

## THE GAME OF LIFE



The 'game of life.' Have you ever thought of life as a game? Life seems so real. But in many spiritual writings we are told that we live in an illusion of our own creation. In the Hindu religion they call it Maya. Unfortunately, the great majority of humankind do not recognise the essential truth of this concept and it is perhaps because everything in life appears so very real and solid.

The new spiritual teachings that are readily available in the world tell us that every individual is responsible for whatever is experienced in life. For many, however, this is difficult to accept, and a good portion of humanity don't believe it—or simply don't *want* to believe it. Perhaps the reason is that many are unwilling to take full responsibility for their actions and the consequences that come with them, and so prefer to remain ignorant of deeper truths.

There is a popular saying: *'If ignorance is bliss, why aren't more people happy?'* There are many who seem to *bury their heads in the sand*, like the ostrich, refusing to look for a deeper meaning and purpose in life and so are unaware of their vulnerability in the face of life's challenges. The unwillingness to open the mind and go beyond fixed belief patterns exposes us to the whims of chance and circumstance, leaving us open, not only to confusion and bewilderment related to the actions of others, but also to our own unguarded thoughts. Rather than look for reasonable ways of coping with life's problems, we jump blindly onto the treadmill of life, expending much time and energy and never really getting anywhere. To reach spiritual maturity, we are called to attend more carefully to **our inner garden**—the inner state of the mind and heart.

A conscientious horticulturist is one who carefully tends to the nurturing of a garden. Mindful gardeners have very good common sense. To equip themselves for the task of creating a beautiful and healthy garden, they first gain the knowledge and skills that are required, acquainting themselves with the best seeds for the soil in order to grow healthy flowers and fruit. A good gardener begins by fertilising the soil to supply the plants with the nourishment they need, and only then will he plant the best seeds.

We tend to forget—or simply don't understand—that our mind is like a garden and the thoughts we plant in the soil of our mind will either grow into beautiful flowers or ugly weeds—if we neglect to discriminate between good and bad seeds. So often, we are unconscious of discordant thoughts playing in the mind, unaware of what is really going on under the surface, and then we wonder why our lives are not as we would wish. We need to understand that to uproot the weeds, we have to attend carefully to our *inner garden*. The key is to recognise those seed thoughts that will grow into weeds for they lead only to unhappiness and discontent.

Until we learn to use the *delete button* in our minds when wallowing in negative thoughts and feelings, and replace them with positive and loving thoughts that build strong and happy relations—nothing will change. Negative thinking becomes a habitual pattern and constant watchfulness is needed to weed it out. The old maxim: 'Energy follows thought' is a great teaching to live by. It means simply that whatever we think and believe, we attract it into our lives.

Fortunately for us, life has a remarkable way of teaching us wisdom, despite our resistance, as it frequently mirrors our states of mind. Through interactions with others we can observe our reactions to them and their reactions to us. In this way we become aware of what we habitually think and believe, thus providing the opportunity to discriminate and cultivate our inner garden. We witness—whether we like it or not—our inadequacies, our levels of intolerance and fears, and soon we realise that the things we dislike or hate are the very things we attract and don't want. They show us what we need to address within ourselves.

Life is what we make it. It is a virtual reality game in which all moves are possible. The challenge is to find our way through the maze of life and to overcome obstacles, one by one, until we reach the goal. 'And what is the goal?' we might ask. It is to discover how to live life selflessly through the development of our Soul, which embodies Love and Wisdom. Life challenges are necessary as they force us to grow. Early in our lives we make many mistakes and continue to do so, but as we progress through life, we become aware of the results of our actions and gradually learn to master the situations that cause us pain and suffering. Because we have free will we can choose to go on blindly making the same mistakes, or we can learn from them and choose another path. There should be no fear of retribution for the mistakes we make in life—as long as we learn from them.

One of the greatest challenges that many are facing in the world today is fierce confrontation by those who are mentally, emotionally or physically abusive in some way. To sustain the love of the soul and to demonstrate forgiveness in such situations is a great achievement indeed, and there are many souls today who are doing just that. Their demonstration of goodwill and brotherhood is a great lesson for us all. The life challenge that we all face lies in the ability to negotiate the 'game of life' and to make the decisions that will lead us along the path towards spiritual achievement and mastery of the game. The choice to do so is ours. When we are ready to let go of old belief patterns, we will find the help we need. It may come in the form of enlightening books, or from a friend who has travelled a little further ahead on the Path. And when we are ready to make the necessary effort to transcend the ordinary way of living, there are great teachers waiting to show us the way.

As we move into the new Aquarian age, we can expect even more help than is already available. Great Masters of life's challenges have expressed an intention to appear physically to show us the way to a more loving, peaceful world through right human relations and harmony between nations, religions, and other kingdoms of nature. Even now, before they make their appearance, They are lovingly supporting all our endeavours by offering Their guidance in different ways. If we play the game of life by meeting its challenges with courage and fearlessness, we can achieve whatever is good and necessary for our own welfare and for the welfare of those we love.

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