

asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind — and that always brings peace — that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda or what prepares it is an obstacle to the Divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond, but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, "Practise the Yoga with an undespondent heart", *anirvinñacetasā*.

I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and excesses of despair are natural — though not inevitable — on the way, — not because they are helps, but because they are imposed on us by the darkness of this human nature out of which we have to struggle into the Light. I do not suppose Ramakrishna or Vivekananda would have recommended the incidents you allude to as an example for others to follow — they would surely have said that faith, fortitude, perseverance were the better way. That after all was what they stuck to in the end in spite of these bad moments and they would never have dreamed of giving up the Yoga or the aspiration for the Divine on the ground that they were unfit and not meant for the realisation.

At any rate Ramakrishna told the story of Narada and the ascetic Yogi and the Vaishnava Bhakta with approval of its moral. I put it in my own language but keep the substance. Narada on his way to Vaikuntha met a Yogi practising hard tapasya on the hills. "O Narada," cried the Yogi, "you are going to Vaikuntha and will see Vishnu. I have been practising terrific austerities all my life and yet I have not even now attained to Him. Ask Him at least for me when I shall reach Him." Then Narada met a Vaishnava, a Bhakta who was singing songs to Hari and dancing to his own singing, and he cried also, "O Narada, you will see my Lord, Hari. Ask my Lord when I shall reach Him and see His face." On his way back Narada came first to the Yogi. "I have asked Vishnu; you will realise Him after six more lives." The Yogi raised a cry of loud lamentation,