

# WINGS AND BONDS

Translated from Bengali

by

**DILIP KUMAR ROY**

HARI KRISHNA MANDIR TRUST, PUNE

YOGI SRI  
KRISHNAPREM

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

All Rights Reserved

1st Edition, 1968

2nd revised Edition, 1975

3rd Edition, 1992

4th Edition, 2018

HARI KRISHNA MANDIR TRUST, PUNE

1st E-Book Edition, 2019

*Typesetting: Sophia Rix*



AUTHOR WITH HIS LITTLE MUSIC PUPIL, JHARNA



# DEDICATION

To

Dr Satyendra Nath Sen,  
Vice Chancellor  
Calcutta University

With warm regards,

November 14, 1975

DILIP kumar ROY

## CONTENTS

DEDICATION	5
CONTENTS	VI
FOREWORD	VIII
INTRODUCTION	13
SRI KRISHNAPREM	XIV
PREFACE	XXV
PART I	29
SRI KRISHNAPREM	30
SRI KRISHNAPREM VIS-À-VIS SRI AUROBINDO	31
PART II	79
THE REFUGE	80
REMINISCENCES	81
ONE	81
TWO	82
FOUR	89
FIVE	91
SIX	94
SEVEN	96
EIGHT	97
NINE	101
TEN	105
ELEVEN	107
TWELVE	109
THIRTEEN	121
FOURTEEN	128
FIFTEEN	135
SIXTEEN	146
SEVENTEEN	148
EIGHTEEN	153
NINETEEN	161

## CONTENTS

PART III	165
LETTERS	165
THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER	166
HIS LAST LETTER	319
ASHISH'S LETTER	321
APPENDICES	327
APPENDIX A	328
APPENDIX B	336
APPENDIX C	339

## FOREWORD

A mystic alone can fully appreciate a mystic. This book is the story of a great philosopher written by a leading mystic poet of India. It is the story of a lifelong friendship between two dedicated pilgrims of the Spirit – the kind of friendship that turns mutuality into a sense of identity in the Divine.

Our author, Sri Dilip Kumar Roy, is essentially a lover – a lover of beauty, a lover of man, a lover of greatness, a lover of God. Out of the deep love that flows freely at the centre of his being has blossomed forth his many-faceted personality as a novelist, an essayist, a playwright, a humanitarian, a poet, and a God-intoxicated singer. When I first met him at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, in October 1938, I found in him the most warm-hearted *gurubhai*. The magnetism of his personality was second only to that of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Those delightful evenings when he used to pour out his heart through his soul-entrancing devotional songs are just unforgettable. He used to inspire his vast audience by the magic of divine love, because he was himself lost in the love of the Divine.

Under the affectionate guidance of Sri Aurobindo, the loving heart of Dilip Kumar turned more and more to the Divine with increasing purity and fervour. Deeper springs of creativity were opened in him. Having produced about sixty books in Bengali and twenty in English – all delightful reading and illuminating – the creative impulse in him still seems to be fresh and strong. The establishment of an independent Ashram in Poona, named Hari-Krishna Mandir, which is a centre of light, love and joy to thousands of people, bears witness to a new dimension of his creativity.

In the full flowering of *bhakti* in the life of Sri Dilip Kumar, the *bhakta*, Sri Krishnaprem played a very significant role. Whereas Sri Aurobindo kindled the flame in Dilip's soul, Krishnaprem helped to prevent the gusts of changing wind from blowing it out. Sri Aurobindo set the ideal and the direction; Krishnaprem provided the support

## FOREWORD

and encouragement of a kindred soul. In following the same goal, Dilip and Krishnaprem strengthened each other – Dilip with his devotional songs, and Krishnaprem with his flashes of faith and intuition.

Sri Krishnaprem was indeed a shining example of what *Narada Bhaktisutra* calls *parabhakti* (supreme love). His love of Krishna was illumined by deep philosophic understanding. Dilip Kumar has put together in this book the jewelled sayings and revealing letters of Krishnaprem. They radiate the light and joy of an illumined soul. They sparkle with brilliant flashes of spiritual insight. In making these public, Dilip Kumar has indeed made a valuable contribution to the literature on higher mysticism.

Our author has arranged and organised the sayings of Krishnaprem with rare insight and artistic skill. The reader can hardly miss the central message of a professor turned yogi who “brought British doggedness to bear upon the practice of yoga”. Adroitly set in the background of interesting life-episodes, the gems of his wisdom shine with irresistible charm.

With deep discernment Krishnaprem distinguishes faith from mental belief. Faith is for him “the light which the higher personality sends down to the lower”. It is one’s firm conviction about the Eternal, and as such can keep the flame of aspiration alive amidst the darkness of doubt and despair occasioned by conflicting doctrines and ideas and ever-changing outward happenings. So he could write:

“I keep a whole collection of doubts, grow them in fact like mustard and cress, and when they are ripe, I eat them up.” He defines true faith as “the naked smokeless flame that burns in the secret recesses of the heart”, affording glimpses of the Infinite.

In discussing philosophical and spiritual matters, Krishnaprem has a way of going straight to the very heart of a problem. He always speaks from the depth of his personal realisation. For him *bhakti* is not emotional rapture *as such*, but self-giving to Krishna, which is naturally accompanied by emotional rapture. It is “the offering of the mortal (*ahuti*) in the pure flame of the immortal”. Such self-offering must be, he agrees with Sri Aurobindo, total and unconditional. It

## FOREWORD

involves “the staking of everything that does not matter for the one thing that does”. It is the complete replacement of the ego by Krishna’s will.

Total self-giving to Krishna places one above the disputes of the Vedantist and the Vaishnava. The Vedantist says: “I want to be one with the Supreme.” The Vaishnava says: “The Supreme is Honey. I do not want to be one with Honey – I want to enjoy Honey.” Krishnaprem says: “It is not a question of what I want or don’t want. It is essentially the question of what Krishna wills.” This is *parabhakti*.

Krishnaprem used always to carry with him an image of Krishna as his eternal companion and *Ishta*. For him *bhakti* is not devotion to the Divine in the abstract or as the timeless Essence. It is concrete love of the living manifestation of God. The *Vigraha* of Krishna is not a mere symbol but the manifest reality of the Supreme. But is not that absurd? May be so. But the category of the absurd is, as the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard pointed out, an essential factor in man’s profoundest religious experience. In the eyes of love the image is one with the reality. The holy idol is, as Ramanuja says, an *Archavatara*, a specific mode of manifestation of the supreme mystery that is Krishna. It is the same mystery that gave meaning to Sri Ramakrishna talking to, and receiving constant guidance from, the living image of the Mother Kali.

Supreme love is one with supreme wisdom. A great lover of Krishna, Krishnaprem had what Sri Aurobindo called a “*pashyanti buddhi*”, a seeing intelligence. He had, on the one hand, an unusual “comprehensiveness and wideness” of vision and, on the other, the yogic power to withdraw from the superficial thought movements of contemporary times and discover “a new and abiding source of knowledge”. *Bhakti* led Krishnaprem to discover “Krishna’s Light”. Krishna’s Light is not the light that is seen but *the light that sees*. It is not an object of perception, because all objects are finite and conditioned. It is what *Kena Upanishad* calls “the Mind of the mind”. It is the creative source of all knowledge, the presupposition of all seeing and thinking. It shines beyond all words and thoughts, beyond all mental formations and intellectual constructions. An adequate understanding of Krishna’s Light would enable one to reconcile the seemingly conflicting positions of the Vedantist and

## FOREWORD

the Buddhist. Whereas the Vedantist speaks of the Self (*Atman*), the Buddhist speaks of the No-Self (*Anatman*). In the light of Krishna's Light one can gain the deeper insight that these two doctrines, for all their radical contradiction, are but different ways of expressing the same ultimate truth which is beyond all doctrines. Like different fingers pointing to the same moon, they point to the reality of that one pure, unobjective consciousness which is self-shining and self-revealing. That unobjective consciousness represents the negation of the popular conception of the self as a self-contained and self-sufficient entity. Herein lies the truth of the Buddhist doctrine of No-Self. But that unobjective consciousness is indeed the root and essence of every individual self, the Self of all selves. Herein lies the truth of the Vedantic doctrine of *Atman*.

By virtue of his total renunciation and pure devotion, Krishnaprem's whole being was set on fire with the love of God. In consequence, he found in India his true spiritual home. By giving his soul to India he affirmed his abiding faith in the supremacy of spiritual values. He recognised the historic role of India as God's playground – *Lilabhumi*. He was quick to see that India is the only country in the world where the masses of the people still pay their highest respects to a man of renunciation and spiritual illumination, not to a person of power, position or wealth. India is the only country which has succeeded throughout the centuries in preserving a suitable climate for the flourishing of saints and sages as "custodians of her millennial wisdom and deputies of Love Divine".

The reading of this book is indeed a delightful and illuminating experience. The mystical experiences and miracles narrated here are deeply moving. Krishnaprem's numerous letters shed light upon such perennial problems as the personal and the impersonal aspects of the Spirit, *karma* and freedom, *maya* and the external world, life and philosophy, religion and social progress, humility and humour, the healing power of laughter, *japa* and *mantra* etc. For Krishnaprem, there is only one true spiritual path, and that path is indefinable. It is the blossoming of the individual beyond his ego in Krishna's Light and Love. So he says, "The true path is through the sky and so has no landmarks and no descriptions. All described paths are but the tracings

## FOREWORD

on the earth of the shadow of one who has gone in the sky.”

We are deeply indebted to Sri Dilip Kumar for his charming presentation to the public, with profound feeling and insight, of the variegated experience and wisdom of a person who was, as Ramana Maharshi truly observed, “a rare combination of a *jnani* and a *bhakta*”.

Cultural Integration Fellowship

SAN FRANCISCO,  
May, 1966

HARIDAS CHAUDHURI

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Dilip Kumar Roy is always prodigally ready to share with others his spiritual treasures, whether through his devotional songs or, more lastingly, through his many books, in Bengali or English, flowing unremittingly from his versatile pen. Although a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and for years a resident of the Pondicherry Ashram, he often turned in perplexity to a fellow-traveller on the road – Sri Krishnaprem, who had come out from England to knock at India’s door, and had very soon found it opened unto him. My own short tribute, following, at best evokes only the external image. Sri Dilip Kumar sought concrete answers to many of his deeper inner conflicts and doubts, and the personal letters he received in reply (and so wisely preserved), he now publishes, along with his reminiscences, in *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, convinced that they may help to clear away debris for others also stumbling along the same path.

Sri Krishnaprem never sought disciples, and, in the earlier days, repelled rather than welcomed intrusions into the privacy of his personal *sadhana*. Often he rebuked Sri Dilip Kumar for giving him unwanted publicity, but he always forgave him, out of a loving heart. Now that he has finally withdrawn into the inviolable privacy of what is known as death, surely there is no longer any “copyright” on his words. They stand out as significant signposts on the Road leading to the Goal, and readers can only thank Dilip Kumar Roy for his intransigence in making the impermanent permanent, not in the spirit of an industrious archaeologist collecting artifacts out of the past, but as an offering of profound gratitude, from a warm-hearted devotee.

## SRI KRISHNAPREM

I am not attempting to give adequate expression to all that Sri Krishnaprem was and stood for – that would be impossible – but to focus and keep intact, if I can, some of my many cherished memories of him. His death occurred in a hospital at Naini Tal, on November 14, 1965. Ours is the sorrow, not his. His last words, according to Sri Mahava Ashish, his beloved disciple and companion of twenty years, were simply “My ship is sailing”. Surely he set sail gladly, in full knowledge of his destination. For he himself once told me: “As long as we live in the past or the future, we are only running up and down the bank on this side. If we want to reach the goal, the Eternal, we have to steer the boat straight out and across to that other shore.” He spoke figuratively, of course. The journey is always an inner journey, and the Eternal has to be found within.

Our personal relationship with him, my husband’s and mine, was always a little special. We did not claim to belong to the inner circle of immediate disciples or intimate followers, but we loved him deeply, with a love that grew stronger every year, and his heart was big enough to enclose us too. The first meeting took place more than thirty years ago. We had gone over, as we often did, to attend *Ramnam* at the little Ramakrishna Kutir, perched on a steep mountain slope close to our house in Almora. I was startled to see a fair-skinned, blue-eyed stranger sitting among the monks on the floor. To judge from his physical appearance, he was obviously a foreigner, and English so it seemed, but he was wholly Indian in his *gerua* dress, and the deep absorption with which he joined in the devotional chanting. After *Ramnam*, we learned from one of the monks that the stranger was Sri Krishnaprem, and that he had taken *sannyas* in 1928 from a saintly Bengali lady, Sri Yashoda Mai. Wife of the Vice-chancellor of an Indian University, she had given up the house-holder’s life and eventually retired to the Himalayas, where she had established a Vaishnava temple and *ashram*

at Mirtola, some eighteen miles beyond Almora.

Not long after this, Sri Krishnaprem unexpectedly came in to see us. His directness, his complete absence of self-consciousness and of even the slightest trace of pretence, and above all the deep respect and love he showed for India and Indian religious thought and feeling, at once attracted us to him. He also had a charming faculty of making conversation a two-way affair. He did not lay down the law or pontificate. He stood for a few moments glancing over the titles of the books crowding the shelves in our small living-room. "I see I could get on well with the owners of these books," he remarked, turning a swift, pleasant smile in our direction. At the time we were unaware that before renouncing the world, he had for some years been young Professor Ronald Nixon, a brilliant graduate of Cambridge, who taught English literature at the universities of Lucknow and Banaras. And he had also become a serious student of Sanskrit and Pali, and he could speak fluently in both Bengali and Hindi.

There was another reason, however, for the link of friendship so newly forged. It seemed an odd coincidence – or was it? – my husband's guru's guru, Swami Vivekananda, had once, when he was still only an unknown wandering *sannyasin*, chosen the little daughter of a gracious host at Ghazipur for symbolic worship in the Kumari Puja, as observed in Bengal. That same little Brahmin girl was one day to become Sri Yashoda Mai, the guru of Sri Krishnaprem.

It might have been another year or more before we had the privilege of meeting Sri Yashoda Mai herself. Hearing that she was staying at the Almora dak bungalow, we went to pay our respects, and at our request, she promised in future to stay with us when passing through the town on her way to or from the plains. After this meeting, we naturally looked forward to visiting the Uttara Brindaban Ashram at Mirtola, and finally a June day arrived when that visit became a reality.

There was no upstart motor road to Mirtola then, and one had to cover the eighteen dusty miles of bridle-path on foot or horseback, or in a *dandi* carried on the shoulders of four men. We chose horses, but the last mile and a half was too steep for them, so we climbed the rest of

the way on foot, up a secluded wooded path with occasional distant glimpses of pine-clad mountains or some deep valley plunged in blue shadow. Then, without warning, we abruptly found ourselves in an enchanted garden with flowers, flowers everywhere, and a gray temple dome rising in front of us against a curtain of green trees. We seemed indeed to have travelled very far from anywhere – to a still place where one heard only the silence. But our *ashram* hosts quickly came out to welcome us. Discarding our shoes in the garden, we walked up a cement ramp to the temple and made *pranams* in the shrine-room to Radha and Krishna, standing side by side on a marble altar with fresh flowers at their feet.

The temple was, and has always remained, the heart of the *ashram*. First under the watchful eyes of Sri Yashoda Mai, then, when she was no longer there, under the direction of Sri Krishnaprem, and now, again, under Sri Madhava Ashish, the orthodox Vaishnava rituals are regularly performed. There is *darshan* at fixed hours, *arati* is observed thrice a day, with sounding of gongs and cymbals and waving of lights. *Bhog* is offered, as a *shankh* is blown, at noon. At night the carved temple doors are properly closed. In those early days, a *pujari* used to officiate, but in the end it was Krishnaprem himself who took over the temple duties. A more humble one also devolved upon him. The food for the offering had to be prepared with ritualistic cleanliness. A Brahmin cook had been employed for this purpose, but one day he departed, and Krishnaprem became cook. Partaking of the *prasada*, everyone found his cooking so delicious that no professional temple cook was ever allowed to be employed again.

The temple, as I have said, was the heart of the *ashram*, for the devotee's love of the Lord was symbolically centred there. The *ashram* was the addition built round it. Little cubicles at the extended sides and in the lower storey provided austere accommodation for those who lived there. A separate building called the library, which could be turned at short notice into a guest-house, stood a little way off, and there used to be a school-house where Sri Yashoda Mai held classes for the ragged little urchins of the neighbourhood. Three giant stone slabs strategically placed as seats in a sunny corner of the garden formed a

common meeting-ground for moments of relaxation, and near by was a covered shelter meant for *sadhus* on pilgrimage to holy places in the Himalayas. According to the rule, they are permitted to remain three days, during which they receive free rations from the *ashram*.

A later addition was an outdoor dispensary, carefully hidden from sight, higher up in the mountain. Here Haridas tended sick villagers every morning for many years – indeed, until the last week of his life. Haridas, an old friend from Cambridge, who later followed Krishna-prem to India, in time gave up his distinguished and highly successful medical career in Lucknow, took *sannyas* from Krishnaprem, and settled down for good at Mirtola. Later still, Madhava Ashish also joined the little group. He, too, had come out from England, to serve during the Second World War as a ground engineer assigned to an airfield in Bengal. When the War was over, he came up on brief holiday to the Himalayas, somehow heard about Krishnaprem, walked over one day to see him, and never left.

And down in the lower garden, Moti Rani's tiny rose-covered cottage still nestles. Moti Rani was Sri Yashoda Mai's daughter, but it was not until after her mother's death that she cut her long hair, put on an ochre-coloured cloth and became a *sannyasini*, accepting *diksha* from Sri Krishnaprem, whom she had known as an elder brother from the age of five. Moti Rani for ever remained a free soul, refusing to be bound by rules, even those of the *ashram*. Vibrant and ever-living, she still seems to haunt her own little cottage at times and to flit along the flower-bordered walks of Uttara Brindaban – one now among those other shadowy presences we have known and loved.

In due time, it seemed that our house was the natural stopping-off place between Almora and Mirtola. Sri Yashoda Mai came twice by *dandi*, Sri Krishnaprem and Ashish frequently came walking bare-foot, staff in hand, with yard-long strides suited to their six feet two. Haridas, thin and light, scarcely seemed to touch the ground at all. Ours was far from being an orthodox household, but they forgave us our delinquencies and accepted us for what we were. We, for our part, did everything possible to meet their strict Vaishnava requirements. Obviously, forbidden articles of food must have been cooked in our

pots, so we even went to the bazaar and bought new ones especially for their use. As they could not eat with us in those days, everything was properly arranged on the washed verandah floor – shiny new pots, a charcoal fire, a big jar of water, dry ingredient and *masalas*, fresh vegetables, brass *thalis*. Sri Yashoda Mai herself and Krishnaprem alternately took a hand in the cooking, assisted by any other member of the *ashram* entourage who had accompanied them.

Once my scientist husband, banteringly but lovingly, could not restrain himself from teasing Gopal, as Sri Krishnaprem had now become to us. “If my widowed grandmother followed all this ritualistic procedure,” he declared, “I could understand it. But you have had such a different background. Back in your Cambridge days you must even have eaten plenty of beef! How is it you can observe such orthodox restrictions?”

Gopal was not in the least annoyed. He laughed as he gave an answer that won instant respect. (My husband never teased him again on this particular subject.) “For one thing, I believe that any self-imposed discipline, external or internal, is rather a good thing in this present age, when every kind of social and individual restraint is in process of being hurled out of the window. Also, quite simply, this happens to be the path laid down by those who have gone before me and reached the goal. Who am I, just entering on the path, to say ‘I will do this and not that, accept this discipline but not that’? I accept the whole.” Which he did.

Conversation, when he was with us, was never formal or solemn or argumentative, and it ranged over an amazingly wide field of interests. He had a strikingly clear and orderly way of summing things up and reaching a convincing conclusion. Buddhism and Theosophy (early loves, responsible for drawing him to India in the first place) continued to hold a definite place in his thoughts. The Gnosis of Plotinus and the Greek Neo-Platonists, symbols and myths and dreams and their psychological significance, the Sufi mystics, maybe Whitehead, or Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, supplied him with arresting comparisons and parallels. He also spoke of Shankara and Advaita Philosophy, on the basis of his own personal study of the original Sanskrit texts. I remember

his comment: “But I find *Sat-Chit-Ananda* hard to love! Aren’t Advaitins somehow rather dry?” As a *bhakta*, he naturally related everything to the Lord Krishna – Thakur, as he quite simply called Him.

Neither newspaper nor radio was allowed to disturb the peaceful and purposeful atmosphere at Mirtola, so when he descended from that refuge on inescapable periodic visits, he seemed like someone stepping down from another planet. He refused to involve himself in any of the problems of this world. Why should he, when he had deliberately cut himself off from the world? His aim was only to “hit the mark of the Imperishable with the arrow of the self, sharpened by meditation, and to become one with it”. We were his last link with the world, he told us affectionately.

He could scarcely miss seeing the headlines, however, of one or another of our three daily papers, spread out on a table. “As far as I can see,” he would remark, “the news is the same as last year. Another war here or there. Higher taxes. So many lives lost in another plane accident. But has anything really happened anywhere?”

“You have missed one very important item,” I replied. “You probably haven’t heard that Queen Victoria is dead!”

When we turned on the radio for the nine o’clock news bulletin from Delhi, he would quietly reach up, pull a book of English verse off a shelf, lean back cross-legged on the sofa, and immediately become lost in its pages. “Do you hear the radio at all?” I asked one night, genuinely curious to know. “Yes”, he replied – speaking from that distant planet – “as a sort of unintelligible background noise.”

Nevertheless, there were times when the talk around the tea-table persistently turned to some urgent problem of the day. He did not allow it to remain long on a merely factual plane. Caste? Yes, no doubt caste, in its old form, had served its purpose and would have to go. But all this present-day craze for reforms and industrialisation and statistics, with human beings reduced to mere numbers, wouldn’t it be at an ultimate cost of spiritual values? Was it not possible for India, holding fast to her own roots, to achieve something better than merely

transforming herself into a second-hand copy of the West? “But, of course,” he concluded (once more returning to the old theme), “it is Thakur Who pulls the strings. We move as He makes us move. We dance as He makes us dance.”

When the Chinese infiltration into NEFA occurred, I, as usual, was displaying my “anxiety complex” over the unpleasant possibility that perhaps the Chinese really would overrun India, and Communism would spread in their wake. He was thoughtful for a moment. Then, referring to an episode in the *Mahabharata*, he asked: “Do you remember how during the battle of Kurukshetra, Asvatthama was just on the point of destroying Arjuna? He had already let fly his Brahmastra weapon, which nothing could stop or avert before it reached its mark. Well, Krishna pressed down His foot, and the chariot wheels sank a foot or two into the earth, and the fatal arrow passed harmlessly overhead. I believe that at the critical moment, Krishna will always press His foot down. India will be saved. India can never lose her soul.”

“All very well,” my husband irreverently interrupted, “but you forget that when the Lord created this universe, there were no schools or colleges, and I was not even there to advise Him. So how can He understand what is really good for the world? When we don’t want rain, He sends a deluge, and when the crops are dying, not a drop falls. At least let Him take study-leave, go to Cambridge or Harvard, and catch up on modern science. ... But I have to admit,” he added as a concessional after-thought, “that He *can* be very loveable sometimes – if He wants to!”

By then it was probably the evening meditation hour. Gopal and Ashish usually went off to their room, and we to our little meditation room, each to follow his own private way of worship or prayer or meditation. Sometimes, however, they joined us, and Gopal would be induced to sing *bhajans* in that beautiful and stirring way of his, invariably bringing tears to the eyes, while Ashish accompanied him on a drum.

More years passed, and we could see that gradually small changes were taking place in Krishnaprem’s routine, not in fundamentals, but

in superficial details. Long ago the verandah food arrangements had been given up. They now ate with us, but on those occasions we were all good vegetarians. The Vaishnava mark on the forehead, the yellow U with a thin black line drawn through the centre and running down to the bridge of the nose, had been wiped off. He no longer wore his *mala* of *tulsi* beads, or if he did, it was hidden beneath the new style of dress he had adopted, for greater comfort – a straight cotton sheet, dyed *gerua*, sown up at the sides but with openings left for the arms to come through, and a hole cut in the middle for the head. This was tied round the waist with a folded twist of cloth, and in winter he added an old sweater. It was not a very becoming garment but, then, he cared nothing about his looks. He had stopped giving initiation to anyone. This responsibility had now been passed on to Ashish. If he had ever had any ego, it seemed to have utterly vanished into thin air. One night after dinner, when he had already washed his mouth with cold water, a jug of hot water was belatedly brought. “I have just rinsed my mouth,” he said. “But this is hot water!” my husband insisted. “All right,” he said sweetly, and proceeded meekly to rinse his mouth again.

We had, on former occasions, been gifted with a silver cup of Moti Rani’s and a brass incense-burner of Haridas’s. Now other things began to come down from Mirtola. A baby Krishna of brass and a stone Krishna in the flute posture arrived. They were followed by a little Burmese carving of a Buddhist monk and begging bowl. Next, a heavy box of books made its appearance, and we heard that several more boxes of books were on their way to the Ramakrishna Ashram and the local college. The bee-hives had already gone elsewhere. They were just cleaning up, we were told – throwing away, giving away, getting rid of superfluous things, generally simplifying life at Mirtola.

Just a year ago it became evident that Krishnaprem was not well. He did not wish to be bothered by doctors, he said. His doctor was Thakur. Nevertheless, because others wanted it, he agreed to go to Naini Tal and submit himself to treatment by an old doctor friend. Four months went by. There was not much improvement. “You have access to Thakur,” someone pleaded. “Why don’t you ask for an exten-

sion?” “You don’t realise that I am already living on extension. This is the extension, now,” he replied.

In October he came back. and he and Ashish stayed with us ten days before returning to Mirtola, the longest time they had spent with us. At the table, he could scarcely eat, but a strange thing had happened. The old bonds had suddenly snapped. It did not matter any more to him what anybody ate. Now, after forty-five years, he said, he himself would not mind eating anything! On one or two days he was not able to leave the bed, and his voice and face reflected his suffering, but there was no word of complaint. Only, “Thakur has two strings to pull, an up-string and a down-string. Today He is pulling the down-string.”

When he felt better again, he and Ashish sat for hours out in the sun in the garden, sometimes reading a little, sometimes talking a little, resting, looking at the great snow peaks, the flowers and the birds. “It is all right. Everything is all right,” he said very softly. He hung like a ripe fruit, and I knew that a ripe fruit does not cling long to the branch. They left for Mirtola, but a month later they brought him down again, this time to be rushed to a hospital. We were not surprised when a telephone call came very early the next morning, saying that his brave and gallant ship had set sail at last. From the local villages, more than a hundred men gathered to meet the returning car, and turn by turn lovingly insisted on carrying his body the last few miles to the quiet cremation site at Dandeshwar. It was an extraordinarily moving procession – more like a triumph than a death. He had lived amongst them for thirty-five years, and was honoured in all the villages round about Mirtola.

There is an old saying that when the lotus blooms, one does not have to send an invitation to the bees. They come of their own accord. Krishnaprem never sought disciples, never permitted himself to be advertised. Once someone came up to him in a street, and obviously guessing his identity inquired pointedly if he could tell him where “Professor Nixon” was. He merely turned away, answering casually, “Oh, he died long ago.” Neither did he allow himself to become the centre of the *ashram*. No life-sized photographs of him were to be seen plastered about. Only a single painting of the guru, Sri Yashoda

Mai, still hangs in the little room that once was hers. Nevertheless, we watched with the years an ever-increasing stream of men and women, from many countries and from every part of India, going on pilgrimage to Mirtola.

But not everybody liked Sri Krishnaprem. He was certainly a thorn in the side of the local British officials in the old days before Indian independence. Most of them, with singular opacity of perception – not realising that it was he who in some measure partially compensated for a few of their many sins of commission and omission – felt that he had badly let them down by his open and flagrant identification of himself with India and Indians, and especially with Hinduism. The wife of a one-time deputy commissioner of the district explained his eccentricity to me thus. He had been a fighter-pilot in the First World War. (So much was true.) But one day his plane had crashed, and he had received a very serious head injury. Naturally, he was never quite right after that!

His name had now become known. His two books, *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita* and *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*, or articles in *The Aryan Path*, drew discerning seekers who felt the need for guidance in their spiritual struggles. From England, France, Holland, Canada, the United States, South America, people were always unexpectedly turning up. Some had come to India in general disillusionment with what appeared to be growing trends of life in the West – violence, vulgarity, materialism, emptiness of purpose, except to make money and enjoy oneself. They came looking for *something* they were not quite sure what. Hearing about Krishnaprem, they found their way to Mirtola, and a few, then or later, became permanent members of the *ashram*. If some of them have had to return to their jobs to earn a living, they have continued to come back, year after year, for such brief renewals of contact and inspiration as they have found possible. Others, more selfish, only wanted to straighten out their hopelessly tangled personal lives. Not a few also arrived with a romantic notion of joining “an *ashram* in the remote Himalayas”, primarily to escape disagreeable responsibilities nearer home.

The unfit, fortunately, have always quickly weeded themselves out.

Sleeping on the floor, a breakfast consisting of only a glass of cold water and a lump of *fur*, only one solid meal in the day, the *prasad* at noon, do not seem so romantic after all. There was a time, it is true, when afternoon tea on the upstairs glassed-in verandah at the back of the shrine-room was a particularly pleasant interlude. Krishnaprem's home-made bread, with honey from the hives down in the garden, or jam made from one of the apricot trees, was a tempting treat. Later it had to be abandoned, because he felt that if tea were served in the *ashram*, every worker on the place, those who cared for the cows and those who cultivated the *ashram* fields, ought also to have tea, and that would have added a not inconsiderable item of expense in the frugal budgeting. Perhaps it was Haridas, however, who most eloquently revealed to us the stark austerity of their *ashram* life. He came in for breakfast at the house one morning, face positively beaming, as he exclaimed, "How I do love luxury!" The luxury? A pail of very hot water, delivered by a servant for his morning bath.

His Western devotees and admirers were one thing, but more extraordinary has been the even greater number of Indians who have gone to Sri Krishnaprem, to remain loyal followers ever since. There are well-known *ashrams* in India where foreigners are to be found sitting at the feet of an Indian guru, but I know of no other person like Krishnaprem, himself "foreign" to begin with, who has drawn so many Indians to himself. They include government officials, well-to-do business-men, lawyers, a maharajah, professors, members of the police force or army, many with no special label, and also many Indian women. It has been his unique privilege to break down the barriers of race and caste. Having imbibed the spiritual teaching of the great *rishis* and saints handed down in this country for thousands of years, and having lived the life, he has reawakened and intensified in them the awareness of their own spiritual inheritance. That he chose to renounce the West for India touched their hearts, but they have honoured, respected and loved him because he dedicated his life to that ancient ideal of realising his oneness with the Eternal and the Imperishable. They have lighted their torches at his flame.

GERTRUDE EMERSON SEN

## PREFACE

In Part II, I have mentioned more than once how I have always loved to keep a record of my talks with those I have admired. In the Mirtola chapter I have traced the genesis of this impulse which was to bear fruit subsequently in my *Tirthankar, Among the Great, Kumbha, Smriticharan, Netaji – the Man* and other Reminiscences. It goes without saying that I have rejoiced in yielding to this impulse because one can live in the delectable past only when a vivid memory helps one to resuscitate pictorially the dead past into a living reality. I can talk thus without hesitation of my mnemonic gift as it is not a faculty one can well boast about – the less so as very mediocre people too have been known to testify to this gift to an amazing degree. It is not a high power of the human personality like that of creative imagination or philosophic thought, not to mention the capacity for love or spontaneous sympathy.

Nevertheless, I cannot, personally, help but thank my Maker for having endowed me with this retentive power, not only because I have always found it delightful to recapture the past, but also and chiefly because it has beautified my creations (such as they are) in literature, poetry and music. In other words, time and time again have I experienced that whenever I had imbibed anything through love it came subsequently to be assimilated by my heart to flower out eventually as inspiration. Which is perhaps one of the reasons why I have always felt so happy that I could retain the “jewelled sayings” of great men, seers, sages, and saints. Among these Krishnaprem was one of my idols.

I have been fortunate also in this that I have been able to draw out some of the greatest writers and thinkers of our age. I have always felt grateful to them for having materially helped me in my quest for Truth, by stimulating me with *their* findings and throwing light on problems which mystify the mind. Among these monitors Krishnaprem holds a unique place in my life in that, of all my dear friends, he is the only one who has trodden the same path as I have all along, to wit,

the one that starts from and ends in Krishna. Of course no two persons' paths or problems can be identical all along the line; still, when all is said and done, there *is* such a thing as fellow-feeling or comradeship which can knit together two pilgrims of the spirit with a higher bond of psychic sympathy and love, thus forging one of the sweetest of affinities – as did happen between us despite the obvious divergence of rhythm in our outer gait.

I have owed much to ever so many kindred spirits in my journey through life. I have met friends in all climes and basked in the beneficent sunshine of their love. Sometimes it was only a brief hand-clasp of deep understanding which thrilled but was never more to be repeated again! One journeys on in life through deserts of sand culling, on occasion, a few pearls of startling beauty here and there. One cherishes them dearly like “angels’ visits short and bright”; for even when they are transitory, something remains that does not perish, a cadence of beauty that sustains us in life’s tortuous paths criss-crossed by the dualities of laughter and tears, thrills and sighs, exaltations and heartaches. Nothing is vain – *tout se tient*, true. Nevertheless, there are joys and joys even as there are gifts and gifts. Friends like Subhash Chandra Bose or Sri Krishnaprem who are born with the light of stars in their eyes do not grow on every bush. To meet such souls is happiness, to win their smile bliss, to savour their intimacy a blessing redolent of Divine Grace. Few pilgrims on earth aspire for the heights with intensity, still fewer are called and the fewest are the chosen. Krishnaprem belonged to this last category, to the Pleiad who can think dispassionately, reject the lesser love regally and love selflessly – or, to put it in his own words, long only to “just give, give, give, – give in joy, give in sorrow, in laughter and tears, in conflict and in peace – that is the one boon we should crave: the power to give ourselves utterly”<sup>1</sup>.

To have known such a lover’s love is blessedness, indeed – the love of a Guru like Sri Aurobindo, a friend like Subhash, a fellow-pilgrim like Krishnaprem, a daughter-disciple like Indira. When one meets such souls one does not even stop to ask if one has, indeed, merited it: one just accepts it all as a divine boon on bended knees.

---

<sup>1</sup> See his <sup>letter</sup> dated 28-4-1945, Part III.

On January 1, 1965, I sent Krishnaprem a few snapshots along with one of mine with a dear friend's little niece in my arms – under a lovely *kadamba* tree, in full bloom, in our temple-home. I sent these in joy, unknowing how gravely ill he was at the time – he having never so much as given me a hint of it in any of his long letters. On receipt of these he wrote back at once enquiring lovingly about Indira, who also was ailing then, with this simple moving blessing: “Thank you, Dilip, for sending me the photos. ... The one with the little girl in your arms is still your charming self. Long may it remain with us.” (7-1-1965)

Whenever I read such lines conveying his blessing I feel his pervasive love around me – even now, when he is no more here with us to shed his life-giving light – the angel light that tided me over some of my deepest crises, the mystic light whose very memory still gives a fillip to my aspiration, drawing sustenance from his incredible one-pointedness which his personality symbolised all through his life. But, as I was saying, whenever I read this line today I feel his nearness. To know that he was there upleading ever so many seekers was to take heart in this depressing world. To imagine him soaring up ever higher on his pure intellect's brilliant wings was to feel stimulated to grow dream wings. But now, alas, to think that he is not there to answer with love our looking up to him (a love such as few can boast) makes me look back with a nostalgic yearning to those days when he was there to instil hope in so many seekers' midnight despondence. I cannot help but miss the radiance of his love. And yet there is a thrill that disowns the fact of his withdrawal, a Voice that refuses to be silenced even in the face of stark reality, a deep assurance that a love like his cannot die in this our world of dust and din and gloom, a love that wanted nothing from me and wished me a long life when he himself must have felt the nearness of the last sunset. This is not a mere personal faith, I speak as the mouthpiece of hundreds who have known his love and felt blessed thereby.

Now to acknowledge a few debts:

To our beloved President and *philosopher king*, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan for his permission to use his tribute to Sri Krishnaprem.

## PREFACE

To my dear friend and *gurubhai*, Dr Haridas Chaudhuri, for his illuminating Foreword to my Reminiscences.

To Mrs Gertrude Emerson Sen (grand-daughter of the poet-philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson) for her kind Introduction and various helpful suggestions.

To my daughter-disciple Indira Devi for her ungrudging help.

To my dear friend and comrade-pilgrim Mohantaji for his invaluable corrections and tireless proof-reading.

To Sri Madhava Ashish for permitting me to include his letters and print a few photographs he so kindly sent.

To Mr Donald Eichert – a disciple of Krishnaprem's – for translating the tribute of Dr Gabriel Monod Herzen – a lecture he had delivered in French after the passing of Sri Krishnaprem.

To our revered friend, His Holiness Sri Gurudayal Mullick and our dear friend and disciple Sri Hiranand Karamchand for revising the typescript.

To Dr Karan Singh, Sri Rasiklal Desai, Dr Govindagopal Mukherji, Ekanta (Richard Miller), Prashanta (Don Taxay), Ramakrishna Malya, Mahendra Rastogi, Arun Nanda, Madame Sophia Wadia, Sri Umaprasad Mukherji, Diwan N. L. Nanda and other friends who helped me in ever so many ways, not to mention their warm sympathy which has sustained me in my arduous work all through.

Hari Krishna Mandir

Poona-16

D. K. R.

Janmashtami, September 1966

# PART I

## Sri Krishnaprem

*Sons of an intellectual age, we scan  
And weigh the heart's findings with our mental measures.  
Surmising never once that no mind can  
Win even a clue to the soul's resplendent treasures.*

*The more we probe the more must thought mislead  
Till even the meaning of our spirit's birth  
Is buried in the din of words that plead  
For the reign of trifling truths of temporal worth.*

*You diagnosed this fatal malady  
With an insight born of loyalty to love  
And so disowned our reasoned revelry  
Whose dire discord your heart could never approve.*

*O Reason's elect, withal, a citizen  
Of stellar climes no mind has ever trod:  
Who saw your radiant Face could never again  
Doubt faith's deep power of leading us back to God.*

## Sri Krishnaprem Vis-à-vis Sri Aurobindo

We often say, in common parlance, that so and so is (or was) a great man. It is not easy to define what we mean by this epithet. But the feeling – or shall I say, the conviction – is not misty any more than the impression of beauty is. Sri Krishnaprem is an instance in point. He impinged on the heart with a force that told. Of course this applies only to those whose hearts have a sense of spiritual values. For politicians or materialists may not react favourably to such personalities. For them, therefore, Sri Krishnaprem may exist merely as the memory of a robust man – intelligent, indeed, but too much of a day-dreamer to be taken seriously. But my humble tribute to him, now that he is no more, is not meant for such appraisers: for they will persist, alas, in being too sensible to credit the reality of the things of the spirit – values to be dismissed simply with a sceptic shrug. Fortunately for us, however, believers are born and, once born, do grow in faith, responding progressively to mystical fervour and spiritual consciousness. It is for these that I write – or rather, all believers write – firmly persuaded that the sceptic must stay recalcitrant to the light of mystic wisdom for which great souls like Krishnaprem stake their all and win. The reason is that the doubting Thomas not only shuts out the light he wants to perceive to be convinced, but actually plumes himself on the void he prefers to the plenitude of the spiritual life. To each his Eden, as Sri Aurobindo was wont to say, whenever the ignorant eschewed the heights in favour of the abyss of darkness they cherished.

Personally, I came to profit most from the mystic wisdom of two persons I had come to know intimately through the love and admiration they inspired in me from the first: to wit, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishnaprem. When I say this I do not, of course, include the great saints and sages of the past who had won me over to their light long before I met these two great personalities. I only stress hereby the sense of blessedness that accrues to us when we have actually communed

with the spiritual figures we have adored.

This was borne home to me more and more as I grew to love them more and more, because, among other things, each in turn buttressed as it were my love for the other. But that is not the whole story; for I must add here that I felt not only refreshed but fortified by Krishnaprem's bowing down to Sri Aurobindo. Happily, I was instrumental infringing them into direct contact again and again through the letters they went on writing to me which, by and large, served as the bridge between them ever since I had built it accidentally to draw them closer to each other, even though there could be no question of Krishnaprem's accepting Sri Aurobindo as his Guru. In fact, once, from Almora, he wrote to me, years ago, in reply to my invitation, that although he had the deepest reverence for Sri Aurobindo, he did not feel like coming to Pondicherry since he could get all the inspiration he needed from his own Guru. A little hurt by this. I went to the Mother with his letter. To my surprise, she not only supported him but actually praised him to the skies and told me: "That is *the* ideal attitude for any aspirant who has already accepted a Guru: to wit, to stick to him, refusing to turn to any other Master for guidance." Sri Aurobindo also wrote to me when Krishnaprem contended that all true Gurus were the same.

"All true Gurus are the same, the one Guru, all are the one Divine. That is a fundamental and universal Truth which justifies Krishnaprem's statement. But there is also a truth of difference; the Divine dwells in different personalities with different minds, teachings and influences so that He may lead different disciples with their special need, character and destiny by different ways to the realisation: that justifies Krishnaprem's own action. Because all Gurus are the same Divine, it does not follow that the disciple does well if he leaves the one meant for him to follow another. Fidelity to the Guru is demanded of every disciple, according to Indian tradition. Krishnaprem has that fidelity: he feels the spiritual tie holding him to his Guru in life and even after her departure; that is why he cannot think of going to someone else. 'All are the same' is a spiritual truth, but you cannot convert it indiscriminately into action: you cannot deal with all persons in the same way because they are the one Brahman: if one did, the result, pragmatically, would be an awful mess. You yourself have always in your heart laid stress on the principle of fidelity; Krishnaprem does the same; so

you ought to find it easy to understand his standpoint. It is a rigid mental logic that makes the difficulty, but in spiritual matters mental logic easily blunders: intuition, faith and a plastic spiritual reason are here the only guides.”

A few years later Krishnaprem visited our Ashram at Pondicherry and he responded warmly to Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual touch and blessings. And he made a very characteristic gesture which I shall never forget, a gesture of simple sincerity with a charm all his own. It was in November, 1948. I took him up to the Mother and introduced him to her. He said that he had come for her blessings that he might give himself without reserve to his Guru and Krishna. Mother held his eyes for nearly a minute, then said:

“But you *have* given yourself.”

“Not enough,” he answered.

Mother told us subsequently that his words had made a deep impression on her: and yet he had spoken but a few words!

He then went to tour South India and visited the famous temple of Srirangam where he had a marvellous experience amounting to a revelation. Meanwhile I appealed to Gurudev to write to me in a few lines his impression of Krishnaprem when he had come to pay his respects to him at *darshan*. He wrote back.

“I do not quite know what to write in the few lines you asked from me nor how to write it. Perhaps I could only repeat from my side what he himself said about ‘establishing a contact’. But a spiritual contact cannot be easily defined in mental terms, they are usually insufficient to express it. If it is some impressions about himself or his spiritual person or his more outward personality that you are thinking of, there too I find it difficult to put it into language; these things in a moment like that are felt rather than thought out and it may not be easy to throw them into mental terms at once. Perhaps the only thing I could say is that they have confirmed and deepened and made more living the impressions I had already formed about him from his letters to you and what came through them and from such psychical contact as I had already made from a distance, *for the contact itself is not distant*.

You know very well the value I have always put upon his insight into spiritual things, the brilliance and accuracy of his thought and vision and his expression of them (I think I described it once as *pashyanti vak*) and on as much as I knew of his spiritual experience and constant acquisition and forward movement and many-sided largeness. A closer perception of the spiritual person behind that is something more than a mental impression. I think this is all I can write at present and I hope it will be enough for you.”

I showed this letter triumphantly to many of my friends who admired Krishnaprem and posted copies of it to many more even though I knew that he would never approve of such publicity. But I, in my turn, having an equal, almost congenital, aversion to being gagged, had to fight for my *raison d'être*. So I used to quote for his edification the great simile of Sri Ramakrishna: “There are two types of men: one goes to a mango-grove and comes back happy but keeps his own counsel; the other comes back and directs all and sundry to the matchless orchard. I belong to the second category, that is why I tell you that I *have* tasted God and as such *can* testify to His matchless savour which you, too, can verify if only you *will*.”

“So,” I would plead, “I can’t help but tell those who long to meet an authentic devotee – but meet, alas, only mountebanks – that the twenty-four carat gold of spirituality does obtain even in our age of loud politics and materialism, though not in the open shop-windows which catch the eyes of all and sundry.”



It was, I think, about the beginning of 1923 – when I was staying in Lucknow with Prof. Dhunati Mukherji – that we were asked to tea by the famous poet-composer, Atul Prasad Sen. I can still recapture in my memory the radiant face of a young Englishman (of about my age) seated, a pipe in his mouth, on a sofa. The poet said to me: “This is Ronald Nixon, Dilip, our brilliant Professor – an English Hindu or a Hindu Englishman, if you like.”

We laughed and the person at whose expense we made merry outlaughed us all. I fell in love with him at first sight and, on my return home, told Dhurjati, the bibliophile, that I had recalled his favourite Marlowe's: "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?"

We met here and there. I used to sing everywhere and Nixon (as we called him then) loved my songs, especially my hymns to Krishna. I visited Lucknow once or twice a year and felt so happy because he was there. His contact was delightful, conversation illuminating and faith in Hinduism inspiring. I was wont to listen with rapt attention when he discussed the *Vedas*, the *Gita*, the *Tantra* etc. – notably with a savant, Sri Jagadish Chatterji. When the "intellectuals" were not there, I put questions to him which he answered with his luminous clarity and charm. I often kept notes of these talks. Once he said:

"Europe never forgets, Dilip, that bread is necessary: only she forgets, too easily, that man does not live by bread alone. But you, as a Hindu, should not adopt the European as your Guru for showing you the way, since it *has* been shown you by your own great ancestors ages ago. Remember Krishna:

*Manmana bhava madhaktuh madyaji nam namaskuru  
Mamevaishyasi satyam te pratijane priyosi me.*

This he translated himself in his *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita* thus: "Fix thy mind on Me, give thy heart's love to me, consecrate all thy actions to My service, hold thine own self as nothing before Me. To Me then shalt thou come, truly I promise for thou art dear to Me."

He used to be a great admirer in those days of Buddha, Krishna, the mystic in Lawrence, the Tantras, the *Gita* (he read the *Bhagavad* years later) and the Upanishads. One day, when our talk centred round Sri Aurobindo, he said, in passing, that Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* had made the deepest impression on his mind and that he had never come across a better exegesis of Krishna's Triune Path. It was this casual remark which came, in the course of the next few years, to revolutionise my life. But the great call to Sri Aurobindo, the

Seer-poet,' was yet to come. Meanwhile I toured India, "hunting for music in the heart of din", learning new styles of our classical music, writing travelogues etc., and wrote to Krishnaprem from time to time telling him all about my thrilling discoveries as a musicologue.

The only letter of his I still have of this period (I regret I have lost the rest) is from Lucknow dated January, 1927. As I have printed it in full in Part III, the very first letter, I will only quote here the closing paragraph:

"For myself, Dilip, though I can be tolerant to all countries, I have only one, and that, strange to say, is not England but India. What I feel is that the wealth of tradition which *is* a nation is too precious a thing to be merged into a common hotchpotch from London to Yokohama. If we confine ourselves to Europe (at least Western Europe) the case is somewhat different as the traditions are more or less common; but can England and India, say, be mixed so philanthropically without doing vital injury to both? *When the traditions of a nation die, then the nation is dead*, and even if it persists as a great Power in the world, yet it is nothing but an aggregate of meaningless individuals determinedly pursuing their contemptible aims. History is a symbol, and what that symbol signifies is something infinitely more precious than a mere peddling adherence to so-called facts. There is only one root fact anywhere, and that is the Eternal One. Whatever helps to reveal Him *is* a fact, and whatever helps to hide Him *is* a lie even if all the fools in the world affirm it."

After that he turned more and more towards Krishna till he came to accept Him as his *Ishta* (Lord) – about the middle twenties, I believe, when he took initiation from his Guru, Yasoda Ma. I may be wrong here about the date, but I do remember having heard from him once that he had turned first towards Buddha, then towards the Vedanta till, in the end, he surrendered – to quote his own words – "at the feet of his Guru the burden of all that the world counts valuable in order to find the hidden treasure for which most men have no eyes". And it came about like this.

He had confided to me that he had taken a Guru, but as he seemed

rather reticent, I left it at that. But the professors wagged their tongues freely, the more so as many a rich father with nubile daughters went on inviting him under all sorts of transparent pretexts which could fool nobody. They did think him eccentric, but his bright personality and brilliant lectures attracted many a lady student and so Dame Gossip had a field day with her speculations. I remember how we chaffed him about his ‘intentions’ and how heartily he laughed it all away, till, one day, he threw a bomb-shell, announcing, at a tea-party, that he had accepted a lectureship in English at the Hindu University, Varanasi. It was then that his learned friends conferred together and decided that it had ceased to be a laughing matter.

“You must persuade him, Dilip, at any cost,” they appealed to me in a deputation, in deep alarm. “A professor of the Hindu University gets only about Rs 300/- per month, whereas he is getting here already Rs 800/- and it will increase, in due course, to Rs 1,200/- or even more. He may even come to flower out into a vice-chancellor with his brilliant gifts, not to mention his popularity...”

“You never once told me that you had definitely decided to bid good-bye to Lucknow!” I complained to him that evening when I had him to myself at last.

“Who told you?” he returned, with a half-smile.

“Who but your colleagues – the lecturers and professors. And they are rather offended because you never thought fit to consult them even once.”

He gave me an affectionate pat on my shoulder. “Don’t take it amiss, Dilip,” he said. “The fact is, I was thoroughly sick of Lucknow and its gossips and didn’t feel the least urge to stimulate the tongue-waggers any further. But why on earth should I *consult* them? For what? Their advice? Oh, what do they think I came here for? To build a career and ripen into a model pedagogue with a fat income and a glib tongue which lectures on things that don’t matter and baulks at those which do? They are aghast, are they, because my pay in Benares is going to be a bare three hundred rupees? But I don’t need even that much. Anyway, what have I to do with the blessed

flesh-pots and academic honours? I came here to win something, you know, but that something is *not* affluence, career or splendidiferous doctorates so dear to the go-getters and fame-hunters.”

Inveighing against ‘the worldly-wise, he would often get worked up and roundly castigate prudence, erudition, arrivisme and what not. On that evening he wound up with a stinging remark which I shall never forget.

“They say, these impeccable oracles of wisdom,” he said with a flushed face, “that since the World-maker is invisible and unknowable, therefore the wisest thing *is* to make the most of our world we *can* know and rely on as real. But the world minus its Maker, I say, can be made the most of only in one way and that is *bloody*.”

And so he gave up his lectureship at Lucknow and went to Varanasi to follow the lead of his Guru, Yashoda Ma, whom he called his *Ma*, that is, mother. When, subsequently, in 1927, she retired to a temple-retreat, he accompanied her to her sanctuary to become, once and for all, a true mendicant in Krishna’s Name. I am not quite sure about the details of his final conversion, but I can clearly recall that on my next visit to Lucknow in 1928 an admirer of his gave me a bad jolt (so bad that I could not sleep that night) when he told me bluntly that Krishnaprem had “gone the whole hog and actually taken to begging for his food in Almora!”

It affected me so vitally because it involved a kind of psychological shame of feeling that, do what I would, I dare not go to this length. And yet surely it was not unheard-of, especially in India where countless spiritual seekers and wandering mendicants lived on alms from day to day. I could not, indeed, help admiring his courage and *audace*, but nevertheless I felt sad to imagine him actually going a-begging for his daily food. Neither could I dismiss from my mind his young wistful face which shone, mirroring his luminous soul. To think that the robust intellectual who used only the other day to drive on a motor-cycle at a break-neck speed through the streets of Lucknow, with me in his side-car, should be literally going about now from house to house begging for a bare handful of rice and possibly turned away by some

irate householders who looked upon such vagrants as definitely harmful parasites of society! And then, everything in Lucknow reminded me of him: his friends and mine, the University grounds where we had strolled together arm-in-arm, the tea-parties which I had to attend now without him, the musical soirées where I had to sing without his dear, eager presence – in short, every scene rebuked me sternly for having stopped short where he had taken a leap into the dark, trusting to the Divine Compassion alone to see to his safe landing. In the end, his absence began to haunt me so much that it would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that what he had achieved at one bound gave me just that decisive push which I needed to go over the edge staking everything that does not matter for the one thing which does.<sup>1</sup>



From November 1928 till March 1937, I lived in seclusion in our Yoga Ashram at Pondicherry. During this time he wrote to me scores of letters. Quite a few of these I published without his express permission. I feared of course that he would mind, but I implored him, when my fears had proved true, to consider my standpoint, namely, that the world often does not know its greatest men, thanks first, to a fundamental confusion of values and secondly, to a lack of discernment. I told him about an apposite remark of Aldous Huxley in his *Along the Road*: “That it is difficult to tell the genuine from the sham is proved by the fact that enormous numbers of people have made mistakes and continue to make them. Genuineness always triumphs in the long run, but at any given moment the majority of people, if they do not actually prefer the sham to the real, at least like it as much, paying an indiscriminate homage to both.” I wrote to him also what the Mother had told us one day in passing: that most people who called Sri Aurobindo great based their estimate on data which could not reveal the moral core of his greatness. “That is why,” she had

---

<sup>1</sup> I have described at some length in Part II *how effectively* his uncompromising renunciation of the world came to give me the decisive push.

added, “a true vision of what *is* the essence of greatness is indispensable, especially to the pilgrims of the Spirit – if only to obviate lamentable mental muddles.” About Krishnaprem’s greatness I had never had a vestige of doubt, though my appreciation of him certainly deepened when Sri Aurobindo himself, subsequently, put his mighty seal on his sincerity, courage and seeing intelligence and wrote to us again and again giving him unstinted praise. To Chadwick he wrote once: “It was Krishnaprem’s power to withdraw so completely from current thoughts and general tendencies and seek (for him) a new and abiding source of knowledge that impressed me as admirable. If he had remained interested and in touch with these current human movements, I do not suppose he would have done better with them than Romain Rolland or another.

“But he has got to the Yogic view of them, the summit view, and it is the readiness with which he has been able to do it that struck me as remarkable.

“I would explain his progressing so far by the quickness and completeness with which he has taken inwardly the attitude of the *bhakta* and the disciple. That is a rare achievement for a modern mind, be he European or *educated Indian*; for the modern mind is analytic, dubitative, instinctively *independent* even when it wants to be otherwise, and holds itself back and hesitates in front of the light and the influence that comes to it; it does not plunge into it with a simple directness, crying: ‘*Here I am ready to throw from me all that was myself or seemed to be, if so I can enter thee; remake my consciousness into the Truth in thy way, the way of the Divine!*’ There is something in us that is ready for it but there is this element that intervenes and makes a curtain of non-receptivity; I know by my own experience with myself and others how long it can make a road that could never perhaps for us who seek the entire Truth have been short and easy but still might have spared us many wanderings and standstills and recoils and detours. All the more I admire the ease with which Krishnaprem seems to have surmounted this formidable obstacle.”

But though I often wondered whether I admired him more than I loved him, neither my love nor admiration could possibly persuade

me to fall in with his desire that I should not pay the tribute due to his greatness simply because he himself disliked publicity. So in my Bengali book entitled *Abar Bhramyaman (A Wanderer Again)* I published a long article of about fifty pages on him. In this I gave a brief account of my talks with him in Almora (where I was his guest) as well as excerpts from his letters and wound up with a long poem on his deep spirituality. To conciliate him, however, I took good care to omit certain supraphysical happenings in his Ashram; but, alas, he was not to be conciliated, which made me wish, indeed, that I had published what I kept back, seeing that he came down on me like a ton of bricks utterly failing to appreciate the mischief I might have done but had refrained only for his sake.<sup>1</sup> But, once again, alas, he betrayed a heart of adamant.

“My dear Dilip,” he wrote, “thanks so much for the book *Abar Bhramyaman* and also for the beautiful record of your *Bhagavat* hymn. But O Dilip, why did you write about me and, if at all, why so much? It’s ill, I fear, will be the result for me in the shape of letters and people wanting to visit such a ‘curiosity’! What good will it do to you? Above all, you should not have hinted at the ‘happenings’: all these things only attract the mind of the foolish. I warn you that I shall deny it outright and say that it was just your eloquence! O Dilip, Dilip! I meant to go on scolding you for a dozen pages! But the milk is spilt and it is useless, so I will say no more. I begged you not to write about us but you just print my request and leave it at that! You are incorrigible and if you were anyone else I should hate you, but I can’t!”

As this reassurance was rather heartening, I made venture to quote his letter in full since, on his own showing, the milk *had been* spilt and that irretrievably. After commending me to the *Bhagavat* he gave me a support I needed rather badly at the time. What happened was this. I had always been a worshipper of Krishna since my boyhood days, and my subsequent study in the Ashram of the *Bhagavat* in Sanskrit gave a fillip to this old devotion. Now, a number of ardent aspirants disapproved of my ‘medievalism’ and frowned on my

---

<sup>1</sup> I filled up the gap subsequently, after his passing, in 1965. See Part II, the Mirtola Chapter.

disloyalty to Sri Aurobindo whose stature (they contended) was much greater than that of Krishna – a claim I could not concede. So I went on writing to Sri Aurobindo, soliciting repeatedly his verdict on my ineradicable penchant for that ‘archaic’ God, as these Aurobindonians dubbed Him. Fortunately for me, he adjudicated in my favour as will be attested by his letters which I give below:

18-6-1943

“I thought I had already told you that your turn towards Krishna was not an obstacle. In any case I affirm that positively in answer to your question. If we consider the large and predominant part he played in my *sadhana*, it would be strange if the part he has in yours could be considered objectionable. ‘Sectarianism’ is a matter of dogma, ritual etc., not of spiritual experience; the concentration on Krishna is a self-offering to the *Ishta Deva*. *If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine; if you can give yourself to Him you can give yourself to me*. In any case it does not very much matter. We have accepted your loyalty and devotion, your work and service. *All else that is needed can come of itself afterwards*. There is nothing wrong in your self-offering in works and service; it is quite as it should be; you have no reason to feel worried about it. Don’t be diffident. More resistance in difficulties and more faith in your spiritual destiny.”

16-9-1944

“As regards Krishna and devotion, I think I have already answered that more than once, I have no objection at all to the worship of Krishna or the ‘Vaishnava’ form of devotion, nor is there any incompatibility between the Vaishnava *bhakti* and my Supramental Yoga.

“All ways can lead to the Supermind, just as all ways can lead to the Divine.

“Certainly I will help you and am helping you and will always help you; the idea that I can stop doing it or will send you away (because of my ineradicable thirst for Krishna – D.) has no sense in it. If you persevere you cannot fail to get the permanent *bhakti* and the realisation you want but you should learn to put an entire reliance on Krishna to give it when he finds all ready and the time come. If he wants you to clear out imperfections and impurities first, that is

after all understandable. I don't see why you should not succeed in doing it, now that your attention is being constantly turned on to it. To see them and acknowledge clearly is the first step.”

17-9-1944

“Certainly Krishna is credited with much caprice, difficult dealings and a playfulness (*lila!*) which the played-with do not always immediately appreciate. But there is reasoning as well as a hidden method in his caprices and, when he does come out of it and takes a fancy to be nice to you, he has a supreme attractiveness, charm and allurements which compensate for all you have suffered. Of course your decision to continue the solitude has our full approval.”

2-10-1944

“What is there to comment on foolishness? It is a universal human failing. Your remark about Krishna was not so much foolish as desperately illogical. If Krishna was by nature cold and distant (Lord, what a discovery – Krishna of all people!) how could human devotion and aspiration come near him – he and it would soon be like the North and South Pole, growing icier and icier, always facing each other but never seeing because of the earth's bulge? Also if Krishna did not want the human *bhakti* as well as the *bhakta* wanting him, who could get at him? He would be always sitting on the snows of the Himalayas like Shiva!”

But the climax came when, to cap my discomfiture, a loyal adherent of Gurudev wrote me a letter gently admonishing me on my wrong mood. He advised me – doubtless with the friendliest of motives – to worship Sri Aurobindo and not Krishna. His reason was that if I approached Sri Aurobindo I could get Krishna easily en route for the Supramental, but if I worshipped Krishna, he could only lead me to the Overmental as against the still higher Supramental plateau because Krishna could only attain the Overmental but not the Supramental which only Sri Aurobindo could bring down.

The long letter my friend penned wound up with a portentous warning to the effect that though Krishna was “included” in the Supramental, He could not include the Supramental in Himself! Duly I

sent that letter up to Gurudev who wrote back to me:

“I am puzzled and perplexed by this affair of Krishna and the Supermind. A, B, C, D, E, F, etc., of Bombay, Nagpur and Delhi and P, Q, R, up to X, Y, Z, of Calcutta and Pondicherry will all be able to catch hold of its tail and ‘include’ it in themselves, only poor Krishna can’t do it? He can only be himself ‘included’ in it! Hard lines on Bhagavan Vasudeva! What I said was that Krishna in *his* incarnation brought down the Overmind into human possibility, because that was his business *at the time* and all that could be done *then*; he did not bring down the Supermind, because that was not possible or at least not intended *at that stage of the human evolution*. I did not mean that he could not have brought down the Supermind if that had been willed at the time. You listen too easily to anybody, G, H or Q let us say, and treat their ingenious hair-splitting or unduly authoritative ideas as if they were gospel truths; that causes mental confusion. I believe Krishna’s intentions are to remain with us and he won’t run away when the Supermind comes down; so why should Mother and I send you away on his account? It would be a most illogical procedure. So that is that.”

But as I dreaded nothing more than disloyalty, I asked Krishnaprem (to whom I was duly sending Gurudev’s letters on Krishna) whether it would be disloyal or unwise on my part to want to realise Krishna through the Guru in the traditional Vaishnava way as this *sadhana* made a powerful appeal to my temperament. To that he wrote back:

“I think I said before but anyhow I repeat that when your Guru allows and, more, encourages your *bhava* towards Krishna, there is no need whatever to worry about what others say or feel. All this talk of ‘others’ about your not being able to get this or that if you go that way is nonsense. There is nothing whatever that cannot be had at Krishna’s feet. If your Guru did not support you I might hesitate to say this, as a path that is not sanctioned by one’s Guru could never lead to success: however good in itself, it is *paradharma*. But in your case there is no question of that. It is clear from what he wrote to you that he was entirely satisfied with what you are doing. I may have said all this in my letter just after ‘Ma’ withdrew, but I cannot remember what I wrote then and if so you must excuse the repetition.

“Doubtless there are many ways of getting beyond the mind because that is just where all ways that are ways have to go. I will speak of only two. One is to use the mind to negate the mind and so force the soul to pass beyond. That is the way of Nagarjuna and, though less unmixedly, of Shankara. It is a straight path but rather, like a path ruled out straight on a map, it takes no account of natural obstacles and so is very hard. In any case it is certainly not *anukula* (beneficial) for you. The other is by love and surrender. The contemplation of Krishna leads straight beyond the mind. I only realised the other day during a talk with a Vedanti friend, a very good *sannyasi* who is here now-a-days, how entirely beyond the mind the contemplation of Krishna is. To his arguments and questions as to how such and such could be true I could only reply that it undoubtedly was so. Everything about Krishna is beyond the mind’s grasp and I found that I could not accept any of the rational accommodations and compromises that his mind suggested. They were just inadequate. He too wanted to go beyond the mind but only in his own sober philosophic way. But why? There is nothing sober about Krishna. He maddens where He touches and so his worshippers leap where others – at least some others – can only walk, a dignified cap-and-gown sort of walk!

“But really what is all this fuss about? Some people disapprove of you? Well, let them. Even if they are advanced *sadhakas*, why should you care? You have no business with any approval or disapproval but that of the Guru and Krishna. ‘But’, you may say, ‘they are my *guru-bhais*’. Let them be. Gurus teach different things to different disciples. Never mind what he may have taught others. You do what he has taught you – Yours Krishnaprem.”

I have quoted his letters without remorse or fear of hell (for betraying confidences) first because these, I felt, would help many a seeker to appreciate better the greatness of Gurudev, and secondly because Krishnaprem’s devotion to his Guru could not but prove a flickerless beacon to hundreds who still grope in the dark in this age of barren scepticism. Also, I shall add that he has helped me and many another by not only instilling courage in our hours of despair but also by shedding on our waverings some glow of the steadfast

flame he had in his heart by dint of his one-pointed *sadhana* and loyalty to his Guru. But there is still something else which I am simply unable to keep to myself: the high praise Gurudev has bestowed on his outlook on things of the spirit. To illustrate what I mean I will now buttress my tribute with a few of Krishnaprem's letters with Gurudev's comments thereon. These cannot but interest all genuine spiritual seekers who will, I hope, agree with me that it would have been utterly wrong to keep lights such as these under a bushel. I need only say by way of preface that as he knew I was bent on publishing these letters, he gave me once a grudging permission with a half-hearted grace.

“My dear Dilip,” he wrote in January 1934, “I received your affectionate letter and enclosure. As for revising or supplementing my previous letters for the second edition of your *Anami* – I will see. I make no promise. For your remarks about the success of my scrappy letters (the casual impromptus of an unknown man) leave me cold. Let them read the *Gita*, or, if they have a taste for these things in letter form, the ‘Friendly Epistle’ of Nagarjuna, the letters of Plato, or even the Epistles of St. Paul which should afford sufficient variety. The semi-private-wholly-public letter is a form that does not suit me. It resembles too much those cinema-cameras in front of which you not only have to stand still and look dignified, but also to gesticulate and be animated, to walk and talk and be yourself with the devastating knowledge that the damned thing will appear, large as life, upon innumerable amateur screens until it, too, finally achieves the Nirvana of all created things. It is unfortunately true that my letters are inadequate. All the same they represent what I felt when I wrote them, and even if I wrote more now they would still be inadequate. So why not leave it at that?

Your affectionately,  
Krishnaprem.”

Then, as I had sent him a few of his letters printed in my book, *Anami*, he wrote:

“Looking at my own letter in your *Anami*, I cannot help regretting

that they have been preserved like flies in amber. In so many ways they now seem to me inadequate. Their only merit is that they were sincerely felt, but some points such as the relation of the abstract to the concrete have been bungled badly. This relation is far too subtle a thing to be dismissed in a few phrases and, though I had a meaning in my mind, I have thoroughly mishandled it. I find I have done little but reverse the ordinary commonplace. identification of the ‘spiritual’ with the ‘abstract.’ Such an obvious, almost Shavian, reversal of values is far too coarse to be the truth and though it does all right for letters, it will not stand the strain of print. Enough, however, of ephemera never meant to stand the strain to which they have been subjected.

“The more one goes on in this path, the more one feels the limitations not only of speech but of thought. The mind is too heavy, too coarse. It will not respond, or responds but imperfectly, to the subtle vibrations that as it were come to it from above. The highest truth must needs be presented in symbols. Fichte, the German philosopher, said that if he had to live his life over again the first thing he would do would be to invent a new set of symbols, but alas, it is not so easy. Symbols are born, not made. They descend from above and cannot be artificially manufactured. In this matter you, poets, have an advantage over philosophers like myself who try to use what is so ludicrously miscalled ‘exact thought’. From below one can compile only allegories: real symbols are given from above. But when given, one can learn far more from them than from words. The symbol (or image if you like) of the seated Buddha, for instance, taught me far more than I was able to learn from my assiduous study of the Buddhist texts. In fact, the mental concepts – miscalled knowledge – derived from the latter did much to obscure the real knowledge derived from the former and it was only as I learnt to pass beyond the words and ‘thoughts’ that the true knowledge originally given by the ‘symbol’ was able to shine forth once more and to some extent irradiate even the dead conceptual knowledge.

“True learning is unlearning...

“I am glad to learn that Sri Aurobindo found my review of *The Riddle of the World* satisfactory. I tried as far as possible to give the

reader an account of what he would find in the book and not merely to use it as a peg on which to hang my own virtuosity *à la* Macaulay. I think at least that it should serve to indicate to all who care for such things that here is a book not to be missed.

“You raise some interesting points in regard to ‘expression’ and ‘silence’, but at the same time you seem to have slightly misunderstood me. I was urging that poetic expression can sometimes deal with realms in which philosophy cannot breathe. To me, at least, it is a necessity which I can scarcely avoid. But I did want to emphasise that our philosophic dialectic, logic, etcetera are far too coarse to deal with the higher levels of Reality. It is easy to cut things with the snip-snap of one’s philosophical arguments, but too often we are merely cutting the air. Even the scientists are now finding that reality eludes them. And what is the significance of the square root of minus one which plays so essential a part in modern physics? To my mind it suggests most emphatically that there is a fundamental supra-rational element that enters in at the conversion or zero point between appearance and reality or, to be more exact, between appearance on this level and one level ‘higher up’. I make this last qualification because I do not believe that the absolute Reality lies, as it were, next door to the world – except in a certain very ultimate sense, but there are many grades of ‘reality’ (or appearance) in between. To the intellect the square root of minus one has no meaning (at least none to my intellect) but certainly it must have a meaning or it would not be as useful as it is to modern physics.

“You speak of the ‘silence’ of the Buddha which you contrast with ‘expression’. But if Buddha had not ‘expressed’, then we should not have five hundred million (or whatever it is) Buddhists living today. In truth, he expressed a great deal and it was only on certain ultimate problems that he remained silent because they cannot be expressed in words – not at least in logical words. Symbolism is another matter. You say: ‘Suppose Buddha were a formless being under a formless tree in a formless Gaya; would we feel the same thrill at his silence?’

“Well, in reality, that is just what He *is* in one aspect. This is the meaning of the doctrine of the *Dharmakaya* and of the ‘Docetism’ that

marked so many *Mahayana* and also Christian Gnostic schools. But for most this Formless remains a mere matter of words and is, consequently, a falsity. Only experience can give us the truth. Without experience, the 'formless' is an empty abstraction, cold like all such, and shot through with the falsity and unreality that pervades all our purely intellectual concepts. We must use them but they only gain significance when life flows into them. In reality, they are neither cold nor abstract. It is our process of acquiring and using them that makes them so. We abstract by a process of negation and then wonder that the result is cold and negative. Our whole process stays on the purely intellectual level. When we say that Krishna is *nirakara* we have only said what He is *not*. But our positive statements are equally delusive. When we say that He is *anandamaya* we equally miss the reality because most men do not know what *ananda* is. They only know pleasure. They try to understand *ananda* in terms of pleasure and hence you get the materialising of the spiritual that marks so much of ordinary *Vaishnava* thought just as from the misuse of negation you get the *coldness* of so much *Vedantic* thought. The root of the trouble is just the mistaking of intellectual concepts for reality. When a man has *seen* something even of the Reality – call him Krishna or Buddha or Brahma – he then *knows* what is meant. He knows how He is *nirakara* but not cold and how He is *anandamaya* but not mere *pleasure*. Till we get experience and knowledge we shall always be in unreality however lofty our conceptions may be. The Vedantin despises the Vaishnava for the latter's concreteness and the Vaishnava spits at the Vedantin saying it is all 'cold'. One says: 'I don't want' – and the other says: 'I want.' Damn all their 'wants' and 'don't-wants': they are quite irrelevant. These 'wants' and 'don't-wants' do all the damage. It is not what *we* want that matters, but what *He* wills, which is a quite different thing. All these concepts are so many suits of clothes. Unless we reach up to the Reality and fill them, they only serve for endless debate. What did the Rishi *mean* by saying He is *nirakara*? What did Buddha *mean* by *anatman*? What did the Vaishnavas *mean* by saying He is *nikhila-rasamrita murti*? The answer to this question must be sought in experience, not in mere dialectic. When the light of experience streams in and fills the empty concepts, then and then only does recognition flow in like a sea and

we can *know* why the above words are used. *Ascharyaval pashyati kashchidenam* (as wonderful, some, few, see Him). Then we can know why the *atma* of the Upanishad means *the same thing as the anatma* of the Buddha and in a flash be free from the empty scholastic disputes that have filled the millennia. ‘Oh but these are contradictions’ – peevishly complains the intellect, to which the only answer is: ‘Very likely they are, but you have *damn well* got to put up with them!’

“I don’t mean at all to urge the contempt for the intellect which most Christians and some Vaishnavas have taught, but I do mean to say that the intellect is in itself a sort of formative or shaping machine. It can only work if it is supplied with material to shape, and that material must come either from the sense-world below or from the spiritual world above.

“In the meanwhile it seems to me as foolish to lose one’s emotion in the coldness of abstract negation as to fuddle one’s mind in the warmth of a (fundamentally) sensuous *Goloka*.

“These thoughts were suggested to me by the contrast you drew between the emotional singing of Chaitanya Deva and the silent meditation of the Buddha. Needless to say that the remarks in the paragraph immediately above this do not apply to these great Teachers but only to some of their followers.

“You speak of a certain ‘shakiness at the idea of being immersed in a Timeless mute *Akshara Brahman*’, but surely that is only because of our ignorance of what is meant by that experience and of a consequent misconception in terms of worldly experiences. That is where so many Vaishnavas as well as Vedantins go wrong. They quarrel furiously about words, about the expression, instead of bending their whole energy on an attempt to realise what is meant by the expression. In the words of an old Buddhist writer, ‘that is called confusing the moon with the finger that points to it.’

“Books are after all just words, but these words fall into two categories – words used to express worldly experience and words used to express transcendental experience. (Perhaps there is also an intermediate class which are just words!) When there is any reason

to suppose that words are being used to express transcendental experience, it becomes of the utmost importance how we try to read them. The wrong way is to fasten on the words themselves and find fault with them because they are not the same words as we find in some other book. The right way is to try with all one's might to find out what the words mean: to find out why those particular words were chosen by the writer to express his vision and just in proportion as we succeed in this attempt, we shall gain a new insight into Him 'from whom words together with the mind fall back baffled' (*Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha*).

“So you see that in my previous letter I was not deprecating *expression* but only lamenting the inadequacy of it. In the last resort, this whole cosmos is but expression – Divine Expression, and in proportion as He, the *kavīh purānah*, is able to manifest in us, we shall ourselves automatically become centres of expression. Till then, our productions, whether in the realm of poetry, philosophy or art, are but the play of children, funerals where none is dead and marriage where there is no bride.

“Talking of poetry brings me to the poem you sent me (Transformation of Consciousness). I like it very much and think it is perhaps the best of all those that you have translated.”

On this Gurudev commented:

“Dilip,

Krishnaprem's letters, as usual, are interesting and admirable in substance and expression and, in addition, there is an immense increase in comprehensiveness and wideness. The point about the intellect's misrepresentation of the Formless (the result of a merely negative expression of something that is inexpressibly intimate and positive) is very well made and hits the truth in the centre. No one who has had the *ananda* of the Brahman can do anything but smile at the charge of coldness; there is an absoluteness of immutable ecstasy in it, a concentrated intensity of silent and inalienable rapture that is impossible even to suggest to any one who has not had the experience. The eternal Reality is neither cold nor dry nor empty; you might as well talk of

the midsummer sun-light as cold or the ocean as dry or perfect fullness as empty. Even when you enter into it by elimination of form and everything else, it surges as a miraculous fullness – this is truly the *Purnam* – when it is entered affirmatively as well by negation. There can obviously be no question of emptiness or dryness! All is there and more than one could ever dream of as the All. That is why one has to object to the intellectual thrusting itself in as the *subjanta* (all-knowing) judge; if it kept to its own limits, there would be no objection to it. But it makes constructions of words and ideas which have no application to the Truth, babbles foolish things in its ignorance and makes its constructions a wall which refuse to let in the Truth that surpasses its own capacities and scope.”

And Krishnaprem went on evolving – gaining not only in “comprehensiveness and wideness” but also in human sympathy which endeared him to all who came in contact with him. I would gladly give many instances of this growing power of his to enter at once into other people’s points of view. But as I have to put it briefly, I will end with one more letter which he wrote in reply to some questions I had put to him in 1934. I had written, among other things, that although he had followed a path very different from ours, I believed that the more we would progress in our spiritual quest the less must our paths diverge, that is to say, beyond a certain level (underlining the last phrase). To that he replied: “You are quite right. *Beyond a certain level* the experiences along different paths are the same. In the first place, this is a bare fact as you can find by a study of genuine mystical experience all the world over. It is the mental interpretations which cause the apparent differences. Secondly, it is so because there is in reality only *one* path (above a certain level again) though the terminology, which really belongs to a lower level, may easily vary. There are two eternal paths: the path of Light and the path of Darkness, as the *Gita* says. One and only one is the ‘path of Light’ but the descriptions may vary infinitely. The Grand Trunk Road is one only, though one may go along it on a push bike or a motor bike. The difference in speed may inspire a different description, but the road is the same and even then the extra horse-power of which the motor cyclist is so

proud is based on the same plodding man power in the end and in this too he will have to face God's inexorable 'stand and deliver', and give an account of how he used the extra horse-power which he, perhaps, took for granted.

"Your ideas about doubts however strike me as rather confused. Doubt is quite proper and inevitable on the intellectual plane. Poking your finger in (or its 'scientific' equivalent) is a perfectly proper means of physical investigation and has to be used, but it is quite out of place in dealing with intellectual problems. Similarly doubt is a most useful intellectual tool but it is quite inapplicable to *spiritual* problems. Do not confuse spiritual truth with the intellectual expression of it. The latter may and, often should, be doubted, because by that we come to a more adequate expression. You ask how I 'dismiss' my doubts. I don't. I solve them as far as possible and only dismiss them when I see that the solution is not available at the present moment or with my present *range*. But I don't let them trespass where they have no right, namely, in the spiritual realm. There they are sheer irrelevancies. I don't doubt my bottom: I am sitting on it. This isn't a mere vulgar metaphor but sheer fact. The spiritual reality is that which is the very *support* of all other activities; without it they couldn't be. 'I say unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will found my Church.' Just try and find out what that 'rock' really is. Many people confuse beautiful poetry or profound philosophy with spiritual fact. But these are but the garments which can, and often should, be changed. None lasts, for I am prepared to change my intellectual formulations ten times in a day, provided I find each time better ones. So don't go about setting me up as an apostle of *blind faith*, because I am *not*. Now, as always, I hold to the phrase of the Buddha, *Atma-dipa atma-sharanam*, the light of truth is within us and it is no good looking for it elsewhere. No teacher can do more than just push you over the edge *if you are standing on it*. You can retain your private judgement as long as you like provided you only apply it within the sphere to which it is applicable. You can't keep goldfish in a bird cage.

"If you haven't the light you want but believe that others have *it*, stick to *them* for all you are worth till you get it. If you have light

yourself but your mind gets in the way, then treat it as you would your motor: clean it, overhaul it, rebuild the damned thing, but don't cut your own throat because your car doesn't run properly.

“But you won't get rid of doubts by *dismissing* them. They will work all the more underneath. You must solve them or, at least, see why a solution is impossible at present and patiently wait. Yes, I am convinced of the gospel of faith but not of faith in some intellectual phrase or other which may be adequate or may not. Not of faith in any external thing (and even the intellect is external, a little less so than the body, that is all) but faith in the reality that I call Krishna, whom you can call by any name you please. Faith, however, does not mean turning your back on the intellect. Use your intellect for all it is worth *in its own field*. At any rate I use mine. From the point of view of the lower personality, faith means the subordination of the lower to the higher. In actual fact *faith is the light which the higher sends down to the lower* (as far as that lower will let it!). In any case it doesn't mean ‘believe all that you are told’. I refer you to my previous letter to see what should be done with regard to words (written or spoken) which you have reason to think enshrine spiritual experience. I am sure you are not asked to aspire to an *undiscerning faith*. Few things are more stupid. What one is asked for is to have faith in one's Guru and in one's own discernment when it is encouraged by the Guru. It would be best, if one could, to cling to the memory of this discernment even when the *tamasic* tide flows in and temporarily covers up the landmarks.

“You talk of humility, but I don't know whether humility is the truest test of spirituality or not. All spiritual men I know are profoundly humble because they know their true position. But humility does not consist in the damnable deprecatory rubbing of the hands that is so fashionable among some Vaishnavas. That is only an inverted conceit. True humility is an absence of egoism. It comes from realising that one is an entirely insignificant phenomenon in the cosmos: even if his capacities and messages shake the stars in their courses he is a *transient* phenomenon. He had a beginning and he will have an end. He is, essentially, a horse for someone else to ride, that is his own

importance. But if a horse spends his whole time bucking up his heels in the jungle and won't bear the saddle, then his owner 'disposes him off' as the students say.

"But I am an immortal soul, I beg your pardon!" Did the horse say he was? If he has identified himself with his Rider then his asseveration is true, but otherwise I fear the sleekest of horses is nothing but a mass of carrion sewn up in a flimsy skin bag! And not only his body but also his unconquerable horsey mind with all its doubts and private neighings.

"If one realises this fact, real humility follows as a matter of course, but if one doesn't, then all the 'miserable sinners', *naradham* and all that kind of rot had better be dropped down the water-closet where they belong. 'Miserable sinners' can canter to Hell and probably will anyway! As for the sceptics, if I were your Guru I would have told you long ago to 'dispose them off' in the manner suggested above. Damn their noble scepticism and sceptical nobility and all that kind of stuff:

*Yada carmavad akasham veshtaishyanti manavah  
Tada devam avijnaya dukkhasyanto bhavishyati.*<sup>1</sup>

The sceptics don't know that Deva, so let them just shut up. No doubt they are this and that and the other thing, but one day they will themselves know that all this and that and the other thing are only to be offered at the feet of their Deva. No, I am not being intolerant, but there is such a thing as moderation in all things or, at least, there should be.

"As an instance in illustration of my previous remarks I may say that I am distinctly occupied (though not *sorely troubled* as the phrase goes) with doubts whether there is a personal God. (So you see your sceptical friends needn't be so proud of their doubts). Don't get alarmed either. The doubts refer to the meaning and adequacy of the terms

---

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo translated this at my request: "This means that when men shall be able to fold the sky round them like a skin, then only will it be possible to put an end to grief without knowing the Divine. It simply means that the two things are equally impossible." (This quotation is from the *Svetashvatara Upanishad*.)

employed and have reference to such questions as whether it is permissible to put new wine in old bottles, to call old things by new names, to disregard associations etc. If I say I believe in a personal God, a lot of fools will suppose I mean someone like the Lord God Jehovah on His throne, and if I say I don't believe, others will suppose that I believe in abstraction – a sort of 'Space, Time and Deity' kind of thing. This is merely by way of illustration of the function of doubt. I keep a whole collection of doubts; grow them in fact like mustard and cress and when they are ripe I eat them up...

“Many thanks for sending me Sri Aurobindo's unpublished poem in Alexandrines: 'I walked beside the waters in a world of light.' I loved it, particularly where he describes the vision of the Cosmic Ignorance:

*But there came*

*A dire intrusion wrapped in married cloud and flame,  
Across the blue-white moon-hush of my magic seas,  
A sudden sweeping of immense peripheries  
Of darkness ringing lambent lustres shadowy – vast,  
A nameless dread, a Power incalculable passed  
Whose feet were death, whose wings were immortality.  
Its changing mind was time, its heart eternity.  
All opposites were there, unreconciled, unceased,  
Struggling for victory, by victory unappeased.  
All things it bore, even that which brings undying peace  
But secret, veiled, waiting for some supreme release.  
I saw the spirit of the Cosmic Ignorance;  
I felt its power besiege my gloried fields of trance.”*

I sent up the letter to Gurudev, giving him an account of how I was hard-pressed by doubts and misgivings. He commented:

“Dilip,

I agree with most of what Krishnaprem says, though one or two things I would put from a different angle. Your reasonings about faith and doubt have been of a rather extravagant angle because they come

to this that one must either doubt everything or believe everything, however absurd, that anybody says. I have repeatedly told you that there is not only *room* for discrimination in Yoga, but a *need* for it at every step – otherwise you will get lost in the jungle of things that are not spiritual – as for instance the tangle of what I call ‘the intermediate zones’. I have also told you that you are not asked to believe everything told by anybody and that there is no call to put faith in all the miraculous things narrated about Bijoykrishna or another. That, I have said, is a question not of faith but of mental belief – and faith is not a mental belief in outward facts but an intuition of the inner being about spiritual things. Krishnaprem means the same thing when he says that faith is the light sent down by the higher to the lower personality. As for the epithet ‘blind’ used by Sri Ramakrishna, it means, as I said, not ignorantly credulous, but untroubled by the questionings of the intellect and unshaken by outward appearances of fact; e.g. one has faith in the Divine even though the fact seems to be that the world here or at least the human world is driven by undivine forces. One has faith in the Guru even when he uses methods that your intellect cannot grasp or affirms things as true of which you have as yet no experiences (for if his knowledge and experience are not greater than yours, why did you choose him as a Guru?). One has faith in the Path leading to the Goal even when the Goal is very far off and the way covered by mist and cloud and smitten repeatedly by the thunderbolt and so on. Even in worldly things man can do nothing great if he has no faith – in the spiritual realm it is still more indispensable. But this faith depends not on ignorant credulity, but on a light that burns inside though not seen by the eyes of the outward mind, a knowledge within that has not yet taken the form of outer knowledge.

“One thing however: I make a distinction between doubt and discrimination. If doubt meant discernment, questioning as to what might be the truth of this or that matter, it would be a part of discrimination and quite admissible; but what is usually meant by doubt is a negation positive and peremptory which does not stop to investigate, to consider in the light, to try, to enquire, but says at once: ‘Oh, no, I am never going to take that as possibly true.’ That kind of doubt may be very

useful in ordinary life, it may be practically useful in battering down established things or established ideas or certain kinds of external controversy to undermine a position that is too dogmatically positive: but I do not think it is of any positive use in matters even of intellectual enquiry. There is nothing it can do there that impartial discrimination cannot do much better. In spiritual matters discrimination has a huge place, but negating doubt simply stops the path to Truth with its placard ‘No entry’, or its dogmatic ‘Thus far and no farther’.<sup>1</sup>

“As for the intellect it is indispensable to man up to a certain point; after that it becomes an inferior instrument and often misleading and obstructive. It is what I meant when I wrote: ‘Reason was the helper, reason is the bar.’ Intellect has done many things for man; it has helped to raise him high above the animals; at its best it has opened a first view on all great fields of knowledge. But it cannot go beyond that; it cannot get at Truth itself, only at some reflections, forms, representations of it. I myself cannot remember to have ever arrived at anything in the spiritual field by the power of the intellect; I have used it only to help the expression of what I have known and experienced, but even there it is only certain forms that it provided, they were used by another Light and a larger Mind than the intellect. When the intellect tried to decide things in this field, it always delayed matters. I suppose what it can do sometimes is to stir up the mind, plough it or prepare – but the knowledge comes only when one gets another, higher than the intellectual, opening. Even in mind itself there are things higher than the intellect, ranges of activity that exceed it. Spiritual knowledge is easier to these than to the reasoning intelligence.”

I enclosed a copy of Gurudev’s letter in my reply to Krishnaprem

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. (Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, II.X p. 246):

Mental doubt alias sceptic thought he assimilates to:

A watch-dog of the spirit’s sense-railed house  
Against intruders of the Invisible,  
Nourished on scraps of life and Matter’s bones, ...  
It keeps close guard in front of custom’s wall, ...  
And barks at every unfamiliar light  
As at a foe who would break up its home.

and wrote:

“I am very grateful, Krishnaprem, for all that you have written to me which has been so very helpful. It is so like you, and I am glad that Gurudev has once more commented so favourably on your views. But one thing: the other day M. wrote to me that you had asserted to him that true faith *could never precede* personal experience and so much of what is extolled as faith was, in essence, pure dogma or something to that effect. Did you tell him all this?”

To which he replied:

“Now what is this ‘faith and experience’ business? I can’t remember any remarks on that subject. In fact the only thing I ever remember saying on the subject of faith was contained in a letter to you in which, as far as I remember, I said that faith was the light of the higher Self penetrating the lower or some words to that effect.

“Casting about in my memory I do seem to recollect some vague talk with M., but the remarks were no doubt *ad hoc* and probably were directed against the *orthodox* religious demand for a blind acceptance of dogmatic belief. Such belief or pseudo-belief (for it seldom, if ever, is *real* belief) has nothing to do with what I meant by faith in writing to you. This is not an intellectual assent to intellectualised propositions for which one has insufficient evidence, but an attitude of the soul which is based on a dim perception in the personality of something more clearly known on higher levels. That, at any rate, is what I meant by ‘true faith’ and I should have thought that your Gurudev would more or less agree with it. But at any rate that is my position at present; I fancy that either you or M. must have garbled what I said.

“Certainly *experiences* are not the Goal but *experience* (in a way, at least) is, for by *experience* I mean living knowledge manifesting in one’s being, and if that is not present, something is wrong or at least something has not started yet.

“Of course faith precedes experience *on this level* but it does so only because it is itself the Light from experience already present higher up.

“Do you *know* what is immortal or what is mortal? And do you

*know* which of these you are?

“Answer these questions and you will understand what I mean by faith. Incidentally, you will also know what I mean by *bhakti*, the *ahuti*, – offering – of the mortal in the flame of the immortal. I say again:

*I said it loud – I said it clear;  
I went and shouted in his ear.*

“I am not in any way against emotion. That would be quite absurd. But I do criticise the current practice of weltering in emotion *for its own sake* and for the sake of the pleasure attaching to it. That is like a man weltering in a hot bath.

“Know Krishna, love Krishna and work for Krishna. Then you can leave all the blisses to take care of themselves. You will certainly not find any shortage of them. Of course there is bliss experienced in self-offering but do not offer yourself *in order to get the bliss* but offer yourself because He is Krishna and your being can only fulfil itself by being united to His Being.

“About *bhakti* – the word is ambiguously used. Some people mean by it an emotional rapture *as such*. (Don’t ignore these two small words.) In that case *bhakti* is not the highest thing. Others, including myself, mean by it self-giving to Krishna which is *of course* accompanied by emotional rapture but it is not performed *for the sake* of the rapture. In that case it is the *highest* or something like it at least, for I do not like to dogmatise about high, higher, highest. Loud applause from you at this point, I suppose? But be sure you don’t misunderstand me. Before you can offer the oblation into the fire you have to know where the fire is and Krishna is *in the light, in the light, in the light!*

“Of course I have left out all sorts of qualifications. There is such a thing as preliminary offering, or say, wish to offer, and much more, but I am writing a letter, not a book.

“Disregard the Light at your peril, for He is in the Light and *a light must mingle with Light*. Fail to know the Light and you will helplessly tread the dark path of the *dakshinayana*, whirling help-

lessly, the sport but not the master of Karma.

“Everybody should strive to find out so that at death he may echo the cry of the Orphic initiate. ‘From the Pure I go to the Pure.’ All I can say is that the Light in which Krishna dwells is *a light which sees*, not a light which is seen and the voice of Krishna is a voice which speaks, not a voice which is heard.

“The point about concrete representation, images, myths etc., is simply that symbols which are known as symbols are sometimes less dangerous than symbols which are not recognised as such and it is impossible, however ‘abstract’ and philosophic one may be, to escape from symbols as all words are symbols.”

This I sent up to Gurudev and wrote in my covering letter:

“I explained to Krishnaprem how M. had misunderstood him and, incidentally, wanted to have a fling at ‘the faithful’ as he called them. Please tell me, Guru, whether he uses the phrase ‘Krishna’s Light’ to imply knowledge. Please also note what he writes in the second paragraph about his own view of true faith and ventures: ‘I should have thought your Gurudev would more or less agree with it.’”

To this Gurudev wrote back: “I do, not only *more or less* but entirely.” Then he went on to add: “I will write about Krishnaprem tomorrow, God willing. Not much to say though – when one heartily agrees, what can one say except ‘hurrah’ or ‘ditto’?”

He did keep his promise. For the next day I received the following:

“I do not know that I can answer your question about what Krishnaprem means by Krishna’s Light. It is certainly not what is ordinarily meant by knowledge. He may mean the Light of the Divine consciousness, or the light that comes from it or he may mean the luminous being of Krishna in which all things are in their supreme truth: the truth of knowledge, the truth of *bhakti*, the truth of ecstasy and *ananda*, everything is there.

“There is also a manifestation of Light – the Upanishads speak of *Jyotibrahma*, the Light that is Brahman. Very often the *sadhaka* feels a flow of light upon him and around him or a flow of light

invading his centres or even his whole being and body, penetrating and illumining every cell and in that light there grows the spiritual consciousness and one becomes open to all or many of its workings and realisations. Appositely, I have a review of the book of Ramdas entitled ‘Vision’ before me in which he describes such an experience, got by the repetition of Rama mantra, but, if I understood rightly, after a long and rigorous self-discipline: ‘The mantra having stopped automatically, he beheld a small circular light before his mental vision. This yielded him thrills of delight. This experience continued for some days, he felt a dazzling light like lightning flashing before his eyes, which ultimately permeated and absorbed him. Now an inexpressible transport of bliss filled every pore of his physical frame.’ It does not always come like that – very often it comes like stages or at long intervals, at first, working on the consciousness till it is ready.

“We speak here also of Krishna’s light, Krishna’s light in the *mind*, Krishna’s light in the vital, etc. But it is a special light – in the mind it brings clarity, freedom from obscurity, mental error and perversion; in the vital it clears all perilous stuff and where it is there is a pure and divine happiness and gladness.

“But why limit oneself, insist on one thing alone and shut out every other? Whether it be by *bhakti* or by Light or by *ananda* or by peace or by another means whatsoever that one gets the initial realisation of the Divine, to get it is the thing and all means are good that bring it. If it is *bhakti* that one insists on, it is by the *bhakti* that *bhakti* comes and *bhakti* in its fullness is nothing but an entire self-giving as Krishnaprem very rightly indicates. But then all meditation, all *tapasya*, all means of prayer or *mantra* must have that as its end and it is when one has progressed sufficiently in that that the Divine Grace descends and the realisation comes and develops till it is complete. But the moment of its advent is chosen by the wisdom of the Divine alone and one must have the strength to go on till it arrives, for when all is truly ready it cannot fail to come.”

It was often like this that it happened: sometimes he or a *gurubhai* would write something to me whereupon Sri Aurobindo would comment. I would then convey to Krishnaprem how things stood, and then he, as often as not, came forward with his reactions to the

verdict of Gurudev, upon which Gurudev would have something more to say by way of clarification, almost like a billiard ball bounding and rebounding again and again. Here I may as well give a typical example of the far-reaching repercussions of just one letter of mine.

As the days went by, I discovered a curious trend in my own nature: whenever anybody tried to denigrate faith, my faith rose up resolutely to vindicate what I called sacrosanct; but the moment somebody declaimed too loudly that faith was the only passport to truth and reason was an outcast in the Holy of Holies, I would take up the challenge and defend reason with all sorts of reasonings. So it happened once that a *gurubhai* – whom I will call Staunch, to indicate one of the faithful brood – invaded my sanctum and said ecstatically that his faith had lately become all but unshakable that the atom bomb was a godsend and must chasten men into solid sanity. To that I demurred and wrote to our Arbitrator in despair:

“Gurudev,

I admire Staunch’s tender heart though I wish his brains had been a trifle less soft. Of course the atom bomb *may*, as he asserts, scare people into sanity, but how, in the name of sanity, is one to be sure of such a consummation devoutly to be wished? Staunch argues that his faith is built on a rock but doesn’t explain on what diamond plinth this blessed rock is built. But seriously, Guru, do tell me if you have a soft corner in your heart for such a touching faith. I can give it no other epithet than *infantine*. And if he feels that our present civilisation is going to be saved simply because his robust optimistic faith assures him to the effect, then why mustn’t I retort, with equal conviction, that a civilisation which needs to be propped by such a puerile faith to be saved is hardly worth saving? *Voilà, qu’en dites-vous, O Guru?*”

To that Gurudev wrote back:

“I do not feel armed to cut the Gordian Knot with a sentence and need not accept Staunch’s or anybody else’s proposition or solution. Man needs both faith and reason so long as he has not reached a surer insight and greater knowledge. Without faith he cannot certainly walk on any

road, and without reason he might very well be walking, even with the staff of faith to support him, in the darkness. Staunch himself finds his faith if not on reason yet on reasons; and the rationalist, the rationaliser or the reasoner must have some faith even if it be faith only in reason itself as sufficient and authoritative, just as the believer has faith in his faith as sufficient and authoritative. Yet both are capable of error as they must be, since both are instruments of the human mind whose nature is to err, and they share that mind's limitations. Each must walk by the light he has, even though there are dark spots in which he stumbles.

“All that is, however, another matter than the question about the present civilisation. It is not this which has to be saved; it is the world that has to be saved and that will surely be done, though it may not be so easily or so soon as some wish or imagine, or in the way that they imagine. The present must surely change, but whether by a destruction or a new construction on the basis of a greater Truth is the issue. After all, the wise man, unless he is a prophet or a Director of the Madras Astrological Bureau, must often be content to take the Asquithian position. Neither optimism nor pessimism is the truth: they are only modes of the mind or modes of the temperament.

“Let us then, without either excessive optimism or excessive pessimism, *wait and see*.”

I sent this to Krishnaprem who wrote back from Almora:

“About ‘faith and optimism’, – well, you know who it is that rushes in where angels fear to tread. But still one fool may, I suppose, open his heart to another. Why do you worry over what you can't accept in your friend Staunch's robust faith? As I see it, it is not his faith which is the difficulty but the particular mental concepts in which he expressed it. True faith is naked. It is not belief in this or that: it has little, if anything, to do with ‘this or that’. It is a naked smokeless flame that burns in the secret recesses of the heart, sustaining the soul and lightening it on its path. The true content of the Flame we cannot formulate in the mind and so we cover it with a painted lamp-shade and say we believe in this or that, the figures which our minds have painted on the shade. And that does not matter provided we really don't

believe that the painted figures are the content of our Faith. They are symbols of it, for even the mind cannot draw a single line arbitrarily but they share in the mind's error and inadequacy.

“It is this that causes the rationalist to curse so. He is always active demolishing the painted figures of men's faith and then is astonished to find the faith still there clothed in new figures: *‘Nainam chhindanti shastrani.’*”

“I have looked in when the weather was darkest and this is what I saw:

‘I saw the deep undertone of thwarted desire running fiercely in the psychic sea. I saw it rise to the surface in great waves and the ship of the mind, with cables cut, running before the dark wind. I saw the crew, their fears transformed into panic anger by the contact of the angry waves, seizing axes and hacking away at cordage and masts. I saw them aim their blows at the wonderful compass glowing with light in the centre of the ship but though they destroyed the card they could not touch the luminous needle. Finally they grew berserk and slashed away at the very timbers of the ship and when it sank they foundered in the water cursing and sobbing. And still the compass shone, a needle of flame, poised serenely in the dark void above the waters. And when they saw that, they swam towards it and laid hold of it and then I saw that there around them was the ship once more, with all its masts and timbers intact and the dark storm had receded again far beneath the surface of a summer sea. But shame was in the hearts of the crew.’

“We should not be worried by the optimist-pessimist business. Optimism is the disposition to think that our wishes will be realised and pessimism the disposition to think that most probably they will not. Neither of them is at all relevant. Not our wishes but Krishna's will is what matters – and that will be realised, make no mistake about that How and when – is known to Him – not to us.

“The *famous* civilisation of ours with all its treasures of art and literature and science may vanish as did that of Atlantis and yet nothing will have gone, for He is there and all is in Him. As Christ said to the Jews, proud of their descent from Abraham: I tell you, God is able to raise up from these stones seed unto Abraham.’

*Pralaya-payodhi-jale dhritavanasi vedam  
Vihita-pavitra-choiritramakhedam  
Keshava! dhrita-mina-sharira!  
Jaya Jagadisha Hare.<sup>1</sup>*

This, duly sent up to Gurudev, elicited the following comment:

“As for faith, Krishnaprem’s meaning is clear enough. Faith in the spiritual sense is not a mental belief which can waver and change. It can wear that form in the mind, but that belief is not the faith itself, it is only the external form. Just as the body, the external form, can change but the spirit remains the same, so it is here. Faith is a certitude in the soul which does not depend on reasoning, on this or that mental idea, on circumstances, on this and that passing condition of the mind or the vital or the body. It may be hidden, eclipsed, may even seem quenched, but it appears again after the storm of the eclipse; it is seen burning still in the soul when one has thought that it was extinguished for ever. The mind may be a shifting sea of doubts and yet that faith may be there within, and, if so, it will keep even the doubt-racked mind in the way so that it goes on in spite of itself towards its destined goal. Faith is a spiritual certitude of the spiritual, the divine, the soul’s ideal, something that clings to that even when it is not fulfilled in life, even when the immediate facts or the persistent circumstances seem to deny it. This is a common experience in the life of the human being; if it were not so, man would be a plaything of a changing mind or a sport

---

<sup>1</sup> Krishnaprem quotes this first verse from Jayadeva’s famous hymn to the ten Avataras of Narayana. This verse describes His coming to save the drowning earth (in the cataclysmic Deluge) as a vast Saviour Fish which took the earth on its back: I have translated it thus:

*When the whole creation foundered in the vast  
Deluge of Doom, Thou cam’st as a Fish, at last,  
Riding the tidal waves to initiate  
A new Play, O Redeemer Inviolate  
Carrying in Thy Grace the Vedas eternal:  
Hail, Hail to thee, O Lord of life, supernal!*

of circumstances. I have, I think, more than once, written the same thing as Krishnaprem though in a different language.

“If you understand this and keep it in mind, Krishnaprem’s experience and the image in which he saw it should be sufficiently clear. The needle is this power in the soul and the card with its directions the guiding indications given by it to the mind and life. The ship is the psychological structure of ideas, beliefs, spiritual and psychic experiences, the whole building of the inner life in which one moves onward in the voyage towards the goal. When the storm comes, a storm of doubts, failures, disappointments, adverse circumstances and what not, the crew – let us say, the powers of the mind and vital and the physical consciousness – begin to disbelieve, despond, stand aghast at the contradiction between our hopes and beliefs and the present facts and they even turn in their rage of disbelief and despair to deny and destroy the structure of their inner thought and life which was bearing them on, tear up even the compass which was their help and guide, even to reject the needle, the great constant in their spirit. But when they have come to the point of drowning, that power acts on them, they turn to it instinctively for refuge and then suddenly they find all cleared, all the destruction was their own illusory action and the ship reappears as strong as before. This is an experience which most seeker’s have had many times, especially in the earlier or middle course of their *sadhana*. All that has been done seems to be undone, then suddenly or slowly the storm passes, the constant needle reappears; it may even be that the ship which was a small sloop or at most a schooner or a frigate becomes an armed cruiser and finally a great battleship unsinkable and indestructible. That is a parable but its meaning should be quite intelligible, and it is a pragmatic fact of spiritual experience. I may add that this inmost faith or fixed needle of spiritual aspiration may be there without one’s clearly knowing it; one may think that one has only beliefs, propensities, a yearning in the heart or a vital preference which seem to be temporarily destroyed or suspended, yet the hidden constant remains, resumes its action, keeps us on a way and carries us through. It can be said of it in the words of the *Gita* that even a little of this delivers us from great danger, carries us to the other side of all diffi-

culties, *sarva durgani*.”

In 1946, in East Bengal, thousands of Hindus were massacred, their women raped, houses burnt and girls abducted. I felt depressed, the more so as many of my friends kept on writing to me about the urgent need of relief work for the bereaved Hindus. “Why not let me join the relief workers, Guru?” I wrote to him after giving him a long account of the fallow land of my heart: “I will have little to lose as I feel I have not been getting on famously in your Yoga for some time past and so am often reminded, now-a-days, of Tagore’s remark in 1938: ‘You and I are artists, Dilip, not Yogis by temperament.’ So will you permit me to go?”

To that Gurudev wrote back:

“After receiving your account of your present condition which I understand perfectly well, my advice remains the same: to stick on persistently till the dawn comes – it surely will if you resist the temptation to run away into some outer darkness which it would have much difficulty in reaching. The details you give do not at all convince me that Tagore was right in thinking that your *sadhana* was not at all in line with my Yoga or that you are right in concluding that you are not meant for this line. On the contrary, these are things which come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time but which need not be at all conclusive or definitive. Usually, if one persists, it is the period of darkest night before the dawn which comes to almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one has to take into sheer physical consciousness unsupported by any true mental light or by any vital joy in life, for these usually withdraw behind the veil, though they are not, as they seem to be, permanently lost. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light which is not of the mind but of the spirit. The spiritual light no doubt comes to a certain extent and to a few to a considerable extent in the earlier stages, though that is not the case with all – for some have to wait till they can clear out the obstructing stuff in the mind, vital and physical consciousness, and until then they get only a touch now and then. But even at the

best, this earlier spiritual light is never complete, until the darkness of the physical consciousness has been faced and overcome. It is not by one's own fault that one falls into this stage; it can come when one is trying one's best to advance. It does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to pass through it. It is difficult to explain these things because the psychological necessity is difficult for the ordinary human reason to understand or accept. I will try to have a shot at it, but it may take some days. Meanwhile, as you have asked what is my advice, I send you this brief answer." This I sent to Krishnaprem who wrote to me:

"I am so sorry that you are not well and still more so to see the nature of the troubles you refer to. Set your teeth and stick it out as best you can: the darkness will pass if you keep facing it. Remember what I wrote to you about the ship and the compass. Never mind what happens: keep your mind on Sri Krishna's feet, remember always that you belong to Him and not to yourself and just go on whether in light or in darkness, in joy or in sorrow as *He* wills. But stick to it. Since your Gurudev sanctions, take a holiday, go to Ramana Ashram or Ramdas or anywhere else but do not for one moment entertain the thought of ever going back to your old life: that is gone for ever and thoughts of it can only bring trouble. These things come sometime or other – sometimes again and again to most, in fact I suppose to all *sadhakas*. The form may vary but the cause is the same: the opposition of the powers which rule our 'lower natures' to the upward surging movement of the spirit. Naturally, it is only when that upward movement becomes real or promises to become real that those powers feel their dominions threatened or respond with storms and darkness in some form or other. Moreover they are only able to do it by working on some weakness in us, some inner resentment or despondency at thwarted desires. As the magician needs something belonging to his would-be victim – some lock of hair or fragment of clothing – before he can work his magic, so these powers need some weakness in ourselves before they can work their *maya*. Hold them at bay contemplating on Sri Krishna's feet, whenever such thoughts arise. Refuse them the more as *your* thoughts realise that they come from outside and let the Light that shines from His feet dispel and drive them away. Then try to find

what it is in you that they made use of as a focus to act upon – nearly always it is some thwarted desire of the ego, often quite unacknowledged by the surface mind.

“Anyway, by whatever means, stick it out, don’t even think of turning back. The moment you have done it, that moment those powers, having gained their end, would leave their maya and you would be bitterly repenting.

“There can be no going back for us, Dilip: that which we have left behind us has perished and it is a sheer illusion to think that we can recover it. It has gone and whether we like it or no, in sorrow or in joy, we must push on. Don’t try to look back even: it only makes us giddy and what we see are only deceitful phantoms.

“Rather we should look to the future with its promise of something quite different from what now is. Now at this moment we should seize the eternal feet of Krishna, not hope to seize them at some future date – ‘if we are good’ as they used to say when we were children. *Now, now, now!* Let the past go and the future take care of itself.

“It is natural that you should be painfully affected by the horrors of Bengal but that too is in Krishna’s hands. He who has given himself to Krishna must keep his eyes on His feet, irrevocably, though the triple world fell into ruin.”

Upon this Gurudev finally commented:

“Krishnaprem’s letter is admirable from start to finish and every sentence hits the truth with great point and force. He has evidently an accurate knowledge both of the psychological and the occult forces that act in Yoga; all that he says is in agreement with my own experience and I concur. His account of the rationale of your present difficulties is quite correct and no other explanation is needed – except what I was writing in my unfinished letter about the descent of *sadhana* into the plane of the physical consciousness, and that does not disaccord with but completes what he says. He is quite right in saying that the heaviness of these attacks was due to the fact that you had taken up the *sadhana* in earnest and were approaching, as one might say, the gates of the Kingdom of Light. That always makes these forces rage and they

strain every nerve and use or create every opportunity to turn the *sadhaka* back or, if possible, drive him out of the path altogether by their suggestion, their violent influences and their exploitation of all kinds of incidents that always crop up more and more when these conditions prevail, so that he may not reach the gates. I have written to you more than once alluding to these forces, but I did not press the point because I saw that like most people whose minds are rationalised by the modern European education you were not inclined to believe in or at least attach any importance to this knowledge. People, now-a-days, seek the explanation for every thing in their ignorant reason, their surface experience and in outside happenings. They do not see the hidden forces and inner causes which were well-known and visualised in the traditional Indian and Yogic knowledge. Of course, these forces find their *d'appui* in the *sadhaka* himself, in the ignorant parts of his consciousness and its assent to their suggestions and influences; otherwise they could not act or at least could not act with any success. In your case the chief *points d'appui* have been the extreme sensitiveness of the lower vital ego and now also the physical consciousness with all its fixed or standing opinions, prejudices, prejudgments, habitual reactions, personal preferences, clinging to old ideas and associations, its obstinate doubts and its maintaining these things as a wall of obstruction and opposition to the larger light. This activity of the physical mind is what people call intellect and reason although it is only the turning of a machine in a circle of mental habits and is very different from the true and free reason, the higher *buddhi* which is capable of enlightenment and still more from the higher spiritual light or that insight and tact of the psychic consciousness which sees at once what is true and right and distinguishes it from what is wrong and false. This insight you had very constantly whenever you were in a good condition and especially whenever *bhakti* became strong in you. When the *sadhaka* comes down into the physical consciousness leaving the mental and higher vital ranges on which he had first turned towards the Divine, these opposite things become very strong and sticky and, as one's more helpful slates and experiences draw back behind the veil and one can hardly realise that one ever had them, it becomes difficult to get out of this condition. The only thing then, as Krishnaprem has

told you and I also have insisted, is to stick it out. If once one can get and keep the resolution to refuse to accept the suggestions of these forces, however plausible they may seem, then either quickly or gradually this condition can diminish and will be overpassed and cease. To give up Yoga is no solution; you could not successfully do it as both Krishnaprem and I have told you and as your mind tells you when it is clear. A temporary absence from the Ashram for relief from the struggle is a different matter. I do not think, however, that residence in the Ramana Ashram would be eventually helpful except for bringing back some peace of mind; Ramana Maharshi is a great Yogi and his realisation very high on its own line; but it does not seem to me that it is a line which you could successfully follow as you certainly can follow the path of *bhakti* if you stick to it, and there might then be the danger of your falling between two stools, losing your own path and not being able to follow the path of another nature.

“As regards Bengal, things are certainly very bad; the condition of Hindus there is terrible and they may even get worse in spite of the interim *manage de convenance* at Delhi. But we must not let our reaction to it become excessive or suggest despair. There must be at least 20 million Hindus in Bengal and they are not going to be exterminated – even Hitler with his scientific methods of massacre could not exterminate the Jews who are still showing themselves very much alive: and, as for the Hindu culture, it is not such a weak and fluffy thing as to be easily stamped out; it has lasted through something like five millenniums at least and is going to carry on much longer and has accumulated quite enough power to survive. What is happening did not come to me as a surprise. I foresaw it when I was in Bengal and warned people that it was probable and almost inevitable and that they should be prepared for it. At that time no one attached any value to what I said although some afterwards remembered and admitted, when the trouble first began, that I had been right: only C. R. Das had grave apprehensions and he even told me, when he came to Pondicherry, that he would not like the British to go out until this dangerous problem had been settled. But I have not been discouraged by what is happening, because I know and have experienced hundreds of times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God’s victory. *I have never had a strong*

*and persistent will for anything to happen in the world – I am not speaking of personal things – which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster. There was a time when Hitler was victorious everywhere and it seemed certain that the black yoke of the Asura would be imposed on the whole world; but where is Hitler now and where is his rule? Berlin and Nuremberg have marked the end of that dreadful chapter in human history. Other blacknesses threatened to overshadow or even engulf mankind, but they too will end as that nightmare has ended.”*

“Guru,” I pursued again, “I cry like the gasping Goethe: ‘More light!’ for I miss it today as never before. I have heard so much about the Divine Grace and seen so little of it so far! But I know you will effectively silence me by saying that in a brighter mood I will contradict myself again for the hundredth time, and you will be right. But, alas, what is a helpless mortal to do when, even after being persuaded that one should be well-advised to have faith – blind, one-eyed or fully vigilant – he discovers that it is as good as non-existent in his composition? (Was not faith essentially a seal of Krishna’s call – or, shall I say, a convincing insignia to signify that one was sponsored by Him?) What has surprised me all along the line is that despite my lamentable deficiency in faith I should be almost inexhaustibly rich in *vairagya*! But, alas, *vairagya*, unlike *bhakti* or knowledge, is essentially negative and faith I lack, although both you and Krishnaprem have driven me to the wall with unanswerable arguments in its favour. In my present state, however, I often catch myself thinking, ruefully, that the man of faith – like his polar opposite, the sceptic – is born, not made. Otherwise why does my faith play truant so persistently?”

To this Gurudev replied once more with a patience as inexhaustible as my capacity for questioning spiritual truth (and yet accepting, paradoxically, the standpoint of *vairagya* that, without the light of the spirit, life must remain a dismal grasping at phantoms):

“In your case faith is there, not in your mind, not in your vital but in your psychic being. It was this faith that flung you out of the world and brought you to Pondicherry; it is this faith that keeps you to what the soul wills and refuses to go back on what it had decided. Even the mind’s questionings have been a groping after some jus-

tification by which it can get an excuse for believing in spite of its difficulties. The vital's eagerness for realisation and its *vairagya* are shadows of this faith, forms which it has taken in order to keep the vital from giving up in spite of the pressure of despondency and struggle. Even in the mind and vital of the men of the strongest mental and vital faith there are periods when the knowledge in the soul gets covered up – but it persists behind the veil. In you, in spite of your difficulties, there is always the knowledge or intuition in the soul that started you on the way. I have been pressing on you the need of faith because the assent has again to take a positive form (*vairagya* is but the negative form of this assent in you) so as to give free way to the Divine Force; but the persistent drive in the soul (which is hidden behind as exteriorly-suppressed faith) is itself sufficient to warrant the expectation of the Grace to come.”



But life not only founds a strange school but teaches its lessons through a strange curriculum. I have often wondered what would have happened to me had I never met Krishnaprem in Lucknow in 1923. Would I have been drawn so early to Sri Aurobindo? That is perhaps not so inconceivable seeing that the seeds of the traditional *vairagya* had been sown in the soil of my early childhood. But what would have happened to me in my spiritual crises in those novitiate days when I wavered so often? Who would have given me, time and again, just that steadying hand-clasp to help me regain my self-poise when it was a case of touch and go with me on the precipice of despair? I do not say this to put it dramatically – as anybody who has practised Yoga will agree – still less to express a conventional type of gratefulness; but perhaps I will sound more convincing if I contend that I have often felt that Gurudev welcomed Krishnaprem's wise exhortations to me for a twofold reason. In the first place because, being, as I have stressed before, an incredibly tolerant Guru who aimed only at “awakening” rather than “instructing” his disciples, he welcomed every impetus that would help me realise my spiritual potentialities. (This he made clear to me once in a beautiful letter which only he could write with his infinite understanding and compassion: “I have

not the slightest idea of disowning you or asking you to go elsewhere or giving you up or asking you to abandon the Yoga or this Yoga. It is not that I insist on your finding the Divine through me and no one else or by this way and no other. I want you to arrive and would be glad to see you do it by whatever way or with whatever help. But even if you followed another way, your place with me would remain, inwardly, physically and in every way. Even if you walked off to the Himalayas to sit in seclusion till you got something, as I think you sometimes wanted to do, your place would remain waiting for you here. I want you to understand that clearly, and not imagine all sorts of things about cutting off or displeasure or abandonment and the rest of it. Nothing could be further from our minds or from our feeling for you.”) And, in the second place, because he had seen from the start that Krishnaprem’s exhortations to me would make his own guiding wisdom more acceptable to me. I employ the word ‘acceptable’ advisedly, since I have been so often both unable and unwilling to see my way clear, when faced by Gurudev’s findings, till Krishnaprem came down on me thundering at my irresolution and vacillation. I cannot help marvelling at the strangeness of such a phenomenon – or shall I say providential dispensation – because, obviously, I could never look upon Krishnaprem as Gurudev’s equal in mystic wisdom or Yogic stature. Yet why was it that I needed the elucidations of the lesser to appraise better the clarity of the greater? I know some of my *gurubhais* looked askance at Krishnaprem’s hold over me. It is understandable. For they might well argue (as in point of fact they did) that Sri Aurobindo had never approved of any outside influence acting on his disciples. But then why did he put his seal on Krishnaprem’s influence over myself, knowing full well that the latter would never accept his direction or even outlook if it ever ran counter to *his* Guru’s lead? Only one explanation occurs to me: that he had faith not only in the spiritual wisdom of Krishnaprem but also in the purity of his love for me. In other words, he knew that Krishnaprem would not misuse the influence he wielded over me precisely because Krishnaprem loved something in me which turned to him in simple trust to be led to the One to whom he himself had given his soul in keeping, prompted by a similar simple confidence.

That is why he once told me in clear terms: “If your Guru, Dilip, should ever think that you had better have no truck with me any more,

please remember that I would not only not mind your steering clear of me, but insist on it.” I do not think such love has anything in common with what we are accustomed to panegyrisse as ‘love’. I need hardly emphasise the unique elements of a love such as this, the less so because the true value of such boons can be assessed by experience alone. I will therefore only touch on one last point – to end on a cheerful note: his sense of humour and love of laughter. I have often wondered whether I would have been able to profit so much by his guidance or even appreciate his “British doggedness he brought to bear on his *sadhana*” as Gurudev once put it, had I not loved his simple cheerfulness which mocked at the sententious and the solemn and insisted on laughter and gaiety, first and last, and exhorted the grave to “save our Yoga from degenerating into that over-conscientious scrupulosity which makes life a hell for many ‘religious’ people and not only sicklies o’er the native hue of resolution, but, more serious still, dries up the healing springs of laughter. Once that occurs disaster is certain. Laughter was given by the Gods to man and it was one of their choicest gifts. No animal can laugh nor does it need to, since it lives in the harmony of the purely instinctive life. It is only Man whose possession of an ego introduces stresses and strains which cannot be avoided and for the healing of which, therefore, the Gods gave him this supreme gift. Time and again it will save us when otherwise all would be lost. He who cannot laugh, he whose devotions are too serious for the healing waves of laughter, had better look out: there are breakers ahead.”<sup>1</sup>

I admired whole-heartedly his most mature work and master-piece, *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*, in which he sounded this warning. Nevertheless, once it so happened that I just could not face the music; it seemed as though the odds were hundred to one against me and so, in sheer despair, I wrote to Krishnaprem that I had finally decided to call it a day, admitting defeat. In explanation, I added that I had made up my mind to retire into a complete seclusion where I must henceforward stay in sombre silence, bidding good-bye to laughter and the merry-round of social life.

To that he wrote back with alacrity:

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*, Chapter V, Sri Krishnaprem

“But what is this awful news about your giving up laughter? Give up anything else you like: arguing, visitors, reading, writing, – but if you give up laughing, I, for one, shall weep. I read it out to Moti and she, too, was quite horrified! If you don’t at once forswear such an awful heresy I shall never dare to meet you again. It would really be too awful! You would come silently into the room, perhaps brushing away a tear from your eye, and say to me in a solemn tone: ‘Brother! shall we meditate together a little?’ Appalling! And then we should look at each other surreptitiously from downcast eyelids to see whose meditation was deepest! And then: ‘Shall we have a little holy talk together, brother?’ Ghastly! I don’t really believe you can be contemplating anything so dreadful!”

I sent this letter up to Gurudev inviting his opinion:

Was sense of humour as welcome to Yoga as it was to life? He wrote back the next morning with his radiant assurance: “Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance – it is unbalanced enough already – and rushed to blazes long ago.”

Doubtless, to walk in cheerfulness is not easy in this our “vale of tears” where the brightest laughter is fraught with the shadow of pain. Only the bravest among us can achieve it, transmuting, by their courage, the heart’s pining for *what might have been* into a living faith that since His Grace on high *is* the Pilot, our life’s bark *shall* come to port. Fortunately, such blessed spirits are still born to our dismal planet – self-luminous souls who can walk in the light of their own faith and shed it on others as well. It is in this virgin light of the soul that Krishnaprem has soared skyward on the twin wings of love and loyalty, with a song on his lips, laughing death away, repeating as it were on a rosary:

*Nabhinandeta maranam nabhinandeta jivanam  
Kalam eva pratiksheta nidesham bhritako yatha.*<sup>1</sup>

*Dark death nor life I hymn, but wait*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Mahabharata*, Shanti Parva

*Like Time upon His guidance still:  
I bow to what He would dictate,  
Like servants doing their masters' will.*

## PART II

WRITTEN AFTER SRI KRISHNAPREM'S PASSING  
ON NOVEMBER 14, 1965

## THE REFUGE

“Life is like a flooded river carrying with it in its mad rush all manner of struggling beings, men, women, children and animals as well as all manner of trees and wreckage, carrying them all down towards the sea of death. Things seem permanent because they are floating along with us, but all alike are rushing towards the end and not one of them can help us. Father, mother, friends, relations, not one of them can save us, for all are in the same flood. Only by reaching the bank can safety be obtained. And ‘the bank of this river is God, call Him by whatever name you will. Neither is the bank far away. Hidden in our own heart, seated in the very midst of our being, is the Deathless, unchanging One, shining with brightness as of a million suns. None can describe Him, nor ever will, but He is there and He may, as the *Gita* says, be known and seen and entered into by those who strive to do so.

“This is no fancy of Poets, no myths or legend of long ago, no dream of white-haired old men. It is the living truth, truer than all sciences and all history. It is knowledge of this truth that has given birth to all religions and it is forgetfulness of it that has led to their corruption and death. It may be seen and experienced by us, too, not in some heaven after death but here and now in this very life. Therefore, as the Upanishad says: ‘Arise, awake and seek out the Great Ones, They who will teach you the way to the Goal’.”

– *Search for Truth*, Sri Krishnaprem

## REMINISCENCES

### ONE

It was in September 1923 – before the Puja vacation – that I was invited by Sri Jnanendra Nath Chakravarti, the vice-chancellor of the Lucknow University, to stay for a few weeks with him. He lived in a sumptuous mansion with an annexe which served for the guest-house, as he was an extremely hospitable man who kept an open table. Ronald Nixon, the most beloved professor of the University, had made his home with him and his wife, Monika Devi, the famous *dame de salon*, as many people dubbed her in those days.

I accepted Sri Chakravarti's invitation with alacrity, the more so as Nixon was there to keep me company.

My bedroom was next to his living-room. Every morning we had breakfast together after which I was asked, as often as not, to sing for an hour or so to my host and hostess in their beautiful *salon*. Krishnaprem never failed to attend, for he too loved my singing, especially my hymns to Krishna and Radha. Then, in the afternoon, he would often ask his colleagues and other friends to tea in his large living-room with books scattered pell-mell all over the place. His friends used to call his tea-parties *conversazioni*, if only to feel self-important. His debates were sometimes attended by outsiders also, as he simply scintillated with his brilliant arguments and repartees. It was, indeed, a treat to hear him, especially when he tore his opponents to pieces.

He had two dear friends in Lucknow: one was Dr Joygopal Mukherji (who became, later, a great friend of mine as well) and the other was the redoubtable professor, sceptic-cum-rationalist-cum-iconoclast, Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji, an old friend of mine.

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

One day, while we sipped tea together, Dhurjati suddenly started inveighing against “divine miracles” which, he asserted – thumping the table like a veritable orator – “had ceased to happen altogether ever since Science (with a capital S) began to ‘debunk’ them...” Krishnaprem laughed genially, and took up the gauntlet. “Science,” he said, “was born only yesterday whereas miracles are as old as the hills, and an infant could hardly ‘debunk’ an elder who, besides, had refused to age for ages.” And then he related a personal experience, which he repeated to me many a time, subsequently.

He said: “I was, as you know, a pilot in the First World War. So I had to drop bombs over the enemy territory. One day, as I was reconnoitering, I was about to steer to the right, where half-a-dozen fighter planes whirred and zoomed, thinking that they were ours – that is R.A.F. planes. Just then some force simply caught hold of my wrist and made me veer right round to the left. I was quite bewildered, the more so as the force was too *incredible* to be doubted. In a few minutes I returned to our base and was told that I had done well to come back so promptly as a number of enemy planes had just come into action. It was then I realised, with a shock of thankful delight, that I had had a miraculous escape. Believe it or not, dear Dhurjati, I am as certain as certain can be that the miracle had been wrought by a power beyond our ken. Only the difficulty is that, though seeing is believing, hearing is not – especially if one’s audience luxuriate in pooh-poohing everything they fail to plumb with their little minds’ puny plummetts.”

### TWO

As Monika Devi loved my songs, she asked me, sometimes, to sing to her alone – when only Krishnaprem attended.

Little by little, I began to notice in my hostess something which struck me as rather remarkable. Let me explain.

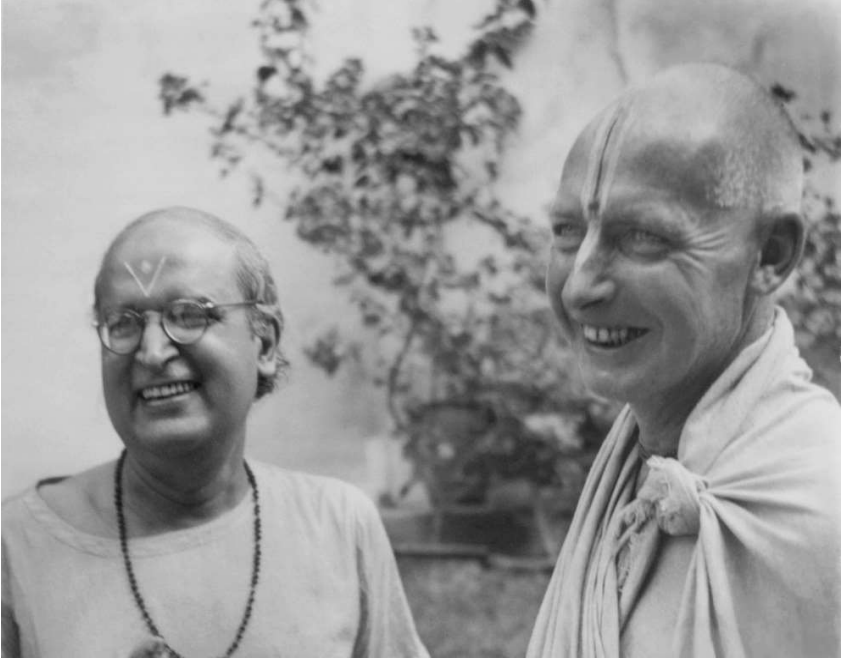
I have given Monika Devi the epithet of the *dame de salon*, for so she had, indeed, appeared to us all – that is to say, as a great lady

of birth and breeding with the innate personal charm of a born hostess, aristocratic to her fingertips. But gradually, it dawned upon me that she was *not* what she seemed. She had a mystic personality which was, indeed, not obvious to the superficial view, but to one who could delve deeper a different personality took shape which could well baffle the eye, used to accepting the surface appearance. This came home to me primarily because she responded to devotional songs, especially Bengali *kirtans* and Hindi *bhajans*, with an astonishing warmth, so much so, that tears coursed down her cheeks when I sang of the Lord's magic flute and cosmic play – *lila*. I noticed, next, how reverently Krishnaprem gazed at her and prostrated himself before her every time she greeted him as her *Gopal*, heart's darling (the name by which Krishna's Mother, Yasoda Rani, called her little son). I was no less impressed when I saw that in her presence the leonine intellectual turned in a moment into a docile lamb! I had, however, no inkling, at the time, of his having already accepted her as his Guru. This I came to know only after a year had glided by.

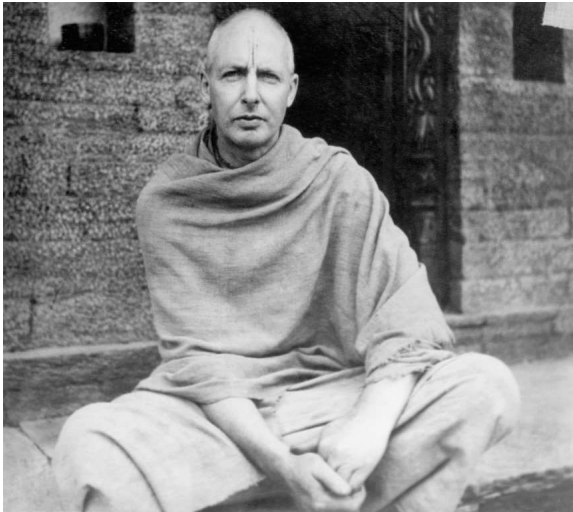
One day, after the *bhajan*, I remarked to Krishnaprem about her being *two* personalities in one and went on to add: "When I see her in a social mood, laughing, smoking, cracking jokes – a veritable 'cynosure of neighbouring eyes', I do indeed admire her scintillating repartees and her native talent to make a party go, but then, as soon as I sing a song on Krishna before her – well, doesn't she look completely transfigured, in her ecstatic tears? I don't know, Krishnaprem, but at such times I cannot help feeling that she is a denizen of the deep, a citizen of an utterly different world, if you know what I mean."

"I do, Dilip," he returned with a loving pat on my back. "And I am glad that you have learnt the wisdom of not judging by appearances. For many a judge has, as you know, summed her up merely as a brilliant *dame de salon* and nothing more. But she is not a person easy to plumb or decipher. In fact, she has to be seen to be believed, if you know what *I* mean."

PART II – REMINISCENCES



DILIP KUMAR AND SRI KRISHNAPREM, PONDICHERRY , 1942



SRI KRISHNAPREM IN 1942

PART II – REMINISCENCES



SRI KRISHNAPREM'S  
UTTAR BRINDABAN TEMPLE



SRI KRISHNAPREM  
IN HIS ASHRAM GARDEN

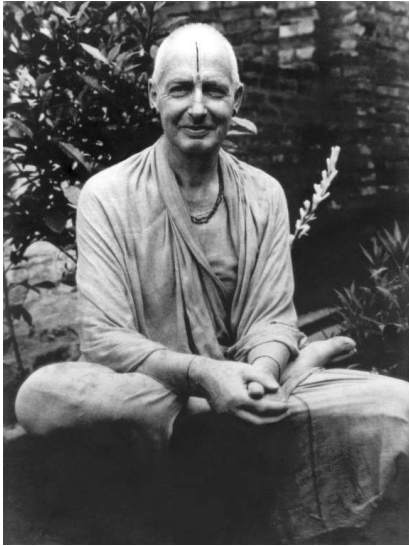


SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI AND  
SRI KRISHNAPREM IN 1948

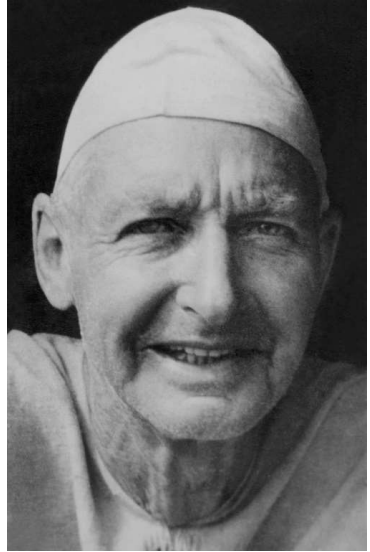


SRI KRISHNAPREM WITH AUTHOR AND  
SMT MOTIRANI IN CALCUTTA 1947

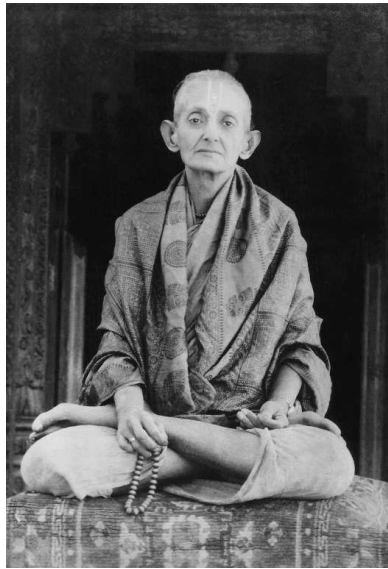
PART II – REMINISCENCES



SRI KRISHNAPREM AROUND 1946  
WHEN HE CAME TO CALCUTTA



SRI KRISHNAPREM'S LAST  
PHOTOGRAPH IN 1964



YASHODA MA – SRI KRISHNAPREM'S GURU MATA  
IN ALMORA

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

### THREE

About a year had gone by when Dhurjati wrote to me from Lucknow that Krishnaprem had been initiated into Vaishnavism by Monika Devi, exchanged his English dress for the ochre-coloured habit and flowered into an imposing Indian sadhu. Joygopal wrote, a few days later, that Monika Devi had taken full *sannyas*, changed her name and shaved her head at the instance of her Guru, a Goswami of a Brindaban temple. Naturally, I was startled, but I was moved to my depths as well. It was, indeed, incredible! For had she not been born and bred in the lap of luxury, an aristocrat and progressive out and out, an ultra-modern who went every two years to England, a resplendent leader of fashion in her set and, above all, a loving mother and wife? Aye, I had to concede, willy-nilly, that she was, indeed, a lady “who had to be seen to be believed!”. (A few years later Krishnaprem was to divulge to me – in their sylvan retreat at Almora – that he had accepted her as his Guru because she could talk of Krishna, the gods and goddesses from intimate personal experience. But about all that I will have a good deal to write presently, in due course.)

A few months after Krishnaprem had retired to Varanasi as a sadhu under the aegis of his Guru (now known as Yasoda Ma), I invited him to spend a few days with me in Calcutta in my grandfather’s luxurious mansion on Theatre Road. He readily complied and we had a marvelous time together. I used, literally, to hang on his words, the more so as he had become a mendicant in the Lord’s Name; and I started keeping a record of some of his memorable sayings, to be able to quote right and left before non-believers.

He went out of his way now and again to have a fling at my anglicised friends. He held that India was the only country in Asia which had stayed unconquered by the materialistic civilisation of the West because she could still boast her great saints’ holy aura to guard her like an armour. Sometimes, when the detractors bridled or scoffed at the sadhus as parasites, he would retort with a smile that if the West had a galaxy of such parasites today, the next World War might be staved off, and said provokingly: “The ones you call parasites I would rather endow with the epithet, *salt of the earth.*”

They would sometimes, in a body, go for him, espousing the cause of the intellect as the best antidote to blind faith. He would calmly rejoin: “But the proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof, my friends! If blind faith could dower us with the *Shivanetra* (the Third eye) I would rather be blind to drab chimera and have angel glimpses of the thrilling Reality.” And so he went on, undismayed by their concerted attack, like a veritable “Abhimanyu encircled by seven charioteers”, as he often described himself with a chortle. (And even they had to give him his due, to wit, that he had a remarkable grasp of our epics and scriptures). Nevertheless, a firebrand challenged him one day: “But, Mr Nixon, how can you possibly subscribe to these dangerous superstitions which no wise man should believe?” Pat came the rejoinder: “My dear wise friend, when you will have outgrown your wisdom it will dawn on you that it is far more dangerous for your soul not to believe what you should believe than for your mind to believe what should not be believed. For in the latter case you may, indeed, land in a pit-fall, but then you can see it as such and so climb out of it to resume your journey. But when you disbelieve what you should believe, you topple over into an abyss and break either your neck or limbs or both.”



We never met at Varanasi where, on the bank of the immemorial Ganga, Sri Chakravarti had bought a beautiful house and lived in it for a year or two with Yasoda Ma and Krishnaprem. I was told that it was there Krishnaprem began his Yoga assiduously, or, shall I say, with his native “British doggedness”, as Sri Aurobindo once put it. My informant told me that in the holy atmosphere of Varanasi Krishnaprem’s very soul seemed to have flowered out under the aegis of his guru, Yasoda Ma. He related a revealing repartee of Krishnaprem’s:

“What on earth have you found to adore, sir, in this drab city of dust and din?” heckled an ultra-modern, as Krishnaprem was giving a discourse on the symbol of Varanasi and Shiva’s aura.

Krishnaprem replied with a radiant smile: “Gold-dust, my friend, and the music of the Ganga.”

FOUR

I have written already about how I missed Krishnaprem when I visited Lucknow in November 1928, and hinted that Joygopal was instrumental in giving me the blow I needed for my orientation towards my Guru. There I heard from all and sundry about Krishnaprem’s begging alms in the streets and cooking his food and sleeping on a bare blanket on the cold heights of the Himalayas, 7,500 feet above the sea-level. My heart sank everytime Joygopal put me abreast of his feats of courage and endurance, and I asked myself again and again, in trepidation, whether all these heroic austerities were incumbent on one who yearned desperately to be havened at his guru’s feet. But I found no answer, and so had to live in a void, since I had no taste left for the fleshpots of the world and even music, my *grande passion*, had begun to pall.

So, at long last, I confined to my friend one night my deep misgivings and told him that although I felt miserable I could not help vacillating because I just dreaded cloistered monasticism. But that was not the whole story, as he divined quickly. So, astutely hitting the nail on the head and giving me a quizzical smile, he hazarded bluntly:

“Don’t hedge, Dilip. I propose buying a ticket for you the first thing tomorrow morning. You just make straight for your Guru’s Yogashram at Pondicherry where you belong. Surrender all you have and are to him.”

“It’s all very well to prescribe remedies,” I demurred ruefully. “But are you sure of the diagnosis?”

A medical man, my friend and host smiled appreciatively and prodded: “What is the trouble?”

“I wish, I knew,” I answered bitterly. “I only know that I am groping in a maze. You see, it’s like this. My Guru, unlike Krishnaprem’s, has not given me anything tangible yet. Surely, you don’t

expect me to give up everything for nothing?”

His noble brow clouded.

“Well, Dilip,” he sighed. “You *have* let me down! I cherished you as I have because I thought you were a born Yogi, like Krishnaprem. I see now that I was mistaken. For what you say amounts to this that you can’t bring yourself to accept a Guru unless he signs a contract with you and gives you in advance some delightful experiences – something like what they call in law a *consideration*, a *quid pro quo* stipulation! Well, if this be your approach – that is, you start with bargaining with the Lord – then you shall never arrive.”

The shaft went home. ... The whole night I could not sleep. I was *bargaining* with the Lord, whereas Krishnaprem had taken the plunge, staking everything with just one throw of the dice. ... Oh, how dare I claim him as my friend after this? ... A medley of self-pity and vacillation, aspiration and fear, longing and diffidence drained me of all my strength till I started praying in tears, when the incredible miracle happened. ...

I got up and, in twenty minutes, took the next available train to Bombay, en route for Pondicherry, after despatching a telegram to Sri Aurobindo on November 15.

It is God’s truth that my destiny was decided in twenty minutes and I had, as it were, no say in the matter. Wasn’t that a miracle! of the first water? I reached Pondicherry on November 22, 1928 and left it on December 12, 1953, three years after my Guru’s passing.



In Pondicherry I often caught myself dwelling on my deep debt to Krishnaprem. I wrote to him regularly, questioning and challenging – often deliberately putting him in the dock as it were, and he too gave back as much as he got. It was, indeed, a joy to break a lance with him, the more so as he went on tirelessly answering my questions over and over again with the luminous clarity of his spiritual discernment – or, shall I say, his “mind of sight”, as Sri Aurobindo put it.

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

One time he wrote to me deprecating my gratitude. “You overestimate the effect I had on you,” he wrote. But I could not admit this. For I have owed to him more than I have to any other friend on earth during an unbroken intimacy of four decades. Not only that: I had the joy of coming in contact with him – vicariously, as it were – through ever so many friends he sent to me intermittently even as he received cordially the ones I recommended.

### FIVE

But I must pause here to introduce another noble soul who followed in the footsteps of Krishnaprem and endeared himself to me: an English aspirant, J. A. Chadwick. He came to me with a letter of introduction from Krishnaprem. I was charmed by his refinement and sincerity not to mention his keen intelligence and brilliant gifts. He lived, for a year, in a room next to mine after he had found his Guru in Sri Aurobindo to whom he clung one-pointedly till his death, in 1938.

I have written elsewhere about the incredible role our Gurudev Sri Aurobindo played as a poet-maker. By which I mean that he could infuse poetry as it were, into many a disciple who had never dallied with the Muse before. Nirodbaran was an instance in point. But more convincing still was J. A. Chadwick, to whom Gurudev afterwards gave the name of Arjava. He had been a distinguished Don of Cambridge as well as a Fellow of the Trinity College. It was always a joy to exchange ideas with him, in especial about music, his *grande passion*. Which, perhaps, is one of the reasons why, when Sri Aurobindo’s magic touch had made him flower out into a beautiful poet, his poems breathed such delectable melody.

I will quote only a few lines from two of his poems by way of illustration. He wrote about Sri Aurobindo, whose poetry he adored, in a poem:

*O puissant heart amidst whose ruptured shrining  
A nameless Love is garbed in Name’s disguise,  
Last metronome to mortal things assigning  
A fadeless rhythm wrung from Dawn’s echoing skies.*

In another poem the closing verse ran:

*Your name is fading music upon my worship's mouth;  
It spills in languorous fragrance from lilies of the South;  
It is the odorous night-flower wherewith your looks are bound,  
Or the moon-pale soul of roses caught in a mesh of sound.*

He had been profoundly stirred by Krishnaprem's pure and one-pointed aspiration for the Grace of the Guru, the more so as he also had longed, like Krishnaprem, to accept a Guru. Happily for me, he came to be swept off his feet by Sri Aurobindo, whom he accepted, once and for all, as the keeper of his soul, insomuch, that, after his surrender to Sri Aurobindo, he never once looked back although his people in England pressed him repeatedly to come back home. He refused to comply as he, too, had lost faith in the materialistic civilisation of the West which he branded as the arch-hatcher of the most cruel fratricidal strifes in human history. That was why, as he often said to me with a sigh, he had ceased to believe in the Western gospel of scientific secularism and aimless activism stalking the dreadful path of self-aggrandisement and exploitation of the weak. He came to adore Sri Aurobindo for his message of Life Divine and Synthesis of Yoga.

I have divagated a little deliberately, because I wish to quote a beautiful Foreword Krishnaprem wrote to his poems when Chadwick died in India at the Guru's feet, a Foreword which elicited high praise from Sri Aurobindo himself. I have decided to do this for a twofold reason: first, because it reveals how Krishnaprem had, incidentally, given a fillip as it were to Chadwick's aspiration to accept, irrevocably, the lead of an Indian guru, and secondly, because it brings to the fore (albeit with an undertone of mystic sadness) Krishnaprem's beautiful courageous attitude vis-à-vis a whole-hearted acceptance of Guruvad and the journey's end.

This is what he wrote – in 1939 – in his exquisite tribute:

“It must be now twelve years since Chadwick and I sat together on the banks of the Ganges at Benares, talking far into the night of

dreams that lay close to our hearts, dreams that had brought us together as they had brought us both to India. Of his past I knew little save that it included a fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge and that a distinguished Cambridge philosopher entertained great hopes from his brilliant abilities in mathematical philosophy of the specifically ‘Cambridge’ sort. Somewhere between the chinks of his academic career I surmised an initiation into the Kabalistic tradition and there was that in his eyes which showed unmistakably that it was not for the sake of a professorship in a provincial university that he had left his friends at Cambridge and crossed the seven seas.

“Once more we met in a university bungalow at Lucknow, a background that we both felt to be an utter irrelevance, and then we departed, I to the North and he to the South where he had found his Guru in Sri Aurobindo. There, in the Ashram at Pondicherry, he lived for the past ten years, shedding at the feet of his Guru the burden of all that the world counts valuable in order to find the hidden treasure for which most men have no eyes.

“Of his life and *sadhana* there under the name of Arjava it is not for me to speak. That it brought about a profound psychic transformation in his nature is clear from the fact that he, whose language had hitherto been limited to the arid propositions of intellectual philosophy, became a poet and, with the aid of poetry, entered the inner worlds of which, till then, he had but dreamed.

“Traditionalists and those who take a narrow view of *sadhana* will perhaps wonder what poetry has to do with *yoga*. The truth is that the reintegration of the psyche that is brought about by *sadhana* has the effect of releasing unsuspected powers that were lying latent in the heart of the *sadhaka*, as indeed, they are in the hearts of all. We read in books of *yoga* that ‘by meditating on Her who shines in the Root Lotus with the lustre of ten million Suns, a man becomes a Lord of Speech and, ... pure of heart, by his deep and musical words, serves the greatest of the Gods.’ The truth of such words, now-a-days too often assumed to be mere empty praise, is witnessed to by these poems left behind by Arjava when, at what seems to us the early age of forty, the Sovereign Dweller of his heart decided to withdraw to inner worlds.

“The mere literary critic will admire the delicate dream-like beauty of these poems, but, unless his insight is more than merely literary, he will go no deeper, for they deal with the mysteries of the inner life and only he who can read their symbols will be able to penetrate to their heart. For Arjava, as is shown in the poem entitled *Correspondences*, Nature was a shrine in which each form seen in the flickering firelight of the senses was a shadow of realities that lay within, shining in the magical light of the secret Moon which was the Master-Light of all his seeing, the central image of so many poems.

“In the midst of our personal sadness at his early departure let us remember that this Path is the one which leads through many worlds and that, as Sri Krishna said, *nehabhi-krama nashosti*, for him who treads it there can be no loss of effort.”

## SIX

I met Krishnaprem at Allahabad in 1938. He had come down with Yasoda Ma for her treatment by competent doctors. She had been suffering for years from a number of ailments and was all but bed-ridden at the time. But what a peace radiated from her emaciated face and what a serene smile! She told me in answer to my anxious enquiry that I should not worry about her health as the Lord had booned her with an ineffable peace which was her constant companion and more than countervailed all her physical pain. “This body, my son,” she said, “is truly like a cage. The One who is inside is the real person we should enquire about, the bird whose nest is in the sky. I have *seen* that this soul, the Bird of Bliss, is not the body, the cage. So what does it matter if the cage goes to pieces?” She often exploited this pet simile of hers. Once, however, I could not help but demur.

“But *Ma*,” I said, “you may be justified in looking upon your body as a mere cage in which your soul chafes and so disowns it as something irrelevant. But what about us? We can’t contact this Bird of Bliss with which you are pleased to identify yourself if your cage goes to pieces. So, for the sake of such as we at least – not to mention Krishnaprem – you should have the cage repaired.” She laughed and said:

“But, when the cage becomes too cramping, my son, it may be necessary to leave it.” Krishnaprem’s eyes darkened with pain whenever she talked in this strain, so much so, that often she had to stop midway and give him one of her rare smiles.

How well I remember the first evening when I sang before her and Krishnaprem and a few others at the house of her host, a Kashmiri relation of the Nehrus! I sang a song on Kali composed by a friend of mine: *Jalbar mantra dile morey*. The opening couplet may be translated thus:

*Mother, thou gavest me the mantra of flame:  
So I burn and burn – my white-heat none can tame.*

I remember it clearly because after the song he paid me a compliment which I have loved to quote very often. “What *shakti* (vitality), Dilip!” he exclaimed. “I am a Britisher by birth and do know something about energy. But even I am truly amazed when I see you squandering your ‘fire’ with such a regal recklessness! ...”

I gave a deprecatory laugh and said lightly: “But how can you be so disloyal as to extol *shakti* (energy) – you who are such an ideal Vaishnava!”

“Don’t talk rubbish,” he retorted. “Didn’t Krishna enjoin Arjuna to rise to the occasion disowning the last traces of faint-heartedness?” And he recited fervently the *Gita’s* great exhortation.

*Klaibyam masma gamah Partha naitat tvay-yupapadyate  
Kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyaktvottishtha Parantapa.*<sup>1</sup>

I have cited this instance as it is so typical of him: he always flared up whenever I teased him, as I often did, about his electing to be a Vaishnava *par excellence*. Which is not to say that he was any the less

---

<sup>1</sup> *Nor yield to cowardice – it behoves thee not:  
Disowning this fool faint-heartedness arise,  
Once and for all, O dauntless warrior!* – The *Gita*, II.3

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

moved by songs of the Vaishnava poets, Mirabai, Surdas and others who yearned exclusively for union with Krishna. I only want to underline this other aspect of his virile nature which responded whole-heartedly to the *Shakti* cult of the *Shaktas*.

### SEVEN

I loved to visit him daily whenever I was free from my musical engagements and he would always take me straight to Yasoda Ma's bedroom where he would talk on and on, nineteen to the dozen, in his downright vein, and she listened with her serene smile, punctuating his "harangues" (as she termed them) with nodding encomiums, or monosyllabic endorsements. I did often wonder at her amazing transformation as I could not help but contrast her tranquil eyes, shaved head and pinched face with the resplendent ultramodern hostess who, twelve years ago, used to be the life and soul of every party she threw in her salon. I had heard from my Gurudev many a time that it was not so difficult to win to fine spiritual experiences, see visions, hear voices etcetera – but the most difficult feat was to change one's nature with its unregenerate impulses. Yasoda Ma will always stand out in my memory as one of the rare spirits I have known who did achieve this "feat", as I told Krishnaprem at Allahabad more than once in my impulsive way. His face always lit up when I made such a remark and he would murmur: "Ah yes, Dilip. But then she is nonpareil."

As I came to admire her more and more, I wanted to make her come out of her shell of reserve, but whenever I asked her a pointed question she would reply, with an evasive smile: "Ask Gopal. He knows so much and can explain to perfection, too. Besides, you have come to tap *him* – and not a spent invalid like me."

And how Krishnaprem flushed! "Oh *Ma!* how dare you talk like that, fooling him to the tonsils! – you who know full well that one word of yours weighs more than ten lectures of mine! ... "

It was indeed, refreshing to watch their beautiful mother-and-son-cum-guru-and-disciple relationship.

PART II – REMINISCENCES

And last, though not least, what *Guruseva!* I told him, often enough, quoting his own words against him:

“Your attending on *Ma*, too, has to be seen to be believed, Krishnaprem!”

It was by no means an overstatement. He not only followed her everywhere like a shadow, but was at her beck and call at all hours. And every night he slept on the floor, like a servant, on a bare blanket.

EIGHT

As I had no time, alas, at Allahabad to keep a record of his sayings, I have forgotten much of what inspired me at the time; but, happily for me, I can never forget the unforgettable, to wit, how he used to warm up the moment the talk centred, as it often did, round the cult of the Guru and the mystic truth which ensouled it.

Krishnaprem often said, laughingly, that I was a past-master in the wicked art of drawing people out. At all events, I did succeed in making him speak of what – as he told me afterwards – he had never intended to blurt out to anybody. What I did, however, was little more than quoting to him opinions of my enlightened friends who thought that the Guru cult was an anachronism in the world of today, a superstition that did even more harm than the caste system. Upon this Krishnaprem always bridled and once I remember he quoted the *Bhagavat*: that one must always look upon the Guru as Krishna Himself.<sup>1</sup>

I demurred *deliberately* (to draw him out again) and asked him at a venture: “It is all very well to quote scriptures. But how on earth does one set about equating cribbed humanity with vast Divinity? For when all is said, a human being is human because of his mortal limita-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Acharyam mam vijaniyat navamanyeta karhicit  
Na martyabuddhyasuyeta sarvadevamayo Guruh* – *Bhagavat*, 11.17.27

Know the Guru for Krishna, nor slight him, taking him for a human being because all the gods reside in him.

tions, whereas the Divine is divine because He is unfettered by these.”

He gave a reply which I recalled afterwards, when reading his most mature work: *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*. It meant:

“The Guru is recognised in moments of calm and insight, in such moments as visit the disciple as peaks of inner harmony in which for the time being the distracting voices of desire are lulled to sleep. At such time he is able to hear with his inner ear and to recognise the voice that speaks to him from without as the true echo of the Voice within the heart.”

I had often wondered, while reading his dicta such as these, whether he had really achieved the (to me) seemingly impossible feat of identifying his Guru with his *Ishta*, Krishna. But everytime I saw the deep adoration in his eyes whenever he looked at Yasoda Ma or the eager promptitude with which he obeyed her injunctions, all my doubts were instantly dispelled and I felicitated him sincerely. But then he nonchalantly waved it aside and said: “My dear Dilip, it is not so easy as all that. It is true one can rise to sudden heights in moments of insight or *bhakti*, but it is far from easy to stay on there, defying the earth’s down-pull. It is only when one sets one’s teeth, determined to take orders from none but one’s highest insight, utterly disowning one’s self-will, that one can successfully maintain one’s altitude and laugh at the downpull.”

But although he deprecated my appreciation of his one-pointedness, his heart *was* given unreservedly to his Guru. This he wrote about in one of his subsequent letters which I will quote here as a moving instance of his warmth. The letter was dated September 29, 1945:

“My Dear Dilip,

I will tell you what is written in burning letters of fire in my heart that carry their own guarantee of truth.

Krishna and the Guru are one: but if I leave Him, Krishna may leave me – at least He may smile His inscrutable (the *samoham sarvabhuteshu*) smile and say: ‘Well, if you don’t care for me then I don’t care for you either – at least not more than I care for the louse on a monkey’s

backside.’ But my Guru will never leave me whatever I do. I might leave Her but She would never leave me. I may fall from the Path, return to the flesh-pots and wallow in their filthy slops for five lives or fifty lives, I may blaspheme the Sacred Stone within my heart and die cursing God and man – all this and more I may do, but She will never leave my side. Each separate folly of mine will be a stab of sorrow in the heart of Her who is sorrowless, but She will never turn away Her face nor cease from trying to assuage the pains that I must suffer from my own foolish acts. Never, never will She leave my side nor cease to guide my steps until I stand in that eternal *Braja* where She stands now. God-forsaken and man-forsaken I may be, but Guru-forsaken, never.”

He wrote all this not to flourish a rhetorical torch dazzling the eyes of all and sundry, but only because he had experienced, day after marvellous day, that the Guru’s spirit was ever-living and could never leave his disciples in the lurch. He had hinted at this moving experience explicitly in another letter (dated, 5-12-1944), after the passing of Yasoda Ma.

“Dear Dilip,

Your affectionate letter came yesterday just as I was preparing to write to give you the sad news that *Ma* has left her body after a sudden acute attack of her gallstone trouble. The end was utter peace, unspeakable, and the years seemed to fall away from her as, with her vision full of Sri Krishna, she dropped the body. *I know she is ever with us and even nearer than before*, but yet the physical loss is more than I can write of. Yet already I know why Sri Krishna told the wives of the sacrificing Brahmins in Brindaban that it is not by physical proximity that He is attained.<sup>1</sup> She had told us that the end was very near but I hated to believe it and it came suddenly. You know how much *Ma* meant to me and how for over twenty years she has been Guru, mother and everything. She was the pivot round which my whole

---

<sup>1</sup> *Smaranat darshanat dhyanan-mayi bhavonukirtanat  
Na tatha sannikarshena pratiyala tato grihan. – Bhagavat, 10.23.33*

*Do go back, meditate on me, remember  
Me all the time and you’ll attain, my Grace,  
And not by courting my propinquity.*

universe revolved. That she still is, but the loss of the physical support is hard to bear.”

When he wrote to me that Yasoda Ma was ever with him and even “nearer than before” he did not want to repeat a mere platitude. He had never been one to luxuriate in pious clichés, still less in sectarian shibboleths. And he hated to invoke authorities for stage-effect. Although he was a great lover of books and scriptures he was never overawed by erudition. He wrote once:

“The Truth is within us, and books are only useful in so far as they crystallise and make manifest what is, till then, only obscurely known. Such a statement as ‘God created the world’ is, for instance, meaningless unless we have at least some idea of what we mean by ‘God’ and what by ‘created’. It is hardly necessary to say that for most people who use the phrase so glibly, the words in question have practically no meaning whatever. If such a person is asked about the origin of the world, he will reply ‘God created it’, and then if asked what he means by ‘God’ he will say that God is the creator of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

No, he swore, first and last, by loyalty, truthfulness, sincerity and, above all, personal experience. He told me many a time that a book, however helpful and revealing, could never be a surrogate for simple, direct experience or the insight that accrues to one in rare moments of worship. He said about his Guru’s spirit being with him “nearer than before” because he had vividly experienced it all through, or, to be more precise, because she did, when invoked, come to him in his hours of need to give him the guidance he had prayed for. This has happened to many a saint as all know who are versed in hagiography. But I have known – personally – only one person who has told me about it from direct experience and that is Krishnaprem whose testimony has always been unimpeachable as he could never even dream of telling a lie to impress people.

---

<sup>1</sup> The first essay in his book *The Search for Truth*, p. 6

There was in Allahabad a pedant (a quondam professor) who was nothing if not pugnacious by nature, so much so, that he was popularly called an *enfant terrible*. He was, besides, a sceptic-cum-iconoclast. But somehow he did love my music and so often attended my musical soirées, after which he would throw his weight about starting an animated debate, questioning and challenging everything under the sun. I will call him by the epithet, Mr Sceptic and as on this particular evening his polemics detonated into a veritable drama, I will try to put it as dramatically as I can.

On this memorable evening I sang, at the end, Shankaracharya's famous hymn to the Guru whose first and third verses are:

*Shariram surupam soda rogamuktam  
Yashashcaru citram dhanam merutulyam,  
Guror-anghripadme manashcenna lagnam  
tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim!  
Shadangadivedo mukhe shastravidya  
kavitvam ca gadyam supadyam karoti  
Guror-anghripadme manashcenna lagnam  
tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim!*

That is:

*Thy body may be beautiful and glow with flawless health,  
Thy fame colossal and thou mayest have won to fabulous wealth,  
But if to the Guru's feet thy heart untethered still remain,  
Then all thou hast achieved on earth is vain, is vain, is vain.  
Thou mayest be deep-versed in all that scriptures have to tell,  
A beacon of light, a master of prose and verse delectable,  
But if to the Guru's feet thy heart untethered still remain,  
Then all thou hast achieved on earth is vain, is vain, is vain.*

Mr Sceptic fidgeted while I sang this song, but Krishnaprem, as usual, went off at once into an ecstasy and sat like one petrified.

After the music, as it often happened, a seeker humbly asked Krishnaprem how one was to tether one's heart to the Guru's feet.

“By being single-minded,” Krishnaprem answered, “and praying constantly for strength and purity.”

“Is one to pray to the Guru or the Lord?” he asked.

Krishnaprem smiled. “Either will do. For the two are one.”

Now, at long last, Mr Sceptic found the opening he had been thirsting for. “But sir,” he chimed in, “how can that be? The Lord is divine and – well, unique, I should say. The sages called him *Ekam-advitiam*, that is, the One-without-a-second, whereas Gurus pullulate like mushrooms. So you may have any number of Gurus, as the famous *Tantrasar* says:

*Madhulubdho yatha bhringah pushpat pushpantaram vrajet  
Jnanalubdho tatha shishyo gurorgurvantaram vrajet.<sup>1</sup>*

Krishnaprem flushed. “I know, sir! For I read this twelve years ago in Lucknow in Sir John Woodroffe's book. But there are Tantrics and Tantrics, as he himself has stressed many a time: hasn't he quoted side by side another couplet which asserts *Gurau tushte Shivas-tushtah* – the Lord is propitiated when the Guru is?”

“But that is beside the point, sir,” Mr Sceptic insisted, “my contention being that since a knowledge-seeker may, with impunity, seek guidance from a dozen gurus – –”

Krishnaprem held up his hand deprecatingly:

“Hold, sir! I question your very premise. You have tripped here because you are confounding a teacher with a guru. In fact, words like guru, love, soul, maya, etcetera have lent themselves to no end of

---

<sup>1</sup> *As fares from flower to flower for sweet honey the eager bee,  
So fares from guru to guru the knowledge-seeker restlessly.*

It is quoted in Sir John Woodroffe's *Principles of Tantra*. Krishnaprem had read the book from cover to cover and spoken to me this very couplet many a time with deep disapproval.

misinterpretations. Those who equate the guru with a mere teacher and no more, may, indeed, woo any number of gurus for instruction, but those who have met outside the incarnation of his beloved Guru in the heart, cannot even dream of exchanging one guru for another.”

Yasoda Ma intervened unexpectedly: “You are right, Gopal! For one who has met his real guru doesn’t go to a dozen gurus as a knowledge-seeker any more than a wife who has once truly loved her husband goes to a dozen husbands as a love-seeker.”

A titter of merriment rippled through the audience which completely unnerved our doughty antagonist. He rose to his feet and left in a huff, mumbling some expletives.

I relate this at some length because this incident is somewhat typical as well as revealing. In our India of today, alas, the aggressive sceptic often comes down like a thousand bricks on sincere believers. I have related one such incident in my book on Kumbha – how a sceptic host once went for me gratuitously, even forgetting that I was his guest. But to end with the unforgettable denouement.

Yasoda Ma looked at me, her eyes twinkling. “What did you think of my timely intervention, Dilip?”

I laughed. “You were like – what shall I say – like the beneficent bolt from the blue, *Ma!* Oh, how he winced and turned tail! It’s priceless!”

And we all laughed, gloating.

When the guests had departed, Yasoda Ma looked at me tenderly and said: “After your last song on the Guru I feel an urge to tell you something, Dilip, about doubts which come in your way so often. While you were singing tonight in ecstasy that our hearts must be tethered to the Guru’s feet, I was reminded, suddenly, of your Gurudev’s beautiful letter, a copy of which you sent Gopal a fortnight back.”

Krishnaprem dittoed.

“Yes, Dilip, it is one of the most moving letters I have read.”

Yasoda Ma said: “You have got the letter with you, Gopal, haven’t you?”

Krishnaprem nodded.

“Yes, *Ma*. Because I got it in Brindaban and we came here straight from there. Why do you ask?”

“Because I want Dilip to read it out to me,” she said. Then, turning to me: “I have a purpose.”

Krishnaprem opened his little bag and handed me the letter.

I read aloud in a thick voice the letter Gurudev had written to me:

“I meant that before I met you for the first time, I knew of you and felt at once the contact of one with whom I had that relation which declares itself constantly through many lives and I followed your career with a close sympathy and interest. It is a feeling which is never mistaken and gives the impression of one not only close to one but part of one’s existence. ... The relation that is so indicated always turns out to be that of those who have been together in the past and were predestined to join again (though the past circumstances may not be known) drawn together by old ties. It was the same recognition – apart even from the deepest spiritual connection – that brought you here. If the outer consciousness does not fully realise, it is because of the crust always created by a new physical birth that prevents it. But the soul knows all the while.”

*Ma*’s eyes glistened. She said: “Tonight I will speak my mind frankly, Dilip. You see, what your Gurudev refers to as the crust, *can* be broken – the obstacle overcome, I mean – if you are set on looking within. You often complain, don’t you, that though you adore your guru you cannot look upon him as divine because of his human limitations? I wanted to tell you only this that the limitations would not have stood in your way at all and you would have recognised him as divine – if only you had opened yourself to His Grace and Light.”

“I know that *Ma*,” I said. “But how on earth is one to open oneself?”

“That’s just what I wanted to suggest to you and that is why I made you read out this letter to me. The best and quickest way to open oneself is to be of some personal service to one’s Guru as a servant, a personal attendant – you understand!”

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

I shook my head ruefully. “But *Ma*, what you suggest is unthinkable. Since 1926 Gurudev has been in complete seclusion.”<sup>1</sup>

“I know,” she nodded. “But one who has written to you a letter like that will surely stretch a point in your favour if you implore him to be allowed to serve him personally. You just try.”

I made no reply. She placed both her hands on my head and said: “You know, Dilip, I often say I have two sons, Gopal and Dilip. That is why I have insisted like this – because I want you to see in your Guru what Gopal has seen in his. For once you see this, the back of your doubts will be broken – I mean the doubts which hold you up so often.”

Before taking leave I prostrated myself at her feet for the first time and said: “*Ma*, this evening will remain graven in my memory, for ever.”

Krishnaprem, to make light of it, said: “Why? Because Mr Sceptic went away discomfited?”

I laughed away my tears and said: “There is that, of course. But, personally, I meant something different, namely, that on this memorable evening *Ma* went out of her way to give me her advice of love – for the first time.”

“And it’s not going to be the last,” laughed Krishnaprem, “now the ice is broken.”

## TEN

It was in April 1943 that I had the opportunity, at long last, of visiting Yasoda Ma’s temple-home in the heart of beautiful Himalayan forest, in a small hamlet called Mirtola.

---

<sup>1</sup> Since November 24, 1938 (when Sri Aurobindo accidentally broke a thigh bone) the perspective changed to some extent in that a few disciples were allowed to have access to him in order that he might have the needed nursing. Unfortunately, however, none but these few – about half-a-dozen – were allowed to attend on him. I hungered often enough for his beneficent personal contact but in vain! I often complained but he answered invariably that he had to go into seclusion as it was “imposed” by “inexorable necessity” – alas!

The temple itself was a small two-storeyed building. Ma's and Krishnaprem's bedrooms were on the first floor. But Krishnaprem had ceased long since to sleep in his room as Ma, needed his help most at night, being all but bedridden at the time. So, Krishnaprem slept on a mattress on the floor at the foot of her bedstead.

We talked and talked for hours on end – or, to quote Krishnaprem's quotation, "tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky", as he once wrote to me apropos of our long debates and discussions in Lucknow. This time I kept meticulous notes of our talks which I published subsequently in my Bengali book of travels, *Abar Bhramayaman*. I was, however, on my guard and kept it a secret, as Krishnaprem frowned on publicity in any shape or form. In fact, this was the only bone of contention between us, because I, on my part, held that it *was* my duty to share with others everything that uplifted the soul, and which soul – that is not sparkless or moribund – could fail to respond to Krishnaprem's words of fire or life of dedication? But, as he had adjured me not to "cramp his style" because he could not speak his mind freely once he knew that his words were going to be "broadcast and trumpeted abroad", I could only write the reports at night in my bedroom, under the rose, so that he never had an inkling of the "mischief" I was about. But before giving an account of our talks in English (for the first time) I must pause for a little and tell in a few words about two other inmates of Uttar Brindaban, the name by which Ma's Ashram was known.



There were at this time only three inmates of the Ashram living under the aegis of Ma. The central figure was, of course, Krishnaprem himself, the life and soul of the place. Then there was Motirani, Ma's youngest daughter. She had cut away from her moorings to be initiated into Yoga by Krishnaprem who, at Ma's bidding, had given her Krishna-mantra. And last, though not least, there was an English friend of his, Alec (Dr R. D. Alexander), who was named Haridas after his initiation. He was an eminent surgeon, who had followed Krishnaprem

to India and had, at this instance, accepted Ma as his Guru and resigned his post as the chief surgeon of a Lucknow hospital. He had come once to Pondicherry to meet me. I had been charmed by his loving nature. He idolised Krishnaprem and was respected by all for his manifold qualities and integrity of character, not to mention his competence as a surgeon. He had opened a charitable dispensary at Mirtola where he treated the poor peasants who all adored him and spoke effusively about his “holy touch” in their simple rustic faith.

Motirani was a delightful personality, as vivacious as she was single-minded and as devout as she was fond of laughter. She was always teasing everybody, not sparing even her own Guru, Krishnaprem, whom she called Chota Ba or Ba – abbreviated from “Baba” – father.

At the time I visited the Ashram – in April, 1943 – Ma’s condition had deteriorated alarmingly; she could hardly rise from her bed. So, they were all deeply concerned about her, as can well be imagined. But her pure smile of deep peace which had fascinated me in Allahabad had, if anything, become more heart-warming still. Only, whenever she spoke about her end being near they all protested with one accord. But she would pacify them with her pet bird-in-the-cage simile, assuring everybody that death was not a calamity but only an announcement of the pent soul’s liberation from its prison-house.

#### ELEVEN

There were at the time only four cottages within the precincts of the Ashram. One was Motirani’s, the other Alec’s, and two were reserved for visitors and guests. There was also a wheat-field in which Krishnaprem, with the help of the peasants there, grew wheat which he and Alec had to harvest every year, personally. Now to come to our talks.



We were discussing the role of reason in spiritual life. Krishnaprem had written to me so many letters underlining its limitations,

that I need hardly repeat them. I will quote only one amusing simile he gave in his temple-home, in the presence of Ma and Motirani.

“People who want the truth,” he said, “must bear in mind that reason can never be its pathfinder. When I say reason I don’t mean, mind you, the pure *buddhi* which the *Upanishad*, as you know, assimilates to the charioteer (our body to the chariot, mind to the reins, senses to the horses and soul to the rider). But this pure *buddhi*, which Sri Ramakrishna called *shuddha buddhi*, is, I think, what Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being, at least that is how I have interpreted it. Anyway, mental reason is not the *shuddha buddhi* – not by a long chalk. So, being only a pleader in the last analysis, it can plead for no matter what you enjoin it to, for it is a ready-enough advocate of your desires, as the psychoanalysts, too, have found out. Yes, yes, when I say pleader I mean pleader, that is the *mot juste*. You know the apposite joke about the absent-minded counsel who went on arguing against his own client with telling eloquence. The poor client was scared stiff and whispered to him about his gaffe. Nothing daunted, he turned to the Judge and went on: ‘I have stated the case, very fairly I think, against my client, as my learned friend, the Public Prosecutor, would have done. Now I will demolish it, item by item, to show that he has not a leg to stand on.’ And so he began once more to argue against his previous arguments, toppling the whole edifice.” We all laughed merrily.

Years afterwards, I read in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo’s brilliant fling:

“An inconclusive play is Reason’s toil;  
 Each strong idea can use her as its tool;  
 Accepting every brief she pleads her case.  
 Open to every thought she cannot know.  
 The eternal Advocate, seated as judge,  
 Armours in logic’s invulnerable mail  
 A thousand combatants for Truth’s veiled throne  
 And sets on a high horseback of argument  
 To tilt for ever with a wordy lance  
 In a mock tournament where none can win.”



## PART II – REMINISCENCES

From the copious notes I kept of our day to day talks I can write on for pages and pages. But as Krishnaprem has himself covered many of these themes in his letters which I have appended, it will be tedious to go on repeating or elaborating it all. I will, therefore, confine myself to selecting a few of his illuminating exegeses of our scriptures.

### TWELVE

Motirani poured coffee for us all. Yasoda Ma listened on, sitting on her bed, telling her beads. Only on rare occasions would she intervene in our debates to throw further light from her own experience.

I said casually: “You know, Krishnaprem, last night, reading a book, I was rather intrigued. Swami Brahmananda quoted with approval a couplet from *Mahanirvan Tantra*:

*Uttamo Brahmasadbhavo madhyamo dhyana-dharana  
Stutir-japo-dhamo bhavo bahyapuja-dhamadhama.”*

Motirani protested: “O Dilipda, you mustn’t. I am not a pundit – what does it mean? You two shan’t leave me out in the cold.”

I laughed. “It means: the highest worship is to be poised in the consciousness in which you see the Lord in everything. The next best is meditation. Lower still is singing hymns or repeating His Name, and the lowest is external worship, formal service.”

Krishnaprem shook his head vehemently and said: “I can’t let that pass. For such citations do a deal of harm when they are appraised piecemeal and flourished as torches of Truth which throw more shadows than gleams. I have told you more than once that in hagiography you will find many a sage contradicting himself every now and then. Or, I may put it this way: that a sage or a saint may say today what he may have to amplify later and, in so doing, may *seem* to be indulging in contradictions. But, if you ponder a little you will be able to harmonise them easily. I don’t want to utter a platitude quoting Emerson: ‘A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.’ For it is too obvious

to be disputed since to grow *is* to outgrow one's yesterday's self and opinions. So, it won't do to judge a man's pronouncements at different stages of his evolution taking no account of his back-ground or milieu at the time. And since this is true of the man in the street, how much truer it must be of the sage whose growth, unlike that of the common man, is fostered by the Divine Ordainer as well as the occult powers beyond the ken of mental reason. Therefore, I say, one must never set about appraising a saint's interdictions or injunctions in isolation. They must be judged in their native setting of *desh-kala-patra*."

"What do you mean by that, Ba?" Motirani interjected. "Don't run so fast, I can't keep pace with you."

Krishnaprem smiled. "What I wanted to convey is that a saint's sayings should not be taken at their face value, torn out of their context. That is, we must take into account the *place where*, the *time when* and the *people to whom* they are addressed. To give an instance or two. Shankaracharya sings in one state of consciousness: *Shivoham, Shivoham* – I am Shiva, I am Shiva – as a mantra for those who have attained that consciousness. In another state the same saint petitions Mother Bhavani to give him refuge, singing: *Gatistvam gatistvam tvameka Bhavani!*<sup>1</sup> stressing that he has no merits at all to recommend himself. Similarly, in one state of consciousness he disowns the guru, in another he swears by the *gurushakti*, as you sang so beautifully in Allahabad, remember? Or, take a very recent instance. Sri Ramakrishna enjoined most of his disciples not to presume to teach others, but Vivekananda, he asserted again and again, was born to enlighten others and take thousands under his wing, giving the apt simile of the banyan tree giving shade to sun-scorched wayfarers."

*Ma* cut in: "But Dilip knows that, Gopal! You answer his question now – about the *bahyapuja*. Why don't you tell him what you have got from it? – The *prasad*, I mean."

"Sh – *Ma*," he hissed in alarm. "Don't you know Dilip? He will broadcast it over the Radio!"

*Ma* laughed. "No, he won't. I want you to tell him as he is sure to understand *now*."

---

<sup>1</sup> My refuge, O Mother Bhavani, art thou alone.

Krishnaprem looked me straight in the face and said: “All right. I will tell you then. You see –” then looking at Motirani: “*You* tell him.”

Motirani gave an amused chuckle. “O Ba! How fussy you can be. Why, it’s the Lord’s own play – why can’t we tell Dilipda? Surely, he is as much His devotee as we are? Listen, Dilipda! Ba cooks, as you know, the Lord’s *bhog* – the *halwa* pudding – and offers, day after day, before His image in our shrine. Once it so happened that after the offering – when we closed the temple-door and came out to meditate, as we always do – he started suddenly and said: ‘Let us go and see if the Lord has actually taken the *halwa*.’ *Ma* only smiled but I was thrilled! We went. And lo, –” she caught her breath – “here, in our temple room, we all saw that a portion of the *halwa* had been scooped out by the Lord – we all bore witness, Dilipda, I swear to you!”

A shiver coursed down my spine. This was *naralila*, indeed! The Lord, then, does still fulfil His promise of comporting Himself like a human being to initiate us into His Grace! (“He has made this tene-ment of flesh His own” – to put it in Sri Aurobindo’s words in his epic, *Savitri*.<sup>1</sup>)

I clapped Krishnaprem on his shoulder in uncontainable delight and said, accusingly: “And yet you will start questioning, *à la* Buddha, my emphasis on Grace!”

“But when did I question Grace?” he protested. “Oh, *how* incorrigible you can be, Dilip! It’s true I love Buddha, but does that mean I agree with all His views? And then how could I possibly question Grace – I who swear by Guruvad? The boot, I should like to say, is on the other leg, since it is *you* who keep questioning the Guru’s divinity. There, I have paid you back in your own coin!”

“Now, now,” I expostulated, “who is being incorrigible, my dear

---

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo wrote to me later endorsing Krishnaprem’s experience about the *prasad* as authentic, assuring me that such things could and did happen. Only he added that it must be borne in mind that such phenomena take place only when the *bhog* is offered by an aspirant of rare purity and dedication. Eight years later I myself witnessed to the same phenomenon (along with a few others) in Pondicherry and afterwards in Poona also. But that is another story which I have written about elsewhere (my novel, *Miracles Do Still Happen*).

retaliator? Haven't I attested repeatedly that I have contacted Grace through the Guru's and many a sadhu's blessings? Didn't I tell you that I have often won through to Grace when I least expected it? Grace can come to one through a child's touch, a glimpse of the sea, a glint of the rainbow and what not. Anyway, if I am unable to equate the Guru with the Divine because of his human limitations, must you charge me with heresy which disowns Grace?"

"There I am at one with you, Dilip," Alec cut in, patting me on my hand. "For I, too, feel that disowning Grace is a very serious charge, especially when the aspirant happens to be, like you or me, a devotee, called to the path of Love."

"Thank you, Alec," I said, mollified. "For with all my limitations I do claim that I am a devotee. And, incidentally, that is why – in spite of my admiration for the personality of Buddha – I have never been able to love him as I have loved, say, Christ, with all my heart. How Krishnaprem, being a hundred-percent Guruvadi, can see his way, to loving Buddha who dismisses Guru and Grace as make-believe, *is*, I confess, a deep mystery to me."

"You are mystified, Dilip dear," Krishnaprem laughed genially, "because you insist on ignoring what Buddha said: that what he had actually divulged in public bore the same ratio to what he knew (but did not say) as a few leaves one can hold in one's hand to all the leaves in the forest."

"You surprise me, Krishnaprem," I returned. "I haven't dreamed of questioning Buddha's unspoken wisdom or knowledge. I draw the line only at his unwarranted assertion that nothing outside – whether God, Guru or Grace – could ever help a man to achieve liberation from all *tanha*, desire. In other words, more explicitly, did he not lay stress, first and last, on personal initiative and austerities, extolling exclusively the truth that inspires *tapasya* as against Divine Grace that sustains *tapasya*?"

"He did," Krishnaprem conceded. "But there again, as I said a little while ago, you must take into account the context in which he gave the verdict. For I am fully persuaded that it was called for in his time, since people had grown too *tamasic*, swearing by formalism and sentimentality and the letter of the scriptures as against the spirit. In any case,

how can my reverence or love for Buddha be construed as denial or disapproval of Grace? Haven't I told you that whatever little knowledge I have achieved has accrued to me, first and last, because of my Guru's Grace, which has revealed to me at every turn how far one may rely on one's own efforts and how one opens oneself to Krishna's Grace through personal service to the Guru. But since you insist on misunderstanding me, let me tell you in unambiguous terms that I do believe in Divine Grace and drive it home with an analogy."

He paused for a little, then resumed: "In *Mahabharata*, Udyogparva, as you know, Krishna speaks of *purushkar* (human will) and *daiva* (divine ordaining). He compares the former to furrowing of the field, the latter to rains from on high. It occurred to me, while appreciating this effective simile, that one might draw a corollary: to wit, personal effort – *tapasya* – could be assimilated to sowing the field with the seeds of one's aspiration, and Divine Grace – *kripa* – to showers from God."

"You have put it admirably," nodded Alec. "But may I know what is your conception of Divine Grace?"

Krishnaprem replied: "In this world of dust and din whenever anybody has given complete *atmahuti* (oblation) merging his self in the Flame of Love Divine, there is an explosion which is Grace."

Alec said: "It is a fine simile, I concede, but the question asks itself: why must one merge oneself in vain in the flame? What good is it to the world if you and I and Dilip and Moti just vanish into His Fire?"

Krishnaprem smiled: "I may answer: every planet that merges in the sun results in an increase of life-giving warmth to the world. In other words, no true *atmahuti* on earth can ever be in vain."

Motirani clapped her hands in childlike glee. "You are an orator of the first water, Ba! No wonder you browbeat Dilipda every time."

"And you are a tease of the first water," Krishnaprem riposted, "and an adept at killing two birds with one stone. But how could I possibly orate before Dilip, knowing that once I make a *faux pas*, he will go on repeating my words, raising echoes all over the place?" Then turning to me: "But for mercy's sake, Dilip, don't keep a record of my words any more to be published in the newspapers. We have

banned these in our Ashram as you may have noticed.”

“I have,” I nodded, “and often wondered why.”

“Because, Dilip,” *Ma* interjected, “newspapers do distract the *sadhak's* mind grievously.”

“I admit *Ma*,” I said. “But still – well, do you really mean to say that a *sadhak* need not know anything about all that is happening today in our great big world?”

“But why must I stuff my mind,” protested Krishnaprem, “with all that is happening in this din-enamoured, speed-intoxicated, power-puffed world, registering everything that is loud in the land? Listen, Dilip. You and I have partially withdrawn from this lunatic world to achieve something that is eminently worth-while, but enormously difficult, namely: the transformation of our human consciousness, our animal impulses. It can be done but not unless we muster all our will and address ourselves to the task sleeplessly till we succeed in utterly effacing the archenemy, our self-will. In other words, we must be one-pointed in our aspiration, first and last and in the middle. No more shilly-shally, if you please! To plod on unremittingly, concentrating on the target *à la* Arjuna. *Mundaka Upanishad* gives a fine simile: The Om is the bow, the self the arrow and the Lord, Brahman, the target into which the arrow must merge completely. That is why it has been said: *sharavat tanmayo bhavet* – one must, like the dart, be exclusively dedicated to one’s destination, the Goal of goals. I tell you, Dilip, all this is a huge Maya, if you don’t get beyond the Maya to the one Eternal Reality from whom it all stems. But once you know Him, all is bliss. Now since I do aspire for this supreme Bliss through utter self-dedication, why must I look this way and that or, if you prefer the Shelleyan sigh: ‘look before and after and pine for what is not’?”

Motirani chimed in: “You *can* lecture, Ba, I must say again. But you said all this to Gabriel too! Remember?”

“I did,” he nodded. “Because he *is* a perceptive man, one of the few scientists I have met who can separate the chaff from the corn – winnow out the non-essentials from the essentials of life. Besides, he

has a grasp of the psychic values. That is why he took to mystic philosophy as duck takes to water. I was, indeed, so glad to see that he acclaimed from the heart the truth, so often missed by the activists: that it is not by outer revolutions or overhauling of institutions that you can truly regenerate the world. He was impressed by the finding of the sages that the greatest revolutionaries are not the socialists, communists or anarchists who revolt against social injustice or political tyranny – but the Yogis who rebel against the tyranny of the flesh, the myopia of the mind and the pride of the ego stifling the soul. Not for nothing did Krishna enjoin Arjuna to become a full-fledged Yogi: *tasmāt yogi bhavarjuna!* And why on earth did He have to extol the Yogi? Because it is only when we are Yogis, in communion with Him, that He can lead us from ‘unreality to reality, darkness to light and death to immortality – *asato ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityorma amritam gamaya*’. So, you will find from history – if you can truly read between the lines – that only a tiny handful – a few Yogis – have, down the ages, shown us the way to the gleaming Goal – the eternal Truth beyond Time. They have all said with one voice that unless you can invoke His Light of lights all your phantom illuminations will remain but pale flickers, to be engulfed any moment by the gloom-assault of the dark hosts, the *asuras*. Alec also liked Gabriel very much.”

Alec said: “Yes, Dilip. Didn’t I tell you last night that Gabriel was a truly discerning soul? No wonder he saw quickly that the mystics were no day-dreaming lotus-eaters who had no roots in the earth, but the only true realists because they have *seen* that not till we master the know-how of transforming our human impulses and reactions can we hope to redeem the pitiful state of the world.”

“Exactly,” ratified Krishnaprem. “For don’t you see this plain fact that this pitiful state of our world is but a projection of a dreadful inner disharmony? Therefore, Dilip, every authentic spiritual man who aspires to deal radically with the chronic maladies of the world must take up here and now the prayer of the *Upanishad*: *sa no buddhya shuhhaya samyunaktu* – may He yoke us to the true understanding, hitching our minds to His all-redeeming Star. Nothing else, I tell you, can take us beyond the mental thinking to sight so that we may steer

our chariots straight to the Goal.”<sup>1</sup>

Motirani chimed in again: “You have lectured beautifully, Ba, and explained many things wonderfully. The only thing you have missed is answering Dilipda’s question: why must we stick to this external, worship?”

Krishnaprem said: “But I *have* answered him. Besides, why call it an external worship at all? No worship can be ‘external’ if done properly. And this is not *my* view; for He Himself has said in the *Gita* that – get me my book and read it aloud to Dilip. I have put it all there succinctly, in my commentary on the Lord’s couplet:

*Manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam namaskuru  
Mamevaishyasi satyam te pratijane priyosi me.”*

The book referred to was on *Ma’s* shelf. Motirani took it down and read in her warm voice (from Chapter 8):

“Fix thy mind on Me, give thy heart’s love to Me, consecrate all thy actions to My service, hold thine own self as nothing before Me. To Me then shalt thou come; truly I promise, for thou art dear to Me.”

She read on: “Krishna stands here for the Eternal One manifesting as the boundless Life in all, but His words are also true as applied to the human Teacher. If the disciple consecrates his life, actions, feelings and thoughts, without exception, to the loved Teacher, and if he meditates upon Him *as being within his heart*, His form will come to be a symbol of his own diviner Self and speak with that Self’s voice to guide him through the fight.

“This method is an easier one for most because the human form draws forth most easily the love of man. Love is the easiest way to self-transcendence; urged on by love, man holds himself as naught. The disciple must still undertake the actual fighting; Krishna is charioteer

---

<sup>1</sup> In his *Yoga of Kathopanishad*, Chapter I, p. 45, he has put this succinctly: “We think of the outer world of sense and of its various happenings as something separate from the inner worlds. But it is not so. As a bubble depends upon man’s breath, as ash depends upon fire, as a poem depends upon the poet’s heart, so does this outer world depend upon and hang from the inner.”

and bears no arms. Nevertheless, his inexhaustible power will follow through the dedicated vehicles, and with Him as guide the victory is sure.”<sup>1</sup>

When she paused Krishnaprem gave her a smile and said: “Are you satisfied now?”

Motirani gave a grudging smile and demurred: “Well, my answer is yes and no. For what you have written is not quite what goes by the name of *bahyapuja* or ritualism.”

Krishnaprem remonstrated: “Now, you are at it again, you incorrigible tease! Haven’t I told you time and time again that *bahyapuja* does *not* mean ritualism pure and simple?”

Motirani still persisted: “But we do follow rites, arrange the flowers, ring the bell, offer water, burn incense and so on.”

“But why shouldn’t we?” challenged Krishnaprem. “Love is expressed not only through words and looks and touch but symbols also. These are beautiful symbolic acts of worship offered to Him when He becomes a living reality to the sincere worshipper. Those who are not sincere, of course, don’t count. At least when you are out to assess the total value of worship you can’t say: I will only pick out formal worship and lip-service etcetera, and leave out the living adoration. My point is that in all true adoration, symbols and rites become living, when ensouled by the flame of love. What happened with Sri Ramakrishna? He followed the same rites as his uncle had done previously, didn’t he? But what a difference! The same rites, the same offering

---

<sup>1</sup> When I returned to Pondicherry *via* Lucknow at the end of April, I sent to Sri Aurobindo a brief resume of our talks and wound up with the question: “What do you think of this *bahyapuja*? Is this external worship really formal? Or can it be a true expression of the soul’s inner adoration, as Krishnaprem claims?”

He wrote back (on April 29, 1943):

“What is meant by *bahyapuja*? If it is purely external then it is of course the lowest form (of worship): but if done with the true consciousness it can bring the greatest possible completeness to the adoration by allowing the body and the most external consciousness share in the spirit and act of worship.” Which was precisely Krishnaprem’s contention, too, as a proof of which he had spoken of the Lord’s granting them the *mahaprasad* which the sages apotheosise.

of flowers, burning of incense, ringing of bells, etcetera – and what did they invoke? Mother Kali’s living Presence, which thrilled all and sundry! And why did Sri Ramakrishna, even after realising Mother Kali in his heart, go daily to the temple to prostrate himself before her Image? Why did he approve of *bahyapuja* – ask people to go to the *Panchavati* to meditate? The *Tantras* were not wrong: the prescribed rites, followed sincerely, do lead to something real and living and so just can’t be scotched out of hand as dead formalism or ritualism pure and simple.”

Then he turned to me and went on: “That is why the Lord said: ‘Worship me with the body also – *mad yaji*.’ *Yajna* does mean rites. And why not? Isn’t it common sense as well? I mean, when the Lord Himself is enshrined in the human body, why must it be left out in the cold like a pariah branded as unfit to partake of the blessed worship? Why, man! this is the evidence of life itself! So, how can you dismiss it all with highbrow intellectual arguments or mental preconceptions? Not for nothing did Goethe say in *Faust*: ‘Gray is all theory, green grows the tree of life alone.’”

He spoke with such a delectable warmth, his flushed face looking golden, that we were all fascinated. Motirani’s eyes filled with fears. She touched his feet impulsively.

“But I am *not* penitent, Ba,” she said, smiling through her tears. “I am glad, glad glad – thrice happy! For don’t I know from experience that to tease you is to tap you?”

“Yes, Krishnaprem,” I said. “I must second her. You do surpass yourself when you are worked up. I am really beginning to see daylight now. But there is one more question I must ask you if you don’t mind. ... You see, I have sometimes wondered whether one could not win this *victory* you write about by just striving hard to do away with the self-will through will-power alone? Must you insist on love? You see my point, don’t you? I mean if you say that for such a consummation, devoutly to be wished, love must step in, then the inevitable question arises: how to invoke love? You can command the will, but not love, can you? Love comes when it comes – don’t we all know?”

He gave me a quizzical look and then shook his head emphatically.

“No, Dilip, it won’t do. I see what you are driving at and why you want to shirk it by ruling out the invocation of love as something not feasible. But there you are wrong, for you just can’t whittle away your self-will by means of will-power alone. Unless love takes a hand it can’t be done. For only love can make surrender a joy. If love is not there the ego can never consent to undergo the unmitigated hardship of surrender. *Only the power-house of love is able to produce the electricity with which the mill of Yoga can be worked.*”

“Lovely simile again, Ba!” Moti clapped her hands once again. “But I love still more your other simile of the egg and the omelette. Do tell Dilipda, please, O please!”

Krishnaprem’s sombre frown eased and gave place to a radiant smile. “You are really impossible, Moti!” he said tenderly. “You can make merry over anything! But beware, this is *not* a laughing matter – this breaking of the eggshell of the ego!” Then, turning to me, he added, by way of explanation: “We say, as you know, you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs; that is to say – *mutatis mutandis*: the kernel of true love can’t come to the fore till you have cracked the ego’s outer shell, that is, your self-will. The only snag here is that till love takes the lead – or, the psychic being comes to the front, as your Gurudev puts it – the ego’s tough shell just can’t be cracked and there again you get caught in a vicious circle, because love can’t ‘step in’ till the ego’s walls are pulled down. But these are really the deepest paradoxes of the spirit and will remain insoluble till they are repealed by the light of *shuddha buddhi*, for only then can the last revelation outflash which dissolves the insoluble darkness. Or here’s another: We say in English: you can catch a swallow when you put salt on its tail. But of course you can’t put salt on its tail till you catch it. So you’ll say it’s silly, won’t you? But it isn’t, for it *is* foreordained, so the two things happen simultaneously: you *will* catch the swallow and put the salt on its tail at one and the same time, because the miracle is wrought by the intervention of Divine Grace and not by your inept hands. But, and here is my point, the Divine Grace intervenes only when you are at the end of your tether, *after* all your mighty efforts. For then, feeling

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

lost, as you call out to Him with every fibre of your being to save you from shipwreck, His love answers and, lo, your heart is flooded with love, His Light knelling the doom of centuries of darkness.”

His words did sound somewhat cryptic to me at the time, but once, in a crisis, the miracle he had hinted at did happen in a split second, and the revelation dawned just when I had all but gone under, in dark despair. And it was truly a strange descent of light, a mystic experience *par excellence*, but so vivid and indubitable that I was thrilled to the core and wrote one of my best and most authentic poems in English. I give it below primarily because I am persuaded that I owed it to the clue Krishnaprem had given me at Mirtola. So I dedicated it to him.

I give the poem here even though I know full well that it can't possibly mean to others what it does to me: a landmark in my spiritual journey towards the Goal where love *is* one with light:

### HELP OF HELPLESSNESS

Mind would appraise and plumb the deep,  
But has no liquid eyes  
That will equip him for the enterprise.

He dives in his high courage, crying:  
“All must yield to my keen  
Swift piercing gaze,” and yet there supervene

Strange blurs and eddies he could not  
Anticipate nor surmise.  
He stands in awe: whence did such gloom arise!

Rings out from the depths a vibrant voice:  
“The gloom is liquid light  
And thus to solid eyes seems inky night.”

Helpless he wails: “My real eyes  
Are blinded by the glooms!”  
Lo, on dark's stem the lone Pearl-flower blooms!

To come now to my last and unforgettable evening at Mirtola – an evening that shall stay graven in my memory for ever. I could not write about it so long for reasons I have already adumbrated. All I need to state is that now I am going to write about it in sheer joy, without any qualms.

But I must preface it with a question Krishnaprem had answered before the evening with a spontaneous eloquence, or shall I say, a heart-warming sincerity which was transmuted into the light of eloquence.

Alec had made a casual remark about faith being native to the Indian mind. He said that it had struck him as exhilarating the very first day he had stepped on India’s sacred soil.

“I am very gratified, Alec,” I said, warming up, “the more so, as I have heard it claimed time and again. Only, alas, my poor mind misgave me when I came to know in Cambridge a motley crew of volatile Indian students hailing from different provinces of India. So few among them had kept faith with faith, if you know what I mean. Then, one day, I happened to read Swami Vivekananda’s eloquent Colombo speech which had made history. He said that a time was when, like every Hindu, he too had *thought* that India was a sacred land – *Punya Bhumi* – but later he came to be *convinced* that it was so. My Gurudev Sri Aurobindo also has given the identical verdict in his speeches and writings. But I have often wondered whether such statements are really true or mere rhetoric. Hasn’t Swami Vivekananda himself wailed time and time again that we Indians have become extremely *tamasic*, deeply addicted to sloth and the herd-mentality? How do you reconcile the two statements?”

Alec looked at Krishnaprem and said:

“Now go on: answer it.”

Krishnaprem said: “But you can answer it as cogently.”

“But not half so eloquently,” Alec rejoined. “And you know why: you have not only the gift of the gab, but your heart, unlike ours, co-operates when your brain thinks. I haven’t in my life met many in

whom the two can work together in such happy harmony.”

Motirani said: “Go on! Fishing for compliments again! Don’t I know you?”

“Gopal! *You* answer Dilip,” *Ma* interposed. “For you know how he loves you.”

“And hangs on your lips, too, you should have added, *Ma!*” Motirani supplied.

“Sh-h!” *Ma* admonished. “Dilip has asked a good question but not a very easy one to answer. So it’s for Gopal to rise to the occasion.”

Krishnaprem gave her a radiant smile; then, turning to me, said: “Well, I agree with *Ma* that your question, though easy to pose, isn’t at all easy to answer, but I will do my best, though I wonder whether I shall carry conviction.”

“I understand your doubts very well, Dilip,” he resumed, after a brief pause, “the more so as I, too, had had them at the start, before meeting *Ma*. Then – or, to be more precise, after my initiation – the scales fell from my eyes and a new vision was born overnight.”

“What I saw,” he added, a trifle hesitantly, “was this: that in India alone – of all the countries in the world – a long and unbroken dynasty of saints had reigned on, venerated by all. The change came only recently, at the turn of the century, when, though the common man in India has stayed loyal to her hoary wisdom and spiritual ideals, a sonorous section of your *modern* intelligentsia began to mouth unthinkingly the Western shibboleths, branding the Hindu religion as medieval, Hindu polytheism as animism, Hindu sadhus as parasites and Hindu avatars as false prophets. Of course, it is the glamour of the Western cornucopia which hypnotised them and it is, indeed, a pity for *them*. But happily for *us*, Dilip, these cock-sure Daniels constitute but a small minority, and, shall I add, they know nothing of the soul of immemorial India whose heart-beats you can still feel in those of her masses. So you find that even today, a sadhu, though in rags, wins homage from all but those few detectors who have, alas, hailed the Western sceptics as their monitors and the hidebound scientists as guides to the phantom Goal of void plenitude. What I mean is that in

India the heart of the common man still adores holiness, God-love (*bhakti*) and spiritual enlightenment (*jnana*) so, even when he cannot follow, he accepts humbly and bows his head in spontaneous reverence to the saints and sages as custodians of her millennial wisdom and deputies of Love Divine.”

Motirani’s eyes glistened. “It is true, Ba! Alec too was telling me the same thing the other day how he was impressed by the Indian audience – oh, why don’t you speak, Alec? Give Ba a little respite, I say.”

Alec laughed, then said, seriously: “It’s true, Dilip. I was really moved when I saw them first listening with rapt attention to music –”

“No, no,” Motirani cut in, “I want you to tell Dilipda what you told me – about the so-called educated men, too, responding.”

“Oh, that?” Alec turned to me again with a smile. “What she refers to is a curious experience I had many times – well, it happened like this: Many is the time I have seen that quite a few all-too-glib pedagogues – who claim they are full-blown atheists or agnostics – as soon as they hear a sage discourse on the *Gita* or a saint sing of Krishna or Kali or Shiva, their hearts melt and capitulate even when their minds still go on wavering and questioning. But, as I was saying, I was far more moved by the really touching sight of men and women listening in rapture to devotional songs or just His name sung by mediocre singers.”

“Exactly,” Krishnaprem dittoed with verve. “And such things happen only because here in India the spiritual values are still cherished by the heart laughing to scorn the learned disapproval of the mind. That is why even those who are not religious-minded accept the saints almost instinctively. Go to a *Kumbha mela* and you will have ample proof of this. For there you will bear witness, day after heartening day, how literally millions of poor people, rustics and believers, flock to the Ganga and, though shivering in cold, sleep on the beach just to bathe in the holy river and touch the feet of destitute saints in rags. But why single out only the famous *Kumbha Mela* when almost all your festivals are inscribed as it were with the Name of gods and goddesses or presided over by their images? Even your caste system derives its sanction not from any secular authority or social legislators but from the *Gita* or the

*Vedas* or *samhitas*, that is, scriptures written by sages who are universally revered as *holy* men. To cut a long story short, the foundation of the bulk of your social structures, unlike ours, rests still on religious sanction and not on any secular power.

“Let me give you a personal instance to illustrate how pervasive is the influence of your sadhus in this hallowed land. Once I had to travel from Kathgodam to Lucknow in the third class. As soon as I entered a crowded compartment, the poor passengers not only made way for me but vacated a whole bench so I could sleep in comfort while they gladly huddled together on the bare, dirty floor. And then: ‘Would Sadhuji care to have some guavas? Would he have some *laddus* (sweets)? Would he prefer milk or sherbet?’ – and so on! They just besieged me with their simple love! I can’t tell you how deeply I was moved by their childlike trust and spontaneous reverence. And why did they adore me, pray? Because I had put on an ochre-coloured *dhoti*. In the West who get a tumultuous ovation? Either royalty, or cinema stars, actors or musicians, and among the intelligentsia, perhaps a unique scientist like Einstein or a mammoth satirist like Shaw – but all boosted by the Press, mind you! But in India it has to be a Gandhi in loin-cloth; to none else will even royalty and titled heads bow down.”

“But,” demurred Alec, “aren’t you a bit overstating your case now, Krishnaprem? Titled heads don’t bow down to any and every sadhu in loin-cloth. Didn’t Gandhiji win the homage he did because he had grown somewhat spectacular? And wasn’t he, too, boosted by the Press?”

“Yes, Ba,” endorsed Motirani. “Once at least you are wrong. For Gandhiji *is* a phenomenon.” Then to me: “Dilipda, I heard a priceless quip about the American tourist, who comes to our India to see three things: Taj Mahal, Mahatma Gandhi and the Royal Bengal Tiger!” and she rollicked with such an infectious laughter that we all had to join.

When our laughter had subsided, Krishnaprem said to Alec: “There is that of course. But you have misread my emphasis. What I meant to stress was that in India Gandhiji could never have won the universal acclaim he did had he not been looked upon as a luminous symbol of

renunciation, *tyaga*, or shall I put it this way: he could not have outranged all in fame had he not come to be worshipped as a man of God, from crust to core. I will freely concede that human nature in the mass is substantially more or less the same all over the world. Nevertheless, here, in India, I repeat, there *is* something which you can find nowhere else in the world. Dilip was telling me yesterday that he had read of late a travelogue written by the famous intellectual Lowes Dickinson, an intimate friend of Bertrand Russell. Do tell Alec about it, Dilip, for it *is* revealing.”

“He said, Alec, that though he disagreed with Kipling’s finding that the East and West could never meet, he would agree if the word India were substituted for ‘the East.’ He wrote that, after touring the East, he had found only one country baffling him all along the line, and that was India.”

“Yes,” Krishnaprem nodded reflectively. “I agree with him, though from a different angle. For to an authentic occidental like Dickinson Indian spirituality must seem essentially incomprehensible and uncongenial. Remain Rolland is another instance in point.” He glowered at me and said: “Please don’t take it amiss, Dilip, if I can’t echo your tender admiration for Rolland. But his tributes to and interpretation of Indian spirituality, alas, raise no resonant echoes in my heart. For in spite of his going into ecstasies over Vivekananda’s missionary ardour, he could never understand Sri Ramakrishna. And I contend that it is no true appreciation of Indian spirituality when one boosts Vivekananda as an apostle of humanitarianism leaving out the divine humanism of his master and maker, Sri Ramakrishna.”

“Yes, Dilip,” he reiterated as he often did when worked up, “I do hold that it is not possible to feel the heart-beats of India without understanding Sri Ramakrishna, the Mother Kali’s own child, who stayed her baby all his life. Or take Sri Chaitanya who melted the stoniest hearts with the nectar of his ecstatic hymns to Krishna. Do you think that if he resurrected today and toured Europe to spread the gospel of the Lord’s blessed Name he would set the Thames on fire?” He gave an ironic smile and added: “No, my dear, the Westerners would just glibly explain away his God-rapture by a learned pseudo-scientific analysis, putting it all down to auto-suggestion or hysteria

or some such sonorous ‘complex’ and smile superiorly. But the whole of India, I tell you, would kiss the dust of his feet from Cape Comorin to Manas Sarobar.” He paused for breath, then added, with a sigh: “I tell you, Dilip, it would be a sad day for India if you came to lose your fundamental *shraddha*, faith, in your time-old spiritual values. For it is this *shraddha* – the mother of true *jnana*, as the *Gita* says – which has been India’s saving, because of which Divine Grace could descend again and again to protect you and prevent your being completely Westernised. And this Grace will, assuredly, come down once more to your rescue if only you firmly repudiate this disastrous Western gospel of godless materialism and scientific agnosticism. Yes, Dilip,” he repeated, his face flushed, “I tell you, those ‘master architects’ are under a grievous illusion who fondly believe that a God-hostile, self-assertive, regimented efficiency is going to transform this earth into a paradise here and now. The modern Nazi as well as Japanese empire-builders blared to that effect – with what deplorable results you can see today. And I am afraid the same fate is going to overtake China tomorrow – I mean, of course, the modern militaristic China which seems dead set on emulating Japan.” He gave a sigh and said: “Men are all fools, Dilip! They teach history but never, alas, want to learn from it.”<sup>1</sup>

Alec demurred: “But China may not adopt the Western agnosticism. For, after all, she has a deeper wisdom and a richer mystic tradition than Japan could boast.”

Krishnaprem hummed and hawed. “Well,” he murmured, “you may be right. I do hope my prognosis will prove untrue. ... Only...” he shook his head dolefully, “unfortunately, my misgivings are stronger than my hopes.”

“Fortunately,” laughed Alec, “it is going to take ages for China to make a fool of herself and disown her past completely.”

But Krishnaprem gave only a grudging smile.

“I thank God for that, Alec,” he said. “For I am glad that I am unlikely to see that red day dawn in my life-time. But that is neither

---

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that he said all this in 1943, when Japan was at the peak of her military power.

here nor there,” he added quickly, “for my heart’s concern is with India, not China or Japan, whom the great Dickinson feels he can nod to, while frowning on India as ineligible for his blessing. Yes, Dilip, to borrow a Shavian epithet: I do pity such smug ‘world-betterers’ who go on glibly pitying India, vaunting that they can’t approve of her whose blessed soil has been enhallowed by Krishna’s footfall; India, whose peerless sages proclaimed the millennial holiness of the Himalayas and the redemptive grace of Mother Ganga; India, where even dead stones come to life as *shaligram*, informed by His breath; India, where even the animals symbolise divinity; India, where whichever way you turn you meet the Divine. If the Russells and Dickinsons fail to understand India’s greatness one can afford to smile and say: ‘You are welcome, sirs, to your cherished myopia if you choose to decline the boon of the deeper vision, the *Shivanetra*, which alone can delve and see into the heart of things, meeting the One in all that is, animate or inanimate. Shall I tell you something, Dilip? Often, while meditating, I catch myself praying to Krishna that He may never let India’s immortal soul be swamped by the rational, robustious, God-deriding, scientific agnosticism of the blatant West, blaring over a thousand loudspeakers: ‘Religion is the opium of the mind.’ May He always shower His blessing on India, whose very dust heaves with latent godliness, in whose tiniest crannies mystic faith flowers like green grass-blades through chinks in rocks – India, whose people have only to anoint wayside stones with vermilion to endow them with sanctity!’<sup>1</sup> Yes, Dilip, *I have* prayed over and over again: ‘May *these* remain custodians of the precious heritage of faith in *jagat-pranam* as the *Bhagavat* puts it.’<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In Poona, near our temple-home, we found, a few months ago, two little boys building a tiny stone-niche in which they installed another stone and called it “Narayan” before which, as Indira pointed out to me more than once, they kindled candles and meditated silently, day after day. Also, under trees, here and there, you find stones, painted red, placed on an eminence before which men and women gather to sing the Lord’s Name with drums and cymbals.

<sup>2</sup> *Vani gunanukathane shravanau kathayam*  
*Hastau ca karmasu manas-tava padayor-nah*  
*Smrityam shiras-tava nivasa-jagat-praname*  
*Drishtim satam darshanes tu bhavat-tanunam* – *Bhagavat* – 10.10.38

“Wait, Ba,” Moti interjected. “What on earth is *jagat-pranam*?”

“The *Bhagavat* puts it beautifully,” Krishnaprem explained, “that you must turn all your senses Godward: words must be used to sing His praises; eyes directed to the saints in whom He presides; the ears dedicated to hear them; hands taught to worship His feet and, lastly, your head must bow down in reverence to the world throbbing with His consciousness; that is called *jagat-pranam*.”

*Ma* suddenly shivered in ecstasy, lowered her head and, in a thick voice, said: “Listen, Dilip. You asked me this morning why I let this pariah dog sleep on the same bed with me. I will tell you now.”

“I used to abhor dogs,” she went on. “I simply couldn’t stand them. Now, one day, I had just offered Balgopal, the *bhoga* I had cooked myself, when I found this street-dog, which had stolen in from behind, lapping up the milk-pudding. Shocked to the soul, I gave it a blow with my stick. The dog howled in pain... when, lo, I saw my Lord... my heart’s Beloved.. the little Balgopal, lying prone inside the dog... and... and He was crying.”

She wiped her eyes and added: “Since that day I have adopted it and made it my constant companion.”

#### FOURTEEN

I have of course put much of the foregoing in my own words, but Krishnaprem did express such lofty sentiments and apotheosise the deep spiritual aura around India, the *punya bhumi*, with a moving tenderness and spontaneous eloquence.

Sri Madhav Ashish, one of his dear disciples, writes: “Once, in Brindaban, a stranger on the road asked him his place of birth. ‘The true or the false?’ he asked in reply. ‘The true place, of course,’ said the man. ‘This,’ said Sri Krishnaprem, touching the Brindaban earth. ‘What is the false place, then?’ asked the man again. ‘When you know the true, what is your concern with the false?’ he replied and went his way, laughing.”

Time and time again would he go on improving on the theme of

India’s millennial wisdom till his voice trailed off into a mystic ecstasy. And then he would suddenly clap me on my shoulder and say: “Oh, sing, Dilip, just sing on to your last breath, sing His Name... sing of and to Him for all on earth. Let us all be mendicants in His Name and thrill in His Name and, I tell you, life’s drab winter shall flower into spring.”

To conclude with an inspiring quotation from one of his most beautiful books, *Initiation Into Yoga* (the concluding paragraph):

“The finest timber comes from the slowest-growing trees. He who expects to blossom into a Yogi in a few months or even in a few years of practice is bound to be disappointed and had better leave the whole subject alone. He, however, who has the sincerity and courage to face whatever is in him, and the persistence to go on with his struggle in the face of obstacles within and without, and the humility to recognise that all that he has done is to take the first few steps on a tremendous journey, is certain to achieve something which he would not give away in exchange even for the whole world, for, as Sri Krishna teaches in the *Gita*, even the seeker after Yoga goes far beyond the hopes and fears of ordinary religion and even a little of this *dharma* delivers from great fear.”

(The passages referred to are: *jijnasurapi yogasya shabdabrahmati vartate* and *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*.

– *Gita*, VI.44 & II.40



The shadows of dusk had lengthened in our room when *Ma* said: “It’s time, Gopal!” So we rose to our feet for the evening service in the temple. Moti went out and lit the *pancha pradip* (five candles on a censer) and called out: “Come, Ba!”

Here I pause to give a short description of the temple and its two approaches from *Ma*’s bedroom.

The shrine itself, in which the images of Radha and Krishna were installed, was built next to *Ma*’s room. As you came out of it

you had only to step across the threshold on the left corner away from the bedstead to enter the little verandah facing the shrine. You could reach this also if you walked along the corridor skirting the room which was allotted to me and another where Krishnaprem worked, sitting on a bare mat. I am not good at description because, though an ideal listener, I have always been an indifferent observer. All I need to stress – because it is necessary for my story to follow – is that Ma could reach the verandah from her room only in these two ways.

When we began our evening service in the shrine, Moti sat just in front of the threshold. Krishnaprem sat next to her on my left with Alec seated on my right.

On that memorable evening – which was to figure as a landmark in my life’s journey – I was asked by Krishnaprem to sing *Brindabaner lila*, one of my best-known songs which is popular still, thanks to the gramophone. I had sung it on numerous occasions in motley assemblies and it very often caught fire. But that evening I sang it with an overwhelming emotion such as I had never felt before. Time seemed almost to stand on tip-toe.

Let me give here my own translation of the song:

*KRISHNA, THE EVERGREEN*

*The rainbow-lilts of eternal Brindaban*

*I still recall, I still recall again:*

*O Prince of loveliness, Light’s darling Son,*

*Touching to radiant joy our nights of pain! –*

*I still recall and call to thee again.*

*Oh, how we ran to the blue Jamuna’s brim*

*To bathe in her crystal waters day by day,*

*Singing in ecstasy our paeans to Him*

*Who would outflash His lightning-pranks to play! –*

*I still recall and call to thee again.*

*The carnivals of joy from grove to grove,*

*When under a star-spangled velvet sky,*

*We searched for the Swain who called to His Ras of love*

PART II – REMINISCENCES

*To savour in an hour eternity! –  
I still recall and call to thee again.*

*Or the moonlight masques and songs in blissful bowers,  
When passion born of His beauty, athrob and tender,  
Changed all the thorns of life into blessed flowers  
And we won from thee all by our all-surrender.  
I still recall and call to thee again.*

*“Krishna is a fool’s fairy tale,” they say,  
“A legend – His song and dance and revelry.”  
To them thy Flute of Flame is a myth today  
And the drab world’s din the last reality!  
But I still recall and call to thee again.*

*How can they know who never have known in love  
The bliss the soul feels when thou leanest to bless?  
To the blind can one who has seen his vision prove  
Or speak to the heart of stone of thy caress?  
But I still recall and call to thee again.*

When I was singing the last verse, I forgot myself and ecstatic tears coursed down my cheeks staunchlessly.

Then, as I started improvising, image after image flashed upon me, and I went on elaborating my answer to confirmed sceptics who dismissed as myth the utter reality of Krishna’s love-play in the Eternal Brindaban, and I sang (I am doing my best to translate into English my Bengali images which are not at all easy to render):

*They scoff and laugh at all I see  
And say: “He never came;  
'Tis all a myth – how can it be?  
Krishna is but a name,*

*An irised bubble, a vapour, sweet  
Imagination’s gleam:  
Could earth and the ethereal meet  
Or stars our dust redeem?”*

PART II – REMINISCENCES

*Ah, they have never known, O Lord,  
What only love could know,  
And so they doubt, alas, thy word:  
That thou, incognito,  
Still comst as rapture in pain's night,  
As beauty flowering  
In yearning rocks thy troth to plight,  
To Abyss of Heaven to sing.  
But I have heard thy Flute of Grace,  
Beloved, in my lone heart  
And thrilled to the deep blessedness  
Of knowing that thou art  
My life's one friend and stay and guide,  
My cradle and my goal:  
And so I smile when they deride  
What floods with bliss my soul.*

When the song came to an end, a deep silence reigned. Nobody spoke a word. ... A flawless peace descended into me down from the crown of my head, a cool beneficent current, till it pervaded, as it were, all the interstices of my being like infiltrating light, an experience that beggars description. After a few seconds I looked at Krishnaprem: his eyes glistened with unshed tears.<sup>1</sup> Motirani was mopping her eyes and cheeks...

The silence was broken first by Alec.

“You know, Krishnaprem,” he said, “*Ma* was listening, standing in the verandah with folded hands!”

Krishnaprem gave a start.

“*Ma!* Good heavens! How dare she walk along the other way all by herself. She might have collapsed!”

Motirani gasped: “And it is *freezing*, in the verandah!”

---

<sup>1</sup> See Krishnaprem's letter dated 19-4-43

“I noticed it too late,” Alec sighed. “Just when she had turned back, at the end of Dilip’s song.”

“But it’s madness!” Krishnaprem exclaimed, aghast. “She is very ill... and may well catch a fatal chill.”

We all rose to our feet in consternation and, in a file, made our way back into her room stepping across the threshold. Obviously, she had come along the round-about way as Motirani was squatting close to the threshold.



She was sitting on her bed with folded hands, as though petrified, just two streaks of tears glistened on her cheeks in the candle-light.

Krishnaprem said reproachfully: “*Ma!* – how could you possibly –”

“Sh-h!” Motirani shushed. “Don’t you see she’s in *bhavsamadhi*<sup>1</sup>?”

So we waited in silence, watching breathlessly...

After a few minutes she opened her eyes, now swimming in tears, and gave a beatific smile. Then she asked me to draw near and sit close to her.

I complied hesitantly, as so far I had never sat on her bed; the others sat on the floor on a mat.

*Ma* placed a loving hand on my shoulder.

“You didn’t see anything, Baba?” she asked, tenderly.

I caught my breath.

“See? No! What should I have seen?”

“*Thakur!*” she said simply. “He had come, and was standing beside you!”

A shiver passed through my spine.

“You mean Krishna?” I gasped.

She smiled. “Whom else could I mean, Baba? When...” she spoke

---

<sup>1</sup> Partial trance

now in staccato, through her tears. ... “you were improvising on the last verse. He... came first and stood for a second in my room and then... then stepped across the threshold... I... could not follow Him that way. So I took the... the other way... till I got to the verandah... and saw Him... standing beside you, listening. ... Yes, Baba... I... I did see Him, with *open* eyes... as I often do. ... *You* didn’t see?”

“No, *Ma*, But I did *feel* – ”

But she went on as though she had not heard: “And He was standing... beside you... in person... looking so... so tenderly... at you! ... And... I... I appealed to Him: ‘O *Thakur*, give him the... the blessed boon of vision... so... so he may see that you... *you yourself* have come down to hear his song... blessed, blessed, boy!’”

I bowed down and kissed her feet and – wept.

And then she opened herself to me and went on telling me, very simply, her varied spiritual experiences. I had never yet – except once – heard her speak of her supraphysical visions, nor the incredible miracles of Grace to which she had borne witness. But on this memorable night it was as though a sluice had been suddenly opened and her words came down in a ceaseless torrent. Even Krishnaprem told me later (when he said that just when *Ma* had seen Krishna, he also had felt His presence vividly) that he had never before heard her speak so volubly of her visions, overriding all inhibitions. I was so happy that she had felt such an irresistible urge. So long as she was with us I could not write about what she had told me, nor would Krishnaprem have approved of it. But now that both of them have passed on to the Beyond, I do not feel any serious qualms about sharing with spiritual seekers what I have found so delectable myself. It is not for nothing that “Sri M” (the far-famed Mahendranath Gupta, chronicler of Sri Ramakrishna’s talks) had told me in 1913 what I have quoted in the Preface to my book, *Among the Great*. This is what I have written:

“*I made my obeisance again to this greatest biographer of the world: ‘But before you go,’ Sri M said suddenly, ‘I should like to make you one request.’*”

“*I stared at him in blank amazement: ‘Request?’ ‘You are born blessed in having such a great father,’ he went on. ‘Promise me, you’ll*

*keep a record of his sayings, will you?’ I nodded mechanically. ‘And not only your father’s,’ he quickly amended, ‘whenever you meet a great man, do put on paper any memorable words that may fall from his lips.’*

*“I do not know what moved him to make such an unheard-of request to a mere schoolboy. Can it be that a hero-worshipper knows a hero-worshipper when he sees one? Or maybe he felt something? – I cannot tell. All I can say is that I have never been able to forget my promise to him. This is the genesis of my present book.”*

With this parenthesis to serve for an apology I will take up the thread where I left it.<sup>1</sup>

FIFTEEN

Yashoda Ma blessed me once again, then resumed:

“I seldom speak of these experiences, Baba! But I am going to tell you tonight because I know that *now* you will understand. I tell you, Dilip, there is an ocean of bliss that is pent in your soul. Even if one of its stray breakers should, some day, waft its message to your mind, then beside its tremendous Reality this world would flicker away before you, like a shadow-dance, and... and even this body which you cherish as the most treasured possession would dwindle into a husk. And yet it is for just such an ephemeral thing that we, fools, fight so frantically, missing the only thing that matters: the light of the soul within. I have *seen* this soul of ours as a blue bird of beauty and bliss – held captive in the body’s cage and yet isn’t affected by it all. Yes, Baba, the *Gita* hasn’t told us a fairy tale when it assures us that nothing on earth can burn, mutilate or whittle it down.”<sup>2</sup>

“Still why do we labour under the illusion, *Ma*, that the husk is

---

<sup>1</sup> The Mirtola happenings, as well as talks I have published in part in two of my Bengali books, from which I have rendered this English version, elaborating freely here and there.

<sup>2</sup> *Nainam chindanti shastrani nainam dahati pavakah  
Na cainam kledayantyapo na shoshayati marutah*

– *Gita*, II.23

the most dependable of all realities and grow to cherish it more than anything else on earth?”

“In the last analysis, Baba,” she smiled, “we cherish the body, too, for the sake of the Lord who ensouls it. It is He who makes it so lovable, I tell you; only we don’t know this till we find Him... till He claims us for His own. And when we are one with Him we find that everything drips honey because! All... all that we sense, feel or perceive is He Himself. There is nothing in this world that stands by itself – apart from Him, and none dearer than His beloved Self. And once you know Him as the Dearest of the dear, do you *need*, to be told: ‘Treasure Him, meditate on Him, sing His Name’ and so on? You won’t be able then to sing of anything *else*, to do without Him for a single moment, Baba! Look at Gopal. Can anyone tempt him away from His feet? Just let them try. Offer him a kingdom or heavenly maidens – he won’t even look at them, I tell you. Why? Because he has had a glimpse of His Beauty beside which all the beauty of the world, lumped together, seems pale, futile... a bauble. I assure you, Dilip, that no one who has even once glimpsed His Loveliness could feel otherwise. This is not mere theory, Baba, I speak from direct experience – after having *seen* Him.”

“Do you see Him, all the time, Ma?” I asked, emboldened by her confidences.

“I can see Him in my heart all the time,” she answered. “But not outside – I mean, not always.”

“But why can’t you, Ma?”

She answered, after a brief pause: “I once asked Him. He said: ‘If I appear before you too often your body will not last long.’”



After a brief pause I asked her: “I understand from Krishnaprem that you have seen many a god and goddess, *Ma* – even such a fantastic deity as Ganeshji. Could you tell me something about Him?”

She smiled: “What exactly do you want me to tell you? That He is a God and not a vapour of fancy’s froth like Krishna, as your friends would say?”

I laughed: “About Krishna I have never had any misgivings, *Ma* – perhaps it is a little inexplicable – but somehow, from the very first, I accepted Him as an unquestionable Reality and I have never wavered since.”

She gave me a rare smile. “I know,” she nodded, touching my head in blessing. “And you have, indeed, proved it by your singing tonight. But you wouldn’t have had any misgivings about Ganesh either had you seen Him as I have. I will tell you how He came to me.”

“It was a lovely experience,” she went on. “And it happened in the middle of the night. I was asleep when, unexpectedly, I was tickled by something. I woke up with a start, and I saw, lo, a tiny Ganesh, a darling little baby, tickling my neck with His lovely trunk! I simply can’t find words, *Baba*, to describe His exquisite grace. He was made of the quintessence of beauty which dripped a golden radiance at every step. I assure you, *Dilip*, all your misgivings and doubts would have taken wings had you glimpsed His loveliness even once.”

“I am very grateful to you, *Ma*,” I said truthfully. “Because I have, indeed, longed to believe. But, you see, I haven’t met so far anyone who could testify to Ganeshji’s divinity from personal experience. Only – may I ask you just one more question?”

“You may,” she smiled again, nodding. Then blessing me once more: “After what you have given me tonight – my *Thakur* – I will tell you anything you wish to know.”

“The first thing I should like to ask you is – how should I meditate?” I asked. “You see, *Ma*, I have never felt happy about my meditation, I asked Gurudev more than once. But he wrote back – ”

“Don’t bother your head about it,” she interjected. “It has been revealed to me tonight, so I can assure you, that you need not worry about meditation at all: It is not your *swadharna*. You just sing, sing, sing to Him and of Him and for Him and you can’t come to grief. I tell you, you shall realise Him through your singing. Could it be

otherwise after what transpired tonight?”

“May He bless your tongue, *Ma!*” I said in joy. “You have taken a load off my mind. Only one thing: how is it that He came down Himself to hear me? I have read about such phenomena. But doesn’t it seem – well, too good to be true? I mean, does the Lord really come down still – even in this our benighted age, comporting Himself like a human being?”

“But why not?” she laughed. “Since He is *lilamay* and loves *naralila*, how can you, a *bhakta*, doubt it?<sup>1</sup> A *bhakta* should believe in all His plays. Hasn’t He assured us in the *Gita* that He does come down from age to age to play at hide and seek with us as a human friend and guide and the last refuge of us all? What does your Gurudev say? Doesn’t he agree?”

“He does,” I nodded. “But – I mean – well, one hears so much about *naralila* but sees so little of it! That is why I feel so thrilled tonight, *Ma*, because you have told me what you have actually *seen*. You see, *Ma*, you have often enjoined me to sing to Him. But only tonight have I been told, for the first time, that He actually comes down to hear me. That is why I feel so blessed, because I have *seen* tonight, though at one remove – through your eyes, *Ma!*”

“Of course you are blessed,” she smiled radiantly. “For He *did* come, and does come constantly, only we have not the eyes to see and ears to hear. In fact, it is He who prays to Himself through you and then grants your prayers. That is *naralila* – His complying in Grace, with the *bhakta*’s invitation,” she stressed, “*because* He is *bhakta-vatsal* – which must mean that to those who have loved Him utterly He is pledged to give Himself utterly and grant any boons they ask. So, when such *bhaktas* implore Him to meet them on the human level, He does meet them half-way – reacting exactly as a human being would.”

“I have, indeed, heard this attested to by many a *bhakta*, *Ma*,” I

---

<sup>1</sup> *lilamay* – playful;  
*naralila* – playing and reacting to life exactly like a human being;  
*bhakta-* – devotee

said. “For instance, I have heard from Swami Saradananda himself that Ramlala – an image of *ashtadhatu* – used to come to life and the Lord, as little Ram, used to play with Sri Ramakrishna. Also, I have read that there was one of his devotees called Gopaler Ma to whom the little Lord Balgopal would come to be mothered – washed, fed and so on.” I laughed amusedly and added: “Do you know, it is claimed – one day He actually came to her and complained that there was no pillow on His bed, she implored Him to sleep, using her arm as a pillow...” I chuckled and went on: “I have heard so many stories of the same stripe, *Ma!* But can such things really happen, I mean – in this our twentieth century?”

Krishnaprem cut in: “Of omnipotent science and omniscient reason, you should have added, to carry conviction.”

*Ma* held up her hand: “Don’t, Gopal!” Then she turned to me and said: “I do understand your difficulty, Dilip. Only, I not only believe that such things can happen, but *know* that they have happened – yes, even in this *Kali Yuga* of science and atheism and what not.”

I caught my breath.

“But such old wives’ tales, *Ma?*”

“Listen, Baba,” she said. “You see that image of Balgopal on the shelf? Now, one night, when I was fast asleep, He woke me up and pouting his dear little lips said: ‘You are sleeping happily because you are comfortable. But what about me? How can I sleep if the blessed ants go on tickling me?’ I started up aghast, and saw that I had inadvertently kept a bottle of honey on the same shelf and so the ants had flocked and got on to my little Balgopal. I wept contritely, removed the bottle and asked Him to forgive me. Then I wiped Him clean of the ants and put Him on my bed, when He was happy and slept.”

I was dumbfounded. She touched my head and said: “But if you don’t want to believe me, you needn’t. Only believe your Guru, I say.”

“How can you talk of my disbelieving you, *Ma?*” I said, deeply shaken. “I can assure you, in all sincerity, that I do believe in truthful people. And *you of* all persons, *Ma*, whom Swami Vivekananda

worshipped once – ”

“Who told you?”

“I did, *Ma!*” Alec said. “Did I – ”

“No, no, it’s all right.” *Ma* smiled. “Only it wasn’t quite worship, properly speaking. You see, Dilip, I was then a child of twelve or thirteen, I think, when Swamiji visited Gazipur where my father lived. He came once or twice to lay flowers to me – what they call *kumari-puja*. It wasn’t actual worship with your bell, book and candle.”

“That may be true, *Ma*,” Alec rejoined. “But it *was* worship, nonetheless. Krishnaprem is fully convinced that Swami Vivekananda must have *seen* something in you. Otherwise he would never have paid homage to the light in you which had prompted him to offer flowers at your feet.”

I caught my breath. “He offered flowers at your feet, *Ma?*”

“Offered flowers?” said Motirani. “He sang hymns to her pretty often.”

“Indeed!” I said, impressed. “Do tell me, *Ma*, how did he sing? I knew one of his disciples who taught me a song. He praised Swamiji’s voice to the skies.”

*Ma* nodded. “Oh, he was a marvellous singer! I often tell Gopal that I have heard only two singers in my life. One of them was Swamiji.” Then winking at me, “And shall I tell you the other’s name?”

“You are nothing if not a tease, *Ma*,” Motirani chimed in, bursting into a bell-like laughter. “But then, surely, you needn’t have asked Dilipda. For I can bet my head he knows.”

I changed the subject hastily in deep embarrassment. “I understand, *Ma*, that you met the great saint Pawhari Baba as well?”

*Ma* folded her hands in reverence. “Oh, he was a king among Yogis! Could one ever forget Him? I for one have never seen such a radiance on the face of a human being.”

“Now, now, *Ma!*” Motirani butted in again. “You mustn’t, you know. After having paid Dilipda the compliment about his music

you should have said that you have seen such a radiance on the face of only two great Yogis, one of whom was Pawhari Baba.” Then turning to Krishnaprem she mimicked: “Shall I tell you the other’s name, Ba?”

*Ma* burst out laughing, but Krishnaprem frowned and scolded: “You mustn’t, Moti!”

“But why not, pray?” she returned rebelliously, “when I *have* seen this radiance day after day here on a certain person’s face, even as *Ma* has, also? I defy her to contradict me.”

“You needn’t, you madcap,” *Ma* laughed indulgently. “Don’t you know the saying in English: the present company is always excepted?”

“But do tell me, *Ma*,” I pursued, “did you see Pawhari Baba often?”

“No, Baba,” she answered. “How could I? He lived in a cave from which he would come out only once in a blue moon. But,” she added, “I will tell you of a miracle he performed, shall I?”

“Don’t, *Ma*,” Motirani teased again. “For Dilipda will never believe you, however sweet you may be to him.”

“Why?” *Ma* asked very simply. “Don’t you believe that miracles can happen still?”

“Well,” I said, a trifle embarrassed, “to be perfectly honest, *Ma*, my answer is yes and no. Yes, because I admit its possibility; and no, because I feel that to be fully convinced one should have some reliable evidence.”<sup>1</sup>

Alec smiled. “Dilip, for heaven’s sake, don’t emulate, at this late

---

<sup>1</sup> I said this in 1943. Indira came to me as my daughter disciple in 1949. Since then I have seen miracles galore, so much so that I have been often reminded of Sri Aurobindo’s dictum.

A prayer, a master act, a king idea  
Links a man’s strength to a transcendent Force  
Then miracle is made a common rule.

I have written about these in many of my books (e.g. my novel, *Miracles Do Still Happen*, *The Flute Still Calls*, *Sri Aurobindo Came To Me*, etc. Apropos, in the present book see, in Part III, Krishnaprem’s letter dated 20-10-1951).

day, our doubting Thomas who swore that he would never believe in the resurrection of Christ till he saw the dead Christ risen again with his own eyes and dug his nails into Him.”

“Don’t be afraid, Alec,” I laughed. “The doubting Thomas has never been my ideal. For, unlike him, I am prepared to believe the word of anybody whom I *know* to be truthful. That is why I hold Krishnaprem’s evidence, or *Ma’s* so precious – because they are unimpeachable.”

“And mine?” Motirani chimed in querulously.

“Oh, doubly so – nay, triply, I should say,” I laughed. “For not only do we cherish you all the more as your great mother’s delightful daughter, but as your radiant Guru’s dazzling disciple as well.”

A chorus of laughter rang out. When it had subsided *Ma* gave me a sweet smile and said: “I won’t say thank you, Baba, but will go one better and tell you about an incredible miracle I have seen with my own eyes.”

She paused, reflected for a space, then resumed: “I think, I had then just turned fifteen when I heard, one morning, that Pawhari Baba was giving a *bhandara*. You must be knowing what a *bhandara* is?”

I nodded. “I understand it’s called a *bhandara* when a sadhu feeds a crowd of other sadhus and presents each of them with *bhand* (vessel) of foodstuff.”

“But,” *Ma* supplemented, nodding, “one may dispense other things too, like clothes, blankets, etcetera.”

“On this occasion, the sadhus were to receive each a *bhand* plus a *dhoti*. I felt it highly intriguing: for I had heard that the cave he lived in was a small one. How could he store there hundreds of vessels and piles of *dhotis*?”

‘I must get to the bottom of it,’ I told myself, and stole away from home. Disguised as a boy, I made my way into the crowd of sadhus who were going up in a file to receive the gifts. I stood among them and waited, moving slowly up, step by step, towards the mouth of the cave. And then, just when Pawhari Baba offered me my *bhand* with a *dhoti*, I just plunged straight in – headlong! Naturally, there was a

big commotion outside: they were aghast, for such things are not done. Nobody would dare. But I was a school girl and did it all on an irresistible impulse – unthinkingly. And just imagine what I saw!”

“Do tell me, *Ma!*” I said, deeply intrigued.

She broke out into a young laughter which sounded like bells.

“Believe it or not, Baba,” she said. “I saw something absolutely incredible: it was just a tiny cave with no other exit. And there were neither *bhands* nor any *dhotis* – not a vestige! The narrow space inside the cave was quite empty!”

I gasped. “And you saw it all with your own eyes?”

“But no, Dilipda,” Motirani interjected. “*Ma* saw it with somebody else’s eyes whose name she has forgotten. Only, it so happens, alas, that Ba also has seen with his own eyes quite a few miracles and so have I, unfortunately.”

“Don’t be so pert, Moti!” Krishnaprem upbraided. “Dilip is not an unbeliever; only he will have to substitute an open mind and discrimination for doubt and scepticism. For scepticism *is* sterile, and doubts, however honest, have never got one anywhere. Of course you are not expected to accept on trust everything attested to by Messrs U, V, W, X, Y, Z. Only you must never, never, never doubt what your Guru vouches for – because all authentic gurus are one in essence, as *Ma* has told you times out of number. Therefore it follows, inevitably, that no true Guru can possibly feed you with lies because the true Guru is appointed by the Lord Himself to lead you home to His Truth-light. Could it be otherwise, I ask you – since all true sadhus, not to mention Gurus, *are* His chosen deputies? Or you may look at it from another angle. Listen: A, B, C testify that they have seen His Light in such and such a way, following a certain *sadhana*, discipline; D, E, F, G... X, Y, Z assert they haven’t. (Of course these – the majority – haven’t, how could they – not having, like A, B, C, staked their all for the Truth of the All-in-all?) Now – and here is my point, Dilip – with a seeker of true vision, like you and me, shouldn’t the evidence of the handful who have *seen* weigh infinitely more than the majority who have *not seen*? And this is true not only on the

higher planes of vision but on the lower ones as well. To give an instance: it often happens that as soon as you are initiated into Yoga you begin to see things happening far away.”

“You mean clairvoyance?”

“Don’t bother your head about names and labels. The point is that the Lord’s Grace may and often does enlarge our vision or deepen our perceptions. Moti, why not tell him about Mrs Webb?”

“She was our guest, Dilipda,” she said, “and had grown so weak that she couldn’t even sit up. On the last day, I saw her in the morning in my room, *with my own eyes*, again! I was puzzled, for she had been completely bedridden for weeks. I rushed to her room, only to find her dead. So, you see, she had paid me a visit just after leaving her mortal body. Ba, also, has seen plenty of such phenomena. And then, I have seen a Yogi called Gandha Baba working miracles without turning a hair – ”

“I know,” I cut in ruefully. “I met him myself at Puri, years ago, when I was a college student. I gave him a handkerchief; he focussed his lens on it for a second and, lo, it emitted jasmine fragrance which I had asked for! But then I heard it claimed noisily by his fans galore that he could do far greater miracles – like reviving for a few minutes a dead bird – ”

“I know, I know, Dilip,” Krishnaprem interjected. “And I can see very well what you are driving at: that around such Yogis a queer crew collect and start a hullabaloo, claiming all sort of powers for their bosses. But, boiled down, it only amounts to this, which I freely admit, that senseless people behave foolishly – which is why legends grow. But, as the *Gita* says: even a wise man acts wisely because it is his nature, and, conversely, a fool must behave foolishly, propelled by his folly.”

“I concede that as freely,” I said. “Only I want to add that fools and the gulled being in the majority, the bulk of what they claim for their miracles must remain a little suspect, mustn’t it?”

“Now, now,” Krishnaprem raised an admonitory finger, “you are being unfair on miracles. For surely nobody asks you to believe

what the foolish and the gulled majority claim to be true. What spiritual seekers are asked to believe – or shall I say, not to discredit out of hand – is the evidence of real sadhus or wise men and, above all, authentic Gurus. These illuminates have all said with one voice that the Divine can and does perform miracles to help aspirants and seekers. And the mass of evidence which bears out what they have attested to is too vast and varied to be scotched out of hand. A cripple walks, the sick are cured, a sign is given – but these are common miracles or, shall I say, miracles of the lower strata, the delightful play of light and shade in His courtyard, not the *great* miracles that happen in the Holy of holies. And the last, supreme miracle is the transformation of human nature, or, as the *Gita* puts it pointedly: A scoundrel changing into a sadhu by the power of Divine Grace, a sinner being redeemed overnight to achieve *shashvat shanti*, the termless peace that passes all understanding.<sup>1</sup> I only say that you and I, *qua* spiritual seekers, should never dismiss summarily such beneficent miracles performed by His loving Grace, for the simple reason that being resistant to Divine Grace does stand in the way of our receiving it. That is why your Gurudev enjoins you continually not to go on harping on reason. A stolid rational life may be the ideal of a sceptic like Russell or Dickinson, but *our ideal* is to achieve a wisdom and peace and bliss which only His Divine Grace can pour down the opening in our hearts to love of God or Light of Knowledge.”

“Krishnaprem,” I sighed, “how I envy knowledge!”

He laughed. “But suppose I return the compliment saying, I envy your power of loving all and sundry, or evoking the Lord’s Grace through your music? Didn’t Sri Aurobindo write to you about this enviable power of yours?”

“He is right, Dilip,” *Ma* nodded. “For why must you insist on harking back to reason and doubt – which can never deliver the goods – when you can have them by following the lead of your Gurudev to whom you have, after all, turned for guidance with full faith in his wisdom?”

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gita*, IX.30-31

“Besides, Dilip,” Krishnaprem put in, “when all is said and done, this wise emphasis on faith, obedience, humility and, above all, love is surely justified, especially on the path you and I are vowed to tread. For remember that Krishna may have talked of knowledge to Arjuna or Uddhava but he talked only of love to the Gopis. He may have blessed the others and said that they were dear to Him, but to the Gopis He actually said that He was eternally indebted to them and dare not even reward them. So He blest them, saying: ‘Let your hearts’ love be its own reward.’<sup>1</sup>

“Yes, Dilip,” he went on, “when all is said and done, love *has* the last word, since only love does hold the key to His Grace. ‘*Bina premse na mile Nandalala*’<sup>2</sup>, as Mira put it. So when you can follow the lead of *bhakti*, the greatest light, why must you hark back – as *Ma* put it – to lesser lights? Why seek guidance from men who don’t know and can’t see – the Russells and Dickinsons – when you do have the option to be guided by the sages and saints and, above all, your Guru who knows and sees and has offered to lead you home?”

## SIXTEEN

A time-piece near *Ma*’s bed tinkled eleven strokes. I folded my hands and said: “*Ma*, I can’t express to you in words how deeply grateful I am to you for having taken me into your confidence tonight. I only have one thing more to say before taking leave: that I feel very guilty tonight – yes, *Ma*, guilty is the *mot juste*. For I did think all along that Krishnaprem ought to have accepted as his Guru Sri Aurobindo instead of you.”

*Ma* laughed my penitence away and patted my head: “Do you know why I confided in you, Dilip? Because you are so sincere and *saral* (simple). But you needn’t feel guilty at all, since you didn’t know that the Guru cannot be chosen: he is appointed by the Lord. For instance, I was Gopal’s Guru, because I *had* to be, even. as Moti had to accept *him* as her Guru and not me because it had also been

---

<sup>1</sup> *Na Paraheyam... sadhuna* – *Bhagavat*, 10-32-22

<sup>2</sup> Krishna cannot be attained without love.

so ordained. Some day, I am sure, you will realise this, when all your doubts about *guruvad* shall melt away like mist before the morning sun. But will you tell me one thing: what made you revise your opinion tonight?”

“Oh, I can answer that,” I said, relieved. “I felt tonight as never before that Krishnaprem could not have flowered as he has, had you not come to accept him with the love of a mother in every sense of the term.”

Alec asked: “What do you exactly imply by that emphasis?”

“I imply,” I said, “that had *Ma* not accepted him as a mother accepts her new-born child, Krishnaprem could not have hailed her so spontaneously as his Guru. *Ma*, I cannot forget your advice to me in Allahabad about serving my Guru *personally*. To my sorrow, I confess that it was not possible. But, incidentally, it revealed to me tonight how Krishnaprem came so close to you through a day-to-day personal service. For it was this, I felt, which opened his heart like a flower, to the light of your love and tenderness. And it is because he felt the mother in you to start with that he could end so quickly by accepting you as his Guru. Am I not right, *Ma*?”

*Ma* smiled: “My answer is yes and no, to borrow your own idiom. To explain I will give you two instances. When Gopal first wanted to accept me as his Guru I told him: ‘I can accept you only if you promise me that even if you don’t have any more spiritual experiences for the rest of your life you won’t give up.’ I knew of course that there was no chance or risk of failure if he gave the pledge. I only wanted him to bear in mind that there must be no half-hearted acceptance – no condition, no bargaining that he must have this or that. He gave me the pledge and accepted me in toto as a baby accepts its mother in spontaneous trust.”

“The other instance,” she went on, “was a miracle which could not have happened to him had I been a mere mother to him. It happened like this: An insect once bit his ankle while he was meditating outside. It got septic and Alec and two other doctors who were summoned could not control it. It grew worse and worse till it became so critical that an amputation of the leg was suggested. It was then that I put my foot down and said he could be cured if he stopped all medicines

and took only *charanamrita*<sup>1</sup> He consented at once, ignoring the doctor's misgivings, and was cured miraculously. You may ask Alec.

“Now I say: he could not have had this faith in my word had I been to him only a mother and nothing else. Am I clear?”

I kissed her feet by way of answer.

SEVENTEEN

In January, 1947, I went to Calcutta where friends were to present me with a purse for Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The occasion was my fiftieth birthday anniversary. Krishnaprem had come down from Almora with Motirani since she badly needed a change. We all stayed together in a beautiful house.

He had changed a great deal and would retire into his shell oftener than before. But, in an expansive mood, he would – now and again – throw off his reserve and go on scattering his “jewelled saying”.

I saw, to my agreeable surprise, that he now spoke Bengali fairly fluently. Motirani often said teasingly: “This time, Dilipda, the roles have been reversed, thank Happiness! Because, for once at least, it is *I* who have been his Guru.”

After the passing of *Ma*, she had drawn much closer to him, and as Krishnaprem now spoke Bengali, we would often converse in Bengali, Motirani teasing him and me all the time to the top of her bent, with a charm all her own.

Unfortunately, this time my friends frequently dragged me here and there to sing and so I could not spend as much time with Krishnaprem as I would have liked to. He himself never went out anywhere nor received visitors who came only to pose, one after another, pointless questions prompted by useless curiosity, as he was wont to put it. Apropos, he gave me once a valuable advice so forcefully that I could

---

<sup>1</sup> Water touched by the foot either of the Guru or the Lord's image. In this instance the water was touched by *Ma*'s toe every-time, and Alec attested to its miraculous efficacy.

nevermore forget it. “Whenever you come out of your Guru’s Ashram, Dilip,” he admonished, “do not, for mercy’s sake, go down to your worldly friends’ level to oblige or gratify them. That would be sheer waste of time, to put it mildly. If they really want your company, let them remember that *they* will have to come up to your level to profit by your devotional songs or talks on things that matter. Let them not be allowed to forget, when they come to court your society, that one who has left the worldly life cannot afford to behave like a worldling. In other words your die is cast and you can nevermore resume the role of the Prince Charming you once were to all who flocked to your durbar for small talk. For believe me, Dilip, do what we would, we could never again recapture what is gone any more than we could make a spent wave flow backwards. You can never revert to what you were in your pre-yogic days. I will say nothing against your collecting funds for your Guru’s Ashram since he approves of it. But, surely, he can’t approve of your accepting dinner engagements and speaking in public assemblies to be garlanded and applauded and lionised. Sing His Name by all means, but keep yourself to yourself. For what have you in common with these your friends and cousins, uncles and aunts who besiege you with their affection and keep overwhelming you with their presents and hospitality, compliments and sweet attention? *They* are not your kin. If mix you must with people, mix with those who can understand your *vairagya*, loyalty and, above all, love of Guru and Krishna. Remind yourself constantly that they alone can be your true friends, the rest you have got to fend off as best you can with polite disclaimers. To sum up, don’t come to Calcutta if you can’t steer clear of these human leeches. I had rather they should sigh that you have changed beyond recognition than chuckle: ‘He’s the same old jolly good fellow, thank God!’”

“You do remind me of Cato,” I laughed, “who said: ‘I had rather men should ask why my statue is not set up, than why it is.’”

Motirani dissolved in laughter and clapped her hands.

I mention this as he always showed by his example how to live up to this difficult ideal, so much so, that he fairly disconcerted me by declining even to attend my birthday-celebration in the maidan

pavilion. The more I pressed him the more determinedly he shook his head. “Forgive me, Dilip,” he said. “I just can’t attend public meetings, still less sit on decorated platforms to be made much of and wheedled into making a ‘splendid’ speech. You know how I love to hear you sing. But sing here, before the Lord, and I would bless your voice and, still more, your *bhakti*.”

Whenever he went out of his Ashram he would carry with him his own image of the Lord, before whom he sang nightly in his little sanctuary either Mira-bhajans or Bengali kirtans taught by Moti. One *kirtan* was Vidyapati’s famous Radha-song: *Moribo, moribo, sakhi*.

I was, indeed, delighted to hear him sing this old hymn which I had learnt from the gramophone when I was a boy of twelve. And my delight deepened into a wonder when I saw him going into ecstasy while improvising. One day he said to me: “I know, Dilip, that a good many among your high-brow friends look askance at my singing Bengali *kirtans*. I know also that I am neither note-perfect nor word-perfect. But then I don’t sing for an audience. I only offer myself to His feet through whatever I sing. He is called *bhavagrahi*, as you must be knowing: that is, One who judges us not by our achievements or kudos but by our sincerity and aspiration, and I aspire, first and last, to follow the *Gita* which enjoins<sup>1</sup>, that whatever one does or enjoys, strives for or persists in should be dedicated to Him and Him alone. What then have I to do with this or that person’s smile or frown?”

He was wont to scatter such *jewelled sayings* with a regal profusion which astonished all whom he had drawn to himself by the magnetism of his radiant personality and the purity of his love. My only regret is that, unfortunately, I was unable in Calcutta to keep a record of his talks in my diary. It was, indeed, a real pity, as his inspired words have helped me greatly in my *sadhana*, the more so, of course, because he always conscientiously practised at every step what he preached.

The sun dawned duly on my birthday anniversary (with rich drama in the offing) on January 22, 1947. I had implored Krishnaprem over

---

<sup>1</sup> *Yat karoshi yadashnasi yajjuhoshi dadasi yat  
Yat-tapasyasi Kaunteya tat kurushva madarpanam.*

– *Gita*, IX.27

and over again before, and I besieged him once more with my importunities on that fateful morning to grace the pavilion where the organizers of the function were to present me with a purse for Gurudev’s Ashram. They said the lovely auditorium looked wonderful with multi-coloured lamps and they all did their best to prevail upon the revered saint to preside.

But he was adamant. His one refrain was that in a festal meeting he would feel like the proverbial square peg in a round hole. When I met his objection, promising to transform the round hole into a flawless square, he frowned and said to my friends: “It’s not a laughing matter for me. For you know full well that I am not the social lion, Dilip Kumar, and so dare not take a leaf out of his book and exhibit myself in his lime-light. I must follow my humble temple-light – stand by my *swadharma*...”

Fortunately for me, however, this time Moti, his tower of strength, was on my side, not only because she longed herself to see me feted, but also because she wanted him to make me happy by his loving presence. So, from early dawn she hectored and beseeched, berated and cajoled him for full one hour till, at long last, he gave in, but only on three conditions: first, that I would see to it that his name did not appear in the papers; second, that he would not be made to sit on the dais with me; and third, that I should sing *Brindabaner lila*. As I promised unreservedly, he came, but only towards the tail-end of the function, that is, just before I was to start singing my *Brindabaner lila*. He had timed it very ingeniously with the help of the telephone.

When I came to the end of my song, after full three quarters of an hour, my glance fell on the front row: I saw Moti wiping her eyes and Krishnaprem sitting petrified, as usual, in a state of silent ecstasy. I felt a heave in my heart and, on an impulse, rose to say in my closing, thanksgiving speech:

“I must, first of all, thank my friend, the saint Sri Krishnaprem, for having come tonight to bless me on my fiftieth birthday. He is averse to all publicity. But I believe with Christ that one should not hide the good God’s beneficent lights under a bushel.”

As though galvanised, he sprang to his feet and made straight for the exit.

When I returned home he took me to task severely.

“Dilip, Dilip, Dilip! Your – your – you are impossible! I shall never, never, never forgive you – –”

He might well have gone on multiplying the negative à la King Lear had not Moti (bless her!) come again to my rescue, as was her wont.

“But why, Ba?” she interposed. “Dilipda never, never, never promised you – nay, not once – that at the meeting he would not announce your holy presence. You should not be so hard on him. Can one possibly contain one’s joy when a bosom friend – and a saintly one at that – comes to bless one by his presence? You know full well you shed light on the assembly. So why pitch into poor Dilipda for saying aloud what everybody must have felt and been impressed by? You know our Bengali proverb: *agun ki chhai chapa thake?*<sup>1</sup> So why must you storm at him for nothing poor darling?”

Krishnaprem frowned darkly. “Hush, Moti!”

“I won’t be brow-beaten, Ba,” she flashed back. “You should give him now your rarest smile instead of that fierce frown. You must embrace him and that gratefully. Remember it’s his fiftieth birthday and that he has thrilled you as nobody else has in Calcutta by singing your favourite *Brindabaner lila*. Is this a real Yogi’s way of appreciating a boon?”

His frown eased and he laughed.

“I admit defeat, Dilip,” he said. “But it’s an unequal fight, mind you: you plus Moti plus your birthday and, above all, your *Brindabaner lila*. I capitulate. Let’s call it a day.”

And he gave me a close hug, his eyes glistening.

Moti quickly, dried her eyes.

“Hip, hip, hurrah!” she applauded.

---

<sup>1</sup> Can fire be hidden by embers?

PART II – REMINISCENCES

EIGHTEEN

We met next at Pondicherry in November 1948, under the happy auspices of my Gurudev. Krishnaprem had come down to South India primarily to visit the Ashrams of Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi whom he had venerated for years. He wanted also to meditate in a few temples in the South. But he came first to Pondicherry and stayed with me in my spacious flat overlooking the blue sea which he loved.

My joy knew no bounds as I had him now wholly to myself, a dream come true as it were. As, however, I have written at some length about it all in the first half of my reminiscences, I will only add how, with a new inspiration which had enriched his personality, he came to plant a new seed in me which was to flower out subsequently in my heart: I mean the Name of Sri Radha. He enjoined me to invoke Her Grace, subject, of course, to my Gurudev's approval. He sang to me a famous Chandidas song (which, of course, I knew by heart but only as a beautiful song – no more):

*Kishorir das ami Pitabas ihate sandeha jar  
Kotiyug jadi amare bhajaye brithai sadhan tar.*

*(Those who still doubt that Radha is the Queen  
Of Krishna's life, the Goddess of His soul,  
Shall not in a million years attain the Goal:  
For only those She smiles on, win His Grace.)*

Even his salutation had changed: he now said “Jai Radhe” with an ecstasy which had to be seen to be believed. I asked him how he had achieved Her Grace. He laughed and said: “There is only one way for us, Dilip: acceptance of the Guru's lead. It's *Ma*, of course, who brought me to Radharani's feet, who else could have guided me home? She told me that to attain Radharani's Grace four things were necessary: loyalty to the Guru, central sincerity, true humility and spontaneous trust – by trust I mean trust in Divine Grace, Radharani's Love.”

I pulled a long face.

“What about me? Why do I so often feel as if – ”

“There there, you are at it again! You mustn’t,” he clapped me on my shoulder lovingly. “Hasn’t your Guru warned you time and time again against indulging in doubts? Besides, why such misgivings after what *Thakur* revealed to you at Mirtola? I tell you, Dilip, you don’t lack the first three of the total equipment; only – the fourth – well, you should aspire to have more of it, that’s all. Call to Radharani for Her Grace and she will give you all the help you need. Only remember I say all this subject to your Gurudev’s approval.”

So I wrote to Gurudev a long letter apprising him of Krishnaprem’s latest development and friendly advice as regards my *impasse*. Gurudev wrote back promptly (3-12-1948):

“Dilip,

It seems to me that Krishnaprem has diagnosed with his usual accuracy and his mind of sight, *pashyanti buddhi*, the truth about yourself and your *sadhana*. I think that you could not do better than accept his diagnosis and follow entirely his suggested treatment. Especially, you should accept his assurance about the final result. To my eyes, you seem to have been making very good progress in several directions and I have no doubt about your emerging from your difficulties into the Light.

“I do not think there is any real *impasse*, I mean no inescapable hold-up on the road from which you cannot get out; it only seems to you to be like that because of the difficulties created for you by your intellect. It is because of its preconceptions and fixed judgments that you cannot make the equation he considers needful for you. The intellect is full of things like that and cannot by itself see truly the things that reveal their meaning fully only in the light of psychic or spiritual truth; the equation he speaks of belongs to that order. The intellect is of use for perceiving material facts and their relations, but even these it cannot be relied on to see rightly in their total reality; it may see rightly but as often see wrongly and always only partly and imperfectly. Moreover, as the modern psychologists have discovered, it sees them coloured by the hues supplied from its own individual

temperament, its own psychological personality and from its own peculiar angle. It thinks it sees quite objectively and impersonally, but it does not so see; a dog might as well try to escape from its own pursuing tail: the human intellect's thought and sight cannot escape from its own subjectivity and colouring personality. You may say that you have got only your intellect to help you with its judgments and opinions: but mental judgments and opinions – well, they are always personal things and one can never be perfectly sure that one's own are correct and the judgments and opinions of others which differ widely or even diametrically from one's own are mistaken.

“But you need not be always dependent on this fallible and limited instrument; for although you have not developed the mind of sight as Krishnaprem has done, it is certainly there. I have always seen that when you have been in a psychic condition with *bhakti* or the higher part of the mind and the vital uppermost in you, this mind of sight has come out and your ideas, feelings and judgments have become remarkably clear, right and often luminous. This has only to develop; you will then be able to see more clearly what Krishnaprem sees and many of your difficulties will disappear and the equation you want to make may become clear to you.

“As for surrender, you already have it initially in your will to serve for the sake of service without claiming reward or success and without attachment to wealth or fame. If you extend that attitude into your whole *sadhana*, then realisation is sure. Krishnaprem is surely right in telling you when the Grace is on you and what he names as the *Radha-shakti* is there to give you its unseen help so that the success of your *sadhana* is sure and the realisation will come. The *impasse* is a temporary block; your “trust” will become complete and the road to realisation clear.

SRI AUROBINDO.”

The word “equation” here refers to Krishnaprem's contention that Krishna's Light must be identified with His Love, in the last analysis. He had written from Almora: “About the Light I spoke of and puzzled you: I meant thereby the *Light of the Divine consciousness and* –

(not or) – the Light that comes from it, as you have annotated. Only remember that this, too, is a description only which is not identical with the *thing*. Also, remember that it is a Light that *sees* – not a Light that is seen.” But in the end he had consoled me: “Anyhow do not worry about what you are pleased to call my *gopiprem*. I am sure all the *gopis* would have greatly preferred hearing you sing to hearing me ‘gas’.” But, alas, the consolation failed to console because I was deep in the doldrums: I just could not see how I was to formulate to my mind any living concept of “the light that sees” as Krishnaprem had put it cryptically.

He went next to Tiruvannamalai whence, after having visited Trichinopoly and Madura, he returned once more to Pondicherry on his way back. There was a new glow on his face: he had had a wonderful vision of Krishna and Radharani at Trichinopoly, in the famous Srirangam temple.

“It was a marvellous revelation, Dilip,” he told me. “As soon as I prostrated myself in the shrine before the Lord’s Image, I lost my outer consciousness and saw – O Dilip, it was – it beggars description!”

“I saw,” he went on in moving terms, “a vast ocean made of liquid light – the *apah* (waters) before the cosmic creation, was it? I don’t know. For Time had stood still till a breath of Love started a ripple in the hushed ocean of Light, when countless white lotuses erupted on the blue waves, one after another, and on each flower stood a lovely Krishna with Radha – She smiling and He playing His magic flute. But O Dilip, what beauty, what music and... and what bliss! The music of the spheres... from harmony to harmony... the diapason...!” He shook his head ruefully, “Pale, dead, frozen words... how could they outflash the living Flame that is Krishna, the throbbing Love that is Radharani...?” He shivered as his voice trailed off into silence.

After a time, as our talk turned on temples, he said: “They say, your modern enlightened countrymen, the wiseacres, that all these medieval temples are an anachronism. bolstered up by blind faith, obscurantism, superstition and what not. They know no better, Dilip! Little wonder they can’t equate the symbol with the Symbolised – so they may be forgiven for not seeing that these temples in which He has come to life stand like so many spiritual dynamos producing His

Love’s electricity which anyone who is not completely insulated by his lack of faith and irreverence may still receive.”

I was thrilled and said: “Here I am at one with you, Krishnaprem. For though I have never had a vision like yours, I have felt an ecstatic awe in the Kanyakumari temple and wrote a poem which Gurudev praised, especially my third verse which ends with:

*Thou wearest bonds to charm away our destiny  
Of shadow doom with wands of Immortality.”*

The other experience which he had at the feet of Ramana Maharshi was typical and revealing. I will do my best to tell it in his own words as far as possible.

“You know, Dilip,” he said, “how profound is my admiration and veneration for the Sage. I agree whole-heartedly with Sri Aurobindo’s verdict that his *tapasya* is a shining light of India. So I went to Ramana Ashram in Tiruvannamalai to receive his blessing.

“When, in the evening, I entered the hall where the Maharshi reclines daily on his couch, I sat down in silence, along with the others, to meditate at his feet. But believe it or not, Dilip, as soon as I sat down I heard a Voice questioning me over and over again: ‘Who *are* you? Who *are* you? Who *are* you?’ I tried hard to ignore it, but it went on and on like an importunate visitor, knocking at the door, who insisted on being admitted. So, in the end, I just had to formulate an answer: ‘I am Krishna’s servant.’ At once the question changed, like a shape-changer, into: ‘Who is Krishna?’ I answered: ‘Nanda’s son.’ No use: the question was repeated pauselessly. I thought up other answers like – ‘He’s an Avatar, the One-in-all, the Resident of every heart’ and so on... but the questioning would not cease, till, at last, I gave it up, left the hall and returned, deeply disturbed, to meditate. But I had no peace: the Voice gave me no respite, till, in the end, I had to evoke Radharani who asked me very simply what answers I had given. I told Her but She shook Her head and then, at last, revealed it to me.”

“She did?” I said, thrilled.

He anticipated me, holding up his hand.

“No, Dilip, don’t ask me, please! I won’t tell you, for you *will* tell everybody, don’t I know you? But listen – there are more thrills to come.”

“Next morning,” he went on, “when I sat down again at his blessed feet, the Maharshi suddenly gave me a lightning glance and smiled. I knew at once beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was the author of it all and that he also knew that I had divined his part correctly.

“Then, as I closed my eyes to meditate, a deep peace descended into me and settled like a block of ice as it were till my every cell was numb with an exquisite bliss. Didn’t you have the same experience, as I think you wrote to me once?”

“Yes, Krishnaprem,” I nodded delightedly. “And if my memory doesn’t fail me, I think I wrote also in what context I had received the boon from the Maharshi. I was so peaceless at the time for having gone to Tiruvannamalai that I told myself I was a fool to expect peace through his contact when I could not have it at the feet of my great Guru, if you know what I mean. And yet I did feel the peace percolating through me like an infiltrating light! I had had an experience of this indescribable peace three or four times previously, only every time it had a different rhythm as it were, though the melody was the same, to exploit a simile from music. What is still more delectable is that sometimes I can almost recapture it by meditating on his tranquil face with that far-away look. Once or twice this peace has soothed me, too, somewhat like the peace that music distils – but perhaps you find this rather vague –”

“Not at all, Dilip,” he shook his head, then thoughtfully: “though no two experiences can be identical. But to continue.”

“As I meditated,” he went on, “it was borne home to me through the mystic silence that though this peace stemmed ultimately from the Lord Himself – doesn’t He say in the *Gita* that He Himself is the primal source of all experience<sup>1</sup> – the peace in this instance was

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gatir-bharta prabhu sakshih nivasah sharanam suhrit  
Prabhavah pralayah sthanam nidhanam bijam avyayam* – *Gita*, IX.18

I am the goal, the upholder, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend. (I am) the origin and the dissolution, the ground, the resting place and the imperishable seed. (Dr Radhakrishnan’s translation)

transmitted through His beloved agent: the Maharshi.”

“But isn’t that precisely why He sends to us, as His deputies, the great saints and sages, Messiahs and Avatars?”

“Of course He does. Didn’t *Ma* explain to you the import of His *naratila* – that is, why He comes down to us from age to age to play at hide and seek with us, humans, as a human being?”

He paused for a little, then gave me a quizzical look.

“I feel tempted to tell you the sequel – ”

“Only you have misgivings about confiding in me?” I finished for him, laughing.

“Well, I’ll risk it,” he laughed back. “For what happened was too wonderful. So listen.”

I hung on his words.

“As I went on imbibing this delectable peace – meditating at his feet – I suddenly took it into my head to return the compliment and put a question to him in silence: ‘And who are *you*, may I humbly ask?’ It so happened that the next moment I had to open my eyes involuntarily when – lo, I found his couch empty!”

“You don’t say so!”

“Yes, Dilip,” he nodded, smiling and enjoying my mystification. “There was the couch where he had presided two seconds before, but in the twinkling of an eye as it were he had vanished – just melted into thin air! I closed my eyes once more and then looked again – and there he was tranquil and beneficent like Lord Shiva Himself! A momentary smile nickered on his lips as he gave me a meaningful glance and then looked away.”

I caught my breath. “Marvellous!”

“It was, indeed,” he nodded again. Then after a while: “You see the point of the miracle, don’t you?”

“That he was beyond *nama-rupa*?”

“That’s right,” he answered reflectively, “or, shall I say: The One beyond all maya, the Star beyond the phantoms, The Last Reality

beyond the ephemera, the Silence beyond the songs – you may make use of any simile you fancy. Personally, I look upon it as a sign of his Grace – his giving me the answer in a way only he could have given.”

I smiled. “So, he met you more than half-way?”

“He is compassion itself, don’t you know?”

“I do. But what then?”

“The rest is silence,” he answered. “Don’t you know your Shakespeare?”

A few weeks later, one of the Maharshi’s disciples who had come with Krishnaprem to Pondicherry wrote to me that he spoke very highly of Krishnaprem. Immediately, I appealed to him to write to me all about it. He replied that the Maharshi, when told, had said: “Ask him to come and I will tell him myself.” But though I longed to go, I procrastinated, taking his Grace for granted, till one day, I suddenly heard, alas, that he had passed on to the Beyond! What folly not to have complied at once!

(Fortunately for me, a remark of his was conveyed to me by my dear and esteemed friend, S. Duraiswami, who had known the Maharshi intimately and adored him. He said to me in December, 1964: “After Sri Krishnaprem had left I visited Ramanashram when the Maharshi asked me if I had met Krishnaprem. When I said I hadn’t, he told me that I should meet him, a *bhakta* and *jnani* in one, a rare combination.”

In another letter, Duraiswami wrote to me from Delhi on January 6, 1965:

“Yesterday I went to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, saw the President and gave him the historic photograph you sent me of Krishnaprem and the Maharshi together – the one you sent me to be given to him. He spoke warmly about them both and said that he had read Sri Krishnaprem’s book (*The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*).”

From Pondicherry Krishnaprem went to Madras to stay with a dear friend of ours, Jashoda Ghosh, who related this incident to which he had happened to be an eye-witness:

## PART II – REMINISCENCES

“I felt blessed, Dilipda, that you had sent him to me and he sanctified my house for a few days. It was joy, joy, joy from morning till midnight: to have his touch, hear him laugh and tell us about the godly things with a charm all his own...” So he went on and on in ecstasy and ended with an account of what happened when he went to see his saintly guest off at the station.

“It was a real drama, I tell you, Dilipda,” he said, bursting into laughter, “or, shall I say a divine comedy? Well, you’ll judge for yourself. Listen.

“Sri Krishnaprem carried with him a little Image of Lord Krishna, the one he worshipped daily. When we entered his compartment we found, on the opposite berth, an English lady, probably an Anglo-Indian. As we talked in English she must have inferred from his accent (as well as complexion) that he was an Englishman turned Hindu, that impossible anachronism in the twentieth century, with his beads, ochre-coloured robe and so on. She could not contain herself.

‘Aren’t you ashamed, you renegade,’ she exploded, ‘to hobnob with these natives, to flaunt these badges of superstition, to disown Christianity, to let down your kith and kin...?’ So she went on ranting, a picture of the jingo gone mad. We got restive, but Sri Krishnaprem looked on, an amused smile flickering on his lips which only added fuel to the fire of her wrath and she shouted: ‘What have you gained, may I ask, after throwing away everything: your culture, religion and country?’ Sri Krishnaprem calmly produced his beloved Image of the Lord and answered, with his radiant smile: ‘I have got Him, madam: my Krishna.’”

## NINETEEN

Now for the last chapter.

I saw him for the last time in Lucknow in November, 1950, on my way to Varanasi. This time Indira was with me and we stayed with our dear friend, Seth Ranjit Singh, who was busy organising a charity concert (where I had to sing and speak) in aid of Gurudev’s Ashram

at Pondicherry. Krishnaprem had come down from Mirtola to Lucknow for Motirani's treatment by competent doctors. When Ranjit Singh told us that Motirani was very ill we were both greatly concerned – for Indira too had grown to admire and love her with all her heart, having heard from me all about her aspiration, purity, simplicity and courage which could laugh death to scorn. This time we both were deeply moved to see how she had flowered despite her protracted illness. She could hardly move without help. It was, indeed, a touching sight to see the tenderness with which Krishnaprem lifted her feet with his hands to deposit them in the motor car every-time she had to go out to the doctor's. We were no less impressed by her cheerfulness. Her face was wan and emaciated, but her laughter was still as refreshing and radiant as before, and last, though not least, she was sparring, joking and teasing everybody as vivaciously as ever! Krishnaprem once told me with some pride: "What courage!" I told him: "Yes, Krishnaprem, she is one in a million and has always reminded me of Hugh Walpole's saying: 'It is not life that matters but the courage you bring to it.'" And how loving she was! One day she gave me her own *tulsi mala* as a present and said, laughing: "I am giving this to you, Dilipda – do you know why? Because you will have to say your rosary and so I will peep into your mind. Please note my cleverness." And then she made another unforgettable remark. Here is the context.

Indira bowed down to the ground at Krishnaprem's feet. I said: "Please bless her. She is not at all well and we have to look after her all the time." He smiled tenderly at her. "Of course I bless you – but more because you have come to look after Dilip than the other way about. For though I hope he will look after you, I may be hoping against hope. But you, Indira, I'm sure, will look after him and I'm glad because he needs being mothered." We all laughed. Then Motirani asked me about Indira's cardiac asthma and said: "When you wrote to Ba that your Gurudev had sent you to look after her, I was really very glad, Dilipda, and do you know why? Because I knew she would turn the tables on you and look after you with a vengeance." I said: "But I was glad because Gurudev loved her so much that he sent me to Jubbalpore when her life hung in the balance. I prayed night

and day for her till, with the Lord’s Grace, she was saved.” Upon this Indira demurred: “But no, Dada, Gurudev sent you not because he loved *me* but because *you* loved me and he loved *you*.” “Well,” I conceded, “I can’t question that since he does love me – though maybe Moti won’t believe it.” This I said like a tease, to get my own back, but, like a flash she retorted: “But there you are wrong again, Dilipda! Dare I disbelieve you? When even poor Moti whom you don’t love can’t help loving you, how could your Gurudev whom you *have* loved hold back you and not love you?”

Indira was deeply moved and recalled this last remark of hers after we bade them farewell, saying: “You shall never see her again, Dada!” (And we didn’t: she breathed her last a few months later, alas, a child of purity and peace, love and light!)

Before we took our departure on the last day, when Indira prostrated herself at his feet, I asked Krishnaprem to give her his special blessing. He smiled somewhat sadly (did he, too, have an intuition that Moti was going to leave him?) and said to Indira: “I bless you, of course, with all my heart, Indira. But it is your Guru who has to give you the greatest blessing, through the opening of your unconditional acceptance of his lead. I have only one thing to tell you – the greatest mantra I have learnt from my Guru – GIVE EVERYTHING, ASK NOTHING – the supreme key to His Heart’s treasury.”

I know now for certain that he had accepted Indira so unreservedly because he had seen that she would be to me what Moti had been to him. What he had glimpsed in her he finally wrote to me on the last day of the last Christmas week he was to be on earth with us, to inspire us all with his love and life of flawless dedication (31-12-1964).

“Lastly, my dear, are you not overlooking the point under your very nose? Isn’t there Indira with you... who has, in actual fact, brought you ever so many beautiful poems (some of which you have quoted in your letters) and is it not also she who has produced and given life to the beautiful images that thrill you and others in your temple? And has she not taken that life out from *your* heart? What she saw there has she not produced *outside*? Why do you seek elsewhere what may be

seen in her? ...

“I have mentioned *japa* (repetition of the Name) and as for *dhyan* (meditation), if you cannot see Him in your heart, why not try seeing Him in hers? That, too, is *dhyan* – or, for that matter, if you can’t even do that (as the *Gita* might say) why not try seeing *her* in yours, inside her is that very Beauty. Must it have velvet skirt and golden crown before you recognise it?”

A high tribute, indeed! And yet how simple in its unconventionality and unconventional in its simplicity – each word redolent of his deep *prem of Krishna* which was at once the essence of his dedicated life and the message of his soul of light!

To end with his last bow in his last letter to me:

“JAI CHAKRADHARI!!”

# PART III

## LETTERS

**SRI KRISHNAPREM TO**

DILIP KUMAR ROY

ANILBARAN ROY

DR GOVINDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA

SRI HEM CHANDRA MAJUMDAR

SRI ABANI NATH ROY

SRI SAUL KUMAR MUKHOPADHYAYA

**SRI AUROBINDO TO**

DILIP KUMAR ROY

**YASODA MATO**

DR GOVINDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA

**DILIP KUMAR ROY TO**

SRI KRISHNAPREM

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI MADHAVA ASHISH

**SRI MADHAVA ASHISH TO**

DILIP KUMAR ROY

**DR GOVINDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA TO**

DILIP KUMAR ROY

**SRI HEM CHANDRA MAJUMDAR to**

SRI KRISHNAPREM

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

November 26, 1965

My dear Dilip,

I am distressed to hear about the passing away of Sri Krishnaprem. I heard of him so much but never had the pleasure of knowing him in person. I know that he was not of the ordinary type. We have lost a great soul from earth.

*Rashtrapati Bhavan*  
*New Delhi.*

Yours sincerely,  
S. RADHAKRIHMAN

January 22, 1927

Lucknow

My dear Dilip,

So you are off to Europe once again. Well, I wish you all luck. ... I do not, I confess, feel altogether clear about the nature of the *adesh* (Divine Command) spoken of by Sri Ramakrishna. I am not at all sure that the greatest work is not done unconsciously and for no other reason than that the doer intensely wants to do it. Of course, this intense desire may be said to be the *adesh*, but then doesn't the discussion become somewhat pointless? Many poets have, no doubt, felt some sort of injunction laid on them, for example, Shelley, Blake, Wordsworth and others, but there are many of whom one doubts it, for example, Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, Chaucer. In one sense I think the doctrine is a dangerous one (whatever sphere it be applied in) as it leads to the intensification of egoism and the idea – "I'm going to do something." After all, do we not find "the man with a mission" one of the most tiresome types of humanity and is not our instinct probably right in the matter? Of course it might be replied that the "man with a mission" to whom I refer means a man with a pseudo-mission – *mithya adesh* – but this is a difficult point. ... Then of course there is a further question: Were not Sri Ramakrishna's remarks made in reference to a man seeking to "help others" or influence others or serve others or some such phrase? Does the great artist concern himself with "others" at all? Does he not create because he must, in order to relieve himself of what he has in him? I agree with you: now-a-days we tend to overestimate the power of art, and take the view that art is *sadhana* or spiritual initiation. But is it? Of course great art can, to a certain extent, take one out of oneself and render one (though perhaps only in a mild and metaphorical manner) independent of space, time and circumstance. However, so can many other enjoyments if pursued ardently enough. Doubtless *all* activities can become part of a *sadhana*, if suitably engaged in. But when all is said, the fact remains that there *is* a difference between Yoga as a *sadhana* and Art as a *sadhana*. Artists, you will say, or at least some artists, urge that art can be *used* as a *sadhana*. But to this platitude the only reply is a counter-platitude: that anything could be taken as a *sadhana* (e.g. battle of Kurukshetra.) To this the art-enthusiasts will

reply in an injured tone that art enriches our spiritual life. I wonder. I fancy it would not be difficult to maintain that art is a substitute – a surrogate for spiritual life: in Bacon’s words, “the shows of things are submitted to the desires of the mind”. Shelley has defined poetry as “the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds”. This is not a bad definition, much better than many more pretentious ones. But can one seriously maintain that the keeping of such a record amounts to a *sadhana*? Isn’t it as vague as Rolland’s pale internationalism? I used once to believe in such vague consolations, but I am now beginning to have my doubts whether all this is as satisfactory as is claimed. For myself though I can be tolerant to all countries, I have only one, and that, strange to say, is not England but India. What I feel is, that the wealth of tradition which *is* a nation is too precious a thing to be merged into a common hotch-potch the same from London to Yokohama. If we confine ourselves to Europe (at least Western Europe) the case is somewhat different as the traditions are more or less commons but can England and India, say, be mixed so philanthropically without doing vital injury to both? When the traditions of a nation die then that nation is dead and even if it persists as a great Power in the world, yet it is nothing but an aggregate of meaningless individuals determinedly pursuing their contemptible aims. ... History is a symbol, and what that symbol signifies is something infinitely more precious than a mere peddling adherence to a sequence of so-called “facts”. There is only one root fact anywhere, and that is the Eternal One. Whatever helps to reveal Him is a fact, and whatever to hide Him is a lie even if all the fools in the world affirm it.

To come now to Russell’s delightfully vague and confident panacea. He has a clear mind, I grant you, but what is the good to you or me of all this stuff about education and atheism? Even a mediocre seeker after truth who really believes seems to me nearer the truth and also more of a real man than all Russell’s enlightened, free-thinking, cosmopolitan, “humanist” sceptics.

Yours affectionately,  
RONALD

November 8, 1929

Almora

My dear Dilip,

Khitish writes to me of the “quest of the ever-new... through the unfoldings of the mind”, which seems to me too vague a sentiment (as that of art being a *sadhana*) to be of any real use. Moreover, what I seek is not the “ever-new” but that which is “the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, the eternal Sri Krishna, changeless in change and yet changing in changelessness”.

I fully agree with you, Dilip: I cannot agree with those who affect to see Yogas in Science and Art (or social work). Disciplines they may be, but the intellectual ardours of the one and the emotional transports of the other are, as such, little nearer to Yoga than the heroic labours of the coal-miner or the ephemeral loves of the philanderer. Of course they may be pursued by real Yogis, but generally they are not, and they can only become real yogic *sadhanas* when pursued as such which in practice presents enormous difficulty. Anyhow, *sadhana* or not, they are all part of the *Lila*, and those who are cast for those parts must speak the lines they are given by the Producer and I certainly do not wish to depreciate those, or indeed, any portions of the Divine performance. After all, as the *Gita* says, *sadrisham cheshtate svasya prakiter-jnanavan-api* – “Even the man of knowledge behaves in conformity with his own nature.” It isn’t what a man does that constitutes Yoga but what he realises about what he is doing, or, truer still, what he realises about what is being done through him.

I don’t know why I have written all this to you, to whom it is now no doubt quite a matter to be taken for granted. I suppose it is just the pleasure of thinking aloud to one who, as you say, is of the same race and family.

Affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

December 3, 1929

Almora

My dear Dilip,

As regards my remarks about science and art in my last letter, your interpretation was quite right. All I meant was that all these things were, in themselves, in a totally different plane from Yoga. Seen from the top of a mountain the difference between a dog and an elephant is negligible. Yoga is just such a mountain and, as it is said somewhere in the *Gita*: “Even the seeker after Yoga transcends the *Vedas*.” He certainly transcends science and art and all the rest of it. However, as I told you so often, I do not at all disparage either of those pursuits, nor indeed, any part of the Divine *Lila*.

You say, you hope for a ‘rapprochement’ between Science and Yoga. But I am afraid I cannot believe that the day is dawning when scientists will become Yogis. It would take long to explain it just now, but I am inclined to feel that the subjectivism of some modern psychology is likely, in the near future, to weave a curtain which will cut off educated men from perception of Reality even more effectually than was done by the old-style materialism. Even yogic experiences will be explained, so clearly, and apparently convincingly, that few will be able to hold out. However, I may be wrong and in any case the time has not yet come...

I do so entirely agree with Sri Aurobindo’s remarks about the difference between Indian and Western philosophy in his letter to Chadwick, where he so beautifully and luminously explains the differences between the Western outlook on life and the Indian, e.g., where he writes: –

“All European metaphysical thought – even in those thinkers who try to prove or explain the existence and nature of God or of the Absolute – does not in its method and result go beyond the intellect. But the intellect is incapable of knowing the supreme Truth; it can only range about seeking for Truth, and catching fragmentary representations of it, not the thing itself, and trying to piece them together. Mind cannot arrive at Truth; it can only make some constructed figure

that tries to represent it or a combination of figures. At the end of European thought, therefore, there must always be Agnosticism, declared or implicit. Intellect, if it goes sincerely to its own end, has to return and give this report: ‘I cannot know; there is, or at least it seems to me that there may be or even must be Something beyond, some ultimate Reality, but about its truth I can only speculate; it is either unknowable or cannot be known by me.’ Or, if it has received some light on the way from what is beyond it, it can say, too: ‘There is perhaps a consciousness beyond Mind, for I seem to catch glimpses of it and even to get intimations from it. If that is in touch with the Beyond or if it is itself the consciousness of the Beyond and you can find some way to reach it, then this Something can be known but not otherwise.’

“Any seeking of the supreme Truth through intellect alone must end either in Agnosticism of this kind or else in some intellectual system or mind-constructed formula. There have been hundreds of these systems and formulas and there can be hundreds more, but none can be definitive. Each may have its value for the mind, and different systems with their contrary conclusions can have an equal appeal to intelligences of equal power and competence. All this labour of speculation has its utility in training the human mind and helping to keep before it the idea of Something beyond and Ultimate towards which it must turn. But the intellectual Reason can only point vaguely or feel gropingly towards it or try to indicate partial and even conflicting aspects of its manifestation here; it cannot enter into and know it. As long as we remain in the domain of the intellect only, an impartial pondering over all that has been thought and sought after, a constant throwing-up of ideas, of all the possible ideas, and the formation of this or that philosophical belief, opinion or conclusion is all that can be done. This kind of disinterested search after Truth would be the only possible attitude for any wide and plastic intelligence. But any conclusion so arrived at would be only speculative: it could have no spiritual value; it would not give the decisive experience or the spiritual certitude for which the soul is seeking. If the intellect is our highest possible instrument and there is no other means of arriving at supraphysical Truth, then a wise and large Agnosticism must be our

ultimate attitude. Things in the manifestation may be known to some degree, but the Supreme and all that is beyond the Mind must remain for ever unknowable.

“It is only if there is a greater consciousness beyond Mind and that consciousness is accessible to us that we can know and enter into the ultimate Reality. Intellectual speculation, logical reasoning as to whether there is or is not such a greater consciousness cannot carry us very far. What we need is a way to get the experience of it, reach it, enter into it, live in it. If we can get that, intellectual speculation and reasoning must fall necessarily into a very secondary place and even lose their reason for existence. Philosophy or the intellectual expression of the Truth may remain, but mainly as a means of expressing this greater discovery and as much of its contents as can at all be expressed in mental terms to those who still live in the mental intelligence.

“This, you will see, answers your point about the Western thinkers, Bradley and others, who have arrived through intellectual thinking at the idea of an “Other beyond Thought” or have even, like Bradley, tried to express their conclusions about it in terms that recall some of the expressions in the *Arya*. The idea in itself is not new; it is as old as the Vedas. It was repeated in other forms in Buddhism, Christian Gnosticism, Sufism. Originally, it was not discovered by intellectual speculation, but by the mystics following an inner spiritual discipline. When, somewhere between the seventh and fifth centuries BC, men began both in the East and West to intellectualise knowledge, this Truth survived in the East; in the West, where the intellect began to be accepted as the sole or highest instrument for the discovery of Truth, it began to fade. But still it has there, too, tried constantly to return; the Neo-Platonists brought it back, and now, it appears, the New-Hegelians and others (e.g., the Russian Ouspensky and one or two German thinkers, I believe) seem to be reaching after it. But still there is a difference.

“In the East, especially in India, the metaphysical thinkers have tried, as in the West, to determine the nature of the highest truth by the intellect. But, in the first place, they have not given to mental thinking the supreme rank as an instrument of the discovery of Truth,

but only a secondary status. “The first rank has always been given to spiritual intuition and illumination and spiritual experience; and intellectual conclusion that contradicts this supreme authority is held invalid. Secondly, each philosophy has armed itself with a practical way of reaching to the supreme state of consciousness, so that even when one begins with Thought, the aim is to arrive at a consciousness beyond mental thinking. Each philosophical founder (as also those who continued his work or school) has been a metaphysical thinker doubled with a Yogi. Those who were only philosophic intellectuals were respected for their learning but never took rank as truth-discoverers. And the philosophies that lacked as sufficiently powerful means of spiritual experience died out and became things of the past, because they were not dynamic for spiritual discovery and realisation.

“In the West it was just the opposite that came to pass. Thought, intellect, the logical reason came to be regarded more and more as the highest means and even the highest end; in philosophy Thought is the be-all and the end-all. It is by intellectual thinking and speculation that the truth is to be discovered: even spiritual experience has been summoned to pass the tests of the intellect, if it is to be held valid – just the reverse of the Indian position. Even those who see that mental Thought must be overpassed and admit a supramental ‘Other’, do not seem to escape from the feeling that it must be through mental Thought, sublimating and transmitting itself, that this other Truth must be reached and made to take the place of the mental limitation and ignorance. And again Western thought has ceased to be dynamic; it has sought after a theory of things, not after realisation. It was still dynamic amongst the ancient Greeks, but for moral and aesthetic rather than spiritual ends. Later on, it became yet more purely intellectual and academic; it became intellectual speculation only without any practical ways and means for the attainment of the Truth by spiritual experiment, spiritual discovery, a spiritual transformation. If there were not this difference, there would be no reason for seekers like yourself to turn to the East for guidance; for in the purely intellectual field the Western thinkers are as competent as any Eastern sage. It is the spiritual way, the road that leads beyond the intellectual levels, the passage from the outer being to the inmost Self which has been lost by the over-intellectuality of the mind of Europe.

“In the extracts you have sent me from Bradley and Joachim, it is still the intellect thinking about what is beyond itself and coming to an intellectual, a reasoned speculative conclusion about it. It is not dynamic for the change which it attempts to describe. If these writers were expressing in Mental terms some realisation, even mental, some intuitive experience of this ‘Other than Thought’, then one ready for it might feel it through the veil of the language they use and himself draw near to the same experience. Or if, having reached the intellectual conclusion, they had passed on to the spiritual realisation, finding the way or following one already found, then in pursuing their thought one might be preparing oneself for the same transition. But there is nothing of the kind in all this strenuous thinking. It remains in the domain of the intellect and in that domain it is no doubt admirable; but it does not become dynamic for spiritual experience. I propose to deal with the substance of this thought and its limitations hereafter, but for the present I leave it there.

“It is not by ‘thinking out’ the entire reality, but by a change of consciousness that one can pass from the ignorance to the knowledge – the knowledge by which we *become* what we know. To pass from the external to a direct and intimate inner consciousness; to widen consciousness out of the limits of the ego and the body; to heighten it by an inner will and aspiration and opening to the Light till it passes in its ascent beyond Mind; to bring down a descent of the supramental Divine through self-giving and surrender with a consequent transformation of mind, life and body – this is the *integral* way to the Truth. (I have said that the idea of the Supermind was already in existence from ancient times. There was in India and elsewhere the attempt to reach it by rising to it; but what was missed was the way to make it integral for the life and to bring it down for transformation of the whole nature, even of the physical nature). It is this that we call the Truth here and aim at in our Yoga.

“I shall answer in a continuation of this letter your question about the *Arya* and then write what else I have to say in the matter.

June, 1930.

SRI AUROBINDO.”

Quite, Dilip. And all his remarks about the Western philosophers are as true. Even where they are talking about the same sort of things

they do so from utterly different points of view and have nothing real in common under the seeming agreement. Whether a Western philosopher says with McTeggart that a stone is a colony of souls, or with Berkeley that it is an idea in the mind of God or with Bertrand Russell that it is a collection of perspectives of neutral stuff (whatever that may mean) in practice he means nothing practical at all and is in just the same position as the common-sense person who says that a stone is just a stone. All these Western systems are like that. They are excellent as intellectual training, but they never come to business. (I have often noticed that many European scholars will discourse eloquently about the beauty and healthiness and convenience of Indian dress, say, or Indian ways, but let any European take them at their word and go and put on a *dhoti* and he is damned at once. It is so with Western thought. It will talk eloquently but will never “put on the *dhoti*,” and will regard you as vulgar if you attempt to do so.)

That is why I differ from those wonderfully catholic men who seek to build a bridge between India and Megalopolis and want to make it easy for the ‘Megalopolitan’ (to use Spengler’s words) to stroll over to India and be back for the evening walk in Piccadilly, I would rather the Megalopolitan were confronted once and for all with the necessity of a choice so that if he chose India he should have to renounce his cultural pride for good and all and bow his head in the dust that Sri Krishna trod. For that reason I do not care any more for Woodroffe’s attempts to show how much in accord with modern science are certain aspects of the *shakta* philosophy. I would prefer simply to say: “This is the truth; take it or leave it.” If science says this in her own way, so much the better for science. If not, so much the worse.

You talk again of Remain Rolland. But you see, I do not care much for him now. All this pale internationalism will not get one anywhere, and it will be swept away again by the very next flood of violent national passions. Noble as it is, it seems anaemic when confronted with, say, the vivid though Asuric life of the socialist Third International. However, my chief objection to him is that I suspect him of using the words and expressions coined by yogis and *rishis* in their efforts to set forth their experiences – of using, I say, these expressions

PART III – LETTERS

to lend a sort of borrowed grandeur to the pale experiences of ‘Art’ which (even when genuine) are to the former as the moon is to the sun. He is thus helping to debase the currency as it were.

Give Chadwick my love and some news about your own sweet self.

Affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

January, 1931

Almora

My dear Dilip,

I am overjoyed to hear from you. No one can really throw himself at the feet of Sri Krishna and not get any response.

*Aham twam sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma shucha* – I will deliver you from all sins. If that promise were to fail, the worlds would fall into ruin.

I had no idea you were going to blossom into a poet. Sri Mataji liked your “Guruvadi” very much – the one printed in Bharatvarsha. She quite agreed with me that there was no reason whatever to cut out the fourth stanza from your poem to placate the *non-guruvadis*<sup>1</sup>. And I too am entirely opposed to the very idea. You write that your modest friend has amiably dilated on “every-body’s being his guru.” I have, as you know, little patience with such modern notions apparently profound but actually sterile. Some even say that books, too, are their gurus, etc. etc. ... No doubt everyone is the gum of everyone. Every man who is not blinded by conceit knows that there is no one or thing in this whole *Brahmanda* (universe) from whom he cannot learn some lesson or other, but

*Akhandamandalakaram vyaptam yena characharam*

---

<sup>1</sup> I had asked Krishnaprem whether, seeing that certain friends of mine wrote to me that this strophe might hurt the feelings of some non-guruvadis, I had not better omit this part of my poem – even though I have never meant it as a reproach to anybody.

*Darshitam tatpadam yena tasmai srigurave namah.*<sup>1</sup>

He who knows that *Akhandamandala* and can start us on the way to Him, he alone is the real guru and it is him we need.

And then, as for these highly catholic people with ‘notions’, it is not their “feelings” that will be hurt (as you fear) but their conceit – which will do no harm. *Gurupadashraya* (surrender to the Guru) is the first step in *bhajana* and *sadhana*, without it nothing is possible.

It is mere pride that is at the basis of all this modern ‘wishywashy’ humanitarianism. Every initiated *sadhaka* – who has taken *diksha* – should nail the flag of Sri Gurudeva to his mast before everything else. Fifty thousand people may have taught me, but one alone is my Gurudeva – *matprananathastu sa eva naparah* – he alone, and no other, is my heart’s Lord.

To compare that Guru with ordinary teachers – well, it may be done by those who have not had the supreme fortune to find refuge at the Guru’s feet, but never by one who has found him.

It was Huxley who said that he would as soon bow down and worship the generalised conception of an ant-heap as worship Humanity with a capital H. If anyone uses a capital G for God now-a-days he must be ridiculed because all the capitals are required for Humanity, the State, Progress etc. I am sick of being told that “the religion of today is such and such or that the religion of tomorrow will be so and so”. I want nothing of their todays and tomorrows: I want the Eternal Truth, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

As for myself, what can I say? I am entirely happy, but that is not due to any *guna* or qualities of mine but to the fact that the *seva* of Sri Krishna gives *Ananda* and bliss, irrespective of the *guna* or *aguna* of the *sevaka*. ... Well, we have both changed a lot, haven’t we? I well remember how sceptical you were about *punarjanma* (rebirth) when I stayed with you in Calcutta and you may also remember my sharp

---

<sup>1</sup> The Guru by whom is shown to us that Highest pervading all that is with its indivisible gyre – I salute.

criticism (when talking to Rabindranath) of people who believed in doing *japa* of *Harinama*. And now here are you believing in all these things that you doubted then and here have I just finished an article on *Harinama*.

Yes, experience is bound to follow all real surrender to the Divine and once a man has tasted the joys of the inner life nothing else will ever satisfy him. The modern disbelief in all these things is essentially sterile. I was very glad to read Sri Aurobindo's trenchant remarks about Russell's diatribes on introversion. Russell (as I told you before) is no doubt a great man and a great thinker on his own lines, but it is all vitiated by his ignorant assumption that there is nothing but this world. What is the use of his pathetic 'humanism', a humanism which emits its feeble candle-glimmer in the midst of the gloom of ultimate annihilation not only of the individual but of all that is living? No, it is not Russell who is going to save the world, nor even your other friend, Remain Rolland, who, for all his idealism, never really gets beyond man. That is why he admires Vivekananda, stressing again and again that the justification of the latter's *Advaita Brahmajñana* and Vedantic *Sadhana* lay only in the fact that in his case it finally issued in social service – which implies of course that had it not so issued it would have been quite sterile.<sup>1</sup> These moderns, when they do believe in religious experience, can think of it only in terms of a sort of vague Wordsworthian "Spirit divine which rolls through all things", or "something far more deeply interfused" – or some words to that effect – I am forgetting all these things. They think that these vague poetic intuitions are the same thing as the living experience of the mystics. They pride themselves on their "undogmatic", "synthetic" eclecticism in support of which they invoke the names of the great teachers of the past, quite forgetting that these said great teachers were neither "synthetic", nor "eclectic". Look at Buddha, Shankara or Chaitanya.

---

<sup>1</sup> You must be remembering Sri Ramakrishna's explicit command to Vivekananda: "First see God and then open your dispensaries." And you don't suppose, I hope, that Rolland can ever understand this – Rolland, who so categorically asserts that *Sadhana* and *Siddhi* must lead to some sort of twentieth-century humanitarianism in order that it may be apotheosised by all right-thinking men?

None of them were at all eclectic but on the other hand all strongly urged a single view with a one-pointed *shraddha* (faith) and *nishtha* (assiduity). But the “undogmatic” modern vogue is to look upon *shraddha* or *nishtha* with something akin to commiseration, if not contempt. A learned article I read the other day in the *Orient* described Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as “plunging into the ocean maddened to ecstasy by its beauty”. *Hai! Hai!* (alas!) and I suppose it was the beauty of the muddy puddle of rain-water on the site where now stands Radhakunda that led Sri Chaitanya Deva to do the same there? The majesty of the ocean may be a great thing, but it was not that which had intoxicated Sri Gauranga, but the infinitely more maddening sense-destroying beauty of Sri Krishna whom he saw standing in front of him.

Gone were the ocean-waves, and in their place he saw only the blue rippling waters of the Jumna surrounding the blue smiling figure of his Lord and it was that sight that annihilated his senses and made him plunge madly in, careless of all but of reaching his Beloved. But I suppose that is all effete superstition?

For myself I am glad I have turned my back on all the synthetic modern pseudo-universalism. Every year that passes it slips farther and farther away.

Yes, we are all *guruvadis*, especially as you, too, seek *bhakti* (devotion). It is a great joy to me that, in spite of all the gloomy prognostications of your all-knowing friends and relatives, you are firmly treading the road we have both taken. It was not without cause that our friendship sprang up so instantaneously. I only wish we were as near in the *outer* world as we are within. “Ma” sends her blessings to you and congratulations on your poetry. With *pranams* to your Gurudeva and love to yourself.

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

30th January, 1931  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

I think you overestimate the effect I had on you. It is true that you had adopted, superficially, a Western way of thinking (I well remember your telling me in one of the Calcutta streets that you weren't able to believe in rebirth – *punarjanma*). At the same time I do not think that your Westernism went very deep in you, nor did it ever satisfy your soul. You never *felt* as a Westerner, though you used, often, to *think* as one. The intellectual and aesthetic glamour (though not, I think, the material glamour) of the West had somewhat fascinated you.

It is no doubt sad that most of your friends do not approve of your yoga: but it can't be helped. No one who hasn't experienced for himself at least something of the nature and joys of the spiritual life can have any valid opinion on the subject. Politics and science and art for their own sakes are no doubt all very well for those who care for them, or, as is more usual, wish to make something out of them; but devoid of an intimate Divine realisation they are mere games, pleasant or unpleasant as the case may be. Moreover, a mere sugar-icing of misty idealism is not and cannot be any substitute for real experiences of the Divine. And then there is all the stale nonsense about seeking a purely selfish bliss etc. Such people know nothing about it and it is sheer waste of time to argue with them, beyond throwing them the statement that where there is self there is no Krishna and where Krishna is, there can be no self.

Again thanks for sending Sri Aurobindo's illuminating letter.

Affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

28th January, 1932

My dear Dilip,

You ask me to explain why I think that modern analytic psychology and subjectivist physics are going to be a more effective veil to Reality than the old Materialism. Well, I can't give proof – but can only make a few suggestions. Religious apologists made a great mistake in abandoning their defences and retreating to a supposedly impregnable 'Hindenburg Line' of subjective experiences. They relegated the truth of religion to the reign of the inner self, then largely unexplored, just as the Theosophists located their Mahatmas in unexplored Tibet. And they bolstered up their position with all sorts of pragmatic arguments such as that prayer was a reality because of the peace it brought etc. Now this was cowardly and therefore foolish. ... *Nayamatma balahinena labhyah*. In fact, except on that plane where subject and object are one, there can be nothing subjective without an objective counterpart, and so what was the result? Baffled for the moment, the attackers (and let me say it is an attack and no mere judicial investigation – whatever some may pretend: merely look at the treatment meted out to any scientist however eminent who reports favourably on psychical phenomena; "Poor old Oliver Lodge," they will say, "he did good work once but he went potty in the end over table-turning"), the attackers, I say, then set to work to study the nature of the fortress in which the apologists had so unwisely shut themselves up. They have now developed and are still developing a technique which enables them to account so plausibly for subjective psychic or mystic experiences that most superficial thinkers are convinced.

First, the work of anthropologists of the Frazer school collected a mass of information about savage magico-religious rites (which they understood only in an exterior manner – compare, for instance, Seabrook's inside account of African Negro magic with the account given by any orthodox anthropologist) and then it was easy to show that the same primitive (and therefore presumably ridiculous) ideas persisted in modern religions.

And then the subjective experiences. Experiments with drugs

showed that to some extent similar states (to the mystic's experiences) can be produced in the laboratory. Other experiences are dealt with in the manner satirised in one of G. K. Chesterton's fantasies: A man shipwrecked from his yacht found himself in the compound of a lunatic asylum and was promptly assumed to be a patient. Every explanation he tried to give of his arrival was assumed to be delusion about shipwreck. Thus, if the mystic escapes the Scylla of Freudian repressed sensuality, he is caught in the Charybdis of Jung's 'racial unconscious' in which, for some reason, all the religious symbols of the past are supposed to be preserved like flies in amber and to issue unexpectedly, causing the appearance of mystic experience.

But I must come to the point. There is a saying in *Vishva-Sara Tantra*: "What is there is here, what is not here is nowhere": *yadihasti tadamutra yannehasti na tat kvachit* – If God exists in the subjective world then he exists equally in the objective world. But the objective side has generally been abandoned by the defenders. If the working of the mind in mystic experiences is explained as has been the working of Nature, then the ordinary educated man will feel that the last stronghold is gone and that all farther belief is impossible. *And it will be so explained away*. This is quite certain. There is a universal tendency to think that when the process *by which* a thing happens has also been explained, then the reason *for which* it happens has also been explained. Why? Because the mind, as you know, is just as much mechanical (and as little if you like) as the outer world. It is merely more subtle: *sukshmah*: both are mere modifications of *prakriti* and explicable in similar ways. The real subject (and object, too) is the *jivatma* (soul) and that is for ever beyond the ken of mechanistic science because it is in a *different dimension*. (I use dimension only metaphorically). Now the modifications of *prakriti* form a closed circle as it were, *guna guneshu vartante*, as the *Gita* says. Science moves in the sphere of phenomena, that is, of the *gunas*, and there will always be an apparent causal sequence among all phenomena in the plane of phenomena and there is small reason to suppose that the end will ever come and, even if it did, it would be back at the beginning again – the snake with its tail in the mouth. In time, science will no doubt come to admit

certain apparently marvellous phenomena now denied, but they will be found also to be explicable along similar lines to all other natural phenomena. All phenomena can be explained in two ways: one in their own plane, and the other at right angles to it as it were, that is, in a different dimension. In their own plane all phenomena follow mechanical laws. This is the mechanism by which they take place (for, after all, everything, however ‘marvellous’ has to take place in some definite way) and this mechanism is in the realm of science. The other explains the reason *for which* they happen and this is the sphere of the mystic or yogi. This possibility of two-fold explanation applies, I believe, to all phenomena whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ or ‘psychic’. (I use ‘psychic’ here in its ordinary meaning – somewhat different from that which it bears in Sri Aurobindo’s system, I believe). But when an explanation has been given along the lines of the first method there is an almost universal tendency to think that the phenomena in question have been completely explained – not to say explained away. Hence my forecast of a thickening of the veil, for it is the second method alone which brings the seeker through other planes into the region of real causation and of the Ultimate Reality. And this method requires an act of faith at the outset and *an* attitude of mind throughout that is quite different from that of most scientists.

I have said nothing so far about the modern tendencies in physics. The subjectivism of Jeans, Eddington and others is no doubt nearer the truth than the nineteenth-century conceptions. But the crucial point is not whether the universe is composed of miniature billiard-balls vibrating in an elastic jelly or of geodesics in an expanding soap-bubble of space-time, but whether its basis is to be found in *Sacchidananda* or merely in a tenuously incomprehensible but ultimately *dead* square-root of minus one; and on this point physics, however subjective, can give no answer.

One last word and I have done. I think you will find in what I have said above concerning the two-fold explanation of phenomena the meaning of certain apparent paradoxes in the *Gita*. For instance, you will find there two sorts of statements about the way in which things happen:

PART III – LETTERS

*Na kartritvam na karmani lokasya srijati Prabhuh  
Na karmaphala-samyogam svabhavas-tu pravartate.*

That is: The Lord produces neither agency nor actions nor yet the union of action and fruit. All is a manifestation of Nature.

And then, on the other hand:

*Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddeshe' rjuna tishthati  
Bhramayan sarvabhutani yantrarudhani mayaya.*

That is: O Arjuna! the Lord, seated in the hearts of all, whirls around by His maya all beings as if they were mounted on a machine.

The first couplet refers to the first type of explanation in which Sri Krishna plays no part, being outside the series; the last to the second type in which He plays the only part. *Tameva sharanam gaccha, O Dilip!* (Take refuge in Him alone.)

Affectionately yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Dilip,

It was a great refreshment to read the letters of Krishnaprem; one feels here a stream from the direct sources of Truth that one does not meet so often as one could desire. Here is a mind that can not only think but see – and not merely see the surfaces of things with which most intellectual thought goes on wrestling without end or definite issue and as if there were nothing else, but look into the core. The Tantriks have a phrase *Pashyanti Vak* to describe one level of the *vak-shakti*, the seeing Word. Krishnaprem has, it seems to me, much of the *Pashyanti Buddhi*, the seeing Intelligence. It might be because he has passed beyond thought into experience, but there are many who have a considerable wealth of experience without its clarifying their eye of thought to this extent; the soul feels, but the mind goes

on with mixed and imperfect transcriptions, blurs and confusions in the idea. There must have been the gift of right vision lying ready in his nature.

‘It is an achievement to have got rid so rapidly and decisively of the shimmering mists and fogs which modern intellectualism takes for Light of Truth. The modern mind has so long and persistently wandered – and we with it – in the Valley of the False Glimmer that it is not easy for anyone to disperse its mists with the sunlight of clear vision so soon and entirely as he has done. All that he says about modern humanism and humanitarianism, the vain efforts of the sentimental idealists and the ineffective intellectual, about synthetic eclecticism and other kindred things is admirably clear-minded: it hits the target. It is not by these means that humanity can get that radical change of its ways of life which is yet becoming imperative, but only by reaching the bedrock of Reality behind, – not through mere ideas and mental formations, but by a change of the consciousness, an inner and spiritual conversion. But that is a truth for which it would be difficult to get a hearing in the present noise of all kinds of many-voiced clamour and confusion and catastrophe.

A distinction, the distinction very keenly made here, between the plane of phenomenal process, of externalised *Prakriti*, and the plane of Divine Reality ranks among the first words of the inner wisdom. The turn Krishnaprem gives to it is not merely an ingenious explanation, it expresses very soundly one of the clear certainties you meet when you step across the border and look at the outer world from the standing-ground of the inner spiritual experience. The more you go inward or upward, the more the view of things changes and the outer knowledge science organises takes its real and very limited place. Science, like most mental and external knowledge, gives you only truth of process. I would add that it cannot give you even the whole truth of process; for you seize some of the ponderables, but miss the all-important imponderables; you get, hardly even the how, but the conditions under which things happen in Nature. After all, the triumphs and marvels of Science, the explaining principle, the rationale, the significance of the whole is left as dark, as mysterious and even more mysterious than ever. The scheme it has built up of the evolution not

only of this rich and vast variegated material world, but of life and consciousness and mind and their workings out of a brute mass of electrons, identical and varied only in arrangement and number, is an irrational magic more baffling than any the most mystic imagination could conceive. Science in the end lands us in a paradox effectuated, an organised and rigidly determined accident, an impossibility that has somehow happened: it has shown us a new, a material *Maya, aghatana-ghatana-patiyasi*, very clever at bringing about the impossible, a miracle that cannot logically be and yet somehow is there – actual, irresistibly organised, but still irrational and inexplicable. And this is evidently because science has missed something essential: it has seen and scrutinised what has happened and, in a way, how it has happened, but it has shut its eyes to something that made this impossible possible, something it is there to express. There is no fundamental significance in things if you miss the Divine Reality; for you remain embedded in a huge surface crust, of manageable and utilisable appearance. It is the magic of the Magician you are trying to analyse, but only when you enter into the consciousness of the Magician himself can you begin to experience the true origination, significance and circles of the *Lila*. I say “begin” because, as you suggest, the Divine Reality is not so simple that at the first touch you can know all of it or put it into a single formula; it is Infinite and opens before you an infinite knowledge to which all science put together is a bagatelle. But still you do touch the essential, the eternal behind things and in the light of That all begins to be profoundly luminous, intimately intelligible.

I have once before told you what I think of the ineffective peckings of certain well-intentioned scientific minds on the surface or apparent surface of the spiritual Reality behind things and I need not elaborate it here.<sup>1</sup> Krishnaprem’s prognostic of a greater danger in the new attack by the adversary against the validity of spiritual and supraphysical experience, their new strategy of destruction by admitting and explaining it in their new sense, is interesting enough and there is strong ground

---

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter to D.K.R. about Professor Eddington’s *Science and the Unseen World*: “The part about the changed attitude of modern Science to its own field of discovery is interesting. ... The latter part of this book about religious experience I find very feeble: it gives me the impression of a hen scratching the surface of the earth to find a scrap or two of food – nothing deeper.”

for the apprehension he expresses. But I doubt whether if, once these things are admitted to scrutiny, the mind of humanity will long remain satisfied with explanations so ineptly superficial and external explanations that explain nothing. If the defenders of religion take up an unsound position, easily capturable, when they affirm only the subjective validity of spiritual experience, the opponents also seem to me to be giving away, without knowing it, the gates of the materialistic stronghold by their consent at all to admit and examine spiritual and supraphysical experience. Their entrenchment in the physical field, their refusal to admit or even examine supraphysical things was their tower of strong safety; once it is abandoned, the human mind pressing towards something less negative, more helpfully positive, will pass to it over the dead bodies of their theories and the broken debris of their annulling explanations and ingenious psychological labels. Another danger may then arise not of a final denial of Truth, but the repetition in old or new forms of a past mistake: on one side some revival of blind fanatical obscurantist sectarian religionism, on the other a stumbling into the pits and quagmires of the vitalistic occult and the pseudo-spiritual mistakes that made the whole real strength of the materialistic attack on the past and its credos. But these are phantasms that meet us always on the border line or in the intervening country between the material darkness and the perfect splendour. In spite of all, the victory of the supreme Light even in the darkened earth-consciousness stands as the one ultimate certitude.

Art, poetry, music are not *Yoga*, not in themselves things spiritual any more than philosophy is a thing spiritual or Science. There lurks here another curious incapacity of the modern intellect – its inability to distinguish between mind and spirit, its readiness to mistake mental, moral and aesthetic idealisms for spirituality and their inferior degrees for spiritual values. It is mere truth that the mental intuitions of the metaphysician or the poet for the most part fall far short of a concrete spiritual experience; they are distant flashes, shadowy reflections, not rays from the centre of Light. It is not less true that, looked at from the peaks, there is not much difference between the high mental eminences and the lower climbings of this external existence. All the

energies of the *Lila* are equal in the sight from above, all are disguises of the Divine. But one has to add that all can be turned into a first means towards the realisation of the Divine. A philosophic statement about the Atman is a mental formula, not knowledge, not experience, yet sometimes the Divine takes it as a channel of touch, strangely a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operated in some inner part, there enters into the ground of the nature something calm, equal, ineffable; one stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature, then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental loses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what? – a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment, mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World Mother. Similar touches can come through art, music, poetry to their creator, or to one who feels the shock of the word, the hidden significance of a form, a message in the sound that carries more perhaps than was consciously meant by the composer. All things in the *Lila* can turn into windows that open on the hidden Reality. Still, so long as one is satisfied with looking through windows, the gain is only initial; one day one will have to take up the pilgrim's staff and start out to journey there where the Reality is for ever manifest and present. Still less can it be spiritually satisfying to remain with shadowy reflections; a search imposes itself for the Light which they strive to figure. But since this Reality and this Light are in ourselves no less than in some high region above the mortal plane, we can in the seeking for it use many of the figures and activities of life: as one offers a flower, a prayer, an act to the Divine, one can offer too a created form of beauty, a song, a poem, an image, a strain of music, and gain through it a contact, a response or an experience. And when that divine consciousness has been entered or when it grows within, then, too, its expression in life through these things is not excluded from Yoga, these creative activities can still have their place, though not intrinsically a greater place than any other that can be put to divine use and service. Art, poetry, music,

PART III – LETTERS

as they are in their ordinary functioning, create mental and vital, not spiritual values; but they can be turned to a higher end, and then, like all things that are capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine, they are transmuted and become spiritual and can be admitted as part of a life of *Yoga*. Art takes new values not from itself, but from the consciousness that uses it; for there is only one thing essential, needful, indispensable: to grow conscious of the Divine Reality and live in it and live it always.

23rd March, 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

25th March, 1932

Almora

My dear Dilip,

I liked your poem on Radha immensely. I like your poems so much because they are the expression of real experience and not mere aesthetic shadows. At the same time I can't help wishing you could use regular verse (as opposed to free verse) in your English translations. I feel that the absence of regular metre impairs the 'soaring power' of poetry. On the other hand I quite see the difficulty of using the more regular metres in English. Your Gurudev, however, uses them magnificently. Incidentally, it was through his fine version of Kalidasa's *Vikromorvad – Hero and the Nymph* – that I came to know of him. I wanted to stage it at Lucknow, but the project fell through.

To return, however, to your poem on Sri Radha. I have one – not quite criticism, but observation – to make. It seems to me that you have universalised too much. You have sung really of the love of the soul for the Divine, taking Radha and Krishna as symbols for that. Now (although this perhaps sounds paradoxical) I believe that the truth is really the other way about. The love of the soul for the Divine is, as it were, a symbol or reflection of the love of Radha for Krishna. This is perhaps too extremely put to stand quite as it is, but I do really mean something by it which is hard to express. To put it another way, it is (to me) just the marvel of Sri Krishna that He dominated with the flashing wonder of his Divinity this apparently

drab physical world. God is no less God, but, if possible, more so when He is, “*manushim tanumashritam*”<sup>1</sup>, even though as the *Gita* says, the “*moodhah*” (fools) may not understand. (For heaven’s sake don’t suppose that I mean any silly business about Man’s being the true God and all that sort of stun). That is why I cannot bear philosophings such as that the blue colour of Krishna is the *Sunya* (ether) and the music of the flute the *Onkar dhvani*, and so on and so forth. The blue colour of Sri Krishna is the blue colour of Sri Krishna, and by God, Dilip, the music of His flute is far greater than the *Onkar dhvani*, great and real though the latter certainly is. Perhaps this is what Sri Aurobindo means (I speak with hesitation) when he speaks of the necessity for the Divine’s dominating and transforming the physical world. It is Sri Krishna dancing on the head of Kaliya Nag as opposed to Krishna reposing in the folds of Ananta. This is the meaning of what fools call idolatry. I do not refer to the half-hearted apologetic sort of worship which uses the image as a symbol or focus for meditation and what not, but the real full-blooded *seva* (worship) which sees the *vighraha* (image) as Krishna Himself.

Some people would probably say that I am materialising the spiritual conceptions. But I do not agree. The abstract is *not* more spiritual than the concrete. That is an illusion due to our false view of the concrete. Krishna is no pale abstraction or symbol but, whether in Goloka or in this world, the concrete of concretes. I wonder whether I have made myself intelligible. Probably not, and in any case, you may not agree that you have been ‘abstract’ in your poem. Be that as it may, I must add that I was greatly moved by the last verse. It brought to my mind Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s:

*Ashlishya va padaratam pinashtu mam  
adarshanat marmahatam karotu va:  
yatha tatha va vidadhatu lampato  
matprananathas-tu sa eva napaarah.*

Krishna may embrace me or spurn me,  
Or, by remaining invisible, break my heart,

---

<sup>1</sup> incarnated in a human body

He may do with me as He pleases,  
 But He shall reign as the Lord of my soul,  
 He and none other.

As for Sri Aurobindo's gracious and encouraging observations about the views occurring in my letters to you, I only wish I could consider myself really worthy of the praises he bestows. It is a great privilege to have had his commentary. Please convey to him my reverent *pranams*. On the two points on which he has suggested slight modifications of my views I have little to say; I sincerely hope that the mass of men will march firmly forward over the littered debris of the psychological theories. So they perhaps certainly would if they remained with their present outlook, but there is the danger of a change in the average man's being brought about by the powerful forces of modern education directed by the purely intellectual-emotional ideal. An instance of what I meant has just come to hand in the shape of a book by the great psychologist Jung who has written a commentary on a Chinese book of Yoga entitled, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. The book is a good one though obscure (perhaps intentionally so), and, knowing nothing of *bhakti*, Jung, in his commentary, has many interesting and some very pertinent things to say. On a superficial reading one might be tempted to say: "At last! here is a scientist really beginning to see something in Yoga after all!" On more careful reading, however, it becomes apparent that here is no acceptance, but a deadly misinterpretation, the more dangerous because of its great subtlety and partial truth. It is, in fact, a supreme effort to wrest the Divine experiences of religion or Yoga out of the hands of Bhagavan (God) and to put them into the hands of man, of man *as man*, ready harnessed to do his bidding. Remember in this connection the true saying in Sri Aurobindo's *Yoga and its Object* that "Yoga is not for the sake of humanity but for the sake of the Divine."

As for Sri Aurobindo's profound observations on art, etc. I fully agree. Art and science, like everything else, may be transmuted by Yoga. In themselves they are not Yoga. Historically, religion has been the greatest spring of artistic inspiration. If I said little about

the positive value of science and art it was because there is little danger that these estimable pursuits will be underrated now-a-days. The great danger arising from art is that poets use mystic phrases like the famous “light that never was on sea or land” to describe, not the real object, which, generally, they have never seen, but some pale emotional reflex of it which thereupon comes to be accepted as *the* Reality. True art is a great thing, a very great thing, but it is not the greatest and it may not and must not usurp the *simhasana* (lofty throne).

Religion or Yoga – call it what you will – is one thing. It is not the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of power, or even for its own sake, though the mystic may pursue knowledge. It is not the creation of beautiful forms, though the mystic may reveal beauty. It is not the thinking of sublime thoughts about cloudy abstractions, though the mystic’s thoughts may well be sublime. It is not the service of suffering humanity, though the saint loves all beings with a love which, in the words of the Buddha, is like the love of a mother for her only child. Still less is it the blowing of oneself up like a frog with yogic exercises till one bursts into the Void. It is the utter and entire giving of oneself to Sri Krishna, claiming nothing, asking nothing, desiring nothing but to be allowed to give oneself. All acts that help or symbolise this giving are *Sadhana*. All acts consequent on this giving are parts of His Divine *Lila*.

With love always from  
KRISHNAPREM

Dilip,

Krishnaprem’s last letter is as refreshing as its predecessors; he always takes things by the right end, and his way of putting them is delightfully pointed and downright, as is natural to one who has got to the root of the matter. But I find it difficult to take Jung and the psychologists very seriously – though, perhaps, one ought to, for half-knowledge is a very powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of True Truth. No doubt, they are very remarkable men in their own field; but this new psychology looks to me very much

like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their *a, b, c, d* of the sub-conscient and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t = cat, t-r-e-e = tree) is the foundation of all knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher heights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of things is above and not below: *upari budhna esham*. The super-conscient, not the sub-conscient, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is, besides, poor and dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part, and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the province of a greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO

Dear Anilbaran Roy,

I have just received a copy of your book *India's Mission in the World* for which very many thanks. I knew of you from articles and photo in the Hindi paper '*Kalyan*' and was very glad to read your views. I was very glad to find you having the courage to assert that this *is* a spiritual country. So much was said about "Hindu spirituality" by well-meaning but ill-informed Europeans and echoed by self-satisfied Indians that now-a-days too many intelligent Indians think that it was all false. So it was in the sense in which it was taken by credulous foreign tourists who imagined that all Hindus went about in a state of semi-*samadhi* and who expected to find a *mahatma* sitting under every *pipal* tree (though even so it may be observed that there actually are more *mahatmas* sitting under *pipal* and other trees in this land than there are in any other I know of!), but the real sense of the phrase is that all the usages and institutions of Hindu society are, or were, based on the supremacy of the Spiritual Reality and were calculated to direct Godward the vision of any who were at all disposed to look in that direction. Compare Hindu caste distinctions with Western class

distinctions, the Hindu ‘*mela*’ with the Western ‘fair,’ the old-time Hindu ‘*jatra*’ with Western drama, the *guru-chela* relationship with the professor-pupil relationship and even the now-a-days-derided ‘kitchen religion’ with ‘kitchen hygiene’ as practised in the West and it becomes clear that, though the ordinary man – the “average sensual man” as Matthew Arnold called him – is much the same all over the world, yet social institutions in this country were such as would encourage any latent seeds of spirituality to sprout while similar institutions in the West give no help even when they do not hinder. True it is, unfortunately, that many of these things having ceased to function properly, may have to go, but it will be a sad day for India, and for more than India, if Hindu life and society are ever *remodelled* on a purely ‘secular’ basis. Religion can no more be a *purely* personal affair as Pandit Jawaharlalji would have it, than the relation between a subject and his King can be a purely personal affair. *If a country has a king, a real king I mean, then the whole country will be pervaded by his influence and it would be utterly ridiculous if some sociologist were to propose to remodel the society of the country on the theory that belief in the king’s existence was a “purely personal matter”.*

Such a view seems to me to spring from a disbelief in spiritual reality which consequently leads men to hold that religion is a mere personal fad like stamp-collecting which may be tolerated for those who like it, provided it doesn’t interfere with more serious matters. It is the old quarrel between *Sura* and *Asura*; for the *asuratwa* of the latter lay not in his cruelty and lust (*asuras*, alas, have no monopoly of *kama* and *krodha*) but in the fact of his being ‘*Bhagawat-drohi*’.

That is why I welcome your book and hope that it will be widely read especially by those who have been dazzled by the material comforts which a purely secular society is, up to a point, able to provide.

We must have faith in India and all that she stands for and not pay mere lip-service to *Bharat Mata* while trying all the time to refashion her into a pale copy of America, Turkey, England or Russia.

With cordial good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
KRISHNAPREM

31st December, 1932  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

You ask if I have ever had doubts. Well, not now – to any serious extent. I came to see that the root cause of my doubts was simply that things weren't going as I wished them to go. When I ceased to expect that things should go as I wished, the doubts vanished. I don't mean by the above that I consider that I have attained the stage of ceasing to want things to go my way. All I mean is that I have ceased to make it a prerequisite of faith that these should so do. Since then I am not worried in any serious manner. I believe that desire to have one's own way is the root cause of all doubt. My own position is something like this: It is, well known that there are three main sources of proof – *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana* and *Shabda* (or *Aptabachan*). Now common opinion starts by assuming that *Pratyaksha* is the most valid – 'seeing is believing' as they say, then *Anumana*, and lastly authority or *Aptabachan*. This view leads almost inevitably (if courageously followed) to Russellism. On the contrary the great seers of the past, of all schools of thought, have taken quite the contrary view. They agreed that inasmuch as our senses are notoriously liable to error and supernormal experiences, notoriously liable to misinterpretation, *Pratyaksha praman* is defective. Inference (*Anumana*) being dependent on *Pratyaksha* is liable to the same defects and the best basis for belief is *Aptabachan* whether in the form of *Guruvakya* or of *Shastra* – the two are fundamentally the same thing. They then reversed the ordinary order and by so doing arrived not at Russellism but at spiritual experience and Divine realisation. Hence I hold that one must at all costs start from the right end if one is to get the right result. One must give up the stupid belief that the world is what it seems to be. It isn't, and the sooner we realise that, the better for us. Incidentally, why do you keep harping on Russell? I quite agree that he is a fine man in many ways and a fine thinker of his own sort, but why do you keep hoping that your Gurudev or someone else will answer his sceptical arguments? *If you accept Russell's premises you will be forced into his conclusions*, but then why accept his premises? He is no muddle-headed thinker whose conclusions are at fault with his premises. Quite the reverse. If you set foot on an escalator you will automatically

be carried to the top of it, so don't set foot on it when you see it is going in the wrong direction.

How do we know that the *Shastra* is true? How do we know that the Grand Trunk Road leads to Delhi? Because thousands and thousands have passed along it and reached the goal described. Has any one yet been known to reach God through Russellism? "By their fruits shall ye know them." No one has yet reached God by reliance on sense-testimony alone.

The next point you raise is about the concreteness of Sri Krishna. You use the term '*sarupya*' as equivalent to '*milan*'. This is not quite clear to me. In Vaishnava terminology '*sarupya*' means merely having a similar form to that of Sri Krishna and is not used for *Radha Bhava*. However, that is a mere matter of names. I am myself utterly certain that Sri Krishna can be experienced in perfect concreteness. As I think I once said before, He is the concrete of concretes and no mere misty abstraction or imagined form. He is no semi-imaginary projection out of a formless Brahman, but is the reality which supports all else. I am not denying the reality of experience of the *Nirvishesha Brahman* but saying that the latter is like seeing the sunlight while to see Krishna is to see the sun itself.

I quite agree with you that love of Sri Krishna is far more satisfying than any mere impersonal *Ananda* and one who has once reached the level even of desiring such love can never be satisfied with less. But on the other hand I do also feel that one must make no demands on Him that He should show Himself to receive our love. There is *no doubt whatever* that He both can and does do so, and that, too, in as concrete a form as anyone could desire, but I feel that one must leave that entirely to Him and – if it is His will – be content to love Him without any return or even any *Darshan*. Till then our love is tainted with selfishness. *Gopi-prem* is not the desire to *enjoy* Krishna but the desire to serve and *be enjoyed by* Him. One must make no demands and no bargain. But at the same time that does not mean, as some '*adhyatmikisers*' teach, that love of Krishna is thus merely a *means* to establish in an easy manner the state of unselfishness and that when that is attained there is no further need of the personal

Krishna at all. It is quite the other way round. Unselfishness is the means to attain Him and at his own time He does accept the love of His *bhakta* in as personal and real a form as can be desired and a great deal more real than we can conceive. He is more real, more vivid than ‘sunlight on the retina’ as you put it. We have got so used to consider spiritual realities as vague and unsubstantial that we quite fail to realise that whatever ‘reality’ and ‘vividness’ is to be found in our sense-perceptions is but a faint shadow of His vividness. Krishna’s embraces are no mere damned allegory about *purusha* and *prakriti*. And for God’s sake, Dilip, *remember that Krishna’s feet are more real than yours.*

You write that you have sometimes criticised Sri Aurobindo. You shouldn’t have. Of course he will not mind. He sees jewel in the lotus and can smile at your criticism, – but *you* mustn’t do it. *Even in thought you mustn’t criticise him.* It all springs from desire to have things one’s own way. He is your Guru and first, it is sheer ingratitude to criticise one who has shown you the light, and secondly, the Guru is inseparable from Krishna. He is the one who has shown you the light, and your whole life can be no repayment for such a gift. Even if you were to spend the rest of this life with no further ‘experiences’ at all you would be utterly wrong if you refused to give yourself to him. As far as I know he does not ask for blind obedience from his disciples (at least so I gather from his letters) but one must never criticise even when one can’t follow. If one could understand everything one’s Guru said, then there wouldn’t be a deal of need for a Guru at all.

You say you wonder why doubts persist even in the face of experience. Well, I think one reason is because we do not see the full causal system of spiritual experiences. Our ordinary life is a linked series of causes and effects and the persistence of the visible effects assures us of the reality of their causes. Thus the reality of the interview I had with a carpenter yesterday or last month is testified to by the reality of the piece of work he brought me today. But in spiritual experience the ordinary *sadhaka* is not aware of the whole cause-and-effect series and therefore these experiences seem to come without any ‘before and after’. In fact they come in from another dimension and

as such we tend to doubt them afterwards. But this also happens with sense-experience when the causal series is not perceived. A friend of mine once saw a ship sink suddenly in mid-ocean as a result of a torpedo from an unseen submarine and assured me that when it had sunk and left no trace whatever, he found it almost impossible to believe that there had ever been a ship there at all.

Why do you doubt that Krishna will respond to you? Because you feel you are unworthy? So are we all. We are no Rukminis that we can write to Krishna saying as she did that “I have such and such good qualities and only *you* are worthy of them.” We have nothing to recommend us to Krishna except our desire for Him. That is why the Brajavasis must be our Gurus and not Rukmini, and the Queens of Dwaraka. He Himself is the full of all good qualities and powers. Will you try to dazzle a jeweller with a handful of imitation diamonds or astonish a *Yogi* with a few conjuring tricks? All we can offer Him is our love, and that He will never reject. Would to God we had more of it...

I think that it is most important that we should always remember the distinction between our outer personalities and our inner selves, as Sri Aurobindo so beautifully expounds in his letter, those selves which Krishna describes as ‘Eternal portions of Himself and which Vaishnava doctrine refers to as Krishna’s Nitya Das. By that inner self one must dominate the outer one or, if one is not always strong enough to do that, one must at least *detach* oneself from the outer, float on the outer self as the lotus floats on the water, surrounded by it but quite untouched. Faith in Krishna and love for Him is really the property of this inner self. The ordinary mental or emotional attitudes that we commonly call belief (or doubt) are merely shadows of this inner faith cast on the outer mind and emotions. That is why they are fleeting while the inner faith is unwavering. When one acts from that inner self one is utterly free whatever one may be doing but when one acts from the outer so-called self one is bound even when one thinks one is freely indulging one’s ‘own’ desires. In reality one is simply mechanically following the play of the three *gunas* in one’s own (lower) nature. Nevertheless I am not urging that what is sometimes called ‘self-realisation’ is the

goal. It can be had quite certainly and is equally certainly a state of *ananda* but it is not the full *ananda*. For that, the self which is *anandakan* must enter into relation with Krishna who is *anandaghan*. That is why the final word of *Gita*. is not *Atmajnana* (self-knowledge) but “*Manmana bhava madbhakto*” (Be-thou-my-devotee) and that is why the *Bhagavat* describes faith in *Atmajnana* as *sattwic* but faith in ‘*Krishnaseva*’ as ‘*nistraigunya*’.

I think I can sum up my ‘creed’ (would it were my practice! but action always lags behind vision) in four words: “Ask nothing; give everything.” At one time I passionately desired ‘experiences’ and if one really desires them Krishna is no niggard, but now I feel that love of Him must be independent of all ‘experiences’ which will come and go at His will and to serve His purpose. It must be something like the air we breathe which may, no doubt, sometimes be perfumed with scent of flowers but is no less essential to us when it has no perceptible scent.

Some people describe Him as formless or as having thousands of hands and feet but two feet are enough for me. And what feet! If one misses them no *Brahmananda* and no *Mukti* can be enough to compensate for the loss. I suppose some people would call this anthropomorphism, but what does it matter what they call it? Facts are facts and I reject this modern notion that the abstract alone is true. Just as there could be no *ananda* anywhere if Krishna were not *anandamaya* so there could be no concreteness anywhere if *He* were not concrete and no form anywhere if He had no form. At one time, as you know, I worshipped the Buddha, and deeply too; but that was before I knew Sri Krishna, and now, when I look down the vistas of the past, among all the host of shadowy phantom figures I see only that one Divine form gleaming with supernatural light. But why the past? Past, present and future, there is nothing but Him. The curves of His body are worth more than all the Infinites and Eternals and Absolutes. All the worlds are within the pores of His skin, and yet there He remains, no shadowy cosmic figure, but the eternal cowherd, in yellow *dhoti*, peacock feathers, maddening the soul with the melody from a bamboo flute. *Krishna! param kimapi tattvam aham na jane*

(What truth can there be beyond Krishna – I do not know).

You see, Dilip, I am quite lost. Jagadish Chatterji wanted me to write a book on Sri Krishna for his American school of Vedic studies, but what can I write? I can't write grave philosophy like Woodroffe about *mantra-shakti* and *ishta-devata* and absolute being, nor delve into the dubious uncertainties of history like Bhandarkar, and I can't, to a Western public at any rate, simply recount how Krishna held up Mount Govardhan on his little finger. They would want to know what it all "meant". I am weary of all "meanings". It means just Krishna.

Love always, Dilip, from your ever affectionate,

KRISHNAPREM

(I must apologise to Krishnaprem for publishing this letter, as he had asked me not to do so. But as it is so beautiful, and as Sri Aurobindo wrote about it to me: "Dilip, Krishnaprem's letter is sound throughout as usual; he has, very evidently, a living spiritual consciousness and spiritual knowledge", I have not been able to resist the temptation.)

Dear Mr Majumdar,

It is of course a very profound problem and one in which the philosophies have been breaking their teeth from time immemorial. I have not the conceit to suppose that the answer I am going to give is in any way the final truth nor am I prepared to argue the matter out fully from a metaphysical point of view. I can only give you the result of my own reflection on the matter and ask you to ponder over it and test it by your own experience. For in the end, *experience is the final test of every thing* and not arguments however ingenious. In the first place, I would draw your attention to the fact that philosophies have been divided in opinion throughout the ages. Some have championed determinism and others have equally vigorously championed free will. This fact alone should make one pause before adopting either side as a whole.

In point of fact the Ultimate Reality is beyond all our categories

all of which fall into pairs of opposites. Heat and cold; light and darkness; good and evil. The only way in which the intellect can deal with Reality is by pulling the one whole into two antithetical parts which appear as opposites. This is the only process of analysis and is essential to intellectual understanding just as a botanist pulls a flower to pieces in order to study it. But after the analysis there must be synthesis again if the living reality is to be restored and we are not to be left with mere broken fragments.

Having then pulled the ultimate Divine activity (and all action is part of that activity) into the two halves of freedom and necessity we must now put the two halves together again. If in so doing we clash with common logic that is unavoidable. The sphere is that of the sphere of synthesis.

In proposing the following synthesis I would ask you to remember that the words are symbols whose importance is to suggest something beyond themselves and not things standing in their own right.

Our experience is divided into two aspects, the life or consciousness aspect and the form or matter aspect, *purusha* and *prakriti*. The life or ‘soul’ aspect is free because it is one with the Divine Life. “I am the life in all beings” says Sri Krishna and again in the *Gita*, “I am the Atma of all beings.” I am not concerned to raise the old question of *dwaita* or *adwaita*; *at all events* the ‘soul’ is part of or, of the *same nature as* God and therefore shares His free creative activity. That is why introspective thinkers, those who have tried to explore things from the standpoint of consciousness, have supported free will in some sense or other.

On the other hand there is the ‘matter’ or ‘form’ aspect, *prakriti*. In the region of duality this form aspect is conceived of as ‘other-than-the-self’. For this reason it is bound in a chain of causation (though even here I would draw your attention to a very significant fact and that is that the notion of ‘cause’ always eludes analysis and that several philosophers have denied causation at all, Bertrand Russell for one I fancy, and that in the last resort ‘causality’ appears to be a notion denied from our own experience of our own ‘causal’ activity i.e., of

our free activity).

In the last resort it will be found that there is no reason why one event should ‘cause’ another except that it is the Divine will that it should do so i.e. the ‘causation’ springs from free Divine Willing. At present, however, I am inviting your attention to the two halves: the free acts of the Divine Self and the bound acts of matter.

If you ask for the evidence for this dichotomy I would say that it is evident on the analysis of any and every act of consciousness in which the conscious event is seen to be divisible into ‘awareness’ on one hand and ‘content’ on the other. Of course this is *only* analysis.

In a man the Divine Self is mingled with ‘otherness’ i.e. matter.

In so far as we act from our Highest and innermost Self, in so far we are free.

In so far as we identify ourselves with the *Atma*, in so far we are *freely* sharing in His creative activity and there are no bounds nor boundary for it is we who will it or at any rate we who will it with Him.

In so far as we identify ourselves with the body and mind (also *prakriti*, remember) in so far we are bound because in so doing we are identifying ourselves with the chain of events which take place in a chain because of the binding will of the *Atma*, that is, *because of* His and our will.

So you see that the spiritually perfect man is perfectly free while he who is perfectly identified with the body etc. is perfectly ‘bound’. In actual fact, however, I do not think the *Atma* is ever perfectly identified with the ‘other’. In so far as the spirit is dominated by matter it appears bound but in so far as matter is dominated by spirit it is free. Now I do not think that in *any man* the spirit is utterly dominated or *utterly* bound. Always ‘a part’ of it remains free and in its own nature. And this is where the ordinary man comes in, the man who is neither pure brute nor yet a highly developed soul.

Such a man is *conscious* of a duality in himself, his higher and lower selves, as he will often phrase it. This I appeal to as a fact of

definite experience.

In this duality the ‘lower self’ is the self identified more or less with matter and mind, the *gunas of prakriti*, the higher self is the self identified more or less with the Spirit, the *Purusha*, the *Atma*.

If any given act is pursued at the dictates of the lower self it is within the bondage; of higher self – of freedom. More or less, I say, because the identification is seldom complete. But except in the theoretical extremes the duality is always there and actions may spring from one or the other. Of course, the ‘higher self of the ordinary man’s experience is not the *Atma* itself but it is the highest he can contact and so is *relatively* free.

Perhaps you will object that the decision to act according to the higher self is itself a ‘bound’ decision. But this is a question improperly put, because if one pursues *any one train* of thought and its logical conclusion one will always arrive at an *impasse*, and antinomy, for the opposite train would as infallibly have led to the opposite conclusion. On this point I can only refer you to the treatment of the four antinomies of the pure reason in Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ where you can get an intellectual discussion of this very point. The resolution of this contradiction lies beyond the reason and can only be grasped by mystical experience and not by any amount of reasoning.

Of course one must never take freedom in the sense of a ridiculous irresponsibility. In reality freedom is self-determination and is the synthesis of the triad, determination, self-determination and indetermination, to put it in the Hegelian form of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

To come to less abstract terms. The soul of things is God and God is free. The crust of things is matter and matter is bound. In *proportion* as we identify ourselves with the one or the other, *in so far* we are free or bound.

Pure spirit is pure freedom but as pure spirit means inactive spirit it is an abstraction. Pure matter is pure bondage but there is no such thing as pure matter. That is also an abstraction. Experience always involves spirit and matter and so experience involves a mixture of bondage and freedom. That which is beyond experience is beyond all categories. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”

KRISHNAPREM

Reverend Sir,

May I respectfully say that none of the arguments that you have advanced appeals to me. I shall explain why. You stated that from brute to a saint there are different and varying stages of development of soul. The freedom varies with the stages of such development. I will explain why I do not agree with the above argument by giving an illustration. Take a motor car; one may not know how to drive it, then one may gradually learn how to drive it. Even if you learn to drive it, you cannot do so unless and until you go actually to the wheel and get hold of it. However near you go to the wheel you cannot drive it; but when you actually get hold of the wheel then and then only you can drive it as you will. By following the analogy can I not say that however high you may rise from a point of view of soul, you cannot direct or change your destiny until you reach the wheel i.e. be one with the Divine. Any lower stages of development will not help you to change your destiny.

Is there any flaw in my argument? It may be that my views are prejudiced because we firmly believe that we ordinary human beings are nothing but automatons. I derived this belief from actual experience of ordinary life in this world of matter.

Is it correct to say from the spiritual point of view that men are superior to insects and animals? Do we know sufficiently of the insect and animal world to be able to say so? Is it not that everything has its place in this world and that its action depends only on its automatic response to the Divine Will. We find that in actual fact two plus two do not always make four. And I contend that this discrepancy happens because of the intervention of the Divine Will.

Yours etc.,  
H. C. MAJUMDAR

Dear Mr Majumdar,

As regards your analogy of the man at the wheel of the motor I do not feel it is exact enough. I do not consider the relation of soul

and body to be a ‘one point affair’ like the wheel of a car but consider that the ‘contact’ is all over ‘the organism’. It is in my view not so much a question of altering one’s destiny as of being able to decide at any point which of the destinies we will follow. It is as if at every point of the road – and *especially* at certain critical points – there were two roads open to us. Swayed by the ‘personal’ preferences of the ‘psycho-physiological self we choose the ‘lower’ and are bound to it. Swayed by the light of the soul and higher self we can choose the other. I consider that this choice faces us to some extent at each moment of our lives but that at certain critical moments it becomes more obvious and more momentous.

“Choose, for your choice is brief and yet endless,” said Goethe and it seems to me to refer to this perpetual choice. Actually of course the *habit* of acting on personal consideration creates a tendency to continue so to act and so increases our bondage. But the possibility of free action is to some extent always there and increases with use. It can never be smothered up *entirely*. All that can happen is that in a given case there can be 100 to 1 or 1,000 to 1 chances against a free action. It can never be ruled out altogether. There was a slight chance that even Duryodhana would repent or else Krishna’s mission of peace to the Kaurava Sabha would have been the merest farce and so in the ultimate analysis would be His whole *lila* (both as the avatar and also in the vast Cosmos).

Coming to the second question, I do believe that men are superior to animals. Of course there is a sense in which there is no difference for “all this is verily Brahman” – but I think there is also a sense in which there *is* a difference. Of course I fully admit that most of us naively assume our own superiority as men and do not think deeply about it. At the same time I do not see the slightest evidence to suggest that animals or even insects like the bees and ants that have developed a social organisation have developed any true intellectual let alone spiritual life. You may say that I have no right to set a premium upon the intellectual mode of being above the instinctive. I should dispute that view but even if I let that pass you will surely agree that the spiritual life is a higher mode and I have never seen any evidence of spirituality in animals or insects. It is no doubt mere conceit to claim

superiority from mere prejudice but not necessarily so if it is done after careful examination of the available facts. Yes, I certainly agree that everything has its place in the Universe in accord with the Divine will, but I also believe that there is evolution. Psycho-physical evolution there assuredly is and I believe spiritual evolution also. By spiritual evolution, however, I do not mean evolution of the spirit but a progressive mastery of matter *by the spirit* and it is in that sense that I believe that the plant ranks higher than the stone, the animal than the plant, man than the animal and the Avatar than man. These judgments are not to be taken as applying to the ensouling *Atma* within these forms but to the forms themselves as being respectively more and more fitted to be vehicles of the highest spiritual realisation and *expressions* of the highest possible Divine activity.

Yes, no doubt a study of action leads to the conclusion that 2 and 2 do not make 4 but surely that supports my view of freedom. For 2 and 2 by themselves always would make 4 and nothing else; but 2 and 2 never are by themselves; always there is an unperceived ‘x’ which is the Divine freedom of the soul and may be of any value from 1/infinity itself and so must make the product differ from 4 by the minutest fraction of by any amount up to infinity.

With best regards,

Yours ever,  
KRISHNAPREM

Dilip,

As for your uncle’s question about free will and predestination, my difficulty is that it is almost impossible to answer it without going into the whole question which bristles, at every step, with the most tangled dualities and oppositions – it is the most perplexing problem in philosophy except that of the existence of pain and evil and, as such, cannot be cut with the stroke of a single trenchant affirmation or denial. My own answer would be a tangle to the ordinary mind, for it proceeds on a very complex basis and how am I to put it all in a few words without being misunderstood or not understood? I will see if it can be done but I cannot promise.

SRI AUROBINDO

Dilip,

After reading Krishnaprem's cogent exposition, I saw what might be said from the intellectual point of view on this question so as to link the reality of the supreme Freedom with the phenomenon of the determinism of Nature – in a different way from his but to the same purpose. In reality, the freedom and the determination are only two sides of the same thing – for the fundamental truth is self-determination, a self-determination of the cosmos and in it a secret self-determination of the individual. The difficulty arises from the fact that we live in the surface mind of ignorance, do not know what is going on behind and see only the phenomenal process of Nature. There the apparent fact is an overwhelming determinism of Nature and as our surface consciousness is part of that process we are unable to see the other term of the biune reality. For practical purposes on the surface there is an entire determinism in Matter – though this is now disputed by the latest school of Science. As life emerges a certain plasticity sets in, so that it is difficult to predict anything exactly as one predicts material things that obey a rigid law. The plasticity increases with the growth of Mind so that man can have at least a sense of free-will, of a choice of his action, of a self-movement which at least helps to determine circumstances. But this freedom is dubious because it can be declared to be an illusion, a device of Nature, part of its machinery of determination, only a seeming freedom or at most a restricted, relative and subject independence. It is only when one goes behind away from *Prakriti* to *Purusha* and upward away from Mind to spiritual self that the side of freedom comes to be first evident and then, by unison with the Will, which is above Nature, complete.

23rd September, 1934

SRI AUROBINDO

To  
Sri Aurobindo

Help! I feel R's attitude contains a large measure of truth. But Dilip as a *sadhaka* is at a loss to determine how much. I feel puzzled because I can't dismiss the hard fact that the Gopis did respond but

not the Brahmin women of Brindaban. Even today, look at our friend X: does he not fume at *bhakti* as suspect, whether for Guru or Krishna? While, look at Krishnaprem, an Englishman by birth whose love for Krishna would put many a devoted Vaishnava to shame. I admit that the *adhikari-bheda* doctrine has its dangers in that it gives many a formalist or sectarian a swelled head or bias; at the same time, in the world of fact could all and sundry respond here and now to Krishna or Christ or Sri Ramakrishna if they so wished? I find it difficult to deny the hard fact that most people cannot even aspire sincerely for Divine Love by disowning life's lesser loves and ignis-fatuus. *Qu'en dites-vous*. Guru? Is our modern judgement on *adhikari-bheda* correct that the doctrine of *adhikari-bheda* is only a high-brow self-adulation of the so-called elite of the spirit? But then I have known some *adhikaris* like Krishnaprem who, if not truly humble, are yet without any sense of self-superiority. Can it not be that at bottom it is not a question of rationalisation at all but that of recognising an undeniable truth? And I ask myself whether the truth behind this doctrine can be dismissed out of hand. Even on the lower levels of mental culture is it not a fact that men are born with exceptional capacities and may, as such, be dubbed *adhikaris* in their respective fields?

DILIP

Dilip,

As to the point that puzzles you, it only arises from a confusion between the feeling of a devotee and the observation of the observer. Of course the devotee loves Krishna because Krishna is lovable and not for any other reason: that is his feeling and his true feeling. He has no time to bother his head about what in himself made him able to love; the fact that he does love is sufficient for him and he does not need to analyse his emotions. The Grace of Krishna consists for him in Krishna's loveliness, in His showing of Himself to the devotee, in His call, the cry of His Flute. That is enough for the heart, or if there is anything more, it is the yearning that others or all may hear the Flute, see His Face, feel all the beauty and rapture of His love.

It is not the heart of the devotee but the mind of the observer

that questions how it is that the *Gopis* were called or responded at once and others – the Brahmin women, for instance – were not called and did not respond at once. Once the mind puts the question, there are two possible answers: the mere will of Krishna without any reason (what the mind would call his absolute divine choice or his arbitrary divine caprice) or else the readiness of the heart that is called: and that amounts to *adhikari-bheda*. A third reply would be: circumstances, as for instance the parking off the spiritual ground into “close preserves”, as R puts it. But then how can circumstances prevent the Grace from acting? In spite of parking off it works: Christians, Mohammedans have answered to the Grace of Krishna. “Tigers, ghouls even must love if they see Him, hear His flute.” Yes, but why do some hear it and see Him, while others do not? We are thrown back on two alternatives: Krishna’s Grace calls whom it wills to call without any determining reason for the choice or the rejection, it is all His mercy; or else He calls the hearts that are ready to vibrate and leap up at His call – and even there He waits till the moment has come. To say that it does not depend on outward merit or appearance of fitness is no doubt true: the something that was ready to wake in spite, it may be, of many hard layers in which it was enclosed, may well be something visible to Krishna and not to us. It was there perhaps long before the Flute began to play, but Krishna was busy melting the hard layers so that the heart in its leap might not be pressed back by them when the awakening notes came. The *Gopis* heard and rushed out into the forest – the others did not or did they think it was only some rustic music or some rude cowherd lover fluting to his sweetheart, not a call that learned and cultured or virtuous ears could recognise as the call of the Divine? There is something to be said for the *adhikari-bheda*. But of course it must be understood in the large sense: some may have the *adhikar* for recognising Krishna’s Flute, some for the call of Christ, some for the dance of Shiva – to each his own way and his nature’s answer to the Divine call. *Adhikar* cannot be stated in rigid mental terms: it is something spiritual and subtle, something mystic and secret between the called and the Caller.

As for the swelled head, the theory of Grace may no doubt

contribute to it, though I should imagine that the said head never felt the Grace but only the magnanimity of its own ego. The *swelling* may come equally on the road of personal effort as by the craving for Grace. It is fundamentally not due to either, but to a natural predisposition to this kind of oedema.

15th January, 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

My dear Dilip,

First of all let me confess that though undoubtedly “born of woman” and I hope “rational”, Dr Stanley Jones’ books not only have no appeal for me at all – but they actually leave a very bad impression on my mind. He “loves and respects Buddha”? – very kind of him I am sure! But he “cannot respect Krishna”? Dear, dear! That is too bad: hadn’t we better shut up the Krishna cult altogether?

I have no use whatever for the talk of “experience of Christ” that these people trot out to confound Hindus and others who are too modest to make any such counter-claims. (I don’t of course mean that *all* Hindus are too modest – far from it). Let me relate a little episode that occurred to me. I once got into conversation with an American missionary of just that type. It was on a boat of course – where else should I meet one? He saw me reading some book on Buddhism and promptly started a conversation.

“Have you experienced *Nirvana*?” he asked me.

“No.”

“Well, do you know others who have?”

“Well, I have heard of those who claim to have.”

“Oh yes,” he replied, “but those of us who have found Christ show it in our lives which bear fruit accordingly.”

After that the conversation dropped, but it so happened that the same missionary was in my cabin, a four-berth second-class cabin with one fan. I was able to observe exactly what these ‘fruits’ were. They consisted in turning the one fan in such a direction that nobody

else got any benefit from it at all, while on the other hand his luggage was all piled on *our* side of the cabin and three-fourths of the wardrobe was filled with *his* clothes!!

Now if Dr Jones had really had experience of Christ he would know quite certainly that Christ and Krishna are the same. He would know quite certainly that certain sayings and doings of Krishna are either symbols whose meaning he has not understood, or else interpolations. He would know this for the same reason that I know that certain sayings of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, are interpolations or have been misunderstood by those who wrote them down. Do not think I have any prejudice against Christ. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel is the same as Krishna. But it seems to me useless to attempt a *human* biography of Krishna such as can with difficulty be written of Christ or Buddha. Krishna lived perhaps seven thousand or more years ago. All the accounts we have, even the *Mahabharata* account, are shot through with symbolism and the *Bhagavat* Krishna is symbolic from beginning to end. It is not possible to write a *human* biography under such circumstances. I do not think it at all feasible to present Krishna's life to modern educated people otherwise than as a symbol. I agree some of the old symbolism may profitably be opened up a bit now-a-days but I do not think it possible to dispense with symbolism altogether. By all means let us "call a spade a spade", but since the average man has no conception of what the spade in question really is, it is inevitable that symbolism should be used to suggest it. Sister R. objects to "this hocus-pocus of words". She is right. All sincere seekers of Truth would be equally sick of the "words" that are stifling not only the Krishna cult but all cults. We want the "Thing in itself" – quite so, but we can't get it unless we find that *Thing now*. What Krishna as a man may have done thousands of years ago is not what will give us "the thing": what He is doing in our hearts *now is* what we must know and that will not be found by concentrating entirely on His human aspect ages ago. If He wasn't in our hearts *now* the *lilas* of ages ago would be quite insignificant.

Why is Christianity tottering so – at least among the educated? Primarily because the Christians have pinned their faith on historical

events and a historical Person. Modern knowledge has shown that we cannot be certain of those events or that Person (again I say: do not mistake me or suppose that I am sceptical myself) and therefore the bottom is falling out of the whole thing. In my opinion the Gnostic Christ, even the Christ of the Fourth Gospel, is far more important than any historical human figure. The human figure was important just because he manifested that Eternal Christ and so with Krishna.

Certainly I agree that a vivid presentation of the human figure can do much to awaken a love and devotion that may carry the *bhakta* to what is within and above his self but it will do so only if the devotee is free from sectarianism even of the sympathetic modern sort and makes no distinction between the various “Sons of God”. Otherwise it may give a pleasant warmth of feeling, or it may even inspire a decent moral life but it will not give that immortality which can only be achieved by the knowledge of the One who “takes without hands, travels without feet, hears without ears and sees without eyes”. That One is in all beings – even the very meanest. Knowledge of Him alone gives immortality. Know Him through Christ, through Krishna or through Buddha, but *know Him somehow or other*.

Love always from yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S. For heaven’s sake don’t think I am at all underrating the power and value of sheer human devotion. It is enormously powerful if *guided* and not allowed to degenerate into sectarianism.

Dilip,

Nothing much to comment. What Krishnaprem says – the central thing – is very correct, as always: the position of all who have any notion of spirituality, though the mere religionist seems to find it difficult to get to it. But though Christ and Krishna are the same, they are the same in difference, that is, indeed, the utility of so many manifestations, instead of there being only *one* as these missionaries would have it. But is it really because the historical Christ has been made too much the foundation-stone of the Faith that Christianity is

failing? It may be the sense of something inadequate or incomplete in the religion itself – perhaps in *religion itself* – (for all religions are a little off-colour now) – the need of a larger opening of the soul into the Light is being felt, an opening through which the expanding human mind and heart can follow.

26th January, 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

2nd January, 1936

My dear Dilip,

Yes, I have used you rather shabbily of late, I fear. Especially after receiving the record of your songs which I was so glad to have. People here say that your singing has greatly developed. I am no judge of that but I loved hearing your voice again after all these years. It carried me back to Lucknow and the many times when we “tired the sun with talking, and sent him down the sky”. They were a glorious prelude to a still more splendid future and to hear your voice singing, as it were, in the same room with me was a very great pleasure, now that half India stretches between our physical bodies.

As for Dhurjati’s query about Divine Grace (which he denies) I feel for my part that the important thing to realise is that there is *something* which does exist and is what has been called “Grace” by several schools. Whether they understood its nature and whether “Grace” is the best word to describe it, seem questions that are of minor importance. I can sympathise with Dhurjati at least to some extent, for I myself am utterly sick of the Grace-mongering religions with their Maharaja-sahib conception of the Divine and their self-satisfied belief that they are “in grace”, as they put it, just because they give a lip-assent to some formulated creed or other – Christian, Islamic or Vaishnavic and not well understood at that. Because of its associations with *blessing of Mahatmas, prayers of the saints* and all that sort of stuff I am myself chary of using the word as it tends to breed a weak effeminate supplication for things to be done for one. (But you must not confuse this with true *sharanagati* – self-surrender.) I prefer the virile

Upanishadic counsel to “Arise! Awake! and tread the razor path!”

Nevertheless I do agree that one mustn’t throw away the baby with the bath-water nor think that because a word has given rise to sickening fatuities and superstitions it has therefore got no meaning in itself.

I am glad you agree with the doctrine of *ahaituki bhakti*. I knew you would when you had had time to think it over. It is the self in us which rejects it, in Francis Thompson’s words:

“Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside!”

Love always from yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

29th January, 1936  
Almora

Dilip,

Your letter crossed mine. I explained in my last letter all about M. B. He was very rude to me and I don’t wish to correspond with him any further.

As for you, my dear Dilip, I couldn’t possibly imagine your hurting any one – not deliberately, anyhow. It is one of the things I love you for and a quality that I rank very high indeed.

I wrote in my last letter about sister R.’s letter, but I wonder very much if she will have liked it much.

I don’t know that I have anything more to add to what I said. I agree with what you have written to her and also, in a way, with her reply to you. Sri Aurobindo’s account of the difference between the point of view of the *bhakta as bhakta* and that of the observer (who may also be *bhakta*) strikes me as giving the gist of the matter.

Is the *bhakta’s* attitude (as such) the highest? I don’t care to discuss such a question. But I think there is a stage beyond the rapturous adoration of the soul in Krishna. The first rapture is apt to throw the mind out of gear as it were, to produce a wondrous bliss which the soul may love to share with others but which is otherwise unrelated

to *the world*. Many *bhaktas* stop there; but I think there is a further stage when the Light of Krishna irradiates downwards through the mind and even senses and makes them more not less capable of ordinary activities. Sri Chaitanya, returning from Gaya, was unable to teach in his school: he was overcome by emotion when anything suggested Krishna. The Vaishnavas will perhaps be deeply shocked if I say it, but I think nevertheless that there *is* a further stage when he would have been able to teach in his school better than ever before. Perhaps he attained this stage later – perhaps not – I do not know. I am not talking of persons but of principles, so the personal question can drop. *The first stage is like the Niagara dashing impetuously in glory from the cliff: the second is the same water flowing through great pipes and mighty turbines which supply a continent with power. No splash and glory but a low vibrating hum of wondrous power in control.*

Why, however, is sister R. so frightened of a *mystical* Krishna? Does she confuse *mystical* with *misty*? *Mystical* knowledge is the *only* knowledge because it is the only *direct* knowledge. No dualistic knowing can be relied on. True knowledge comes from participation in the known and that is what is meant by mystical experience. It is because she is a mystic that she has been able to have the great experience she has had. There is no revelation from anything or any person – not even with a capital P – who is outside and separate from one's true self. Neither Guru nor Avatar nor God can save any one except He dwell in the heart. The Salvation that seems to come from without really comes from the utter self-giving which leaves no self but Krishna within. Any Figure who moves our hearts to the utter self-giving can *save* us provided we do not limit Him with sectarian walls. If we do that, we may lose ourselves in *Him*, but since that Him is not the All to us, we cannot gain the true Salvation. We rise to something greater than ourselves but not to the Eternal which is All. The history of many Christian and other sectarian saints will bear this out. For this reason I am loth to strip away the symbolic attitudes that have gathered round the Great Teachers – for it is just these attitudes – however silly they may appear to some – that universalise the Figure and make Him not a person who lived and died,

but the Supreme Eternal.

I fully agree with the doctrine of *adhikar* but that must not be confused with any formal scheme current in society or invented by the mind. It is much more subtle than that. Let sister R. try to impart her love for Krishna to others. In some cases she will succeed, in others not, and this will be only partially due to her own limitations because even the greatest, Krishna, Buddha, Christ could only succeed in some cases and in others could produce no effect. This is *adhikar-bheda* whether you like the word or not, but it has nothing to do with castes, races or creeds. At any given time some will listen to the Flute and some will not – because they are not ready. But why argue? She has found Krishna. He will teach her in her heart whatever she should know.

As for your other friend what is all this pother about? Certainly I don't advocate *blind* faith. True faith is not blind though the interpreting mind may weave a tissue of partial untruths about the vision just as the same mind may weave a tissue of falsehood around the bare datum of a sense perception e.g., mistaking a post for a man. St. Paul called faith "the evidence of things unseen". *Evidence*, not mere mental belief.

As a man gradually purifies his nature so his faith will shine more clearly, free from the misunderstandings of the mind. A sectarian believes in all sorts of silly things. It is not his faith that is at fault (I am talking of *real* faith, mind you) but his poorly developed mind which misinterprets the data given by his faith. We must purify our minds till they can grasp the object of our faith without covering it up with all sorts of silly superstitions. But if we abandon faith we shall be lost, for faith is just the evidence for a higher level of knowledge. It is a thread let down from that higher level and if we turn our back on it we shall just wander contentedly about on the level at which we are. That is what most so-called *rationalists* do. We must use faith as they do: as a thread in saving men from ship-wreck: they fire a rocket across carrying a light thread. That having been grasped it is used to pull over a stout cord, a stout hawser which will carry men across.

As for Gurus as “incarnate Gods” as your friend ridicules it, well, why not? All men are incarnate Gods for one thing – only they know it not; for another, if I can see the God in some one man either because he has seen It in himself or because *through* him a Light has shone for me, why should any one else get annoyed? Presumably because *he* has not seen God anywhere himself, is it not?

‘Ma’ sends her love. She read the Hindi poem you sent of R’s and your own Bengali translation, and liked them both very much. She says that being a Bengali she liked the Bengali version best.

Love always from yours affectionately,

KRISHNAPREM

Dilip,

Of course, Krishnaprem’s view about the canalisation of Niagara is my standpoint also. But for the limited human consciousness it is difficult to get across the border between mind and spirit without making a forceful rush or push along one line only and that must be some line of pure experience in which, especially if it is the *bhakti* way, one gets easily swallowed up in the rapids (did not Chaitanya at last disappear in the waters?) and goes no farther. The first thing is to break into the spiritual consciousness, any part of it anyhow and anywhere, afterwards one can explore the country, to which exploration there can hardly be a limit; one is always going higher and higher, getting wider and wider. But there is a certain intense ecstasy about the first deep plunge which is extraordinarily seizing. It is not only the *bhakta’s* rapture, but the *jnani’s* plunge into the *Brahma-Nirvana* or *Brahmananda* or release into the still eternity of the self that is of that seizing and absorbing character – it does not look at first as if one could or would care or need to get beyond into anything else. One cannot find fault with the *Sannyasi* lost in his *laya* or the *Bhakta* lost in his ecstasy: they remain there probably because they are constituted for that and it is the limit of their leap. But all the same it has always appeared to me that it is a stage and not the end: I subscribe fully to the canalisation of the Niagara.

*Adhikara* is of course a matter of the psychology and the soul and the nature, it has nothing to do with any outer or artificial standards.

Then as to the *Avatar* and the symbols. There is, it seems to me, a cardinal error in the modern insistence on the biographical and historical, that is to say, the external factuality of the *Avatar*, the incidents of his outward life. What matters is the spiritual Reality, the Power, the Influence that came with him or that he brought down by his action and his existence. First of all what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not?) but what he was and did *within*; it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all. It is the *inner* life that gives to the *outer* any power it may have, and the inner life of a spiritual man is something vast and full and, at least in the great figures, so crowded and teeming with significant things that no biographer or historian could ever hope to seize it all or tell it. Whatever is significant in the *outward* life is so because it is symbolical of what has been realised *within* himself and one may go on and say that the inner life also is only significant as an expression, a living representation, of the movement of the Divinity behind it. That is why we need not enquire whether the stories about Krishna were transcripts, however loose, of his acts on earth or are symbolic representations of what Krishna was and is for men, of the Divinity expressing itself in the figure of Krishna. Buddha's renunciation, his temptation by Mara, his enlightenment under the Bo-tree are such symbols; so too the virgin birth, the temptation in the desert, the crucifixion of Christ are such symbols true by what they signify even if they are not scrupulously recorded historical events. The outward facts as related of Christ or Buddha are not much more than what has happened in many other lives – what is it that gives Buddha or Christ their enormous place in the spiritual world? It was because something manifested through them that was more than any outward event or any teaching. The verifiable historicity gives us very little of that, yet it is that only that matters. So it seems to me that Krishnaprem is fundamentally right in what he says of the symbols. To the physical mind only the words and facts

and acts of a man matter: to the inner mind it is the spiritual happenings in him that matter. Even the teachings of Buddha and Christ are spiritually true not as mere mental teachings but as the expression of spiritual states or happenings in them which by their life on earth they made possible (or at any rate more dynamically potential) in others. Also, evidently, sectarian walls are a mistake: an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth which may serve a mental, but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar, the Guru, have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal: it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.

It is also a fact that nobody can give you any spiritual realisation which does not come from something in your true Self, it is always the Divine who reveals himself and the Divine is within you; so He who reveals must be felt in your own heart. Your query here simply suggests that this is a truth which can be misinterpreted or misused, but so can every spiritual truth if it is taken hold of in the wrong way – and the human mind has a great penchant for taking Truth by the wrong end and arriving at falsehood. All statements about these things are, after all, mental statements and at the mercy of any mind that interprets them. There is a snag in every such statement created not by the Truth that it expresses but by the mind's interpretation. The snag (what you call the slip) lies not in the statement itself which is quite correct, but in the deflected sense in which it may be taken by ignorant or self-sufficient minds enamoured of their ego. Many have put forward the “own-self” gospel without taking the trouble to see whether it is the true Self, have pitted the ignorance of their “own-self” – in fact, their ego – against the knowledge of the Guru or made their ego or something that flattered and fostered it the *Istha Devata*. The snag in the worship of Guru or Avatar is a sectarian bias which insists on the Representative or the Manifestation but loses sight of the Manifested; the snag in the emphasis on the other side is the ignoring of the need or belittling of the value of the Representative or Manifestation and the substitution not of the true Self, one in all, but of one's “own-self” as the guide and light. How many have done that and lost the way through the pull of the magnified ego which is one of the

PART III – LETTERS

great perils on the road! However, that does not lessen the truth of the things said by Krishnaprem. Only, in looking at the many sides of Truth one must put each thing in its place in the harmony of the All which is for us the expression of the Supreme.

9th February, 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

10th September, 1939  
Mirtola

My dear Dilip,

It was a joy to hear from you again and to know that you are well in all ways. Thanks also for the Bengali article of yours in ‘*Bharatavarsha*’ describing the motor accident. It must have been a great shock to you, but I am thankful that you emerged from it in safety, though, for my part, I do not think that any danger of that sort threatened you or threatens you. Men die everyday in what we term “accidents” but yet it is in truth no chance, no accident, that they thus go beyond. What we term “chance” is really the sum total of those factors in us which we cannot or at least do not estimate in our ordinary judgments, all – as Browning puts it – that “the world’s coarse thumb and finger failed to plumb”.

I am not surprised that you have come to feel aloof from those who were once your closest relations. While we live in the plane of the body, identifying ourselves almost entirely with it, we feel related to those beings to whom the body is related. Those are the relationships that we most feel to be “ours”. But when we come to detach ourselves a little from that body, to feel ourselves as the living soul within, we equally naturally come to feel ourselves as in a network of quite different relationships, those of the soul itself. As the old Hermetic writers used to put it, we are reborn into a new race, the deathless race of the soul, so that mere bodily and vital ties recede until they are little more real to us than those which we contracted in a previous life. *The light in a lantern may seem to be related to the lantern in which it burns and so to the tin-smith who made it, but its real and intrinsic relationship is to the whole hierarchy of lights headed by sun and stars.*

Yes, you are right: we must not expect anything from the world, for what we term “the world” is but the rind and shell of what *has been*: it is the soul alone that *is*. Bergson has a fine analogy when he compares life to a rocket whose soaring energy falls back as ash. I am not altogether a Bergsonian but that figure of his seems to hit off excellently the nature of the so-called world of matter which surrounds us and of which our bodies are a part.

I am glad to hear that you no longer blame yogis for *travelling away from life*. There is a lot of silly talk about escapism now-a-days, all of it based on ignorance. I don't deny that there are some so-called sadhus who have wished merely to escape from life but such are no real yogis. To practise yoga is to grasp the very heart and soul of life and to grasp it as no others do who rake about in its dead ash. Moreover, for one who tries to escape life by becoming a sadhu, a thousand or ten thousand try to escape by plunging into ash-pits of overwork (to say nothing of over-pleasure!) or of routine. There are even many who go to war for precisely the same purpose: to escape from all that they know to be truest in themselves, but which is hard to *live up to*, in order to live easily and comfortably in the warm tropical climate of their passions. You may think it strange to talk of ease and comfort in war, but it is not physical but psychic ease of which I was talking, and to be able to feel that the more you hate, slander and kill “the enemy”, the more praiseworthy you become and to feel that to surrender the duty of steering your own ship into the hands of your superior officers is also praiseworthy – all these things *are* a psychic “ease”, as more than one man confessed to me in the last war. Of course there are others to whom war is by no means “ease” of any sort and who do not at all *escape* into it, but certainly an institution like the Nazi party (or any such) is far more escapist than all the ash-covered sadhus in India. The Nazi very definitely “escapes” from his human duties into the pleasures of being able legitimately to hate, to torture, to despise, to boast, to spy, to trample. It is in return for these psychic pleasures that he cheerfully puts up with physical privations and hardships. (I am using the word psychic not in the special sense in which Sri Aurobindo employs it but in the general sense of belonging

to the psyche and particularly to the desire-nature).

I agree the world just now is certainly a poor show, but the real escapists are those who relax their grip on what they know to be the truer – the light which shines above and can be brought down here – to go and wallow contentedly in the hog-wash of the world – what I have called the ash-pits.

Once I saw a beautiful sight when sailing down the Ganges from Calcutta. You know the ugly brown sludgy water of the river there, defiled by the refuse of a thousand mills. Nothing could have been more drab and unattractive. Then the sun began to set and as if by magic the water turned a most wonderful colour, purple and green and gold. Yet nothing had changed except the light that fell on it. So it is I feel with the world. Nothing could be more drab and ugly than the world as seen in the light of “ordinary” consciousness and yet if we can illuminate it from a different angle, can bring to bear on it the light of the spirit, the whole prospect changes and reveals a glorious beauty where before was nothing but hateful and sordid ugliness.

I am enclosing a copy of the small pamphlet I mentioned. But remember that it is only dealing with certain preliminary steps and attitudes (as suggested by the title) and that the all-important side is only implicit. What we term the emotional side is indeed the life-blood of the whole *yoga*, but, like blood, it needs a firm outer skin if it is not to lose itself by flowing all over the place.

No, I haven't left this place – not even to go as far as Almora – since I saw you last in Allahabad. As for *changing my sadhana* it is as you say a *strange phrase*! My *sadhana* changes me, not me my *sadhana*. The latter is a river that flows on one and unchanged to the sea. It can never change though it leaves behind it on its banks many villages with their local temples. The *I* who writes this at the moment is not the *I* who wrote five years ago, or, if you prefer, the village from which I write now is not the village from which I wrote then. Both these expressions mean just the same; you might call one the Buddhistic and the other the Vedantic way of stating the same thing.

I disagree with you that “Buddhism at its best is *Jnāna-mārga*”.

Buddhism at its high average is *Jnāna-mārga* and *Vaishnavism* at its high average is *Prem-mārga*, but both of them *at their best* are something beyond these one-sided *mārgas*. Shall I suggest what I mean by saying that *he who knows and does not love does not know, while he who loves and does not know does not love*.

But love is too sacred a thing to be talked about. Let us keep love for the heart where it belongs and reserve our lips, the symbol of the Logos, for knowledge. The eyes alone express both. In the end, the calm, straight-gazing compassionate eyes of the Buddha are as full of love as the ever-changing sidelong glances of Krishna are of knowledge. But damn this word knowledge anyway: no more than love is it to be found in sentences and books.

Become a Buddhist? If that means to turn one's back on all that Krishna stands for, certainly not.

Remain a Vaishnava? If that means to ignore all that the Buddha stands for, again, certainly not.

Leave these ridiculous labels alone, Dilip: they belong to quite different worlds from those in which both you and I are trying to live. They belong to the world of appearances, not to that of reality and their use can only breed confusion in the minds of those who seek to grasp the Real.

Well, it is time to stop now. *Ma* sends you her love and *ashirvada*.

Love always from yours,

KRISHNAPREM

21st January, 1940  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

The word you could not read was Hermetic, the school in Egypt which followed Hermes Trismegistus, perhaps the most remarkable of all the secret schools of the West.

I have made a few slight alterations in your article on Sri Auro-

bindo which I was very glad to read. Your idea of explaining the conversations by appropriate quotations was an excellent one. Your article is excellent and I hope it will be widely read.

As for what you say about grace, I don't dispute it at all except that, for me, the *word* has an association that I do not like. Your phrase 'you cannot by *tapasya* obtain this grace' seems to me to confuse the point in a subtle manner. In a sense it is true. *Tapasya* is the *sadhana* of the male side of our androgynous psyches. But, however male we may be, we all have a hidden feminine side corresponding to the physiological femininity that is latent in the malest of male bodies. That feminine side does not work by the male method of *tapasya* but by something which is much more like receptiveness though the word is too negative and the thing is not really negative at all except by male standards. The point is that an actual process that we will call (and only call) 'receptiveness' is one of the fundamental movements of the psyche which, as I have said, is androgynous. Compare Newman's 'the soul is a woman' and the Vaishnavas' self-identification with the *Gopis*. The flow of what you term *grace* is, in my view conditioned by the 'receptiveness' just as an access of 'power' is conditioned by *tapasya*. The two are complementary and either is incomplete if clung to alone and with denial of the other. The soul is the complete sphere and not the severed halves of which you can read in Plato's Symposium. To speak in symbol, the soul is a married couple. If either member of the pair is inferior and undeveloped the other develops characteristic facets and exaggerations as a compensation. The same is true of those who strive to cling *one-sidedly* either to the male-strength-*tapasya*-power attitude or to the female-receptiveness-grace attitude. In the Sacred Inner Marriage taught by the mystic schools throughout the ages there must be no subordination of male to female or of female to male: both must work in harmony within the one heart.

Love always from yours affectionately,

KRISHNAPREM

1st April, 1940

Almora

My dear Dilip,

I am so glad to hear from you.

Dr Alexis Carrel's book, *Man the Unknown?*. Yes, I was reading it at the time when we met last in Allahabad. It is an interesting book in many ways but there is something about his values which I do not like, something that definitely repels me. I would not care to live in a community governed by Dr Carrel and I am sure I should react somewhat as did the young barbarian in Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* – do you remember? Dr Carrel understands many things and has many suggestive ideas but he does not understand the psyche and without knowledge of that, all outer improvements in life are sterile, mere prisons carefully whitewashed and filled with modern conveniences. A true society must be built upon the Soul. Failing that, even the old societies, with all their faults, are better for they are woven on a network of psychic values (forgotten though they may be by the mind) while these 'New Jerusalems' are built on the mind alone and the mind, by and in itself, is sterile, sterile, sterile. You will probably jump at my saying this, but it *is* so. The mind is a lens which can focus the sun's light or can be used to study things in more detail than is otherwise visible. But in itself it is just clear glass.

I am so sorry to hear of the death of poor Hashi's brother which must have been a terrible shock coming as it did so soon after the loss of her father. What use are words on such occasions? Please convey my deep sympathy and assure her that those who drop their physical bodies are not *dead* and are not even far away from us. In many ways they are nearer to us, the real 'us', than ever and we can know and feel that nearness if we will cease to think of material bodies as being the only reality.

They *are* near us and we can *know* that nearness if we turn inwards and away from our outer bodies. They are in fact "nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands or feet". But, as I say, what use are words when the waters of this bitter sea run high above our heads?

Thanks so much about your records. Of course we should like

PART III – LETTERS

the laughing song. What do you take us for?

*Ashirbad* from *Ma* and love from yours ever.

KRISHNAPREM

July 21, 1940  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

It was a great pleasure to have your long letter and poems after quite an age. How long it seems since we met at Allahabad! For my part I have not been out of this Ashram, not even as far as Almora town since then, but I have sometimes enjoyed your presence *via* a gramophone.

You ask what I think of the present state of the world. If I say it is an illusion, you will probably misunderstand me as is nearly always the case when that word is used. You will think I mean nothing at all which is certainly not my meaning. If I say that it is part of the Divine *Lila*, then the feeling that “it must be all right” will surely arise and, except in a somewhat ultimate sense, it is NOT all right. If I say it is the work of the *Asuric* powers, we are involved in a hard and fast dualism starring (as the films say) Hitler as the chief *Asura*. It is hard to know what to say without being liable to be misunderstood in some way or other.

To start with, the war that is raging is not the real war. It is the troubled wake of a ship that has gone on out of sight: it is the trail of slime behind a snail; it is the pathway of dead ash left by a forest fire or – as He says in the *Gita* – “By Me *already* have these men been slain.” The ship, the snail, the forest fire – these have already gone on ahead in the inner worlds. Because we have eyes for nothing but material things we do not see them but see only the dead ash they have left behind. Therefore I say: it is illusion because it is not what we think it is. It is not that “coming events cast their shadows before” – but that inner realities throw their shadows behind and beneath and we – who live in those shadows – take them for realities. This war is

not being fought nor will it be won or lost. It has been fought and won, though what that victory will taste like to us, poor fools, when we, wandering along in our trail of ash, catch up with it, is more than I can say. The victory of Krishna is certain, but if, as is usual, our hopes are set on falsities, that victory may be but dust and ashes in our mouths. This war is part of the Divine *Lila*. Is it therefore “all right – God’s in heaven” sort of thing? The question should be: “all right *for whom?*” For those whose life is rooted in Reality it is “all right”, but for those of us who cling to falsehood and mere outwardness it is not at all *all right*.

You are appalled at the bitter waves of overt suffering that are sweeping over huge areas of our world. Many people think that Hitler has *caused* it – were it not for him it would not be. That is quite false. It is we, we, we who have been piling up that sorrow. When we take a photograph the image is impressed upon the sensitive plate, but not till it has been treated with developers does that image appear. This suffering is the photograph upon our sensitive psyches. We exposed them (as the photographers say) to a false view of the world, and now that false view is being developed in hateful black and white. But it was no less *there* when not manifest to any eyes but those that see within.

Why should you be so surprised that, as you say, “the *Asuric* (Titanic) powers should succeed so signally” when we – men in general – have given them such lodging space in our hearts? Why does a cholera outbreak sweep a whole great city? Let us try and understand that without being put off by shallow modern half-truths about germs and such like. Let us see such a thing as it really is, *yathabhutam*, as the Buddhists say, and we shall understand this present outbreak.

These Hitlers and what nots are mere puppets worked by strings which neither they nor others see, great waves that dash upon our breakwaters to overwhelm them or to recoil in baffled fury. The force of Hitler is the force we have given him, we who project on others *the devil* that lurks within ourselves. He has risen on the wings of our hatred and fear just as, in dream, monsters created by ourselves rush on us with *our* power. Remember the profound Puranic story of how

when Brahma created the *Rakshasas* they rushed on him to devour *him*. Just so does a figure like Hitler, clothed in the projections of a whole world's secret wishes and fears, rush upon us. Like the Gadarene swine of the Gospel, he is the vehicle of all the devils we project from ourselves and in the end his fate will be that of those swine who "rushed down a steep place into the sea". For (and this I say subject to the limitations of my knowledge of him) he has or would appear to have accepted those projected devils and clasped them to him. No man is forced to accept such projections against his will. If he refuses them resolutely they cannot cling to him but return whence they came. *Curses like chickens return home to roost*. He, however, who accepts them, forthwith becomes their servant, gaining, like Marlowe's Faustus, powers for the time being, but ultimately being rent in pieces by the devils to whom he has given himself. This, unless my vision of him is quite wrong – and I have striven to judge with as much detachment as possible – is what will happen to him. An inner disruption, a tearing in pieces of his psyche, is certain, and, since inner events are reflected outside, it is even likely that that inner disruption will have its outer embodiment so that the pitiable man will perish miserably at the hands of the passions he has given himself to be the servant of.

It is just no use our being appalled at what we now see. Things are not worse because they become manifest and these horrors were with us all the time. In the (sometimes) pleasant and fair life of peace in our great cities – East or West – these ghastly figures were standing at our elbows, lying under our feet unseen by most and yet there, as much there as they are now. I am not talking philosophy, but just fact.

You write that sometimes, when you were depressed lately, you felt like the *Mayavadin* that "this world is too beastly a place to be open to redemption". But this view is superficial. You start by taking *this world* as a thing in itself and then suppose that the *Mayavadin* condemns it or rejects and condemns it. But what the real *Mayavadin* means (and only he should count) by *this world* is nothing more than a wrong view of Reality and such a wrong view is undoubtedly beastly and must be rejected. Incidentally, don't imagine that by the word view I mean a mere mental view: I mean something much deeper than

a creed held by that little corner of our being which we call our conscious mind.

However, to come back to the war, you ask what I think will happen. I *know* that the Soul alone will prevail and that its purposes will be carried out. In that we can rest in utter certainty. As Jesus put it: “Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away.” These *words* are the Logos, the Vedic *Rita* or Cosmic Harmony in which the very Gods have their being. So much I know. As for what I think, I *think* that England has still some purposes of the Soul to manifest, and if so, in spite of all faults, she will remain resisting all assaults until those purposes are accomplished, after which, who cares, for when the work in the field is done the worker returns home. For the rest, something that speaks in every drop of my blood tells me that England will neither yield nor be defeated in this war (though as I have already said, I do not know how she will like the taste of the peace to follow) and however grim appearances may be I hold to that conviction. There is no need for a “miracle”. Subject to the corrections aforesaid England cannot go under. Of course that is a big proviso (namely, *if* she manifests some purposes of the Soul) but it is the only thing that matters – all the rest is illusion and a clinging to falsities.

You write I wrote to you once years ago that I didn’t mind the world’s misery so much because the misery of the world acts as a foil as it were in order to set off the beauty and glory of Krishna. I don’t remember what exactly I wrote. I think I must have said it in some special context or other, but, if not, then it was just one of the exaggerated remarks one is apt to indulge in sometimes when emotion gains the upper hand.

However, don’t you worry about the Divine’s “manifesting with a greater effectiveness his Truth against the *Asuric* forces”. He will do that all right if we give him something to manifest in or through. Let us not give way to the childish longing for “miracle”. Instead of longing for Divine intervention, like some people who long for American intervention, let us fight our own battle (those of us who are removed from physical fighting just as much and even more than those who are not) and we can be utterly confident that in proportion as we offer in our souls any foothold for the Divine values, to that extent

the unconquerable Divine Power will manifest. Those of us who are removed from the overt conflict have a greater opportunity (and therefore a greater responsibility) for seeing things as they are and then of hastening the only thing that matters: the ultimate and inevitable triumph of the Divine.

In any case the really awful thing is not the WAR but the state of the world psyche (of which we are parts) which made that WAR occur as inevitably as a certain state of the physical body issues in a rash upon the skin. Do not blame the *Asuric* Powers as stupid people blame *governments*. Those Powers work in and through us, for our being is much greater than appears and though our feet tread this dark earth, our heads are far beyond it and the Divine Sun and Moon themselves are our eyes.

It is time I stopped! Thanks again for your poems of which I particularly liked the translations from the *Kavir panthi* and the Sufi.

Love always, Dilip, and *please don't publish this letter*.

*Yours ever,*  
KRISHNAPREM

November 14, 1940  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

What lovely records! Especially the *kirtan* which is simply wonderful (No, I mustn't: I was going to write in Bengali the name but I am forgetting to write Bengali characters not having done so for some time and I will not expose them to your gaze! – *Brindabaner lila* is the one I mean.) Each time I hear it I like it more and more. Your comic songs made us rock with laughter but why mention special ones when all are so good. Besides, any record of yours always produces the feeling of your presence and I can see you waving your hand in your well-known manner in time to the music. Hashi's records, too, are splendid and *Ma* in particular liked them immensely. Thank you so much, Dilip, for the set: it is a joy to all of us.

As regards my previous letter with reference to which you raise

several points, – no, I certainly did not mean to imply a rigid fatalism.

“*Mayaivate nihata purvameva*” – yes, I mean what you say: lines broadly laid down, but I mean much more than that, which I can’t express (but it is not fatalism though). It is not a matter of external higher decisions which should or should not be carried out but that *we ourselves* are living *now* on more than one level of being and that what we live on higher levels is reflected or manifested here below as events. Then we (down here) are marionettes after all? It depends on what we mean by ‘we’. If we *entirely* identify ourselves with our physical bodies then in an important sense, yes, but no one does entirely do so. Many do so predominantly and so their lives are predominantly ‘processions of fate’. It is in our hands, to be free or bound. The whole trouble arises because we persist in treating this physical world as if it were a reality by itself. That, however, is just what it is not and to see it as it is not is a bondage – fate – necessity – *maya* – anything you like. But it does not exist by and in itself. It hangs from the higher or rather is itself that higher seen in a particular way. To adopt Blake: “The fool does not see the same world as the wise man does.” Nor the same “we” either. See the world – and there is only one world in truth, for “what is there is here and what is not here is nowhere at all” – (*Yadihasti tadanyatra yannehasti na tat kwachit*). See it as it is and you see creative Divine Play, the freedom: see it as it is not and you see the remorseless bondage, the fatal wheel of necessity, which is just what we usually do (I mean, we see it as it is *not!*) But I can’t express what I really mean in words. Remember the wise saying of Plotinus: “Out of discussion we call to vision.” At least what I am talking about is not a theory or a philosophy but a fact though one which it is damned hard to describe.

“Human will and initiative” – “We can have a say too” – ? Yes but, is what is human will, properly understood? Clearly not the merely animal will which also exists in us, and who are ‘we’? Clearly not the ‘we’ who identify ourselves with our physical bodies – at least certainly not while doing so. The ‘we’ who are “grounded in *Prajna*” certainly do not so identify ourselves for that is the *avidya*, not the *Prajna*.

However, don't think I am talking *Mayavada* as commonly understood. Our physical bodies are quite real – only they aren't physical bodies: by which I mean that what we call our physical bodies are a wrong seeing of something quite real and even 'wrong' is only a relative term.

I am afraid I have only made the confusion worse confounded. I will try once more.

- 1 Don't see the physical world as something in itself but as a way of seeing (or mis-seeing if you like) something quite different but which includes it. Perhaps, way of being seen would express it better.
- 2 Don't see the self as something in itself but as one out of many ways of seeing.

There are as many 'selves' as there are ways of seeing. When we see things in one way that is one of our 'selves' and when in another that is a second one. These 'selves' are not separate beings like so many chemical boxes nor are they a hierarchy of bureaucrats that one can overrule the other. Nevertheless the *ways of seeing* (i.e. self) which is more inclusive may perhaps be not inappropriately called 'higher' and if you see in that mode or from that point of view you will see that the succession of events down here *is* the wake of a ship, the snail's track etcetera – for that *way of seeing*. For other ways of seeing, it is not so, hence the confusion.

Let us leave it at that. As Hamlet said: "Words, words, words!" And I am not going to write any more words today but just sit and contemplate the wordless sky.

You ask about astrology. That must wait: I will only say that 'Mars', 'Venus' etcetera are not lumps of matter in the heavens but cosmic principles which pervade the universe and which find one expression in the heavenly constellations and another in the 'constella' (the psycho-analyst's word, not mine!) in our hearts. In short, they are, as some one termed them, the visible Gods – though not the only ones. Add to this the universal maxim 'as above, so below' and you have the whole in a nutshell – which nutshell you can crack if you are interested in its contents and please don't exhibit this string

of words as if it were a garland of lotuses.

Love always from

Yours  
KRISHNAPREM

Mirtola,  
Uttar Brindaban,  
July 6, 1941

Dear Govinda Gopal,

How does a *suduracar* become *ananyabhak*?<sup>1</sup> Well, the only words that come to my mind at the moment are those of the Buddha: “Think not lightly of the good saying: It will not come to me.” Even as the water-pot is filled by the falling of drops, so a wise man becomes full of good even if he gathers it little by little. Why should he gather good? Because he wants it. But if he doesn’t want it? Then I don’t know. If he doesn’t want it, better leave the whole subject alone. There is no such thing as unearned income in the spiritual world.

If people go on with *japa* throughout their lives and gain nothing by it, it only shows they aren’t going on the right road. *Japa* may or may not be the best way, and that is a subject on which I have my own opinion, but there are ways and ways of doing *japa* and what I have seen of most people’s *japa* is not fit for much more than earning a few *pice* a day in a Marwari’s *bhajanshala* and quite useless as an attempt at the most difficult achievement in the world.

Individual effort always bears fruit *if it is intelligently and rightly directed*, but you may spend a hundred years in trying to jump at one bound up on to the roof of a house and nothing whatever will come of such misdirected effort.

Indications of progress? Yes, ask yourself the question whether the compulsion of *raga* and *dvesha* in you is increasing or decreasing, whether your temper is in better control, whether things irritate you as much as they used to. In other words, is the power of Desire getting greater or less in you, for *where there is Kama there is no Rama* and vice versa. This is the best indicator of progress or the reverse.

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Gita*, IX.30: *Suduracar* means scoundrel. Krishnaprem writes in his *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*: “Even if the most sinful of men turns to Him and serves Him with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he, too, has entered on the Homeward Path.”

Anyhow I tell you one thing with entire certainty: namely, every step you take uphill is one step nearer to the summit which is our Goal. But the steps have to be taken in the right direction. As an old Chinese writer put it: “Anyone can talk about meditation, but he cannot master it if he does not know what the word means. If people sit and meditate one or two hours looking at their own egos and call it contemplation, how can anything come of it?”

You ask about *Vishvarupa*. I can only refer you to my book, *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*<sup>1</sup>, in which I have explained it in far more detail than I could possibly do in a letter. Why did it terrify Arjuna? Because the *Vishvarupa* is death to the ego and all fear death. The ego is false and all that is false must die in the fire of Truth. But we identify ourselves with the ego and therefore we fear.

*Vanshi-vibhushitakarannava-niradabhat...* ? As you please. But it is certain that the vision of the True and Real is not *soothing* or *pleasing* to the ego, for it is the Flame that will consume that ego utterly. Remember what the *Katha-Upanishad* says about the *shreya* and the *preya*. This path is the path to the *shreya* and if you are concerned with the soothing and the pleasant – the *preya*, in other words – it is better to keep off it altogether, for on it (as the same Upanishad states) one must meet and face *the Mighty Fear, the Upraised Thunderbolt (Mahadbhayam vajram udyatam)* – though, as it adds, *they who know that become immortal (ya etad-vidur-amritas-te bhavanti.)*

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

November 13, 1941

---

<sup>1</sup> He writes (Chapter 11): “He cannot bear for long the blaze of Light that floods upon him, shattering all his being. No human mind and body can for long endure upon the summits of eternal snow-clad peaks. He must return once more to lower levels, the dazzling Light be veiled in the familiar forms of Father, Lover, Friend; for still the fourth stage of the Path remains to tread and, while he needs a body, he must see the light in human, form.” – *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*

Mirtola

Dear Govinda Gopal,

You ask about the ‘best way’. I don’t think there is any one ‘best way’ if you come down to details, for they will differ in each case. Everyone is apt to speak of the way they themselves have gone as the ‘best’ – hence all the conflicting statements in different books. There is a statement in a little book termed ‘Light on the Path’ which says: “Seek it (the path) not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the Way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation (*dhyana*) alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labour, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onwards. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder.”

With the above statement I entirely agree. Hence, my unwillingness to say any one way is ‘the best’. The one essential thing is the dissolution of the so-called personal ego which must die before the true Self can be born. (Even this is only words for that Self is never born!) The dissolution or death of the false ego can be brought about by the self-abandonment of love and devotion, by the insight of *Advaitic* knowledge and by the technical processes of *Rajayoga* as well as by other means but somehow or other it has to be done and the ‘best way’ for a given individual at a given moment or in a given life (for it is not a matter of one life alone) will depend on where that individual is standing at the moment.

*Japa* is a most profound subject and I cannot possibly set forth its essential nature in a letter. In the first place we must distinguish between what is called *nama-japa* and *mantra-japa*. The latter requires a *guru* to give you the *mantra* and to direct your use of it (which again will vary according to temperament). You have no doubt been initiated into *Gayatri* and there is certainly *no better mantra* but you must try to understand its real meaning.

*Nama-japa* can be done by anyone but it is only very effective in practice (whatever books may say) when the name is one which is so *loved* that its repetition calls up the image of its Bearer. Mere mechanical

PART III – LETTERS

or loveless repetition is – I won't say useless – but of very limited use.

Remember that nothing mechanical is of any use since that which is mechanical is dead and this path is the path of life.

It is a difficult, a heart-breaking path. None can tread it to the end who does not want it more than he wants any other thing. Be sure that you really do want it before you try to go further. Current sentimentalism about God and so forth is about as much use as a hedge of flowers when the sea wall is broken and the tide rushes in. Fortunately for most men, that wall is strong and few are able to break it.

KRISHNAPREM

April 16, 1942  
Mirtola

My dear Govinda,

If I have not and do not answer your question about the particular path along which I myself travelled, it is because such description could only be of externals, as it were of the particular clothes I have worn (and there have been many) and would miss the essentials which cannot be described, least of all in a letter.

For over twenty years I have desired nothing but that One thing and have taken up anything that came to hand that seemed a possible help towards it. If I found it of no help I flung it aside and tried another. But I can recollect nothing that was of 'no help' altogether. All have been useful in some degree or other and I regret none of my past attempts and experiences. However, if there is one thing which seems to me central and all important: it is *faith in the Guru*. For the rest, there is a mystery at the heart of all life and it is in that mystery that all true causes lie. We can say nothing more.

To your question about him who is '*natisakta na nirvinna*' the *Srimad Bhagavata* answers, '*bhaktiyogo asya siddhida*' (I quote from memory only). But what is *bhakti-yoga*? *Bhakti* is self-giving. What if I am unable to give myself? I do not know if I can do more than suggest a few answers:

PART III – LETTERS

- 1 Contact with those who do give themselves (but we must be sure that they do really do so and not merely appear to. That is the reason why so much so-called *satsang* is useless for it stimulates inner doubts which may be suppressed but remain all the same. Our soul can never be deceived however much the mind can). Such contact is difficult to find.
- 2 Acting always for Krishna's sake in everything. Gradually this will increase the realisation of Him and with that increasing vividness will come more ability to give one's self to Him.
- 3 Careful and dispassionate self-examination. "I do not give myself, why? What is it that prevents me from so doing?" The answer will come of itself if you meditate, so I will say nothing. Meditate on the question at all times of the day, sitting down, walking about etc. If you really want the answer you will certainly get it. That much I can promise you.

Having found the answer set to work to remove the causes that hinder.

You ask when you will get the love which you want. I can only give you a paradox by way of answer:

Until you see you cannot love:

Until you love you cannot see.

Crack your teeth on that. There is an answer. Find it. Again, whatever one *says* about the Brahman is part of the pairs of opposites. For instance, Infinite-finite, unity-diversity etc. etc. It is useless saying this Infinite is never against the finite for the two concepts are essentially linked together. *Yato vado nivartante*. One can say nothing which is true but must grasp *both* of the opposites and leap boldly. The very earth we tread on is illusory but it seems to tread on *for a moment*. So with words and other symbols, abstract or concrete. They can serve as momentary bridges for the feet of experience to tread but if we stop to examine them they dissolve into impalpable mist. Such is the world. Philosophy is no exception. We must go on boldly and in the end make the leap.

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

17th January, 1942

My dear Dilip,

I was very glad to get your letter and poems. I do, I think, understand the special difficulties under which you work and if I have never alluded to them it was rather for fear of seeming to criticise in any way than because I did not realise their existence. However, as you ask me to write as frankly as possible, I will do so.

To my thinking, it is quite out of the question for you to “give up wanting Krishna and using His Name”. There can be no question of disloyalty to your Guru in so-doing and I am glad that Sri Aurobindo’s letter has set your mind at rest on that point. The traditional names and acts of those great figures of the past are, every one of them, windows through which the Real is easily evolved...

There is only one complete Yoga: all so-called different Yogas are partial aspects of it which represent only the partial aspirations of certain people. He who would go the whole of the Way must find the whole Yoga, whether he starts from the *Upanishad*, Patanjali’s *Ashtanga* Yoga, *Vaishnavism* or from anywhere else. *Krishnat param kimapi tat-twam aham na jane*<sup>1</sup> – the words are not mine but those of the great Vedantist Madhusudan Saraswati. But Krishna can be seen in many ways and under many partial aspects. It is certain, however, that He will never fail anyone nor leave him, saying: “Thus far with me but no farther.” Presentations of *Yoga* may vary; inadequate ones may have to be criticised; new words may have to be found to replace those that have become stereotyped in time; but Yoga is one and eternal. When man first appeared on this earth it was down the Ladder of Yoga that he came. When the last man leaves this Earth it will be up that same Ladder that he will climb. The Ladder is *one*. There is no other. Ways and means may and do differ from man to man each of whom has his special difficulties, but the Ladder itself is one. I speak, however inadequately, of what I know to be the Truth. Take it or leave it.

I sympathise with you for your feeling of the lack of personal contact with your *Guru* and can well understand how hard it must make things. That is a matter, though, which is not in your power to

---

<sup>1</sup> I do not know what Truth there can be beyond Krishna.

alter. I, personally, should find it very difficult, but – as the *Gita* says – “Over that which is inevitable thou shouldst not grieve.” If you can’t have it at present then you can’t, and there is nothing to be done but to set your teeth and get on with it.

When I read your letter to *Ma*, she said: “Tell him to look for Krishna within and not without and that he will see Him when he cares for nothing else but Him.”

Speaking for myself, I know there was a time when it used to irritate me if people talked too much of “within”. I felt I wanted to see Him without, but I have since understood that one must first see Him within and then He is seen everywhere. For the rest, it is quite true that one’s heart must be full of the desire for Him. It is hardly my place to say it, but as you have asked me to, I would say that you still perhaps care for too many things besides Him. For instance, music and poetry in themselves and the admiration they bring you. As expression of your feelings for Him they are admirable. They can even be admirable things in themselves for some people but not for you. You have made progress in music and poetry and all your friends are delighted? But what will it profit you if, in the process, your egoism should have increased? I am not speaking *de haut en bas* (as a superior to an inferior) as they say, for I speak of my own difficulties. Except in relation to your Goal all these things – music, poetry, philosophy etcetera are empty, thrice-empty. Read the passage in Tennyson’s Holy Grail<sup>1</sup> where Percival describes the Waste Land where everything turned to dust and the Bridge that led far out into the Sea. We should not, like Percival potter about dismayed by the Waste Land nor even spend our time wringing poetry out of the evanescence, but, like Galahad leap for the Bridge. Don’t tell me that in your *Yoga* this world is not the Waste Land but the garment of the Divine. When the Grail was reached and the wound of its Keeper healed, then and only then did the waters flow once more over the Waste Land fertilising as they flowed.

“All is not phantom,” you say in your poem. I tell you all is phantom

---

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Grail, poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson

unless He be seen who is the only Real. See Him and all is His garment: see Him not and all is the merest phantom. What is Maya? – you ask. To see anything whatsoever apart from Him: that is the Illusion – the source of sorrow. There are no “emanations”, no “creations” – no things at all apart from Him. All those are so many words which describe deluded ways of seeing. See them and you do not see Him. See Him and you see that all is Him – nothing has vanished, nothing is lost, nothing is rejected: seeing Him you see that all is Him and He is all. What we call the beauty of the sky, the great spaces of air, the life-giving flow of water, the bright power of fire – all these are Him. See them as separate and you find yourself in the arid desert of scientific nonsense. See Him and they are seen to be the ever-living Gods who form His limbs, eternal as He is eternal.

You say you find it hard to go on. That is a good sign. This path is the hardest path in the world and as long as we find it easy we may be sure we are not getting very far but just free-wheeling easily along a level road. Oh yes, we may be happy and peaceful for a time but that happiness or peace is illusory: anything can disturb it and we achieve nothing. *His* peace is something quite different, something that has its being in the very heart of tremendous winds, winds which would shatter us to atoms. It is only when the strain begins to tell on us, when the breath comes short, that we can know that we are really climbing. Till then all that we have done at most is to go over rapidly the ground we covered in a previous life. This life begins when the strain comes on – scarcely before. There is no attainment of Him, until the egg-shell of self is broken. Why then should we complain when the breaking-strain begins to come on? With pain we are born both physically and spiritually, but it is the inner life that we seek and not the self-enwrapped bliss of uterine existence.

Fill yourself with Krishna, occupy your thoughts with Him and let all your actions be for Him. Surely you will find Him. Do not think that this will be disloyal to anyone, for this is the “surrender” of which you write and he who teaches you will teach you this.

Why worry over what your fellows around you say or do? Each of us has his own egg-shell cracked. Some are cracked one way, some

another, but all are broken in the end. As for the “personal independence” of which you write – that is a dream. You can never have it and even if you did, it would be hell, for it means separateness.

As for those who say that seeking Krishna has no part in their *Yoga* – that is the ignorant talk of those who do not know who Krishna is and vainly plume themselves on their own vain ignorance of “all that old stuff”. Paris fashions in *Yoga*!

See Krishna, think of Krishna, act for Krishna and, if you believe me, you will find Krishna with the utmost certainty though the world should crack and open up beneath your feet. This is the Truth. All else but Him is nothing, absolutely nothing.

Love and blessings from *Ma*. Moti also sends love and *pranams*.

Love always from,

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

14th April, 1942  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

We enjoyed your friend Gabriel’s visit and all too kind stay immensely. He is really a delightful man and we found that we also had mutual friends in Paris so that for your sake, for their sake and not least for his own sake we were delighted to see him.

To return to your letter: you say you will find difficulty as regards what you term Shankara’s rejection of *karma*. But as with *samsara*, you must first find out what he means by *karma*. I think if you study him carefully and meditate on what he says then you will see that by *karma* he does not mean just ‘action’ as we translate it but action motivated by desire, the action, that is, of the ignorant and unbalanced man. Study the nature of such action and you will find that its real purpose is to try and consolidate the position of the personal ego which cannot be done however much we try. The ego is unbalanced and consequently always in danger because it is removed from the true

Centre. Instead of trying to hold it firm by gripping at the outer shell of being (and that is what ordinary action does) it must learn to go back and poise itself in the Centre. When there it is perfectly stable and balanced, free from the stain of desire. When it is poised in that state its natural (or divine if you prefer the word) life-manifestations may perhaps be termed ‘action’ (the divine action of the *Gita*) but it is not *karma* in Shankara’s sense of the word. That at least is my reading of Shankara, though it is perhaps not that of all his followers. However, I do not believe that everything going under the name of Shankara was the work of the original and first Shankara and in this last view I have the support of my friend Jagadish Chatterji who is far more competent than me to speak on such a matter. There may be overemphasis for definite ends in Shankara’s work but I do not think there is any fundamental error. The difference between the unbalanced desire-prompted actions of the ordinary man and the divinely balanced life-movements of a *Yogi* is that between earth and heaven the *latter cannot be achieved until the former have ceased*. Hence Shankara’s stress, but he who grasps a razor by the blade is likely to cut his hand.

Do not vex yourself with disputes as to personality and impersonality. Personality has no meaning apart from its polar opposite Impersonality and *vice versa*. They are mental terms and must always be linked together in thought. To overstress one in consciousness is to be haunted by a malignant ghost of the other. Be receptive to both movements, and Krishna, from whom spring both, will fertilise the soul. Do not think to affirm but aspire with your whole being (both sides of it) and you will *receive* that which cannot be affirmed and which is lost in all affirmation. That is no doubt why Christ said: “Ask and ye shall receive.” But do not ask with the mere mental asking for with that goes the equivalent opposite, rejection. The whole soul must open with all its petals and not one or two only. It seems to me that you expressed this in the music of that *kirtan* of yours I am so fond of: *Brindabaner lila*. Only remember that the sceptic who says it is all the poet’s fantasy, *kavir kalpana* (all the *lila* of Sri Krishna), is also in you – otherwise you would not concern yourself with him. His doubt is the compensation of wrongness in *your* affirmation. See

Him in the centre as He is and all is peace. But, you will perhaps ask; after all, is He personal or is He not? I can only answer that the question has no meaning. He is That which manifests alike in the personal and the impersonal, but these are mere opposed concepts of ours and to reach Him as He is in Himself they must be dropped. Meanwhile we can hold them both like sun and moon, one in each hand, and leap boldly.

To return to your *Mayavadi* friend's remark that worship is sanctioned for *inferior adhikaris*. Well, there is worship and worship. There is the worship of Radha for Krishna: there is also the worship of Shankara's own hymn to the Devi before which he could not gain the *Jnana* he sought. As for us we are all *inferior adhikaris* and it is only the mental ego that despises worship in favour of *philosophy*. One is the response of the heart, the other of the head. Let us marry them together that the divine birth may take place.

As for your troubles with hardness and narrowness in others – do not think too much of them. We all have our faults which arise from the same universal cause, namely failure to understand ourselves, which is the first step towards transmuting them. Each of us has his own inner troubles from which he seeks to escape or defend himself and those attempts are manifest in outer *faults* of character. He who is hard is so because he fears his own inner softness. He who is proud is so because he despises part of himself. He who is cruel hates and would torture part of himself. Failing to understand ourselves, we project all this on others and our actions thus become ugly. In short:

'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife. – Shelley

There are many reasons, too long to go into, why life in an *Ashram* causes these phantoms of our own creation to become more active and to come more out into the open. This gives us a chance to deal with them radically and it is a great advantage – if we take it. Let us not look with judging eyes at the shells of men but having first seen our own hearts look just with eyes of pity and understanding on the

pathetic struggles of those timid children, the egos of men, with the phantom forms of their own ignorance and then, if we can, see deeper still the blissful self beneath, of whom these egos are but untaught children. All these pathetic struggles are taking place within the arms of a peace that is present in us now and at all times. For God’s sake, don’t think I speak *de haut en bas*! I am no *en haut* myself and what I have written is addressed to my own heart as much as to yours. Naked we must seek Krishna. Even a stitch of self-protecting clothing hides us from Him. For instance, you write and so do I: that is all right, but in that writing is not Dilip and is not Krishnaprem gratified? We should write as the sun shines without any ego-gratification. Only then does He, the Light of lights, shine in our writing or our singing.

By personal independence we all mean the right to protect our egos from being overwhelmed. The stupid seek it grossly with the broadsword of gold and material power: the clever seek it subtly with all the cunning of the mind. All of us seek it and all of us must cease to seek it. We all seek it because we are afraid of death but death is only one side of Krishna and “except we die we cannot be born again”. Personal independence is a snare and a delusion: a mask to cover our childish fears. It must go and go utterly to be replaced by dependence on Krishna.

I have written pages. I will not read them though or I might tear them up. I have written to myself as much as, perhaps more than, to you. Please therefore do not circulate it and keep it to yourself.

We very often play your records in the evening. When I hear them I seem to feel you as if you were here and can see the familiar gestures with which you accompany them. I love them all but the *Brindaban Kirtan* still remains my favourite.

Love always, Dilip, from yours

KRISHNAPREM

19th April, 1943  
Almora

My Dear Dilip,

Your all too brief stay here was such a joy to us in every way! We all missed you very much when you went. Not only I (which was to be expected) but everyone felt the place quite dull without you.

Yes, I can quite understand how foreign Lucknow felt. It is rather a city of illusions at the best of times and now with all this war business people must be even more than preoccupied with their own phantoms.

“’Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife.”

It is quite literally true. The ways are crowded with them and they jostle us at every step. Everywhere are the shape-changers and we are such fools that we take them for real men and women. Where is that country of which you sang, that Braja whose dwellers cast the shadows which we call the world? Well, I suppose we do know where it is, but part of us prefers the shadows.

When shall I hear you sing *Sri Brindabaner lila* again? I can't tell, though you may have guessed, how much it moved me. All things fell away and only Krishna remained, the truth beyond the darkness. Why do you not sing only to HIM? If you do, I'm sure that that which is within you will burst its banks and flow in a great tide. The banks are only illusions. All that we do that is not for Him is the merest folly. There is nothing real but Krishna anywhere – but still we go on with our follies.

And here is a verse to offset the verse you quoted:

*Uttamāhaituki bhakti madhyamā dhyāna-dhāranā*  
*Adhamah karmasannyāsas-tarkacharchā-dhamādhamā*<sup>1</sup>

This is not much of a letter but I just felt like writing to you. *Ma* sends you her love and blessings. *Moti* also her love and *pranams*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Most precious of all is unbargaining love, next comes meditation, then renunciation of works, and the worst is the penchant for intellectual debates.

Love always, Dilip, from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

17th April, 1943

My dear Dilip,

I have been meaning to write to you for weeks, ever since getting your loving birthday poem in fact, but the continuous stream of visitors made it impossible to do more than scribble notes and I didn't want to put you off with a mere line. The poem arrived all right on the 12th May (actually my birthday is on the 10th) but though Moti read it out she said she was unable to explain much of it to me and I could only catch the general drift of it. However, later your friend M. G. and her son arrived here and they read it out and explained it – not without some difficulty – from which I infer that your writing is difficult in places. What can I say except to thank you for – no – to reciprocate the love which inspired it and to wish that all its 'blush-making' eulogies were deserved. One image, incidentally, rather baffled interpretation, namely the phrase *sabhāmā-jhe swapnachāri* (I think those were the words) which suggested a picture of me drowsing away through academic council meetings and the like, a picture that was probably true enough but perhaps not quite what you meant! Seriously, I can only wish that I were or may become all that your too fond heart sees in me.

A record by Renuka Sen-Gupta has just been brought from Rajendra Shanker with a message that it was sent by you and I am handing it to Moti. Also a short time ago a packet of 'dhups' from Calcutta that I can only suppose was also your gift.

After you left we had enough of hot weather to have satisfied even your Pondicherry-acclimatised heart. Now the rain seems to have set in and we are having weather that is seasonable no doubt and good for every tiling but is nevertheless a bit depressing. The Guptas left the day before yesterday and perhaps just in time to avoid the heavy

rains. They were very nice people, but so are all your friends.

You asked in your last letter (with the poem) what it was I said about homoeopathy. I don't know that I remember at all clearly and in any case I don't know enough about the system to say very much but what I do feel is that the orthodox allopathic system is – shall we say '*asuric*'. In the first place, it is inseparable from experiments on animals which, however justified, will inevitably have to be paid for. In the second place, it is becoming more and more wedded to the statistical which seems to me to be a fundamentally wrong approach. In the third place, its remedies are *violent*, and, in the end, violence never pays.

It is admittedly the most developed system at the present day and so perhaps the most generally useful, but that is because the present flow of the tide is in its favour and the best brains have gone into it. At present the unorthodox systems are having to work against the tide and so with inferior resources, but that does not prevent their being potentially of more value and in some cases even actually so. One of the Chaldean oracles reads: "The spawning of illnesses within us is in our own control for they are born out of the life we lead." In my opinion, no therapy is satisfactory which does not base itself on the fact that the root causes of all illness are psychic. Applying violent remedies to the physical body *may* be the best that can be done in any given circumstances but it is no substitute for adequate study of and balancing of the disturbed psychic conditions which have brought about and are expressing themselves in the disorder. It is like pouring oil on the troubled wake of a ship instead of improving the stream-line of the vessel itself. Physical conditions are the outer crust of being. Like the shell of a snail they are the excretion of (and merely serve to house) the living psychic organism 'within'. For a *sadhaka* in particular the less recourse one has to allopathic medicine the better because (a) the so-called remedies are no real remedies but merely burden-shifters and (b) the emphasis on merely physical conditions is a wrong one and is apt to encourage our already strong *instinctive* materialism. As for homoeopathy, it is only one of several possible alternatives and I know too little of its practice to say much of its

value. I believe that Hahnemann got his ideas from Paracelsus and occult sciences but did not care to acknowledge it and the subsequent development has been over-influenced by the prestige of ‘natural’ science and so taken a wrong direction, at least in part. Perhaps also Hahnemann did not really understand what he borrowed and the real principles involved. But at least it is free from the taint of cruelty and violence and that is something.

Science, like *shraddha* in the *Gita*, is threefold. There is a *tamasic* science, a mere collection of opinions, not verified and not understood, what most people call a mere bundle of superstitions in fact. *Rajasic* science, the study of the action of matter on matter, thorough-going like many *rajasic* phenomena, but superficial and never reaching the heart of the matter. Lastly there is a *sattvik* science based on the knowledge of the eternal Gods, of how their action and interaction weaves the web of manifested being in all the three worlds. This science is now-a-days more or less submerged on account of the doubtless necessary over-emphasis on the mental analytic mode of thought. But it is there and will come into its own again in due time. Incidentally, as usual, the average man confuses it with the *tamasic* variety.

In all things we should study the movements of the ever-living Gods for it is they who weave the web of life here and now. But do you really believe in the Gods or do you think I am talking mere poetry? We must above all beware of pushing off spiritual reality to ‘higher realms’ and leaving this world to be dealt with after the manner of Russell etc. If we do that we shall never reach those higher worlds at all. Our thoughts may soar to all sorts of lofty ideal conceptions but they will remain mere thoughts as long as we remain rooted in the bog of so-called matter. “What is not *here* is nowhere at all” as the *Tantra* says and if the Gods are not seen here and now they will be seen nowhere or, if seen, will appear as mere ideal illusions. When you see *Surya Deva* for instance, do you feel that it is all very poetic but that “after all”, “really” He is “only” a ball of naming gas (or whatever the latest description may be) or if so, then for all your *Yoga*, as Touchstone said: “Thou art in a parlous state!” or as Blake said to the angel: “Thou art a disciple of Aristotle, thy works are only analytics

and thou art damned!”

Anyhow, *jale Krishna, sthale Krishna, Krishna parvatamastake*: He is on land and *sea* and the mountain-peak. If I had your gifts, I would do nothing but write *bhajans* and sing them. I do not feel I can write a line now-a-days. The breath is flowing in the wrong nostril. But if I do write again I would like to write something quite different, something about One whose darkness conceals more than all that the brightness of *Surya* has ever revealed. But, alas, I am no poet and the language of prose cracks and gives way under the breaking strain. Write about the Gods: yes. About the Sons of God, yes. But how write about Krishna Himself with a stream of ink having nothing in common with him but its black colour and its ‘*vakra gatih*’? So perhaps I won’t write at all or write about other things. Anyhow it is time this particular stream of ink came to an end and so I will stop.

*Ma* sends you her love and blessings and *Moti* her love and *pranams*. Your all-too-brief visit passed like all things pleasant and we can only look forward to the next in an uncertain future.

Love always, Dilip, from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

21st June, 1943  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

Your letter crossed mine in the post. I hope you will have received mine by now. I don’t at all agree with your idea of trying ‘drastic remedies’. I don’t think it does any good: if it did produce any result it would have to be paid for afterwards by some reaction. On the other hand what you say about singing *only* to Krishna is excellent. But even then you go a bit off it when you say that you have got to sing once to such and such people. You haven’t got to do anything of the sort. If those people are present let them be present. Why should you think of *them*? Why can’t you sing to Him alone and let who will be present or absent? Do not even think of them and what *they* would

like or not but only of Him and what *He* would like. If others enjoy His *prasad* what is that to you? Apart from that, if I were you I would sing to Him regularly, alone, morning and evening (but that is for you to judge, subject to your Guru's approval of course) at any rate alone until you were able to feel His presence sufficiently to be indifferent to the presence of others. Afterwards what does it matter? He is in all of them. The plain issue is this: what is your voice for? To sing to Krishna or bring about triumphs of your own?

Why do you make such heavy weather about so-called *bahya-puja*? Never mind about what Brahmananda or any other Ananda may have said. Look to the facts which are that Krishna is present in a brass image as He is in all things. If special methods are adopted (i.e. *prana-pratishtha* and *puja*) He is, not more present, but more easily seen as present. He is in all things everywhere. Do you not want to see Him in all things, *outer* as well as *inner*? And what is *outer* and what *inner*? The so-called *outer* world is only seen because the inner world is in the heart just as the picture on the screen is only seen because the slide is in the magic lantern. Your consciousness extends to far horizons – even to the stars. Then those stars etc. are in *your consciousness*; so why think of them as outside? There is no inside and no outside but only different states of consciousness and in all of them is Krishna. Why discriminate unfavourably? Some men seek only within and despise the outer as unreal. But that is the *pseudo-mayavada* or rather the wrong *mayavada*. That which is within is that which is without and *vice versa*. Looking only within, you see that *atma* which is within but leave the *without* all cold and lonely. But Krishna is more than that. It is by His very essence that He manifested (and manifests) the *inner* wonders in the outer world as well. There is no outer and no inner. The brass image is “only maya” – is it? Only a piece of dead matter? Then don't see the *brass image* but see Him where fools see the *brass image*. Moreover there *is* no *dead matter*. It is men's folly that they think there is. Just they invent this myth of dead matter, then they say how can Krishna be in dead matter? Then they 'discover' that the mind and heart are also dead matter and then they say how can Krishna be anywhere?

It may still be asked why not worship Him in the heart, what need of more? To which there are two answers. Firstly, who says the brass

image is not in my heart? It is. All I perceive is in my heart and nowhere else. Secondly, when He is everywhere why should we leave any tract of experience without Him? In the mind worship Him with thought: in what is above the mind worship Him with what is above the mind (if you can) or with silence; and in what is *below* the mind, the so-called outer world, worship Him with what is below the mind, the so-called physical body. To Him we should offer what is His own, on all planes and in all conditions of consciousness. That man must be a boob or else very unbalanced (which is perhaps the same thing) whose inner offering of his five senses is *hindered* by this bodily offering of the five symbolic lights in the *arati*. And so with other processes of *Puja*. Those only will despise so-called outer *puja* who have never understood it and whose own efforts in that direction have been merely formal orthodoxies designed for outward show. I will say only two things more and have done. Firstly, ritual of any sort is a powerful means of handling those things which are as yet invisible to the normal consciousness (and that includes far more things than are visible). Secondly, just this. He who worships Krishna only in the heart will see Him in the heart: he who worships Him every where will see Him everywhere. “Cleave the wood and you will find Him; lift the stone and He is there.” Not Vasudeva *antara* or Vasudeva *bahya*, but Vasudeva *sarvam*. I don’t say so-called *bahya-puja* is the only way to see Him *outside*, but it is one way: it has certain advantages and of course certain corresponding disadvantages, so, *chacun á son goût*. But we should be careful not to be misled by Protestant Christian disapproval either directly or indirectly surveyed by “educated” writers who are themselves over-sensitised to such disapproval, The *Siddhas* are beyond it of course and beyond many other things but what is that to you or me?

*Ma* sends her love and blessings, Moti her love and *pranams* but how can I send you that which has been yours since we first met?

Yours,

KRISHNAPREM

25<sup>th</sup> August, 1943

Almora

My dear Dilip,

Thanks for your booklet of poems.

As regards my remark that violence never pays and the question of justifiable violence on justifiable Occasions – the point is a subtle one (as indeed are most points if pursued to the end! In fact they are apt to have the Euclidean character of position without magnitude!).

Certainly I agree that the “ordinary run” of humanity is not ready for subtle therapies. But I was not talking of or to the “ordinary run” but to you as a *Sadhaka*. The ordinary man must and will have his appendix operated on under certain conditions, and even for the *sadhaka* whether he uses medical violence on certain occasions will have to depend on the degree of his inner attainment. I was putting forward a guiding principle rather than a mere practical rule. ‘Violence never pays’ meant that in some form or other it has to be *paid for* though on some occasions such paying of the price may be the lesser of the two evils.

To pass from the merely medical to the wider question: Yes, I certainly think Kurukshetra was historical as well as *adhyatmic* (all the acts of a *Mahapurusha* have that twofold quality and, for that matter, so have the acts of all men in a more limited degree – limited because of their inner disharmony). I don’t know just when Kurukshetra occurred but I am quite sure the narrative has a substantial *historical* basis, I certainly hold that the instructions to Arjuna (in the *Gita*) have their outer as well as inner application. Does Krishna then support violence on occasions? Undoubtedly and on many occasions. For instance, apart from making use of violence in men, He *supports* violence by the Gods, e.g. in earthquakes etc. (I hope you are not so ‘modern’ as to be scandalised by a reference to the Gods who are just as factual as you or I but in a different mode). Even if I were to say that violence is not for the Brahmin I shall still be confronted with Drona and Parashurama. Clearly I could not support the point. Violence is part of the manifestation but perhaps it would be correct to say that it is the last resort and always has to be paid for. Its results are not permanent (because not harmonious). Notice that Krishna makes

no attempt to deny Arjuna's gloomy prognostications about the evil results of the war and that in fact they did take place though of course they were not the *only* results. Moreover, even if on Kurukshetra's field Krishna was weaponless, on other occasions he was by no means so.

What can I say in the end but as Brahma said to Krishna in Brindaban, "Let those who know, know: what can I say save that your powers are beyond the range of my body, mind and speech." All I know is that there is truth in the principle I enunciated and an important truth for you and me. How much truth and what are the limitations (limitations are invariably and inevitably present in *all* mental formations) I do not know. Hitler as Duryodhana? Again I do not know. He may be or again he may be much less than that. It is too fatally easy to see Krishna's enemies or even Arjuna's enemies in those who one may feel to be enemies of one's own connection. I detest nearly all that I have heard of Hitler (which incidentally, is not true of Duryodhana) but are the statements that have come my way all true, are they all a decently complete selection of the facts? I do not know. I know that the would-be Fuehrer in myself is evil but is the man Hitler essentially or only accidentally (in the philosophic sense of the term) a manifestation of that inner archetype of the would-be dictator? I do not know. If I felt called to take part in the outer conflict I would certainly fight against him with all my heart. But an outer Arjuna has not yet come within the range of my vision and that makes me suspicious. One there is who is certainly present even to my weak eyes and He is, as ever, in the midst of it, but if I take them off Him even for a little and look around for anyone else, the fog of ego-blindness comes down and blots out everything. '*Yatra Yogeshwara Krishna*' (where Krishna is, there will be victory, prosperity etc.). Yes, but He is always everywhere. What about Partha-dhanurdhara? Is the roaring noise of the Anglo-American aeroplanes the *pratyancha* of the great Gandiva bow? Again I do not know, so I must be silent and watch only the One whom I can see. If I could see Him more clearly I should be able to recognise others too; but at present I cannot and therefore I remained silent when you talked of Hitler. But that certainly does not mean that I have any sort of sympathy for him. If all that we have

heard is an adequate selection of the facts about him then he seems to be one who has given himself to the service of evil forces and who is fated to be torn to pieces by the powers he serves.

Perhaps you feel that it is our duty to take a side even if only in thought. Well, if you feel so by all means do so, but, for myself, I feel that if one can keep one's gaze fixed on Krishna, however feeble our powers, we shall be doing something, however little, towards removing the fog of illusion, the *Rakshasi maya*, that envelopes the whole field and so will be doing what little we can towards helping others to see more clearly. And that is all I can say about that.

You say that sectarianism sometimes makes you doubt whether even a spiritual *sadhana* can always help to enlarge the mind and heart. In time, yes, but not always, at once – and we are too impatient. Moreover it must be a truly spiritual *sadhana*, that is, one performed for the sake of the Spirit alone. Only too often the *sadhaka*, while invoking the name of the Spirit, is contentedly serving ego-interests and then of course little, if any, true widening takes place. One trouble is that many of the *sadhanas* that appeal particularly to the modern educated mind are what may be called 'manipulative' – that is, they recoil from sheer self-giving to Krishna and seek to attain the goal by self-directed manipulation of the psyche. Many, perhaps most versions of *ashtanga yoga*, come under this head, and at least some versions of *advaita vedanta*. It is doubtless possible but I think very difficult for the modern man to go through to the true goal by such manipulative methods. The curious thing is that it is just *these* methods that are apt to appeal most to the modern mind. There is a terrible danger of being side-tracked into serving the interests of a merely glorified ego. Another trouble even where self-giving is attempted is that we sometimes identify Krishna's *lila* with our own hopes and desires and then proceed to serve the latter under the name of the former! But why worry about all this? The world is full of illusions and will-o'-the-wisps. The only true light is that which streams out from Krishna's feet, the *akasha-ganga* which streams through all the worlds. "See where Christ's blood flows through the firmament," as Faust cried out, too late and in despair. Forget your problems (they are endless) and your

PART III – LETTERS

doubts, as your Guru says, settle down to aspiration and devotion, “leaving it to Krishna to do what He is sure to do in His own right way and time”.

Your visit was a joy to us all. Have no doubts of what is quite certain and you will surely find Him at the right time. In our blindness we are naturally impatient but it is on a dark night that He is born.

Love always, Dilip

Yours ever,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S. – I had finished this and was reading the *Bhagavat* this morning and came across this which is perhaps appropriate after my remarks about manipulative methods: (Excuse my bad Bengali letters.)

*Yanmādibhir yogapathaih kāma-lobha-hato muhuh  
Mukunda-sevaya yadwat tadwadāma na shāmyati*

‘The mind, attached constantly by desire and greed does not so certainly attain calm by the practice of *ashtanga yoga* as by the service of (devotion to) Mukunda.’

P. O. Mirtola  
Dist. Almora,  
6th July, 1938

Dear Abani Babu,

Yes, I got your letter but as I was just going away to some friends in Almora I could not answer it then. I came back a couple of days ago and found your post card awaiting me. Thanks also for the copy of the address to Dilip which I read and liked. I can read Bengali quite easily – if it is not too aggressively ‘modern’ – though I cannot speak it to any extent.

Yes, Dilip sent me a copy of *Suryamukhi* and I remember the letters you quote from. By all means give “a true account of Krishna’s life

and actions” – if you can. But where are you going to find them? The *Bhagavat* on which people rely for the *Braja Lila* was certainly written several centuries AD, though the simple account in the *Vishnu Purana* is perhaps post-Buddhistic. I do not think it is possible to make the *Mahabharata* pre-Buddhistic; and though doubtless some of its stories reflect very old traditions we can place no reliance on the details. Moreover, though you may not agree, to me it is quite certain that perhaps most of the stories clustering round Krishna were written by symbolists though doubtless they used older perhaps even historical material which they re-cast to suit their symbolism.

You say that in that case “he may never have existed”. That is just the rub: what are you going to do about it? You can call up faith and *believe*, but a belief without evidence automatically evolves its shadow in the shape of an equal and opposite doubt buried deep in your heart or, as some people would say, in your unconscious. Anyhow you will get no peace and no certainty and without certainty how are you going to proceed? Moreover even if there was a “real” historical Krishna and even if he did all that he is related to have done, it is not anyone or anything outside yourself that can give you the goal you desire. Nothing that is outside yourself can give you That which is within you though things outside can and do symbolise the reality within. It is not any historical figure who can say as Krishna did “I will liberate you from all sins”. Nor as Christ said: “No man cometh to the Father save through me.” Both these statements are true but we must know that the I who is speaking is not any person however beautiful and loveable but the Atman itself, buried in the hearts of all beings. And that Atman is real and certain. It alone can be the basis of our lives. Whether Krishna, Christ, Buddha existed or not (as the world counts existence) that Atman exists, has always existed and will always exist. Give it what name you please but that Reality is there as the unescapable background of all life, of all thought – even of doubt. All else is uncertain but That is unshakeably true and it is That on which we must base our lives, to which we must direct our aspirations.

Then what need of a human figure at all? For some there is no need but most find it difficult to feel *love* at all intensely save for a human figure. This is quite natural and since love is the great force

which carries us through the “dead centres” of our egos into the shoreless sea beyond, it follows that it will be easier for us to symbolise that Reality in the form of some brightly shining figure who can symbolise it for us while at the same time serving as a focus to draw the love of our hearts. Christ, Buddha, Krishna, in themselves they are all the One Atman in your heart but, if they existed historically (as in point of fact I believe they did), they were, as *historical figures*, men in whom that Atman was able to manifest in its full beauty and power. Hence comes it that their characters and actions have a power to symbolise that Atman which is not found in, say, your next door neighbour though the same Atman is in him too.

Perhaps you think that such an attitude seems artificial. The whole world is artificial and its artificer is the mind. Nowhere in all the world is there anything solid and real. We tread on thought, our bodies are made of thought, the whole world is but thought. The ‘solid’ street you tread is but a cobweb spun by mind but you need not fear to fall, for your body which treads it is but a similar cobweb. Alone the Thinker of the thought is immortal. But that Thinker is in you – rather He *is* you, could you but see yourself as in truth you are. Seek therefore the Thinker in your heart for only there will you find the Immortal One who showed Himself in all those Divine forms which as forms perished long ago. Seek Him in your own heart for it is only there that you are in direct touch with Reality and, whether Krishna was a historical figure or not, the Krishna in your heart is an eternal Reality, the only Reality in all this ever-changing flux of shadows. Do not be deceived by the illusions of the senses. I tell you in all sober seriousness that the floor on which you are sitting is not a solid ‘thing’ at all but a mere phantom floating in the Sea of Consciousness. It is not in the bright illusions of the senses and the sense mind that Krishna is to be found but in “That which sees through the eye but the eye does not see; which thinks through the mind but the mind does not think.” Therefore seek him not in history but in That which makes history but, as the *Upanishad* might have added, which history does not know.

As for your other question, about the monotony of life – it should have answered itself. There can be no lasting satisfaction in the play of transient shadows. Satisfaction is elsewhere.

PART III – LETTERS

*Ma* sends her blessings. She has not been very well lately.  
Love and all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,  
KRISHNAPREM

(Re. Krishnaprem's letter on Hitler and the War)

Dilip,

What we say is not that the Allies have not done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces. I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have been that, in dealings with each other – at least all who had the strength and got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? But there is the other side also. You are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; looked at like that, all have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England – the present allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and spread too the institutions which try to embody them. Whatever the relative worth of these things – they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage of the forward evolution. (What about the others? Hitler, for example, says it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples – they must be kept as serfs and labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be free without seeking any personal gain; she has also conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, or Iraq without a struggle. She has been moving away steadily, if slowly, from imperialism towards co-operation; the British Commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction; she is moving in idea towards a world-union of some kind in which aggression is to be made impossible; her new generation has no longer the old firm belief in mission and empire; she has offered India Dominion independence – or even sheer isolated independence, if

she wants that, after the war, with an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves. All that is what I call evolution in the right direction – however slow and imperfect and hesitating it may still be. As for America she has foresworn her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, she has conceded independence to Cuba and the Philippines. Is there a similar trend on the side of the Axis? One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once again, *it is the forces* working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface *details*. The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated.

For us the question does not arise. We made it plain in a letter which has been made public<sup>1</sup> that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the *Asuric*. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves

---

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple (29-7-42): “You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India; it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overcome the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. It is no use concentrating on the defects or mistakes of nations; all have defects and commit serious mistakes; but what matters is on what side they have ranged themselves in the struggle. It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act according to the light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine work to be done; for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the *Asura*.”

instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions which are common to human nature and all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces: the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly and might lead even, at the worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least have stood for human values, though they may often act against their own best ideals (human beings always do that): Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (e.g., the virtues of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race). That does not make the English or American nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a primary importance.

The Kurukshetra example is not to be taken as an exact parallel but rather as a traditional instance of the war between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because the leaders made themselves His instruments. It is not to be envisaged as a battle between virtue and wickedness, the good and the evil men. After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, quite unselfish and without passions?

Were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests – just and right, no doubt, but still personal claim and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharmayuddha*, but it was for right and justice, in their own case. And if imperialism, empire-building by armed force, is under all circumstances a wickedness, then the Pandavas are tinted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter that they might become supreme rulers over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India? That would be the result of weighing old happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact such an empire was a step in the right

direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now, in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter.

We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or mediaeval or quite recent times but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was envisaged but nothing more – exploitation was not excluded. The modern ideas on the subject – the right of all to liberty, both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement; this is a new *Dharma* which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice, – an infant *Dharma* which would have been throttled for good if Hitler had succeeded in his “*Avataric*” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject nations naturally accept the new *Dharma* and severely criticise the old imperialism; it is to be hoped that they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world order evolves, even if at first stumblingly or incompletely, which will make the old things impossible – a difficult task, but not absolutely unachievable.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities open to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open – to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove the peril of black servitude and the revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important

tragic issue before us.

3rd September, 1943

SRI AUROBINDO

15th September, 1943  
Almora

Dear Abani Nath Roy,

You are right about the inner world. It is quite real and can be studied by the proper means. The real events of life all take place there and we see only their projections outside. As for demonstration, I wouldn't do it if I could. People who don't wish to believe in it are far better left in ignorance. They would only damage themselves. As for "keeping abreast of the events of the world" – I am afraid I myself make no very great effort to do so and so am perhaps disqualified from expressing any opinion about the desirability of so doing. Since the war started we have even stopped taking any newspaper at all.

I am glad you took *diksha* from your *guru*. Now-a-days people don't care to do so but in my opinion it is almost impossible to make any real inner progress without *diksha* – at least it is very much easier to do so with it and I congratulate you on having done so.

To revert to Siddhi Ma<sup>1</sup> – it seems to me far better to sit in a room shedding one's own tears than to wander in the world making other people shed the tears (if not blood!) which, in one way or another, is what most people do. As Arjuna told Yudhishthira, money can seldom be made without harming some one or other.

So you are off to the war! Well keep your mind on your Gurudev and you will be alright. Always good wishes, yours,

KRISHNAPREM

---

<sup>1</sup> Abani Roy wrote to Krishnaprem that an intellectual activist of Bengal once told him (on hearing that *Siddhi Ma* spent most of her time in her room shedding devotional tears of ecstasy), "O, but how absurd!"

Jan. &amp; April, 1944

(OM)

Mirtola, Almora

My dear Govinda,

I was very happy to receive your letter after an age. ... To serve others *is* to serve Krishna. We get enmeshed in the toils of maya only because we constantly forget that He presides in every single body. That is why we lose sight of Him and live under the yoke of maya to be born again and again and stay engrossed in what we call *our* world peopled by *our* “dear ones”. If we could only learn to see all this as *His lila* (play) and envision and serve the one Krishna who ensouls all His creatures, then He would not be able to stay away, veiled from us, because then the Veil (of illusion) would be abolished for ever and the whole world would be viewed, pervaded by Him. So far as I am concerned it is unthinkable for me to let Him stay away beyond my horizon. Whatever I see or hear or feel in this world of ours lives by His breath – He, my Gopal, is the life of all that is: it is that one Krishna who plays at hide and seek with us in countless forms and fathomless lilt. It is only because we equate our bodies with the Last Reality that we grow to dote on our private worlds of illusion, to wit, where our kith and kin figure. That is why we have to go through no end of pain and frustration – because we hug the blindness of *moha*, make-believe. Your mother is right: we are all one, sparks of the same Vast Fire.

I send you my deep love and blessings...

I am so glad to learn that Dilip visited your Ashram at Deoghar (Vaidyanath). Wherever he goes he floods the place as it were with *ananda* (bliss).

Yours,  
YASODA MA

(Translated from the original Bengali)

Almora, May, 1944

My dear Govindagopal,

At one time everything seemed to get clearer day by day and I felt I understood things I had not understood before but now there seems to be a change. In that light there appears a darkness which gets blacker and blacker as the light gets brighter so that the more I see the less I understand. Men have described a hundred paths but none of them seems to be the true path. The true path is through the sky and so has no landmarks and no descriptions. All described paths are but the tracings on the earth of the shadow of one who has gone in the sky. No one can follow him by following them. But how to grow wings and fly? Is it perhaps that wings begin to sprout when all else is despaired of? *Krishna Kripa hi kevalam*. The Sun shines but in its heart is darkness and similarly there is a light shining in the centre of night. They pass into each other and we are dazzled. Sometimes one begins to see that all knowledge is ignorance but with that must go its opposite pole – all ignorance is knowledge. If we can trust that and cease to hanker after the knowledge, we shall find Krishna; but it is so difficult to trust oneself in ignorance. Will not its water swallow us up? Supposing after all that Krishna is not Krishna? There is something in us that says “trust and leap”. I think we shall not regret it if we follow. I have seen it a hundred times but yet I think I fear. A curse on all our knowledge – it makes it so much harder to unknow.



My own? May 10th. Yes, one can find out some things (through astrology) but what will you seek to know? They are all illusory. What we seek is not within the *Kalachakra*.

I wish I had the gifts of Dilip. I would use them to lose myself. But then perhaps I should not. He seems to envy those of others. We are all fools.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM  
14th July, 1944  
Almora

Dear Dilip,

I was glad and relieved to get your letter. Work has left me silent but not forgetful. I am so glad that you are over the illness. What your friend said to you about “Krishna’s having been a historical failure” – whatever that may mean – is of course all nonsense. Why didn’t you ask him what he knew either of Krishna’s historical intentions or of his “subjective beauty”. (This friend of mine said that Krishna’s beauty was only “subjective” which of course was somewhat difficult for me to understand, so I asked Krishnaprem if he could throw some light on it – D).

As for the types of *darshan* that you speak of and especially such as leave the character quite unchanged, they don’t in the end amount to much. *Darshan* is a phenomenon which varies from mere seeing of projected fantasy images, through a whole series of stages up to that seeing, which having seen, there remains no more to see. But why worry? Stick to Him and leave others to go their own way. One thing is certain: love is greater than everything; even Krishna is compelled by it; that is no fable of poets.

Anyhow I am taking holiday and going to Brindaban the day after tomorrow. If I can’t see Him I will at least see the blue Jumna waters. I shall only be there for three days or I would have suggested your coming. Then I will go for a few days to Lucknow and get my eyes seen to (the outer ones I mean, though if the inner ones would open a bit more, the outer ones could go to pieces for all I care.) In the meanwhile Mod will look after things here with the aid of a Brahmin. She sends you her love and *pranams*.

Tomorrow is *Ma’s* birthday and then I am off. I haven’t seen Brindaban for nearly ten years and my philosophy is vanishing at the prospect. After all Brindaban is Brindaban and Krishna is Krishna: all the rest is just words – more or less.

Love always from

KRISHNAPREM

19th November, 1944

My dear Govindagopal,

No, but I will say this: In the first place I have not had a ‘fling’ at Vedanta but only at one particular school of it. The *Purnaprajna darsana* also claims the title of Vedanta. Secondly, even the Shankara school of Vedanta is very satisfactory – until you meet Krishna.

If there were no Krishna I, personally, should be happy enough with Advaita Vedanta but, and there is the rub, there *is* Krishna and if you see Him all previous values go into reverse as it were. *Moksha*, which was the highest *purushārtha* suddenly finds itself reduced to the status of being one member of the *dwandwa – bhukti-mukti*. The *Shānta bhāva* achieved with so much effort and pain suddenly finds itself the lowest of the series (*shānta, dāsya* etc). Swami Prabuddhanandaji once asked me, as a matter of fact, that of all the five *bhāvas* how is it that the one which is nearest to our (i.e. his) *bhāva*, the *shānta bhāva*, is the one which you (Vaishnavas) reckon as lowest? And then *kāma*, the great enemy of the ascetic Vedantin and his patron the ascetic Mahadeva, suddenly becomes the friend of the worshipper of Krishna, who worships with *Kāma-bija, Kāma-Gāyatri* and *Kāma-Yantra*.

So what can I do? If it was not for Krishna all could be plain sailing. Only a fool would fear to abandon the ridiculous for the sublime. But *there is Krishna* and there’s the difficulty. Just imagine that Krishna stands before you offering you either *advaita moksha* or Himself, which in fact would you choose? You may say the choice is not a real one, that Krishna is Himself *moksha*. Very likely, but the converse is not so true – *dīyamānam na grihnanti*.

You may argue as much as you please to avoid being confronted with the choice. Deny its existence, explain that both mean the same, demonstrate that I neither understand Krishna nor *moksha* or I should never have put the alternatives. Nevertheless all your shouting will only serve to drown a voice in your heart which says that even the possibility of finding Krishna is better than the certainty of *moksha*.

What more? As Goethe said: “Choose, for your choice is brief and yet endless.”

PART III – LETTERS

Your opinion of my *buddhi* and general reasonableness must be going downhill fast. But what can I do? I will be reasonable about everything else but I can't be reasonable about Krishna. Krishna is Krishna and there is an end of it.

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

5th December, 1944  
Almora

Dear Dilip,

Your affectionate letter came yesterday just as I was preparing to write to give you the sad news that *Ma* has left her body after a sudden acute attack of her gallstone trouble. The end was utter peace, unspeakable, and the years seemed to fall way from her as, with her vision full of Sri Krishna, she dropped the body. *I know she is ever with us and even nearer than before* but yet the physical loss is more than I can write of. Yet already I know why Sri Krishna told the wives of the sacrificing Brahmins in Brindaban that it is not by physical proximity that He is attained. She had told us that the end was very near but I hated to believe it and it came suddenly. You know how much *Ma* meant to me and how, for over twenty years, she has been my Guru, mother and everything. She was the pivot round which my whole universe revolved. That she still is, but the loss of the physical support is hard to bear.

You must forgive me for not answering your letter properly just now. I will do so later. But you are entirely right and clearly have your Guru's full support. Why worry about what others say or think? In the end you will get nearer Him than your critics.

I am so glad you have come to love the *Bhagavat*. It was the first book I read with *Ma* and had just finished it again with her when she went. It has meant more to me than any other book and you will remember my urging you to read it when you were here. I will try to write more later. At present I cannot. Give yourself utterly to Krishna

and in finding Him you will find everything while your critics will remain merely talking about. Go forward, caring nothing for anything else. *Only ask nothing, give everything.*

With love, dear Dilip,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

22nd March, 1945  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

Thanks so much for your travelogue, *Abar Bhramyaman*, and also for the beautiful record of your *Bhagavat* hymn to Krishna, the *Gopigita*. But O Dilip, why did you write about me, and if at all, why so much? It's ill, I fear, will be the result for me in the shape of letters and people wanting to visit and see such a 'curiosity'. What good will it do to you? Above all, you should not have hinted at the *happenings*; all these things only attract the minds of the foolish. I warn you that I shall deny it outright and say that it was just your eloquence! Why don't you use the same eloquence about Krishna and your Gurudeva instead of wasting it where it is not wanted? O Dilip, Dilip, I meant to go on scolding you for a dozen pages! But the milk is spilt and it is useless, so I will say no more. I begged you not to write about us but you just print my request and leave it at that! You are incorrigible and if you were anyone else I should hate you, but I can't.

To turn to your long letter of last year, I am so glad you got so much from the *Bhagavata*. Ever since I read it first long ago it has been the greatest of all books to me. It was the first book I read with *Ma* when I scarcely knew enough Hindi to read it and it was the last book I read with her before she withdrew from the outer eyes.

I think I said before but anyhow I repeat that when your Guru allows, and, more, encourages your *bhāva*<sup>1</sup> towards Krishna there is no need whatever to worry about what others say or feel. All this talk of

---

<sup>1</sup> Attitude

your not being able to get this or that if you go that way is nonsense. There is nothing whatever that cannot be had at Krishna's feet. If your Guru did not support you I might hesitate to, as a path that is not sanctioned by one's Guru will never lead to success, however good in itself, it is *para dharma*. But in your case there is no question of that. It is clear from what he wrote to you that he was entirely satisfied with what you are doing. I may have said all this in my letter just after *Ma* withdrew but I can't remember what I wrote then and if so you must excuse the repetition.

Doubtless there are many ways of getting beyond the mind because that is just where all ways that are ways have to go. I will speak of only two. One is to use the mind to negate the mind and so force the soul to pass beyond. That is the way of Nagarjuna and, though less unmixedly, of Shankara. It is a straight path but rather, like a path ruled out straight on a map, it takes no account of natural obstacles and so is very hard. In any case it is certainly not *anukul*<sup>1</sup> for you. The other is by love and surrender.

The contemplation of Krishna leads straight beyond the mind. I only realised the other day during a talk with a Vedanti friend, a very good *sannyasi* who is here now-a-days, how entirely beyond the mind the contemplation of Krishna is. To his arguments and questions as to *how* such and such could be true I could only reply that it undoubtedly was so. Everything about Krishna is beyond the mind's grasp and I found that I could not accept any of the *rational* accommodations and compromises that his mind suggested. They were just inadequate. He too wanted to go beyond the mind but only in his own sober *philosophic* way. But why? There is nothing sober about Krishna. He maddens where He touches and so His worshippers leap where others – at least some others – can only walk, a dignified cap-and-gown sort of walk.

But really, what is all this fuss about? Some people disapprove of you? Well, let them. Even if they are advanced *sadhakas* why do *you* care? You have no business with any approval or disapproval but that of your Guru and Krishna. But, you may say, they are my

---

<sup>1</sup> Beneficial, helpful

*Gurubhais*. Let them be. The Guru teaches different things to different disciples. Never mind what he may have taught others. Do what he has taught *you*.

Understanding Krishna with what? With the mind? That is impossible. “*Yasyamatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda sah.*”<sup>1</sup>

Govindagopal has accused me of having a *fling at Vedanta*. And why should I have a fling at Vedanta anyhow? Has not the Lord said in the *Gita*: “*Vedaishca sarvairahameva vedyah* – all the Vedas have me as the last thing to be known.”

My love to you always and inevitably, in spite of the great mischief you have done in singing my praises all over India.

KRISHNAPREM

28<sup>th</sup> April, 1945  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

What is this about your being ill? What is the matter and how are you now? If you aren't well enough to write please get some one to drop us a line as we are all anxious about you. And then your words about *inner conflicts*. You aren't thinking of leaving your Guru, I hope? If and when you are able to, do come up here for a bit, we all so much want to see you. So do come if you can and when you can: I will make all arrangements from Almora.

Yes, of course, Sri Krishna is to be seen everywhere and in everything as Ramdas Swami says, but that does not mean He is not seen “as Sri Krishna”. As I quoted in my last letter, “*Jita dekhoun tita Shyamamayo hai*” (wherever I look I see Him). But best of all is to pray only for the power of giving oneself utterly to Him. Then all else will follow and, whether in *milan* or in *viraha*, you have Him always. As one of the Goswamis (I think) said: “In *milan* He is one: in *viraha* He is a thousandfold.”<sup>2</sup> It appears to me that there is no

---

<sup>1</sup> He who thinks he knows me, knows me not...

He who thinks he knows me not, knows me... – *Kena Upanishad*, 2.3

<sup>2</sup> *Sangama viraha vikaipe*

need to choose between seeing Him “as Krishna” and seeing Him in all things and it is not correct to say that to see Him only “as Krishna” is only to see “a peerless Beauty” that is “worth seeing” (as if He were some sort of Venus da Milo or Niagara falls!) To see Him is to see everything in Him and Him in everything – Krishna as everything and everything as Krishna and that *is* seeing Krishna “as Krishna”. His form is not just one form among many forms, something “worth seeing” but still limited. His form is unlimited and inexhaustible – each pore of His skin contains a *Brahmanda* and yet He is still Nandanandan and Gopiballabha. You can’t contain Him I cannot express myself, Dilip, but just give, give, give. Give in joy, give in sorrow, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and in peace. That is the one boon we should crave: the power to give ourselves utterly. Never mind who says He is this or that. Of course He is this – and also that – for He is everything. You yourself know all that you need know about Him when you know that He is the Lord of your heart’s innermost core. You and I and everyone may want Him as this or as that but it is the desire of that inmost heart’s core that He will follow and the inmost heart is far too wise to formulate its desire because it knows that to formulate is to limit.

Do come along if and when you feel able to and whatever ‘*inner conflicts*’ may trouble you, don’t let them be about your Guru. Whatever you have gained has been through him.

Moti sends you her love and *pranams*. She has just come back from the plains and walked up from Kathgodam to here.

Come along and I will cook for you.

Love always

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

29th April, 1945

My dear Dilip,

---

*Varamiha viraho na sangamastasya  
Ekah sa eva sange*

*Tribhuvanamapi tanmayam virahe* – Padyavali

Which means: Between *Sangama* (union) and *Viraha* (separation) the latter is greater inasmuch as in the former you see Krishna as Krishna in Him alone, whereas in *Viraha* He is seen and felt as present everywhere.

PART III – LETTERS

We have just got back a few days ago. And originally I left here promising to be back in a week! *Quite a Dilip* – most irregular! ... Such bathing I had there in Puri after twenty years! Still it was a disappointment that the Gods decided against our going to Pondicherry: I had wanted to.

What a good time we had together! I wish it had been longer. ... “Then Heigh-ho the holly, this life is most jolly.”

I wish you had been with us at Puri. I am sure the sea-waves would have been good for your *sadhana* – they were excellent for mine. They broke on the beach with the maddening sound of *khol* and *kartal*.

*I dreamt we dwelt in marble halls  
And everything was merry:  
But how the dream has left my eyes  
For you're in Pondicherry!*

Moti sends you her love and *pranams*.

Love always from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

14<sup>th</sup> September, 1945  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

A welcome surprise a couple of days ago in the shape of your book, *Among the Great*. Thanks indeed and congratulations. I have just finished reading it through with great enjoyment. I greatly enjoyed the one you had with Rabindranath and in particular liked the discussion on the separate dharma of man and woman. Nothing I have ever read of his struck me as so deeply and sensitively true. I dare say Havelock Ellis did say something of the sort in his own way but I am quite sure it didn't have the sensitiveness of Rabindranath's treatment nor will it have been delineated against a spiritual background. Of course I may be quite wrong but the little I have read of Ellis makes me suspect

that his background would be what you term ‘vital’ or ‘vital-intellectual.’ After all India is India. I, personally, would not have included my Guru – or any real Guru for that matter – as one among a miscellaneous collection of ‘greatnesses’ but, since you have done it, I admit you have done it well. Whether through love of you or for other reasons which I won’t specify *I would rather read you on Sri Aurobindo than anyone else.* But I won’t embarrass you further. Your apt use of explanatory matter and letters seems to me to have made the essay on Sri Aurobindo a first class introduction to his Yoga.

As for the others – well, I dare say they serve as a neutral-toned background, but with the exception of the one on Rabindranath (which I greatly liked as I said) in Queen Victoria’s famous phrase, “We are not interested!” Well, they do serve to show up the utter inadequacy of a spirituo-idealistic, a humanitario-ascetic and a humanistico-scientific approach to all the *real* problems of life. However, don’t take me too seriously. I am not really as intolerant as the above sounds and all things have their places.

Russell likes to “keep his intellectual sky free from mystic clouds”. Well, well! it doesn’t matter much as it isn’t the actual heavens but only the artificial electrically-lit dome of an American planetarium.

I spent a marvellous week in Brindaban, just living in the open on the ghat of Jumna, but I am not going to say anything about it: I am too frightened of your urge to print!

And now what news of yourself? When are we going to see you again?

I like the photo of you at the beginning of the book – in fact we all thought it an excellent one.

Love always, Dilip

KRISHNAPREM

29th September, 1945  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

I will tell you what is written in burning letters of fire in my heart that carry their own guarantee of truth.

Krishna and Guru are one: but, if I leave Him, Krishna may leave me – at least He may smile His “*Samoham sarva-bhuteshu*” smile and say: “Well, if you don’t care for me then I don’t care for you – at least not more than I care for the louse on a monkey’s backside.” But my Guru will never leave me whatever I do. I might leave Her but She would never leave me. I may fall from the Path, return to the flesh-pots and wallow in their filthy slops for five lives or fifty lives, I may blaspheme the Sacred Stone within my heart and die cursing God and man – all this and more I may do but She will never leave my side. Each separate folly of mine will be a stab of sorrow in the heart of Her who is sorrowless but She will never turn away Her face nor cease from trying to assuage the pains that I must suffer from my own foolish acts. Never, never will she leave my side nor cease to guide my steps until I stand in that eternal *Braja* where She stands now. God-forsaken and man-forsaken I may be, but Guru-forsaken, never.

This and much more that I cannot write is written in my heart and since She always told me that all true Gurus are one, I know it must also be written in yours. Why do you not read it and care nothing for the words of men? You will say you don’t understand your Guru and all the Supramental business. What does that matter? He understands you alright and tells you (or so I gather) to trust him and surrender yourself to Krishna. Why not just get on with it and leave the optimists and the pessimists and the rationalists and the blind-believers etc. to their own courses and get on with yours? And then all this civilisation business. You and I have not taken a contract to save it (though we have taken a contract to do something else). If it is not saved but finally ascends to the stratosphere in the smoke of its own atomic bombs, it will be because it was not saveable and as the *Gita* puts it: “Over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve.”

If it can be saved doubtless it will be but even Krishna decided to abandon Mathura. I am not being a fatalist. Those whose *dharma* it is to work directly for the saving of whatever may be saveable will

PART III – LETTERS

do so and are doing so. (I am not referring of course to the politicians and, to adopt a modern phrase, the puppet Governments). The Yadavas in Sudharma Sabha and the Pandavas in the halls of Indraprastha doubtless debated gravely enough on the solution of world problems. But those who dwell in *Braja* tend their cattle with Krishna in their hearts.

And there is one thing that we can learn even from the atomic bombs and that is that when the hard atom of the personal ego is shattered then there is a liberation of light that shines like ten thousand suns and a power shatters all the countless structures of the Darkness (for God’s sake, don’t think I am referring to the unfortunate Japanese cities!).

“As without, so within.”

Moti has gone to Badrinath (on foot) with Umanath. As for me, I am still occupied with the cooking and the outer worship in the temple: *adhamādhama* no doubt, but why should I expect to be *uttamottama* so quickly?

My love to you always,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

14th October, 1945  
Almora

Dear Dilip,

I have just had your letter and I feel quite upset that I should have hurt you. Only your second letter has come – the first one will perhaps come tomorrow, but I can’t wait till then – I feel I must write something at once to beg you to take none of my rubbish seriously. I wouldn’t have hurt your feeling for the world. When I wrote to you that if I were your Guru I wouldn’t have answered even one of your letters I meant it as the merest teasing, and as for being “hard and judicial” with you it is absurd. You have always encouraged me to scold away and I never imagined you would take it seriously. Ego? I don’t in the least know whether my ego is bigger or smaller than yours, but this I do know, namely, that mine is a far more dangerous type of ego than

yours. You may have vanity – I certainly have a pride that is far worse. If someone goes about to hurt you, you are just hurt and there is an end of it. If someone does the same to me, down comes an armoured sheath which may effectively turn the arrow but which also shuts out Krishna far more effectively than anything you will ever do. However, I am not going to start analysing my faults – they will fill a book. I only mention them to show that whatever I wrote to you (and I can't remember half of it) was certainly not written in any *de haut en bas* frame of mind! But don't be hurt with me, Dilip, I love you too much; and if I have, unwittingly, rubbed you on a sore point you must just forgive the clumsiness which caused it. It was certainly never meant. I only wanted you to go on in the confidence that your Guru approved and loved you and apparently all I did was to make a parade of my faith and taunt you with a lack of it! What I wrote was true – I know it – but it was not written to taunt *you* of all people.

I know or at least I can feel the difficulties you write about and I know that were I in your place they would be my difficulties also, and I can and do sympathise with *every line* you write about them. I know I should be in great difficulties – but there you are, we cannot escape from difficulties whatever road we tread.

As for Guru being the same as Krishna, I think that perhaps you do not understand in what sense it is meant or you would not have written comparing physical appearances. But if you cannot feel that they are the same, can you not feel that Guru is a servant of Krishna – one with Him in the sense of being His Representative, one with Him as the sun's rays are one with the sun?

In fact many, perhaps most, *Krishna-bhaktas* would prefer to look at it that way. We should not be misled by looking at physical bodies or even at minds, the oneness is something different from all that, far above all that and hidden within it. In fact it was not till *Ma* withdrew from my sense-vision that I could realise in what the oneness really lay. I say *realise* – but who am I to talk of *realisation*?

But please, please don't ever think that I could willingly write anything to hurt you or to discourage you either. Your Guru has told you that you will gain your Goal. *Ma* said the same and I gather Ramdas also said the same. So go on; have faith in that which is the deepest thing in your heart – your love for Krishna. What I said about

PART III – LETTERS

Krishna forsaking one was but a manner of speaking: *Guru-stuti* is not *Krishnananda*. As if He would ever forsake anyone, He who is ‘nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands and feet’!

Yes, you have found peace in Ramdas Swami’s Ashram. But that doesn’t mean that you should go and reside there any more than the fact that I found ecstasy and was *scarcely conscious of the body for the whole week* I was in Brindavan means that I should abandon my job here (which has its difficulties just as yours has).

The peace you found was Krishna’s *kripa* and it is my belief that you will find it again – when and where He chooses.

We are fools, Dilip, all of us. We live in a fog created by our own desire-tainted minds and then get impatient because we cannot see. There is only one thing that matters and that is that we should never forget His feet in our hearts.

I must stop and send this off. I will write again if there is anything in your other letter that hasn’t been answered in this.

Do write and tell me that you aren’t really hurt or cross with my stupidity.

Love always from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

5th June, 1946  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

Thank you so much for the birthday present which I shall value always. I am glad that my previous copies were walked off with as they were only “publishers’ compliments”. It was very kind indeed of Sri Aurobindo to inscribe both volumes as he has done with his blessings. Please convey my *pranams* to him when you write.

I also received a few days ago a copy of your *Fall of Mewar*. Thanks. I remember your asking me to go through the typescript many, many years ago.

As for your difficulties about Guru and Krishna – I think they arise

partly because you are too literal-minded in the matter. Do we not identify the Shaligram with Krishna in every act of *Puja*? Probably this will only wring a half-hearted assent from you who, I suppose, have never moved much in the realm of *Shaligrams* and *Puja* – nevertheless it is true.

But when it is said that Guru and Krishna are the same it must be taken in a mystical, not literal, sense. It is not His body, nor yet His mind that is Krishna but the Divine Consciousness within Him. Krishna means the Divine consciousness and surely it is clear that the Guru manifests that consciousness and that, to his *chela*, that consciousness is more manifest, more apparent, in the Guru than anywhere else. It is that consciousness (and *shakti* of course) which is the true Guru – not the outer form in which it manifests. The outer form is human, and is limited and may even make mistakes. But the Divine consciousness within him is flawless and free from all error. One chooses a Guru not because he is learned, possessed of *siddhis* or of excellent character – in short, not for any human accomplishments – but because in him we first contact the Divine consciousness whether we are able to understand it or not. The attention should thereafter be fixed always on that element of Divine consciousness within him and not on the merely human personality which is its vehicle. It is just this that is the reason why we say that all Gurus are the one Guru because by Guru we mean the Divine consciousness and Grace manifesting in any particular personal vehicle with which we first (or most vividly) contact it. The other view, the concentration in the mere personal vehicle, leads to the false kind of *Guruvada*, the deification of the human personality – the claim that *my* Guru is greater than *other* Gurus – hence, to sectarianism and all sorts of falsehood. The attitude to what I have termed the human personal vehicle should be one of love and reverence because it is the vehicle of the Divine Krishna-consciousness, the particular vehicle through which His *kripa* reaches us.

In the *Gita*, Arjuna exclaims, “Thou alone knowest Thyself by Thyself, O *Purushottama*.” Only Krishna knows His own nature and therefore only He can give us the knowledge of it. It follows that

unless He manifests and shows Himself to us somewhere we can never find Him even though He is by our side the whole time. (Compare His words to the *Gopis* after His reappearance to them at the time of the *Rasa Lila*). Surely you can see that to see Him the Divine consciousness is necessary, that the Divine consciousness is He Himself and that it is that Divine consciousness that constitutes the *Guruhood* of the Guru.

Shall I say that the candle is the same as the sun not because the wax is the same as the body of the sun (whatever that may be) or because the shape of the candle is the same as the shape of the sun but because the light of the candle is the same as the light of the sun and it is the light that is important to us.

The illustration, like all such, is not quite exact because it depends on the common view that the candle's body is something separate from the candle's flame. But Krishna is all there is: there is nothing separate from Him. It follows therefore that what I have termed the personal human vehicle is also Him though manifesting in a different mode.

To sum up the whole matter: The Guru is the Light and Grace of Krishna (nothing else can be a Guru). The perception of it, however dimly, in a human personality makes that personality the Guru. Then we may pause for a time. But *to that consciousness* nothing whatever is separate from it, the so-called outer form is but a crust made of that very consciousness and so in no sense separate from it. Hence, as the Divine consciousness, through His own *Kripa*, is born in the heart of the *chela* (*sambhavamyatmamayaya*) the latter comes to see even the psycho-physical bodies of the Guru as what they are in reality, Divine *shakti* and not as something merely physical. For the 'merely physical', implying as it does something separate from Krishna, is an illusion – there is nothing anywhere that is separate from Him.

Your phrase about equating a human being with his human limitations to a Being who had none shows where you have made a mistake. Krishna is not "a Being" of any sort. He is Being Himself – *Sacchidananda swarupa*.

Perhaps you will say that this is all *jnāna* and philosophy. Well, you wanted a 'philosophical,' 'intellectual' answer to your problem – at

least that would seem to be the purport of your reference to my alleged ‘brilliant intellect!’

But if you want the other side it may be seen also. Sri Krishna is the object of all love. It is only because He is in the hearts of all that anyone can be loved. Love is the same as self-giving and the Guru is he to whom we really give ourselves unconditionally. Clearly then the Guruhood of the Guru *is* Krishna. I will also add that the *patitva* (husbandhood) of the *pati* (husband) is also Krishna. His form as the Beloved Radha is the form in which He completely reveals His nature as the object of all love. His form as Guru is a form in which He partly reveals, partly hides that nature – partly hides because of the imperfection of our love and surrender. As the latter becomes more complete and perfect the element of hiding diminishes until, when the self-giving is complete, He hides no more, the last veil vanishes and He stands before our eyes in all the beauty of His *Swarupa*.

Note what your Gurudeva says in the first letter printed in the copy of ‘Sri Aurobindo Circle’ that you sent me – particularly the last paras on pages 27 and 28.

As for the experience of the old Brahma lady – her vision of Bala-Gopala – why should you envy her? Doubtless you have had experiences which she never had. It was His gift to her, given perhaps to help her overcome her *Brahmo-samskaras*: have you had no gifts yourself that you should grudge her hers? His gifts are intended to help us to give ourselves more fully and He gives what each of us really needs – not merely what we merely would like. You have gifts of love, of *bhava*, of music, that many doubtless envy (perhaps I do myself!). Many can sing but not many can invoke His presence with their song as *you* can.

Perhaps a concrete vision is withheld because – as yet – it might not be a help to you. You, doubtless, think it would, but He, it seems, thinks otherwise and His judgement is certainly better than yours. Even I can see and can say from my experience that such visions, for *some people*, can, in their intoxication, seem as checks and hindrances to that all-exploding, tidal flow of our whole being to Him which is our Goal.

I know that longing for the concrete vision. That longing is itself our only wealth: what else will take us to Him? Certainly not mere

PART III – LETTERS

visions as such. Perhaps you will say that the temporary vision may increase the longing. So it does in some cases – therefore it is given. In others it does not (whatever we may think) and therefore it is not given. He is the judge, not you or I.

But what is this awful news about your giving up laughing? Give up anything else you like – arguing, visitors, reading, writing – but if you give up laughing, I, for one, shall weep.

I read it to Moti and she, too, was quite horrified. If you don't at once forswear such an awful heresy I shall never dare to meet you again. It would be too awful! You would come silently into the room, perhaps brushing away a tear from your eye, and say to me in solemn tones: "Brother, shall we meditate together a little?" Appalling! And then we should look at each other surreptitiously from under downcast eyelids to see whose meditation was deepest. "Shall we have a little holy talk together, brother?" Ghastly, Dilip dear, ghastly! I don't really believe you can be contemplating anything so dreadful. Is there no laughter in Braja?

Yes, it certainly was a pity I could not get to Pondicherry this time, especially when all the arrangements had been so thoughtfully made. But my whole trip was "irregular" from start to finish and the same Gods that brought it about also fixed its limits. Anyhow they gave us some jolly days together – especially those few quiet afternoons when the rioting prevented visitors from coming.

Moti sends you her love and *pranams*.

Love always, Dilip, from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S.: I may add that some Vaishnavas prefer to regard Guru as the *nitya prasad* of Krishna rather than as Krishna Himself. But that, too, is perhaps based on an incomplete understanding.

9th October, 1946  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

I am so sorry to hear that you are not well and still more so to

see the nature of the troubles you refer to. Set your teeth and stick it out as best you can: the darkness will pass if you keep facing it. Remember what I wrote to you about the ship and the compass. Never mind what happens: keep your mind on Sri Krishna's feet, remember always that you belong to Him and not to yourself and just go on whether in light or in darkness, in joy or in sorrow as *He* wills. But stick it. Since your Gurudev sanctions, take a holiday, go to Ramana Ashram or Ramdas or anywhere else (I hope not Calcutta) but do not for one moment entertain the thought of ever going back to your old life: that is gone for ever and thoughts of it can only bring trouble. These things come sometime or other – sometimes again and again to most, in fact I suppose to all *sadhakas*. The form may vary but the cause is the same, the opposition of the powers which rule our lower natures to the upward-surgings of the spirit. Naturally, it is only when that upward movement becomes real or promises to become real that those powers feel their dominion threatened or respond with storms and darkness in some form or other. Moreover they are only able to do it by working on some weakness in us – some inner resentment or despondency at thwarted desires. Like the magician who needs something belonging to his would-be victim – some lock of hair or fragment of clothing, before he can work his magic – so these powers need some weakness in ourselves before they can work their *maya*. Hold them at bay by contemplating on Sri Krishna's feet whenever such thoughts arise. Refuse them as *your* thoughts: realise that they come from outside and let the Light that shines from His feet dispel and drive them away. Then try to find what it is in you that they made use of as a focus to act upon – nearly always it is some thwarted desire of the ego, often quite unacknowledged by the surface mind.

Anyway, by whatever means, stick it out, don't even think of turning back. The moment you had done it, that moment those powers would have gained their end, they would leave their *maya* and you would be bitterly repenting.

*There can be no going back for us, Dilip: that which we have left behind us has perished and it is sheer illusion to think we can recover it. It has gone and whether we like it or no, in sorrow or in joy, we must go ever on. Don't try to look back even: it only makes us*

giddy and what we see are only deceitful phantoms.

Rather we should look to the future with its promise of something quite different from what now is. Now, at this moment, we should seize the eternal feet of Krishna, not hope to seize them at some future date “if we are good” as they used to say when we were children. Now, now, now! Let the past go and future take care of itself.

It is natural that you should be painfully affected by the horrors of Bengal but that too is in Krishna’s hands. He who has given himself to Krishna must keep his eyes on His feet, regardless though the triple world fell into ruin.

What more can I say? My thoughts are so much with you.

You speak of Bombay. It is just possible, Mod says, that she may go there in the winter sometime and asks when you think of being there. She sends love and *pranams*. My love to you always, Dilip,

Yours ever,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S. Write to me as soon as possible.

26th October, 1946  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

Thanks so much for sending me the proofs of your *Bhagavati Katha*. It is a book which I am sure will be a joy to many who are looking for the eternal Star which may guide them in the stormy sea of our present world. In the whole body of the Hindu scriptures I do not know of any book that is the equal of the *Bhagavata* – at least, to put it personally, there is none that has been such a profound and continuous source of inspiration to me. It was the first book I read with my Guru, and also the last: from the very first time I read it, almost spelling my way through a Hindi translation, I knew that here was what I had sought, the one fixed point in the ever-changing flux of joy and sorrow, success and failure, life and death. True, indeed, are the words in its concluding chapter:

PART III – LETTERS

“The stars of other *Puranas* shine in the assemblies of the wise so long as the sun of the *Bhagavata* has not risen into view. It contains the heart of the *Upanishads* and none who has once slaked his thirst in its living essence will ever care to seek it elsewhere.”

*Rajante tavad-anyani puranani satam gane  
Yavad-bhagavata naiva shruyate-mritasagaram  
Sarva-vedantasaram hi shri bhagavatam ishyate  
Tadrasamritatriptasya nanyatra syad ratih kvacit.*

Out of a matrix of the calm Upanishadic wisdom shines forth its twelve-petalled Lotus, the marvellous Lotus of the heart. May your book help many to perceive its gleaming beauty.

KRISHNAPREM

4th September, 1947

My dear Dilip,

It is long that your letter has been lying unanswered. We were delighted to get your photos. Moti is specially pleased with hers and says it is the best she has seen. ... Also I hear Sri Aurobindo issued a message on Independence Day. If you have a copy available please send it as I have not seen it and should like to.

Yes, Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* is a good book – I would not say a *great* one. It will doubtless be helpful and point the way to many, but it is too facilely intellectual and I do not find in it the secret fire without which nothing practical can be achieved. It will point out the direction but those who seek will have to look elsewhere for the means of building the Fire and actually treading the Path. As always, he says many true and excellent things.

'*Karma-yoga*'? Yes, it is all-important. But it must be *Karma-yoga* (that is, properly-centred) and not just *karma*. Say what you will about 'pure' contemplation or 'pure' *bhakti*, the question we ordinary people always ask is: what are we to *do* to attain the Goal? *Do*; doing is

*karma*, whether that doing is *japa*, *puja*, writing, cooking, gardening or *pranayama*. By ‘doing’ we light the Fire which is to burn up all doings. Without friction that Fire cannot be lit: without tending it cannot be maintained. We must handle in order to ‘realise’. On no account should we despise what the alchemists called ‘the manual work.’ Do you remember the thing I wrote to you about a ship? Keep your eye on the magic compass and work the ship. Keep your central Faith – never mind whether you can formulate it or not and work. The formulations of that Faith are all secondary and all inadequate however useful up to a point. It is beyond them all.

Probably your Guru asks you not to reason too much because you take it too seriously and get attached to it when your real being is far beyond it. One may reason as one would play chess, sweeping away the pieces after the game – or as one would clear and tidy one’s living room, to make it more comfortable and serviceable. There is no certainty in reason: all is contingent. Certainty comes from *Buddhi* – which did not originally mean ‘reason’, whatever the mere scholastics made of it later. Reason is an intermediate being, a power of arranging – sterile in itself like distilled water – to be used as a servant, a tool, an instrument. As one may arrange one’s room either for one’s sense comfort or for the worship of Krishna (arrangement for its own sake being quite sterile) so the reason is either for the service of the sense world or the Divine world. Doubtless it is necessary for you to restrain it at present in order to gain that detachment from it which is necessary if you are to use it efficiently as an instrument and not as ‘yourself’. It must be illuminated and made radiant by your true being which is beyond it – ‘is’ and not ‘will be’.

Why talk of a ‘will to faith’? You have plenty of faith. What you need is to rest calmly in it. Faith is the light of the Soul. It shines into the mind and lights up the latter’s arrangements (good or bad) and so forms ‘beliefs’ which need to be purified. But purification needs detachment and you can’t use your car while you are engaged in cleaning it.

I tell you truly: all that you have done and are doing (all that is worth doing, I mean) has been and is being done by your faith. All the obstacles, dejections and entanglements have been caused by your reason, acting of course in the service of still lower levels, vital and what not. Reason always serves one or the other – the higher or the

PART III – LETTERS

lower. Only in a faultless academic manner can it stand alone and seldom, if ever. On the other hand, without its eloquent advocacy the lower levels can comparatively seldom succeed in getting their way. Hence their determination to enslave reason to their desires.

What I write I write as much to myself as to you, so don't think I am lecturing or 'scolding' as you put it.

We all think of you so often and wish you were here. When is your novel coming out? Moti sends her love and *pranams*.

Love ever yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

1, University Road,  
Delhi, 9th December, 1947

Dear Dilip,

I came here some fifteen or twenty days ago.

The other day, remembering what you had written, we went to see Srimati Subhalakshmi Devi's Hindi film '*Mira*'. I cannot say too much. It was an absolutely unforgettable experience and quite swept me off my feet. There was something in her voice and in the life that pulsed through it that tempts me to use all the adjectives at my command. The very essence of *Krishna-bhakti* seemed to flow through it and fill the air all around. May He keep her heart in the midst of all the fame which is sure to be hers.

I could recognise your touch in the singing as well as the songs. It was a splendid achievement and I am really grateful. The mere memory gives a thrill.

Moti sends her love and *pranams* to you. She says that she fully agrees with your taste and congratulates you. She adds that she has never seen anything like it in foreign or Indian films.

Love to you always,

KRISHNAPREM

Uttara Brindaban, Mirtola, Almora,

13th June, 1948.

My dear Dilip,

Thank you so much for the volumes of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* which you sent as a delightful birthday present and no less for conveying your loving wishes and your Gurus' blessings. I am greatly touched by the undeserved kindness which they have always shown me. Please offer them my *pranams*.

For the rest I was delighted with your letter of the 26th April. I know how much you value our friendship and that you should be willing to break it off if I went in a direction contrary to what your Guru approves was quite the most heartening thing you have ever written to me. For the first time you have talked freely and frankly about being 'pledged' to him and I was quite overjoyed (and so was Moti) at hearing this plain statement instead of the intellectualisms that were all you would say in the past. Anyhow I could feel a new life and new realisation behind the words and that made me very glad.

As for the thing which was worrying you – my attitude to Communism – I do not think you need worry. The sympathy you noticed was largely my habit of putting forward the opposite view if I think someone is holding a view in a merely one-sided or prejudiced fashion. Of course I should not have done so had I known that your Guru disapproved of it so entirely but that I did not know and felt free to break a lance. For the rest, I certainly have felt an interest to know what is this thing that carries off the hearts of so many young men and women quite like a religion. Nothing can be really understood without an effort of sympathy and imaginative entering and I freely admit that I have made such an effort and value the knowledge it gave me. Nevertheless, having made it, I stand where I did before, entirely unconcerned with any political movement whatsoever. I do not propose to set forth my views on the general movement known as Marxism because you have no concern with any but your Guru's and I gather that they are perfectly clear. But I can assure you that such views as I hold are quite detached and I do not think there is the least risk of any influence from that source coming to you through me.

O damn! this all sounds so pompous and unreal. The plain thing is that my heart is given to "*Brajesh-tanu*" and I have none left to give to Moscow, London, New York or their respective 'lords'. I have never

known any politics in Braja and such *Asuras* as come there get speedily dealt with. After all, they only come when Krishna is visible there and have little enough interest at other times!

Anyhow it was a joy to hear that you were prepared to sacrifice anything that stood in the way or even threatened to do so. You are quite right. Our loyalty to this Path must overrule everything else whatsoever and must be quite unconditional. That it should have brought you peace is not surprising: “*Tyagat shantir anantaram*” – as it says in the *Gita* and the greatest *tyaga* is the abandoning of the desire to keep one’s hand on the tiller of the boat. Again and again we take it off and then, at some critical moment, surreptitiously or openly, put it forth again. We must take it off and keep it off.

I am reading Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* with great interest. It is quite a unique work – naturally. I was reading Book II (which you sent me in Delhi) but put it aside to read ‘*The Vision and the Boon*’ you mention (Book III, Canto IV) which is certainly of crucial importance. I feel that Sri Aurobindo has succeeded in putting across, as they say, much that cannot so easily be done in prose. After all poetry is revelatory, while prose is expository – at least, in general. The latter arouses agreement or disagreement, the former stimulates vision, a quite different thing. “From discussion,” as Plotinus says, “we call to vision.”

For the rest things go on here much as usual. Moti’s health has not been good – the kidneys have been giving trouble and there seems little (of an outward nature at least) that can be done. At the moment she has gone for a short trip in the neighbourhood but before going asked me to send you her love and *pranams* when I wrote. Her eyes are, I am glad to say, better in spite of the doctor’s gloomy forecast.

Love and greetings to you always,

Yours ever,  
KRISHNAPREM

*Context:* I wrote to him that after having read Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* a change had come over me and that I had at least found it possible for me to accept all that he said without mental reservation – a thing I had tried to

do but couldn't heretofore. As a result – I wrote – I came to feel that Krishnaprem's sympathy for Communism must cause some amount of estrangement between us since Gurudev didn't hold with Communism at all. I added that much though I would regret to move away from him (in case my fears were well-founded – that he felt sympathetic towards Communism) I would have to steer clear of his influence as I wanted nothing else to influence my heart henceforward except my Guru's ideology and findings.

12th July, 1948

Almora

My dear Dilip,

I am writing a few words describing what I find in *Savitri*: if you find it suitable you can put it in your *Annual* – otherwise tear it up. As for Dr I.S., I am sorry that he thought fit to misunderstand me so. He came here one day as you know and we all liked him very much and talked quite freely. In the course of conversation he asked me explicitly what differences I felt between your *Ashram* and this one. I replied equally frankly that I could think of three:

- 1 That with us there was a greater stress on tradition and traditional ways.
- 2 That I (at least) am sufficiently under the spell of name and form to prefer the name and personality of Sri Krishna to an impersonal (as far as name goes) Divine. I can surrender to the former but not to the latter.
- 3 That the teaching I had received laid greater stress on what is eternal than on processes and events taking place in Time.

How he could make out of that what you say he has, quite passes my comprehension.

But why *must* people concern themselves with what I think – especially people who have their Guru? Krishnaprem thinks this, Krishnaprem thinks that, Krishnaprem doesn't believe in the Supramental, Krishnaprem doesn't know what the Supramental is, Krishnaprem won't eat what is touched by a sweeper! – Oh damn it all! Who am I that people should worry themselves about what I think,

believe, understand or do?

You know what my feelings are with respect to your Gurudev and so, I am quite sure, does he himself. Without doubt he also knows how far the particular path I try to tread is a parallel one to his own. Knowing that, he has gone out of his way to be kind and gracious to me, an outsider (perhaps that is what some people can't tolerate) and I have far too much respect for him and far too keen an appreciation of his kindness to wish to be guilty of the impertinence of writing chits about my agreement or disagreement with him. Besides, it isn't a question of 'agreement' at all. *Truth is something to be seen, not something to 'agree with'* – you can leave all that to the world of politics or economic theories – or even philosophic theories for that matter.

As I say, your Gurudev has always been extremely kind to me and has always encouraged your friendship with me. It is perfectly certain that he would not have done so had he felt that my vision, such as it is, was one which leads to a contrary or even cross direction to his. For the rest, you know and your Gurudev knows (and I am sure he approves) that I follow the path and Guru to whom I have given myself and, with Sri Krishna's help, will do so till the end. What has it to do with anyone else?

As a matter of fact, it was just because Dr I. S. was a member of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram that we treated him as just one of ourselves.

Now about what I am writing. I have half done it and hope to send it off the day after tomorrow but I am not at all satisfied with it. You have given me no time at all (your letter arrived only yesterday) and apart from the fact of being so occupied with cooking etcetera, I am quite unable just to sit down and write. I can't do it. Moreover I haven't yet had time to read the whole of *Savitri* properly. Anyhow I am writing of what I have seen as I should like to offer what small tribute I can. But if it isn't suitable you will just have to tear it up.

Love always

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Madras, 2nd December, 1948

Dear Dilip,

I had a perfect journey last night in the train. As for my stay with you all at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I do not feel I can write without being inadequate. Where the heart is too full of joy, words do not readily come – at least to me, and I do not intend to try. My feelings were, I think, obvious to you and to all the friends who welcomed me at your place with open arms. And to you, personally, dear Dilip, I know there is no need to say anything – even those happy care-free strolls through the streets with you were well worth all the long journey from Almora to Pondicherry, even if there had been nothing else.

Love to you always, dear Dilip,

Yours ever,  
KRISHNAPREM

14<sup>th</sup> April, 1951  
Almora,  
P.O. Mirtola.

My dear Dilip,

I was very glad to get your letters but sorry to find you sad and depressed after the passing away of Sri Aurobindo. Certainly it is quite ‘natural’ as the phrase is and I can well understand it, but that won’t help. Surely now is the time to bring out all that is in you. You say that for you Sri Aurobindo “is no more”. How can you say that, since all that “is no more” is his physical body? I know the senses cry out for their accustomed stimulus, but surely you are not going to let them have the last word? I can quite appreciate that you don’t find Sethna’s attitude of any help when he asserts he has firm faith that Sri Aurobindo must come back. It would be none whatever to me and I told him so. For me the true object of *faith* is what is Eternal. Possibilities or even probabilities in the future are objects of *belief* only. *Faith supports me, beliefs have to be supported by me.* Hence, as I told him, at times of crisis, it is to the Eternal we should look and not to the future. ... Let me quote the words of Jalaluddin Rumi: “Past and Future are the veils that hide Him out of our sight. Burn both with fire.”

He holds the future in His hand – what is it to us? Yes, we are ready to serve Him whenever and however He wishes, but the when and the how are His business not ours. Do not drug the living moment with the anodyne of work but, keep gazing steadfastly on His eternal being (*Guru* or *Ishta*) and then just do whatever comes to hand, caring neither for what has vanished nor for what has not yet come. As for “second comings” (I refer to Sethna’s “faith” that Sri Aurobindo will come again when the Supramental descends) such things may happen or they may not. Nothing is impossible but none knows Sri Krishna’s will and intentions. In any case, all such things are events in time. We cannot know them (true faith is a mode of knowledge) but can only believe. Forced belief is tortured by gnawing doubts. What need? Sri Aurobindo is your Guru. His eternal being will not, cannot, leave you. Within you and without you He stands and will stand for ever. Sri Krishna said in the *Gita*: “*Na me bhaktah pranashyati.*” The past has gone; the future is not yet. It is only He who was, is and will be – for ever. Only He is of any use to us now or at any time. Only He can be ‘ours’.

Anyhow keep up your courage, Dilip dear; and don’t get sad and depressed. Nothing has left you that was really yours and nothing can.

Love always, Dilip, from

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S. Remember one thing that will save you from many troubles: all that happens in time vanishes in time. Therefore hold fast only to Him who is unvanishing.

From my book *No Reason Can Explain – unpublished* Episode No. 16

On October 22, 1951 (when Indira was with me at Pondicherry) she wrote in her diary: “Terribly inauspicious dream: saw Dada reading a letter from Krishnaprem who writes about Motirani’s death at the end of August and about the ‘gap she has left behind’ since ‘she was

the life and soul of the Ashram’ etcetera. Also that he is ‘very angry’ with Dada.”

Indira – who used to go to the Ashram daily in the morning to collect my letters, went out, as usual, at eleven. She saw the Mother at noon with a letter that had come for me on that morning. She had the power – as I have verified on many an occasion – of telling us, by just touching an envelope, all about its contents. (There are many such instances recorded with exactitude in my *No Reason Can Explain*). She told the Mother that in one of the envelopes she had in her hand Krishnaprem had written about Motirani’s death. On her return she came to me and repeated what she had told Mother, then added: “I did not show you my diary before as I had decided that my dream must have been mistaken since if Motirani had really died at the end of August – so I thought – Krishnaprem would surely have written to you earlier.”

After reading her diary I opened Krishnaprem’s letter and read:

Uttar Brindaban,  
P.O. Mirtola,  
20th October, 1951

My dear Dilip,

I wonder if you heard the sad news that Moti left her body during the last days of August. Her health had been failing steadily and finally the end came with heart-failure. You who knew and loved her can imagine the gap she leaves behind – at least to the senses. You know how much she was the life and soul of the place.

I was very angry with you on account of all that nonsense about the world’s not knowing its great men or whatever the title was. I had no mind to write to you at all, but my hand has been forced.

I warn you that if I get a single letter from people quoting you as a reference, not only will the writer get no answer, but neither will you. This is meant seriously, so take it as such.

How are you and how is Indira? I hear rumours of your going to America.

Love always and tell me how you are getting on.

PART III – LETTERS

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

(I had written in the first edition of my book, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* about Krishnaprem's rich personality endowing him with the epithet "great" both as a man and Yogi of rare purity).

15th October, 1951

Dear Govindagopal,

I was very glad indeed to know from you that *Baba* (father) was able to leave in such complete peace. Yes, I know well enough how dark it all seems but that darkness is only of the senses and the sense-mind which persuade us that all is dark because *they* cannot see. We must not listen to their voices or we become sunk in depression and sadness from which the only issue is into a forgetfulness (Time's healing!) which is *tamasik*. "*Natmanam avasadayet*" – it is Thakur's healing, not Time's that we want. They are *not* gone: Mirtola is *not* empty (as Moti had passed away) nor is Deoghar. But we have to open the eye that can see and not sink down in the blindness of the pain that cannot. Do not ever listen to the voices which say 'he is not' but only to the one which says 'he is' for that is the truth and I tell it to you from my own heart. For the rest, changes are bound to come and do come. Life cannot go on forever in one mood and our outer life has to be adjusted accordingly; but this is the truth that nowhere is there emptiness.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Lucknow, 22nd November, 1951

Dear Govindagopal,

Painful memories? Yes, that is inevitable but, as you know, there are only two paths. One is to cut loose from everything, pleasure as well as pain and go 'alone to the Alone'. That is not for either you or me. The other is to accept both pain and pleasure as equally His gift.

PART III – LETTERS

With Radharani’s grace all can be borne. But do not hug the memories and dwell in them. When they come and are painful – accept them but remember always that he is not gone – merely invisible to the senses.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

19<sup>th</sup> August, 1952

Dear Govindagopal,

Don’t you go getting depressed or embittered or even excessively worried. I am not going to put up with it from you anyhow. Just trust Radharani – I am sure she won’t let you down. Whatever happens let it happen as and how it will; it cannot be other than His will and that is best of all for those who love Him.

Much more important is that you should not yield to this ‘feeling of desolation’. It is the voice of *tamas* telling you that *Baba* (father) is ‘gone’, that you don’t know where he is or if he is, that the sky is clouded and the future unattractive. All this is pure *tamas*. As opposed to that there is the voice of *sattva* which equally tells you that all that can go must go, that you do know that he is and in a general sense *where* he is – at least that he is in your heart, which is a more real place than in your senses and that the true sky is never clouded – the *Aditya* standing in the Zenith as Chandogya puts it. All this, too, you hear in your heart and you can’t deny it. Choose then which you will listen to – and fight the other. ‘*Māna anusmara yuddhya ca*’. Above all, do not listen to one insidious voice which suggests that to cease to grieve would be disloyal; your father is *ānanda* by nature and he wishes that you should be in *ānanda* and not darken your soul by dwelling in constant grief for that which is not and never was him.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Dear Govindagopal,

I am so glad you are feeling less depressed. As for the (external)

PART III – LETTERS

emptiness in the *Ashram* – we have got to face and conquer that emptiness sometime, and the sooner the better. After all if Thakur or Guru said to us, “I am now going to put you through the experience of the emptiness of the external world if you think you are able to stand it” would we not willingly and even eagerly assent? And yet that is exactly what He has done (and so only in part, for he has left much behind) and we are supposed to be intelligent enough to recognise His hand. For the rest, just resolutely say ‘no’ and refuse to follow right at the start when that alluring voice tempts down the path of sad reminiscence. I know how alluring it can be in its sadness and also how weak and depressed it leaves one in the end.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Ashwin, 5, 1362  
September, 1955  
Almora

My dear Dilip,

I was glad to have your letter.

“Why must one have faith in a doctrine?” you ask. Why, indeed? I have never asked you to. Doctrines are not sacrosanct. Have faith in nothing that is in time but only in Him who is eternal.

“If I had followed this or that, where should I be now?” you have asked. Well, how do you or I know? Are you so dissatisfied with your present position that you so condemn the road that brought you there? Danger? Everyone knows this path is full of dangers. Agonies and heart-breakings? *No one ever got far on this till his first, or purely human, heart was broken and he got a new one in its place.* As I said before: true faith never misled or harmed anyone, but true faith has no concern with anything that happens anywhere or anywhen (all happenings are mere matters of belief or opinion, well- or ill-founded). The only true object (*vishoi*) of faith is the Eternal Bhagavan – Him and nothing else.

Stick to Thakur, Dilip, my dear! Him alone, nothing and no one

else; He alone will never let you down and anything or anyone that you think of as separate from Him will let you down sooner or later. Remember His last instructions to Uddhava: he who spends time praising the merits or blaming the results of others gets way-lost. (Book II, Canto 28, Shloka 2).

Anyhow, you have ended on a good note: that you will not go under but stick to Him, *come what may*. Yes, let us stick to Him and Him alone. Nothing else matters. Don't let the disappointment of others (friends or good men though they be) spoil your peace. Nothing that ever was or will be is worth troubling about, but only His feet who ever Is. Where they are is peace and joy.

All love to you, Dilip. Forgive plain speech, remember you asked for it. *Ashirvad* to Indira.

Ever yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

Almora, 22nd August, 1957

Dear Dilip,

I was so glad to get your letter. I had been meaning to write to you for a long time but first Haridas's going, then a visit to Nainital for dentistry and then *Janmashtami* all made it rather difficult.

Thank you so much, Dilip, my dear, for your sympathy. Yes, it is nearly forty years that Haridas and I had been friends. But I have seen that sorrow is of this side. For those who go, the going is well. And for those who stay – if only they stay with Thakur – the staying is also well.

I am glad you liked Sir Paul Dukes. We found him a nice and very sincere man, otherwise I would not have given him your address. But now-a-days there are so many humbugs in Ashrams (and elsewhere!) that I did want him to come in touch with at least *some* genuine people. ... Moreover, it is not only his charm: he is also a man of great courage as you must have seen for yourself.

I am so glad you hope to be able to build a small place of your

own – or of His own rather.

Did I tell you that I met Duraiswami this time in Calcutta and would have liked to have seen more of him? I feel a deep sympathy for him as I liked him very much indeed! He has been through a sad experience but one can only experience disillusion if one has had illusions – either about another or about oneself, and hence we should not cry out against heaven when our illusions are broken. If only we can keep Him steadily in our hearts we shall be alright whatever happens; and if illusions break, it is because they are illusion. By the way, they tell me that the Supramental has descended in the Pondicherry Ashram. I imagine you know as little about it as I do!

I was delighted to get the parcel of delicious coffee, the more so because of the love which has prompted its sending. But dear Govinda was shooting at random when he told you that we were living in “*kashta*” (hardship) *keshta thakle, kashta kisher?* (Where the Lord is how can there be hardship?) And do believe me, Dilip, my dear, that Thakur has seen to it that we have never been short of anything that was *needed*. Admittedly there is not more than is needed and that is as it should be.

Correspondence? I don’t think I could drop you however much I tried! But it is true that I try to avoid unnecessary letter-writing to all and sundry.

Certainly I hope I shall always get news of you when there is any news to give and certainly my love and sympathy with you is the same as it always has been.

Thank you, both of you, again, for the coffee. I do appreciate it. All love to you, Dilip, and blessing to Indira.

Ever your affectionate,  
KRISHNAPREM

April, 1958

My dear Dilip,

PART III – LETTERS

I wrote a letter to you some time ago thanking you and Indira for the record and for the parcel...

Do not fret yourself over having left the Pondicherry Ashram. Things being what they are, you undoubtedly did right and I personally am happy that you have settled down to your own *bhajan*...

In all true *guru-shishya* relationship something must be unconditional and Indira has, I think, given herself unconditionally to you. ... All things that come and go may be doubted. Only do not doubt Him who is eternal. Why should we con over and over in thought the events, doubts, hesitations, successes and failures of the past? Even yesterday has vanished for ever. Only He remains and let us concern ourselves with Him alone.

*Ashirvad* to Indira and love to you.

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

January, 1959

My dear Dilip,

All good wishes to you both for the New Year. May it bring all that is good and be a year of happiness and peace for you both. I would love to have been present at the opening of your temple, especially as I haven't seen you for ages, but now-a-days it is practically impossible for either of us to get away at all. So may all blessings be with you both on the occasion of the ceremonial opening. I hope all will go off splendidly and the temple becomes a real centre of spiritual life for yourselves and all the many devotees who will come to it...

Affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

Mirtola  
9th January, 1963

Dilip dear,

First of all accept my loving greetings and all good wishes for the New Year. I hope all is well with you both and that the travels were not too much of a strain on your health. As for letters, I am *always* glad to hear from you and if I am often, as now, late in replying – well, you know that is nothing new and we have had a number of friends coming and going all the time.

I was very sorry to hear of the trouble caused by people you turned out. Some people are like that and one has to put up with it, but they did not venture to write here and in fact it would not have mattered if they did – the letters would go straight in the fire. For the rest, my affection for you, my dear, has never been, nor is now, based on what you ate or did not eat and you may rest assured that anyone telling such stories here will get short shrift. I have seen too many disgruntled Ashram-goers to pay any attention to their scandal-mongering mischief. In fact, as long as we are inwardly right with *Thakur*, nothing matters at all; so let us leave the opinions of men to those who care for such. Anyway, I am glad that the phenomena of the Lord's anklets you heard occurred and cheered you up. ... Yes, dear Dilip, there is nothing greater *in any world than love*: didn't Mira say: *prem vina mile nahi Nandalal* (one can never attain the Lord without love)?

All goes well here. Ashish sends you his affectionate *pranams*. My affectionate *ashirvad* (blessing) to Indira. I hope her father has recovered from his illness. And to yourself all love.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.S.: One thing I would like to say: in this time of peril to India (and more than India) from Chinese materialism, all of us who value that freedom to follow the life of the Spirit – for which India has always stood – should be constant in the invocation of the Divine Power in which lies our real strength. As the *Gita*. says:

*Yatra Yogeshvarah Krishnah*

*Tatra Shrir-vijayo-bhutir-dhruva nitir-matir-mama*

(Where Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, resides shall reign prosperity, victory, opulence, life-sustaining Truth etcetera).

*Context:* After the Chinese aggression I started touring Rajasthan singing patriotic songs and raising funds (wherever possible) for our brave troops in NEFA. (See the next letter).

And then I wrote to him about one of our accepted disciples whom we had been forced to turn out of our Ashram. This man went on spreading all sorts of lies about us and our ways and, not content with getting a false report printed here, in a daily paper, actually started sending anonymous letters to our friends, maligning us. Only one of his charges was true (I had written to Krishnaprem): to wit, I was a non-vegetarian at the time. (Afterwards I became a vegetarian again). I wrote defending my considered view that food had little to do with spirituality unless of course one over-ate. But I felt a malaise that Krishnaprem might disapprove of my view about the place of diet or formalism in Yoga. So I was not a little relieved to receive this loving assurance from him, the more so as I was hard-pressed at the time.

Lastly, I wrote to him about a beautiful experience of mine – I had heard the Lord's *nupur* (anklets) on 17-9-1962 in our temple, while singing His Name. I have described it in detail in our book *The Flute Calls Still*, pp. 301-3.

Almora, February, 1963

Dilip dear,

I was very glad to get your letter yesterday. ... Seriously enough, I am very glad to hear of your activities in aid of the defence of our frontiers. I only wish we could contribute on your scale. Anyhow we sent to Delhi what little we could. You strike the right note when you say that our soldiers are giving their lives that we may do our *sadhana*; what I mean is that it is not just a struggle between two national egoisms – we could have little to say in support of that – but a defence of freedom to pursue the spiritual path against a system under which it would be almost impossible, perhaps quite impossible, after one generation. Not for nothing did Sri Aurobindo say that the

tyranny of a Communist system would be a far worse thing than the tyranny of a mere Hitler. I have deliberately taken a stand on this issue as it is the one which concerns all of us who seek the spiritual goal, the freedom of the spiritual Path, which is the thing that we value most. Those who have other values which mean more to them will, naturally, think in terms of them. But surely these are ours and we must be ready to fight for them, if not with outer weapons, then with whatever we have and, above all, with our hearts. Divine forces are there to help and will help, but for that they must have as it were, bases in our hearts from which to operate. If we can give these bases, I am confident in the result, for, as I said, the fight is not for any morally national aims but for the sake of the Spirit, for something universal that is one in all men. We have no monopoly of the Spirit (“*samoham sarvabhuteshu*” – as says the *Gita*) but at least we will give Him a home and those who threaten us do not.

The distinction between *karma* and dry prayer, as some put it: Well, how should the meditation on Him who is *rasamoy* (delectable) be dry? And is not meditation the attempt to find out His will and *karma* the attempt to carry it out in our own spheres? He has said in the *Gita*: “*Mam anusmara yuddhya cha* – remember me and fight”. You write if you had been young you would have gone to Ladakh to fight. But we, at your age and mine, could hardly fight with rifle and bayonet; but there are other weapons and more conflicts that could have been won on the outer battlefields lost through the weakness of men’s hearts. If we can keep our hearts free from the forces of doubt, depression, fear, jealousy etc., the light will shine from them to strengthen all who come within their range whether great or small. Let us not turn away from prayer and meditation just when there is most need of it. All of us who value the freedom to follow the life of the Spirit for which India has always stood should in this time of peril to India and more than India – be constant in the invocation of that Divine power in which lies our real strength. As Sanjoy puts it in the last Canto of the *Gita*: “*Yatra Yogeshwarah Krishnah*... wherever Krishna is, abide real prosperity, victory, steadfast morality.” I do not refer to the more or less formal prayers of ecclesiastical institutions,

but of those that are in the hearts of all who know that there is no power but His. We must all do what we can. Would that I could do more than I do.

All love to you and blessings to Indira,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

19-2-1963

Dilip dear,

I was very glad to see the photos of your temple and its surrounding garden with its (for me) nostalgic glimpse of the infinite land sea of the Indian plains. It is now, I suppose, seven years since I last saw it. Certainly you have succeeded in finding a very beautiful image of Radharani and, to my feeling at least, the effect of the *sinhasana* (altar) has been greatly enhanced by having the two together. I congratulate you and Indira on it.

I can't imagine why you should feel that there would be anything wrong in the fact that Radharani occupies your mind now-a-days, somewhat to the exclusion of Krishna. After all, they are in truth inseparable and where one is, the other is also. Yes – I know the song you mention:

*Kishorir das ami pitabas ihate sandeha jar  
Koti yug jadi amare bhajaye brithai sadhana tar.*<sup>1</sup>

We used to sing it here often. You may or may not remember that when we met in Pondicherry that time, now so long ago, I suggested that you might find it helpful if you could also bring Radharani into the picture of your devotion and so I am naturally pleased that you should have done so, and, as I say, where one is, the other is also – visible or invisible.

---

<sup>1</sup> He who doubts that I am subservient to Kishori (Radha) shall never, never arrive even if he worshipped me ten million years.

PART III – LETTERS

Yes, the question of the status of temples and religious trusts in general is a troubled one now-a-days. Anyhow, these things (like everything else) are ultimately in His hands, in which place we should be content to leave them. After all, our tenure of these temples of flesh that we live in is so uncertain that we can obviously expect no absolute right in the temples of brick and stone we erect outside.

Meditation? Quite possible we mean different things by the word. At any rate I feel that our thoughts, our feelings and our actions should all be centred on Him and with this I think you will agree. Nothing of us should be left out.

All love,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

By the way, you needn't imagine we are 'orthodox' because we are vegetarians. We eat with anyone who comes here – Hindu, Muslim or anything else – and have done so since the beginning.

Almora,  
June 1963

Dilip dear,

I was very glad to get your affectionate letter and the various enclosures including the Bengali article on your visit to Ayodhya which I also read with interest. You ask a difficult thing when you want my views in the *manner* of what, from your account, would appear to be a Divine healing that was accomplished on the little girl. I can only ask that you will read what I have to say with the same sympathy with which it is written and remember that to accept is one thing, to understand is another. First of all, I will answer your direct question. Such events are not arbitrary nor was Indira's vision what you term 'imaginary'. Then we must ask what in fact is meant by 'Hanumanji' i. e. what it is that manifests in that form. As I see it, 'Hanumanji' is a Divine Power though not Divine in quite the same sense as Rama (= Krishna). He appears in a personal (though non-human) form because He is a *living* though not individual power, the

divine creative power – shall I say the creative power of feeling that is always turned towards and exclusively at the service of the Divine. (The question of Rama as opposed to Krishna *or* any other Divine Personality surely does not arise). He is thus the Power of the Divine Grace which flows wherever there is a conductor, a channel, that is open. I will add that He can and does appear in other forms in other settings. In this case the channel would undoubtedly appear to be Indira whose habitual state of being turned towards the Divine, coupled as it is with a particular psychic constitution, must certainly have been reinforced by the deep feeling of concern for the child. That upsurging tide of feeling, united as it was to her psychic nature, opened the channel to the flow of the Power. (This is not in any sense a derogation from the Divine nature, of the Power nor an assertion that it was in any sense ‘hers’ or could be used at her will. The Power is a Grace that is and remains Divine. But, whenever a physical manifestation of it occurs, we must look for the embodied channel through which it does so.) His descent was experienced by her as the resplendent (i.e. divine) and favouring (smiling) form in which he clothed himself for her. The descent or flow of the Grace was in and through her, even though seen as *outside* her; and you, and I presume she also, were quite right in feeling that, at that moment, the essential part of the healing or preserving act had occurred and so felt that the recovery was certain.

You ask, why Hanumanji?<sup>1</sup> Some form had to be used and I cannot, at the moment at least, think of any quite similar form that is included in the Krishna cult. Moreover her (Indira’s) experience at Ayodhya must have aroused in her an inner perception of the nature of that Power that was there being worshipped with such *bhava* and devotion. That will be enough. The flow of feeling with which she must

---

<sup>1</sup> I asked Krishnaprem why – when we were praying for the recovery of little Brajabala (a four year old daughter of a friend of ours) who had been run over by a motor car and the doctors had given her up as a hopeless case and yet she recovered after we had prayed for her and Hanumanji appeared to Indira, resplendent and smiling – it was Hanumanji who had to appear? We were Krishna-worshippers and so a devotee of Krishna might manifest himself. But Hanumanji was a worshipper of Rama. Why had *he* to come to save the little girl in answer to our prayer? Also I asked Krishnaprem whether it was wrong for us to address Radharani as *Mother*, as was suggested to me by a Vaishnava devotee from Bengal – (D. K. R.)

have appealed for help and healing for the child opened the channel and the Power descended through her, showering itself in the form in which she could recognise it.

Surely we need not differentiate between Rama and Krishna in the matter by saying that you were only in the habit of singing the latter Name. All the Names are His Names – to sing any one of them is to sing all.

I cannot feel certain that this account will altogether satisfy your feelings. I will only say that I can also appreciate the attitude of pure acceptance which is unquestioning. But if we do ask questions – and I personally feel that we should do so – then we must invoke another Power – the Power of intelligence which is also Divine: *dhiyo yo nah pracodayat* (He who directs our intelligence).

Your other question is, as you say, on a quite different level. It is true I think that in the two worshipping schools of Vaishnavas i.e. the Chaitanya and Nimbarka schools, it is not usual to address or refer to Radharani as Ma. I presume the reason for this is that in that Form the particular *Shakti* and *bhava* or Motherhood was not manifested or, at least, not emphasised (just as I suppose, Krishna, too, is not, usually *thought* of as the Father. *Pitahamasya jagato mata dhata pitamaha* of the *Gita* is said surely of His fundamental or pivotal Being rather than of His Personality as Krishna).

In Brindaban and Braja as a whole I have usually heard Her referred as *Priyaji*. But certainly I have also heard *bhaktas*, perhaps mainly from the Punjab side, addressing her as Ma and I cannot at all see why, if it appeals to you to do so, anyone else should think fit to object. I fear it is just a case of the usual “we-don’t-do-it-that-way-in-our-community” attitude.

For the rest, all is well here.

My love to you, Dilip dear, and congratulations to Indira on her birthday.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Almora, October 1, 1963

Dilip dear,

I was very glad to receive your *vijoya* letter. May all blessings be with you and with us all for the only *vijoya* that matters to us: the victory over our own selves.

Above all, I was glad to get the news of your dream which has all the signs of a genuine inner experience and I am very happy that it should have come to you. As for its meaning I will say what I can.

First of all, it occurred at the end of your Gurudev's birthday and therefore whether he had personally anything to do with it or not, it should be held to embody teaching for you and, as you know, the Guru is essentially one, in whatever form – *vande Krishnam jagatgurum*. First you heard the voice – His Voice that speaks in our hearts and to which we so seldom listen – no, before that you see the *prasad* which of course means Grace without which none can see Him. The Grace will have and does have a special fragrance. All fragrance is from Him for, as He says in the *Gita*: “I am the blessed fragrance (*punya gandha*) of the earth” – in fact, it has been a very universal experience of the mystics that Divine Presence has manifested in scents. Now in response to your desire to see and not only hear and feel (the scent of) He manifests a form. It is not His total being but a profile – one side only – and means the Golden Crown of the Peacock (*Ishwara*) rather than the peacock feather of *Braja*. He toys with and gives you His white *prasad* – the stainless white Light from which all colours come. I cannot but recall the words of the *Upanishad*: “The One who, Himself without colour, distributes all the many colours in His hidden purpose, into whom, its end and its beginning, the whole world dissolves – He alone is God: may He give us the pure understanding (*sa no buddhya shubhaya samyunaktu*)”<sup>1</sup> of Him, of course. Remember that your prayer had been for one-pointedness and the power to meditate on Him, to understand (in its true and not just intellectual sense) Him, the one stainless Light in all beings.

But you cannot yet see Him *face to face* – your own will is not yet sufficiently submitted to His; that is why He wore the Crown of Sovereignty. His will must be sovereign to us before He will show

---

<sup>1</sup> *Svetashvatara*, 4.1

us the other side, the love and loveliness that is shown in *Braja* alone – the Land where no one thinks of aught but Him. He has two sides (profiles), the glorious Lord of Dwaraka and the Beloved of Brindaban. We seek the Beloved but the condition is that we must first submit our wills to Him, the Lord. When seen face to face, the two are one – Crown and Peacock feather, both are worn. To quote the same *Upanishad*: “One who is without a personal will by His Grace perceives the Lord and His greatness and becomes freed from sorrow.”<sup>1</sup>

What more can I say? It is for you my dear, (if you can accept my interpretation) to see just where it is that you still desire to assert your own will. We all do it – some in one thing, others in another. It is for each of us, unified by the dual process of examining our hearts and watching our actions (which always reveal our hidden thoughts if we study them carefully) to find out just where our personal will is still active – where it is that we are not submitted to His will but desire the fulfilment of our own.

But that you should feel that a change has come over your attitude, a withdrawal of the sense of value that we project upon the outer, this is a sure token of the actuality of the experience and the power of the Grace whose stainless fragrance is that which comes only when we can submit ourselves to Him – it is the scent of unconditional self-giving. But we have to implement it – to work to keep it alive.

Do not ask such questions. Could *any* vision of His face be anything but good? But, in truth, such *dreams* are usually not signs either of attainment (a mistake which has inflated many to their own undoing) or of coming events. They are no doubt signs of Grace but they are also meant to teach us what is our next step – which it is for *us* to take.

Do not think I am lecturing you! What I have written is as much for myself. For all of us it is the same. *His love is hidden behind His loveliness until we are no longer at all our own for only then can the loveliness be hidden in the love.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 1.6

All love,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

Almora,  
31-1-1964

Dear Dilip,

I was sorry to hear of the accident to your knee. I hope it is alright now. You must be a bit careful – neither you nor I are as young as we were and damage to the knee-joint can be a great nuisance. Anyhow, if it brought the vision of Radharani it was no doubt worth it. As for the vision itself, why should you be doubting it? Hasn't she sent you many poems? Don't be what is called 'a doubting Thomas'.

There was the second dream. I seem to remember stories in the *brajalila* in which some *sakhi* or other, or some wandering stranger offer to paint a picture of Radharani's Beloved for her though I can't remember details. Isn't your 'old woman' outside – *Yogamaya*? – She who out of the mere black and white (abstract idea) photo in your heart can produce the living picture full size, in oils. Anyhow – whoever the old woman may have been, she does produce the full-size picture who says to you 'Everything is mine'. You ask apropos of what? Of you, of course, my dear: surely it means 'everything is mine, including you, so why are you worrying? Trust me and be happy'.

But I think there is more to it. I wonder if you remember a nursery rhyme: there was a crooked man and he had a crooked stick etc. etc. That crooked man's name began with a K. In my experience at least He never sends dreams just so that you should have the pleasure of seeing His beautiful face. There is always a kink in it somewhere! In this case I think it is fairly clear. There is an old (and therefore wise) woman and she is 'outside'. She is in fact His *Yogamaya*, and works by making a marvellous show *outside* of what is really to be found *inside*. But only if you have a photo (a real likeness) of Him (or of anything for that matter!) in your heart can she produce the external

image enlarged and coloured.

There is also a hint, though it may not be altogether to your taste. ‘Where can I get His photo?’ – you ask. Where indeed except in the heart of man? In that heart with all its contradictions, greatness and littleness, straightness and crookedness, steadiness and fickleness, oneness and manyness *is* His photo – the black-and-white image of Himself. Of that photo *Yogamaya* produces the external image and coloured image – the outer world which fascinates us all, which contains all things, good as well as bad, ugly as well as beautiful. So we come back again to His words: “*Everything is mine*” – the “useless” old woman as well as beautiful young girls – all forms are His; which will you turn your back on? All is His, all is Him, will we turn away from any? Lastly, my dear, are you not over-looking the point under your very nose? isn’t Indira there with you, who has, in actual fact, brought you ever so many beautiful poems (some of which you have quoted in your letters) and is it not also she who has produced and given life to the beautiful images that thrill you and others in your temple? And has she not taken that life from out of your heart? What she saw there has she not produced outside? Why do you seek elsewhere what may be seen in her? ...

I have mentioned *japa* (repetition of His Name) and as for *dhyan* (meditation), if you cannot see Him in your own heart why not try seeing Him in hers? That, too, is *dhyan*, or, for that matter, if you can’t even do that, (as the *Gita* might say)<sup>1</sup> why not try seeing *her* in yours – inside her is that very Beauty. Must it have velvet skirt or golden crowns before you recognise it?

Karma? Remember your old song: *karma tomar marma ki pai?* (Can action know you in your essence?) When *Ma* spoke of ‘singing’ she didn’t necessarily mean *sa re ga ma*, but expressing to others the happiness and certainty that is within you. I didn’t mean telling them

---

<sup>1</sup> Krishnaprem here refers to the answers of Krishna in alternatives, one after the other, in the *Gita* that is, four couplets in succession: if you can’t do this then you may try this; if you fail again, then you may give another mode a trial which is as follows, and so on. See the *Gita* or, rather, Krishnaprem’s own exposition in his *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter XII, verses 8-11.

PART III – LETTERS

your spiritual experiences; that, in the end, does little good and often much harm, but sharing with them your spiritual *experience* (in the singular) the inner certainty and love you have *underneath* all these doubts and hesitations. *That* is the true singing. The other can be done at times – this always.

All love to you Dilip, my dear. My affectionate blessings to her and may They be with us all.

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

P.O. Mirtola,  
Almora,  
21-11-1964

Dilip dear,

It is weeks since I received your loving letter and I wanted to reply to it at once. But people were here all the time. The Puja vacation always means a larger number of visitors and I can only say that it is the really personal letters that got hung up – the other ones I somehow or other dashed off in the intervals. I am so glad you had a happy time with Govinda there; it must have helped him a lot to get into touch with *actual* feeling as opposed to academic atmosphere in which he has to spend so much of his time. There are times when I feel like saying ‘scotch all the traditions’: it is the actual thing that we want and so much of that stuff only serves to give us the idea that we know all about it when in fact we know nothing but the shell. One has only, instead of Sanskrit, to say only Latin, Greek or Arabic, in order to realise that the whole structure of *sacred* languages is a veil between us and Him and I am weary of it. “There was a veil past which I could not see” – and the worst of it is that it is we who have been at such pains to hang it up and then call on all and sundry to admire its hieratic beauty or its intellectual profundity. I do feel that the pressing need of the hour is to get rid of all *clothes* and stand without them.

We had a visitor from Pondicherry in the person of Kalyan Chaud-

huri and it brought up happy memories of Theatre Road and then, later, your rooms in Pondicherry. I believe they are still kept empty in the hope that you will one day go back. But why should we “go back”? It is better to *go on*. There is no room for going back on this path, not even for the going back of nostalgic memory.

Last year Ashish and I were going to Nainital on some work and were waiting for the bus to start when we suddenly heard a radio start in the shop opposite. “Is it? – Surely it can’t be!” – But it was: that is, you singing one of your Sanskrit songs, the *Bhavani stotra*, and it felt like meeting you and being wished a good journey. You know that Mirtola is now on the bus route up to the frontier. Convenience in some ways, inconvenience in others: one has to pay for everything. Anyhow, the only bus that matters is one that goes to a quite different “frontier”, and we hope we are still on that.

All love to you Dilip, my dear, and may our path lead ever onward. I hope that both you and Indira are keeping well. These bodies of ours have no reverse gear (whatsoever some people in Pondicherry may believe!) but I hope yours and hers are giving no trouble.

Again all love from both of us and may His blessing be always with all. *Jai Radhe!*

Yours affectionately,  
KRISHNAPREM

P. S. But please don’t call me *His Holiness!* My Thakur isn’t *holy* and my Guru isn’t *holy* and I am certainly not *holy* myself nor intend to be.

Dear Salil Kumar,

This time I was able to read your letter. Your difficulty in doing *japa* is everyone’s difficulty – at least it is the question everyone asks. Fundamentally, the answer must be that the *japa* is not interesting you. If it interested you as much as a novel or a newspaper does, your mind would not wander while doing it. The answer is blunt and not

much to anyone's liking and it seems inescapable but I fear it is true that we are not as interested in Him as we are in the things of this world. What to do about it? It is here that I hesitate to say anything as it might not be the line along which your Gurudev is trying to take you. I can only say what seems to me to be certain, namely, that our stock of interest, like our stock of money, is strictly limited. If we spend all our money on wine we shall have none left for food as a result! If we get wealth we must withdraw some of the wine money and spend it on food. Similarly, if all our interest is spent on worldly things we have none left for the main thing for Him. We must withdraw energy from the outer in order that there may be more for the inner. This is something which we can all do. See where our mental energy is running away to waste and stop up that channel. Withdraw from it.

If you say that your energy has to be used in earning food – that is not *wasted*. Without food no *sadhana* either. But there are other interests which do *waste* it. Just what they are I cannot tell you, but you can find out for yourself by observing where your mind wanders when you try to do your *japa*. For instance, one of the most common interesting activities for a serious *sadhana* is the reading of newspapers and magazines.

That day when you will be able to say: "I want nothing but Him" will never just *come* of itself; it has to be worked for by steady work on oneself, on the withdrawal of interest from all else but Him.

I do not know how far any of this will appeal to you. In any case you should consult your Gurudev as to whether or not it would be *anukul* (advisable) for you. In fact it should not conflict with any path, for I have only suggested a method of increasing the energy of your *sadhana*, whatever that *sadhana* might be. But as I say, your Gurudev must be the final judge.

May all blessings be with you.

Sincerely,  
KRISHNAPREM

Almora, 7-1-1965.

Dilip dear,

I am sorry to hear that poor Indira's health is bad again, or perhaps I shall say 'worse' again, for she has had so much ill health. But do not make up your mind she will leave her body at any particular time just because some astrologer, however good, has said it. First of all, a good astrologer will not make such a definite prediction of death just because he knows that he may be mistaken and therefore will not make a prediction which, by affecting the mind, might help to bring about its own fulfilment. Moreover 'death' is of two kinds – inner, that is, death to all self, and outer, or physical death. Secondly, neither astrology nor palmistry or any of the occult sciences can predict anything with certainty. The most they can do is to state probabilities and, in the end, this is true of *scientific* prediction also. Sometimes they *hit*, sometimes they *miss* (however good they may be) and I say this, having in the past studied astrology myself. I do not claim to be a good astrologer – I gave up the practice years ago – but, at least, I learnt from it what I wanted to know, namely, what can be known from it and what cannot. There is a passage in an old Chaldean book (and the Chaldeans were the great astrologers of the ancient world) which says: "Study not the impetuous rush of the moon; she ever moves by operation of necessity. The procession of the stars was not brought forth for the sake of thee. Flee thou those things if thou wouldst enter in True Worship's Paradise."

I have not the presumption to say that she will not leave in March but this I will say that our *times* are in His hands (and especially the *time* of anyone whose life is dedicated to Him) and though we may make guesses more or less probable, certainty is with Him alone.

But all this is mere *outer*. She has helped you to a feeling of His reality and His nearness. All of us have to go through the desert of emptiness when the support on which we have leaned is withdrawn and, sooner or later, it *has* to be withdrawn if we are to grow and find our only support in His naked Presence. We have to be naked ourselves if we are to find Him as He is. So don't give way to depression, Dilip, my dear! There are times when we are all tempted to, but we have to fight against it. Depression weakens us and makes us less capable of doing what we have to do. It is one of the greatest enemies of a *sadhaka*. Just to accept His will as something incomprehensible to which we can only submit is not enough, though it may serve as a starting point. His will has to be, not passively endured, but taken within oneself, for only so can we attain to understanding and to the transformation

of which your song speaks. One thing at least is certain and that is that His will is always towards growth, always, so that we may attain our full stature. So, when He removes our props and faces us with difficulties we must know that it is to aid our growth. A resigned and passive acceptance can no doubt bring peace but it cannot give the *Ananda* (bliss) which comes with active and creative acceptance. That is perhaps why in ‘Brindaban’ *Shanti rasa* (peace) is not present – in ‘Brajā’ it is *Ananda* that is sought, not *Shanti*.

All goes well here. Many things have changed since the happy days of your visit but one thing remains – His constant Presence. Nothing else matters.

Thank you for sending the photos – I was glad to see them. Certainly Indira looks ill and certainly much water has flown since I last saw her. Well, it is one-way traffic on this road for us all and why should we regret it or crave for rebirth: And the one with the little girl in your arms is still your charming self. *Long may it remain with us.*

What more can I say except the human wish that you and Indira may still have happy days together and the others, that we may all realise that our strength is in Him who never leaves us for an instant. May we rely on Him and Him alone.

Love always, Dilip dear,

Yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

*Context:* I wrote to Krishnaprem that a palmist, a Norwegian monk, had prognosticated in 1945 that Indira was destined not to live longer than 45 years. As he said so many remarkable things about her character and early life, I had enclosed a copy of the palm-reading in which he wrote among other things about Indira:

“Extremely honest, clean, refined, philanthropic, very religious, truthful, sensitive, extraordinarily intelligent, forgiving... moral strength is rock-like, unfaltering. ... The love for honour and dignity is remarkable...”

“Health is poor, the respiratory organs weak, there is an indication of death due to heart failure or hemorrhage at the age of 34 and 45 *when life must end.* ... Though always casting a halo of peace and prosperity on those around, the ‘owner’ shall never be ‘happy’. Always remaining desperately

lonely, amidst friends and even those who would love her dearly and sincerely if given the chance. ... Performing all duties – yet staying miles away from all bondage. ... A very lonely soul indeed – wandering alone striving for spirituality undaunted, yet afraid to take what by right is its own...

“It is undoubtedly a most remarkable hand – extraordinary – highly extraordinary – rare – refined. ... The owner must necessarily be a wonderful – rare and unique personality... Sykelko Reed 23-3-1945.”

I asked Krishnaprem anxiously that as his prognostication about the crisis at 34 was wholly correct, I was very afraid about the other at 45. ... About three months later Krishnaprem wrote again anxiously enquiring how Indira was. I wrote back that her condition had, indeed, become extremely grave, but that there was definitely *another* intervention of the Lord’s and Radharani’s saviour grace.

My dear Krishnaprem,

Ashish’s letter dated 11th April has completely upset me. Indira, too, is extremely concerned. She was saying with tears in her eyes: “He was so unwell, and still he thought of me and wrote the other day enquiring how I was faring...” Ashish writes that your health has been deteriorating rather fast during the past twelve months! Good God, and I wrote a long letter asking you again about *karma, jnana, bhakti*...! But then I didn’t know at all that you were so unwell. I wish you had written to me when you were first taken ill. Not that I could have done anything about it from here, but I might, at least, have suggested to you what I am going to insist on now, whether you like it or not.

I would have you come at once to Bombay or to Poona at your earliest convenience – that is, as soon as you feel you can undertake the journey.

I appeal to you with tears in my eyes: do come without further delay if you possibly can. Time in such matters is of the essence. You can fly with Ashish from Delhi to Bombay. I will make all arrangements, so don’t hesitate on that score. I can’t see the letter I write because of my tears. I who owe so much to you must wish I can be of some

service to you *now*. I know of course that you are in Radharani's hands and that you are a very advanced Yogi. So I can almost foretell what you are going to say, to wit, "I am in Her hands, Dilip, and so I don't worry at all about me..." and so on. But still there is a fraction of a chance that you may agree to come to Bombay or Poona for treatment (for after all, you have been now and then to Nainital to be treated). So I consulted Indira. She says: "Please write that all arrangements shall be made in Bombay and that someone can go and fetch him along with Ashish, of course." We can put our small guest-house at your disposal. Poona, too, has very competent doctors though not as good as those of Bombay, Lucknow or Delhi. But we can consult the Bombay doctors as well, either here or in Bombay, if you prefer the Bombay physicians. Of course we will put you up with a friend there and see that you are comfortable and we too shall go to Bombay to look after you as best we can. What more can we suggest?

I would have loved to go with Indira to Mirtola in May if and when you are better. But, as I told you, the heights are bad for her asthma – though she claims she can go. But lately she has vomited blood twice, so we will have to wait till she is finally out of the wood.

I am writing at random as I don't know how I should act and how I might be of some service to you. I know, of course, that we can do very little – and that it's the Lord who is the doer, not we men, for all our vaunting. Also, I do pray to Him that I may never presume to think that I can help anybody, least of all a saintly soul like you who are living under the aegis of Radharani Herself.

You mustn't write yourself. But I would feel happy if Ashish writes out your reply.

I didn't want to inflict on you such a long letter, but it has spun out to an unconscionable length for which please forgive me. I will register it tomorrow and would ask you to register your reply, too, as letters often miscarry here in Poona.

Do, if you can, send me a wire, too, but then how will *that* help unless you can assure me that you are better? Ashish writes that it is "serious" and that he is "uncertain about the outcome".

I can't contemplate – but I mustn't even suggest such a thing.

May you recover soon, is all I pray for. May He ordain that you will stay with us all yet awhile, we who owe so much to your inspiration and life of self-dedication so rare, alas, in this atheistic world of self and self, dust and din, fakes and phantoms.

Yours affectionately,  
DILIP

P. S. Yesterday morning in our temple I sang one of the finest songs of Indira's, thinking of you, Krishnaprem, and I have never sung it like this. Everybody was deeply moved, though none, except Indira, knew who inspired it.

I may as well tell you in a few words about its genesis.

In May 1958, Indira began vomiting blood and having heart-attacks, writhing in agony when Ganeshji appeared in her meditation and said: "I am at the feet of the Mother." There is a famous Devi's temple here but I didn't suspect Ganeshji meant this temple on a hill. A few days later, Indira vomited blood again when He again came to her and gave her the same message. Then only it occurred to me that Ganeshji might have meant *His* temple at the foot of the hill. But we knew of no such temple. Still we set out on 1-6-1958, and after a lot of search found that a small Ganesh temple did indeed exist at the foot of the hill in a by-lane. I asked Indira to pray to Ganeshji to cure her. But the moment she went inside the temple she went off into *bhav-samadhi* and after a while dictated the song *itni binati* etc.<sup>1</sup>

I was a little disappointed that she didn't pray. But she was cured

---

<sup>1</sup> The first two lines are:

*Itni binati suno Hariji, binati suno Prabhu men:  
Anta samai mukh nam ho tera hridai chabi ho teri*

– *Indiranjali*, Vol. II p. 249

which means:

When day is done, grant this my prayer,  
O Lord, that I may sing  
Only thy Name and in my heart  
Thy vision adore, my King!

PART III – LETTERS

all the same, thanks to Ganeshji! The Lord has thus intervened several times to save her, as He did once again on her last birthday (26-3-1965). Glory to Him, our one Saviour!

Almora, 26-4-1965

Dilip dear,

I am much moved by the love and concern expressed by you and Indira in your letters received yesterday, and of your invitation to come to Poona and be looked after. What can I say except that I know how deeply it comes from your heart.

But do not be anxious. The Hands that have brought me so far are still holding the wheel of my life. I think its course is not yet run, the voyage not yet finished. Anyhow, my dear, *let us trust Him – we have no other, first, last or in the middle.*

My love to you both and may His Blessings be with us all.

Affectionately yours always,  
KRISHNAPREM

HIS LAST LETTER

Uttara Brindaban, Almora  
October 17, 1965

Dilip dear,

First of all, all loving *Vijaya* embraces to you and all affectionate blessings to Indira.

We came back here a few days ago and are carrying on the treatment that the doctor – a very experienced man and an old friend – has prescribed. Your offers of paying for my treatment, check-up etcetera at Poona or Lucknow and of sending me and Ashish air-passage from here to your Guest House are, my dear, just what could be expected of your loving heart and touched me very much and I would have

loved to come, if only to see you, but I really don't feel that I could undertake a long journey. As for treatment – as you see, I have not refused to go to a doctor – but I do not find any inner sanction for wandering further afield. When Ashish wrote that I didn't expect to be “well” again, he meant that I don't expect just to “get over” it and become again my former self in robust health. The hookworm was merely what brought it to a head and the actual trouble – the ileitis – goes back in its origin some twenty-five years or more. That sort of thing with its resultant organic changes doesn't just clear up and vanish like a thunderstorm in a summer sky, though one may certainly hope for improvements and a build-up of some strength again. In any case, all is in the hands of our Friend and all is well.

In this outer conflict, too, His hand is over all and *satyam eva jayate nanritam*<sup>1</sup> – that which is based on mere propagandist lies must crumble away. No doubt we have to pay for the mistakes that we are elected representatives have made in the past but, whatever the difficulties, I personally have full confidence in the outcome. I think that it is the duty of all of us, who have come to know that it is He who is our life, to hold our minds steady that they may be firm platforms from which He can fight. *Jai Chakradhari*.

What more shall I say except, once again, my love to you always.

Affectionately yours,  
KRISHNAPREM

CONTEXT: I had written to him about our brave soldiers fighting Pakistan magnificently, thus discomfiting the blatant, unscrupulous aggressors, and added that I often caught myself praying for them in our temple before the Lord and Radharani not because I am a patriot at heart but because I agree whole-heartedly with Swami Vivekananda when he said in his famous Colombo speech which made history (15-1-1897): “Formerly, I thought, as every Hindu thinks, that this is the *Punya Bhumi*, the land of Karma. Today, I

---

<sup>1</sup> *Satyam eva jayate, nanritam* is cited from *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.1.6: it means: Truth alone wins through to victory, not Falsehood.

### PART III – LETTERS

stand here and say, with the conviction of Truth, that it is so. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth – East or West, North or South – and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualise the material civilisation of the world. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be...”

#### ASHISH'S LETTER

Almora, 17th Nov., 1965  
P.O. Mirtola

Dear Dilipda and Indiradi,

Your telegram moved me greatly.

Some three weeks after getting back to Mirtola and just when his condition was stable and the doctor who had come here was well pleased, there was a sudden deterioration. By the time we realised that this was not one of the usual mild upsets, it had become very serious. A Jaipur surgeon happened to come and advised immediate operation. It took another day to get a car and we left for Jaipur on the 13th. But he was too weak to stand the journey and collapsed at Kathgodam, so we went up to the little hospital at Nainital where, on the morning of the 14th, he slowly and quietly left his body.

We brought his body by car to Penenoula and from there the local villagers lovingly insisted on carrying him the last few miles to Dandeshwar, a little old temple beside a stream in the Deodar forest near here, where *Ma's* body had also been cremated.

Of course, one cannot help feeling, sometimes, that an earlier operation might have saved him. But I am not convinced, and, anyway, he was opposed to the idea until the pain was so great from the intestinal obstruction that there was no alternative but to operate or to go – and he wanted to stay for our sakes. But by then it was too late. Fortunately drugs controlled most of the pain.

Yet he is with us, and his love glows in our hearts.

I send you his love.

I do not know when I shall be able to get away from here. People will be coming – his disciples and friends – and we have to arrange to feed the large number of men who built the pyre, for in the hills there is no custom of payment for this work. And then there are youngsters here who are not yet ready to be left alone.

Let us leave it in Thakur's hands.

With much love and *pranams*.

Yours affectionately,  
ASHISH

Dilipda dear,

I have been keeping your letter by me with its request for some account of Gopalda's (Sri Krishnaprem's) last days. ... My being is saturated with his sayings...

When I first met him in 1946 I admired him but was not altogether sure that I liked him. With his brilliant intellect he challenged everything, everything except the area represented by his Krishna-bhakti into which his feelings were allowed to flow. Somewhere between the two was the man who, as Joygopal said, had a barbed-wire fence around his heart. It was that prickly touch-me-not fence that I had felt.

In subsequent years I watched that fence disappearing – Moti tore most of it away. Feeling and intellect flowed together, the former losing its fear of involvement and becoming ready to embrace all comers, while the latter, no longer needed for defence, became a surer and more balanced instrument. He became an integral man. And though I can point to no particular moment to mark the event, it slowly became clear that he was no longer a seeker but one who had found...

Gopalda was not much concerned with what any 'public' thought, and when he saw that the Krishna myth had been a safe channel for his feelings, rather than necessary expression of the truth, he simplified the whole paraphernalia of specifically Vaishnava religion with which he had been surrounded.

Under Thakur's guidance, the whole Brahminical structure of exclusive privileges came tumbling down. ... Towards the end he deliberately broke away every single restriction that had been part of the sacred structure of Vaishnava do's and don'ts. Yet none of it was aggressive in the way that most structure-breaking is apt to be. The more whole he became, the more simple and entirely lovable he was. All that "I care for nobody, no, not I" that he used to flaunt with a gay abandon was wholly altered. Previously, it left one with one's admiration rather chilled, selfishly, no doubt, by a suspicion that he really would not care what happened to the disciples he barely tolerated, when he could at last turn his back on this world for ever. Now there could be no question of his not caring and, indeed, he could – had he wished to – cut short the period of his suffering by some nine months, but he believed he had work to do.

He had come not merely to tolerate but even to encourage an ever-increasing crowd of disciples and friends whose constant demands taxed his strength to exhaustion. And while there was an undercurrent of Radha-Krishna devotional modes of expression, for the main part he spoke directly of human problems and of man's place in the cosmic evolution. In other words, his Teaching of the inner path was shorn of traditional and mythological trappings. One might think that would deprive it of much of its mystery and attraction, but it seemed rather to add to the sense of reality.

Faith, to him, was something that should support one, not something which had to be supported with fanatical asseverations of its Truth. ... His faith was rooted in the eternal, not in anything that comes and goes, and he would scout the idea that any authority could replace direct perception. Yet there was nothing of the brittle intellectual about him – the sort who jumps from viewpoint to viewpoint admiring his own virtuosity. His certainty was so real and so utterly unshakable that people drew strength from his presence more than from what he said...

But there was always a song on his lips. Strolling in the garden he would sing with an abandon that brought joy to one's heart. Your song, *mere dilme dilka pyara hai magar milta nahin* (in my heart lives my Beloved but I can't find Him) was one of his favourites.

PART III – LETTERS

I am expecting copies of his photograph any day now and will send one as soon as it arrives.

His birthday was May 10th, 1898.

With love and good wishes to you both,

ASHISH

[Collated and condensed from Govindagopal's letters he so kindly wrote to me last year – 1966 – in compliance with my request. The translation is mine.]

Dear Dilipada,

Your insistence leaves me no alternative. Krishnaprem used often to relate to me ever so many spiritual experiences of his...

You told me what he had related to you about the *Mahaprasad*, to wit, how he offered once the *halwa-bhoga* to the Lord in the shrine and how it was abstracted. He told me that more than half had been scooped out, fancy that!

At this time a series of divine phenomena began to happen one after the other. Let me tell you about one I heard from his own lips.

You know how he put the Lord and Radharani to bed nightly. Now, on occasions, it so happened that when he opened the temple-door in the morning they found His anklets on Her feet and Her necklace around His neck and so on. ... It did look (didn't it?) as though they had been playing at their human-divine love with great eclat throughout the night? Well, their ways are not ours, are they?

Let me recount to you another equally thrilling experience of his – about *Ma*, his guru and mother and everything.

“You can well imagine,” he told me after her passing, “how derelict we felt directly after *Ma* had dropped her body. So I won't dwell on it.

“We cremated her at Dandeshwar beside a little stream – a *jharna* – and returned to Mirtola around midnight. I was dog-tired and went off to sleep at once.

“In the small hours of the morning her dear familiar voice awakened me. ‘Wake up, Gopal!’ it rebuked me. ‘How can you go on sleeping? It’s time for meditation. I am here!’

“Galvanised, I started up and cried out in pain: ‘If you are here *Ma*, how is it that I can’t see you? Won’t you reveal yourself to me?’ ‘No,’ came the answer, ‘*you* will have to come up to me by dint of your meditation.’

“Next night she came again – a disembodied Voice; only to add: ‘I abide with you – within you.’ On the third night: ‘I am with all of you, I tell you.’

“And so it went on: she kept visiting us like this manifesting herself from one plane of consciousness to another to efface as it were the line of demarcation between the two worlds – of life and death.”

And *how* he loved me, Dilipda! Can I ever repay such a debt? It reminds me – how he once wired to me – let me tell you the story as it culminates in another marvellous experience. You will judge for yourself.

I was then at Benares when Krishnaprem and Motirani wired to me from Brindaban: “Come. You must, must, must.”

So I had to comply – in great joy. And then it happened again, the incredible miracle! Listen.

One day we were conversing in the court-yard of their cottage in Brindaban when a telegram arrived from Baidyanath. My elder brother, Gouragopal, implored Krishnaprem to visit our place before returning to Almora. Motirani was overjoyed and I myself felt thrilled at the thought that we would have his dear presence once more in our midst when, suddenly, he rose to his feet and went inside. He returned to us after a few minutes and told us gravely that *Ma* insisted on his going back at once to Mirtola. “Our presence, she tells me, is urgently needed there,” he explained tersely.

We were sorely disappointed, but there was no alternative: they had to leave immediately. On their return they were shocked to find

PART III – LETTERS

that the priest who had been left in charge of the temple service had absconded on the day before, so that had they not returned, the Lord's worship would have stayed suspended.

It was thus she came time and time again to give Krishnaprem the guidance he needed and sought. Who says, Dilipda, that miracles have become an anachronism in this our age of iron?

With love,

Yours affectionately,  
GOVINDAGOPAL

# APPENDICES

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### A MODERN YOGA

(On Sri Aurobindo's *The Riddle of this World*)

By SRI KRISHNAPREM

A new work from the pen of Sri Aurobindo is an event of the first magnitude for the world of *sadhakas* and, indeed, for all who are interested in the spiritual quest. It is now many years since his monumental *Essays on the Gita* threw out its magnificent challenge to sterile intellectualism and narrow orthodoxy alike, and there will be many who will have been eagerly awaiting further hints on the system of *yoga* which was implicit in that work. The present volume is a collection of writings dealing with problems and difficulties raised for the most part by some of those who are aspiring to lead the spiritual life under his guidance and consequently has for *sadhakas*, an even greater interest than works addressed primarily to an outside public.

To avoid possible misunderstandings it is perhaps as well to add that the *yoga* treated in this book has nothing in common with the so-called '*yoga*' which, I am told, is having quite a vogue in the sillier circles of the West and which concerns itself with such things as standing on one's head and breathing rhythmically, psychic trivialities or ridiculous 'concentration' on health, wealth and happiness. It deals with the high spiritual quest that even so long ago as the time of Yajnavalkya, was *anuh pantha vitatah purano* "the ancient narrow Path that stretches far away".

There is perhaps no one writing in India whose words on this subject will be listened to with more respect than Sri Aurobindo and that for two very good reasons. First, his powerful and keen intellect, and secondly, his prolonged and arduous *sadhana*, a *sadhana* which, I understand, he is still pursuing, unlike so many half-baked '*jivan-muktas*' who immediately their *sadhana* begins to bear fruit, lay it aside and at once "assume the God" and rest on their laurels.

This book, moreover, is clearly based on the author's own experience. There has been a deal too much unscrupulous talk about *yoga*. Popular *sannyasis* and others have eloquently expounded the various *yoga* systems as if they were full-blown adepts in them, whereas it is to be feared that too often they were merely quoting modernised versions of the technicalities contained in the classic texts of the subject, and were quite innocent of experience of any but the most minor of the various states they discoursed on so eloquently.

It is time, however, to turn to the book itself and for the benefit of any who may be unfamiliar with the writer's previous books, it may be briefly stated that the central method of this *yoga* is an integral and comprehensive offering of the whole nature to the Divine Reality. The technical methods of the classic *yogas* are not rejected but are all subordinated to this central "*samarpan*" which is, as it were, their soul and must include our whole being, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. There is to be no ascetic dualism but an ascent which springs from the whole nature. Rejecting the selfish desire to "live one's own life", the aspirant bends all his powers, purified by the discipline of the *yoga*, to a winged ascent to the one Divine Reality and to a poised waiting at the feet of that Reality.

At this point, the point at which many mystics stop, the second movement of this *yoga* commences. The *Sadhaka*, emptied of self but filled with the Light and Power of the Divine according to the level to which he has been able to rise, now seeks to retrace his steps and to descend again to the lower world bringing down with him as much as he can hold of the Light and Power with which he has been filled, thus transforming his lower nature and ultimately making of it a centre in this lower world through which can take place the manifestation of a diviner reality than has heretofore been possible. Thus there is a two-fold movement; an ascent *to* the Divine and a descent *with* the Divine; an ascent to the "kingdom of Heaven" and a building of that kingdom of heaven here on this earth, no mere shaking off the dust of this world in "a flight of the Alone to the Alone", but an attempt to transmute, to divinise life here by providing channels and centres of manifestation for that spiritual Reality which is, even now,

the very basis of this and all other worlds but is hampered and clogged in expression by the “*tamasic*” inertness of the world of matter and the inharmonious self-seeking of the world of mind.

This, and nothing less than this, is the aim of this *yoga*. Soul, mind and body all must be transmuted. The soul must no longer remain a pale starved shadow resembling the “strengthless head of the dead” of Homer but must become a vivid and radiant existence, a centre pulsating with Divine Light and energy, dominating and using the mind and body. The mind too, must no longer remain a mere analytic machine classifying and analysing the elements of existence, revelling in its proud independence. Instead, it must realise its subordination to the soul and assume its proper function, that of the formative power, that which impresses with form, not merely the raw material of the world but also the formless (in the sense of transcending form) truth of the soul.

Even the body, the “despised and rejected” of so many mystics, must cease to be the “Brother Ass” of St. Francis and become a harmonious vehicle of the Divine Life in the same way that a block of marble from being a lump of dead matter, becomes a radiant expression of the sculptor’s idea.

Such, at any rate, is the heart of this *yoga* as far as it has been understood by the present writer and it will be seen that, even in this brief and inadequate expression, it is no narrow or unworthy ideal, no mere salvation-seeking, but a noble attempt to “remould things nearer to – not the heart’s – but the Divine Desire” and it is one which should commend itself to the attention of all those whose eyes are not utterly blinded by the follies of materialism.

Nor need the so-called “intellectual” turn up his nose in scorn. Here is no pseudo-science, no obsolete psychology, no fantastic cosmology. Though I, at least, am in no way prepared to admit that the old systems represent merely “the childish lispings of humanity” or whatever the silly phrase was, yet it must be admitted that they have long ceased to be understood by the majority including, it is to be feared, many of their orthodox commentators, who manage sometimes

to shed more darkness upon light than light upon darkness. In this system a new terminology has been forged, which, abandoning the conceptions of the ancient seers, is yet more easily intelligible to the mind trained in modern ways of thought. In this connection it might be suggested that the value of a second edition of the book would be greatly enhanced if an appendix were added giving terms used, such as 'vital', 'psychic', 'supermind' and others which are all used in a highly technical sense which has to be gathered from somewhat inadequate data as the book proceeds.

One of the outstanding features of the book is its clear differentiation between the spiritual experience of *yoga* and the merely intellectual concepts of idealistic philosophy or the emotional intuitions of poetry. Intellectual philosophising about the Absolute Reality, however loftily 'idealistic' it may be, still remains purely speculative. "It cannot give the decisive experience or the spiritual certitude for which the soul is seeking." The intuitions of the poet, too, shot through as they sometimes are with spiritual light, are too vague and evanescent to be of practical use. They are like delicate plants that branch out in beautiful shapes beneath the surface of a lake which collapse into a shabby shapeless mass when you take them out of the water for examination.

The spiritual life leads to something sometimes more than these, more certain than the speculations of the intellect, more definite than the intuitions of the poet and this certainty, this definiteness, can only be had by the discipline of *yoga* (whether in this or in some other form) and that too, when carried out under the guidance of a competent and experienced teacher.

It is characteristic of this age of popular education that many people suppose that anything can be learnt by a patient study of books. But there are some things which can never be learnt in this manner and *yoga* (in any form) is one of them. *Yoga* is the art of the soul and it can never be learnt without the living contact with a master. All attempts to practise *yoga* without a *guru*, and a real *guru* at that, end either in disappointed failure, trivial psychism, ill-health or madness. The present writer has seen cases of all of the above occurring to

uninstructed or ill-instructed would-be *yogis*.

Some of the dangers and difficulties that occur on the path are discussed in the chapter on “The Intermediate Zone” in this book. A perusal of this chapter will enable the reader to understand how it is that there are so many “*Avatars*” and “*Jivanmuktas*” roaming about the world now-a-days and so many prophets with “divine inspiration” seeking to save our souls though their own seem to the outer eye as much in need of salvation as ours. The prevalence of such people, by no means *all* charlatans, is often a ground of scepticism to the superficial, but it is, in reality, an inevitable phenomenon, always liable to occur to those who essay the mystic path without adequate guidance.

In this sphere, as in others, Sri Aurobindo has useful advice to offer. Unlike the generalities and hair-raising creepy occultisms with which so many writers warn us of “dwellers on the threshold” and other ‘dangers’ in a manner which is as delightfully romantic as it is inadequate and vague, he gives us advice which is clear and definite, that is to say, as definite as it could be expected to be in a realm which he well describes as one of “half-lights and tempting, but often mixed and misleading experiences”.

In fact, all through, the book is characterised by the clear definiteness of thought that real experience gives. Many have got into the way of supposing that the word ‘mystical’ is synonymous with the word ‘vague’ and that all spiritual writings will have an elusive dreamy texture, a sort of Celtic twilight which conceals more than it reveals, and, though rich in the suggestion of infinite possibilities, is apt to be poor in definite content and disappointing in realisation. Such readers will find that the life of the spirit can be written about with a concrete clarity which will surprise them, a clarity of thought and expression which, while it too often crystallises into a sterile dogma at the hands of subsequent generations, is yet clearly visible in the writings of many of the great mystics.

The concluding section of the book contains a gallant attempt to give some explanation of the origin of the cosmos. Though the author frankly admits that the answer to this age-old question, one, it may

be noted, on which the Buddha forbade his followers to speculate, is one to which no adequate answer can be given on the plane of the human intellect, yet, for those who will not be content with the wise silence of the Buddha, he attempts to indicate a view which, if it cannot be the whole truth, will yet serve as some sort of a prop to those whose minds cannot stand alone but demand some answer at least to the great question as to why this cosmic process with all its misery emerged from out of the blissful splendour which lies beyond the naming ramparts of the world.

Let us, however, turn away from the contemplation of the ultimate insolubility back to the *yoga* which, with its double movement, stands before us like a challenge. Are we going to remain in our own selfish littlenesses, for ever chasing the tail of our own desires or are we going to lose ourselves that we may find them again in selfless co-operation with the one Divine reality which rules us all, mystic and materialistic alike? And it is just here that it seems to me misunderstanding may creep in. A great and sympathetic Western writer has described Sri Aurobindo as believing that “humanity is going to enlarge its domain by the acquisition of a new knowledge, new powers, new capacities which will lead to as great a revolution in human life as did the physical science in the nineteenth century”.

Now this seems to me a misrepresentation of the true *yoga*, a misrepresentation which is as dangerous as it is slight. The *yoga* is not something to increase the vital well-being and cultural development of humanity as such, something like eugenics or the wireless. Another book issued by Sri Aurobindo School emphatically states that this *yoga* is not for the service of humanity but for the service of the Divine. Any view that places the emphasis on a mere humanity is then clearly wrong, for it is the service of the Divine Reality and its manifestation in humanity and elsewhere that is the heart of the *yoga*; and this difference, slight or even purely verbal as it may seem to humanist moderns, is yet of profound significance and makes all the difference between the high spiritual endeavour of the ancient East and the ephemeral humanist progress of the modern West. Not that such ‘progress’ is in any way to be deprecated in itself but it is a phenomenon

belonging to a far lower level than this or any other *yoga*.

I have one slight criticism to make and that is that Sri Aurobindo does something less than justice to the Buddhist *yoga*. There are one or two references in the book and in all of them it appears to be considered that Buddhism was nothing but a system that taught world-negation and escape into a transcendental region beyond the cosmic process. No doubt this is true of certain Buddhist schools but it is by no means true of all. The extremely influential *Mahayana* schools or at least some of them, taught the nobler *Bodhisattva* doctrine and rejecting what they termed “the *Nirvana* of the *Arhats*” held that supreme enlightenment consisted in the realisation that *Nirvana* and *Samsara* are one and the same reality which they termed ‘*bhuta tathata*’. Ashvaghosha, perhaps the greatest of all Buddhist philosophers, expressly preaches that enlightenment has two aspects which he terms ‘*prajna*’ and ‘*achintya karma*’. The first may be regarded as the centripetal force leading to realisation of the Unity and the latter is the inconceivable actions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and may be considered a centrifugal force working for the spiritual welfare of all beings.

This is no isolated passage either, as in the famous *Lankavatara Sutra* the Buddha is represented as saying: “Self-realisation and purity – this is My own stage. ... Its rays of light move forward like a mass of fire; they who are bright coloured, charming and auspicious transform the triple world. *Some worlds are being transformed, while others have already been transformed.*” I do not propose to discuss here the question as to how far this doctrine is equivalent to the “double movement” of Sri Aurobindo’s *yoga* but it must, I think, certainly be admitted that the escape from the cosmic process by no means constituted the sole message of Buddhism.

To return to the *yoga*, it may be of interest to enumerate the qualifications which are necessary for one who aspires to tread this path. They are nowhere set forth in a definite list but from a study of the book it becomes clear that they do not differ essentially from those demanded by the masters of old. “A central sincerity”, “a fundamental humility”, the ability to do all work in “a spirit of acceptance, discipline and surrender”, not with personal demands and conditions but with a vigilant conscious submission to control and guidance, a

calm equanimity and a faith that “in spite of our errors and weaknesses and in spite of any immediate appearance of failure, the Divine will is leading us, through every circumstance, towards the final Realisation”. Above all, transmuting all by its constant presence, must be a burning aspiration towards the Divine and a desire to offer oneself and all that one has for the Divine service, quite irrespective of what part one may be called upon to play in the *Divine Lila*.

Clearly, the *yoga* is no child’s play, no passing amusement for those in search of a new sensation. It is the age-old spiritual path, the ‘Great Work’ of the alchemists, the transmutation of the whole character, and this can never be an easy task for although the actual transmutation is and can only be accomplished by the Divine grace, yet the preliminary drudgery, the preparing of the vessel for that Grace must be accomplished by one’s own efforts.

Perhaps there will be some whose first question will be whether this *yoga is a jnana yoga, a bhakti yoga or a karma yoga*. I wish such lovers of classification and levels to find out for themselves the answer to this question from the book itself or from the following few remarks. Here is *jnana*, for it teaches the way to the attainment of the highest knowledge, the knowledge that there is nothing but the One divine Reality, the “*sarvam khalwidam Brahma*”, of the *Upanishads*; here is *bhakti* for it sets forth the necessity for unchanging love of and self-surrender to the Lord, the *atmanivedana* which is the culminating stage of the nine-fold *bhakti* of the *Srimad Bhagawat*; and here is *karma* for it expounds the unattached skill in action, the ‘*karmasu kaushalam*’ of the *Gita*.

Beyond all classifications stands the One, the Supreme, the Stainless Eternal, changeless amidst His own eternal change, effulgent amidst His own dark shadows. All paths are His paths and this book stands as one more testimony that, even in this age of dark materialism, the ancient razor-edged Path is open for those who have the courage to walk therein: *tena dhīrā apiyanti Brahmavidah Swargam lokamita ūrdhwam vimuktā*: Thereby the calm wise who know the Brahman, released, come unto the high Heaven-world beyond.

KRISHNAPREM

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX B

#### SAVITRI

By SRI KRISHNAPREM

Sri Aurobindo's achievement in this great poem is one of which it is not easy for us to grasp the full significance. It is not a mythological poem, and ancient myth – as often as not even believed – used as a back-cloth against which to display poetic virtuosity. Neither is it a philosophical poem, an exposition in verse of doctrines whose more natural vehicle would be prose. Nor, again, is it mere literature, to be evaluated according to the canons of traditional, or even modern, English poetry. Indeed one remembers Sri Aurobindo's explicit rejection of certain criticisms – not of this poem – made by the Irish poet Æ<sup>1</sup> The English language has been given to the world and its usages and limits can now no longer be determined exclusively by the ears of the islanders whose tongue it originally was. Those who would remain sole rulers of their language must abjure empire. But

---

<sup>1</sup> Æ wrote in a letter to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy (dated 6-1-1932): "English is a great language but it has very few words relating to spiritual ideas. For example, the word 'Karma' in Sanskrit embodies a philosophy. There is no word in English embodying the same idea. There are many words in Sanskrit charged with meaning which have no counterpart in English – words like *dhyani*, *sushupti*, *turiya* – and I am sure the language which the Hindus speak today must be richer in words fitting for spiritual expression than English, in which there are few luminous words that can be used when there is a spiritual emotion to be expressed. I found this difficulty myself of finding a vocabulary though English is the language I heard about my cradle." To this Sri Aurobindo replied in a letter:

"But this seems to me a reasoning from the conventions of a past order which cannot apply to a new poetry dealing with spiritual things. A new art of word's written from a new consciousness demands a new technique. Truth first – a technique expressive of the truth in the forms of beauty *has* to be found if it does not exist. It is no use arguing from the spiritual inadequacy of the English language: it has to be made adequate. It has been plastic enough in the past to succeed in expressing all that it was asked to express, however new: it must now be urged to a farther new progress." (Æ referred to some poems of Sri K. D. Sethna sent to him for opinion by Sri Dilip Kumar Roy).

to return.

The uniqueness of the achievement lies in the fact that Sri Aurobindo has closed a gulf that has yawned in the human psyche for many many centuries. In the ancient world, poetry, whether in Vedic hymns or elsewhere, was – above all – revelation. Its subject matter was the eternal truth which dwells in the heart of all life. Of that secret ‘Truth-Consciousness’ – to use Sri Aurobindo’s own terms – Poetry was the essential expression: the Poet was the Seer, not in some mild Wordsworthian sense, but in the full and ancient meaning of the word. He *saw* in very actuality the ever-living Gods who from within ruled and still rule all life and he used all the magic of the divine Logos to weave garments of sound in which those powers could dwell, as it were, embodied. He was the Seer, the Prophet, the Magician and his speech was mantra and enchantment, not only in India but throughout the world. It was a dim memory of this that remained in the medieval European tradition of Virgil as the great Enchanter.

But this of which we speak was in that archaic world when men were still embedded in the matrix of the universal life – in touch with Gods above and beasts below – the days before the rise of tyrannous, self-conscious, separative mind, that “slayer of the Real”. Gradually, with the rise of this self-arrogating power a separation came about. One became two and head sundered itself from heart, knowledge from feeling. For itself the head forged the new tool of prose with which to express what it termed the facts of life, while to the more conservative heart was relegated whatever was left of the old magic language, shorn indeed of its prestige and power but still possessing the glamour which clings to the language of an old but conquered race. Poetry thus became the language of the dispossessed heart, the vehicle of its dreams and misty unfulfilled longings, a glowing many-coloured rainbow arched over the rushing waters of life but existing – as the analytic head is careful to tell us – only in the eye of the beholder.

Perhaps the last great Western poet to have made any real attempt to grasp the inner unity was Dante, and even he made use of merely traditional myth – and somewhat degenerated myth at that – for most

of his structure, while Milton who came later used even more degenerated myth for purposes which it is not unfair to describe as theological apologetics. Still later, Blake, a genuine but undisciplined seer, attempted to recover the lost unity but lost his way in uncharted private worlds.

After him the venture fails. The best poetry became, more and more, purely lyrical and subjective. The rainbow still gleams above the waters, the magic light still glows within the heart; but more and more, the fissure widened, polarising, however unspokenly, the *poetic* with the *actual* poetry with life.

In this poem the fissure has been closed. *Savitri* (and it is no mere coincidence that the name is that of the quintessential verse of all the Vedas as well as that of the wife of Satyavan) is neither subjective fantasy nor yet mere philosophical thought, but vision and revelation of the actual inner structure of the Cosmos and of the pilgrim of life within its sphere – *Bhu, Bhuvah, Swah*: the Stairway of the Worlds reveals itself to our gaze – worlds of Light above, worlds of Darkness beneath – and we see also ever-circling life (“kindled in measure and quenched in measure”) ascending and descending that Stair under the calm unwinking gaze of the Cosmic Gods who shine forth now as of old. This and much more can be seen, not as some theory to be agreed or disagreed with, but as present living fact by any who can open their inner eye. For poetry – all poetry – is evocative. “Out of discussion,” says Plotinus, “we call to vision.” Far above the plains of prose with their challenge to agreement or disagreement, tower the mountain peaks of poetry calling to vision. Poetry is indeed the full manifestation of the Logos, and when, as here, it is no mere iridescence dependent on some special standpoint, but the wondrous structure of the mighty Cosmos, the ‘Adorned One’, that is revealed, then in truth does it manifest in its full, its highest grandeur.

Such Poetry can only be written either in the early days before the rise to power of self-conscious mind or when that particular cycle has run its course and life establishes itself once more in the unity beyond, this time with all the added range and power that has been gained during the reign of mind. It is an omen of the utmost significance and hope that in these years of darkness and despair such a poem as *Savitri* should have appeared. *Let us salute the Dawn.*

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX C

#### ON SRI KRISHNAPREM

(In 1942 my position in the Free French Services compelled me to leave Pondicherry while nevertheless remaining in India. I at once decided to take advantage of the situation to meet Sri Krishnaprem, whom I already knew through his writings and his letters to my dear friend, Dilip Kumar Roy, who furnished a letter of introduction for my trip to Mirtola.)

My meeting with Sri Krishnaprem was rather extraordinary in that it marked the beginning of an intimate friendship. Our rapport was so immediate that people around us had the impression that we were merely renewing an earlier acquaintance. For the benefit of anyone who may not accept this “inner” explanation I may add that there were several external factors in common: we were both of European origin, both sometime University teachers; both had left Europe to seek a Guru in India and both had found one. On the other hand, he had been able to remain seated at the feet of the Master while I had deemed it my task to apply my Guru’s teachings to life in the outer world. The fact that we had found a direct path to the Divine in two different persons did not prevent our Goal from being one and the same or separate us in any way. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo, on several occasions – particularly in his letters to D.K. Roy – praised Sri Krishnaprem’s spirituality and Sri Krishnaprem had occasion to spend several days at the Ashram in Pondicherry when he made a trip to South India.



Life at Uttara Brindaban exhibited a thorough harmony between eternal and the Inner Reality. Inwardly it found expression in the daily ritual acts, in the individual discipline of all concerned, in the way the mystical preoccupation was carried over into a practical monastic regime. Among the disciplines it comprised, the most apparent and

## APPENDICES

perhaps the most severe related to food. The diet was of course strictly vegetarian, excluding even eggs as also any form of alcohol. However smoking was allowed in moderation.

The temple-ritual was very simple because this was not a wealthy establishment. One is reminded of the *Bhagavad Gita*, IX 26:

He who offers to Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept gladly from the striving Self, offered as it is with devotion.

Every evening we foregathered in Yasoda Ma's room, her faithful dog included. Sri Krishnaprem would read aloud from H.P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*. It was in the Indian style: long pauses between the sentences to allow the listener to savour the echo awakened in his consciousness. Occasionally, someone would tender a comment or ask a question. Sri Yasoda Ma's contributions were always brief, utterly impersonal but fraught nonetheless with mystic passion.

Outer life included playing host to a trickle of carefully vetted Europeans who had been fortunate enough to pass through the affable but business-like screening provided in Almora by some friends of the Ashram, the botanist Boshi Sen and his American-born wife, née Gertrude Emerson, grand-daughter of the philosopher. Sadhus making the pilgrimage to Tibet were regularly given lodging. Peasants from a neighbouring village, regarding themselves as "lay disciples", regularly offered the Ashram their services.

Everyone worked at Uttara Brindaban, each member placing his talents at the disposal of all who cared to avail of them. Yasoda Ma, who had received first-class high-school education, ran a school for the village youngsters, giving them the rudiments of elementary education and a grounding in daily hygiene. When her health permitted she was also the Ashram cook. Dr Alexander, who had taken the name of Haridas, treated sick peasants at his dispensary with Sri Krishnaprem as his assistant. Labourers tilled the fields belonging to the Ashram, which provided members with a good part of their food requirements.

When Yasoda Ma received from her disciple, Ronald Nixon, all his worldly possessions, she had been careful to preserve his collection of books. This was housed in a structure separate from the main Ashram building. As for Sri Krishnaprem, he continued to teach. If professor Nixon was dead, his dedication to the spread of knowledge was not abated. Letters from people scattered throughout India and abroad kept him busy answering questions. Out of this voluminous correspondence and his evening readings three books saw the light of day, first in the form of contributions to *The Aryan Path*, an organ of the Bombay Theosophical Lodge.

The first was the shortest. It was called *The Search for Truth* and represented an act of faith on the part of a seeker, who sought exalted advice from the Guru to the disciple.

The other two works were in the nature of commentaries on texts of the first order. The first was *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita* and the second *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*. As the titles suggest, both books treated the texts from the point of view of what light they shed on yoga. In the case of the *Bhagavad Gita* this was only fitting, since every chapter of this renowned work includes the statement that it is one of the yoga scriptures. Of all the sacred texts this is the most widely known in India, constituting a sort of introduction to the entire Hindu tradition. Sri Krishnaprem's commentary is strictly Hindu in its arrangement and inspiration. But its literary form, its style, its flashes of English humour salted with good-natured irreverence for academic scholarship – these traits place the author in the best tradition of writers from across the Channel. This seeming levity in no way detracts from the fundamental importance of the book which sets forth the principles of a whole conception of spiritual practice. Its impact on India was considerable.

*The Yoga of the Kathopanishad* is a more technical treatise. It provides what you might call an anatomy and physiology of human consciousness, with a very subtle description of its workings particularly in relation to the mysteries of death and rebirth.

Notwithstanding the importance of these profound labours the

## APPENDICES

members of Uttara Brindaban found time to explore the surrounding country. One day Sri Krishnaprem took me to the head of a nearby valley where, among the aromatic cedars, the aged temple of Dandeshwar stands. I was asked, very politely, to remain outside while he entered the inner sanctum to meditate a while. His blue eyes and very English looks left no doubt as to his European origin, but his *sannyasi's* garb gave him right of entry.

This fruitful, disciplined life was going on when Sri Yasoda Ma, whose health had long been in decline, left this earthly plane.



That was in 1944. Sri Krishnaprem tasted the loneliness of the perpetual sorrows. The Ashram was now his and he had to take on the heavy responsibility of being a guru. One might say, in Hindu terms, that it was the beginning of a new dharma, the appearance of new karma – in short, a new man had come to birth.

Nine years later, in 1953, I paid him my second and last visit. In between we had met in Calcutta, Puri and Pondicherry, and had kept in touch with each other by letters. Arriving at Uttara Brindaban, I saw the tall figure of my friend coming down the path and at once felt that he had changed and grown inwardly.

There had also been changes in the Ashram routine. The founder no longer being there, a small structure housing her ashes had been erected in front of the entrance to the temple. Her daughter, Moti, had also passed away some time after taking *sannyas*. Those who remained had striped their lives of inessentials. Human warmth was more in evidence than the last time I had been there. Visitors were now made welcome. True, these were only external matters, but I knew from experience that they must be the expression of an inner change, of which I was soon to have more explicit evidence.

Four years later, Haridas passed away. In 1955 Sri Krishnaprem had placed the administration of the Ashram in the hands of a young English disciple. There ensued a period of intense concentration and

## APPENDICES

unfoldment.

On the 14th of November, 1965, Sri Krishnaprem left this world. He had been taken to a hospital in Nainital. The remains were transported to the vicinity of Uttara Brindaban. There more than a hundred villagers insisted on taking it in turns to bear the body several kilometres to the neighbourhood of the Dandeshwar temple where the cremation took place. The ashes were brought back to the Ashram. A Hindu friend had this epitaph engraved for the *samadhi*:

For me he was tangible proof of the intangible  
and lent profundity and dignity to life.

If I may be permitted to do so, contemplating this life unreservedly made over to a single ideal, I would add these words to the epitaph: “He was the embodiment of dedication.”

Even now fresh disciples are making their way to the Ashram, inspired by his memory, to tread the Path he demonstrated.

January 1966

GABRIEL MONOD HERZEN

(Translated from the original French by Mr Donald Eichert.)