

**Messing with Perfection:
The Mishandling of Meher Baba's *Discourses***

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Abstract

Meher Baba is the only Avatar to whom we can attribute words with certainty. The words Baba gave us are unique and wondrous gifts, prepared to unfold in ways we can neither predict nor should attempt to control. The 6th edition of the *Discourses* was published shortly before Baba dropped His body, and we have no reason to assume He made mistakes in that major address to humanity. The 7th edition, published in 1987, massively changed the 6th edition. Editing the Avatar's words without His authorization turns God's words into gossip. Apart from the monumental blunder of confusing the *Discourses* with a technical reference that needs tweaking to remain current, the editing itself applies irrelevant conventions, fixes nonproblems with inelegant solutions, deflavorizes delightful language, eviscerates the unique tone and presentation of the 6th edition, and subverts meaning. The 7th edition should take its place in history as an unfortunate oddity, and future printings of the *Discourses* should restore the 6th edition in all of its magnificent Idiosyncratic glory.

Introduction

Over the years I have heard people comment on the differences between the 1967 three-volume 6th edition of Meher Baba's *Discourses* and the 1987 one-volume 7th edition published by Sheriar Press. The comments have sounded a recurrent theme about a loss of music in the newer edition. Although the 7th edition has a splendid photograph of Baba on the cover, it has always felt colder to me than its predecessor, more like a rule book to consult and less like a friend to turn to. And it does not fit in pockets, so is carried around less than the small paperback gems it replaced; but if the size of the pages were the only problem with the 7th edition, this analysis would not exist.

What exactly changed in the 7th edition to cause people, myself included, to react in a vaguely negative way? I began this investigation with no knowledge of the editorial changes. I had never read the foreword to the 7th edition, which explains the reasons for the changes. But I did have a prejudice that it is wrong to change any of the words Meher Baba wrote or approved with his name as author. A close look at the editing changes fortified that prejudice into a profoundly held conviction.

If the *Discourses* needed to be edited in 1987 to make them more "current and appropriate," then why not in 2007? 2017? 2027? Where does it end? The editing establishes a dangerous precedent. And if the *Discourses*, why not *Meher Baba's Call*? It too suffers from some of the same "mistakes" that required editorial correction in the *Discourses*. Maybe you have played the game called telephone, in which somebody whispers a sentence to one person who in turn whispers the sentence to another person, and so on. Usually after only a few whispered repetitions the original sentence has transmuted into something quite different and surprising. Similarly, editing changes have a tendency to compound. A trivial modification in tone, language or punctuation, repeated over time, can lead to a calamitous change in meaning. The 7th edition sets in motion such distortions.

The foreword to the 7th edition flavors the revisions as adjustments to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, italics, and the like — pedantic concerns of editorial savants wielding red pencils. What harm is there in that? That question has three basic answers.

1. The simple fact of the editing betrays a deep misunderstanding of the nature of the *Discourses*. It presupposes that without periodic maintenance the book will stop working at optimum efficiency. It confuses the *Discourses* with the *Chicago Manual of Style* or any other

reference that must be tweaked to stay current. If the *Discourses* are for the future, as Baba explained, why second-guess Baba's judgment and assume He prepared them incorrectly?

2. Punctuation, capitalization, spelling, italics, and so on are not merely mechanical. These aspects of the printed word are not pedantic details of little or no concern to the reader. They cannot be altered without affecting the realms of tone and meaning. For example, by doing away with virtually all the italics the 7th edition is sadly impoverished.

3. Arbitrary changes in language are edits that fall outside the scope of the explicitly given justifications in the foreword to the 7th edition. They are numerous in both the text and the bold-face insets. Some are stylistic tinkering (which often destroy the charm of the original phrase or inflict some other damage), others modify the original meaning. These changes establish a terrible precedent by making the *Discourses* subservient to an editor's whim, tastes, and opinions. Do we allow museum patrons to dab paint on a Picasso? Why should Baba's words be afforded less respect?

Method

Two sections are analyzed: The Problem of Sex and The Sanctification of Marriage. In the United States, these two areas of life have changed perhaps more than any others since the 6th edition was published. Because these sections are "topical," they seemed likely to invite editorial attention. Also, both of these sections are unique in the *Discourses*. The Problem of Sex is dedicated to a problem. Baba did not dedicate a section to the problem of ethics, or family relations, or dealing with aggressive people. He singled out sex. The Sanctification of Marriage is unique because it is the only section that elaborates in depth about a ubiquitous human institution that is also the subject of human law.

This analysis includes comparisons of 10 paragraphs (Additions, Deletions, & Deflavorizings). Every one contains edits of style and several suffer from arbitrary rewording.

Scope of Editorial Changes

Table 1 lists the types of editorial changes in the 7th edition. They are more numerous than those described in the foreword to the 7th edition, which asserts that the changes do not affect meaning. In fact many of the revisions, even those intended to be stylistic, significantly alter meaning. Several of the items are discussed in detail below.

Table 1. Scope of Editorial Changes in the 7th Edition *Discourses*

Editorial Change	Affects:	
	Style	Meaning
1. Removing italics.	•	•
2. Changing insets.	•	•
3. Changing capitalization.	•	
4. Changing “inappropriate” words.	•	•
5. Changing “archaic” words or words not in current American usage.	•	•
6. Changing sentences to achieve “gender sensitivity.”	•	•
7. Changing punctuation, especially commas, semicolons, and insertion of em dashes.	•	•
8. Changing paragraph breaks.	•	
9. Americanizing of spelling from original British.	•	
10. Changing <i>which</i> to <i>that</i> .	•	
11. Arbitrary rewordings.	•	•

Italics

The italics, virtually eliminated in the 7th edition, animate the 6th edition with charm and warmth. They are thoughtful and accomplish what italics are meant to do: highlight and stress important information. The italics peppering the 6th edition make those books *personal*—losing them is an exorbitant price to pay for “bringing the text into compliance.” Occasional emphasis and first-occurrence of non-English words are legitimate reasons for italicizing but they should not have been applied to the *Discourses*. If ever a word asked for italics it is *sanskaras*. Every deletion of italics makes the *Discourses* look and feel like any other book. What is gained?

Gender “Sensitivity”

This area of concern primarily affects pronouns, something that might seem of interest only to academics or editors. The foreword to the 7th edition reminds us of the current trend in English usage away from masculine forms (he, him, his, man, mankind) to denote both sexes, and assures us the changes are minimal and do not affect meaning. However, in the two sections analyzed, the gender-related changes are neither minimal nor innocuous. They are numerous and they subtly reroute meaning.

The use of ‘he’ in the 6th-edition *Discourses* to refer to a spiritual aspirant was a natural use of language. Denoting humanity with masculine forms has been standard practice in the English language for centuries, and it was standard practice when the 6th edition was published. It in no way excludes or diminishes women or womanhood. And it makes the description of spiritual experience individual rather than group oriented. In the last few decades, the standard editorial fix for the “gender problem” is to change masculine words like he and his to the gender-neutral plurals they and their. The 7th edition follows this course to designate a single person, but it is simply not accurate to refer to one person as a they. Applied to the *Discourses* these edits are inelegant solutions to a nonproblem. As a result, the 7th edition repeatedly characterizes the spiritual journey as a plural experience, as an experience of they and them. The illusory journey back to God is an individual journey made one soul at a time. It is never made by them or they. Every change of the aspirant to aspirants and he to they erodes a personal sense, distances the reader, and makes the book colder.

The gender corrections imply that Baba “blew the sensitivity thing” and became obsolete eighteen years after He discarded His body. There is no doubt that women have been oppressed. One of the great advancements of this Avataric age is the drastic reduction of bigotry against women. Well-meaning people often address oppression by denying or trying to remove the differences between groups, so it is understandable that the editors of the 7th edition would address a long-standing inequality by “equalizing” pronouns. However, changing the Avatar’s words, even for a high purpose, imposes our conceptions on how the Avatar should do His work and attempts to co-opt the Avatar into our rivalries and politics. Aside from this weighty objection, we cannot predict the impact repeated politically motivated “corrections” will have on the *Discourses* over the long term.

Insets

The bold-face insets that appear liberally throughout the text are excellent guides to the book’s content. You can open the *Discourses* anywhere and immediately know what is being discussed, and in many cases the gist of the discussion as well. The insets use very little ink and visually break up the pages nicely. In the 7th edition, the insets have been almost completely stripped of the articles, prepositions, and verbs that appeared in the 6th edition. These changes attempt the good editorial practice of making language concise, but they take tolls on usefulness, elegance, and meaning. Concision without precision.

The insets are miniature abstracts. Abstracts come in two basic flavors: substantive and descriptive. The former provides specific information in a piece of writing, the latter describes the kind of information in a piece of writing. Data vs metadata. For example, a substantive abstract might read, “The measured secondary inputs ranged from 0.5 to 7.7.” A descriptive

abstract of the same experiment might read, “The experiment included measurements of secondary inputs.” It is common for an abstract to contain both sorts of information. The insets in the 6th edition tend to fall into the substantive (data) category, and the edited insets in the 7th edition tend to fall into the descriptive (metadata) category. Nothing is gained by diminishing the information in the insets.

6th Edition	7th Edition	Discussion of Changes
Arising of problem of sex	Element of sex	The rewrite is useless. It conveys no information about the associated text.
Opposites of indulgence and mechanical repression equally disappointing	Opposites of indulgence and repression	The rewrite deletes <i>mechanical</i> and <i>equally disappointing</i> , reducing information and providing metadata rather than data.
False promises of the opposites	False promises of opposites	The rewrite eliminates <i>the</i> . The original trips better off the tongue.
Renunciation of craving made possible through awakening	Renunciation of craving through awakening	The deletion of <i>made possible</i> removes descriptive information.
Indulgence and repression relative to craving	Understanding craving	The rewrite replaces <i>Indulgence and repression relative to</i> with <i>understanding</i> , reducing information and providing metadata rather than data.
Restraint nearer to freedom than indulgence	Restraint nearer to freedom than indulgence	No change.
Possibilities of celibacy and marriage	Possibilities of celibacy or marriage	The change from <i>and</i> to <i>or</i> implies a shift in meaning, which is arguably more accurate than the original, as the accompanying text discusses an either-or choice for the aspirant between marriage and celibacy. On the other hand, viewed from a broader perspective, the exclusionary implication of the rewrite is less accurate. Indeed, the possibility and benefits of both are stressed later in this section and also in the following section, The Sanctification of Marriage. The original <i>and</i> better expresses the simultaneous possibilities than does the more limiting <i>or</i> . The rewrite is more consistent with contemporary emphasis on sex.
Path of perfection open in celibacy and in marriage	Path of perfection open through celibacy or marriage	The change from <i>in</i> to <i>through</i> follows a standard editorial practice of eliminating repetitive words. However, the telegraphic nature of the rewrite subtly reduces the emphasis on the possibility of perfection in marriage.
Necessity of clear choice	Necessity of clear choice	No change.
Dangers of promiscuity	Dangers of promiscuity	No change.
Infinity attainable through intelligent handling of marriage	Infinity attainable through marriage	The rewrite eliminates useful information.

Table 4. Comparison of Insets in The Sanctification of Married Life		
6th Edition	7th Edition	Discussion of Changes
Married life, a spiritual enterprise	Married life a spiritual enterprise	The comma in the 6th edition is a rare use of punctuation in an inset. The implied pause creates a thoughtful feeling lost in the telegraphic rewrite. Perhaps this change is an attempt at editorial consistency.
Married life essentially different from promiscuous sex partnership	Married life utterly different from promiscuity	The associated text includes the phrase <i>utterly different</i> . However, the rewrite echoes an editing trend in which the word sex is eliminated or changed to sexuality. See A Close Look at Two Sections.
Tension between the varied purposes of married life calls forth sublimation	Married life calls forth sublimation	The rewrite deletes useful information.
Conditions of marriage precipitate changes in inner life	Conditions of marriage precipitate changes in inner life	No change.
Married life must be in tune with Divine Plan	Married life must be in line with divine plan	The associated text includes the phrase <i>in line</i> . However, <i>in tune</i> is delightful and in no way contradicts the text. Editorially, the capitalization of Divine Plan is consistent with similar capitalizations throughout the 6th edition.
Married life sanctified and enriched by children	Married life enriched by children	The associated text includes the word <i>enriched</i> but not <i>sanctified</i> . However, the text richly serves the use of the word <i>sanctification</i> in the title of this section. The use of <i>sanctification</i> enriches this inset. Anyone reading this paragraph who has children will appreciate the original wording.
Birth control movement's wrong means	Birth control	The rewrite changes data into weak metadata and completely erases the meaning. Perhaps the words are eliminated to accommodate contemporary sensibilities and prevent offending those who would disagree. This change is political.
Physical means remove incentive to mental control	Physical means remove incentive for mental control	The change from <i>to</i> to <i>for</i> is a minuscule adjustment in usage.
Mental control indispensable for rising from passion to peace	Mental control indispensable for rising from passion to peace	No change, thankfully, to this beautiful phrase.
Joint responsibility of parenthood	Joint responsibility of parenthood	No change.
Children must be welcome	Children must be welcome	No change.
Mental power undermined by reliance on physical means	Physical means become addictive	The rewrite is not inaccurate, but the original better expresses the associated text, which discusses the impact of physical means on mental power. Perhaps the rewrite is intended to change the implied passive tense of the original (pinpointing and expunging passive tense is something of a holy grail with editors), perhaps to soften the message against physical means. In any case, the rewrite feels political.
Spiritual advancement through married life	Spiritual advancement through married life	No change.

That-Which

The proper use of that and which has been something of an obsession in American editing circles for several decades. According to current references such as *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the word which should be reserved for nonrestrictive elements in a sentence, also known as appositives. An appositive is a modifying word, clause, or phrase that provides additional, but not essential, information about the part of the sentence that precedes it. The word that should be reserved for restrictive constructions, wherein the modifying words, clause or phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence. A rule of thumb, and an easy way to distinguish between the two constructions, is the use of a comma to set off a which phrase.

Nonrestrictive Example	Restrictive Example
The use of commas, which is important to editors, is irrelevant to most people.	The topics that are important to editors are irrelevant to most people.

When the 6th edition was published in 1967, the that-which rule was not applied with the zealotry it is today. In fact, for most of the twentieth century it appears not to have been a rule at all, or at least not one anybody cared about. Virtually every American and British writer of consequence in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century—including the great stickler George Orwell—routinely used which in restrictive constructions. The 6th edition *Discourses* follows that convention, and to correct this nonproblem, the 7th edition is riddled with “which-to-that” swaps.

The literal impact on meaning ranges from negligible to none in most instances, but why alter the *Discourses* to conform to conventions that did not apply, or even exist, when the work was written? Does anybody seriously propose to rewrite the Declaration of Independence to correct outdated usage? Do the Avatar’s words deserve less respect than those in a political document? Furthermore, the cumulative substitutions of that for which affect the *Discourses* markedly. First, they expunge a stylistic approach that places the *Discourses* in history. Second, they retard and harden the writing. In the 7th edition, commas appear before many instances of which in order to recast the sentence into a contemporary nonrestrictive construction. And even more corrosive to the writing are the replacements of which with that. They force the reader to again and again encounter a word ending with a percussive instead of a word which ends in a whisper. Some of the loss of music in the 7th edition can be traced to these changes.

More ominously, as shown in the second example below, the insertion of a comma can have disastrous effects on meaning.

Example of a Change in Tone	
6th Edition	7th Edition
The consciousness of the gross world which it has in the beginning is of the most partial and rudimentary type. (Vol. 2, page 140)	The consciousness of the gross world that it has in the beginning is of the most partial and rudimentary type. (page 224)

Example of a Change in Meaning	
6th Edition	7th Edition
. . . hence spiritual progress cannot be said to be <i>automatic</i> in the sense that it will come about without the active effort of the person concerned. (Vol. 3, page 94)	Hence spiritual progress cannot be said to be automatic, in the sense that it will come about without the active effort of the person concerned. (page 337)

In the above example, the insertion of a comma after automatic is an attempt to cast the second part of the sentence into an appositive construction. It also turns the meaning around. In the original, the “in the sense that...” phrase clearly modifies the word automatic. The comma implies that this phrase modifies the entire first clause—making the sentence seem to be either clumsy or an obvious mistake. With the comma, one expects to read “in the sense that it will NOT come about...”

Note that in this example, in addition to recasting the original sentence into two parts, the 7th edition edit also removes italics. The italicized *automatic* clarifies the connection between the two parts of the sentence; removal of italics contributes to the confusion of the rewrite. The “automatic” insertion of a comma and removal of italics are lessons in why good editing entails more than the application of rules.

Americanizing

The *Discourses* evolved through several different forms and editions before the 7th edition, all of which used British spelling. This was natural, considering Baba lived in India and the *Discourses* were developed under His guidance by Indians speaking British English. The Americanizing of spelling in the 7th edition serves no purpose and wipes out a very important historical aspect of the *Discourses*.

Removing Baba's First Person

Of all the editorial changes made in the 7th edition, maybe the most indefensible and rebarbative occurs in the opening sentence of "The Dispersion and Exhaustion of Sanskaras." In that sentence, Baba used the first person "I." The 7th edition removes that self-reference and depersonalizes the sentence. Removing Baba's reference to Himself in a piece of his own writing stands out shamelessly amid all of the feckless stylistic meddlings the *Discourses* endured.

The other changes (which are typical of the changes throughout) complicate the sentence structure and wreck the lilt of the original.

Typeface

The 6th edition is set in Baskerville, the 7th in Century Oldstyle. Baskerville is both highly readable for long texts, and elegant, with long serifs and stroke weights gracefully varying from thick to thin. The italics are warm and readable. Century Oldstyle has relatively large x-height and short ascenders and descenders. It is a much colder and grammar-schoolish font than the engaging Baskerville of the 6th edition. Century Oldstyle and related fonts such as New Century Schoolbook, Century Expanded, and Clarendon are better suited for shorter texts, and are commonly used in "See Jane run" books and magazines.

Legato to S t a c c a t o

The side-by-side comparisons in "A Close Look at Two Sections" below give a visual picture of the changes from the 6th to 7th editions. Table 5 quantifies those pictures and helps answer the question, "Where did the music go?" In all, the flow of language was interrupted or stopped 17 times in "The Problem of Sex" and 21 times in "The Sanctification of Marriage." These interruptions of cadence, along with the wholesale deletion of italics, account for most of the loss of music. The legato of the 6th edition became the staccato of the 7th.

Table 5. Insertion of Commas, Semicolons, Em Dashes, Periods, and Paragraph Breaks

	,	;	—	.	¶
The Problem of Sex	7	1	4	2	3
The Sanctification of Marriage	9	4	2	2	4

A Close Look at Two Sections

Close looks at “The Problem of Sex” and “The Sanctification of Marriage” reveal many changes covering all of the categories listed in Table 1. I will not belabor all of them here; they are easily visible in the side-by-side versions below. However, two distinct subversions of meaning emerge: the shifting of the problem of sex into the function of sexuality, and a redefinition of marriage.

The Problem of Sex Once fundamentally viewed as a moral, religious, or spiritual challenge, in America sex has come to be regarded more as a basic area of wellness similar to nutrition and exercise and sleep. With the spiritual component removed, sex becomes a set of physiological functions and psychological identity issues. American language has changed in recent decades to express this shift. Today, terms tend to express moral neutrality. Examples of language change include prostitute → sex worker, venereal disease → sexually transmitted disease, unwed mother → single parent, sex craving → gender orientation, womb → uterus, conception → fertilization. These all express a shift in emphasis from spiritual problem to health issues, from individual struggle to normalization.

In this section, rewordings of this nature, and of particular interest, include sex-companionship → sexual relationship, sex gratification → sexual gratification, sex contact → sexual contact, sex relations → sexual relations. The noun-modifiers sex become the adjective sexual; companionship becomes relationship. These rewrites shift the focus of the discussion from spiritual problem to physiological and psychological functions. This clinicalization of language exerts powerful leverage in changing societal and individual perspectives. Such changes to the *Discourses* are especially dangerous. The editorial step from sex-companionship → sexual relationship may seem small, but it is an equally small editorial step from sexual relationship to sexual need, an enormous change from the original meaning.

The Sanctification of Marriage In this section, the rewordings of man → the man and woman → the woman in referring to marriage are of particular concern. This rewording occurs

five times. The original wording implies a universal condition of marriage between man and woman. By specifying the man and the woman, the rewrites remove this universality and subtly reflect an expanded contemporary view of the possibilities of marriage. The editorial step from man → the man may seem small, but it is an equally small editorial step from the man and the woman to the persons, an enormous change from the original meaning. These changes appear to have been made to reflect contemporary trends, and they move the meaning away from Meher Baba's words.

Time-Delayed Destruction

An arbitrary edit in “The Problem of Sex” is the insertion of the word ‘the’. This exemplifies the destructive power that can be packed into a negligible change and the unpredictable nature of changes. Baba does not use the term spirit thoughtlessly. There is a vast difference between spirit and the spirit. In *In God's Hand* (published by Beloved Archives, Inc. 13 years after the 7th edition), Baba writes about the concept of spirit in unique, specific, illuminating, and new ways. That astonishing manuscript was discovered years after the publication of the 7th edition *Discourses*. The insertion of ‘the’ in the 7th edition limits and objectifies this term and transforms the meaning of the sentence. It confuses and minimizes the correlation to Baba's explanations that were unavailable at the time of editing. This edit is time-delayed destruction.

Editing as Time-Delayed Destruction

6th Edition	7th Edition
When the two partners launch together upon the spiritual adventure of exploring the higher possibilities of spirit they cannot at the outset limit their experiment by any nice calculations concerning the nature and amount of <i>individual gain</i> .	When the two partners launch together 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 amount of individual gain .

Recommendation for Future Editions

Until Meher Baba's advent, humanity had always read the Avatar's words in the form of scripture, compilations of opinions edited ad nauseam by "interpreters in the past" (Baba's term). Disagreements over scripture have been among the most divisive forces in human history. One might say that poor editing has been a major contributor to war, injustice, and misery ever since the invention of written language. For the first time, humanity no longer has cause to disagree over what the Avatar wrote. We have words with an Avataric imprimatur. Are those words less authoritative than somebody's idea of "appropriate?" Should any publication the Avatar personally supervised and approved with His name as author be altered for the sake of somebody's notion of "current?" Changing any of the Avatar's words without His authorization is beyond-beyond unnecessary, and beyond-beyond any justification.

The *Discourses* should be reprinted with every word, italics, and punctuation intact from the 6th edition. The best and only way to protect the Avatar's words is to leave them alone.

Side-by-Side Comparisons

The editorial changes made in the 7th-edition are highlighted. Bracketed words within highlights denote multiple changes—for example, added or changed words within a string that has been de-italicized.

The Problem of Sex (6th edition)

The Problem of Sex (7th edition)

SEX is decidedly one of the most important problems with which the human mind is confronted in the domain of duality. It is one of the "givens" in the make-up of human nature with which one has to deal.

Arising of problem of sex Like everything else in human life, sex 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 alternatives such as joy or pain, good or bad, solitude or company, attraction or repulsion, so in relation to sex it tends 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. Yet he cannot wholeheartedly accept either, for when he tries repression he is dissatisfied with his lot and longingly thinks of indulgence. 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 with both 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 that both 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 in its gratification. Both result in the

Opposites of indulgence and mechanical repression equally disappointing gratification of consciousness through 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 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 when 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, seeks freedom through repression. Thus *searching for happiness and freedom, the mind gets caught up in the opposites of indulgence and repression which it finds equally disappointing*. 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.

Thus craving falsifies the operation of imagination and presents the mind with the option between the alternatives of indulgence and repression which prove to be equally deceptive in their promise of

False promises of the opposites happiness. However, in spite of alternate and repeated disappointment in indulgence as well as in repression, the mind usually does not renounce the root cause of unhappiness which is

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Element of sex everything else in human life, sex comes to be judged through the opposites, which are the necessary creations of the limited mind. Just as the mind tries to fit life into a scheme of alternatives—such as joy or pain, good or bad, solitude or company, attraction or repulsion—[word deleted] in relation to sex it tends to think of indulgence and repression as alternatives from which there is no escape.

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The mind when 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, seeks freedom through repression. Thus *searching for happiness and freedom, the mind gets caught up in the opposites of indulgence and repression which it finds equally disappointing*. 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.

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The Problem of Sex (6th edition)

The Problem of Sex (7th edition)

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.

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

Renunciation of craving made possible through awakening

true awakening is the entering into the path of wisdom which, in course of time, surely leads to the freedom and abiding happiness of life eternal. Internal and

spontaneous renunciation of craving is as different from mechanical repression as it is from indulgence. *Mind turns to the 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,

Indulgence and repression relative to craving

he begins voluntarily to disburden himself of craving through intelligent understanding. *The question of indulgence or repression arises only*

when there is craving. The need for both vanishes with the complete disappearance of craving. When the mind is free from craving, the mind can no longer be moved by the false promises of indulgence or mechanical repression.

However, it should be borne in 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). Hence

Restraint nearer to freedom than indulgence

for the aspirant a life of strict celibacy is preferable to married life, if restraint

comes to him easily without undue sense of self-repression. Such restraint is difficult for most persons and sometimes impossible, and for them married life is decidedly 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, married life in 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*

the mind usually does not renounce the [word deleted] cause of unhappiness, which is craving. Hence, 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.

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

Renunciation of craving through awakening

Perfect Master. [word deleted] True awakening is the entering into the path of wisdom, which, in course of time,

surely leads to the freedom and abiding happiness of life eternal. Internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving is as different from mechanical repression as it is from indulgence. *Mind turns to the 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 aspirants become* fully awake to the inevitable bondage and suffering entailed by

Understanding craving

craving, *they begin* voluntarily to disburden *themselves* of craving

through intelligent understanding. *The question of indulgence or repression arises only when there is craving. The need for both vanishes with the complete disappearance of craving.* When the mind is free from craving, the mind can no longer be moved by the false promises of indulgence or mechanical repression.

However, it should be borne in 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). Hence for *aspirants* a life

Restraint nearer to freedom than indulgence

of strict celibacy is preferable to married life, if restraint comes to *them*

easily without undue sense of self-repression. Such restraint is difficult for most persons and sometimes impossible, and for them married life is decidedly 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, married life in turn also nourishes the growth of many spiritual qualities of utmost importance. *The value of celibacy lies in*

The Problem of Sex (6th edition)

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Possibilities of celibacy and marriage

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 lessons of mutual adjustment and the sense of unity with the other.* True union or dissolution of duality is possible, however, only through Divine Love which can never dawn as long as there is the slightest shadow of lust or craving in the mind. 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 as 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.

Path of perfection open in celibacy and in marriage

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 his sanskaras and karmic ties.* 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 must choose one of the two courses which are open to him. He must take to the life of celibacy or to the married life, and he must avoid at all costs a cheap compromise between the two. *Promiscuity in sex gratification is bound to land the aspirant in a most pitiful and*

Necessity of clear choice

dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust. As such diffused and undirected lust veils the higher values, it perpetuates entanglement and creates in the spiritual path insuperable difficulties to the 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 formidable. It is only by the maximum restriction of the scope of mere sex that the aspirant can arrive at any real understanding of the values attainable through the gradual transformation of sex into love. If

Dangers of promiscuity

the mind tries to understand sex through increasing the scope of sex, there is no

Possibilities of celibacy or marriage

the habit of restraint and the sense of detachment and independence [word deleted] 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.* True union or dissolution of duality is possible, however, only through *divine love,* which can never dawn as long as there is the slightest shadow of lust or craving in the mind. Only by treading the path of inner and spontaneous renunciation of craving is it possible to attain true freedom and unity.

For *those who are* celibate as well as for *the* married *persons,* the path of inner life is the same. When *aspirants are* drawn by the *Truth,* *they long* for nothing else, and as the Truth increasingly comes within *their* ken, *they* gradually *disburden themselves* of craving. Whether in

Path of perfection open through celibacy or marriage

celibacy or in marriage, *they are* no longer swayed by the deceptive promises of indulgence or mechanical repression, and *they practice* internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving until *they are* freed from the deceptive opposites. The path of perfection is open to *[word deleted] aspirants* whether in celibacy or in marriage, and *whether [they begin] from celibacy or from marriage will depend upon [their] sanskaras and karmic ties [of the past].* They cheerfully *accept* the conditions *that their past lives have* determined for *them* and *utilize these conditions for [his]* spiritual advancement in the light of the ideal *they have* come to perceive.

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Necessity of clear choice

Promiscuity in [sexual] gratification is bound to land the [aspirants] in a most pitiful and dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust. As such diffused and undirected lust veils the higher values, it perpetuates entanglement and creates in the spiritual path insuperable difficulties to the 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 a *sexual relationship* is accompanied by a sense of responsibility, love and spiritual idealism, conditions for the sublimation of sex are much more *favorable* than when it is cheap and promiscuous.

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end to the delusions to which it is a prey, for 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 the individual is *doomed to react to people within the limitation of this initial perversion* and thus close the door to deeper experiences.

Truth cannot be grasped by skipping over the surface of life and multiplying superficial contacts. It requires the preparedness of mind which can centre its capacities upon selected experiences and free itself from its limiting features. This process of discrimination between the higher and the lower, and the transcendence of the lower in favour of the

Infinity attainable through intelligent handling of marriage higher, is made possible through *whole-hearted concentration and a real and earnest interest in life*. 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 wandering between many possible objects of similar experience. In married life the range of experience to be had 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. There is therefore a real opportunity for the aspirant *to recognize and annul the limiting factors in experience*. By the gradual elimination of lust and the progression through a series of increasingly richer experiences of love and sacrifice, he can finally arrive at Infinity.

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the scope of mere sex **that [word deleted] aspirants** can arrive at any

Dangers of promiscuity real understanding of the values attainable through the gradual transformation of sex into love. If the mind tries to understand sex through increasing the scope of sex, there is no end to the delusions to which it is **[word deleted] prey—**for 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 the individuals are doomed to react to people within the limitation of this initial perversion** and thus close the door to deeper experiences.

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Infinity attainable through marriage from its limiting features. This process of discrimination between the higher and the lower, and the transcendence of the lower in **favor** of the higher, is made possible through **whole-hearted concentration and a real and earnest interest in life**. 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 wandering between many possible objects of similar experience.

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MOST persons enter into married life as a matter of course, but marriage will become a help or a hindrance according to the manner in which it is handled. There is no 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 prevail in business partnership. It has to be undertaken as *a real spiritual enterprise which is intended to discover what life can be at its best*. When the two partners launch together upon the spiritual adventure of exploring the higher possibilities of spirit, they cannot at the outset limit their experiment by any nice calculations concerning the nature and amount of *individual gain*.

Married life almost always makes many demands upon both partners for mutual adjustment and understanding, and creates many problems which were not originally expected. 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 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 precisely why married life is utterly different from promiscuous sex relations. Promiscuous sex attempts to separate the problem of sex from *other* needs of the developing personality and seeks to solve it in isolation from them. Although this kind of solution might seem to be easy, it turns out to be very superficial and has the further disadvantage of *side-tracking* the aspirant from attempting the real solution.

The relative values of the various sides of the limited personality can best be appreciated when they become intertwined and appear in varied settings and perspectives. 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 latent in the mind begin to organise around the crystallised scheme of married life. This organization 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*.

Married life, a spiritual enterprise

Married life essentially different from promiscuous sex-partnership

Tension between the varied purposes of married life calls forth sublimation

MOST persons enter into married life as a matter of course, but marriage will become a help or a hindrance according to the manner in which it is handled. There is no doubt that some of the immense spiritual possibilities are accessible through **[word deleted]** 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 **that** usually prevail in **[a] business partnership**. It has to be undertaken as **a real spiritual enterprise [that] is intended to discover what life can be at its best**. When the two partners launch together 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 amount of **individual gain**.

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Married life a spiritual enterprise

Married life utterly different from promiscuity

Married life calls forth sublimation

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In one sense married life may be looked upon as the intensification of most human problems. 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 uncompromising opposition between the higher and the lower self. Such opposition is necessary for the wearing out of the lower self

Conditions of marriage precipitate changes in inner life

and the dawning of the true Divine Self. Married life develops so many points of contact between two souls that severance of all connection would mean the

unsettlement and derangement of practically the whole tenor of life. Since this difficulty of breaking away from one another invites and precipitates inner readjustment, marriage is really a disguised opportunity for the souls to establish a real and lasting understanding which can cope with the most complex and delicate situations.

The spiritual value of married life is directly related to the nature of the preponderating factors that determine its daily course. If it is based upon shallow considerations, it can deteriorate into a partnership in selfishness aimed against the rest of the world. If it is inspired by lofty

Married life must be in tune with Divine Plan

idealism, it can rise to a fellowship which not only requires and calls forth increasingly greater sacrifices for each

other, but actually *become 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 for the children who are the fruit of the marriage, for they have the advantage of absorbing a spiritual atmosphere from the very beginning of their earthly career.

Though the children are thus the beneficiaries of the married life of the parents, *the married life of the parents is in its turn enriched by the*

Married life sanctified and enriched by children

presence of the children. Children give to parents an opportunity for expressing and developing a real and spontaneous love

in which sacrifice becomes easy and delightful, and the part played by children in the life of 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 whole-heartedly welcomed by the parents.

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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 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 birth control is oscillating and confused because it contains a queer admixture of good and bad elements. *While birth control 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 child-bearing 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 a responsibility for parents which they may be unable to adequately discharge, it becomes an indirect and contributory cause of crime, war and poverty. Though 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 birth control 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 people to serve their own selfish ends and to avoid the responsibility of bearing and bringing up children. 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 awaken to the higher values have no incentive to moderation in the gratification of passion. They thus become victims of excessive indulgence and bring about their own physical, moral and spiritual ruin by neglecting mental control and becoming slaves to 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

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Birth control

Physical means removes incentive for mental control

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

awakening of individuals to their real dignity and freedom as spiritual beings. Thoughtless and uncontrolled indulgence must inevitably lead to

Mental control indispensable for rising from passion to peace

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birth control and keeps clear of the spiritual disasters entailed by the use of physical means. Mental control 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.

extremely inadvisable to rely upon physical means for the regulation of child-bearing. For such regulation the [individuals] must rely upon nothing but mental control.

Since woman has to undertake the troubles and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children she may seem to be affected more seriously by any possible failure in mental control than man. In fact it does not mean any real unfairness to woman. While it is true that woman has to undertake the troubles and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children, she also has the compensating joy of feeding and fondling

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Joint responsibility of parenthood

them. Thus motherhood is much greater than the joy of fatherhood. Further, the man must also face and shoulder the

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economic and educational responsibility towards the children. In a properly adjusted marriage there need not be any injustice in the distribution of parental responsibility to be shared between man and woman. If both are truly conscious of their mutual responsibility, inconsiderateness will give way to active and co-operative endeavour to attain full mental control. In the event there is any failure in mental control they will cheerfully and willingly discharge the joint responsibility of parenthood.

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If a person is not prepared to undertake the responsibility of children there is only one course left to him. He must remain 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.

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Children must be welcome

For those who cannot practise it, the next best course is to marry rather than fall a prey to promiscuity. Within married life

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one can learn to control animal passion. It is bound to be a gradual process, and in cases of failure in practising control, the couple must

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allow nature to take its own course rather than interfere with it through artificial means. They must cheerfully welcome the consequences and be prepared to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up the children.

From the spiritual point of view, birth control must essentially be effected through mental control and nothing else. Physical means are under no circumstances advisable *even when a person seeks to use them merely as a provisional and secondary aid, without intending to ignore the ideal of developing mental control.* While using physical means he can never arrive at real mental control, though he might want it in real earnest. On the contrary he becomes addicted to the use of physical means and even begins to justify them. To explain still more clearly, what happens in the use of physical means is that while the individual 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 the habit. Though he may remain for some time 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 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 entirely inadvisable 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, but with conscious and deliberate co-operation they can 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, 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.

promiscuity. Within married life one can learn to control animal passion. It is bound to be a gradual process; and *in cases of failure In [practicing] control, the couple must allow nature to take its own course rather than interfere with it through artificial means.* They must cheerfully welcome the consequences and be prepared to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up the children.

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Mental power undermined by reliance on physical means

Physical means become addictive

Spiritual advancement through married life

Spiritual advancement through married life

Additions, Deletions & Deflavorizings

This section compares 10 paragraphs from the 6th and 7th editions. Nine were randomly selected; number 4 was intentionally chosen because it is splendid. Every paragraph in the 7th edition was edited for style and usage (italics, capitalization, Americanizing, and so on). In addition, several paragraphs have arbitrary wording changes, with effects ranging from small to significant.

6th Edition

7th Edition

1. **Volume II, page 94:** There is a hoary custom that after the aspirant has the *darshana* of a Master and falls at his feet, he washes the Master’s feet with milk and honey and places a coconut near them as his offering. Honey represents red *sanskaras*, milk represents white *sanskaras* and the coconut represents the mind. Thus this convention which has become established in some areas in connection with greeting the Masters, really symbolises throwing the burden of all *sanskaras* on the Master and surrendering the mind to him. Adoption of this inner attitude constitutes the most critical and important step which the aspirant must take in order to get initiated on the Path.

Page 187: There is **an ancient tradition** that after the aspirant has the **darshan** of a Master and falls at his feet, he washes the Master’s feet with milk and honey and places a coconut near them as his offering. Honey represents red **(bad) sanskaras**, milk represents white **(good) sanskaras**, and the coconut represents the mind. Thus the convention, which has become established in some areas in connection with greeting the Masters, really **symbolizes** throwing the burden of all **sanskaras** on the Master and surrendering the mind to him. Adoption of this inner attitude constitutes the most critical and important step **that** the aspirant must take in order to get initiated on the **spiritual path**.

Hoary custom is a quirky and enjoyable turn of phrase. The rewording, *ancient tradition*, belongs in an anthropology textbook. The parenthetical explanations of red and white *sanskaras* are not inaccurate but not needed. The recasting of *Path* to *spiritual path* throughout is diminution of style, but more importantly, it diminishes the sense of specialness imparted by *Path*.

2. **Volume III, page 75:** Roughly speaking, today on the whole the East has developed more along spiritual lines than material lines, with the result that the Eastern mind has a spontaneous aspiration for God. The West, on the whole, has developed more along material lines than spiritual material lines, with the result that the Western mind has a spontaneous urge toward intellectual and artistic things.

Page 321: **Generally** speaking, today on the whole the East has developed more along spiritual lines than material lines, with the result that the Eastern mind has a **more** spontaneous aspiration for God. The West, on the whole, has developed more along material lines than spiritual material lines, with the result that the Western mind has a **more** spontaneous urge toward intellectual and artistic things.

The arbitrary change from *roughly* to *generally* serves no purpose. The two additions of *more* are probably intended to “prevent confusion” in the reader by qualifying their respective statements. Or perhaps the changes are meant to soften what the editors perceived as politically incorrect assertions. In any case, these additions change meaning and are based on an assumption that the original sentences are wrong.

3. **Volume II, page 31:** Impressions connected with the subtle world get worn out in turn through some forms of penance or yoga.

Page 137: Impressions connected with the subtle world get worn out in turn through **for instance**, some forms of penance or yoga.

The addition of *for instance* is probably intended to clarify meaning. Perhaps the original wording was thought to imply that *only* some forms of penance or yoga wear out the *sanskaras* being discussed. Clarifications, when ambiguous like this, can corrupt meaning.

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4. **Volume II, page 139:** How does the soul get caught up in illusion? How did the Formless, Infinite and Eternal Soul come to experience itself as having form, and as being finite and destructible? How did *Purusha*, or the Supreme Spirit, come to think of itself as *Prakriti* or the world of nature? In other words, what is the cause of the cosmic illusion in which the soul finds itself? To realise the true status of the Oversoul — which is One, Indivisible, Real, and Infinite — the soul needed consciousness. The soul did get consciousness, but this consciousness was not of *God* but of the *universe*; not of the *Oversoul* but of its *shadow*; not of the *One* but of many, not of the *Infinite* but of the *finite*; not of the *Eternal* but of the *transitory*. Thus the soul, instead of realising the Oversoul, gets involved in the cosmic illusion, and hence, though really infinite, it comes to experience itself as finite. In other words, *when the soul develops consciousness it does not become conscious of its own true nature but of the phenomenal world*, which is its own shadow.

Page 223: How does the soul get caught up in **Illusion**? How did the **formless, infinite[,] and eternal** Soul come to experience itself as having form and as being finite and destructible? How did *Purusha*, or the **supreme** Spirit, come to think of itself as **prakriti**, or the world of nature? In other words, what is the cause of the cosmic **Illusion** in which the **individualized** soul finds itself? To **realize** the true status of the Oversoul — which is **one, indivisible, real, and infinite** — the soul **needs** consciousness. The soul **does** get consciousness; **however** this consciousness **is** not of **God** but of the **universe**; not of the **Oversoul** but of its **shadow**, not of the **One** but of many, not of the **Infinite** but of the **finite**, not of the **Eternal** but of the **transitory**. Thus the soul, instead of **realizing** the Oversoul, gets involved in **[the] cosmic Illusion**; and hence, though really infinite, it comes to experience itself as finite. In other words, **when the soul develops consciousness, it does not become conscious of its own true nature but of the phenomenal world**, which is its own shadow.

This passage, from *The Divine Truths (for meditation through reading)*, underwent such a frenzy of profligate changes it is difficult to know where to start. The highlighting speaks for itself. Of particular interest are the three sentences rewritten into present tense. These changes remove a sense of time and journey, which is what this paragraph is about. But beyond the particulars, the editing changes to the *Meditation for Reading* are profoundly distressing. Baba specifically provided these words as a meditation. From the paragraph immediately preceding the *Meditation for Reading*: "If the aspirant meditates upon the following exposition of the Divine Truths in the manner which has been elaborately indicated above, meditation will become not only spontaneous and easy, delightful and inspiring, but also helpful and successful. He will thus be taking a very important step towards the realisation of the goal of life." Changing this meditation, given the significance Baba assigned to it, is terribly wrong and dangerous.

5. **Volume II, page 102:** *With the exception of such general knowledge about fundamentals, however, the Masters have consistently preferred to attach minimum importance to the spread of detailed knowledge about occult realities, and have even scrupulously withheld information concerning those points likely to have vital bearing upon occultism as an art.*

Page 194: **[However,] with the exception of such general knowledge about fundamentals, the Masters have consistently preferred to attach minimum importance to the spread of detailed knowledge about occult [phenomena]. [They] have even scrupulously withheld information concerning those points likely to have vital bearing upon occultism as an art.**

The italics are removed and the sentence is arbitrarily rewritten into two. The arbitrary change of *realities* to *phenomena* imparts a scientific or philosophical feeling. Changing the word *reality*, in any of its forms, requires that it be changed consistently in similar contexts; otherwise one can imagine antagonistic schools of interpretation arising around the issue of 'realities vs phenomena'. In any case, the lower case *realities* can not be confused with the Reality of God, which is consistently capitalized throughout the 6th edition. A note on inconsistency: in other places (and without a consistent discernable strategy) the 7th edition replaces *Master* with *Perfect Master*, a change not made in this passage.

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6. **Volume I, page 167:** It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordinating it to an end in the future, for this means the imaginary accumulation of all importance in the imagined future rather than the perception and realisation of the true importance of everything that now exists. *There cannot be ebb and tide in eternity, no meaningless intervals between intermittent harvests, but a fullness of being which cannot suffer impoverishment of a single instant.* When life seems to be idle or empty it is not due to any curtailment of the infinity of the Truth, but it is due to one's own lack of capacity to enter into its full possession.

- Page 119:** It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordinating it to an end in the future. For this means the imaginary accumulation of all importance in the imagined future rather than the perception and realization of the true importance of everything that exists in the eternal Now. There cannot be [an ebb and flow] in eternity, no meaningless intervals between intermittent harvests, but a fullness of being [that] cannot suffer impoverishment [for] a single instant. When life seems to be idle or empty, it is not due to any curtailment of the infinity of the Truth, but to one's own lack of capacity to enter into its full possession.

These are arbitrary edits. Breaking the first sentence into two fractures an exquisite flow of thought and language. Changing *ebb and tide* to *ebb and flow* replaces a lovely touch with a cliché. The tiny change of *of* to *for* in the sentence, “. . . but a fullness of being which cannot suffer impoverishment of a single instant.” erodes the richness of meaning. *Of* conveys a sense of the indivisible inclusiveness of eternity; *for* does not. This preposition expresses divine knowledge; the change lowers the document to our level.

7. **Volume I, page 82:** While meditation on the personal and impersonal aspects of God requires withdrawal of consciousness into the sanctuary of one's own heart, *concentration on the universal aspect of God is best achieved through selfless service of humanity.* When the soul is completely absorbed in the service of humanity, it is completely oblivious of its own body or mind or their functions, as in meditation, and therefore new *sanskaras* are not formed. Further, the old *sanskaras* which bind the mind are shattered and dispersed. Since the soul is now centering its attention and interest not upon its own good but upon the good of others, *the nucleus of the ego is deprived of its nourishing energy.* Selfless service is therefore one of the best methods of diverting and sublimating the energy locked up in the binding *sanskaras*.

- Page 53:** While meditation on the personal and impersonal aspects of God requires withdrawal of consciousness into the sanctuary of one's own heart, concentration on the universal aspect of God is best achieved through selfless service [for] humanity. When a person is completely absorbed in the service of humanity, he is completely oblivious of his own body or mind or their functions, as in meditation; and therefore new *sanskaras* are not formed. Further, the old *sanskaras that bind* the mind are shattered and dispersed. Since the individual is now centering his attention and interest not upon his own good but upon the good of others, the nucleus of the ego is deprived of its nourishing energy. Selfless service is therefore one of the best methods of diverting and sublimating the energy locked up in the binding *sanskaras*.

The word *soul* in the 6th edition is replaced with *individual* and *person*, and to accommodate these changes the gender-neutral *it* is changed to the masculine *he* and *his* four times. The change to masculine forms reworks perfectly comprehensible sentences in a way that, strangely, violates one of the purported editing justifications.

8. **Volume II, page 79:** For a car to move toward its destination a driver is necessary. But this driver may be susceptible to strong attachments for things that he encounters on the way, and he might not only halt at intervening places for an indefinite time, but also get lost in the wayside in pursuit of things that have only temporary charm. In that case he might keep the car moving all the time but without coming nearer the goal, and he might even get further away from it. Something like this happens when the ego assumes control of human consciousness. The ego may be compared to a driver who has a certain amount of control over a car and a certain capacity to drive it, but who is in complete darkness about its ultimate destination.

- Page 175:** For a car to move toward its destination, a driver is necessary. However, the driver may be susceptible to strong attractions for things that he encounters on the way; and he might not only halt at intervening places for an indefinite time[,] but also get lost by the wayside in pursuit of things that have only temporary charm. Thus he might keep the car moving all the time but without coming nearer the goal, and he might even get further away from it. Something like this happens when the ego assumes control of human consciousness. The ego may be compared to a driver who has a certain amount of control over a car and a certain capacity to drive it, but who is in complete darkness about its ultimate destination.

These arbitrary edits effect a trace diminution of style. The change of *in* to *by* in the sentence, “. . . but also get lost in the wayside in pursuit of things that have only temporary charm.” reduces the richness of meaning of getting lost *in* the wayside.

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9 **Volume I, page 164:** *Love is the reflection of God's unity in the world of duality.* It constitutes the entire significance of creation. If love is excluded from life, all the souls in the world assume complete externality to each other and the only possible relations would be superficial and mechanical. It is because of love that the contacts and relations between individual souls become significant. It is love which gives meaning and value to all the happenings in the world of duality. But, *while love gives meaning to the world of duality, it is at the same time a standing challenge to duality.* As love gathers strength, it generates *creative restlessness* and becomes the main driving power of that *spiritual dynamic* which ultimately succeeds in *restoring to consciousness the original unity of being.*

Page 116: *Love is the reflection of God's unity in the world of duality.* It constitutes the entire significance of creation. If love **were** excluded from life, all the souls in the world **would** assume complete externality to each other; and the only possible relations would be superficial and mechanical. It is because of love that the contacts and relations between individual souls become significant. It is love **that** gives meaning and value to all the happenings in the world of duality. But, **while love gives meaning to the world of duality, it is at the same time a standing challenge to duality.** As love gathers strength, it generates **creative restlessness** and becomes the main driving power of that **spiritual dynamic** which ultimately succeeds in **restoring to consciousness the original unity of [B]eing.**

The third sentence is edited twice. Present tense is changed to the subjunctive future conditional with the addition of were/would. This unnecessary change is not grammatically incorrect. (Strict adherence to subjunctive rules is fading in common usage.) The third sentence clauses are also separated with the insertion of a semicolon after *other*. This interrupts the flow of one of the great statements of the twentieth century. The separation of clauses is a reason to use a semicolon, but it is by no means required.

10. **Volume I, page 26:** Some of the desires have mere latency of action, but others can actually translate themselves into action. The capacity of a desire to find expression in conduct depends upon the intensity and amount of *sanskaras* connected with it. To use a geometrical metaphor, we might say that when a desire passes into action, it traverses a distance that is equal to the radius of a circle describing the boundary of the *sanskaras* connected with it. When a desire gathers sufficient strength, it projects itself into action for getting fulfilled.

Page 10: **With some of the desires action is merely latent,** but others can actually translate themselves into action. The capacity of a desire to find expression in conduct depends upon the intensity and amount of **sanskaras** connected with it. To use a **geometric** metaphor, we might say that when a desire passes into action, it traverses a distance that is equal to the radius of a circle describing the boundary of the **sanskaras** connected with it. When a desire gathers sufficient strength, it projects itself into action **in order to get** fulfilled.

Recasting the first part of the first sentence accomplishes nothing and removes the parallel construction of the clauses. Similarly, the insertion of *in order to* in the final sentence accomplishes nothing and slows the cadence. The change from *geometrical* to *geometric* erases a hint of the original British, and otherwise accomplishes nothing.

Baba's Observation

It is fitting for Baba to have the last word. The following passage is from [Lord Meher, p. 1881](#)

“If a lecturer speaks today before a gathering of five hundred, and the same subject is repeated by the five hundred listeners to others, there would be five hundred different interpretations — some never dreamed of by the speaker! Therefore, what about the teachings of Masters like Jesus interpreted after him perhaps a thousand times through different interpreters in the past. The original thought is sometimes lost sight of, or made irrelevant, but yet each clings to his own

different interpretation as the original.

“That is why many today hesitate to believe in the Bible and other such books, where interpretations do not appeal to them. There is more of the writers in the Bible than of Jesus Christ!

“Thus it is that there are always quarrels between fanatic followers of different religions over words and explanations that the Prophets never uttered, but were written in the so-called holy scriptures by over-enthusiastic disciples and priests, which quite naturally creates a revolt in the minds of others.”

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