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SEX
AND
THE SANCTITY OF
MARRIAGE

MEHER BABA

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Life at Its Best

*If understood, life is simply a jest;
If misunderstood, life becomes a pest.
Once overcome, life is ever at rest.
For pilgrims of the Path, life is a test.
When relinquished through love, life is at its best.*

—MEHER BABA

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INTRODUCTION

*“Love, love — everybody talks of love,
But who knows what love really means?”*

So sang Chandidas in reference to the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man becoming a means to love for God. And, no doubt, so will sing another poet-saint in another 700 years.

But we now in this most unfortunate time of the world are fortunate, for God-Man Himself has set out the matter of what is love and what is not; and how a man and a woman together may free themselves step by step, from entanglements of attraction until they come to the door of the Master who will give them that perfect Oneness they have been seeking.

Guru-prasad, }
Poona. }
10th June 1964. }

Francis Brabazon

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Francis Johnson

Guru-prasad,
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The Problem of Sex

SEX is decidedly one of the most important problems with which the human mind is confronted as long as it does not step outside the domain of duality. It is one of the things

The arising of the problem of sex which are so to say 'given' in the make-up of human nature and has to be dealt with. Like every other thing in human life sex also comes to be considered through the opposites which are the necessary creations of the limited mind. Just as the mind tries to fit life into a scheme of the alternatives of joy or pain, good or bad, solitude or company, attraction or repulsion, in relation to sex, it has a tendency to think of indulgence and repression as alternatives from which there is no escape. It seems as if man must accept the one alternative or the other. And yet he cannot whole-heartedly accept either alternative because when he tries repression he is dissatisfied with his lot and longingly thinks of indulgence and when he tries indulgence he becomes conscious of his bondage to the senses and seeks freedom by going back to mechanical repression. The mind remains dissatisfied in *both* the alternatives and there thus arises one of the most vital and complicated problems of human life.

In order to solve the problem of sex the mind must first understand how both of these alternatives are equally the creation of imagination working under the deluding influence of craving. Craving is implicitly present in the repression of sex as well as its gratification ; both presuppose the vitiation of consciousness by the operation of lust or the desire for sensations. The mind is therefore inevitably restless in either alternative. Just as when there are clouds in the sky there is gloom and

The opposites of indulgence and mechanical repression are equally disappointing

lack of sunshine, whether it rains or not, so when the human mind is shrouded by craving, there is diminution of being and lack of true happiness, whether this craving is gratified or not. The mind which is restless with desire creates an illusory idea of happiness in the gratification of desire, and then knowing that the soul remains dissatisfied even after gratification of desire it seeks freedom through repression. Thus *in search of happiness and freedom the mind gets caught up in the opposites of indulgence and repression which it finds equally disappointing.* And since it does not try to go beyond these opposites its movement is always from one opposite to the other and consequently from one disappointment to another disappointment.

Craving thus falsifies the operation of imagination and presents the mind with the option between the two alternatives of indulgence and repression which prove to be equally deceptive in their promise of happiness. However in spite of alternate and repeated disappointment in indulgence as well as repression, the mind usually does not renounce the root cause of unhappiness which is craving, because, while experiencing disappointment in repression it is easily susceptible to the false promise of gratification and while experiencing disappointment in gratification it is easily susceptible to the false promise of purely mechanical repression.

The false promises of the opposites

This is like moving within a cage. The gateway to the spiritual Path of internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving remains closed for those who have not the good fortune to be awakened by a Master. But true awakening is the entering into the path of wisdom which in the course of time surely

Internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving is made possible through awakening

leads to the Freedom and Abiding Happiness of Life—Eternal. Internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving is different from mechanical repression as it is from indulgence. *Mind turns to mechanical repression of craving because of disappointment; but it turns to internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving because of disillusionment or awakening.*

The need for indulgence or mechanical repression arises only when the nature of craving is not clearly grasped. When the aspirant becomes fully awake to the inevitable bondage and suffering entailed by craving

The opposites of indulgence and repression are relative to craving

ing it voluntarily begins to disburden itself of craving through intelligent understanding. *The question of indulgence or repression arises only when there is craving; the need for both vanishes along with the complete disappearance of craving.* When the mind is free from craving the mind can no more be moved by the false promises of indulgence or mechanical repression.

However it should be borne in the mind that *the life of freedom is nearer to the life of restraint than to the life of indulgence* (though in quality it is essentially different from both).

Restraint is nearer to freedom than indulgence

Hence for the aspirant a life of strict celibacy is preferable to the married life, if restraint comes to him easily without any undue sense of self-repression. But such restraint is for most persons difficult and sometimes impossible and for them the married life is decidedly much more helpful than a life of celibacy. For ordinary persons married life is undoubtedly advisable unless they have a special aptitude for celibacy.

Just as the life of celibacy requires and calls forth the development of many virtues, the married life in its turn also

nourishes the growth of many spiritual qualities of utmost importance. *The value of celibacy lies in the habit of restraint and the sense of detachment and independence which it gives.* But as long as the mind is not altogether free from craving there is no true freedom. In the same way, *the value of marriage lies in the lessons of mutual adjustment and the sense of unity with the other.* But true union or dissolution of duality is possible only through Divine Love which can never dawn so long as there is in the mind the slightest shadow of lust or craving. Only by treading the path of inner and spontaneous renunciation of craving is it possible to attain true freedom and unity.

For the celibate as well for the married person the path of inner life is the same. When the aspirant is drawn by the Truth he longs for nothing else; and as the Truth increasingly comes within his ken, he gradually *disburdens* himself of craving. Whether in celibacy or in marriage he is no longer swayed by the deceptive promises of indulgence or mechanical repression and he practises internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving until he is freed from the deceptive opposites. The path of perfection is open to the aspirant whether in celibacy or in marriage; and *whether he begins from celibacy or from marriage will depend upon the sanskaras and the karmic ties of the aspirant.* He cheerfully accepts the conditions which his past life has determined for him and utilises them towards his spiritual advancement in the light of the ideal which he has come to perceive.

The aspirant however must choose one of the two courses which are open to him; he must either take to the life of celibacy or to the married life; and he must at all cost

The possibilities of celibacy and marriage

The path of perfection is open in celibacy as well as in marriage

The necessity of a clear choice

avoid a cheap compromise between the two. *Promiscuity in sex gratification is bound to land the aspirant in the most pitiful and dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust*; and as such diffused and undirected lust veils the higher values, it perpetuates entanglement and creates insuperable difficulties in the spiritual path of internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving. Sex in marriage is entirely different from sex outside marriage. In marriage, the *sanskaras* of lust are much lighter and are capable of being removed more easily. When sex-companionship is accompanied by a sense of responsibility, love and spiritual idealism, conditions for the sublimation of sex are much more favourable than when it is cheap and promiscuous.

In promiscuity the temptation to explore the possibilities of mere sex contact is almost formidable; and it is only by the maximum restriction of the scope of mere sex that the aspirant can arrive at any real understanding of the higher values which are attainable through the gradual transformation of sex into love. But if the mind once tries to understand sex through the increasing of its scope there is no end to the delusions of which it must be a prey, because there is no end to the enlarging of its scope. In promiscuity, the suggestions of lust are necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind and it is *doomed to react to people with the limitation of this initial perversion* and thus close the door to deeper experiences.

Truth cannot be understood by skipping over the surface of life and multiplying superficial contacts; but it requires the preparedness of mind to centre its capacities upon selected experiences and to free itself from its limiting features. This process of discrimina-

Infinity is attainable through the intelligent handling of marriage

tion between the higher and the lower and the transcendence of the lower in favour of the higher is made possible through *whole-hearted concentration and a real and earnest interest in life*; but such whole-hearted concentration and real interest is necessarily precluded when the mind becomes a slave to the habit of running at a tangent and wanders to many other possible objects for similar experience. In married life, the range of experience in the company of the partner is so wide that the suggestions of lust are not necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind, and there is a real opportunity for the aspirant *to recognise and annul the limiting factors in experience*. By the gradual elimination of lust and a progression through a series of increasingly richer experiences of love and sacrifice, he can finally arrive at infinity.



The Sanctification of Married Life

MOST persons enter into married life as a matter of course, but marriage will turn into a help or a hindrance according to the manner in which it is handled. There is no

Married life should be a spiritual enterprise

doubt that some of the immense spiritual possibilities are accessible through a married life, but all this depends upon having the right attitude. From the spiritual point of view, married life will be a success only if it is thoroughly determined by the vision of Truth. It cannot offer much if it is based upon nothing more than the limited motives of mere sex, or if it is inspired by considerations which usually obtain in the partnership of 'business'. It has to be taken as *a real spiritual enterprise which is intended to discover what life can be at its best*. When the two partners together launch upon the spiritual adventure of exploring the higher possibilities of the spirit they cannot at the outset limit their experiment by any nice calculations concerning the nature and the amount of *individual gain*.

Married life almost always makes upon both the partners many demands of mutual adjustment and understanding and creates many problems which were originally beyond

Married life is essentially different from promiscuous sex-partnership

their expectation; and though this might in a sense be true of life in general it is particularly true of married life. In married life, two souls get linked with each other in many ways with the result that they are called upon to *tackle the whole complex problem of personality rather than any simple problem created by some isolated desire*. This is exactly the point in respect of which married life is utterly different from promiscuous sex-partnership. Promiscuous sex-partnership attempts to separate the pro-

blem of sex from *other* needs of the developing personality and seeks to solve it in isolation from them; and though this kind of solution might seem to be easy it turns out to be very superficial and has further the disadvantage of *side-tracking* the aspirant from attempting the real solution.

The relative values of the various sides of the limited personality can be best appreciated when they get intertwined and appear in varied setting and perspective. It is

difficult to discriminate between them if they appear fitfully in a disconnected series. In married life there is ample room for varied experience with the result that the different tendencies which

are latent in the mind begin to get organised around the crystallised scheme of married life. And this organisation of varied purposes *not only provides an unlimited field for discrimination between the higher and lower values but also creates between them a necessary tension which requires and calls forth effective and intelligent sublimation.*

In one sense, married life may be looked upon as the intensification of most human problems; and as such it becomes *the rallying ground for the forces of bondage as well as for the forces of freedom*, the factors of ignorance as well as the factors of light. As the married life of ordinary persons is

determined by mixed motives and considerations, it inevitably invites an unpromising opposition between the higher and the lower self of man; and such opposition is necessary for the wearing out

of the lower part and the dawning of the true divine self. Married life develops so many points of contact between the two souls that severance of all connection means the unsettling and derangement of practically the whole tenor of

The tension between the varied purposes of married life calls forth sublimation

The conditions of marriage invite & precipitate the changes in inner life

life; and since this difficulty of getting away from each other invites and precipitates inner readjustment, it is really a disguised opportunity for the souls to establish a real and a lasting understanding which can cope with the most complex and delicate situations.

The spiritual value of married life is directly relative to the nature of the preponderating factors which determine its daily happenings. If it is based upon shallow considera-

Married life must be in tune with the Divine Plan

tions it can deteriorate into a partnership in selfishness as against the rest of the world; but if it is inspired by lofty idealism it can be raised to a fellowship which not only requires and calls forth increasingly greater sacrifices for each other but actually becomes *a medium through which the two souls can offer their united love and service to the whole family of humanity.* When married life is thus brought into direct line with the Divine Plan for the evolution of the individual it becomes a pure blessing to the children which are the fruit of that marriage, for they get the advantage of imbibing spiritual atmosphere from the very beginning of their earthly career.

Though the children are thus the benefactors from the married life of the parents, *the married life of the parents is in its turn enriched by the presence of the children.* Children give to the parents an opportunity for expressing and developing a real and spontaneous love in which sacrifice becomes easy and delightful and the part play-

Married life is sanctified and enriched by children

ed by children in the life of the parents is of tremendous importance for the spiritual advancement of parents themselves. It therefore follows that when children make their appearance in married life they ought to be wholeheartedly welcome to the parents.

In view of the claims which children have on married lives the present Birth Control movement deserves careful attention and critical examination. The question must not

The Birth Control movement tries to secure its aim through wrong means

be considered from the point of view of any one special or limited interest but from the point of view of the *ultimate* well-being of the individual and society.

The right opinion in this respect as in all respects, must above everything be based upon spiritual considerations. The attitude which most persons have towards the Birth Control movement is oscillating and confused because it contains a queer admixture of good and bad elements. *while the Birth Control movement is right in its aim of securing the regulation of population, it is disastrously unfortunate in the choice of its means.* There can be no doubt that the regulation of children is often desirable for personal and social reasons. Uncontrolled breeding intensifies the struggle for existence and may bring about a social order where ruthless competition becomes inevitable. Apart from creating for parents a responsibility which they cannot adequately discharge, it becomes an indirect and contributory cause of crimes, war and poverty. But though the humane and rational considerations demand and justify all serious attempts to regulate the birth of children the use of physical means for securing this purpose remains fundamentally indefensible and unjustifiable.

The purely physical means which are generally advocated by the supporters of the Birth Control movement are most objectionable from the spiritual point of view. Although the physical means of Birth Control are advocated on humanitarian grounds they are almost always used by the generality of the

The use of physical means takes away the ordinary incentive to mental control

people for serving their own selfish ends and for avoiding the responsibility of bearing and bringing up children. And since the physical consequences of yielding to lust can be so successfully avoided through the use of these means those who have not begun to be awake to the higher values have no incentive to be moderate in the gratification of passion. They thus become victims to excessive indulgence and bring about their own physical, moral and spiritual ruin, by neglecting mental control and becoming a slave to the animal passion.

The easy use of the physical means obscures the spiritual side of the question and is far from being contributory to the awakening of man to his real dignity and freedom as a spiritual being. Thoughtless and

Mental control is indispensable for rising from passion to peace

uncontrolled indulgence must inevitably lead to reaction and spiritual bondage. For spiritual aspirants in particular and

also for all human beings (because they are all potentially spiritual aspirants) it is extremely inadvisable to rely upon physical means for the regulation of children. *For the regulation of children they must rely upon nothing but mental control.* Mental control secures the humanitarian purposes which inspire the Birth Control movement and keeps clear of the spiritual disasters entailed by the use of physical means; and it is not only useful for regulating the number of children but is also indispensable for restoring to man his divine dignity and spiritual well-being. *Only through the wise exercise of mental control is it possible for man to rise from passion to peace, from bondage to freedom and from animality to purity.* In the minds of thoughtful persons the much ignored spiritual side of this question must assume the importance which it deserves.

Since woman has to undertake the troubles and the

responsibility of bearing and rearing children she may seem to be affected by any possible failure in mental control more seriously than man; but in fact it does not mean any real unfairness to woman. It is true that woman has to undertake the troubles and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children, but she has also the compensating joy of feeding and fondling them. Thus motherhood is much greater than the joy of fatherhood. Further the man also must face and shoulder the economic and educational responsibility towards the children. In a properly adjusted marriage there need not be any injustice in the distribution of parental responsibility which should be shared by man as well as woman. If the father as well as the mother are truly conscious of their mutual responsibility *inconsiderateness will give place to active and co-operative endeavour to attain full mental control*; and in the event of there being any failure in mental control they would cheerfully and willingly discharge the joint responsibility of parenthood.

If a person is not prepared to undertake the responsibility of children there is only one course which is left for him. He must remain a celibate and practise strict mental control. For, though such mental control is extremely difficult to attain it is not impossible. From the purely spiritual point of view strict celibacy is best; but since it is so difficult few can practise it. And for those who cannot practise it the next best course is to marry rather than fall a prey to promiscuity. Within married life one can learn to control animal passion. But it is bound to be a gradual process and *in cases of failure in practising control parents must allow nature to take its own course rather than interfere with it through artificial means*. They

**In married life
children must be
welcome**

**Joint responsi-
bility of parenthood**

must cheerfully welcome the consequences and be prepared to shoulder the responsibility for the upbringing of children.

From the spiritual point of view, Birth Control must essentially be effected through mental control and nothing else. And physical means are under no circumstances advisable *even when a person seeks to use them merely as a provisional and a second aid without intending*

Mental power is undermined by reliance on physical means

to ignore the ideal of developing mental control. While using the physical means he can never arrive at real mental control though he might want it in right earnest; on the contrary he becomes addicted to the use of physical means and even begins to justify them. To explain it still more clearly, what happens in the use of physical means is that while one thinks that he is using them merely as a preliminary step before mental control is fully developed, he actually gets addicted to their use and becomes a slave to that habit. And though he may for some time remain under the delusion that he is trying to develop mental control (side by side with the use of physical means) he is actually losing it gradually. In short, *mental power is necessarily undermined by reliance on the physical means.* Thus the use of physical means is detrimental to the development of self-control and is positively disastrous for spiritual advancement; it is therefore under no condition advisable even for the best of motives.

In the beginning of married life the partners are drawn to each other by lust as well as love.

Spiritual advancement through married life

But they can with conscious and deliberate co-operation gradually lessen the element of lust and increase the element of love. Through this process of sublimation lust ultimately gives place to deep love. By the mutual sharing of

joys and sorrows the partners march on from one spiritual triumph to another spiritual triumph, from deep love to ever deeper love, till the *possessive and jealous love of the initial period is entirely replaced by a self-giving and expansive love.* In fact, through the intelligent handling of marriage a person may traverse so much of the Spiritual Path that it needs only a touch by the Master to raise him into the sanctuary of eternal life.



AVATAR MEHER BABA CENTRE, POONA

Weekly get-together of Meher Baba lovers is held at 441/2-Somwar Peth, every Monday between 7 and 8-30 p. m.

The Centre is open to all seekers of Truth and Lovers of God.

“We are all ONE in God’s Love”.

Books and literature on and by Meher Baba in *English, Marathi, Hindi, Gujarathi, Persian, Urdu, Sindhi, Bengali, Telugu* and *Malyalam* are for sale at the Centre.

A library section is maintained which gives books and periodicals to its members, who regularly attend the Centre’s said Monday meetings.

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