

## The Book of Life: Excerpts

### Listen with ease

Have you ever sat very silently, not with your attention fixed on anything, not making an effort to concentrate, but with the mind very quiet, really still? Then you hear everything, don't you? You hear the far off noises as well as those that are nearer and those that are very close by, the immediate sounds—which means really that you are listening to everything. Your mind is not confined to one narrow little channel. If you can listen in this way, listen with ease, without strain, you will find an extraordinary change taking place within you, a change which comes without your volition, without your asking; and in that change there is great beauty and depth of insight.

### Putting aside screens?

How do you listen? Do you listen with your projections, through your projection, through your ambitions, desires, fears, anxieties, through hearing only what you want to hear, only what will be satisfactory, what will gratify, what will give comfort, what will for the moment alleviate your suffering? If you listen through the screen of your desires, then you obviously listen to your own voice; you are listening to your own desires. And is there any other form of listening? Is it not important to find out how to listen not only to what is being said but to everything—to the noise in the streets, to the chatter of birds, to the noise of the tramcar, to the restless sea, to the voice of your husband, to your wife, to your friends, to the cry of a baby? Listening has importance only when one is not projecting one's own desires through which one listens. Can one put aside all these screens through which we listen, and really listen?

### Look with intensity

...It seems to me that learning is astonishingly difficult, as is listening also. We never actually listen to anything because our mind is not free; our ears are stuffed up with those things that we already know, so listening becomes extraordinarily difficult. I think—or rather, it is a fact—that if one can listen to something with all of one's being, with vigor, with vitality, then the very act of listening is a liberative factor, but unfortunately you never do listen, as you have never learned about it. After all, you only learn when you give your whole being to something. When you give your whole being to mathematics, you learn; but when you are in a state of contradiction, when you do not want to learn but are forced to learn, then it becomes merely a process of accumulation. To learn is like reading a novel with innumerable characters; it requires your full attention, not contradictory attention. If you want to learn about a leaf—a leaf of the spring or a leaf of the summer—you must really look at it, see the symmetry of it, the texture of it, the quality of the living leaf. There is beauty, there is vigor, there is vitality in a single leaf. So to learn about the leaf, the flower, the cloud, the sunset, or a human being, you must look with all intensity.

### To learn, the mind must be quiet

To discover anything new you must start on your own; you must start on a journey completely denuded, especially of knowledge, because it is very easy, through knowledge and belief, to have experiences; but those experiences are merely the products of self-projection and therefore utterly unreal, false. If you are to discover for yourself what is the new, it is no good carrying the burden of the old, especially knowledge—the knowledge of another, however great. You use knowledge as a means of self-projection, security, and you want to be quite sure that you have the same experiences as the Buddha or the Christ or X. But a man who is protecting himself constantly through knowledge is obviously not a truth-seeker...

For the discovery of truth there is no path...When you want to find something new, when you are experimenting with anything, your mind has to be very quiet, has it not? If your mind is crowded, filled with facts, knowledge, they act as an impediment to the new; the difficulty for most of us is that the mind has become so important, so predominantly significant, that it interferes constantly with anything that may be new, with anything that may exist simultaneously with the known. Thus knowledge and learning are impediments for those who would seek, for those who would try to understand that which is timeless.

### Learning is never accumulative

Learning is one thing and acquiring knowledge is another. Learning is a continuous process, not a process of addition, not a process which you gather and then from there act. Most of us gather knowledge as memory, as idea, store it up as experience, and from there act. That is, we act from knowledge, technological knowledge, knowledge as experience, knowledge as tradition, knowledge that one has derived through one's particular idiosyncratic tendencies; with that background, with that accumulation as knowledge, as experience, as tradition, we act. In that process there is no learning. Learning is never accumulative; it is a constant movement. I do not know if you have ever gone into this question at all: what is learning and what is the acquisition of knowledge?...Learning is never accumulative. You cannot store up learning

and then from that storehouse act. You learn as you are going along. Therefore, there is never a moment of retrogression or deterioration or decline.

### **Learning has no past**

Wisdom is something that has to be discovered by each one, and it is not the result of knowledge. Knowledge and wisdom do not go together. Wisdom comes when there is the maturity of self-knowing. Without knowing oneself, order is not possible, and therefore there is no virtue.

Now, learning about oneself, and accumulating knowledge about oneself, are two different things...A mind that is acquiring knowledge is never learning. What it is doing is this: it is gathering to itself information, experience as knowledge, and from the background of what it has gathered, it experiences, it learns; and therefore it is never really learning, but always knowing, acquiring. Learning is always in the active present; it has no past. The moment you say to yourself, "I have learned," it has already become knowledge, and from the background of that knowledge you can accumulate, translate, but you cannot further learn. It is only a mind that is not acquiring, but always learning—it is only such a mind that can understand this whole entity that we call the "me," the self. I have to know myself, the structure, the nature, the significance of the total entity; but I can't do that burdened with my previous knowledge, with my previous experience, or with a mind that is conditioned, for then I am not learning, I am merely interpreting, translating, looking with an eye that is already clouded by the past.

### **To destroy is to create**

To be free, you have to examine authority, the whole skeleton of authority, tearing to pieces the whole dirty thing. And that requires energy, actual physical energy, and also, it demands psychological energy. But the energy is destroyed, is wasted when one is in conflict. ...So when there is the understanding of the whole process of conflict, there is the ending of conflict, there is abundance of energy. Then you can proceed, tearing down the house that you have built throughout the centuries and that has no meaning at all. You know, to destroy is to create. We must destroy, not the buildings, not the social or economic system—this comes about daily—but the psychological, the unconscious and the conscious defenses, securities that one has built up rationally, individually, deeply, and superficially. We must tear through all that to be utterly defenseless, because you must be defenseless to love and have affection. Then you see and understand ambition, authority; and you begin to see when authority is necessary and at what level—the authority of the policeman and no more. Then there is no authority of learning, no authority of knowledge, no authority of capacity, no authority that function assumes and which becomes status. To understand all authority—of the gurus, of the Masters, and others—requires a very sharp mind, a clear brain, not a muddy brain, not a dull brain.

### **Authority corrupts both leader and follower**

Self-awareness is arduous, and since most of us prefer an easy, illusory way, we bring into being the authority that gives shape and pattern to our life. This authority may be the collective, the State; or it may be the personal, the Master, the savior, the guru. Authority of any kind is blinding, it breeds thoughtlessness; and as most of us find that to be thoughtful is to have pain, we give ourselves over to authority. Authority engenders power, and power always becomes centralized and therefore utterly corrupting; it corrupts not only the wielder of power, but also him who follows it. The authority of knowledge and experience is perverting, whether it be vested in the Master, his representative or the priest. It is your own life, this seemingly endless conflict, that is significant, and not the pattern or the leader. The authority of the Master and the priest takes you away from the central issue, which is the conflict within yourself.

### **Can I rely on my experience?**

Most of us are satisfied with authority because it gives us a continuity, a certainty, a sense of being protected. But a man who would understand the implications of this deep psychological revolution must be free of authority, must he not? He cannot look to any authority, whether of his own creation or imposed upon him by another. And is this possible? Is it possible for me not to rely on the authority of my own experience? Even when I have rejected all the outward expressions of authority—books, teachers, priests, churches, beliefs—I still have the feeling that at least I can rely on my own judgment, on my own experiences, on my own analysis. But can I rely on my experience, on my judgment, on my analysis? My experience is the result of my conditioning, just as yours is the result of your conditioning, is it not? I may have been brought up as a Muslim or a Buddhist or a Hindu, and my experience will depend on my cultural, economic, social, and religious background, just as yours will. And can I rely on that? Can I rely for

guidance, for hope, for the vision which will give me faith in my own judgment, which again is the result of accumulated memories, experiences, the conditioning of the past meeting the present?...Now, when I have put all these questions to myself and I am aware of this problem, I see there can only be one state in which reality, newness, can come into being, which brings about a revolution. That state is when the mind is completely empty of the past, when there is no analyzer, no experience, no judgment, no authority of any kind.

### **Creativeness through self-knowledge**

...There is no method for self-knowledge. Seeking a method invariably implies the desire to attain some result and that is what we all want. We follow authority—if not that of a person, then of a system, of an ideology because we want a result that will be satisfactory, which will give us security. We really do not want to understand ourselves, our impulses and reactions, the whole process of our thinking, the conscious as well as the unconscious; we would rather pursue a system which assures us of a result. But the pursuit of a system is invariably the outcome of our desire for security, for certainty, and the result is obviously not the understanding of oneself. When we follow a method, we must have authorities—the teacher, the guru, the savior, the Master—who will guarantee us what we desire; and surely that is not the way to self-knowledge.

Authority prevents the understanding of oneself, does it not? Under the shelter of an authority, a guide, you may have temporarily a sense of security, a sense of wellbeing, but that is not the understanding of the total process of oneself. Authority in its very nature prevents the full awareness of oneself and therefore ultimately destroys freedom; in freedom alone can there be creativeness. There can be creativeness only through self-knowledge.

### **Quiet mind, simple mind**

When we are aware of ourselves, is not the whole movement of living a way of uncovering the “me,” the ego, the self? The self is a very complex process which can be uncovered only in relationship, in our daily activities, in the way we talk, the way we judge, calculate, the way we condemn others and ourselves. All that reveals the conditioned state of our own thinking, and is it not important to be aware of this whole process? It is only through awareness of what is true from moment to moment that there is discovery of the timeless, the eternal. Without self-knowledge, the eternal cannot be. When we do not know ourselves, the eternal becomes a mere word, a symbol, a speculation, a dogma, a belief, an illusion to which the mind can escape. But if one begins to understand the “me” in all its various activities from day to day, then in that very understanding, without any effort, the nameless, the timeless comes into being. But the timeless is not a reward for self-knowledge. That which is eternal cannot be sought after; the mind cannot acquire it. It comes into being when the mind is quiet, and the mind can be quiet only when it is simple, when it is no longer storing up, condemning, judging, weighing. It is only the simple mind that can understand the real, not the mind that is full of words, knowledge, information. The mind that analyzes, calculates, is not a simple mind.

### **Self-knowing**

Without knowing yourself, do what you will, there cannot possibly be the state of meditation. I mean by “self-knowing,” knowing every thought, every mood, every word, every feeling; knowing the activity of your mind—not knowing the Supreme Self, the big Self; there is no such thing; the Higher Self, the Atman, is still within the field of thought. Thought is the result of your conditioning, thought is the response of your memory—ancestral or immediate. And merely to try to meditate without first establishing deeply, irrevocably, that virtue which comes about through self-knowing, is utterly deceptive and absolutely useless.

Please, it is very important for those who are serious, to understand this. Because if you cannot do that, your meditation and actual living are divorced, are apart—so wide apart that though you may meditate, taking postures indefinitely, for the rest of your life, you will not see beyond your nose; any posture you take, anything that you do, will have no meaning whatsoever.

...It is important to understand what this self-knowing is, just to be aware, without any choice, of the "me" which has its source in a bundle of memories—just to be conscious of it without interpretation, merely to observe the movement of the mind. But that observation is prevented when you are merely accumulating through observation—what to do, what not to do, what to achieve, what not to achieve; if you do that, you put an end to the living process of the movement of the mind as the self. That is, I have to observe and see the fact, the actual, the what is. If I approach it with an idea, with an opinion — such as "I must not," or "I must," which are the responses of memory—then the movement of what is is hindered, is blocked; and therefore, there is no learning.

### **All becoming is disintegration**

The mind has an idea, perhaps pleasurable, and it wants to be like that idea, which is a projection of your desire. You are this, which you do not like, and you want to become that, which you like. The ideal is a self-projection; the opposite is an extension of what is; it is not the opposite at all, but a continuity of what is, perhaps somewhat modified. The projection is self-willed, and conflict is the struggle towards the projection....You are struggling to become something, and that something is part of yourself. The ideal is your own projection. See how the mind has played a trick upon itself. You are struggling after words, pursuing your own projection, your own shadow. You are violent, and you are struggling to become nonviolent, the ideal; but the ideal is a projection of what is, only under a different name.

When you are aware of this trick which you have played upon yourself, then the false as the false is seen. The struggle towards an illusion is the disintegrating factor. All conflict, all becoming is disintegration. When there is an awareness of this trick that the mind has played upon itself, then there is only what is. When the mind is stripped of all becoming, of all ideals, of all comparison and condemnation, when its own structure has collapsed, then the what is has undergone complete transformation. As long as there is the naming of what is, there is relationship between the mind and what is; but when this naming process—which is memory, the very structure of the mind—is not, then what is is not. In this transformation alone is there integration.

### **Can the crude mind become sensitive?**

Listen to the question, to the meaning behind the words. Can the crude mind become sensitive? If I say my mind is crude and I try to become sensitive, the very effort to become sensitive is crudity. Please see this. Don't be intrigued, but watch it. Whereas, if I recognize that I am crude without wanting to change, without trying to become sensitive, if I begin to understand what crudeness is, observe it in my life from day to day—the greedy way I eat, the roughness with which I treat people, the pride, the arrogance, the coarseness of my habits and thoughts—then that very observation transforms what is. Similarly, if I am stupid and I say I must become intelligent, the effort to become intelligent is only a greater form of stupidity; because what is important is to understand stupidity. However much I may try to become intelligent, my stupidity will remain. I may acquire the superficial polish of learning, I may be able to quote books, repeat passages from great authors, but basically I shall still be stupid. But if I see and understand stupidity as it expresses itself in my daily life—how I behave towards my servant, how I regard my neighbor, the poor man, the rich man, the clerk—then that very awareness brings about a breaking up of stupidity.

### **What is the self?**

The search for power, position, authority, ambition and all the rest are the forms of the self in all its different ways. But what is important is to understand the self and I am sure you and I are convinced of it. If I may add here, let us be earnest about this matter; because I feel that if you and I as individuals, not as a group of people belonging to certain classes, certain societies, certain climatic divisions, can understand this and act upon this, then I think there will be real revolution. The moment it becomes universal and better organized, the self takes shelter in that; whereas, if you and I as individuals can love, can carry this out actually in everyday life, then the revolution that is so essential will come into being... You know what I mean by the self? By that, I mean the idea, the memory, the conclusion, the experience, the various forms of namable and unnamable intentions, the conscious endeavor to be or not to be, the accumulated memory of the unconscious, the racial, the group, the individual, the clan, and the whole of it all, whether it is projected outwardly in action, or projected spiritually as virtue; the striving after all this is the self. In it is included the competition, the desire to be. The whole process of that, is the self; and we know actually when we are faced with it, that it is an evil thing. I am using the word evil intentionally, because the self is dividing; the self is self-enclosing; its activities, however noble, are separated and isolated. We know all this. We also know that extraordinary are the moments when the self is not there, in which there is no sense of endeavor, of effort, and which happens when there is love.