

BASICS 1

Brief notes on 40 topics: an overall vision for an ideal start.

Discover this collection of essential notes by Paul Brunton. It is a selection of concise ideas, maxims, or brief, meaningful phrases that have been deliberately organized by theme to reveal the harmony and connection between them. As PB himself stated: *"I have written on different topics as they occurred to me, but none so different as not to be connected with the Quest in some way".* A must-read for gaining a deeper understanding of his overall perspective!

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This dismal fact is the mark on all things, and creatures: that they pass away, have a transient existence, and in this absolute sense lack reality. They appear for a while, seem substantial and eventful, but are in truth prolonged mirages. If this were all the story it would be melancholy enough. But it is not. That whence they came, to which they go back, does not pass away. That is the real, that is the consciousness which gave the universe, of which we are a part, its existence. Out of that stems this little flower in each life which is the best, highest self. If we search for it and discover it, we recover our origin, return to our source, and as such do not pass away. Yes, the forms are lost in the end but the being within them is not.

Millions of other humans came into the world and after a relatively short existence disappeared. He will be no exception: his turn to vanish will also come. Thought, confronted with this terrible fact, must either despair, take refuge in the hopes of religion, or resolve to find out the truth behind the tremendous cosmic drama.

The animal part of us is doomed to oblivion, the spiritual part is ageless and deathless. The physical body belongs to the animal part. All attempts to perpetuate it must fail and arise from confusing the two levels of being, the transient and the eternal.

When we come to see that it is the body alone that expresses the coming into life and the going into death, that in the true self there is neither a beginning nor an ending but rather LIFE itself, we shall see aright.

Life has a Higher Purpose: the Quest of the Overself

Every man over a certain age is under sentence of death. Some men below that age are equally threatened. Should not both groups be sobered enough by such a remembrance to ask, "Why am I here on this Earth?"

We are here in this world for a Higher Purpose than the obvious physical one of self-preservation, for even that is contributory to it. We are here to evolve into the consciousness of Overself. Every physical experience is only a means toward such spiritual development.

At the present stage of human existence, there is no other way to durable spiritual development than through physical embodiments. The total sum of its varied experiences offer us the chance at first to learn and thus to progress, and later to overcome ourselves and thus to attain spiritual awareness...

The Quest is simply the attempt of a few pioneer men to become aware of their spiritual selves as all men are already aware of their physical selves.

The immediate purpose of human incarnation and evolution is to develop a true and full self-consciousness at all levels from the lowest to the highest. The man who does not know himself beyond the physical intellectual ego is still only half-conscious.

We came to this Earth to understand ourselves, bit by bit. There is really nothing to be achieved here; only something to be accepted—the fact of your own divinity.

To do something really worthwhile, to become creative and constructive in an inspired way, aware of the Overself, is to become godlike. We then fulfil the purpose of human existence on Earth.

We will have to grow into this higher consciousness. No other way exists for us.

The value of noble character

The more I travel the world of living men and study the recorded experiences of dead ones, the more I am convinced that mystical powers, religious devotion, intellectual capacity, and ascetic hardihood do not possess anything like the value of noble character. I no longer admire a man because he has spent twenty years in the practice of yoga or the study of metaphysics; I admire him because he has brought compassion, tolerance, rectitude, and dependability into his conduct.

True education will nurture noble character rather than egoistic calculation, foster sharp intelligence rather than routine memory, train the student to the kind of technical work he or she likes to do and can do, and teach things of lasting value rather than force useless ones into the mind.

Is it necessary to pray? when? whom?

It is a great and grave fallacy to believe that it is necessary to pray in order to be taken care of by god. The truth is that there is no moment when god is not taking care of us or, indeed, of everyone else. God is in every atom of the universe and consequently in full operation of the universe. This activity does not stop because we stop praying.

It is common to pray for help to overcome our shortcomings, and this is right; it is even more common to pray to escape the painful results of our shortcomings, but this is not right. Their results are needed for our development and if god took them away from us, we would be robbed of a chance to make this development.

It is better to pray to be led into truth, for then, as Jesus knew and remarked, "All these [other] things shall be added unto you."

What is prayer but a turning to the higher unseen power in the only way that simple, spiritually untutored people know?

Why deprive them of it? What is wrong about its use in organized religion is that they are not taught the further facts. First, prayer is only a beginning, its continuing development being meditation. Second, it ought not be limited to material demands but always accompanied by moral and religious aspiration. Third, it is best performed, as Jesus taught, in private and secret.

Set forms of prayer, fixed formulas, and ready-worded phrases are for the multitudes who have little capacity for creating their own. It makes the going easier for them when they are told or taught what to say. But those who have more capacity should not feel themselves bound so rigidly: they should feel themselves free to express their devotional feelings in their own way and own words.

When prayer is not selfish commerce but holy communion, when it is not worldly minded but spiritually minded, when it seeks the inner Ideal rather than the outer Actual, it has the chance of becoming effectually realized.

Dogmatic or mechanical prayer is really valueless. The only effective prayer comes straight from the heart. It should be fervent, reverent, and spontaneous, expressing both idealistic aspirations and spiritual needs.

We do not approach God through our knees, or through the whole body prostrate on the ground, but deep in our hearts. We do not feel God with our emotions any more than we know him with our thoughts. No! —we feel the divine presence in that profound unearthly stillness where neither the sounds of emotional clamour nor those of intellectual grinding can enter.

The man who finds God within himself feels no need to pray to a god who is to be sought and addressed outside himself. To enter this stillness is the best way to pray.

Such is the untouched depth of the human being that when a man prays to God he really prays to himself, his Overself.

For the person who has come to this understanding, who continually feels that IT IS, who is ever in remembrance of It, rituals, ceremonies, mantras, and prayers are not only unnecessary but are a waste of time.

Natural meditation

What I call natural meditation, that which comes of itself by itself, or which comes from the admiration of nature or of music, is not less valuable than any meditation of the yogi, and perhaps it is even better since there is no artificial effort to bring it about. The human being feels his inner being gradually lapsing into this beautiful mood which seems to coalesce a feeling of hush, peace, knowledge, and benignity.

Real meditation is not formal but spontaneous, not set by the intellect but prompted by the heart.

Spirituality does not mean stagnation

It is easy to fall into the error that spirituality means stagnation, that transcending the worldly life means abandoning it. This error arises because it is not clearly comprehended that the operative principle is what one does with his thoughts, not with his things. For the second activity is always a result of the first.

True spirituality means applying the knowledge got from learning and heeding the laws of the inner life in the differing degree that each individually can do so. It does not mean joining a group or a society and chattering fruitlessly about it or gossiping inquisitively about spiritual leaders.

Asceticism

Nothing ought to be overdone. The overdoing of asceticism produces cranks—unbalanced, illogical, and self-deceiving persons.

The kind of asceticism which considers the body as an enemy to the spirit, is a kind of sickness. The two dwell together, belong to one another, and in a proper life co-operate together. To consider them otherwise, to torment the body in order to gain the spirit's favour, is to twist the very meaning of its existence.

A temperate self-discipline is certainly inculcated by philosophy, but it does not call for the extreme of rigorous asceticism. A reasoned austerity at certain times and a wise self-denial at other times fortify and purify a human being.

The fanaticism of the groups

Too much self-satisfaction, too little acquaintance with the world's great thinkers, seers, and sages—this ignorance enables too many cults and sects to thrive.

Too often sects breed tyranny, uncharitableness, and fanaticism. They shut out the freedom which permits spiritual adventure and hence true spiritual seeking.

With so many cults, creeds, religions, sects, and societies claiming that their teaching is the only true one or that their path is the only path to salvation, the seeker will either get bewildered or be forced to do the right thing—which is to exercise his own independent judgement and not to accept any claim on its mere face value.

There are those in India who have made a sect out of Vedanta, even of Advaita Vedanta. The intolerance, the fanaticism of the narrower groups and religions has been brought in here too. Let the western student of philosophy who takes it seriously enough to think, breathe in remembrance, and live actively by it, be warned, and stay free, unjoined, unlabelled, spacious in outlook, understandingly tolerant in practice. If the independence of the philosophic position stops him from speaking for any particular established religion or mystical cult, it allows him to view all religions and all cults with fairness and detachment.

How many contemporary mystics have gained from all their work in meditation nothing but illusion, self-aggrandizement, or giddy hallucination? One claiming communication every day with the Buddha drips nonsense, propagates fear, and repeats the profound metaphysic read in Buddhist books; another while professing to be Jesus reincarnated and announcing his own Messiahship makes extensive financial demands on his disciples every year.

All these cults cunningly appeal to the ego in man, however much or often they cull New Testament texts or quote Christ or affirm lofty metaphysical truths of being.

Their primary desire is a materialistic one, but it is mixed with such a thick serving of spiritual principles and quotations from Jesus that the cult is able to deceive itself into saying that it is a religion!

The absurdity of insisting on name-labels, the narrowness of joining religious groups, attains its summit when immortal life is proclaimed as our destiny only if we belong to a particular group!

There is no cult, organization, or group with which I associate myself or within whose limitations I would ask others to confine themselves.

Falling victim to the charlatans and the impostors

The sources of spiritual help are many, but of reliable help, few. Superstition, self-aggrandizement, or semi-charlatanry taints much of what is offered to the public.

There are too many people who mistake a confused mass of unrelated assertions, unrefined terms, and unproven statements for mysticism. They do so because they think that mysticism is beyond logical proof, above scientific demonstration, and out of reach of mathematical exposition. They consider mysticism to be entirely a matter of feeling and not of thinking. These are the people who fall victim to the charlatans and the impostors. The kind of mysticism they espouse is a bemused one.

There are insane leaders who form insane cults and gather unbalanced fanatics around them. The heads of the followers are constantly filled with mad dreams until there is little room left for the real facts of this world and less for those of the authentic spiritual world. The cheating, the betrayal, and the disappointment of these foolish people is inexorable but they may refuse to acknowledge the futility of their dreams and may resist disillusionment to the end.

They need philosophy not only to lead them to truth but also to protect them from the fools and frauds, the hallucinated teachers and mercenary guides who infest the approaches to it.

The spiritual “leader”

The spiritual leader who is always soft and sentimental may help some of his pupils, but he would help them more if, at the same time, he were also hard and firm. The first attitude will attract more to him, but without the second to balance it neither he nor they will get the proper view of life.

The title “leader” implies its corollary “follower.” but a spiritual leader of the kind here described does not want a mass of followers trailing behind him in a partisan spirit. It is enough for him to give others a few inspirations, ideas, insights, and yet leave them free to work on the material as they wish, unobligated to join any movement.

The student of philosophy

No person comes to the knowledge of his divinity through a crowd of other persons. No human entity can discover its own relation to God through any group method. The way to spiritual awareness is entirely individual, essentially lonely, inescapably within oneself.

Taking no theoretical position, not committed to any beliefs, not wearing any labels, not putting himself in any categories, the philosophical student starts his search for truth in intellectual freedom and ends it in personal inner freedom. He is then what he is.

Philosophy stresses the need of development's being individual. Students of other teachings may grow in groups, but not students of philosophy!

We call ourselves students of philosophy because we cannot take any name derived from a human teacher. We are not followers of this person or that person exclusively, but of the inner light.

In the end all students will become philosophers in the ancient sense of this term—that is, “lovers of wisdom”—and therefore not only feel the Divine but also understand it. Not only this, but they will be able to help others to attain like understanding and be desirous of doing so. The greater their knowledge, the greater their power to help others. Moreover, knowledge of how the Divine works is a safeguard against the pitfalls, pseudo-teachers, and evil ones, for they can then be perceived instantly. Philosophers will not then be deceived by face values. Jesus said, “Be ye harmless as doves but shrewd as serpents”.

The certificates of character

When at length a human being will be called to account by karma, he will be judged not by the certificates of character which others bestow upon him, whether good or bad, but by the motives felt in his heart, the attitudes held in his mind, and the deeds done by his hands.

Although he should heed criticisms of himself to sift them for their truth or falsity, he need not be too concerned about them. His real judge is his own Overself, not any human being.

The traps of the ego: false altruism, defensive alibis...

It is a man's own internal defects which often conspire against him, and which show their faces in many of the external troubles that beset him. Yet it is hard for him to accept this truth because his whole life-habit is to look outwards, to construct defensive alibis rather than to engage in censorious self-inquisition.

Few persons have either the capacity or the wish to stand back sufficiently far from themselves to see what it is they are really doing and where it is they are really going. We play different roles in the cosmic drama at different levels, and this is true of all men. We all have to rise from the animal to the human, from the human to the divine. The ego is there, but consciousness can either use it as free being or get stuck in it and be used by it. When consciousness is free that means it is free of all the negatives too and especially free of all those identifications with undesirable conditions of the ego and unworthy manifestations of it.

How easily can the ego clothe itself in false altruism or hide behind high-sounding speech! How quickly can it exploit others to its own advantage! How smoothly can it lead a genuine aspiration into a side-path or, worse, a trap!

The negatives must be overcome to make a way for the Truth

It is well to remember not to let oneself become the victim of negative feelings or harsh thoughts. They do not mend matters but only make you suffer more, and also suffer needlessly.

Before we can cultivate the best in us, we must crucify the worst in us. The ego must be hung and nailed by degrees if the Overself is to be resurrected in our consciousness. This is why it is so important to cleanse our emotions and correct our thoughts. The desires and the negatives must be overcome to make a way for the Truth, the Beauty, and Goodness.

Let no one be deceive oneself, awakening is inevitable

The application of these ideals is hard but let no one deceive himself into thinking that their nonapplication is much easier. Those who live without such life-purposes are subject to troubles that could have been avoided and to afflictions of their own making.

The human being who imagines that he can go through life and manage his various affairs in independence of any alleged higher laws is following an illusion. Somewhere or at some time his awakening is inevitable.

Not that the ultimate destiny of every living creature is inglorious: the eventual awakening of its individual mind into the universal divine self is indeed as certain as the dawn of the next day's sun, but truth can be understood only by those who are willing to accept the atmosphere of eternity.

To accept the insecurities of life

Hiding within our pleasures and lurking behind our possessions are their malignant enemies—change and death. Sickness trails behind the healthiest life and may one day catch up with it. Our joys are insecure, our loves and friendships ever open to separation and bereavement. We may try to ignore these facts by forgetting them but life itself will force us to remember them again. It is better to accept them frankly, even though we individually hope for the best.

To face and understand adversity

Because the mind at the back of the universe's life is infinitely wise, there is always a reason for what happens to us. It is better therefore not to rail at adverse events but to try to find out why they are there. It may be consoling to blame others for them, but it will not be helpful. If we look within ourselves for the causes, we take the first step toward bringing adversity to an end; if we look outside, we may unnecessarily prolong it.

His attitude need not be utterly pessimistic. He [the philosophic student] may say to himself, "If I have made a mistake, very well; I am undergoing a process of spiritual trial and error. Some errors are inevitable, but I shall catch up with them, study them, understand their results, and wring their meaning and their lessons out of them. In that way they will become steps which I shall mount towards truth. If I suffer calamities of my own making, I will stand aside, calm, impersonal, and detached, and take the sting out of them by this ego-free attitude. In the long-range point of view it is not what I want but what I need that matters; and if I need the correction of adversity or calamity it is better that I, have it."

Such serenity in the face of adversity must not be mistaken for supine fatalism or a lethargic acceptance of every untoward event as God's will. For although he will seek to understand why it has happened to him and master the lesson behind it, he will also seek to master the event itself and not be content to endure it helplessly. Thus, when all happenings become serviceable to him and when he knows that his own reaction to them will be dictated by wisdom and virtue, the future can no more frighten him than the present can intimidate him. He cannot go amiss whatever happens. For he knows too, whether it be a defeat or a sorrow in the world's eyes, whether it be a triumph or a joy, the experience will leave him better, wiser, and stronger than it found him, more prepared for the next one to come.

The philosophic student knows that he is here to face, understand, and master precisely those events which others wish to flee and evade, that to make a detour around life's obstacles and to escape meeting its problems is, in the end, unprofitable. He knows that his wisdom must arise out of the fullness and not out of the poverty of experience and that it is no use non-cooperatively shirking the world's struggle, for it is largely through such struggle that he can bring forth his own latent resources. Philosophy does not refuse to face life, however tragic or however frightful it may be, and uses such experiences to profit its own higher purpose.

To learn quietly (from philosophy) or brutally (through suffering)

If people are so determined to become the victims of their own egos that no words, no sage counsel, can stop them, there is no other course left except to leave them to suffer the consequences of their actions and thus learn the hard way.

We humans are fallible beings prone to commit errors. If we do not become penitents and break with our past, it is better that we should be left to the natural consequences of our wrong-doing than that "we should be forgiven prematurely".

Most persons have no inclination to wake up when dreams are pleasant, whereas when they are frightening they soon awaken. So too the dream of worldly life does not impress them with the need of true religion until it becomes tragic or severely disappointing. Only when sorrow drives them to question the value of living do they take a real interest in non-worldly urges.

Ironically enough, pain and suffering are not always necessary. But only the few understand this. They may learn quietly from philosophy within a few years what humanity at large must learn brutally through suffering and relearn again in every epoch.

If suffering brings moods of dejection, it is only fulfilling its intention. This is part of its place in the scheme of things, leading to the awareness that underneath the sweet pleasures of life there is always pain. But thought would present only a half-truth if it stopped there. The other half is much harder to find: it is that underneath the surface sufferings which no one escapes, far deeper down than its counterpart, is a vast harmony, an immense love, an incredible peace, and a universal support.

The inescapably earthly sufferings and the principle of Karma

The saints were martyrs. They accepted all their suffering as coming from God and even embraced it. The Philosophic way is to realize that it is often karma, self-earned and brought upon oneself; hence one should analyse it and try to understand why it has come so that the lesson won't have to be repeated. >

>The Christian, Muhammedan, and Jewish religions must accept the doctrines of reincarnation and karma if they want to establish a reasonable place for suffering in the scheme of things.

Those who understand the principle of karma aright, who do not misunderstand it as being an external independent fate but see it as a force originally set in motion by our actions, understand also the significant part played by suffering in the lives of men. It is educative rather than retributive. Merited punishment is really a crude form of education. Thoughtful men learn lessons from their sorrows and resolve not to commit the same sin or the same error a second time.

If he accepts this tenet of karma coupled with rebirth, then his awakening to a sense of responsibility for his life and the course it takes should lead in turn to a feeling of the need for self-discipline.

If he can bring himself to desert his habitual standpoint and begin to think as a sage thinks, his battle will be over bloodlessly. But if he cannot do so, cannot let go so abruptly of his old egoisms and animalisms, then there will be a long struggle, with its attendant wounds and inescapable sufferings.

If a person is strongly egoistic and arrogantly self-opinionated, if he lacks humility even when he approaches a Master, then not only can he not follow the path, but he must circle around looking for its gate. Such a person, uneducable and unteachable, is unfit for the path of discipleship. Life is the only teacher he is ready for. Life is intelligent enough to bring him exactly the kind of experiences he needs—crushing disappointments, frustrations, humiliations, and disasters.

When a human being is crushed to the ground, when his ego is deflated and he calls out in sheer desperation for guidance or for help, the answer may not come to him in the form that he wants or expects; it may come in the form of clues and hints at best, of suggestions. It is for him then to patiently take them up and follow them to where they lead. The suffering which has come to him is not meaningless. There is a sublime rationality behind it, even if it is only the specific effect of a cause which he set going in previous incarnations.

Those whom life has wounded may turn to spiritual teachings for comfort, but too often this is only a passing reaction to sufferings. It has its temporary value and place, but it is not the same as consciously and clearly engaging in the Quest because the thirst for truth is predominant.

Acceptance of suffering is sometimes a key to the way out of it. The greater the suffering, the greater are the possibilities of peace succeeding it—provided that the lessons to be learned from it have been correctly interpreted and actively applied to daily life.

The aspirant who has experienced a great deal of suffering during his lifetime may be comforted by the thought that, undoubtedly, much unfavourable karma has been thus worked off. Moreover, such experiences lead to a better-balanced personality, as a rule, which is as essential for the Quest as meditation.

You should not desert the Quest in resentment because earthly sufferings have come upon you. For if you do so, then you are inviting still further sufferings to come as a consequence of infidelity. Let you rather look upon them as mostly of your own making, through which you may learn lessons for the ultimate perfecting of your character, and always as tests of the sincerity with which you embarked on the quest. You must use these trials as opportunities to show forth endurance, steadfastness, and faithfulness, as well as to increase your wisdom. They do not come by chance. Earthly sufferings are as useful to you if not more so than the earthly joys which you so readily welcome.

The treatment of unpleasant realities by not including them in his picture of the world comforts but at the same time befools a man. None of the great prophets like Jesus and Buddha denied the existence of sickness, the reality of pain, or

the significance of suffering in the cosmos. No—they acknowledged them as being inseparable from human life but pitied the victims and offered them an inward comfort which was based on Truth and Reality.

The answer to those who admit they can understand and accept the existence of suffering when it is the result of karma caused by man's conduct toward man but cannot understand and accept it when caused by Nature's havoc, by earthquakes and floods, by wild beasts and tornados, may not be a palatable one. It is that calamity and suffering, destruction and death, are ordained parts of the divine World-Idea, which needs them to ensure the evolution of entities. It is also that, after all, these things happen only on the surface of their consciousness, for deep down in the Spirit there is perfect harmony and unbroken bliss.

To Blame fate...

If we choose to be endlessly preoccupied with external matters, business, and pleasure, if we will not turn lovingly in the only direction to which we must turn if we are to behold our divine self, then it is useless to blame life, God, or luck for our unhappy blindness.

The aspirant who is really earnest about the quest should develop the attitude that his personal misfortunes, troubles, and disappointments must be traced back to his own weaknesses, defects, faults, deficiencies, and indisciplines. Let him not blame them on other persons or on fate. In this way he will make the quickest progress whereas by self-defending or self-justifying or self-pitying apportionment of blame to causes outside himself, he will delay or prevent it. For the one means clinging to the ego, the other means giving it up...

We are seldom fair to fate. When events do not happen in the way we would like them to, we refuse to accept the idea that it is our own fault, so we blame our harsh fate. But when they do happen favourably, we personally take the credit for bringing them about!

To Condemn persons...

Each time we attempt to deny the responsibility we bears for our own troubles and to shift it onto other people's shoulders, we make the repeated appearance of those troubles in our life a certainty. For the inner causes still remain.

Like a stone in a shoe which we stubbornly refuses to remove, the fault still remains in our character when we stubbornly insist on blaming things or condemning persons for its consequences. In this event the chance to eliminate it is lost, and the same dire consequences may repeat themselves in our life again.

... Cease from condemnation and criticism ;let the ego go!

Let go of all negative thoughts, especially those which concern others. Cease from condemnation and criticism...

He should refrain from giving attention to the imperfections and shortcomings of others, and he should certainly never blame them for these. He should turn his critical gaze towards himself alone—unless he is specifically asked by others to examine them—and exercise it to correct himself and improve himself and reform himself.

It is easy to despise as stupid those of obvious inferior intelligence, but it would be well to remember that we were once at the same level. The notion of rebirth teaches patience, tolerance.

Let go, let thoughts come to rest, let the ego go. This is the best preparation to receive the glimpse, to invite and feel its bliss, wiping out the memories of suffering.

The break-up of relationships

When a separation, divorce, or break-up of relationship comes between two persons—be they friends, spouses, or associates of some kind—it may appear sudden in happening, but it already exists on the subconscious plane. The event merely brings it to the surface.

The happiness that no one finds

The wisdom of experience teaches us that all things change. Friendship wanes and realized ambition brings its own new troubles or disappointments. A fixed and unalterable worldly happiness based on outward things is sought by many but found by none.

The human situation is a paradox

The human situation is a paradox. We are at one and the same time inhabitants of a world of reality as well as a world of appearance. A true human life must embrace both aspects, must be spiritual as well as physical, must integrate the intuitive as well as the intellectual. The body's needs, comfort, and surroundings must receive his attention. But they should not receive attention out of all proportion to their value. Is he here on earth for these things alone? Is the higher purpose of life to be entirely ignored? A sounder balance is required.

The Path of knowledge

Only knowledge of the truth and application of its understanding can end the bondage to ego where these tendencies of negative feelings lurk. Hence if the practice of contemplation is accompanied or followed or, although not usual, preceded by the path of knowledge, a real rooting-out of ego-bondage is possible. This alone leads to permanent reform of character and transformation of outlook. It is done by stages, or rather depths of insight, but the final one is quite abrupt.

Progress along this path is not merely a matter of chronology; nobody may measure it with accuracy for nobody knows what forces may suddenly arise out of an individual's past to hinder him or what forces may suddenly arise out of the Overself to help him.

The way is a progressive one only in the largest sense. In actuality it consists often of stagnations and setbacks, falls and even withdrawals. Instead of smooth progression there are fits and starts, rises and falls. Nearly all seekers experience lapses and wanderings aside. Continuous advance without retrogression is likely to begin only after initiation into the ultimate path.

The upward flights of his novitiate have to be bought at the cost of downward falls. A period of illumination is often followed by a period of darkness. At first the experience of reality will come only in flashes.

Flashes of the Overself

The felicitous experience of the Overself may come briefly during meditation. It comes abruptly. At one moment the student is his ordinary egoistic self, struggling with his restless thoughts and turbulent feelings; at the next the ego suddenly subsides, and every faculty becomes quiescent. All the disciple has to do is to be non-resistant to the divinity, which is taking possession of him, to receive lovingly and not strive laboriously. The oncoming of this experience will be marked by various other signs: the intellect becomes suspended; will, judgement, memory, and reasoning slip gently into abeyance. A deep serenity unknown before takes possession of him, and an exquisite calm settles over him. In these moments of joyous beauty, the bitterest past is blotted out, and the ugliest history redeemed.

Sometimes the Overself reveals itself in other ways: it may use another person, or other persons; it may appear in a sentence in a book opened at random. [Editor's note: Or, in our 21st century, it may also appear at random through digital media]

Let the love come first...

The way to be admitted the Overself's presence can be summed up in a single phrase: love it. Not by breathing in very hard nor by blowing out very slow, not by standing on the head... can admission be gained. Not even by long study of things divine nor by acute analysis of them. But let the love come first...

The beginning of the end for the ego

The tightness with which we hold on to the ego and thus separate ourselves from the Overself's life and the tenseness with which we shut ourselves in the old miserably limited existence are the results of habit. If we are to escape from it into the free creativity of the greater life, we will have to break its vicious circle. This may be enforced upon us by the shock of drastic events, or it may be made possible for us by the grace of an illumined human being, or it may be achieved by us through the determined arousal of a desperate will. Whichever way it happens, it will be the beginning of the end for the ego and the beginning of the best for ourselves.

The Stillness is the perfect shelter

Withdraw into the inner Stillness: what better thing can a man do? For it will point to the goal, give direction and support to finding it.

Only in perfect stillness of the mind, when all discursive and invading thoughts are expelled, can the true purity be attained and the ego expelled with them.

It is not enough to seek stillness for the body and mind alone: the attention and intention must be directed at the same time to that Overself which transcends body and mind.

Counsel to a seeker: *First* hear or study, reflect and understand what you, the world, and God are. *Then* enter the Stillness, love it. The Stillness will take care of you, and of your problems.

The Stillness has magical powers. It soothes, restores, heals, instructs, guides, and replaces chaos and tumult by orderliness and harmony.

In the Stillness we find the perfect shelter from the unease brought by so many human presences, with all their radiating auras.

The Stillness is not experienced in the same way as a mere lazy and idle reverie: it is dynamic, creative, and healing. The presence of one person who is able to attain it is a gift, a blessing, to all human beings, though they know it not.

A Stillness which is not simply the absence of noise, but which is rich, fruitful, and uplifting in beauty and refinement of its presence—this is the best.

No better fortune can come to a man or woman than this serene inward well-being and this certitude of Universal Truth.

To Serve humanity

When he first attains to this clear vision, he sees not only that which brings him great joy but also that which brings him great sorrow. He sees men bewildered by life, pained by life, blinded by life. He sees them wandering into wrong paths because there is no one to lead them into right ones. He sees them praying for light but surrounded by darkness. In that hour he makes a decision which will fundamentally affect the whole of his life. Henceforth he will intercede for these others, devote himself to their spiritual service.

He is not working for this generation, nor for this country, nor for any millennium, but for an infinite duration of time. Therefore he is, he must be, infinitely patient.

It is not by overmuch fussy activity that we necessarily serve others best. We may, if we have opened ourselves to divine influences, become radiations of such influences. Merely by being faithful to them, we become the best missionaries for them.

To serve humanity is in the end to serve yourself. This follows from the working of karma. To forgive those who, in ignorance, sin against you is, for the same reason, to forgive yourself.

A universal message

We cannot communicate the incommunicable. The absolute reality is outside our finite thoughts; all philosophic writing must fall short of bestowing truth upon its readers. At best it can prepare the way for an attainment which must always be individual. Therefore, we who record the activities of our brains in these directions should not take ourselves too seriously. The printed paper will remain but paper (*editor's note: ...and digital media, just media*) and readers will still have to take up the quest for themselves though we write a thousand pages. So I make this apology for my occasional light treatment of heavy matters. I am unable to share the illusion of many writers, that a few paragraphs may suffice to convert someone's materialistic darkness into spiritual light. I am well aware, however, that the pen can indeed cast plenty of mental light upon the problem of truth; but since I regard this as a buyer of gold regards brass, please pardon me if now and then I remember the futility of all our writing, when judged from the highest standpoint, and if, therefore, I break into irreverent chuckles in the midst of a grave paragraph or link up the profane with the profound in incongruous manner.

This universal message is destined to flow all over the world. Its bearers will be none other than the writings of ancient and modern seers. It will bring people the opportunity to grow, to go forward...

If this message is false, you cannot know this until you have fully investigated it, for to come to conclusions before thorough examinations is unworthy of a thinking person. If this message is true, then it is of colossal importance to the world, and to you.

Seek for the divine

The divine being is present in all people, from the crudest to the most cultured. The Overself is forever with us simply because it is what we really are. We are seeking it, knowingly or unwittingly, and are preordained to do so.

The concept of the Overself is foundational. It provides meaning for life. It is no truer message than this: “seek for the divine within yourself, return to it every day, learn how to continue in it and finally *be* it.”

The Overself is not only a necessary conception of logical thought. It is also a beautiful fact of personal experience.

No church, no monastery, no ashram can shut in the divine life behind its walls. THAT is for all.

The power of the Overself

There is some life-power from which we derive our capacities and our intelligence. It is hidden and intangible. No one has seen it but everyone who thinks deeply enough can sense that it is there, always present and always supporting us. It is the Overself.

Is this benign state a past from which we have lapsed or a future to which we are coming? The true answer is that it is neither. This state has always been existent within us, is so now, and always will be. It is forever with us simply because it is what we really are.

Out of this deep mysterious centre within himself, he will draw the strength to endure distresses with fortitude, the wisdom to manage situations without after-regrets, the insight to keep the great and little values of everyday living in proper perspective.

The Overself is not a goal to be attained but a realization of what already is. It is the inalienable possession of all conscious beings and not of a mere few. No effort is needed to get hold of the Overself, but every effort is needed to get rid of the many impediments to its recognition. We cannot take hold of it; it takes hold of us. Therefore, the last stage of this quest is an effortless one. We are led, as children by the hand, into the resplendent presence. Our weary strivings come to an abrupt end. Our lips are made shut and wordless.

Will never fail you

We think that birth is the beginning and death the end of all for us. Theologians and metaphysicians have argued and disputed over this as far back as the memory of human being can go, so who are we to say “yea” or “nay” to them? But when the noise and din of their jarring voices fade into the distance, when the quieter hours of evening wrap us around, fold upon fold, then it is that a strange and sublime sense steals upon us, if we will but permit its coming, and says: “my child, what they think and what they say does not really matter. I am by your side, and I shall never fail you. Smile at death if you wish or fear it—but I am with you always.”

Life is for you

With this serene acceptance of life, this glad co-operation with it and willing obedience to its laws, you begin to find that henceforth life is for you. Events begin to happen, circumstances so arrange themselves, and contacts so develop themselves that what you really need for your further development or expression appears of its own accord.

The fruit of experience is Enlightenment

The journey of life is both an adventure and a pilgrimage to our essential being. All the reincarnations which are necessary to the unfoldment of our character and capacities must be lived through. We pass from body to body to collect experience. The fruit of experience is Enlightenment: the established awareness of the essential being's presence, the Overself or soul. The aspirant must take heart that one day the goal will be reached, even if there were no law of evolution to confirm it—as there is.

Submit to the World-Idea—or suffer. Resign yourself to the higher course of things: go along with it—and be at peace!

To our critics...

We are regarded as odd people because we trouble our heads with the search for an intangible reality. But it never occurs to our critics that it is much more odd that they should go on living without pausing to inquire if there be any purpose in life at all.

Our best honours

It is those who create ways and means for others to follow in the search for spiritual fulfilment, the teachers and awakeners, who deserve our best honours.

Such men are so few, their worth to society so great, the darkness around us gathering so thickly, that their presence among us is the greatest blessing.

The Quest and the sense of humour

This enterprise of the spiritual quest is the most serious in which a human being can engage. We must treat it as such. But let this not cause anyone to lose the sense of humour.

People are needed with intellectual acumen, with emotional control, with balanced reason, with loyalty to ideals and with sincerity and faithfulness in working for them. They are to be undeterred by criticism and unmoved by praise. And lastly, amid the arduous struggles of this quest, its soaring thoughts and serious comprehension of world-sorrows, a sense of humour is needed also.