

really the man of intellect, the rationalist who says, “Let God, if he exists, prove himself to me first, then I will believe, then I will make some serious and prolonged effort to explore him and see what he is like.”

All this does not mean that experience is irrelevant to *sadhana* — I certainly cannot have said such a stupid thing. What I have said is that the love and seeking of the Divine can be and ordinarily is there before the experience comes — it is an instinct, an inherent longing in the soul and it comes up as soon as certain coverings of the soul disappear or begin to disappear. The next thing I have said is that it is better to get the nature ready first (the purified heart and all that) before the “experiences” begin rather than the other way round and I base that on the many cases there have been of the danger of experiences before the heart and vital are ready for the true experience. Of course in many cases there is a true experience first, a touch of the Grace, but it is not something that lasts and is always there, but rather something that touches and withdraws and waits for the nature to get ready. But this is not so in every case, not even in many cases, I believe. One has to begin with the soul’s inherent longing, then the struggle with the nature to get the temple ready, then the unveiling of the Image, the permanent Presence in the sanctuary.

P.S. All this is of course only an answer couched in mental terms to your one objection or inability to conceive how one can love God without having first known Him or had experience of Him. But mental reasoning by itself leads to nothing — it is something in yourself that has to see and then there is no difficulty. Fortunately, you are moving near to that. Nor would I trouble at all about this point, if you did not make of it a support for depression and despair. Otherwise it would have no importance, since with one idea or with the other one can arrive at the goal because the soul drives towards it.

### The Sunlit Way of Yoga

Peace was the very first thing that the Yogins and seekers of old

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,

“What, so many austerities! such gigantic endeavours! and my reward is realisation after six long lives! O how hard to me is the Lord Vishnu.” Next Narada met again the Bhakta and said to him, “I have no good news for you. You will see the Lord, but only after a lakh of lives.” But the Bhakta leapt up with a great cry of rapture, “Oh, I shall see my Lord Hari! after a lakh of lives I shall see my Lord Hari! How great is the grace of the Lord.” And he began dancing and singing in a renewed ecstasy. Then Narada said, “Thou hast attained. Today thou shalt see the Lord!” Well, you may say, “What an extravagant story and how contrary to human nature!” Not so contrary as all that and in any case hardly more extravagant than the stories of Harishchandra and Shivi. Still I do not hold up the Bhakta as an example, for I myself insist on the realisation in this life and not after six or a lakh of births more. But the point of these stories is in the moral and surely when Ramakrishna told it, he was not ignorant that there was a sunlit path of Yoga! He even seems to say that it is the quicker way as well as the better! You are quite mistaken in thinking that the possibility of the sunlit path is a discovery or original invention of mine. The very first books on Yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the second over the other.

It is not either because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and the Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer. No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we have had to struggle hundreds of times (in fact that is an understatement) before we could overcome; many still remain protesting that they have a right until the perfect perfection is there. But we have never consented to admit their inevitable necessity for others. It is in fact to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden. It was with that object that the Mother once prayed to the Divine that whatever difficulties, dangers, sufferings were necessary for the path might be laid on

her rather than on others. It has been so far heard that as a result of daily and terrible struggles for years those who put an entire and sincere confidence in her *are* able to follow the sunlit path and even those who cannot, yet when they do put the trust find their path suddenly easy and, if it becomes difficult again, it is only when distrust, revolt, abhiman, or other darkneses come upon them. The sunlit path is not altogether a fable.

But you will ask what of those who cannot? Well, it is for them I am putting forth all my efforts to bring down the supramental Force within a measurable time. I know that it will descend but I am seeking its near descent and, with whatever dark obstruction of the earth-nature or furious inroads of the Asuric forces seeking to prevent it, it is approaching the terrestrial soil. The supramental is not, as you imagine, something cold, hard and rocklike. It bears within it the presence of the Divine Love as well as the Divine Truth and its reign here means for those who accept it the straight and thornless path on which there is no wall or obstacle of which the ancient Rishis saw the far-off promise.

The dark path is there and there are many who make like the Christians a gospel of spiritual suffering; many hold it to be the unavoidable price of victory. It may be so under certain circumstances, as it has been in so many lives at least at the beginning, or one may choose to make it so. But then the price has to be paid with resignation, fortitude or a tenacious resilience. I admit that if borne in that way the attacks of the Dark Forces or the ordeals they impose have a meaning. After each victory gained over them, there is then a sensible advance; often they seem to show us the difficulties in ourselves which we have to overcome and to say, "Here you must conquer us and here." But all the same it is a too dark and difficult way which nobody should follow on whom the necessity does not lie.

In any case one thing can never help and that is to despond always and say, "I am unfit; I am not meant for the Yoga." And worse still are these perilous mental formations such as you are always accepting that you must fare like X (one whose difficulty of exaggerated ambition was quite different from yours) and

that you have only six years etc. These are clear formations of the Dark Forces seeking not only to sterilise your aspiration but to lead you away and so prevent your sharing in the fruit of the victory hereafter. I do not know what Krishnaprem has said but his injunction, if you have rightly understood it, is one that cannot stand as valid, since so many have done Yoga relying on tapasya or anything else but not confident of any divine Grace. It is not that, but the soul's demand for a higher Truth or a higher life that is indispensable. Where that is, the Divine Grace whether believed in or not, will intervene. If you believe, that hastens and facilitates things; if you cannot yet believe, still the soul's aspiration will justify itself with whatever difficulty and struggle.

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*Prāyopaveśana* would be quite the wrong movement, it would be a sort of Satyagraha against the Divine. In essence it is an attempt to force the Divine to do what one wants instead of trusting to him to do what is best according to his own divine will and wisdom; it is a culminating act of vital impatience and disappointed desire, while the true movement is a pure aspiration and an ardent surrender.

After all, one has not a *right* to call on the Divine to manifest himself; it can come only as a response to a spiritual or psychic state of consciousness or to a long course of sadhana rightly done; or, if it comes before that or without any apparent reason, it is a grace; but one cannot demand or compel grace; grace is something spontaneous which wells out from the Divine Consciousness as a free flower of its being. The bhakta looks for it, but he is ready to wait in perfect reliance, even if need be all his life, knowing that it will come, never varying in his love and surrender because it does not come now or soon. That is the spirit of so many songs of the devotees, which you have sung yourself; I heard one such song from you in a record some time ago and a very beautiful song it was and beautifully sung—“Even if I have not won thee, O Lord, still I adore.”

What prevents you from having that, is the restless element

of vital impatience and ever recurring or persisting disappointment at not having what you want from the Divine. It is the idea, “I wish so much for it, surely I ought to have it; why is it withheld from me?” But wanting, however strongly, is not a passport to getting; there is something more to it than that. Our experience is that too much vital eagerness and insistence often blocks the way, it makes a sort of obstructing mass or a whirl of restlessness and disturbance which leaves no quiet space for the Divine to get in or for the thing wished for to come. Often it does come, but when the impatience has been definitely renounced and one waits, quietly open, for whatever may be (or for the time not be) given. But so often when you are preparing for a greater progress in the true devotion the habit of this vital element stands up and takes hold and interrupts the progress made.

The joylessness also comes from the vital. It is partly due to the disappointment but not solely, for it is a very common phenomenon when there is a pressure from the mind and soul on the vital to give up its attachments and its full unpurified acceptance of the outward life; it often gets a rajasic or tamasic vairagya instead of the sattwic kind, refuses to take a joy in anything, becomes dry, listless or unhappy, or it says, “Well, I have given up, I am giving up, but in exchange I must have the realisation you promise me; why don’t I get it, I can’t wait.” To get rid of that, it is best, even while observing it, not to identify oneself with it; if the mind or some part of the mind sanctions or justifies, it will persist or recur. If sorrow there must be, the other kind you described in the previous letter is preferable, the sadness that has a sweetness in it, no revolt, no despair, only the psychic longing for the true thing to come.

It is not by *prāyopaveśana* or anything of the kind that it must come, but by the increase of the pure and true bhakti. You have been constantly told so by us and lately by Krishnaprem and his guru; remember that she told you that the presence of Krishna during your singing was a sure sign that it would come, — not necessarily today or tomorrow or the day after, but that it would surely come. We can’t be all of us wrong and your vital

impatience only in the right. For heaven's sake, get rid of it and settle down to quiet aspiration and an ever growing devotion and surrender leaving it to Krishna to do what he is sure to do in his own way and time.

### Ordinary Life, Vaishnava Traditions and the Supramental Yoga

Even if things were as bad as you say, I don't see how going away would help you in the least — (it would certainly not make you non-human); some have tried before this device of progress by departure and it has never succeeded, they have had to come back and face their difficulty. Why do you always come back to this notion of going away or entertain it at all? It is quite meaningless from any rational point of view; it only encourages the adverse Force which wants to take you away from the path to return to the attack, and it prevents the speedy conversion of that dissatisfied part of your vital which is always kicking against the pricks — the pricks of your soul and of your spiritual destiny. However sad the prospect may seem to this dissatisfied vital fragment, your destiny is to be a Yogi and the sooner it reconciles itself to the prospect the better for it and for all the other personalities in you. Your alleged or inferred unfitness is a delusion, an imagination of this vital part; it doesn't exist. If persistence of difficulties is a proof of unfitness, then there is nobody in this Asram who is fit for the Yoga. We would all have to pack up our belongings or give them away and start either to get back to the ordinary world or en route for the Himalayas.

You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say “not altogether a wretched life, you will admit”. On paper, it sounds even very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy, — and in the end, it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment, disillusionment and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces — and then decay and death.