

To Give or Not To Give?

Alova



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Surprise 1

Opening of the Heart



One of the major events that happens during one's spiritual development is opening of the heart. This is a transforming, life-changing experience, often overwhelming. When it happens, we feel a oneness with things we previously perceived as completely separate from us. Life, colors, sound seem more vibrant. A physical ache may occur in the chest area. We become aware of things that were always there, but we didn't notice them before. Boundaries appear softer and less distinct.



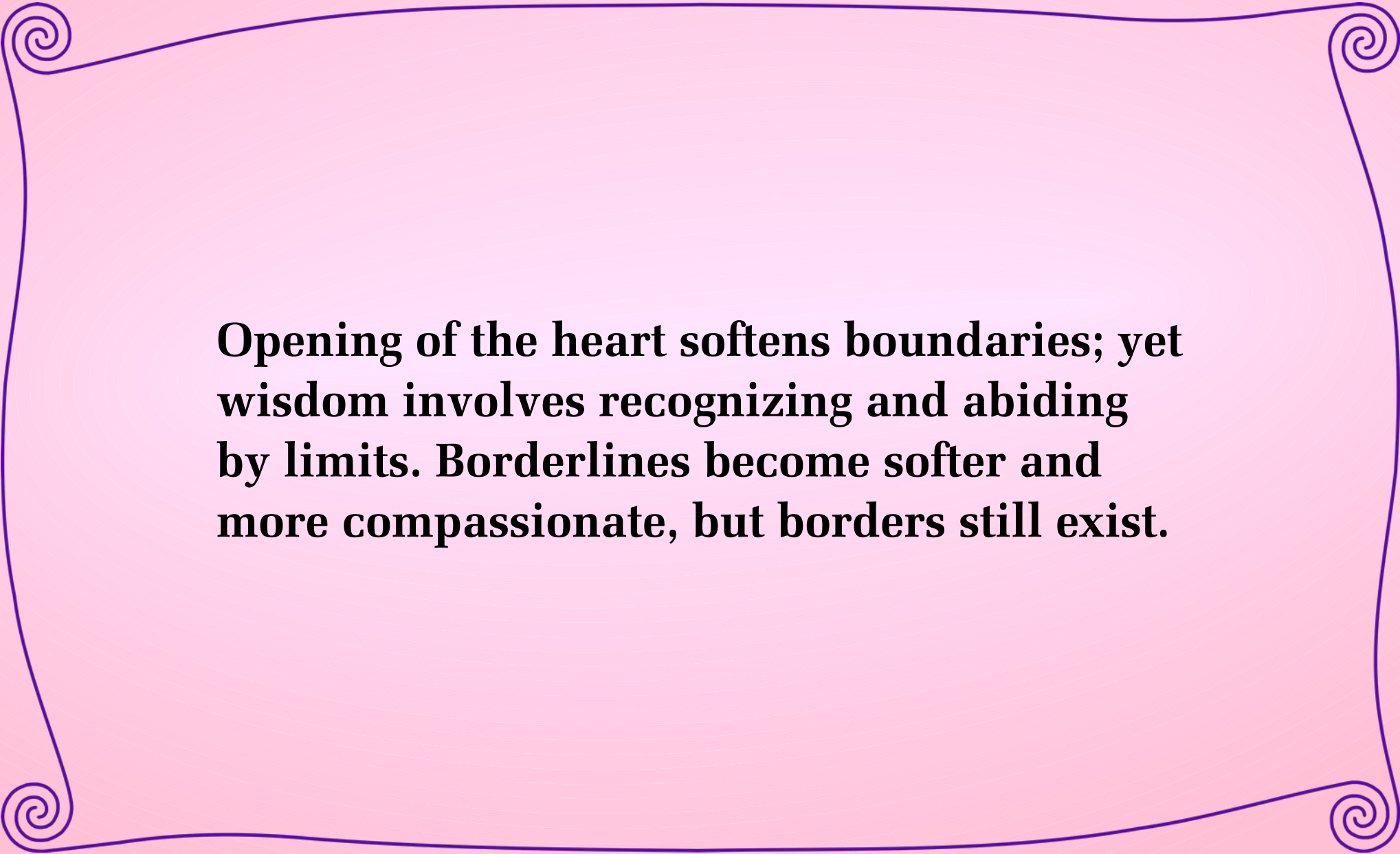
When the heart opens, we feel less fearful and more giving, more expansive, accepting, generous. We feel that apologies are unnecessary, forgetting that they are part of repentance and benefit the harmdoer.* We are ready to sacrifice for others. We feel their pain and well-being as if it were our own. We have a stronger sense of sense of unity. The dividing lines around “me” and “mine” stretch, and what we consider our “self” expands.

*** For a more detailed discussion, see *Forgiveness and “Karma,”* p. 1, https://wisdom2joy.com/Forgiveiness_and_Karma.**

There is a big distinction between the heart and emotion or sentiment. Fond feelings, affection, warm fuzzies are not at all bad, but they are not the heart. They are not intrinsically spiritual. They reverberate on the heart and on the whole body, like all feelings do. Warm emotions can lead us toward the heart and toward spirituality; but there is a big difference between sentiment of any kind, including what is often called “love,” and the spiritual nature of the heart.

“Mush”—sentiment alone—lacks distinctions and results in confusion, blurry boundaries, emotional or financial entanglements, delusion, even foolishness. One can have overwhelming, benevolent feelings for the whole world, but without truth and wisdom, such feelings can lead to more harm than good.

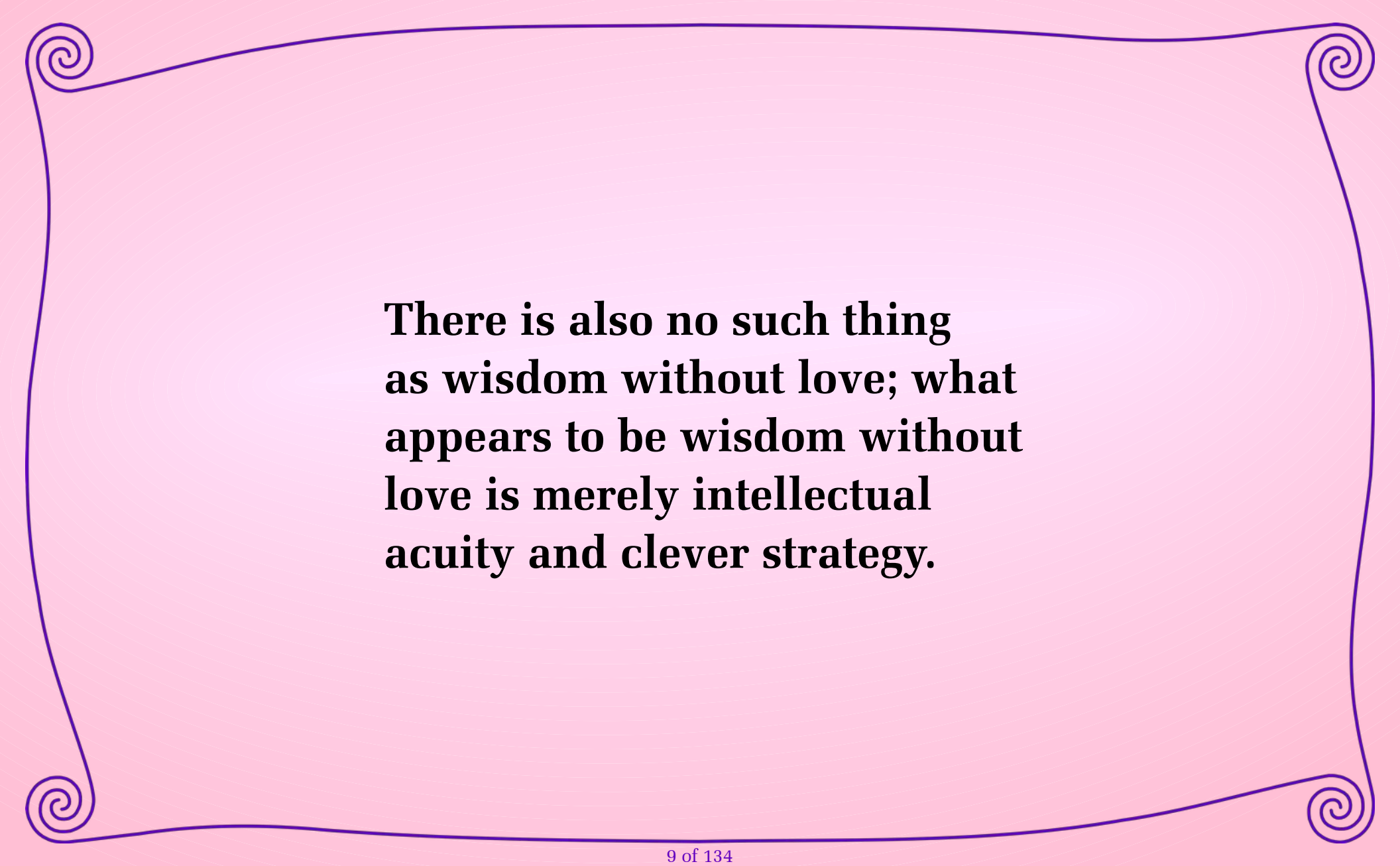




Opening of the heart softens boundaries; yet wisdom involves recognizing and abiding by limits. Borderlines become softer and more compassionate, but borders still exist.

**Wisdom is part and parcel of love.
There is no such thing as love
without wisdom. Without wisdom,
what seems like love is merely
sentiment, emotion, desire, mush—
and it can result in great suffering.**

**See also *About Love, Part 2 Love in Action*, p. 5-6, or video/audio 2,
https://wisdom2joy.com/About_Love.**



**There is also no such thing
as wisdom without love; what
appears to be wisdom without
love is merely intellectual
acuity and clever strategy.**

People who are deficient in truth or wisdom and have a great deal of fuzzy sentiment are considered weak—and they actually are weak. They can be easily deceived, manipulated or controlled. For this reason, people who seek power, control or self-determination sometimes reject spirituality. However, the weakness is not caused by spirituality, but by a deficiency of truth, wisdom, discipline, and

**People with great
intrinsically
can be far,**



**adhering to limits.
hearts are not
weaker—they
far stronger.**

Opening of the heart is a spiritual experience, often an answer to searching or prayer. When it occurs, since it is the greatest spirituality people have experienced so far, they sometimes think that spirituality is the heart, that this is the goal and end of the spiritual road.

Opening of the heart is a major step, but it's not the fullness of spirituality. It is not the end of the path

**—in fact, there
spiritual path!
continue growing,
number of**



**is no end to the
We can always
in an infinite
directions.**

**When the heart opens, our cup overflows.
We feel a greater unity and wish everyone
to have happiness equal to ours, comforts,
optimism, and confidence equal to ours.
We want to eliminate all boundaries, all
barriers, and feel only the wonderful unity.**

However, we need to balance our feelings with truth, discrimination, and wisdom. Rather than act immediately on our wonderful feeling and start giving to everyone and anyone, we need to pause and realize that people are not the same. They may not be able to have or keep what we have; they may not like what we like; they may not want what we want. What is best for us might not be what is best for them.

Truly charitable giving is giving what the recipients really need most at the time—not necessarily what they ask for, what they want or like, what the giver likes or usually gives, or what books or laws consider charitable. True charity involves not just the intent and feeling of the giver, but true wisdom, insight, and sometimes a willingness to forego the pleasure of an immediate smile for the sake of a greater, long-term pleasure.



**It takes a big heart to feel warm and loving
toward everyone.**

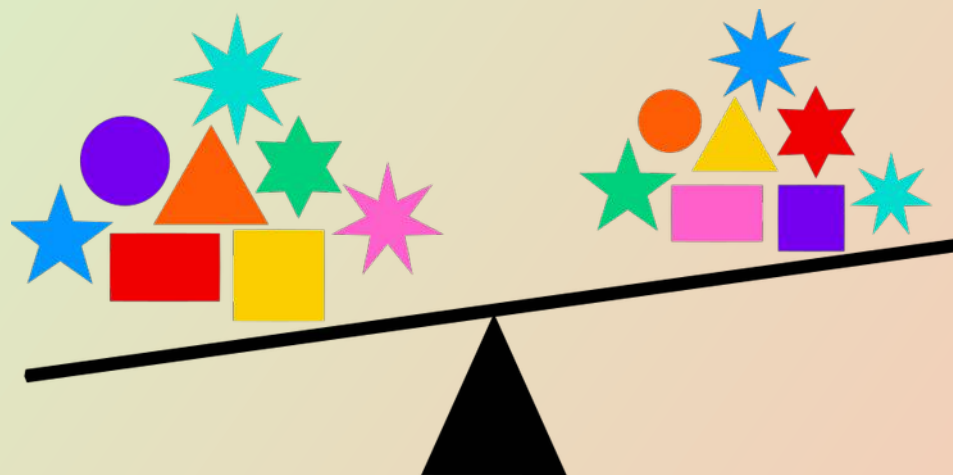
**It takes a bigger heart to give people
what they need most.**

**It takes an even bigger heart
to tell them the truth.**



Surprise 2

Inequality



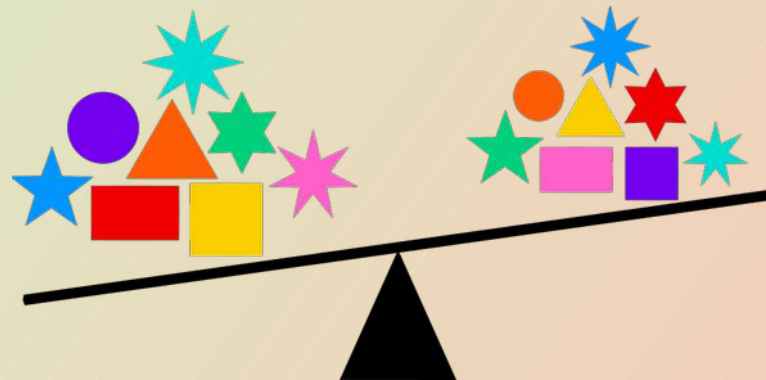
Our physical world has limits—space, time, energy. Only one object can occupy a particular space at a time, there are twenty-four hours in a day, massive objects can only be moved with massive forces. The Sun doesn't shine at night except occasionally at the poles, and money grows in imagination but not on trees.

We like to push our limits, to go further than what was thought possible. Humanity is testing and even transcending some of the limits of our physical, three-dimensional reality. Limits still exist, however, and since people start off differently, value differently and choose differently, there are great differences among us.

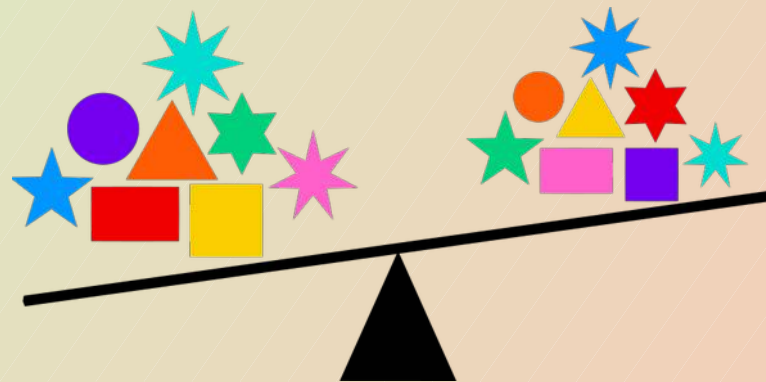
Many people have adopted the idea that all people are equal, or “should” be equal. Although all souls are of equal inherent worth to Creation, and all people may be treated equally under the law, we are not equal—physically, mentally or spiritually. We are not equal when we are born, we do not grow equally or learn equally, we do not have equal choices to make—nor would we choose equally if we did.

For a more detailed discussion, see *Equality, Uniqueness and Free Will, Part 1 Equal*, p. 1-3, or video/audio 1, https://wisdom2joy.com/Equality_Uniqueness_and_Free_Will; or James Alexander Michie, *The Truth about U.S. Equality*, <https://www.jamesalexandermichie.com/the-truth-about-u-s-inequality/>.

Everyone makes mistakes, but everyone does not make an equal number of mistakes, or equally important mistakes. We are not equally correct, equally careful, equally knowledgeable, or equally credible. We are not equally honest in word or deed, we are not equally ambitious or equally diligent, we are not equally generous or equally jovial.



**Thank Goodness! Our great inequalities
lend richness to human life and society,
and afford infinite opportunities and
avenues for choice and progress.**



When our heart opens, we want others to have the same good feelings, the same pleasures as we have. However, most people harbour bad feelings and cling to them for dear life. In addition, having anything entails duties of maintenance and protection, and people are not equally willing or able to bear responsibility.

Taking property by force from some people and giving it to others out of purported kindness is plunder, not compassion. It does not end up helping the recipients in the long term, for they do not learn to create or maintain what is handed out to them. Giving degrees to students who have not passed their coursework does not really help them, for they end up fraudulent and incompetent. Big lottery winners are often paupers a year later. Some people actually prefer to not own much and not have much responsibility.

**Inequality in itself is not a problem.
It does not cause jealousy, resentment
or hatred, or actions based on those
feelings.* People harbor those feelings
and act on them.**

*** For more detailed discussions, see: *Heal Thyself*, p. 1-4 or video/audio 1-5, [https:// wisdom2joy.com/Heal_Thyself](https://wisdom2joy.com/Heal_Thyself); and *Emotional Clarity*, p. 1-5 or video/audio 1-2, [https:// wisdom2joy.com/Emotional_Clarity](https://wisdom2joy.com/Emotional_Clarity).**

Attempts to force economic equality have resulted in greater poverty for the masses and greater wealth for controllers, and more violence and death than all wars combined during the same period. It is notable that a facist regime is required in order to enforce socialism or communism, since they are highly contrary to human nature.

It is not inequality, but rather
exploitation, plunder and cruelty
that are problems—big problems.

Note: Since the advent of communism/socialism invented by aristocratic British supremacists, it has resulted in an estimated 119-202 million deaths: Russia 1-2 million (Bolsheviks, 1917-1922); USSR 20-42 million (Stalin, 1936-1952) plus 40 million (others); China 39-80 million (1958-1961); North Korea 5.6 million (1948-1994); Cambodia 2-4 million (1975-1979); Vietnam 1.7 million (1945-1947); Poland 1.6 million (1945-1948); Yugoslavia 1.15 million (1945-1965); Ethiopia 1 million (1975-1978); Indonesia, 1 million (1966); Afghanistan 1 million (1979-1981); Rwanda 800 thousand (1994). By contrast, World Wars I and II combined resulted in 85-107 million deaths. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_killings_under_comunist_regimes; Rudolph Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994), <https://w22.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE1.HTM>, and *Statistics of Democide* (Wissenschaftliche, 1998), <https://www.melbhattan.com/pdf/statistics-of-democide>; Rick Kelo, "Socialism & Mass Murder in the 20th Century," <https://rickkelo.liberty.me/socialism-mass-murder>; Jim Liao, "Communism: The Leading Ideological Cause of Death in the 20th Century," https://www.theepochtimes.com/communism-the-leading-ideological-cause-of-death-in-the-20th-century_2212529.html.

A given harmful action hurts some people more than others, or in different ways. Punching a frail invalid does more harm than punching a big bodybuilder with the same force—but that doesn't make it okay to punch bodybuilders. Stealing an amount from a poor person does more harm than stealing it from a wealthy person—but that doesn't make it okay to steal from wealthy people. A theft may wound a wealthy person emotionally, and may not affect a poor person emotionally at all.

Lying to some people in some circumstances is far more harmful than lying to other people in other circumstances—but that doesn't make it okay to lie. Speaking with certain tones of voice is harmful to some people—but that doesn't necessarily make it wrong, while others may not take notice—but that doesn't make it okay. Some people realize they are affected by eating food prepared by someone with base or harmful thoughts, and other people are affected without realizing it.



Because of earthly limits we have inequalities, and because of inequalities we have enormous scope for growth, sharing, and contests. When it comes to sharing and contests, humans have created standards of “fairness.”

Ancient traditions in all cultures have rules of battle so that combatants are evenly matched. Black-belts compete with other black-belts and not with white-belts. Athletes must compete within their age, weight, and sex classifications, and spelling contestants within age groups. Inferior competitors are awarded handicaps. Blows below the belt and drugs before competitions are not allowed. It is considered shameful to contend with someone of an inferior class.



Societies have rules to protect weaker members and uphold fairness. This is an indication of humanity's spiritual advancement over instinct alone. Humans are intelligent enough to realize that physically weaker members of society have great value in other ways and are essential to a creative and thriving community. Women, after all, bear children; children become competent adults; the elderly have priceless experience. When humans allow unbridled greed for power and dominance to prevail, they sink lower than animals and their civilizations disintegrate.

There is no real contest, no worthy battle, between unmatched contenders. It is no challenge for the strong, and an impossible challenge for the weak. There is no honor or victory in crushing ants; there is honor and victory only in a battle that requires effort, skill, courage and character.

Battles can occur in different arenas—athletics, weaponry, politics, chess, video games ... even music, film, and magic. Someone who is strong in one arena is weak in others, for each of us makes choices about which skills to hone and how to spend our time.

When it comes to life in general rather than a specific area, the lines of skill and fairness are not so distinct. Neither is life in general a contest. Values in life are not so separate from one another and cannot be quantified as in commerce, or tested in a contrived setting.

Inequality is wonderful! If everyone were equal—if we all had equal rights to equal things, equal abilities, and equal environments with equal options—there would be no giving, and no need for giving. There would be no need for mental discrimination, no opportunity to develop wisdom, no impetus for individual improvement, no growth of character ... no growth of much at all. Life would also be extremely boring.

Surprise 3

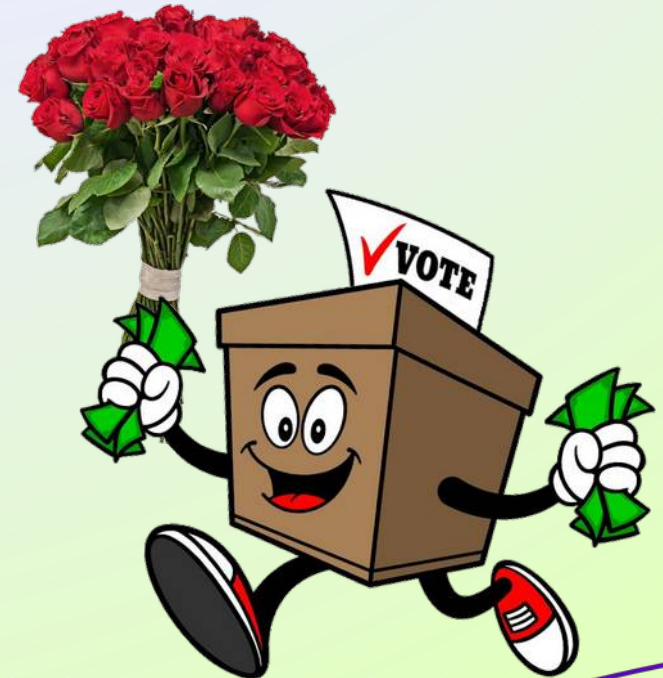
Giving and Gaining





Giving and receiving is one of the joys of earthly life. Living within three-dimensional limits provides us great opportunities to apply ourselves, gain knowledge and skills, acquire property and utilize, trade or gift it—and progress spiritually at the same time.

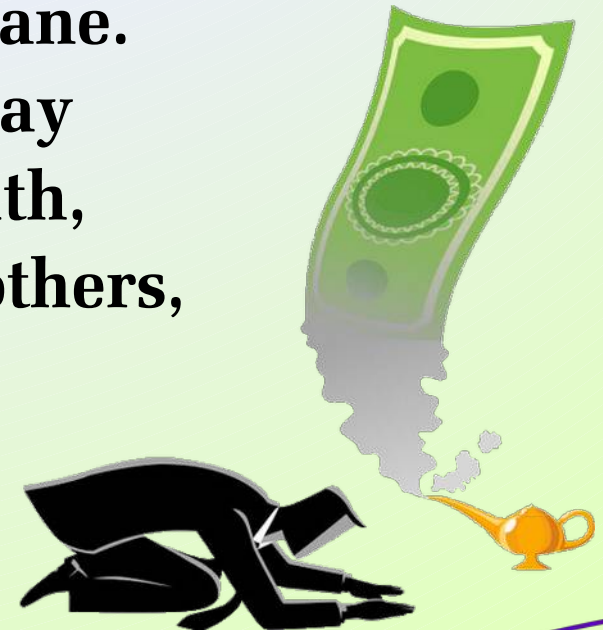
When giving something, people typically expect to gain something. There are usually strings attached to “gifts.” People may have agreed upon an exchange, or may simply expect a return, either material or non-material. Hosts often expect dinner guests to bring flowers. Parents bribe children to study or do chores. People buy affection, special treatment, or good behavior. They buy votes in favor of their enterprises, or pay to avoid being prosecuted.



When giving “charitable” donations, people usually gain something—public status, a name plaque, or even a building named after them. Sometimes donors want preferential treatment, approval of community leaders, or silence about their misdeeds. People even worship gods, goddesses, or God in order to get something in return.

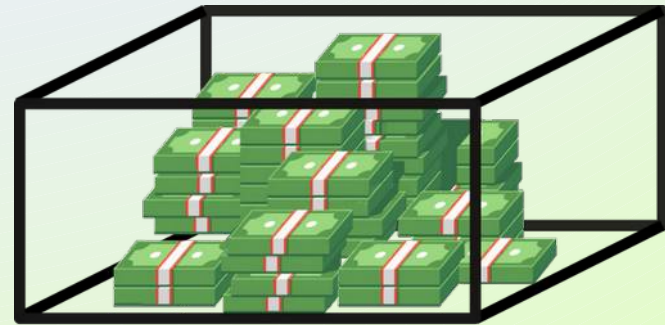
All giving with expectation or hope of gain is commerce. We calculate the risk, expense and gain, and evaluate whether the gain is worth the risk and expense. It is good to subject much of our expenditure of time and energy to this accounting, for we learn to conserve resources. We learn to be efficient and utilize our time and energy intelligently. We invent tools and systems to improve productivity.

Commerce itself is founded upon distinctions, separation. From a stance of separateness without love, without awareness of unity, one focuses primarily on receiving, and can then behave in ways we all know are shameful and inhumane. Common practice in commerce is to say and do whatever one can get away with, including lying, taking advantage of others, bribing, extorting, exploiting or even causing death of others, in order to gain as much currency as possible.




Commercial philosophy fosters division. It leads to evaluating human beings only according to their economic usefulness, like objects. Proponents of this philosophy describe the disabled, uneducated and elderly as “useless eaters” and say they should be “eliminated” or have medical treatment withheld. This, despite the fact that societies and infrastructure were built on the backs of people who are now elderly and many who were uneducated. Most humans are reviled by such suggestions, but many who advocate this philosophy occupy positions of worldly power.

Commerce relies on expressing the value of materials and services as a number, denominated in “currency.” People are so habituated to evaluating everything in currency that human thought has become limited, confined inside the box of commerce.



From a spiritual perspective, expressing value as a number is totally impossible. Spiritually there is not only one scale (like currency), but an infinite number of scales. The scales are not linear, and the value of things cannot be measured as a number of anything. Spiritual qualities and gifts are immeasurable and can be compared only in a very general sense. They cannot be bought or sold. They cannot be bequeathed. They can only be earned by one's own effort and action.

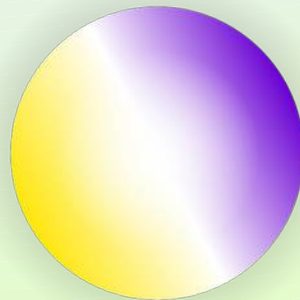
**When one even thinks about commerce
—exchange, trade, buying or selling—
love and giving without thought of
receiving vanish instantly. Self-interest
arises immediately, without realizing it.**



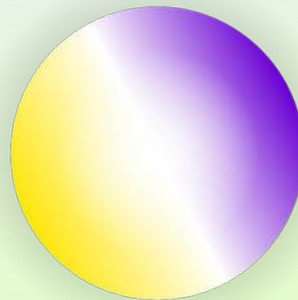
**Commerce and spirituality
are mutually exclusive.**

Although commerce in itself is not spiritual, it is possible to remain aligned with spiritual principles while engaging in commerce. People can trade with honesty, integrity, love, wisdom, and fairness—and without greed, selfishness, withholding relevant information, or exploiting anyone. As humanity progresses spiritually, principles of justice will increasingly influence commercial practices. Commerce will eventually become unnecessary, although the knowledge and skills will remain, as it will be replaced by pure, wise giving.

**Giving and receiving are necessary
and profoundly beneficial here on
Earth. The challenge is to balance
the two.**



Eventually, one sees them as not separate! Our body knows itself as a whole unit. It wouldn't think about which organ to favor over another, but does automatically what is best for the whole body. When our sense of self expands, we “give” from one part of ourself to another part of ourself: giving and receiving merge into one, since we are conveying to and from aspects of our self.



Because the present rules of commerce reward selfishness and greed, anyone who focuses primarily on giving ends up with less, and is often cheated. Opening of the heart results in giving more. The more one's heart opens, the bigger the challenge to figure out how to engage in commerce without being harmed. The more open one's heart, the greater the need for discernment, prudence, intelligence, and skillful communication.

Surprise 4

“Personal Power”



In addition to various strengths and abilities, people have a quality which shall here be called “personal power.” We all feel it, but it cannot be measured by standard scales or tests. It is multi-dimensional. Integrity is a sign of it; intelligence, abilities, skills, strengths of all types are indications of it; self-confidence, wisdom and other non-material qualities contribute to it; but it is not any of these, and not even a sum or a weighted sum of all of these.

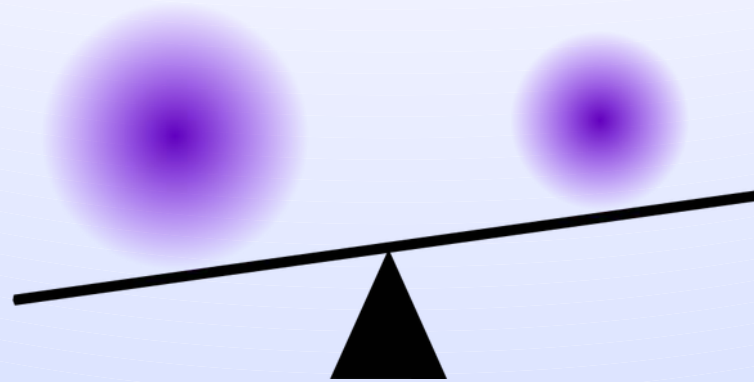
This personal power does not equate with worldly power, such as a powerful position in society. A person with very little personal power can occupy a high-level position, and someone with enormous personal power can occupy no position at all. Someone with more of this personal power is not a better, or worse, person than someone with less. Goodness is shown by how someone uses one's power.

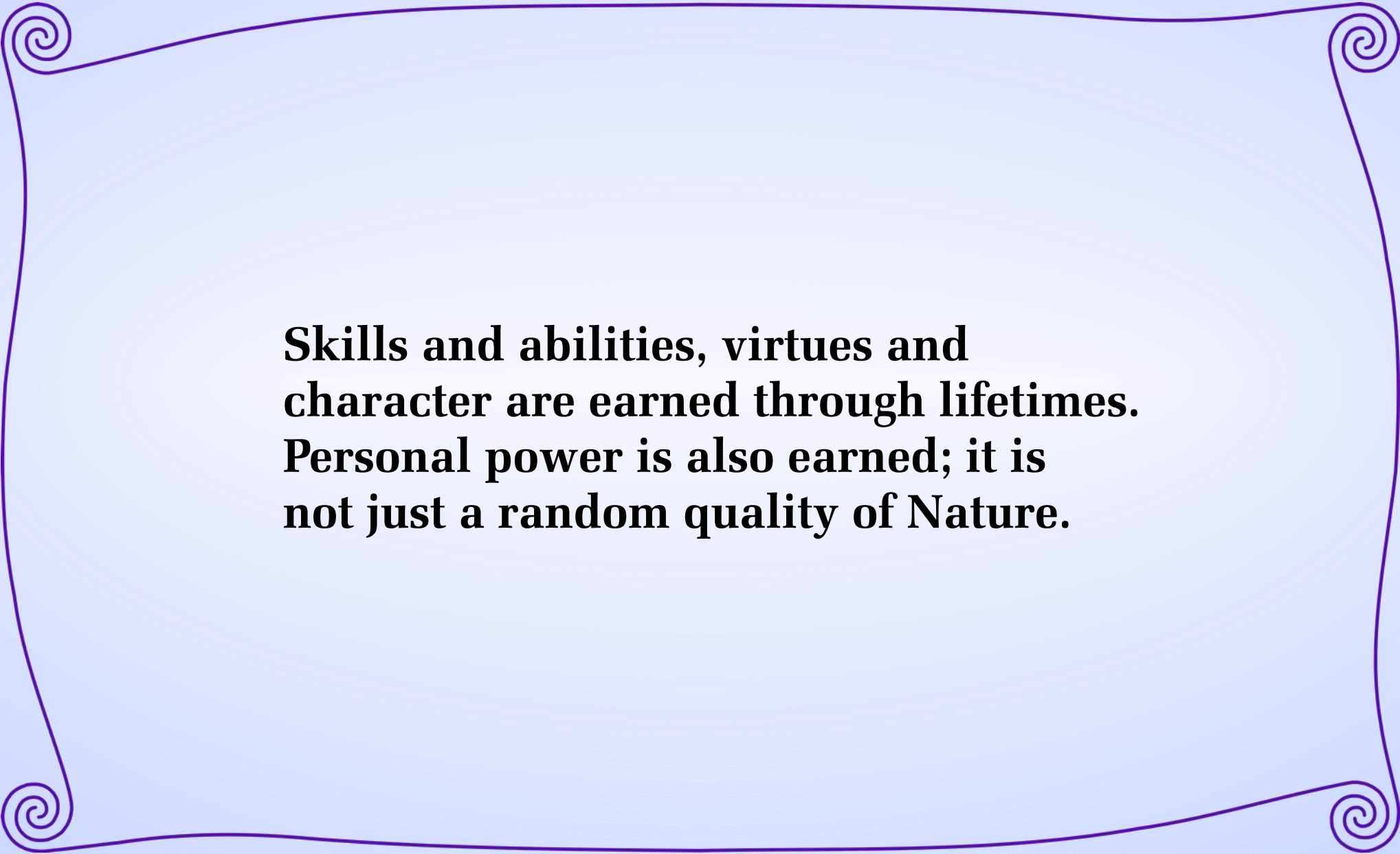
This personal power is not just a greater amount of any type of skill or ability, including psychic ability. Psychic abilities can be acquired through discipline like any other ability. They are not the same as what is here called “personal power.” Developing psychic ability includes learning to access and utilize one’s personal power, but someone with great personal power may have no particular psychic ability.

This personal power involves the ability to access our root energy unencumbered. As we clear our inner blockages and access our root energy, we sense truth and untruth, our inner compass, and our inner guidance more readily. Inner blockages can result from jealousy, resentment, unfulfilled desires, pride, unhealthy habits, incorrect beliefs, lies we have told, harm we have done. As we align our thought and action with truth=love, we naturally access our root energy more readily.

Through our root energy, we can access more of the universal energy of our Source. However meek or shy, illiterate or underconfident, or however unimportant our worldly position, when we tap into our root energy and our universal Source, our presence becomes more powerful—whether we want it to or not. We then influence our surroundings more, intentionally or not.

**People have different overall
amounts of this “personal power,”
this nebulous quality we can feel
but is impossible to measure.**





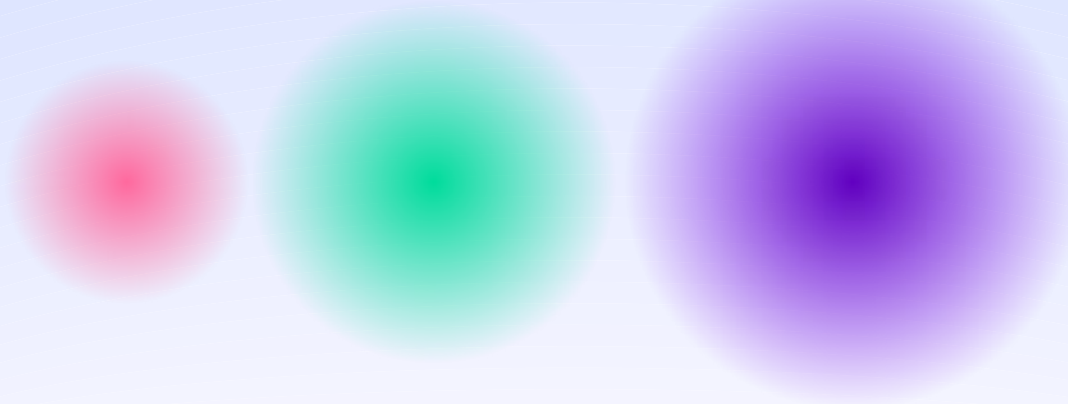
Skills and abilities, virtues and character are earned through lifetimes. Personal power is also earned; it is not just a random quality of Nature.

An adept technician in any field—healing, martial arts, oratory, music, sports, art—reaches an invisible ceiling before achieving mastery. The transition to mastery* occurs by accessing one's root energy. It is not necessary to meditate or perform any specific exercises in order to access one's root energy; it occurs when one's desire is strong and focused, overwhelming any blockages or distractions. Masterful artists in all fields have accessed their root energy and utilize it in their respective endeavors.

*** For more detail, see: *On Mastery*, Part 1 Expert to Mastery,
https://wisdom2joy.com/On_Mastery.**

Accessing one's root energy results in more of this personal power. Mastery of skills within a particular field is not necessary. The less encumbered and deeper one's access to one's root energy and our Source, the stronger one's personal power.

People with a greater amount of this personal power have greater influence just by their being. Even animals' hearts melted in the presence of Francis of Assisi; Kṛṣṇa enamored everyone who saw him, even as a child; memorable leaders have inspired millions, for good or for ill, with consequences either way—including eventual loss of power if one abuses it.



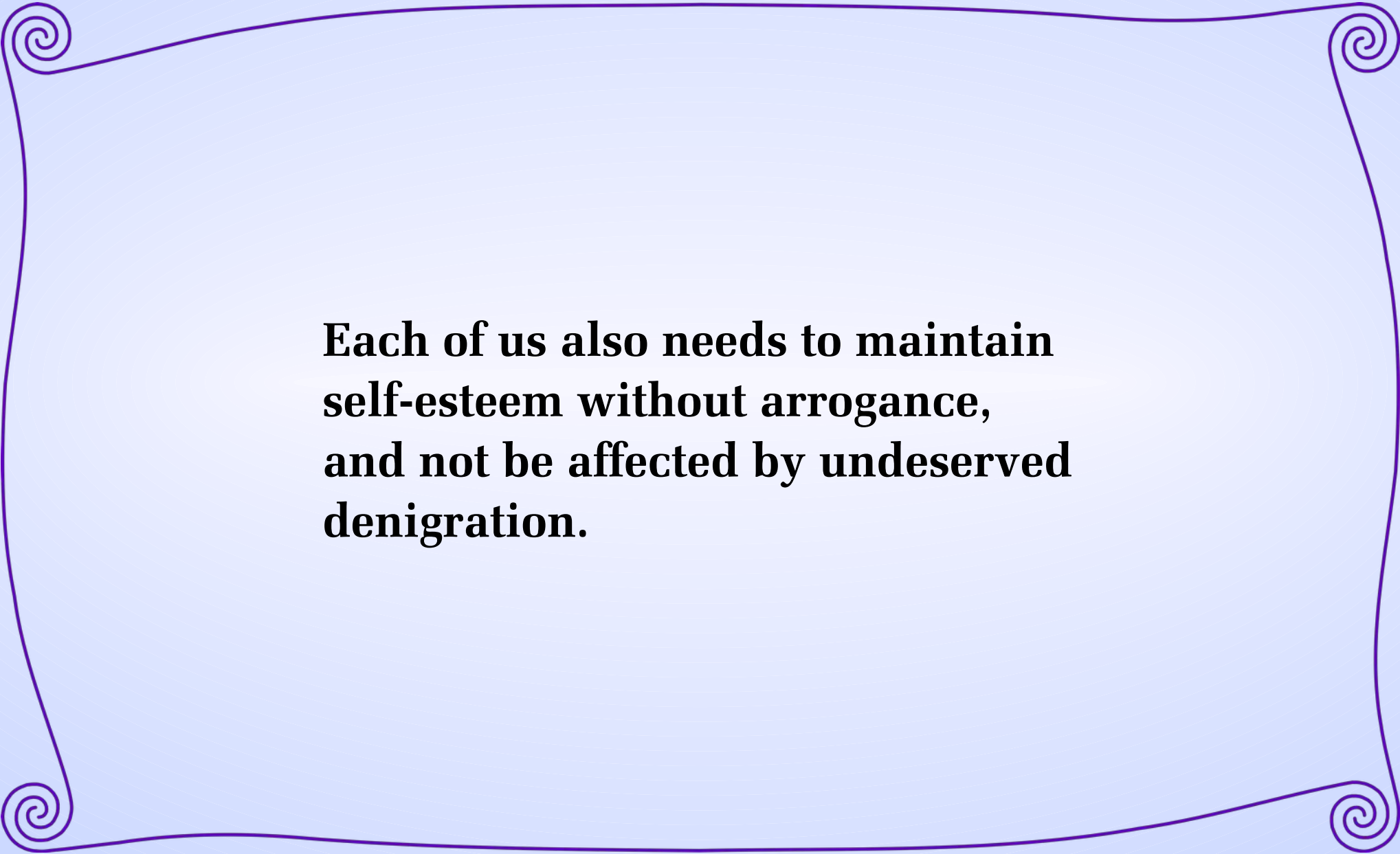
We develop personal power as we stick to the truth despite pressure or temptation to do otherwise.

We develop personal power as we follow our conscience amid pressure to do otherwise.

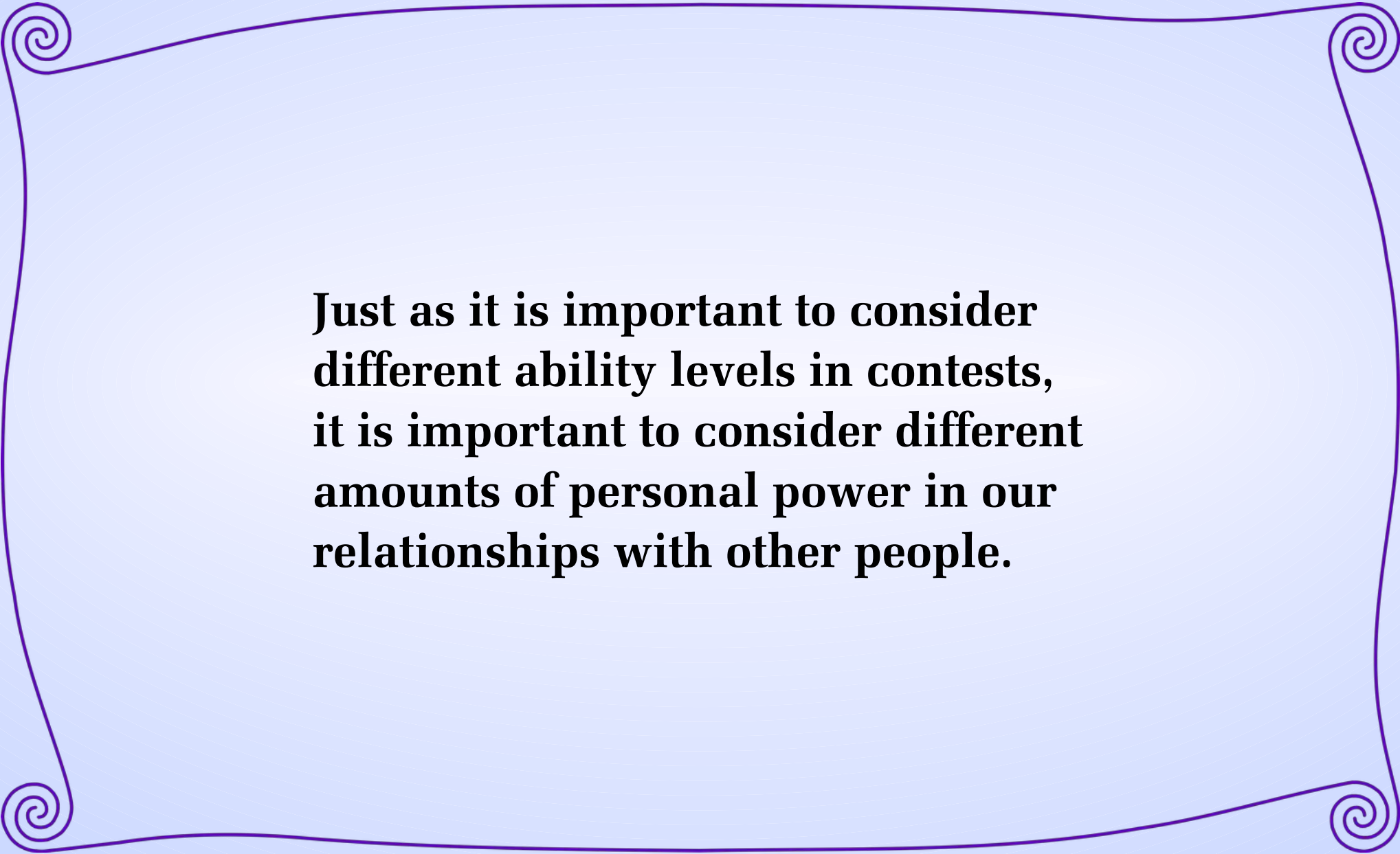
We also develop personal power when we sacrifice, giving without receiving, using wisdom to choose what, when and to whom.

Spirituality does not lead directly or necessarily to worldly power, position, protection or dominance, but it does lead to inner strength, confidence, peace, and standing that cannot be taken away except by the natural results of one's own behavior. Spiritual development gradually results in greater personal power.

Whatever one's skills, abilities, or personal power, every soul is a creature of the Divine and deserves love, from everyone. We need to sense the infinite value of each Divine soul. People with greater skills, abilities, position, wealth, or personal power can use it to disenfranchise, exploit or put down others who have less—which is why societies establish rules for fairness.



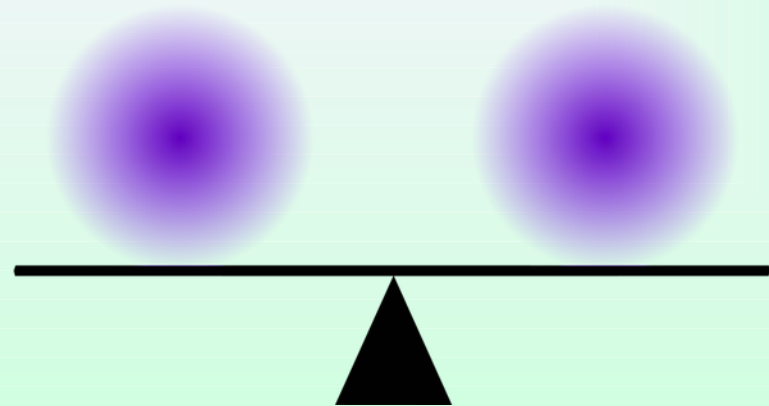
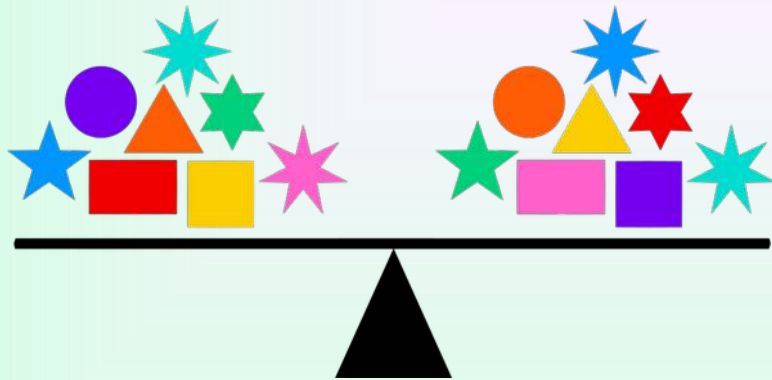
**Each of us also needs to maintain
self-esteem without arrogance,
and not be affected by undeserved
denigration.**



**Just as it is important to consider
different ability levels in contests,
it is important to consider different
amounts of personal power in our
relationships with other people.**

Surprise 5

Equality

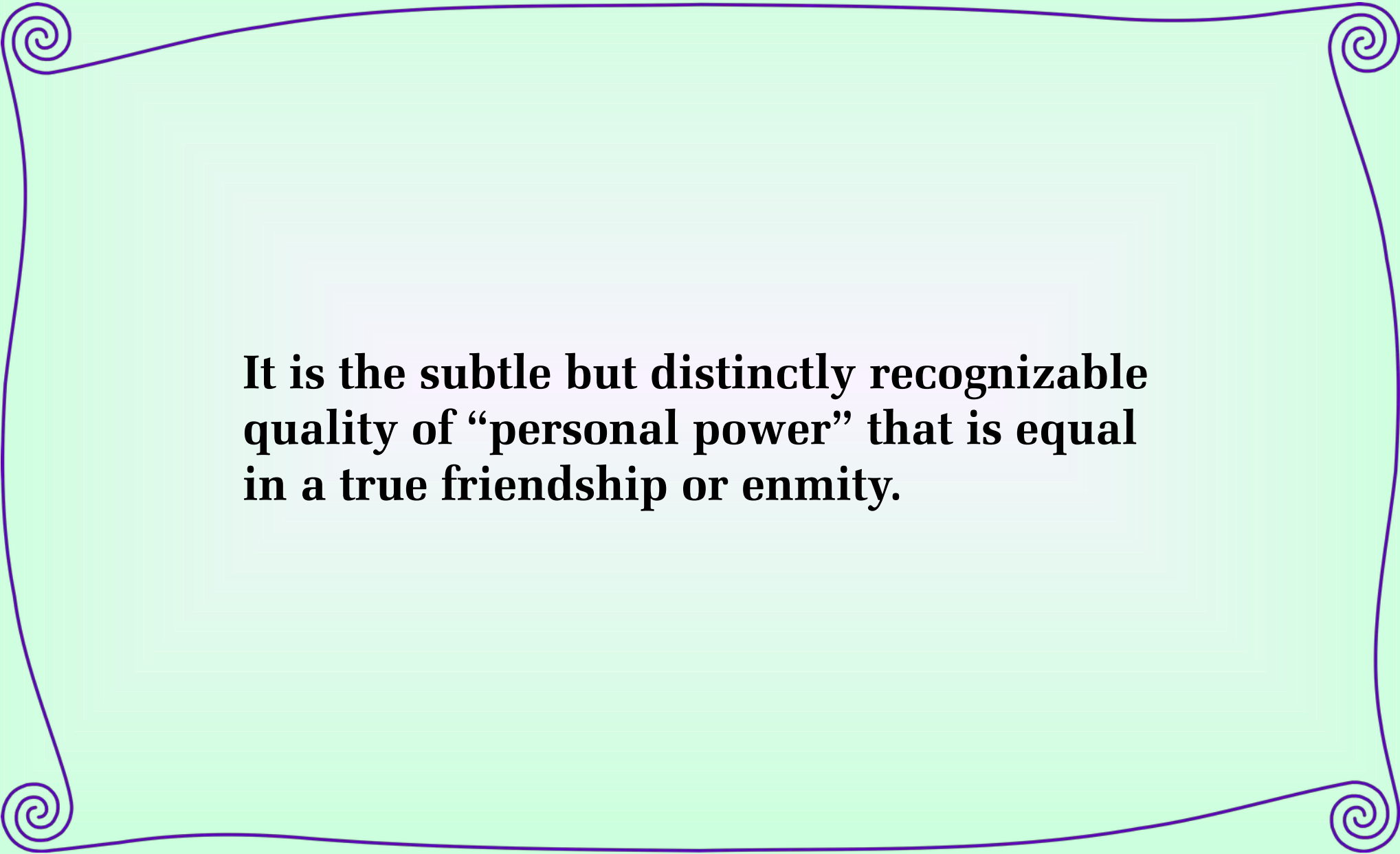


When we recognize our manifold inequalities, we find that equality can also exist. An ancient maxim says,

**Friendship and enmity
can only exist between equals.**

**Friendship and enmity
can only exist between equals.**

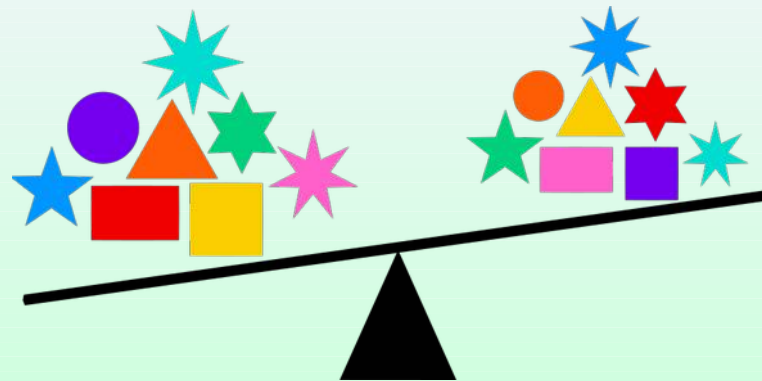
**How so? In what way are friends or enemies equal, and why can't they be unequal?
People's essential beings are of equal worth, but how can people be equal in life?**

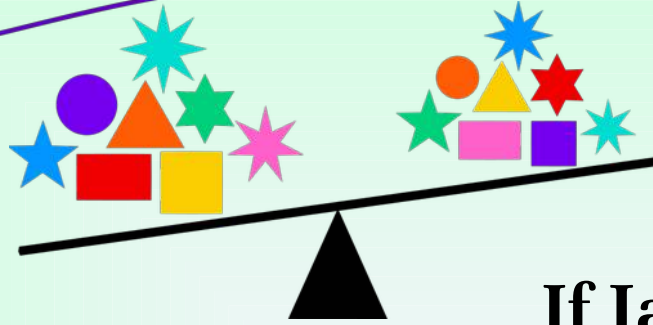


It is the subtle but distinctly recognizable quality of “personal power” that is equal in a true friendship or enmity.

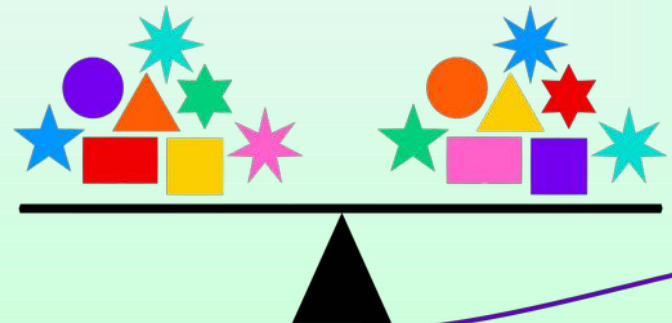
A true friendship is reciprocal, although it does not submit to accounting practices: many facets of a friendship cannot be measured and tallied on a balance sheet. Friendship doesn't fit into the box of commerce. There is, however, a general sense of balance; when a relationship is out of balance, people can feel it, especially the one who is contributing significantly more.

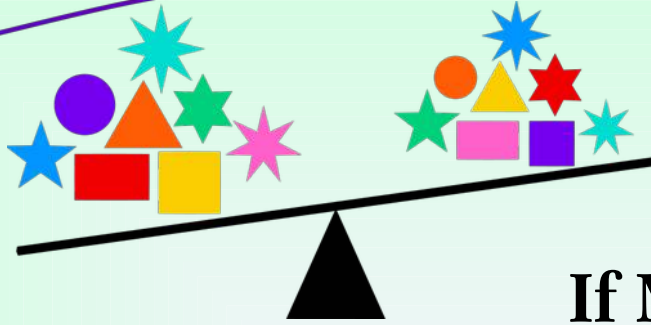
To help imagine why inequalities of personal power cannot result in true friendship, here are some examples of material inequalities that can cause imbalanced relationships.



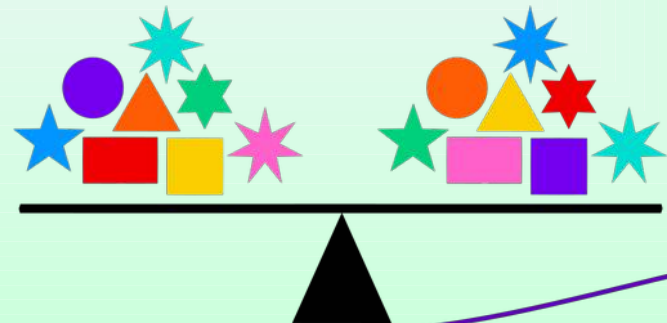


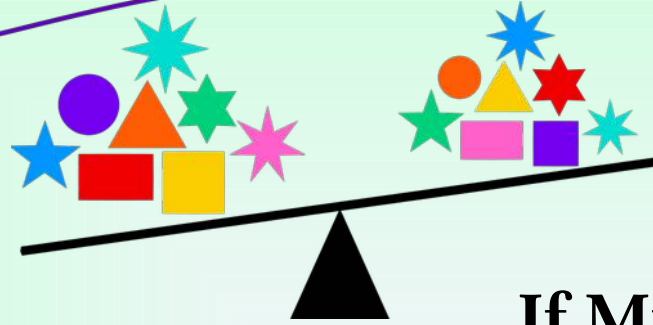
If Jack is wealthy and Jill is not, Jack will have to pay for meals when they go to expensive restaurants, and may also need to instruct Jill on special etiquette followed at posh establishments. If the difference in wealth is only slight, Jill could often pay for meals and might have strengths that balance the relationship.



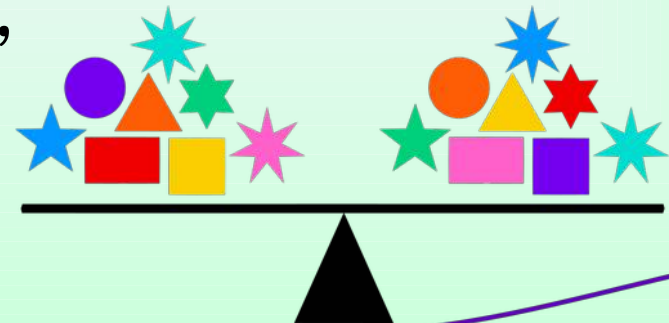


If Mary is highly intelligent and Jane is not, Mary will dominate—and should dominate—on matters of analysis, memory, and strategy. They may have great affection for one another, but the relationship is inherently imbalanced. If there is only a small difference in intelligence and Jane has greater social skills, a wider circle of influence, or greater expertise in a particular area, this can balance Mary's intelligence and a true friendship can exist.





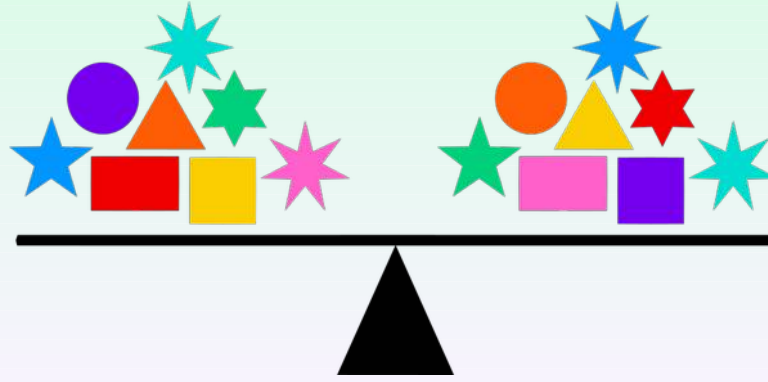
If Mike is spiritually very advanced and Tom is not, however much they like each other, a true friendship would not be feasible—they would want to spend time in different environments and with different people, and converse deeply on completely different topics. They would have different approaches to morality, spirituality and life itself.



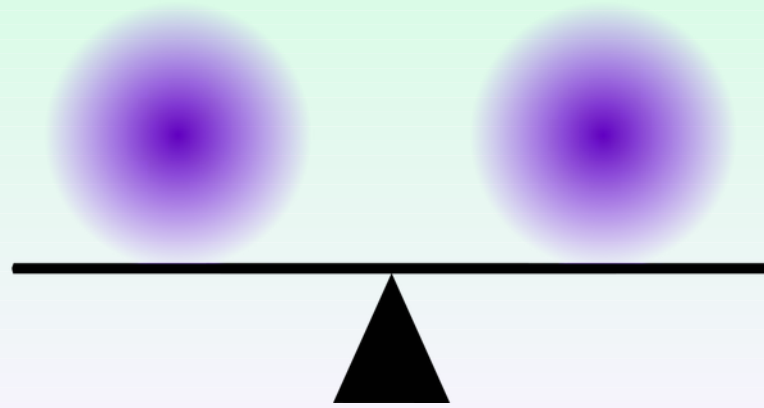
Hopefully we can extrapolate from these examples and see that, when two people with different overall amounts of personal power attempt to be friends, the more powerful one will always dominate, even without intending to, even without acting in a dominating manner. It just happens, whether either person wants it to or not. The relationship can be very friendly, but it is not a true friendship. Someone with more personal power can be a friend to someone with less, but someone with less cannot be a true friend to someone with more.

Relationships between unequals can provide great benefit and joy—parents and children, teachers and students, elder and younger siblings, mentor and novice, performer and fan. These relationships can be very wonderful and loving; they are just not friendships.

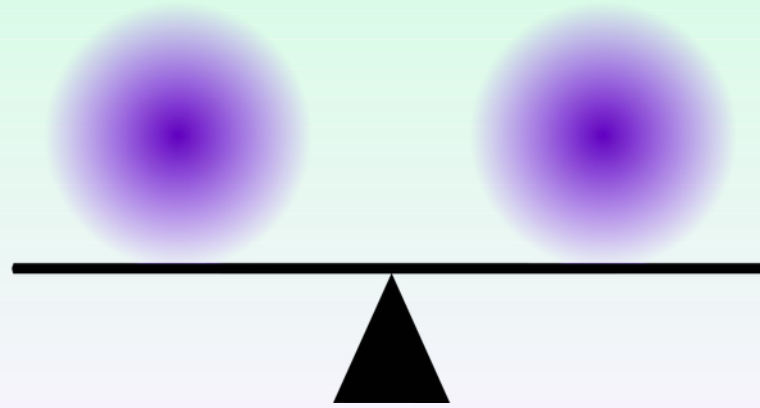
In any relationship, only oneself truly knows what one has given or sacrificed. Most people count what they give as highly valuable, because they know what went into it. They count what others give as less valuable, because they don't know what went into it. In happy personal relationships, both people give what they feel is 65%. People who evaluate friendships by commerce alone, aiming to give and get 50%, typically feel unsatisfied and unfulfilled.



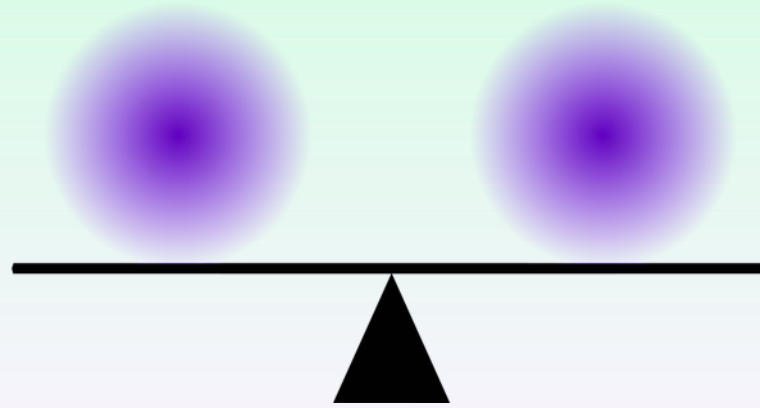
Friends are not identical and are not supposed to be identical; there is just a balance, in addition to mutual affection and interests. People often mistake affection for friendship; they think that if they feel affection for someone, that person is their friend. But true friendship is more than just one-way or two-way affection.



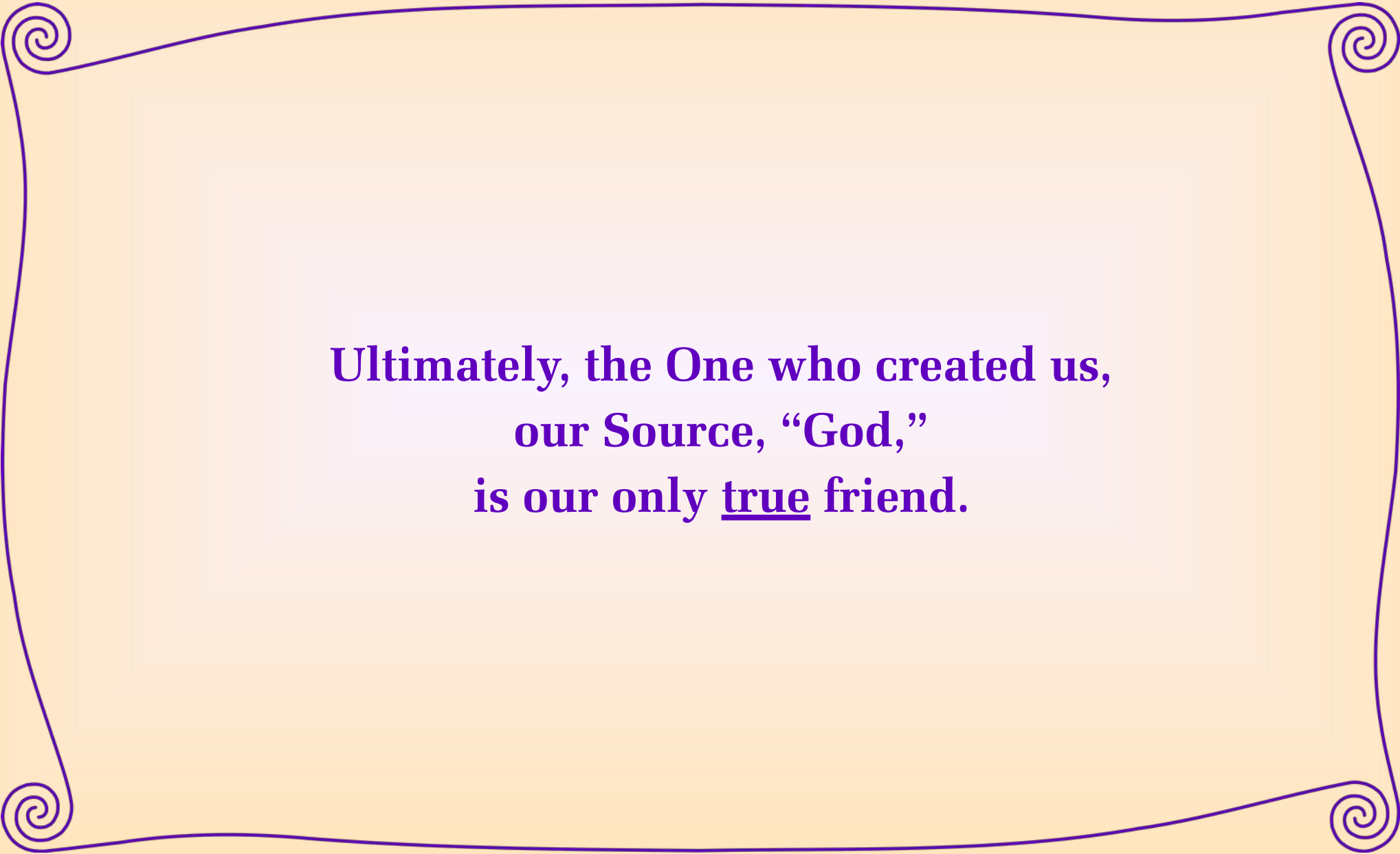
**True friendship cannot exist when
one person has significantly greater
personal power than the other;
equality really is required.**



The principle of equality in friendship described in the maxim has been largely lost to modern societies, especially among people who have accepted the fallacy that everybody is equal. Abandoning this principle, people are at a loss for how to wisely select friends and mates, resulting in much hurt, loneliness, confusion and broken relationships.



We can get back on track by considering both inequalities and equalities, personal skills and personal power, what is measurable and what is immeasurable.



Ultimately, the One who created us,
our Source, “God,”
is our only true friend.

Surprise 6

Undue Affection



Affection feels good. When we even think about an object of our affection, we feel good—warm fuzzies. We sometimes use the word “love,” as in “I love strawberries!” This isn’t really love, although affection can lead us toward love.* Because affection feels good and often stimulates giving and good intent, it is frequently presumed to be spiritual.

*** See *About Love, Part 1 What is Love?*, p. 1-4 or video/audio 1, *Part 3 Pleasure → Affection → Love*, p. 8-12 or video/audio 3, https://wisdom2joy.com/About_Love.**

What causes us to feel affection? The object of our affection provides us pleasure, or reminds us of something pleasurable, or we expect or imagine that it will provide pleasure. Sometimes we feel affection for someone due to a resonance, or an old, forgotten memory, or even an old, forgotten debt that we now wish to pay.

When expressing affection, people usually expect a return later, even if it's only kindness. If it isn't forthcoming, people often criticize the receiver of their affection. This shows that the giving was commerce—there was a string attached.

When one gives purely from the heart without any strings or expectations, the receiver does have an unspoken duty—but this duty comes from Life itself, not from the giver. If a beloved elder conveys priceless knowledge to a youngster, the elder does not expect the child to give comparable value in return. However, when the child grows to maturity, the adult has a duty to give value to someone else, perhaps another child. We all have a duty to Life to give as we have received.

One of the most poignant, crushing experiences in life is realizing that someone for whom we have great affection and to whom we have given deeply from our heart does not care so much about us. We usually don't find out until we are in need, and the person has an opportunity to do something from the heart (not just out of duty)—but doesn't.



**We hurt because we had an expectation:
we imagined that the person had a
similar affection for us too, or at least
heartfelt gratitude, and would act
accordingly. If we don't expect something
and it doesn't happen, we're not hurt.**

(*Hmm* ... Imagine how Creation might “feel” when we humans, capable of great morality and nobility, act instead with selfishness, greed and malice, ignoring all the great sacrifice that came before us.)

Hurt occurs because we were under a self-created illusion. Illusion always ultimately hurts in some way. Untruth is a pain in the side of the universe. Removing illusion cannot occur without going through the underlying pain.

“Undue affection,” as it is called, occurs when one’s giving includes a hope or expectation of reciprocity which is unfulfilled and apparently unwarranted. There is a string attached that comes up empty. Even though one felt generous and benevolent when expressing affection, it was commerce, which can result in loss.

**Commerce and human spirituality
go in different directions.**

**Commerce is founded upon and rewards division,
whereas humanity's present spiritual direction
aims toward intelligent awareness of unity.**

When we are focused on the material, we are full of affections and disaffections, moving from pleasure to pain and back again. People actually act out of e-motion and affection, rather than rationality, conscience, or justice—until we start to feel more pleasure from rationality, conscience, and justice than we feel from short-lived, material pleasures.

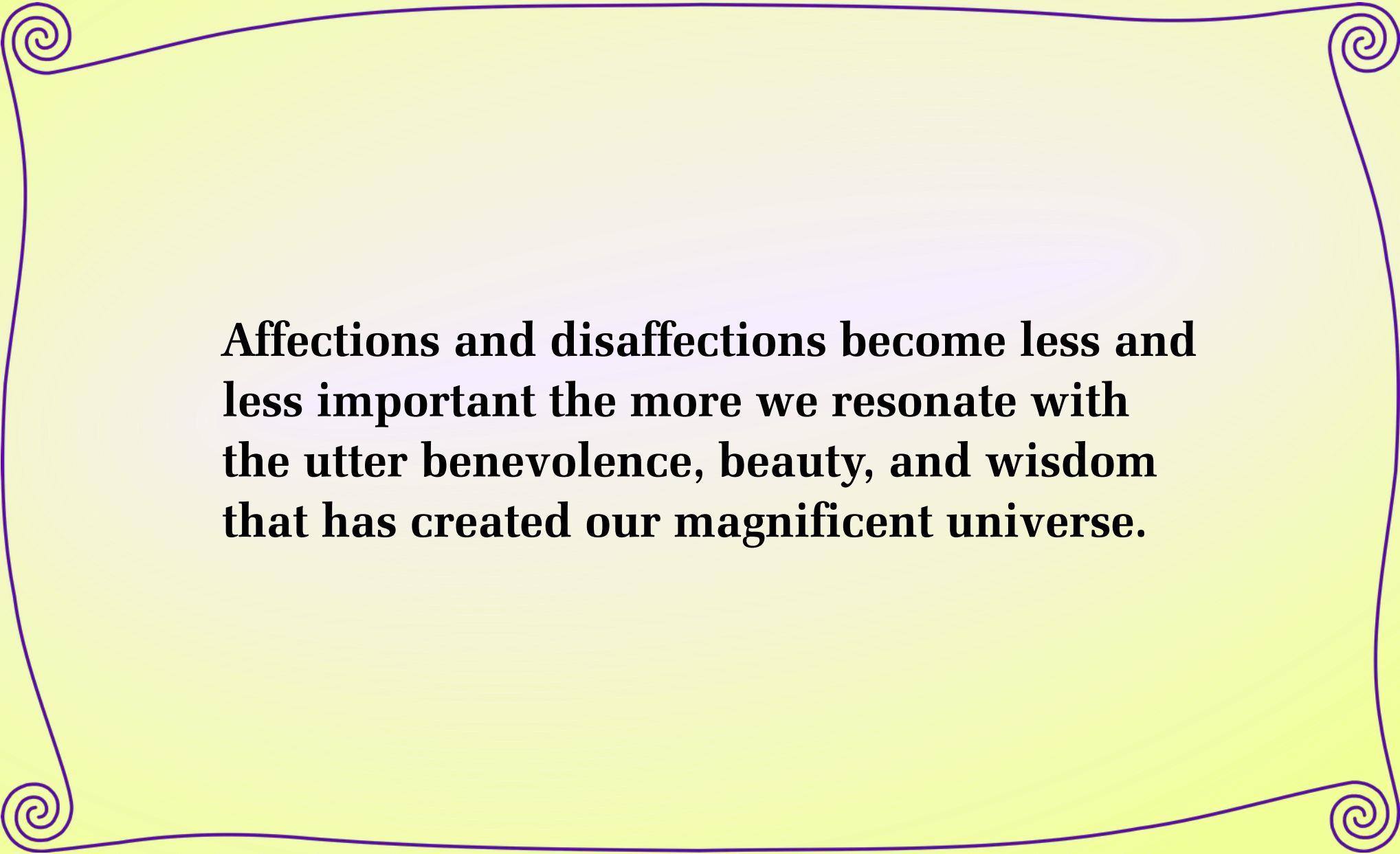
The further one travels on the spiritual path, the more one releases illusion—and the more one drops affections too. One still appreciates all things and all people, and sees each for what it truly is and not what it could be or what one hopes it to be. One recognizes that a scorpion is a scorpion and will sting by its nature, rather than hoping it will change because of our affection and good example. Without illusion, we perceive and accept people as they are. We are not blinded by our own affection, and we see whether others really have affection for us or not.



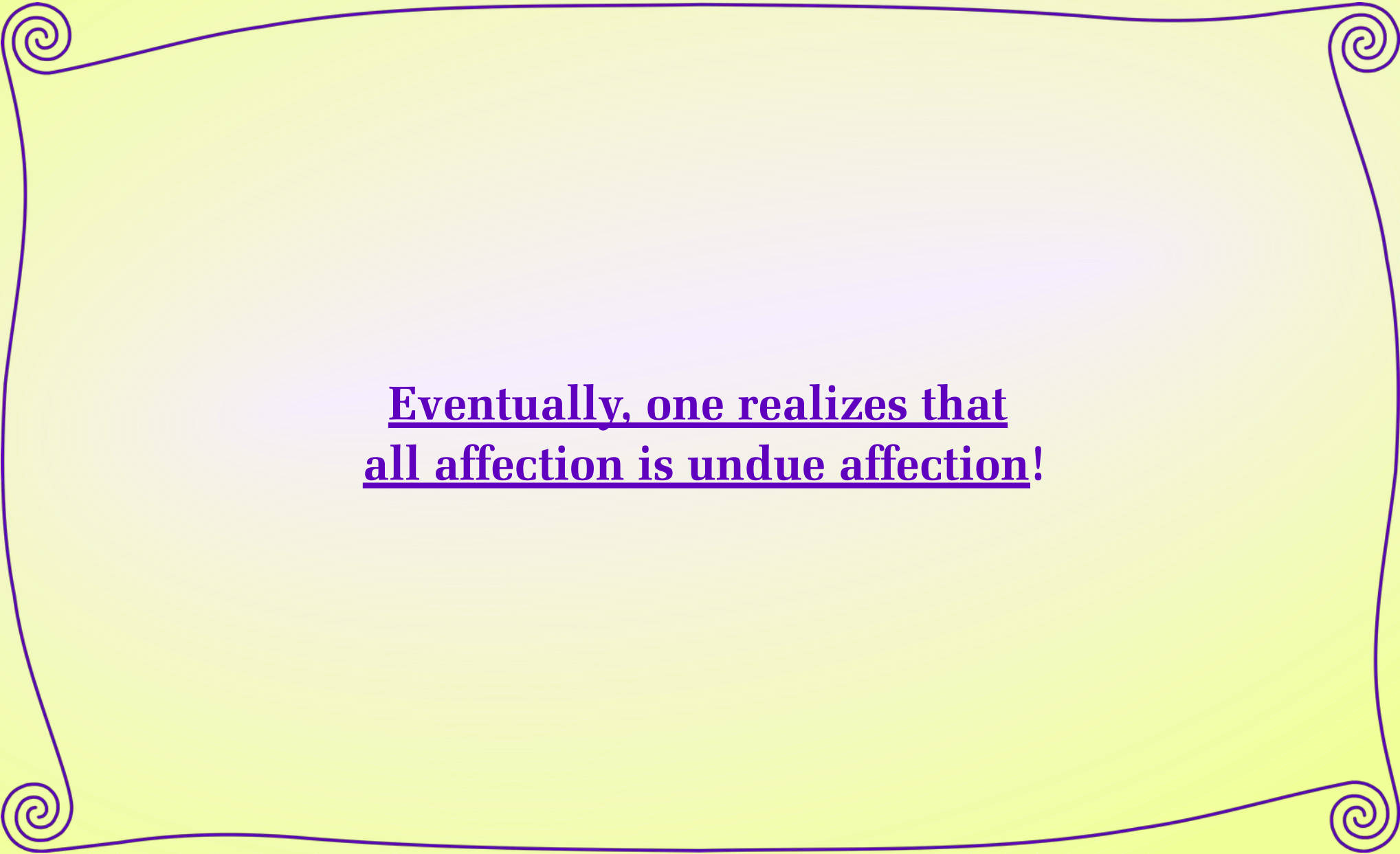
The more we release affections, the more we act from truth, rationality, conscience, and justice. We still enjoy strawberries, we are just not as attached to the pleasure they provide because we get even more pleasure from truth and justice. If we have a health condition and shouldn't eat strawberries, it's easier to forego them because we derive more and more pleasure from Goodness itself.

Even affections and attachments that seem harmless and reasonable can actually result in a great deal of harm. A mother in her later years told her daughter, “I’ve never understood you, and I hate things I can’t understand.” The daughter had suffered since childhood from her mother’s antagonism, even though her mother was very well-meaning, doing good for many—she was just attached to understanding things.* If everyone were this attached to understanding, advanced souls could not find hospitable families in which to incarnate and humanity would suffer for it.

***A true story.**



Affections and disaffections become less and less important the more we resonate with the utter benevolence, beauty, and wisdom that has created our magnificent universe.



Eventually, one realizes that
all affection is undue affection!

Surprise 7

Sacrifice: Folly or Virtue?



Sacrifice is voluntarily relinquishing something that we own, that we have a right to. Each of us is here because of great sacrifice. Our mother sacrificed her own body, physically and energetically, to create our own. Ideally, both our parents sacrificed, day in and day out, for many years.



Sacrifice is often associated with suffering, penance, and even wallowing in pain and guilt due to a sin or transgression. This horrible notion of sacrifice has been planted in the human psyche for purposes of indoctrination and control. It is based on an idea that a god or goddess wants us to suffer and grovel in exchange for favors. We need to blow these ideas about sacrifice to smithereens with truth-bombs.* Is a god or goddess who wants underlings to be in pain worthy of worship? If a god or goddess needs our suffering or our worship, is he or she worthy of the ultimate throne in our hearts?

*** *Lifting the Heaviness*, https://wisdom2joy.com/Lifting_the_Heaviness.**

† See also *Domination, God and Savior-hood*, p. 4-6 or video/audio 2, http://wisdom2joy.com/Domination_God_and_Savior-hood.

**Sacrifice is often joyful. We
sacrifice for our children and for
anyone we love or like. Elders
routinely sacrifice for younger folk.
We give just because we want to.**

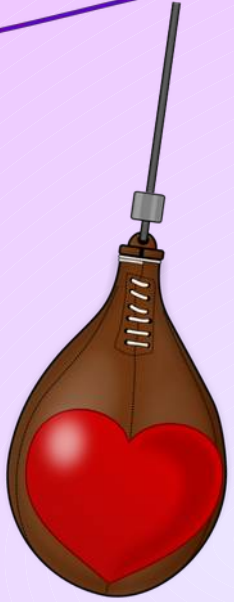
Because of the limits in our three-dimensional world, we sacrifice something every single day: we spend time doing one thing and not another, we eat some foods and not others, we work toward one goal and not another. Athletes endure pain and suffering; musicians practice for hours upon hours; scientists spend late nights in laboratories. Spiritually, we sacrifice pride, selfishness, and greed. Anyone who has deliberately accomplished anything has suffered and sacrificed something.

All of us, without exception, exist and have numerous comforts because of the sacrifices of others. Generations of forbears sacrificed and left rewards to their offspring and to the world. We have industries, conveniences, knowledge, better health and longer life because countless people have sacrificed and contributed to our collective enlightenment. People often forget this fact, adopting a philosophy that everybody (especially oneself) is entitled to whatever pleasures they want without having to sacrifice anything. They have forgotten the age-old precept, “A benefit for an obligation, and an obligation for a benefit.”

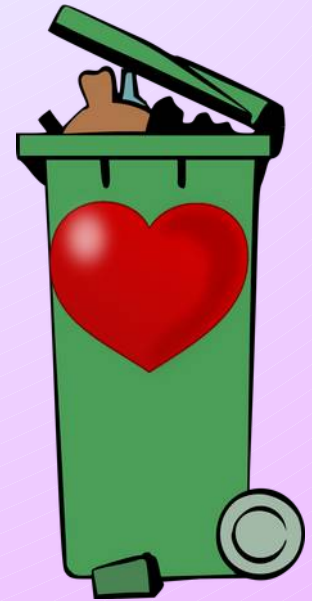
Sacrifice and giving are inherently good:
none of us would exist without them.
Some gifts can be harmful rather than
beneficial—we don't give matches to
children or housekeys to thieves—but
giving is intrinsically a good thing.

We give to some people at some times, and not to other people at other times. We give material things, and also of our time and caring. Sometimes we give in exchange for something—commerce. Sometimes we give as an investment, risking one thing in hopes of gaining something else or something more—also commerce. Sometimes we give without thought of any return—pure sacrifice.

When we look back with hindsight, we may notice that sometimes our giving was wise—its good fruit outweighed the loss; and other times it was foolish—it was wasted or even resulted in harm.



It is usually not good, or spiritual, to be used as a doormat, garbage can, or punching bag for other people's dirt or hostility. Inviting others to harm or abuse us, or harming ourselves, does not help anyone else, and is not spiritual.



It is not spiritual despite the fact that many religions extol being abused, victimized, martyred, or downtrodden as virtuous. Sometimes outright masochism is deemed praiseworthy. Most religious images of holy people depict them as sad and forlorn—not happy, despite their descriptions of ecstasy. So spirituality has acquired a reputation as sad, weak and foolish, rather than as joyful, strong, intelligent and thriving.

It's important to remember that if we are depleted, we can't help anyone else. There is a delicate balance between selfish and unselfish care for oneself. The balance depends acutely on one's inner and outer resources, and on one's actual needs, not just desires. As usual, whether one can prudently assist others in a situation can only be rightfully assessed by oneself.

**Pure sacrifice is giving without expecting
or even hoping for compensation or reward.**

It is not gambling that we will get a payback later—that is speculation, investment, commerce. Pure sacrifice is a willing imbalance. It is totally stupid from a commercial standpoint: why would one give without getting anything in return?

**After our heart opens, we are more
inclined to sacrifice purely, without
any intent to gain. We just give.
The more our heart opens,
the more we give.**



**Find someone who gives much to many,
and ask them why they give so much more
than they receive. If they venture an answer,
it will probably be something like, “I didn’t
realize that,” or “I don’t know, I just do it
without thinking,” or “I just like to.”
It’s just their nature.**

When we sacrifice purely again and again, without any wish for compensation, we grow spiritually. This growth is not like getting a medal or star for each event, but rather overall growth of our character and soul. We become a source of goodness, truth and strength, uplifting others with words, actions, and just by our presence. We derive our sustenance and energy more and more from a Divine, intangible Source.

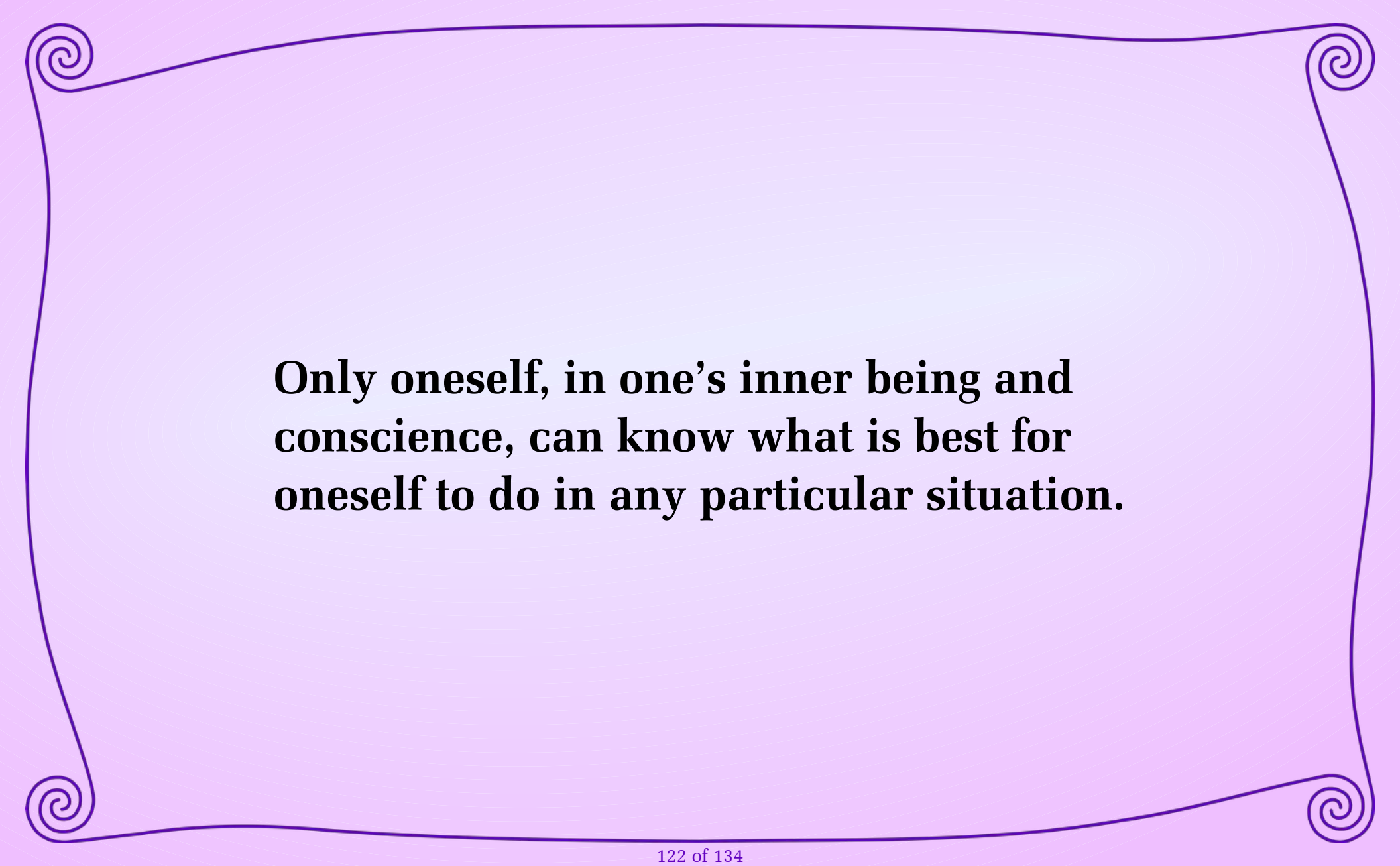
Occasionally, it is good and spiritual to not seek redress after being abused or harmed. The only way we know this is from our conscience, deep inside. It is just a feeling, and we often don't know the reason.

Sometimes sacrifice takes the form of enduring injustice. It's important to realize that forgiving a harmdoer from reparation or penalty is not always wise, loving, or spiritual. But if the harm is done to us personally, our conscience (not our fear) might advise us to bear the harm without compensation or reward. We can't trick the system and sacrifice on purpose for a gain, however—that would be commerce and it doesn't work on the spiritual path.

For a more detailed discussion, see *Forgiveness and “Karma”, Rebuke and Repentance*, p. 5-6, and *Communities: Restoration and Penalty*, p. 10, https://wisdom2joy.com/Forgiveiness_and_Karma.

If someone receives a curse, for example, one can allow the curse to bounce off and reflect back. If one has the strength, one can also allow the curse in and experience its injustice and harm, absorbing the negative energy into one's own heart. This latter response is a sacrifice. It increases one's personal power, although it is not done for this reason. Saintly people are known to take on the suffering of others out of pure compassion.

If we feel an impulse to let an injustice go, it's good to question ourselves to see if our inclination is due to weakness, cowardice, or co-dependency (meaning that we benefit in another way); or because we see a way to profit from it; or because we want to turn the tables later.



Only oneself, in one's inner being and conscience, can know what is best for oneself to do in any particular situation.

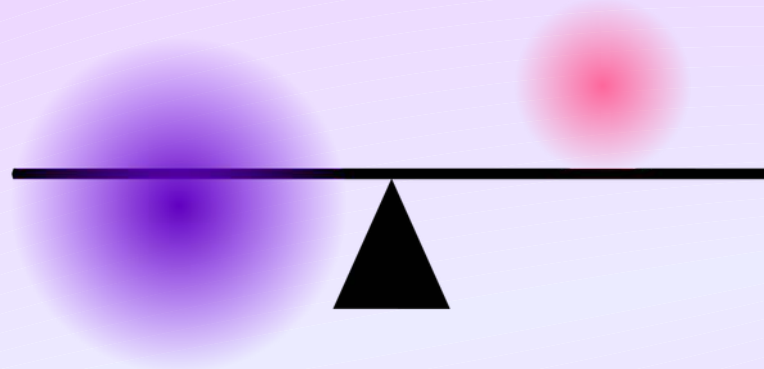
Only oneself can determine whether a sacrifice was or is likely to be foolish or virtuous. Only oneself knows what was given, with what hopes, and with what spirit.

Pure sacrifice is foundational to
spiritual progress, from beginning on
the spiritual path until ... infinity.

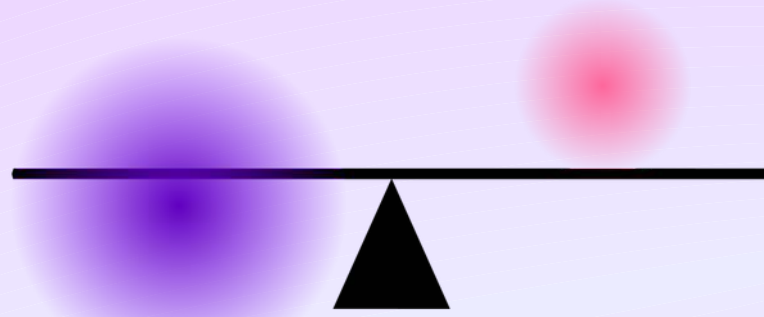


The link between pure sacrifice and spiritual growth, and between spiritual growth and personal power, is the basis of an ancient principle that has been largely forgotten in the West, to the detriment of society, general happiness, and our spiritual progress. This ancient principle is based on the facts that:

- (1) people are unequal and have unequal capabilities;**
- (2) more advanced souls tend to have more “personal power;” and**
- (3) giving and sacrifice tend to be characteristic of more advanced souls.**

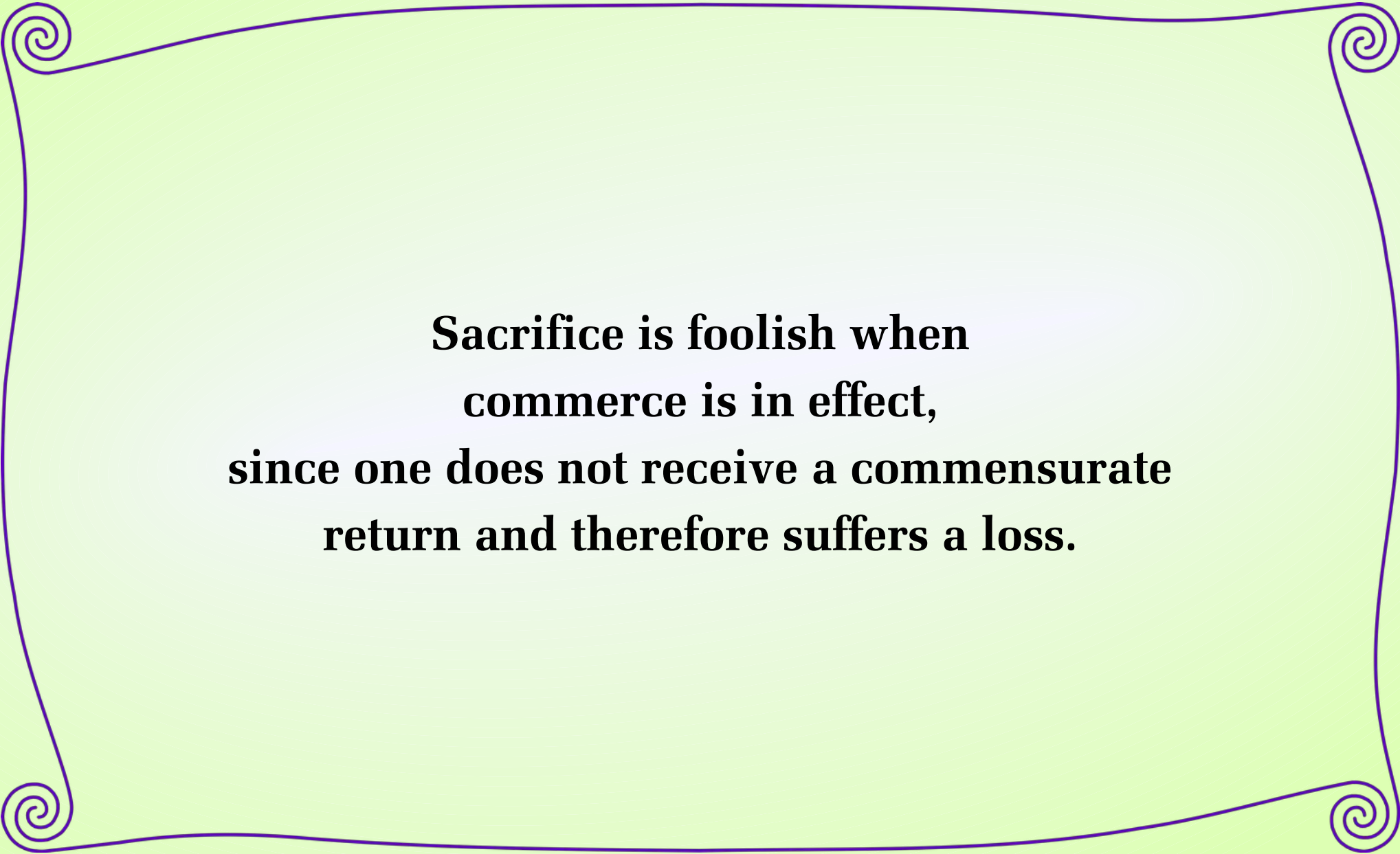


This principle is that, in a conflict, an advanced soul sacrifices for the benefit of a weaker one, much like parents, teachers, or a “handicap” in sports.

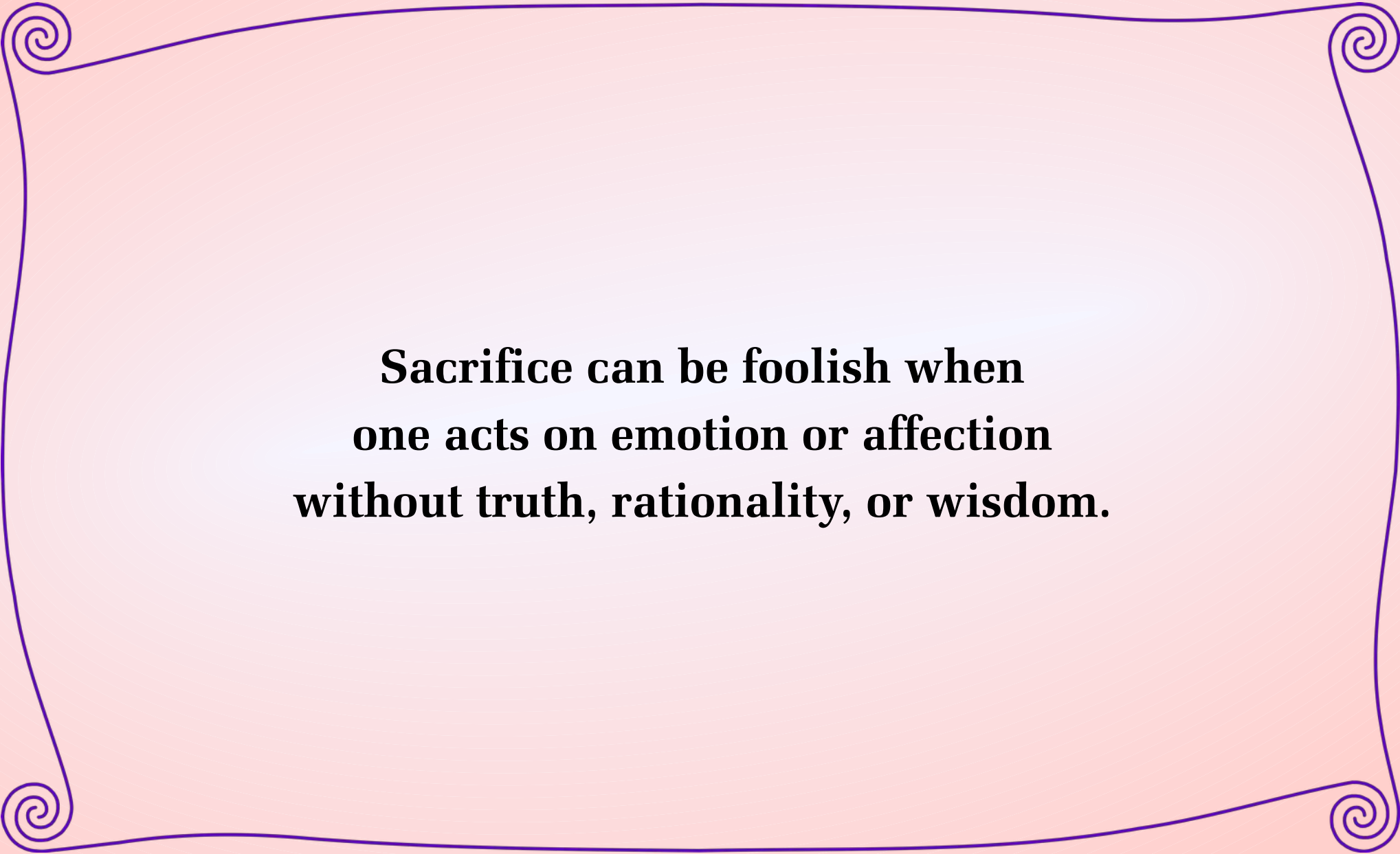


This principle is an unwritten element of Eastern cultures where spiritual advancement is both acknowledged to exist and is respected. People with more personal power are expected to defer, to forgive more, when injured by someone with less power. This principle is directly opposed to the philosophy of commerce. This principle serves to uphold the values of compassion, kindness, humility, and sacrifice in society.

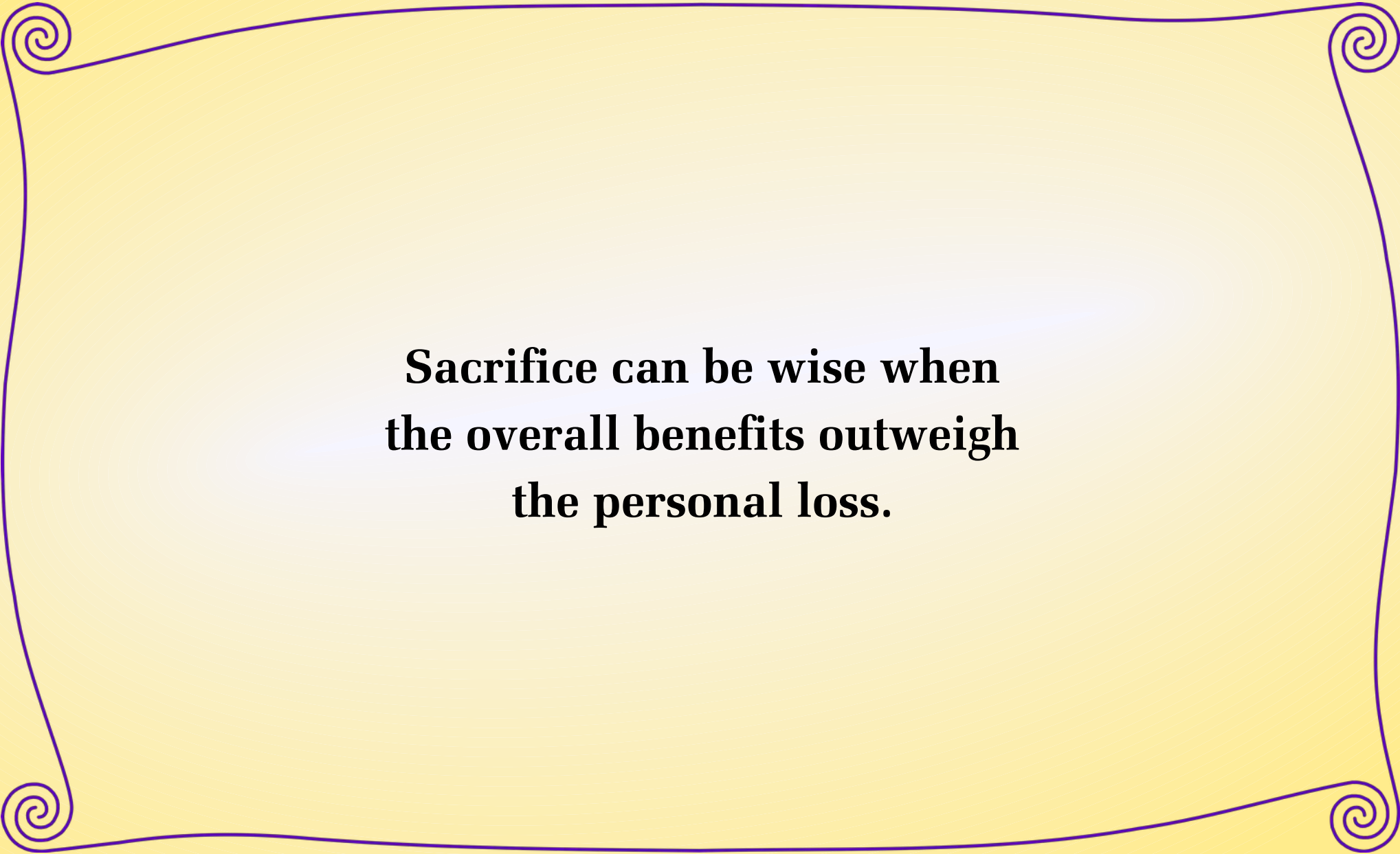
This practice is voluntary on the part of those with greater personal power. Its purpose is not to take advantage of great souls, but rather to benefit younger souls. Its purpose is not to encourage inertia, but rather to assist and inspire toward greater effort. People who do give more and sacrifice more are respected in cultures where this principle is honored, and where both the material and immaterial are valued.



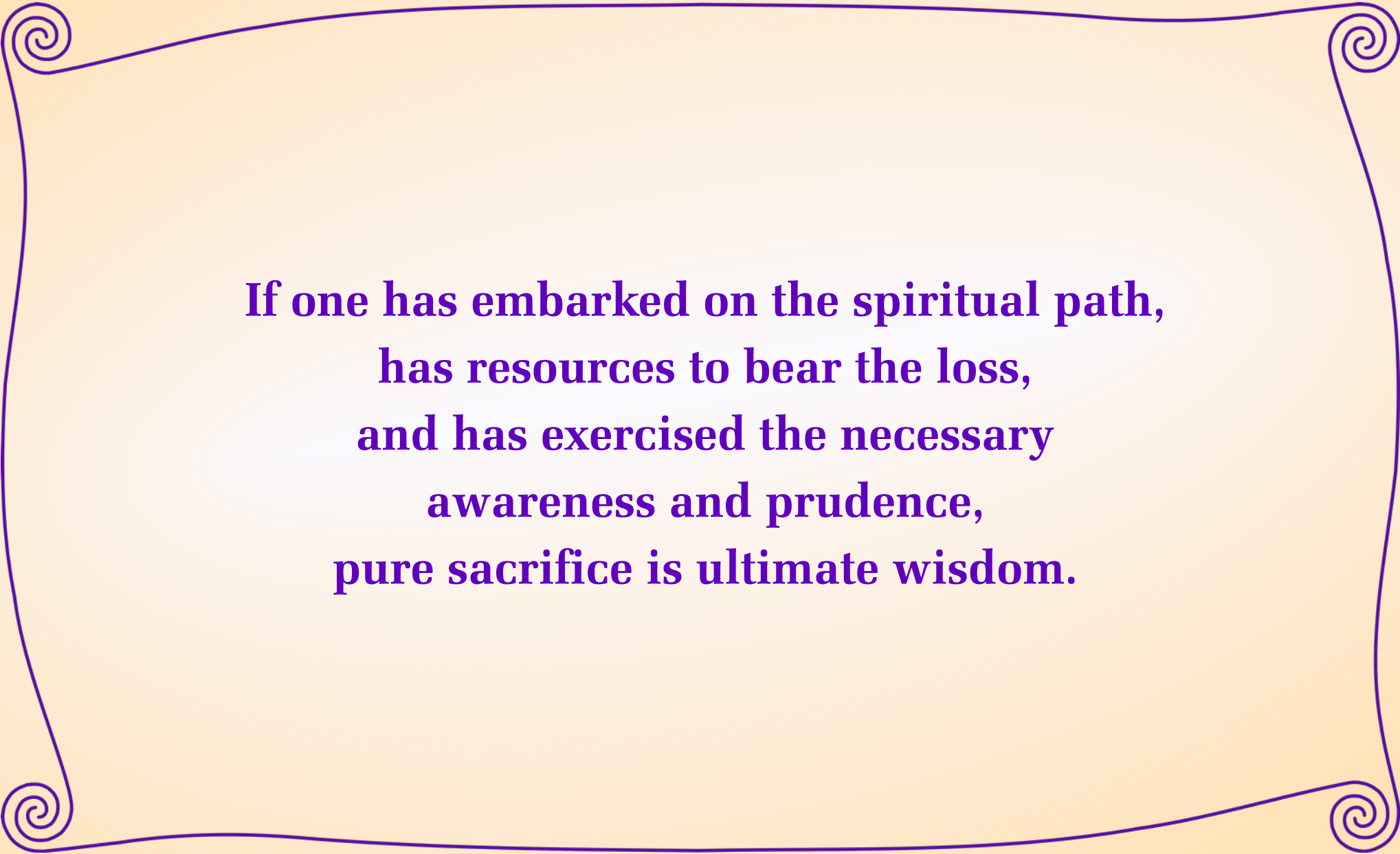
**Sacrifice is foolish when
commerce is in effect,
since one does not receive a commensurate
return and therefore suffers a loss.**



**Sacrifice can be foolish when
one acts on emotion or affection
without truth, rationality, or wisdom.**



**Sacrifice can be wise when
the overall benefits outweigh
the personal loss.**



**If one has embarked on the spiritual path,
has resources to bear the loss,
and has exercised the necessary
awareness and prudence,
pure sacrifice is ultimate wisdom.**

Pure sacrifice is also ultimate **Joy.**

To Give or Not To Give?

Alova

January 2022



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