

# CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i> . . . . .	xix
<i>Introduction</i> . . . . .	xxiii
<b>How to Cultivate Divine Love</b> . . . . .	<b>3</b>
<i>The Universal Nature of Love</i> . . . . .	5
<i>Fatherly Love Is Based on Reason</i> . . . . .	6
<i>Motherly Love Is Based on Feeling and Is Unconditional</i> . . . . .	6
<i>Conjugal Love</i> . . . . .	7
<i>Love Between Master and Servant</i> . . . . .	11
<i>Friendship—Grandest Relationship of Human Loves</i> . . . . .	11
<i>The Unconditional Divine Friendship of Guru and Disciple</i> . . . . .	12
<i>God’s Love Sublimely Manifest in Bhagavan Krishna</i> . . . . .	13
<i>The Perfect Love Between Soul and Spirit</i> . . . . .	14
<b>A New Look at the Origin and Nature of Cosmic Creation</b> . . . . .	<b>17</b>
<i>The Beginning of the Cosmic Dream</i> . . . . .	18
<i>The Evolution of Intelligence</i> . . . . .	20
<i>Reincarnation Is a Series of Dreams Within a Dream</i> . . . . .	21
<i>Life Is a Dream Unworthy of Our Tears</i> . . . . .	22
<i>We Dream Our Own Limitations</i> . . . . .	23
<i>Don’t Take Life So Seriously</i> . . . . .	25
<i>In Meditation Delusive Dreams Vanish</i> . . . . .	26
<i>Never Become Mentally Ruffled</i> . . . . .	27
<i>It Is Your Own Dreams That Frighten You</i> . . . . .	28
<i>The Power of the Mind Is Limitless</i> . . . . .	28
<i>Only in God Are You Safe From Delusion</i> . . . . .	29
<b>Practicing Religion Scientifically</b> . . . . .	<b>31</b>
<i>Scientists Work in Cooperation With God</i> . . . . .	31
<i>Belief Is Only the First Step</i> . . . . .	32
<i>Self-realization Is Necessary to Experience God</i> . . . . .	33
<i>The First Experiment Is Silence</i> . . . . .	34
<i>The End Result of Truth Is Always Good</i> . . . . .	35

<i>There Are No Harmless Lies</i> . . . . .	35
<i>The Importance to You of Others' Happiness</i> . . . . .	36
<i>"Won't Power" Leads to Will Power</i> . . . . .	37
<i>A Practical Experiment in Religion</i> . . . . .	38
<i>There Is Always a Way Out</i> . . . . .	38
<i>No "If" About the Working of God's Laws</i> . . . . .	39
<i>Seeing Is Believing—The Science of Religion</i> . . . . .	39
<b>Finding the Joy in Life</b> . . . . .	<b>41</b>
<b>What Is Fate?</b> . . . . .	<b>44</b>
<i>Why We Are All Different From One Another</i> . . . . .	44
<i>Three Ways to Deal With the Effects of Actions</i> . . . . .	45
<i>Even the Fate of Death Can Be Changed</i> . . . . .	46
<i>Avoid Wrong Behavior to Prevent Unpleasant Results</i> . . . . .	48
<i>Never Give Up Your Good Efforts</i> . . . . .	50
<i>Angels Are Made on Earth, Not in Heaven</i> . . . . .	51
<i>How Meditation Changes Your Fate</i> . . . . .	52
<i>The Most Important Consideration Is to Be With God</i> . . . . .	53
<i>Be a Jailbreaker From the Prison of Fate</i> . . . . .	54
<b>The End of the World</b> . . . . .	<b>55</b>
<i>The Good and Evil Actions of Man</i>	
<i>Affect the Harmonious Balance of the Earth</i> . . . . .	56
<i>The Life Cycles of the Earth</i> . . . . .	57
<i>Dwapara Yuga, the Present Cycle</i> . . . . .	58
<i>Spirituality Must Be Kept Strong in All Nations</i> . . . . .	59
<i>Loyalty to One's Country</i> . . . . .	60
<i>Treta Yuga</i> . . . . .	61
<i>Satya Yuga</i> . . . . .	62
<i>Rise Above the Age in Which You Are Born</i> . . . . .	62
<i>The World Ends for Us When Our Minds Are Detached</i> . . . . .	63
<i>The World Ends for Us When We Are Free From Desires</i> . . . . .	63
<i>The End of the World Is Realized in Samadhi</i> . . . . .	65
<i>End Your Dream Delusions in God</i> . . . . .	65
<b>The Why and How of Religion</b> . . . . .	<b>67</b>
<i>Yoga Fulfills the Purpose of Religion</i> . . . . .	68
<i>The Universal Science of Religion</i> . . . . .	69
<i>The Age of Logic Is Here</i> . . . . .	70

<i>Find Joyous Fulfillment in Divine Love</i> . . . . .	71
<i>Evil Is a Boomerang</i> . . . . .	71
<i>Errors in Judgment Make Us Do Wrong</i> . . . . .	72
<i>A Reason for Every Law</i> . . . . .	73
<i>The Real Armament: Peace and Love</i> . . . . .	75
<i>Obedience to a True Guru Is the Surest Way of Wisdom</i> . . . . .	75
<b>The Spectrum of Spiritual Consciousness</b> . . . . .	<b>77</b>
<i>What Is Truth?</i> . . . . .	78
<i>Spiritual Consciousness Obeys All the Rules That Make Life Complete</i> . . . . .	79
<i>The Inner Versus the Outer World</i> . . . . .	80
<i>Spirituality Embraces a Wide Field of Controlled Activity</i> . . . . .	81
<i>Sincerity and Intensity of Effort Is What Counts</i> . . . . .	83
<i>The Opposite Modes of Material and Spiritual Consciousness</i> . . . . .	84
<i>Your Highest Good Lies in Spiritual Consciousness</i> . . . . .	85
<b>The Mind: Repository of Infinite Power</b> . . . . .	<b>87</b>
<i>Our Little Minds Are Part of God's Omnipotent Mind</i> . . . . .	87
<i>The Seeds of Success Are Within You</i> . . . . .	88
<i>Thought Can Be Materialized</i> . . . . .	89
<i>To Achieve Something Is to Please God</i> . . . . .	90
<i>Work on Your Progress With God</i> . . . . .	91
<i>Make the Best of Circumstances</i> . . . . .	92
<i>Never Accept Failure</i> . . . . .	93
<i>Seek Divine Guidance</i> . . . . .	94
<i>You Create Your Own Helplessness or Strength</i> . . . . .	95
<i>Material Success Becomes Empty Without God</i> . . . . .	96
<i>Make God Break His Vow of Silence</i> . . . . .	97
<i>"Lord, Don't Make Me a Spiritual Clown"</i> . . . . .	98
<i>The Joy of Pleasing God</i> . . . . .	99
<b>Why Evil Is a Part of God's Creation</b> . . . . .	<b>100</b>
<i>Perfection Is Not to Be Found in This World</i> . . . . .	101
<i>The Greatest Conquering Force Is Love</i> . . . . .	103
<i>"I Can Give My Life for a Sincere Soul"</i> . . . . .	104
<i>The Cosmic Motion Picture</i> . . . . .	104
<i>For Him Who Realizes God, There Is No Evil</i> . . . . .	106

<b>The Mystery of Mahatma Gandhi</b> . . . . .	<b>108</b>
<i>Religious Principles Are the Foundation of the Art of Living</i> . . .	108
<i>Mahatma Gandhi: A Political Savior</i>	
<i>of All Politic-ridden Nations</i> . . . . .	110
<i>A Living Embodiment of Scriptural Truths</i> . . . . .	110
<i>A Perfect Example to Politicians</i> . . . . .	111
<i>“Each for All and All for Each”</i> . . . . .	112
<i>What Gandhi’s Ideals Have Done for India</i> . . . . .	113
<i>Reestablishing the Christian Doctrine</i> . . . . .	114
<i>Resisting Evil by Love</i> . . . . .	115
<i>True Equality Is Achieved Through Love</i> . . . . .	116
<i>Destroy Hatred, and Peace Will Come to Stay</i> . . . . .	117
<b>Magnetism: The Inherent Power of the Soul</b> . . . . .	<b>119</b>
<i>The Effect of Dietary Habits on Magnetism</i> . . . . .	119
<i>The Vibrations of the Whole World</i>	
<i>Pass Through Your Body</i> . . . . .	121
<i>Calmness Protects You From Negative Vibrations</i> . . . . .	122
<i>How to “Steal” Magnetism From the Saints</i> . . . . .	123
<i>Use Your Time Wisely</i> . . . . .	124
<i>Don’t Be a Chatterbox</i> . . . . .	124
<i>The Magnetism of Unselfish Love</i> . . . . .	125
<i>Let God Flow Through You</i> . . . . .	126
<i>It Is the Ego That Keeps God Away</i> . . . . .	127
<i>The Love of God Is All-consuming</i> . . . . .	128
<i>Listen to What the Spirit of God Has to Tell You</i> . . . . .	129
<b>Psychological Furniture</b> . . . . .	<b>131</b>
<i>What Instruments Mold Us Into Psychological Furniture?</i> . . . . .	132
<i>Human Peculiarities</i> . . . . .	133
<i>Dangerous Psychological Furniture</i> . . . . .	135
<i>Conversation Pieces</i> . . . . .	136
<i>Make Constant Effort to Increase in Value</i> . . . . .	137
<i>Strive to Understand the Intrinsic Characteristics of Others</i> . . .	138
<i>Wisdom Is a Chisel, Love Is the Sandpaper</i> . . . . .	138
<b>The Unknown Potential of Memory</b> . . . . .	<b>140</b>
<i>Limiting Effect of Man’s Mortal Nature</i> . . . . .	141
<i>Memories of Past Lives</i> . . . . .	142
<i>Select Only the Good Habits of Past Lives</i> . . . . .	143

<i>Forget Past Errors</i> . . . . .	144
<i>Concentrate on the True and the Good</i> . . . . .	145
<i>Ways to Improve Memory</i> . . . . .	145
<i>Remember Your Oneness With Spirit</i> . . . . .	147
<b>Harmonizing Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Methods of Healing</b> . .	<b>148</b>
<i>The Three Basic Methods of Healing</i> . . . . .	150
<i>Everything Is Thought Force</i> . . . . .	152
<i>Mind Works if You Know How to Control It</i> . . . . .	153
<i>Mind Can Produce Negative as Well as Positive Results</i> . . . . .	155
<i>Man Is Kept Hypnotized With Delusion</i> . . . . .	156
<i>Suffering Can Be for the Welfare of Others</i> . . . . .	157
<i>Awaken in God to Be Free From Delusion</i> . . . . .	158
<i>A Miraculous Healing</i> . . . . .	159
<i>Have More Mental Strength</i> . . . . .	160
<b>Mind Power Can Help You Lose or Gain Weight</b> . . . . .	<b>162</b>
<i>Think Thin</i> . . . . .	164
<i>Don't Be a Diet Fanatic</i> . . . . .	165
<b>How To Work Without Fatigue</b> . . . . .	<b>167</b>
<i>Cultivated Tastes Versus Natural Hunger Instincts</i> . . . . .	168
<i>Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Vital to Health</i> . . . . .	169
<i>Exercise Removes Fatigue</i> . . . . .	170
<i>Avoid Wasting Energy</i> . . . . .	171
<i>The Secret of Vitality</i> . . . . .	172
<i>Will and Energy Go Hand-in-Hand</i> . . . . .	173
<i>Love Is One of the Greatest Stimulants to the Will</i> . . . . .	175
<b>Ridding the Consciousness of Worry</b> . . . . .	<b>177</b>
<i>Success or Failure Is Determined in Your Own Mind</i> . . . . .	178
<i>The Lesson We Have Come on Earth to Learn</i> . . . . .	179
<i>Practice Mental Neutrality</i> . . . . .	180
<i>God Can Never Forsake You</i> . . . . .	182
<b>If God Is Free From Karma, Why Aren't We?</b> . . . . .	<b>184</b>
<i>Pain Has Three Causes</i> . . . . .	185
<i>The Connection Between You and Bodily Pain Is Only Mental</i> . .	186
<i>In Sleep You Are Free From Karma</i> . . . . .	187
<i>Death Is a Reward</i> . . . . .	188
<i>Destroy Bad Karma With Right Action</i> . . . . .	190

<i>The Guru's Help</i> . . . . .	192
<i>Three Ways to Rise Above Karma</i> . . . . .	192
<i>Kriya Yoga Sunders the Prison Bars of Karma</i> . . . . .	193
<b>The Yoga Art of Overcoming Mortal Consciousness and Death . . .</b>	<b>194</b>
<i>Physiological Methods of Self-mastery</i> . . . . .	195
<i>Is Death a Misfortune or a Blessing in Disguise?</i> . . . . .	196
<i>The Spiritual Psychology of Pain</i> . . . . .	197
<i>The Suffering of Death Is Self-inflicted</i> . . . . .	198
<i>Why, After Death, the Ordinary Man Forgets His Former Life</i> . . .	199
<i>How to Cut the Cords of the Soul's Attachments</i> . . . . .	200
<b>How Feelings Mask the Soul</b> . . . . .	<b>204</b>
<i>Feelings and Emotions Obscure the Soul</i> . . . . .	205
<i>Indulgence Enslaves the Soul</i> . . . . .	205
<i>A Balanced Attitude Nurtures Soul Awareness</i> . . . . .	206
<i>Work With Keen but Unattached Interest</i> . . . . .	207
<i>Motive Is Criterion of Right or Wrong Action</i> . . . . .	208
<i>Calmness Is the Parent of Right Action</i> . . . . .	209
<i>See Yourself as a Soul, Not the Physical Body</i> . . . . .	211
<i>Practice Deep Meditation and Retain Its Effects</i> . . . . .	212
<b>The Yoga Ideal of Renunciation Is for All</b> . . . . .	<b>213</b>
<i>Depend More on God</i> . . . . .	214
<i>God Appreciates One-pointed Devotion</i> . . . . .	215
<i>Yoga: The Universal Middle Path</i> . . . . .	216
<i>Perform All Duties to Please God</i> . . . . .	217
<i>Play Your Role Well in the Drama of Life</i> . . . . .	218
<i>Be in the World but Not of It</i> . . . . .	219
<i>Live in the Consciousness of God</i> . . . . .	219
<i>Stand Unshaken Midst the Crash of Breaking Worlds</i> . . . . .	221
<i>Do Not Be Frightened by God's Cinema</i> . . . . .	222
<i>Make God the Polestar of Your Life</i> . . . . .	222
<i>God's Judgment Is Just</i> . . . . .	223
<b>"With All Thy Getting, Get Understanding"</b> . . . . .	<b>224</b>
<i>Seek the Help of a Spiritual Teacher Who Knows God</i> . . . . .	225
<i>Life Without Understanding Is Spiritual and Material Suicide</i> . .	227
<i>Understanding Must Have Both Heart and Head</i> . . . . .	228
<i>True Understanding Tells You When You Are Right or Wrong</i> . .	228

<i>My Guru's Guidance Made Me Clear sighted</i> . . . . .	229
<i>Don't Oscillate in Keeping Your Good Resolutions</i> . . . . .	231
<i>Stand By What Is Right</i> . . . . .	231
<i>Find Understanding Through Communion With God</i> . . . . .	232
<b>Criticism</b> . . . . .	<b>233</b>
<b>Where Is Jesus Now, and What Is He Doing?</b> . . . . .	<b>236</b>
<i>How Liberated Masters Watch Over the World</i> . . . . .	237
<i>Christ Has Not Gone—He Is Watching You</i> . . . . .	238
<i>Christlike Behavior Is Difficult, But Rewarding</i> . . . . .	239
<i>The Permanent Monument of Christ-love</i> . . . . .	240
<i>From My Indian Guru I Learned the Real Meaning of Christ's Teachings</i> . . . . .	241
<i>Love Those Who Abuse You</i> . . . . .	242
<i>How a Quarrelsome Man Was Changed</i> . . . . .	243
<i>If You Associate With Skunks, You Cannot Smell the Roses</i> . . . . .	244
<i>Greater Than the Wounds of Battle Are Wounds to Your Soul</i> . . . . .	244
<i>Don't Soil Your Soul With Those Who Are Mischief Makers</i> . . . . .	245
<i>If You Would Come to Me, Live the Life of Christ</i> . . . . .	246
<b>Do Souls Reincarnate?</b> . . . . .	<b>247</b>
<i>We Have Made a Mess of God's Creation</i> . . . . .	248
<i>We Feel Mortal Because We Lack Continuity of Consciousness</i> . . . . .	249
<i>We Don't Want to Remember Troubles of Past Lives</i> . . . . .	250
<i>Live Rightly Now, Regardless of What Lies Hereafter</i> . . . . .	251
<i>We Are Not Products of Blind Chance</i> . . . . .	251
<i>Present Tendencies Reflect Temperament of Past Lives</i> . . . . .	252
<i>Your Divine Nature Is What You Must Cultivate</i> . . . . .	253
<i>Seek the Answer to the Mystery of Life and Death</i> . . . . .	254
<i>How to Recognize Souls You Have Known Before</i> . . . . .	255
<i>Help Enemies of the Past Through Love and Forgiveness</i> . . . . .	257
<i>Seek God: He Will Show You Glimpses of Your Past</i> . . . . .	257
<i>If You Make the Effort, You Will Find God</i> . . . . .	258
<i>When God Comes, the Veils of Delusion Drop Away</i> . . . . .	259
<i>"I Come Only to Tell You of That Joy of God"</i> . . . . .	260
<b>Where Are Our Departed Loved Ones?</b> . . . . .	<b>262</b>
<i>The Unperceived World of Thought</i> . . . . .	262
<i>Where Is Heaven?</i> . . . . .	264

<i>We Are Made of God's Thoughts, Which Death Cannot Destroy</i> . . . . .	265
<i>Know the Right Way to Find Your Loved Ones</i> . . . . .	265
<i>The Astral World Has Many Spheres</i> . . . . .	266
<i>Communication With the Astral a Secretly Guarded Science</i> . . . . .	267
<i>The Saints Cannot Come to the Spiritually Unprepared</i> . . . . .	268
<i>Technique of Sending Thoughts to Departed Souls</i> . . . . .	270
<i>We Can Find Loved Ones Who Have Been Reborn</i> . . . . .	271
<i>True Love Draws Souls Together Life After Life</i> . . . . .	272
<i>The Soul and Its Joy Last Forever</i> . . . . .	273
<b>Reflections on Love</b> . . . . .	<b>274</b>
<b>The Known and the Unknown</b> . . . . .	<b>277</b>
<i>How to Develop Your Talents</i> . . . . .	277
<i>Recognize the Tendencies That Make You Unique</i> . . . . .	279
<i>Mass Education Must Allow for Individual Development</i> . . . . .	280
<i>Past Desires Produce Present Tendencies</i> . . . . .	281
<i>How Much Free Will Do We Have?</i> . . . . .	282
<i>Cosmic Law Is Activated by Our Decisions</i> . . . . .	283
<i>Live Life for God</i> . . . . .	284
<b>Controlling Your Destiny</b> . . . . .	<b>286</b>
<i>Our Acts, Past and Present, Forge the Chain of Our Destiny</i> . . . . .	288
<i>The Example of Great Men Shows     That Our Destiny Is Not Fixed</i> . . . . .	290
<i>Be Mentally Dissociated From the Body's Limitations</i> . . . . .	290
<i>Almighty Power Lies in the Mind</i> . . . . .	291
<b>Guests—Good and Bad</b> . . . . .	<b>293</b>
<i>A Letter to God</i> . . . . .	294
<b>How to Free Yourself From Bad Habits</b> . . . . .	<b>297</b>
<i>Habit Defined</i> . . . . .	298
<i>Watch Out for Hidden Bad Habits of Past Lives</i> . . . . .	299
<i>Train Children to Develop a Preference for Right Habits</i> . . . . .	299
<i>When You Say No to Temptation, Mean It</i> . . . . .	300
<i>Don't Cater to Likes and Dislikes</i> . . . . .	301
<i>Bad Habits Are Like an Octopus</i> . . . . .	302
<i>Train Your Will to Be Unenslaved</i> . . . . .	302
<i>A Story of "Won't" Power</i> . . . . .	304



<i>By Concentration, Habits Can Be Installed at Will . . . . .</i>	304
<i>Introspect to Know Yourself as You Are . . . . .</i>	305
<i>Perennial Peace and Joy Lie Within, Not in Externals . . . . .</i>	305
<i>The Time to Create Spiritual Habits Is Now . . . . .</i>	306
<i>Technique for Creating and Destroying Habits . . . . .</i>	307
<i>Make-believe Pleasures Cannot Substitute for the Bliss of God . . . . .</i>	308
<b>The Garden of Flowering Qualities . . . . .</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>Oriental and Occidental Christianity . . . . .</b>	<b>311</b>
<i>True Christianity . . . . .</i>	311
<i>Oriental Conditions of Life Were Different . . . . .</i>	313
<i>Why Christianity Changed in the West . . . . .</i>	314
<i>Real God-communion Is Needed . . . . .</i>	316
<i>East and West Need Balance . . . . .</i>	317
<i>Knowing God Scientifically . . . . .</i>	319
<b>A World Without Boundaries . . . . .</b>	<b>321</b>
<i>Understanding Must Be Freed From Prejudices . . . . .</i>	322
<i>Love the World as You Love Your Nation and Family . . . . .</i>	322
<i>International Understanding Dissolves Divisive Boundaries . . . . .</i>	323
<i>Peace Will Come When We Learn to See God in All . . . . .</i>	324
<i>Peace Begins at Home and in the Schools . . . . .</i>	325
<i>Without Selfishness There Would Be No Wars . . . . .</i>	326
<i>Yoga Meditation Reveals Our Divine Nature . . . . .</i>	327
<i>If Everyone Learns God-communion, Peace Will Reign . . . . .</i>	327
<b>To Know God Is to Love All . . . . .</b>	<b>329</b>
<i>A God of Love, Wisdom, and Beauty . . . . .</i>	330
<i>God-contact Answers Every Question . . . . .</i>	330
<i>He Who Is Mentally Undefeated Finds God . . . . .</i>	331
<i>The Garden of Truth Is Found in God-communion . . . . .</i>	332
<i>Look to Your Spiritual Welfare . . . . .</i>	333
<b>How You Can Approach God . . . . .</b>	<b>335</b>
<i>The Monkey Trial—And Its Sequel . . . . .</i>	336
<i>Proof of the Existence of God . . . . .</i>	338
<i>The Way to Know God . . . . .</i>	339

<b>The Cosmic Lover</b> . . . . .	<b>343</b>
<b>Personal and Impersonal God</b> . . . . .	<b>345</b>
<i>God Is Both Personal and Impersonal</i> . . . . .	347
<i>Even the Finite Is Infinite</i> . . . . .	348
<i>The Absolute Cannot Be Described</i> . . . . .	349
<i>God Manifests in Human Incarnations</i> . . . . .	350
<i>The Guru Is a Model of God</i> . . . . .	351
<i>Those Who Are One With God</i> <i>Can Appear in Form Any Time</i> . . . . .	352
<i>Realizing God Requires Unflinching Determination</i> . . . . .	353
<i>The Right Meditation Techniques Are Necessary</i> . . . . .	354
<i>Don't Put Off Your Search for God</i> . . . . .	354
<b>How to Find a Way to Victory</b> . . . . .	<b>357</b>
<i>The Mind Must Remain Undeclared</i> . . . . .	358
<i>Evil Is Anything That Obstructs God-realization</i> . . . . .	359
<i>The Conquest of Self Is the Greatest Victory</i> . . . . .	360
<i>Be Secure in Your Innate Goodness</i> . . . . .	362
<i>Do Not Neglect God for Work, Nor Neglect Work for God</i> . . . . .	363
<i>God Doesn't Teach Through Mystery</i> <i>but Through Illumined Souls</i> . . . . .	365
<i>Success Lies Within the Seeker</i> . . . . .	366
<i>Rejoice in God's Bliss, and Serve Others</i> . . . . .	366
<i>To Win God Is the Ultimate Victory</i> . . . . .	367
<i>Don't Waste Your Opportunity to Seek God</i> . . . . .	368
<b>"I Am Blessed to Behold Him"</b> . . . . .	<b>369</b>
<i>A Fresh Beginning for the New Year</i> . . . . .	370
<i>The Movie Drama of Life</i> . . . . .	371
<i>Realization From Mountains or From Living Souls?</i> . . . . .	371
<i>The Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar</i> . . . . .	373
<i>God Is More Tempting Than Temptation</i> . . . . .	373
<b>Take God With You Through Life</b> . . . . .	<b>375</b>
<i>Man Is Made in the Image of God</i> . . . . .	376
<i>God Will Not Force Himself on You</i> . . . . .	377
<i>The Guru Is Sent by God</i> . . . . .	378
<i>God's Answer to His Devotee</i> . . . . .	379
<i>A Loving Message for America</i> . . . . .	380
<i>Our Destination Is God</i> . . . . .	380

<i>A Controlled Mind Lessens Pain</i> . . . . .	381
<i>Follow Those Who Have Found God</i> . . . . .	383
<b>The Aurora of Bliss</b> . . . . .	<b>385</b>
<b>Answer the Call of Christ!</b> . . . . .	<b>388</b>
<b>Divine Communion With God and Christ</b> . . . . .	<b>398</b>
<b>The Eternal Romance</b> . . . . .	<b>405</b>
<i>God Stands at the Door of Your Consciousness</i> . . . . .	406
<i>God Yearns for Our Love</i> . . . . .	406
<i>The Desire Behind All Desires</i> . . . . .	407
<i>Ignorance Means Not Using the Power God Gave You</i> . . . . .	408
<i>God Is the Most Lovable Being</i> . . . . .	409
<i>There Is More to Life Than Appears Outwardly</i> . . . . .	410
<i>God Is Always With Us</i> . . . . .	411
<i>The Romance With God Is Eternal</i> . . . . .	413
<b>A Scripture of Love</b> . . . . .	<b>415</b>
<i>Paramahansa Yogananda: A Yogi in Life and Death</i> . . . . .	417
<i>Aims and Ideals of Self-Realization Fellowship</i> . . . . .	420
<i>Glossary</i> . . . . .	426

# How to Cultivate Divine Love

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The world as a whole has forgotten the real meaning of the word *love*. Love has been so abused and crucified by man that very few people know what true love is. Just as oil is present in every part of the olive, so love permeates every part of creation. But to define love is very difficult, for the same reason that words cannot fully describe the flavor of an orange. You have to taste the fruit to know its flavor. So with love. All of you have tasted love in some form in your hearts; therefore you know a little about what it is. But you have not understood how to develop love, how to purify and expand it into divine love. A spark of this divine love exists in most hearts in the beginning of life, but is usually lost, because man does not know how to cultivate it.

Many people wouldn't think it even necessary to analyze what love is. They recognize love as the feeling they have for their relatives, friends, and others to whom they are strongly attracted. But there is much more to it than that. The only way I can describe real love to you is to tell you its effect. If you could feel even a particle of divine love, so great would be your joy—so overpowering—you could not contain it.

Think deeply about what I am telling you. The satisfaction of love is not in the feeling itself, but in the joy that feeling brings. Love gives joy. We love love because it gives us such intoxicating happiness. So love is not the ultimate; the ultimate is bliss. God is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. We, as soul, are individualized *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. "From Joy we have come, in Joy we live and have our being, and in that sacred Joy we will one day melt again."\* All the divine emotions—love, compassion, courage, self-sacrifice, humility—would be meaningless without joy. Joy means exhilaration, an expression of the ultimate Bliss.

\* Taittiriya Upanishad 3-6-1.

Man's experience of joy originates in the brain, in the subtle center of God-consciousness that the yogis call the *sahasrara*, or thousand-petaled lotus. Yet the actual feeling of joy is experienced not in the head but in the heart. From the divine seat of God-consciousness in the brain, joy descends into the heart center,\* and manifests there. That joy comes from God's bliss—the essential and ultimate attribute of Spirit.

Though joy may be born in conjunction with certain outer conditions, it is not subject to conditions; it often manifests without any material cause. Sometimes you wake up in the morning "walking on air" with joy, and you don't know why. And when you sit in the silence of deep meditation, joy bubbles up from within, roused by no outer stimulus. The joy of meditation is overwhelming. Those who have not gone into the silence of true meditation do not know what real joy is.

We feel much happiness in the satisfaction of a desire; but in youth we often feel in the heart a sudden happiness that comes as if from nowhere. Joy expresses itself under certain conditions, but it is not created by those conditions. Thus, when someone receives a thousand dollars and exclaims, "Oh, how happy I am!" the condition of having received a thousand dollars has merely served as a pickax, releasing a fountain of joy from the hidden reservoir of bliss within. So, in human experience, certain events are usually required to bring forth joy, but the joy itself is the perennial native state of the soul. Love also is native to the soul, but love is secondary to joy; there could be no love without joy. Can you think of love without joy? No. Joy attends love. When we speak of the misery of unrequited love, we are talking of an unfulfilled longing. The actual experience of love is always accompanied by joy.

\* The *anahata chakra*, the subtle dorsal center, the seat of feeling, center of control of *vayu*, the vibratory air element, a manifestation of the creative *Aum* vibration. Man's life and consciousness are perpetuated by the power and activity within the "tree of life," the trunk of which is seven subtle centers located in the spine and brain. From these centers comes the power for all man's physiological and psychological functions and abilities. Owing to their common center of origin, some spiritual and psychological experiences are intertwined with physiological processes. For example, there is a definite connection between the physiological function of the heart and the subtle spiritual center of feeling in the heart. Working together, they express the great emotion of love, both human and divine. (See *chakras* in glossary.)

### The Universal Nature of Love

In the universal sense, love is the divine power of attraction in creation that harmonizes, unites, binds together. It is opposed by the force of repulsion, which is the outgoing cosmic energy that materializes creation from the cosmic consciousness of God. Repulsion keeps all forms in the manifested state through *maya*, the power of delusion that divides, differentiates, and disharmonizes. The attractive force of love counteracts cosmic repulsion to harmonize all creation and ultimately draw it back to God. Those who live in tune with the attractive force of love achieve harmony with nature and their fellow beings, and are attracted to blissful reunion with God.

In this world, love presupposes duality; it springs from a mutual exchange or suggestion of feeling between two or more forms. Even animals express a certain type of love for one another and for their offspring. In many species, when one mate dies, the other usually succumbs soon after. But this love in animals is instinctive; they are not responsible for their love. Human beings, however, have a great deal of conscious self-determination in their exchange of love with others.

In man, love expresses itself in various ways. We find love between man and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, friend and friend, master and servant, guru and disciple—as with Jesus and his disciples and the great masters of India and their *chelas*—and between the devotee and God, soul and Spirit.

Love is a universal emotion; its expressions are distinguished by the nature of the thought through which it moves. Hence, when love passes through the heart of the father, fatherly consciousness translates it into fatherly love. When it passes through the heart of the mother, motherly consciousness translates it into motherly love. When it passes through the heart of the lover, the consciousness of the lover gives that universal love still another quality. It is not the physical instrument, but the consciousness through which the love moves that determines the quality of love expressed. Thus a father may express motherly love, a mother may express friendly love, a lover may express divine love.

Every reflection of love comes from the one Cosmic Love, but when expressed as human love in its various forms, there is always some taint in it. The mother doesn't know why she loves the child; the child knows not why he loves the mother. They do not know whence comes this love they feel for one another. It is

the manifestation in them of God's love; and when it is pure and unselfish, it reflects His divine love. Thus, by investigating human love, we can learn something of divine love, for in human love we have glimpses of that love of God's.

### **Fatherly Love Is Based on Reason**

Fatherly love is wisdom-born, and based on reason. Uppermost in the father's consciousness is the thought, "This is my child to take care of and protect." He does this unselfishly, expressing his love by doing things to please and instruct the child as well as providing for its needs. But fatherly love is partly instinctive, as are all forms of familial love; the father cannot help but love the child.

### **Motherly Love Is Based on Feeling and Is Unconditional**

Motherly love is broader. It is based on feeling, rather than on reason. True mother love is unconditional. We can say that in many ways it is more spiritual and therefore greater than most human expressions of love. God implanted in the heart of the mother a love for the child that is unconditional, regardless of the child's merit or behavior. Even if the child in later life becomes a murderer, the mother's love remains steady, unchanged; whereas the father may be more impatient and less inclined to forgive. The unconditional love of the mother is perhaps the human love closest to the perfection of God's love. The true mother forgives her son even when no one else will. That kind of love exemplifies God's love; He forgives His children no matter what sins they have committed. Now who could have placed this love in the mother's heart, save God? In true maternal love God gives us distinct proof that He loves us unconditionally, no matter how wicked we are, or how many times we have sinned.

The Divine Spirit is not a tyrant. He knows He has put us in a world of delusion. He knows we are in trouble; He knows of our struggles. Man only increases the inner darkness of his spiritual ignorance when he thinks of himself as a sinner. It is better for him to try to correct himself, appealing to the Divine Mother for help, beholding in Her the reflection of God's infinite love and forgiveness.

While I was meditating last night, I sang this love song to the Divine:

O Divine Mother, I am Thy little babe, Thy helpless babe,  
secretly sitting on Thy lap of immortality. I shall steal my way  
to heaven secreted on Thy lap. In the shelter of Thy lap I shall

steal my way to heaven. No karma can touch me, for I am Thy babe, Thy little babe, Thy helpless babe. Secretly on Thy lap I shall steal my way to heaven.

That is the relationship to have with God, for the love of the Mother is the all-forgiving love of the Divine.

### Conjugal Love

At its most idealistic, conjugal love can be one of the greatest expressions of human love. Jesus implied this when he said: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife."\* When man and woman genuinely and purely love one another, there is complete harmony between them in body, mind, and soul. When their love is expressed in its highest form, it results in a perfect unity. But this love, too, has its flaw; it can be tainted by the abuse of sex, which eclipses divine love. Nature has made the sex impulse very strong so that creation might go on; therefore, sex has its place in the marital relationship between man and woman. But if it becomes the supreme factor in that relationship, love flies out the door and disappears completely; in its place come possessiveness, over-familiarity, and the abuse and loss of friendship and understanding. Though sexual attraction is one of the conditions under which love is born, sex in itself is not love. Sex and love are as far apart as the moon and the sun. It is only when the transmuting quality of true love is uppermost in the relationship that sex becomes a means of expressing love. Those who live too much on the sex plane lose their way and fail to find a satisfying marital relationship. It is by self-control, in which sex is not the ruling emotion, but only incidental to love, that husband and wife can know what real love is. In this modern world, unfortunately, love is too often destroyed by overemphasis on sex experience.

Those who practice a natural—not forced—moderation in their sex life develop other enduring qualities in the husband-wife relationship: friendship, companionship, understanding, mutual love. For example, Madame Amelita Galli-Curci† and her husband, Homer Samuels, are the greatest lovers I have met in the West.

\* Matthew 19:5.

† World-renowned soprano (1889–1963) who met Paramahansa Yogananda during his early years in the United States. She and her husband became devoted members of Self-Realization Fellowship. She wrote the foreword to Paramahansaji's book *Whispers from Eternity*. (See page 53).