

Be What You Are



Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

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Foreword

The association we seek, in ignorance, with worldly minded people leads to bondage. But the same association, if cultivated with holy men, leads to non-attachment [Srimad Bhaagavatam, Canto 3, Chapter 23, Shloka 55]

A distinct urge to seek clear and correct answers to genuine questions is an indication that a person is now ready to tread the path of seeking and eventual fulfillment. The only requirement is that the seeker must develop genuine *sraddha* (attention) to find answers and do *sadhana* regularly. In our age-old *Guru-sishya parampara* (teacher-student tradition), involved in the ancient *Gurukula* mode of imparting spiritual wisdom, it is enjoined on the students to approach the Guru with utmost humility and earnestness. The Gita says: *"With reverential salutations do you approach them- the wise men who have known the Truth. Serve them, and enquire from them with due respect, until your doubts are clarified. These wise men will impart the knowledge of this divine Truth to you."* (Chapter 4, sloka 34).

It is in this spirit that most of the questioners have sought elucidation and clarity and it is our good fortune that Swamiji did find the time to satisfy their spiritual hunger.

The spiritual evolution of each person is a highly individualistic affair, depending as it does on his upbringing, accumulation of *samskaras*, *vasanas* and environmental influences. It is the Guru's sacred function to fathom the mind of the seeker and administer wisdom in the right measure and at the right time. In a way, it is like the mother looking after a growing infant. Too much or too little food, given at the wrong time, could work havoc with a growing body, even causing serious imbalances in personality development in the

years. It is to their eternal credit that our Teachers have always risen to the occasion and led their disciples along the right path with clarity, focus and compassion.

In this careful selection of letters there are innumerable passages which reflect the mind of the seeker and also reveal the unerring hand of the Guru in the replies given by Swamiji. It is up to each aspirant to study this collection carefully, if necessary more than once, and introspect on the answers given by Swamiji. The path to successful seeking in the Indian system has excellent guideposts – *Sravana, Manana, Nididhyasana* (hearing, ruminating and deep introspection). Thus is superior Wisdom gained and ultimately consolidated into *Vijnana* – Knowledge realization. The personality gets enriched, the mind drops all impurities in the form of greed, jealousy, anger, delusion, competition and desire. In other words, the personality becomes wholesome, ever dwelling in the inner core and even closer to the Divine than anything else one has experienced or lived with. This integration takes place at a deeply subjective level and its effects are, by the same token, deep and vast.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that this book will help the committed enquirer to make his journey to the Self satisfying and fulfilling. We are deeply indebted to Swamiji for permitting this collection to see the light of day. May his grace flow to every one who decides to take to this path.

Balan Subramanian
President
Brahma Vidya Centre

Vijaya Dashami, 1991, New Delhi

Publisher's Note

It is with a deep sense of commitment that we present this book - a compilation of selected correspondence with Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha- an illumined Spiritual Master - on one hand, and a few dedicated disciples and seekers of truth on the other.

A book of this nature carries a certain uniqueness in that its subject matter, spirituality lies not in the realm of dry philosophy but in the din and bustle of the everyday world. Faced by the perplexities and challenges that life and living in this complex world necessarily entail, devotees and seekers have turned to their Guru for answers and help. The Guru too rises to the occasion, adroitly handling the seeker's enquiring mind with his sometimes mystic but always brilliant replies, and the answers are gleaned and clarity gained for the seeker from within the flow and turbulence of life itself.

Rarely does History mention silent revolutions of the Heart. It fails to record the battles fought and won within the Mind of Man. Yet, it is these inner conflicts and turmoils that give essence and meaning to a seeker's life. Moments of honest doubt, periods of deep despair, events of pain and suffering are all necessary to shape a spiritual pursuit and in the proximity of a benign Teacher these do become a catalyst for the aspirant's growth, maturity and eventual fulfillment.

Though this volume covers a wide range of subjects, in order to preserve the natural flow we have deliberately avoided an index or classification. It would be better, we felt, to leave the reader alone on his voyage and let him make his own sudden and spontaneous

discoveries as he turns the pages.

This spontaneous ease and freshness is in itself an achievement in spiritual life. As Swamiji himself once cryptically remarked - "**Spirituality is Naturality**". This art of being natural is perhaps best summed up in a special note that he wrote for a close disciple, captioning it 'Be What You Are'. It is from the same note that this book gets its title.

BRAHMA VIDYA CENTRE

From a special note written for a close disciple:

If your whole focus in life is upon spiritual seeking and fulfillment - if this is so - then, from now on, do not worry about progress at all. This wholesome focus is called '*eka-chittata*.' Generally, *sadhana* is to accomplish such wholesomeness.

As for liberation, unaffectedness is liberation. Every day you are what you were the previous day, plus what you have acquired or lost that day. Around a constant quotient is built a transmuting quotient both together leading to the next day. Laws of nature will bring factors to your life and also drive your life to the further factors. Your nature pushes, and wide Nature pulls. The drama will go on, endlessly; till embodiment ceases.

Normally, understanding this will not satisfy the seeker; because of some expectations. Expectations must become extinct. *Mukti* is falling of desires. Desires will not fall the way you want, but will fall. Recognize the place for extinction of desires, and allow them to settle.

As for joyfulness and exhilaration, normally every system must produce it. But each personality has its quality, level and order. Like variations in voice, varying thrills and ecstasy will be of that quality, level and order which your system permits. Rather than seeking anything specially, observe and allow whatever is harmonious to yourself. Be more an observer and helper than a hinderer.

Harmony to be with others and with yourself. Others may include any and all. Yourself will consist of everything and all characteristics.

Rather than attempting at joy, allow the natural joyousness to well forth. Remove all obstacles.

Do not compare seekers and *Siddhas*. Particularly to determine your status. Bhishma fought and fell; Krishna advised and escaped; Rama abandoned and suffered; Sankara argued and travelled. Some had devotion; some delighted in wisdom; some excelled in dispassion; some sang; some wrote; you will do one of these or even something new that is natural or harmonious with you. If in error it becomes otherwise, that contrast will have to attenuate and become absent. Better avoid such a discrepancy.

In short, be what you are; and find fulfillment in doing so. Rest is all nature and nature's motivation and course.

Swamiji

Respected Gurudev,

..... I wonder as to what is the mind. Certainly, it is not matter. It seems that the mind, as the key factor in Self-realization, must be something akin to the Self, if not the Self itself. Or could it be that it is the Self, contaminated and heavy due to the traces of innumerable desires ranging over countless births? When cleansed of the contamination, through the constant pursuit of knowledge, the mind will become thin, light and subtle, so much so that it can be identified as the very Self. Ego is often termed as the lower Self. Now, if Ego is deemed as an offshoot of the mind, then mind would become part of the Self

Yours

....

Dear and blessed

Harih Om Tat Sat.

Mind is truly indefinable, as is God. It can be spoken of as a unique divine energy, or as a very special mystic substance. Various descriptions are given about the Mind and the Soul. One such description is -- Soul plus contamination caused by desires, or conversely, Mind minus contamination is the Soul. Mind can also be said to be something alien to the Soul, which veils the latter in a mysterious manner. It is all a question of which description suits your taste and becomes comprehensible for you. You accept that which agrees with your present state of evolution. But the truth is that although in the first stage, the Soul is differentiated from the body, in the last stage of evolution one has to realize the truth of absolute

Oneness, namely that the Soul alone exists, nothing else. The *sadhaka* has to identify everything with Truth, as Truth, as *Brahman*. Of course, here he will meet a lot of contradictions, but he will have to leave all of them aside and make his headway. His own evolution will in due course of time clarify everything for him.

About the ego, read my earlier letter again, and think over the relevant portion. For details about the practice of meditation, you may await the book to be completed....

Yours

Swamiji

1968

Respected Swamiji,

..... For half-a-dozen years I have been struggling hard to gain spiritual knowledge and realization, and for that purpose I have been studying a good number of philosophical books. Now through your guidance and grace, I have achieved a little of my object. Experience has taught me that the one who implicitly follows the instruction of his Guru alone, can ascend the true spiritual apex. It is through intuition that real wisdom dawns in an aspirant. In order to transcend the deep sense of duality and then to reach the oneness of the Absolute, I feel the guidance and grace of the Guru is essential. But the ego plays havoc by standing in the way of the disciple surrendering at the Guru's feet. The aspirant has, therefore, to nullify his ego before he can reap the benefit of surrender. With the nullification of the ego, Guru's grace will flow in abundance. Now-a-days, I have no agitation about my dhyana (meditation), or any other sadhana. I feel that where there is constant remembrance of the ideal, there would be no occasion for perplexity or fear

Your disciple.....

Dear

Harih Om Tat Sat.

Yes, years of reading and *manana* (cogitation), ultimately followed by *dhyana* (meditation), are needed for gaining a little of spiritual vision and realization. I am very happy you feel that you have gained only "a little" of your aim. To think that you have gained only "a little" is always good, nay even necessary. Such a feeling alone will enable you to gain more and more in the days to come. "*Yasyaamatam tasya matam, matam yasya, na veda saha*" Such are the words of the Upanishad. It means "The Self is known to him, who thinks that he knows it not. It is really unknown to him who thinks that he has

known it in full." So, your feeling must gain for you more and more of true knowledge and realization.

What you say about nullification of the ego, pride, is true. While the ego-sense is indispensable for the conduct of life, in the later stages of spiritual evolution, it is verily a curse.

To bid good-bye to it, and take to surrender, particularly at the feet of one's preceptor, is indeed very very rare, and hard for ordinary people. This only shows how deep-rooted, strong, deluding, and hard to obliterate is the ego.

It does not matter if some are unable to dissolve their ego completely. If their minds refuse to accept total surrender, they can at least take the Guru as a benefactor and guide. Later on, when the *sadhakas* realize the mystery of the mind and the truth about its notorious habit of persistently wandering helter-skelter, its vicious and binding inherited tendencies, they will automatically take to surrender, regarding it as the most effective means for purifying and refining themselves and thereby becoming truly fit for spiritual evolution. The Guru however, will not have any difficulties with the ego-full disciples, as the ego-sense will not be in him. Whatever be the hurdles placed by the ego, remember that even the least effort made in the spiritual direction, no matter however imperfect it be, is always ennobling and will surely bring monumental results.

As for your sadhana, continuous remembrance of the ideal is, no doubt, the best saving factor. However, this should not make you complacent and breed neglect and indifference. So, be careful and vigilant.

All *asis* for your *mangal*.

Yours

Swamiji

1968

Respected Gurudev,

*Thank you for the letter. Now that the meaning of the Sangh Programme verses is clear, there is enhanced interest in reciting them. The importance of **Gayatri-japa** is now fully understood. It is a cleansing agent for the mind.*

The year 1968 has brought in its wake happy tidings for me in more than a dozen ways, the most important of them being the newly acquired craving for spiritual enquiry. Taking stock of the accrued benefits, I find that this one development alone has brought me considerable happiness and peace of mind. What was instrumental in leading me into the orbit of your influence, I wonder. It could only be fate, I think. I was a reader and devotee of Gita and you now have taken me a step nearer to the Ultimate Reality. To know that good forces are working for me is quite reassuring.

Your Disciple....

Dear and blessed,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter was duly to hand. But only now I could get time to reply. I am happy that all of you find more interest and purposefulness in going through the Sangh Programme. When minds join together and work in unison, that in itself will be a mighty force. It will also afford the participants greater interest and enthusiasm in their efforts. May your meeting be successful in every way. May it also spread as much as possible. Our hearty congratulations and blessings to you all.

'Like attracts like' is an unailing law, particularly of the human mind and nature. Hence, the innate good or bad of one must, and will, find

a corresponding response from every quarter. I think you can apply this law to yourself for finding an explanation to the series of developments which have favoured you this year.

Life, more so in its spiritual aspect, is truly an unfoldment. The unfoldment will take place as days, months and years pass by. There will be newer and higher awakening as your zeal and purity increase. After all, the only purpose worth mentioning in the life of a noble soul is the discovery, or say the rediscovery, of his true nature, the re-obtaining of the lost awareness about him-Self. The re-discovery will not, of course, be a sudden process. There is bound to be delay. The reason for it is that man is not just a mental or intellectual being. He has in him a physical counterpart also. Hence, along with the purity and refinement of the mind and intellect, the physique too has to be developed, refined and purified. The development and bringing about sublimity in the physical set-up will generally take a long time, a series of acts, events, etc. All of them are good and are a sheer need for his fulfillment. Finally, when the propitious hour comes, the necessary mental tuning too will come to pass. Thus, it is all well-planned by Nature to suit and fulfill every soul individually. On your part, you must thank God heartily, and be devoted to Him more and more, for whatever He has done already and will do henceforth towards your spiritual progress and fulfillment.

Every one will, no doubt, have his share. It is only a question of time and the maturity which the seeker has attained.

Yours

Swamiji

1968

Our dear Swamiji,

Humble pranams at your holy feet. Your writing to me in English is much helpful, in that I need only read it out directly to G, for the latter's understanding. Otherwise, I would have to translate every syllable of what you write and satisfy G. Yes Swamiji, G is much more evolved now and seems to be fully contented. It is a very pleasant surprise to hear G talk some of the rarest philosophical truths.

*My husband and myself are doing our **sadhana** punctually with **sraddha**. The various pieces of advice you gave us, I am trying with all zeal to live and practise.*

The experiences about which I wrote to you last are those that I felt during some of my sittings (meditation). The rare and fine experiences which come to me sometimes, whether I be in meditation or not, are incomparable and ineffable. Certainly I do not have the power or means to describe them. While reading inspiring philosophical books as well as your letters, often I find myself unable to go ahead with the reading because a lot of divine sensations fill me to the full.

*One day G told me of a unique experience felt during G's **japa**. The body, G felt, was emitting forth thick hot flames, so much so that G thought it wise to stop **japa** and get up so that the experience might attenuate. The significance and meaning of this and similar experiences have already been explained by you at different times. However, I have a feeling that G's experiences reflect the salient spiritual truth, in a very large measure. What do you say, Swamiji?*

About my fear, I refrain from speaking, because I am afraid I would be found guilty on that account. Last week there was a death in a nearby flat. The

person died while in the bathroom, chanting God's name. I went there, saw the whole affair, particular the sorrowful face of the children and then returned home. My condition, needless to say, became worse after this event, sleep receding from me again for a long time. I am really ashamed of my weakness. But I am sure you will shower your grace and help me overcome my fear complex.

Pranams again to your holy feet.

Your disciple.....

Dear and blessed sadhika,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter to hand today. I am happy G has evolved and feels fulfillment and contentment. Emission of heat from the body during meditation is nothing unusual. It is the expression of *Rajo Guna*, the *Rajas* content in the person's make-up. Meditation is a purifying process. At the same time, it will also give some powerful realization to the *sadhaka*. In meditation, the meditator becomes convinced of the existence of the Self, its untold potential and wonderful nature. Let such experiences come and go. Do not become attached to them. When too much of heat is felt, and it is unbearable, sip a little cold water. Take *sattvic* diet. Do not over-think about spiritual experiences. Moderation is necessary in all matters.

There will be experiences of opposites too at times during meditation. Mind will rise in a tempest. Too many thoughts may crowd up. This is but natural. You are a product of the world, in the world, for the world. So, that nature cannot be fully shed. Let the worldly thoughts too come up and then subside in their own natural manner. Try to remain unruffled during their onslaught with patience and faith in God and yourself. If G has so much of devotion towards the Guru, it is good indeed. May G rise sky-high in his ideals and aims, and succeed in fulfilling the chosen role in the family and the

world. My hearty *Sivasis*. I appreciate your feelings about G. May they be richly rewarded.

I am happy that you and your husband are regular in your saadhana, and that you feel some unique experiences, not merely *ananda*, in some of the sittings. They must be encouraging you more and more on your path. O.K. Carry on. Do not worry much about the distractions you meet. They too are of help, in that they tell you repeatedly that your *sadhana* has not ended and that it has to be continued further and farther. Even an adept swimmer will be put to fatigue at times while swimming, seemingly more at times. It is just like your experiencing more difficulties and hindrances sometimes. Ours is a *poorna* (complete) *abhyaasa* (practise), and in it every kind of experience, pleasant as well as unpleasant, is welcome. Everything has got its own unique place contributing to the *sadhaka's* evolution. Everything tends to make you *poorna* and take you to the knowledge of *poornatva*. So nothing need be avoided or resisted. Let Nature herself give as well as take as much as she likes. You be just a witness, not a possessor. A mere partaker, not the causer.

About your fear: Ah, great and curious it is ! Yet it is no wonder. Everyone's mind is a compound of three basic forces - namely love, hatred and fear. Raga or attraction, is the force to fall off first. Then falls dvesha (hatred). And bhaya (fear) is the last to vacate the mind. Every *jeeva* (soul) will have one or the other of these three working in him predominantly. In your case, the most pronounced seems to be the last, viz. fear. You have to recognize this fact and then patiently act upon it. What you should do is to concentrate your efforts for eliminating fear, although the process may take quite a long time. Think always in terms of fearlessness. Practice fearlessness by repeated *vichaara*. Argue yourself against the upsurge of fear. Reassure yourself that you are resting on God's lap, the most secure fortress imaginable. Remain conscious of his hand of protection.

When He is there, why should I fear, think thus. It may take long for you to succeed in overcoming fear but now qualify yourself for the success by beginning your efforts

About the recent death, it seems that too many deaths take place around your residence, and their one purpose apparently is to molest you in all ways! As I can think, death generally affects that person who dies, whom it has befallen. Why should it grab your peace in the process? Really, it puzzles me that you are becoming a constant prey for Death, in spite of the fact that you are alive. Next time when I meet *Yama*, the God of Death, I shall catch hold of his wrist and then insist for an answer. Until then, wait in peace and steadiness.

Swamiji

1968

Dear Swamiji,

..... Mind, when purified or stilled is Atman. This is what I feel. In such a still state, you are in yourself in your real nature. Is it not so? Perhaps, it is for a second or so that I am able to remain in such a still state. At that moment, nothing exists except myself ...

A sadhika

Dear and blessed sadhika,

Your understanding is correct, no doubt. But I say it has to be much more deep and firm. Stillness of mind is the goal, true. It is the way as well. When the mind is stilled and at the same time wakefulness is not hampered, it is almost wakeful slumber. In that state, as the mind does not break itself to form thoughts or *vrittis*, no foreign stuff is or can be felt or cognized. It is the unitary state of Consciousness - the state in which the *Chaitanya* within the body remains single and aloof from every worldly entanglement of duality or *dvandvas*. The realization then obtained can only be of the Self, of yourself. True.

But surely it is not for seconds alone that you can experience such a state. If you do your *sadhana* consistently, patiently and with faith, it will repeatedly come in, hold you in its warm embrace for minutes together, even up to half or three-fourths of an hour at one stretch. Only then the *sadhana* triumphs and then alone, the divinity and forcefulness of your initiation will become clear to you.

So keep doing your *sadhana* and practice *vichaara* also. Attenuation of desires, knowledge of the Reality and then the dissolution of the mind, at first temporarily while doing meditation; all these three must

bless you simultaneously. Only then will your spiritual efforts be crowned. It is for effecting the former two that I asked you to do *vichaara*. *Satsanga* will be an unfailing help for all these. But all *sadhakas* cannot have its benefit to the required degree, occupied as they are variously. The further stages of spiritual realization, I don't hint at now. Let them be reserved until you, inspired by your own *sadhana*, question me or otherwise make me divulge.

Sivasis to you all. May your lives be fulfilled the soonest.

Yours

Swamiji

1968

The following letter was written by Swamiji in response to a seeker's enquiry regarding the apparent contradictions which are found in our scriptures as well as in the utterances of authoritative exponents of spiritual truths.

Dear and blessed seeker,

Harih Om Tat Sat. You must have received the short reply I sent some days back. I had promised to send another detailed note answering some of the points you have raised. Well, I wish to answer you, but it is a great problem to give all the replies in the form of letters. These are things which can be better discussed in person and cleared. Next time when you come home, be here in the Ashram for some time. Your quest must be fulfilled. However, I give you some things to cogitate upon and understand.

No knowledge is simple and easy to have. More so the *adhyatmic* knowledge. In *adhyatmic* wisdom, there is a definite end, a finality, unlike in other areas of knowledge. Self-fulfillment is the consummation of spiritual seeking. This fulfillment is sufficiently broad and covers all spheres. Freedom, absolute lightness of mind, composed nature, absolute clarity and freedom from doubt, exhaustion of all karmas, these are some of the main results and effects of fulfillment. You will become doubt-free only when you become a Self-knower, you become TRUTH, you gain liberation. Until then doubts will and must assail you, if you are an ardent seeker. When you get some doubts cleared, the effect will only be partial, temporary. Doubts hinder, they also help. Avoid the hindering effect, cling on to their helpful aspects. So do not be drowned by the doubts you have. Reserve them safely, give them a safe corner, and march on.

Remember the verse:

Bhidyate hridayagranthih chidyante sarvasamshayaah.

Ksheeyante chaasya karmaani tasmin drshte paraavare..

See what the last line states. Be patient and wait for that *paraavara darshan*, glimpsing the truth in its absolute aspect, in the high and in the low, in the gross and in the subtle.

Contradictions are a singular feature of the entire *Prakriti*. To understand these contradictions, to harmonise them, to remain one and unaffected by them, is the real spiritual struggle. Where contradictions meet and dissolve, there spiritual freedom results. Keep this truth always in view.

Contradictions there will be, when a seer utters truth. Our scriptures are the words of seers. So they contain great contradictions. How can I avoid contradictions then? As the truth is, so too I am. I cannot be otherwise.

See the Vedas. They begin with many Gods but after a time question their truth - the fact of many *devatas*. Then they say there is only one.

The Vedas also refer to heaven and hell. They do so for a purpose - to influence men towards right. Later they invalidate heaven and hell and lay down the truth of the One Omnipotent, Omnipresent Self. "Know this Self and be liberated. Heaven and hell are unsound. Karmas are frail boats. Only the fool believes in them. Be wise and discard all thoughts of future and past. Be concerned only with the present. The present body alone is the sure possession. Make use of it. Before you drop it, know the Truth, for knowledge of Truth alone bestows liberation", are the ultimate words of the Vedas. Dear soul, be discerning, use the sword of *viveka*, real wisdom, and cut across the bushes of doubts. Clear your way and reach the Spiritual Garden ahead.

Think. Where do the scriptures end now? Let them begin anywhere. To think, we must have a basis, a prop. We alone make a stick and give it the strength to help us. It is not the stick that walks, but we. In logic also there should be a foundation or a help. In mathematics theorems are proved using the help of axioms and assumptions or hypotheses. In the same way we have to proceed in the spiritual field also.

All souls must have been free in the beginning. Somehow they earned bondage. Our business must be to undo this bondage. To undo the bondage, different branches of thought and thinking are evolved and suggested. Each may take hold of that which suits him the best. Once it serves your purpose and you reach the goal, as you lay down your stick on reaching the destination, lay down, keep away the thinking also. The freedom you get will be so stable, profound, profuse and absolute, that you will never fall from it. Oh, wise seeker, would you resent to have that freedom, that lofty abode?

To have the high, one has to leave the low. To climb the higher, you have to step out of the lower. To reach the highest, even the higher has to be ascended, cast off. I am trying to take you to the highest. The child cries when it is asked to walk alone, to walk independently, and the father refuses to give his finger to hold. But that cry should not be heeded. After a time the same child will laugh and dance for having learnt to walk alone and be free. Your doubts and murmurs are just like the child's cry, they are a passing show.

In Mandukya karika Goudapada says:

(1)*Na kaschit jjayate jeevo sambhavo'sya na vidyate...*

(2)*Na nirodho na chotpattih na baddho na cha saadhakah...*

(1) No *Jiva* is ever born, the birth of this *samsara* is also not real. This is the ultimate truth, where nothing is ever born. The birth-death-less state of things alone is the truth.

(2) There is neither dissolution, nor evolution. There is none bound, none struggling for liberation. No *jiva* seeks, nor is anyone liberated. This is the uncontradictable absolute truth.

Think well, O Soul of wisdom, and reach the highest abode. Next time, come to me in leisure and in patient fervour. I shall clear all your doubts. Listen and read about truths, keep them as ideals. Years of seeking and *saadhana* will be necessary before full knowledge and freedom are realized.

Let there be *mangal* and peace for you.

Love and *sivasis*,

Yours

Swamiji

1966

*The following was written to a youngster in response to his letter stating his doubts about the need and role of marriage, especially for one given to a life of dedication and spiritual **sadhana**.*

Dear and blessed soul,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your loving post card is before me. I note with interest your ideas about the propriety of married life and the prospects which it holds out. You have tried to match these against the advantages of the unmarried life as also perhaps, of the ascetic's life. I wonder whether you have meant to speak about all these on a general basis or on the basis of your own nature and tendencies. If it is the former, then I feel you are too hasty and under-informed in the matter, considering your age and experience.

During my talks in Rourkela, if at all I had made any comparison between lives of the householder and the monk it was all, no doubt, based on our *Sastras* as well as tradition. As such, there would be nothing in it to be repudiated. However, my assessment was purely general, not particular in any way.

To marry seems to be the rule of Nature, not only with humans but with the rest of the beings also. Therefore, one will have to think and rethink well before violating or abandoning this rule. However, in the case of humans, unlike the other beings, there is the scope for using the intelligence, will, etc. as a result of which they can evolve themselves mentally and spiritually. That is to say, the life of human beings is not static or stagnant. This fact allows the individuals to reform and refine their inner and outer nature so as to choose their way of life. When the refinement reaches a certain level, it will be possible for them to outlive the need for a married life. This outliving,

if it has to be meaningful and beneficial, must be only after keeping in view some nobler spiritual and social aims.

Those who have reached the requisite height of evolution alone can successfully take to the ascetic way of life and pursue it until the end, benefiting themselves and the society alike.

It is no doubt a great blessing to belong to the ascetic order of people. But before any one becomes an entrant to it, he has to deeply analyse his inner nature, tendencies, ideals, etc. If necessary, in making the analysis he must seek the guidance of a competent spiritual preceptor so that no mistake is made. This is what I have to say generally in the matter.

As for yourself, it is an individual case. We have to evaluate it, after going into all the merits and demerits of the personality. I haven't had any occasion to study you firsthand. As such, I am unable to give you any advice. However, let me say that the issue concerns yourself, first and last. Hence you are the person to think well and assess the case. Rather it is a duty, which you will have to fulfill yourself. I or any one else, can of course help you greatly.

Do not think of leading an absolutely spiritual way of life in the sense it is generally understood. On the other hand, a way of life with spiritual and social service ideals will be quite good and feasible too. Our present society particularly needs persons leading such a socio-spiritual life. Whatever your aims are in such a direction, I wish them full success. You have my full love and blessings for the noble ideals your heart cherishes. May the Almighty help you fulfil your life. Yours in the Lord,

Respected Swamiji,

Thank you for your letter sent to my Bombay address in reply to mine. Did you receive the booklets I posted to you?

Now I have completed reading the book 'Vedantic Way of Living'. I liked very much the simple exposition, and the large scope of matter covered in the seven lectures.

The Bhakti Yoga presented as an advaitic path appealed to me much. Most exponents treat Bhakti as a dualistic path, though the final culmination of the lover, the beloved and love is the same as Advaitic experience.

Swamiji, if you allow me, I would like to be favoured with your reply to a question.

*Among the four **Asramas** of life, there are initiation ceremonies relating to **Brahmacharya (Upanayanam)**, **Grihastha** (marriage), and **Sannyasa (deeksha)**. Is there any formal initiation for **Vanaprastha asrama**? If so, how and what is it?*

*Secondly, is it possible and desirable to practice **Vanaprastha** at home (wife and children)? Mahatma Gandhi did it. It implies **Brahmacharya** (as continence and abstention) among others, does it not? And other restrictions in food and habits, etc. In fact, these days going to a jungle is not possible-so the **Vanaprastha asrama** has to be and can be practiced only at home. Am I right? If the practitioner has already acquired some **viveka-vairagya**, etc. would it not be easy? A formal ceremony will help to clinch the mind's strength to stay, instead of falling back.*

*In **sannyasa** the ceremony and the garb help to hold the aspirant from a fall, though there have been **sannyasins** who fell back by marrying and becoming*

householders. That is why I am enquiring about ceremonial initiation into Vanaprastha.

I shall be very grateful to have your kind reply. I am much indebted to you, Swamiji.

With pranams.

Yours in the Lord,

....

Dear and blessed seeker,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of 18th August was duly received. The point you had raised was an important one and I did not have the necessary time to give you an elaborate reply so far.

The booklets you sent were received. The one on 'Immortality' I read fully. It is quite good. The contents have been forcefully presented, a feature rarely found. I am happy about it.

About your remarks on the changing of life from one stage to the other, sometimes from the higher stage to a supposedly lower one, let me tell you: sincerity of purpose, truthfulness at all costs to oneself and to the ideals one stands for, is the secret of a noble human life. It is more so of the spiritual life. But human nature is very abstruse too. Hence if you find any one deficient in this trait, there need be no surprise.

A true knower of truth, our *Sastras* say, will not feel surprised even if one day he suddenly finds all the oceans going dry exposing their bottom or the entire Himalayas turning to a molten mass at one stroke. In this queer world of contradictions, there is every chance for anything queer and contradictory to take place any time. Wherever such a thing takes place we need not be surprised. Let this truth be

your consolation. Those who reveal contradictions are, in reality, heading for their fulfillment through them. Those who see these contradictions are also in truth working their way to fulfillment, for only when they are able to cultivate *samyak darsana* (the vision in which all contradictions dissolve and reveal unshakable harmony), their spiritual search and sadhana will be crowned with success. So let the note of contradiction noticed outside be a factor that will lead you towards your own perfection and inner harmony.

Now the *vaanaprastha* order of life about which you have enquired: I am quite unconventional in all my ways, although I am true to our own tradition and hoary habits. Before considering the *vaanaprastha* order, you had better have a clear idea of the other three orders. Then *vaanaprastha* will become easy to grasp and you will be able to decide matters well.

What is *Brahmacharya*, to begin with? Until one is initiated into *Brahmacharya*, he is a mere lad, not wedded to any ideal or given to any healthy routine. Such a boy is initiated into a phase of life, viz. *Brahmacharya*. He is invested with a sacred thread, an accretion to the body no doubt. As education is the primary acquisition, the *Brahmacharin* is given lessons on various subjects. In olden days, education meant the study of Vedas and Sastras. Four of the Vedas and six of the Sastras comprised all branches of knowledge, both secular and religious. That is why the *Brahmacharin* was taught all these.

In order to help him increase his comprehension and improve his memory, he was given a religious discipline. This in truth, is a discipline for the mind and intellect. The *japa* (chanting) of *Gayatri* was the backbone of his discipline. For a while every day, the *Gayatri japa* was made into a bit of contemplation. This contemplation, done twice or thrice daily, would make the student (1) free internally for a

short while and (2) able enough to concentrate his inner faculties whenever he so requires.

Throughout the *Brahmacharya* period, he was to exert himself for increasing his fund of knowledge, thereby preparing himself to live and work in the world with full success. This period is in a way similar to present school and college life. Of course, the present scheme does not have the old factor, namely the training of the mind and intellect.

On gaining enough knowledge and by then reaching bodily maturity, the role for every one was, as it is even today, to get married and begin to live in conjunction with a chosen partner. To accept one from the opposite sex as a life long partner is (a) a personal need (b) a need of the society and (c) a plan and urge of Nature. The married life - the partnership - will, as you know, lead to a series of problems and challenges, all of a creative nature. The education gained during the previous phase (*bramacharya*) is to stand in good stead for meeting and resolving them.

This is the general rule. But there may be exceptions to this. That is, one may choose to avoid the marriage alliance and prefer to live singly with whatever ideal or occupation he wishes to foster. It is this choice that sometimes leads aspirants to an entry into the monastic order of life. But wait.

Suppose the rule is accepted and one becomes a *Grihastha*. The *Grihastha* phase does not mark the end or the finale of his life on earth. He has to think about the end of the earthly sojourn when he will have to leave everything and everybody that he has caused and loved, and go. Thought of this eventuality is natural to the human mind. The question of preparing oneself mentally and intellectually to meet this eventuality without trouble and agitation is therefore sure

to arise. *Vaanaprastha*, the third station of life is truly an answer to this.

Is *Vaanaprastha* the final then? No. there is another order of life, the last, called *sannyasa*. What does it consist of?

It consists of those things which are just the opposite to those in a *Grihastha's* life. You can work out these 'opposites' yourself. *Sannyasa* phase being one quite opposed to the *Grihastha*, obviously it cannot be resorted to all of a sudden. The change from *Grihastha's* life to *Sannyasa* has to be tempered, gradual.

What is the way then? *Vaanaprastha*, truly, is the intermediate stage during which the *Grihastha* (householder) prepares himself for the last order, *sannyasa*.

Brahmacharya commences with the investiture of the sacred thread. This thread is multiplied during the *grihastha* stage, as you know. Whereas the *sannyasin* begins his order of life with the removal and burning of the sacred thread and the *shikha*, which are the marks of the preceding order.

Perhaps the *Vaanaprastha* should have the middle of these two, as a mark, if you so desire. But I should say it is not the external marks that matter for us. However, the principle is: the *grihastha* life wants you to 'involve' in things secular and religious. *Vaanaprastha* should therefore imply a departure from this involvement. So it should be one of withdrawal. Withdrawing from both religious and secular spheres. But this process should not be sudden, for that will bring about disharmony for others and also tend to upset the harmony and balance in oneself.

The following may be the marks of the *Vaanaprastha*:

1. Think of yourself always 'independently', for religious matters, not in conjunction with the family members.
2. Chant *Gayatri* alone, if at all, avoiding the other auxiliaries, like *Arghya*, *papa-mochana* (offering of water, washing of sins), etc.
3. Refrain from all *pinda* and *udaka kriyaas*. Also do not expect your sons to perform the same for you, as do the *grihastaas*.
4. Do not think of *swargaloka* or such other *lokas* and do not do any karma aimed at obtaining them after your death.
5. Avoid ornaments and ornamentation. Wear always simple dress. Better take to white.
6. Put on a Tulsi garland.
7. Stop all bad tastes and do not indulge in gossip. Select suitable friends. Avoid alcohol as also all non-sattvic items in the matter of taste, sound, sight, smell, touch. Take only the minimum of coffee or tea.
8. Be devoted to *Brahmacharya*, the opposite of the *grihasta* ideal. Endeavour to get established in it before the youth passes off.
9. Read spiritual and sattvic literature. Avoid rituals like *Sraaddha*, *Rudrekaadasi* etc.
10. Instead, take to meditation and the effort to purify the mind.
11. Culture *viveka* and other similar virtues.
12. If you are a worshipper of God, make a practice of offering the food to Him and then partaking of it as the '*prasaada*'.

The principle to be adopted always must be moderation, not suddenness and absoluteness. If you have a full family, nothing should be done to cause misery to any one on any account whatsoever. Your change should be taken as a pleasant one by the others. Adjust yourself accordingly.

Vaanaprastha life as enjoined in our Scriptures is a very rigorous one. It is not feasible in the present times. The point to be noted is that it should signify a retreat in every respect. To accomplish this, one has to refrain from all the religious and social entanglements, which the *grihastha* life demands. Ceremonies should be replaced by *vichara* and meditation. The 'personal side' also should be similarly replaced. That is why celibacy becomes a need.

If one gets well established in the *Vaanaprastha* order of life, the entry into *sannyasa* is the natural climax. *Sannyasa* will mean a step further and the last for the humans.

In short, the *Vaanaprastha* is a *mumukshu*. He should hence constantly work for *moksha*. The difference between him and the *sannyasin* is that while both of them do the *jnaana sadhana*, the former does sitting within the household, but the latter outside.

The right and the sacred initiation, I advise, will be the proper entry into the Brahma Vidya Abhyasa and following that the consistent pursuit of that vidya. In the matter of initiation, a preceptor is, of course, necessary.

Write to me if you want anything further. With love and Sivasis,

Yours in Self,

Swamiji

1971

My dear Gurudev,

Hari Om Tat Sat. After long waiting, I received your kind and affectionate letter. Yes, I got the news about you and the Ashram from Lalita. The way she described the beautiful site around the Ashram and the life over there and the temple on the hill top, really, if I had wings I would have flown there. I do feel that way. Sometimes I wonder 'Will there ever be a day in my life when I will visit your sacred Ashram.... am I that blessed?'

You will be glad to know... that I have become very busy. Now-a-days practically every day I go to different places and recite Ram Charit Manas to the ladies in the afternoon. I do feel that they like and appreciate it. My husband drops me and again picks me up. I have no servant. So I remain very busy performing the household duties. I am glad that peace of mind has been the same, not disturbed even under odd circumstances.

Sometimes I feel as if I had no mind. The feeling that I am a blessed one upon whom the Almighty has showered his Grace is getting stronger. I do feel that I have realised the Self and it is only due to your Grace. My own 'Self' is the eternal truth and God is the very 'Self' within me.

'Om' is the eternal truth which is all-pervasive like gagana (sky). It is beyond the mind, beyond the body, beyond the intellect, even beyond thought.

I have realised that God alone is real and this world is an illusion created by the mind. The moment there is no thought, there is no body, neither the mind nor the world. There remains only God, which is my own 'Self'. Am I correct?

I have one question for which I seek to get your answer early. The question is:

Why do people say that the body is dead because Atma has left the body and

it has entered another body? The truth is that Atma is immovable, because it is all-pervasive. Being everywhere it should be in the dead body too. When Atma is immovable, then what comes out of the body making the living body dead?

Another question is that my mantra merged into the sound 'OM'. So should I meditate on 'OM' or should I go on doing my mantra? The old mantra became automatic immediately and the new mantra you gave, that very day it merged into sound 'OM'. The new mantra has not become automatic. Why?

If my questions are foolish, please do not mind, but they are genuine questions.

Respects to dear Mataji and best wishes to everybody in the Ashram.

With lot of reverence,

Your humble disciple,

...

Dear and blessed soul,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of 19th February was received only on the 27th evening. Hence I could not write at your temporary address to reach you in time. However, this is mailed to the address given by you and I expect it to be redirected to you wherever you are. But will it follow you to Rishikesh and other places? I doubt.

The questions raised in your previous letter of the 9th February are answered below.

Atma is all-pervasive. If it be so, then even the ignorant man must be admitted to be the *Atma* because everything is *Atma*. Will it not then

mean that no one has to do any *sadhana* for realizing the *Atma*, on the ground that everything is the one *Atma*?

It is to avoid such a fallacy that the Self is first stated to be a mystic 'spiritual presence' situated within the body, separate from it. Only when it is described like this, the seeker will begin to seek it as different from the body. Only when so sought he will be able to overcome the body-desires, attachment and identification. You will agree that in the matter of seeking the Self the main factor to be accomplished is the overcoming of the forces which crowd round the body consideration. It is to help this accomplishment that the 'separateness from the body' of the Self is first posited.

There is another reason also. In spite of the fact that *Atma* is all-pervasive, it can be realized only by man and that too within his own body. Using the body as a medium for the purpose, living in it, he has to realize that thing which abides within it. It is like using water for getting steam by heating it. The heat and expansiveness are the factors more important than the water itself. Water acts as an agent in the process. Nevertheless it is indispensable for serving the purpose desired.

The same can be said about the body. Without the body, you can't realise the Soul within.

Once you have realized the Soul within the body as a thing mystic and spiritual, the ultimate truth that everything is that one Soul, nothing else, has also to be understood, for only then peace and salvation will come to you. The consideration of *Atma* as all-pervasive will come only in such a stage.

The principle is: Realize the *Atma* first as the body-different. Thereupon as the all-pervasive. It is a progressive process.

By disclosing the ultimate truth that *Atma* is all-pervasive, we do not intend to deny the basic facts of our life, namely the birth, death, etc. of the body. On the other hand, only the true perspective with regard to all these phenomena is revealed. That is all. The facts of life are facts indeed. The body is born. It will die too. Nevertheless, the all-pervasive *Atma* subsists in its own nature. Neither affects the other. Both subsist equally without any contravention.

The existence of the *Atma* is always absolute. Its manner of expression includes that which you call 'the world'. This is the truth. But this truth will remain a mystery until the seeker's mind becomes crystal clear, desire-free and stable under all conditions. The least trace of impurity any time will impair his vision. That is why earnest seekers go ahead and undertake any kind of sacrifices and persecutions in their efforts for self-purification and spiritual achievement.

About the chanting of mantra, I understand what you say. My answer is: do as you feel like doing. That is the best. There is no contradiction or conflict. All paths lead to the same goal

I wish you *mangal* in your *Ram Charit Manas* efforts. May they help you and others alike. I also wish you success in your pilgrimage. May your soul flower forth well. Be firm, fear-free but cause no confusion or a sense of loss to any one. That is the golden method of doing things.

Mataji sends you her warm greetings with love and blessings. So too do I. The same to your husband and others.

In the Lord,

Swamiji

1972

*The following was written to a disciple in Shillong who had wished to know Swamiji's view on rebirth and the references made to **Sookshma** (Subtle) and **Kaarana** (causal) bodies in the scriptures in relation to reincarnation of the Soul.*

Dear and blessed,

Harih Om Tat Sat.

... Now, about the issue of rebirth of the Soul on which you wanted me to write to you: There is utter confusion in understanding the concept of the Soul of man, its nature and features. This confusion is responsible for the divergent views like birth, death, rebirth and the like.

The matter medium through which energy flows has a form. But the energy in it is formless. In the same way, the Soul in the body, which is more a presence and existence than any kind of matter, or even energy, cannot but be formless, form-free. In fact, to be formless (shapeless) is a necessary feature of the Soul for it to be permeating in the formful body. Once the form-idea of the Soul is removed from the mind and the basic truth that it is (has to be) formless is grasped, the questions of birth, death, rebirth and the like will automatically vaporize.

If the Soul is formless, and further if it is the subtlest form of existence, then for that very reason, it should be present everywhere. Once this lesson is understood, where does the question of its coming from one sphere to another or going from one place of inhabitation to another arise at all?

This is the real truth. But the human mind, associated as it is with gross forms and shapes, and having the power only to apprehend matters and concepts on this basis finds a seemingly insurmountable difficulty to transcend grossness and think in terms of the subtle and the subtlest. This difficulty is the real delusion and nescience.

Once this 'transcending' is done, the seeker becomes bold and clear-minded to accept (1) the all-pervasiveness and (2) the singleness of the Soul. And on that basis he will come to feel that the theories and allusions about the birth, death and reappearance of the Soul as also the idea of multiplicity about it are utterly wrong, non-factual. But there is a long way to go between (1) the ability of the seeker's mind to grasp matters when he enters into the realm of Vedantic study and *sadhana* and (2) the state of the 'transcendence' of physicality.

During the intervening period, in which most of even the staunch seekers are, they should not be left without any prop. Hence the prop assumes great significance. That is why the concept of a Soul different from the body is first presented, and then it is described as surviving the death of the body.

If the Soul is said to survive the body's death, then what transpires subsequently should be revealed. It is in this connection the tentative statement that it will hover in the skies above, in the unknown heaven or hell for a temporary period, is offered. That following this period, it may or will take birth again on the earth here, either as human or as a non-human. But mind you all these are possibilities, conjectures, the truth about which cannot either be proved or disproved. Being disprovable, they are more likely to be accepted with faith and fear than refused.

But for persons of higher evolution, whose understanding has become pure and deep, these statements being not provable become more

likely to be refused than accepted.

Thus the theory's fate is dependent more upon the enquirer's mind, capacity of intellect, purity and boldness of nature than anything else. And this is exactly what is wanted too. The entire purpose of religion and religious practices, whatever be the name or form of the religion, is just one: to inculcate purity of the mind and heart and thereby to make the religionist steadfast, bold and unflinching in his devotion and application. Once this is accomplished, he soon turns into a philosophical seeker or investigator and that transformation alone consummates the religious life.

What is faith in religion has to grow into discovery and realization sooner or later. The God who is unknown to the religionist becomes finally fully known to the seeker and the *siddha*.

Is not the aim of all religions discovery and direct perception of the Almighty? That means, faith may be the beginning point of religion, but the end point is the actual discovery of what has been believed so far, the actualisation of that which has thus far only been imagined.

So the moment you start enquiring as to whether there is really a rebirth of the Soul or not, you transcend the ordinary realms and cannons. The only purpose of telling you that there is a Soul which outlives the death of the body is to drive home to you that there is something besides the body, in the body of yours. The moment this body-different thing is posited, immediately you will want to know what happens to it at the time of death, as death is of the body alone. The only valid answer will be that the Soul being different from the body, cannot become a party to the fate that befalls the body.

You will want to be told that it takes birth or appearance somewhere. By first speaking of it hovering in the heavenly regions above, which heavenly regions themselves are more fallacious than factual, your

mind is kept in a sphere of indefiniteness and delusion. Then comes the question, "How long will it remain there?" The answer is, as Krishna has mentioned in the 6th chapter of Gita that the soul, after hovering in the far away regions takes birth again in the human womb if it has *punya* (virtuous acts) to its credit prior to its leaving earth. For the other souls that had been steeped in vicious acts, the birth which they beget on the earth will be among the inferior creatures and animals.

Now think as to where does the religionist stand? He believed in the Soul thinking that such a belief will make him better and happier. But then he finds that if he pursues the line of belief further and further, he has to think of coming back again to the earth but with no promise of anything better or true. Ultimately what is calculable or reckonable is the good or bad nature of the acts that he does during any given lifetime here. So he firmly concludes: "Let me preserve the good and dismiss the bad."

This is the definiteness of purpose, firmness of resolve (called *vyavasayatmika buddhih*) mentioned in the 2nd chapter of Gita. This again is the purity of the mind, the one cry of all religions. 'Definiteness of purpose' and 'purity', both nurse and tend the seeker in his evolution and he starts discriminating between **any two** things.

It is then and then alone that he meets either a Guru, the God in human form, or proceeds with his understanding all by himself up to a certain degree. And his thinking undergoes a thorough revolution - mark, it is a revolution - not just an evolution in the same incline.

What is that revolution? If the Soul is inside the gross, his mind begins to assert, then it should necessarily be subtle. What should be the degree of subtlety which it possesses?

The body contains the ingredients of air and even space. Both air and

space are much too subtle. The latter is the subtlest itself. If the Soul is present in the entirety of the body, constituted of these elements, then it must mean that it is subtler than even space itself. To become so is to become all-pervasive indeed.

So the Soul is found to be all-pervasive by virtue of the mere fact that it permeates our body in full. How can the all-pervasive thing either come or go? Can it ever leave one place and go or come to another?

Thus the seeker's views and conclusions now become based upon the all-pervasiveness of the soul. It is then that he finds that all the other concepts like the heavenly sojourn of the Soul, further the subsequent embodiment on the earth, likewise the several other ideas and views, all turn to be mere concoctions, tentative concepts and theories, but nevertheless useful and timely. But this does not solve the problem fully.

For these were the ideas which nursed his religious life and evolution so far and which the Scriptures themselves had clearly declared. How can a paltry human mind dismiss them as fallacious and then hold on to something different? Is it ever possible?

This critical state of the seeker's mind, which challenges and gives him pain, is the real precarious condition that marks the *Arunodaya* before the brilliant sun-rise of *Atmagyana*. The surrender to and acceptance of a *Mahatma*, the Human God, will become inevitable at least at this time if not until then.

Doubt is the last hurdle to be overcome for a genuine seeker. And doubt is the most confusing and unbearable too. When the seeker aches under doubts and feels utterly helpless, the Teacher somehow presents himself with all amiability, scholarliness and spiritual benignness. His presence is never a matter for doubt. The heavens may be doubted, the Soul too, but the truth-teller and the truth

revealer, namely the Guru, can never be. So what becomes impossible to believe turns to be easily possible in the presence of your Teacher. Thus the real confidence and thereupon proper evolution begins to work. They naturally find their fulfillment, may be in years or decades, depending upon the seeker's earnestness and the Teacher's efficiency and spiritual attainment.

Has the matter become clear to you now my dear...?

If it has not, I shall clarify further when we meet. Do not worry on this account for now.

To complete the narration, let me state the following too.

Vedantic thought and finding are based fully upon facts experiential, not imaginary. So experientialness is the basis and end of Vedanta. Are the heavens a fact? If so, are you able to see them? Did the astronauts to the moon pass through the heavens during their journey in space? Dismiss them then once and for all.

About the Soul: Put the question the other way around. As the Soul is different from the body, you say that the body's fate namely death, should not befall it. Agreed it is true. But should not this truth, this principle be extended to the first event, namely birth itself? As the Soul is held to be different from the body, when the body gets born can it get involved in the process? It cannot. That is to say, the body's birth is the body's alone, not that of the body-different Soul! So, when the body is born, the Soul does not get born.

Say then the Soul is not born at all. First of all dispose of the birth issue and then alone go to the issue of death. Otherwise, will you not be putting the cart before the horse? Why show a preference to death while both death and birth are equally true of the body, and birth is the first event and death the last.

Before saying that the Soul does not die, say it did not get, has not got born at all. If this is understood, whose death are you considering? About whose leaving the body do you want to think and understand?

Can an all-pervasive thing, whatever it may be, come or go, leave or hold? Thus the tentative theories of birth, death, rebirth, soul etc. all turn out to be mutually contradictory and ultimately fallacious. And the problem arises as to how you are to get away from them all and remain founded on the Supreme uncontradictable truth.

About the three bodies which Vedanta speaks of: This point too remains utterly confusing. It is wrong to base the theory of rebirth on the basis of these Vedantic concepts.

What is the concept about the three bodies and how is it to be understood?

A body does not mean a thing with hands or feet and with a certain figuration or shape alone. The bacterium has a body. The trees and plants have their respective bodies. The question of the body arises in respect of that alone which lives and experiences. That is to say, for any living or experiencing thing alone we ascribe a body, because in the absence of the body that thing would not make itself felt. And further it would not be able to do the living or experiencing. That is why you do not consider anyone to be alive except when he is associated with a body through which he lives and experiences.

Thus it is clear that life or experience is always related to a body, the medium through which the living and experiencing are made possible. Viewed in this way, how many bodies, seats and media of experiencing does a human have? This becomes a valid question, because we are found to experience three distinct states of living. What are these three?

The state wherein we are wakeful and active is one. It is called *jaagrat*. Throughout this state we are active and alert and our activity and alertness concurrently becomes a subject of universal perception and realization. When I talk, you immediately hear and see me doing so. All those around are agreed upon the fact of my talking. This sort of a common, universal and uniform activity and experiencing (during this waking state) are possible only because of this gross body of ours. We call the body gross because of its grossness, physicality, solidity.

But is this gross body and the experiences born of it the only state and experiencing for us? No. There is quite a similar state called dream, wherein too we do all that we do in the wakeful state. But there is a basic and thorough difference between the dream state and *jaagrat*.

Dream comes up quite unawares. Secondly, even if two or more people sleep at the time in the same place or room, even on the same bedspread, not all of them dream. Even if they do, not alike and uniformly. The experiences will be different for each of them. Thus the dream state becomes un-common, non-universal and individualistic in nature.

And how do they compare it with the wakeful experiences? While you are lying asleep in a place, you happen to dream of travelling to a distant city. While experiencing thus, it is not a dream, but hundred percent factual for you. How could this 'going to a distant city' be possible when the gross body with which you generally do such acts as travelling, etc. lies intact there?

We have to accept a thing or event on the basis of its experientialness. If this test is applied, the dream state cannot be refused. So the need to ascribe the dream experience to a body, meaning a medium or instrument for the purpose, becomes imperative. What is that dream body?

Certainly it is not gross. It cannot be. For the gross body is lying there. That means the dream body is different from the wakeful body. It exists obviously within the gross waking body. For only a subtle thing can exist within a gross thing. It is on this ground that we call the dream-experiencing body as the subtle body of man.

As the dream experiences are fully similar to those of wakefulness, we infer that the subtle body, the factor responsible for producing the dream phenomena, has hands, feet, eyes, etc. This is a compelling inference on the basis of our direct experience and pragmatism.

But I must stress a thousand times that this fact cannot be a ground for arriving at any conclusion about transmigration of the soul.

Now let us search for the sleep body. Sleep, I mean deep sleep without dreaming, is a prolonged state during which you feel unbroken loneliness and *aananda*. Unlike the other two states, sleep state is noted for uniformity, sameness and a prolonged duration.

In studying the sleep state as well, apply the same principle that an experience will not be possible for you without the instrumentality of a body - body being just a medium. Naturally you have to conclude and concede that there must be another body which enables you to beget the experience called sleep. In as much as no going, no coming, no seeing, no hearing or any other sensing is taking place during sleep, the sleep body is considered as having no shape or parts. The only description you can give about it is that it is the *kaarana* or causal factor. Why is it taken as the 'causal' factor, *kaarana sareera*?

The reasons are (1) you cannot go into dream without first having slept - that is to say without having entered into the sleep state. (2) the wakeful state too is not possible in the total absence of the sleep state (3) the 'nothing' knowledge which we have during sleep is the foundation upon which all knowledge of the waking state is built.

Even Shankara and others have described the sleep body as indescribable. The *kaarana sareera* (causal body), they say, is anirvachaniya (indescribable). We are unable to understand its nature at any time for the simple reason that we lose our normal awareness, whereby we understand everything just when it is taking place (for instance seeing, hearing, etc.) during that state.

Thus the three bodies - the gross, the subtle and the causal - are conclusions based upon our experiences. They are the bases for the three states of the mind or awareness of the living man.

The point is that from these bodies or the allusions to them found in our Scriptures or subsidiary texts, you should not seek any proof or sanction for the rebirth or transmigration of the Soul.

The Soul is just one. It is the subtlest thing. And hence it is all-pervasive by nature. Therefore, even birth, which is of the body, does not involve the Soul. As such neither growth, nor change nor again decay nor death can involve it the least. Therefore, the need for going into heavens or hells does not arise. It is baseless. Being so, rebirth too is utterly fallacious.

The right conception and the only truth is that there is only one Soul, which itself is spoken of as God. By virtue of its very nature, it remains transcending birth, death and rebirth. It is devoid of and beyond all these.

A thing by virtue of its very nature *is existing*. Even so is this Soul existing. As it is devoid of any and all transformations it exists, exists and exists; continues to exist devoid of all changes. Existence, constant and unalloyed existence, this alone is true of the Soul.

My body has become quite fatigued by now. I am just running this letter on the typewriter, straight from the mind. There is no thought-

process forerunning the actual typing. It is the Soul that does the job through this body's fingers. All obeisance to it.

More when we meet. Please let me know when you receive this letter. My love and *Sivasis* to all of you.

Your own Self,

Swamiji

1972

Revered Swamiji,

... I'm extremely grateful to you for giving me the assurance that I needed so badly. I'll now tell you about the problem which troubles me right now. This problem concerns the 'existence' of God. In the past I was a staunch believer of God and everything told to me by my elders, but now-a-days my mind has become so doubtful, that I just can't accept any theory or dogma without rigorous proof. I thought that logical reasoning would at least help me in establishing the existence of such a God. So I enquired on the following lines:-

(a) Is there a Supreme Will, much greater and forceful than all human wills put together; something that dictates every act of ours? I came to a deadlock as I saw the amount of misery and trouble which seems illogical if there's any God/Supreme Will.

(b) Could everything that I see around me just be there, or is it more likely that it has all been put there by some Invisible Hand? Could all the lives that we see in and around just be an 'event of chance' as scientists claim it to be or is it more possible that there's some meaningful pattern which will explain the 'mystery' that surrounds us? I just couldn't proceed very much on this line as both the contradictory thoughts seemed possible to me.

(c) How much of my own life do I actually control? I understand that as long as I stayed in society I was bound to have interaction with people every now and then and since I have no control over people, I actually don't stand much chance in controlling my acts when in groups and when I identify myself with some cause like the nation/state etc. Of course this influence which I can't overcome is my own creation and so does not go to prove in any way the existence of a Superior Will. So again I'm stuck and Swamiji, it is upto you to lead me out. The main problem is to prove beyond doubt

and if possible to realize the existence of this Supreme Will which people do call God/ Bhagavan/ Allah etc. I don't know how to proceed beyond what I have just got into and so your guidance is very much needed. Please tell me precisely what to do, how to reason as this is the only problem bothering me right now. Many claim that they've seen God. Is that possible for me also? I think I should wind up right here for the present.

Obediently yours,...

Dear and blessed soul,

Harih Om Tat Sat, Your letter of the 1st August received. I was away in Bombay and returned only on the 20th. We are preparing for a visit to Canada and US next month lasting for four months.

Your questions: (a) Supreme Will: Supreme Will is there no doubt, but it is quite stretched and spread out through multiple factors like the individual, society, nation, world, previous generations, etc. It works through all these put together. In humans, the all-in nature is quite pronounced. Miseries of nations, societies, including some of the diseases and afflictions are of our own creation, or are not extinct because of lack of effort. For instance, there is no leprosy at all in some European countries, whereas we have it enough in our country. Think for yourself.

(b) "No accident is accidental, but it is caused", is a saying. So is the case with the world and universe. Can endless incidents and their cluster be born of an accident? However, since this question will take us back to the pre-evolution or pre-creation state, it is bound to be inaccessible for us who have come much later after the creation. But take it from me, from the Dynamic Intelligent Source alone has this perplexing creation been brought forth. Recently I have written on "Space and the Creation of the World, world's origin, an objective scientific approach." Contradictory thoughts are a symptom of a

probing mind. State of absolute wisdom and liberation is that wherein all contradictions stand resolved.

(c) By and large, free will in one's life is there at every stage, but that is strictly within limits and boundaries. It is like tying a cow by a rope to a peg for grazing. She can ramble about and graze, but cannot go beyond the rope's length. Even within it, at times she winds round the rope and the length and freedom get reduced. She can also unwind and restore full freedom. Equally so with man's plight and his freedom.

(d) Man gets more and more freedom when he goes deeper within himself. But it is less when he lives in the outer levels. Why man alone? There is no particle, electron or proton, which is fully independent. Freedom is a corollary or complement of limitation. Equally so, limitation of freedom. Only when both are there, either could be present.

Man's freedom is absolute in finding mental peace - peace is mental alone. But even for that, he has to be in his body, and that implies a host of physical needs. Understanding is fully possible. Freedom follows from understanding. Work for it, my dear boy. *Japa, tapas*, meditation, introspection, etc. are for gaining the right understanding. May your Indweller guide you well. I shall act as your own Indweller's representative when needed. You have my love, acceptance and blessings. Everything will be all right. Surrender and know.

Respected Swamiji,

.....The six weeks holiday was a great blessing. During this period I entirely forgot the outside world, giving myself to reading of religious books, meditation, etc. I could go through the 'Talks by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi', 'Search in Secret India' by Paul Brunton, 'Tripura Rahasya', etc. These books were immensely delightful and they gave me a new outlook of things in their proper perspective. My meditation also goes on nicely. I am now able to establish myself in the 'state of the Self', as you would call it, for quite a few minutes (30 to 45 minutes). That state of Peace comes to me regardless of time, place or posture. All these are surely due to Swamiji's grace alone. You should bless me for my continued progress.

I have got a doubt to be clarified by Swamiji. When devotees often enquire of you as to how to experience the 'I' within and how to know that one has realized that state, you used to reply "when the Self is experienced, it will be automatically known and nobody need tell the person that he has realized". I presume the state of realizing the Self is the same as the state of **Samadhi**. Again it is stated in **Tripura Rahasya** that even the ignorant people experience the state of **Samadhi** occasionally in life (fleeting **Samadhi** such as when their desires are gratified). However, they do not know about it unless somebody else tells them. Is it then that they do not experience the Self in the fleeting **Samadhi**? Or is it that the Self is experienced only in **Nirvikalpa Samadhi**? Talking from personal experience, a devotee like me experiences the state of **Samadhi** (may be this is **savikalpa samadhi**, not **nirvikalpa**) for a few minutes, but again when he is in the waking state, he is not able to experience the Self or realize the underlying divinity in the phenomenal world outside. When will this be achieved? Where does the Realized Soul fit in?

One more doubt - in **Ashtavakra Samhita**, it is stated that Sage

Ashtavakra is teaching Janaka. In Tripura Rahasya, Janaka is said to be teaching Ashtavakra. Which is correct?

With profound love and respects,

Yours

...

Dear and blessed.....

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 10th has been received duly. I read the contents with pleasure. I am happy that both you and your wife Kalyani, have begun the practice of reading a few verses of the Gita every day, and also studying their meaning in detail. There is nothing better to improve your *sadhana*, and also your spiritual and secular wisdom. Try to understand the verses, their meaning and their relevance and application to the daily life and activities. If you reflect on this line, you will find the truths and principles extremely practical to govern your speech, thoughts and actions at all times. Towards the last part of the Gita from 13th to the 18th chapter, a lot of qualities, traits, habits, etc. along with culture, custom and the like are described in a very thorough and philosophical manner. Read them, ruminate, understand and try to imbibe these. It will be very interesting and enriching.

May the ceremony go on well, and may Kalyani have a safe and happy confinement. Krishnan from Calcutta had been here for a few days, and on the 15th he left. Somehow, I have not had time to reply to several letters for the past few weeks, and I expect to write to all hereafter. Mataji has gone to Madras for not too long a spell.

I am very happy that the illness and leave together gave you a very good period for *Sadhana*. This is how it should be. I am reminded of the verse from Yoga Vasishta in which Vasishtadev tells Sri Rama

that with the association of the wise people one's misfortune changes itself to the opposite. For instance, a state of gloom suddenly looks to be one of auspiciousness and hope. Death seems like a subdued festival. Danger gives the look of a real good fortune. Is this not true? In your case, your sickness and rest have shone well. Very good. May this be true of many others.

Holy books like Gita, Bhagavatam, Yoga Vasishtha, etc. are as good as the Wise People. To be in the company of such Sastras is very nearly akin to that of being near Mahatmas. It is not possible always to be physically in the company of the Wise. So you can always seek Sastras as a substitute. That is why so many Sastras have been written by our ancients to give ample variety. To read them and understand and live their spirit is delightful indeed.

Very good that your outlook has improved and that you are able to think and see matters in their true perspective. Of course, Truth is elusive as well. So never put a full stop so easily. "The more you proceed, the farther it recedes," is a great saying.

30 to 45 minutes of inward communion in stillness is not a bad gain. The one important point is whether you are in peace or not. Then also see whether it is a state of inertness or not. Peace and attention or awareness, when together, establish you well in your own *Antaratma*. But there is a long way to go yet. That is in wisdom, in steadiness, in cultivating qualities, virtues, etc. which are enumerated in the Gita in several places.

Now about your doubt: *Samadhi*, Self-realization, state of Self, etc. are terms which are often used loosely, even by the so-called learned people, without knowing what precisely they stand to denote.

Unlike in Yoga or religious pursuits, in Vedanta everything has been studied and defined properly. It is because of the fineness of

perception of the Seekers and Seers that it has been so. The Seers always wanted to understand and reveal the Truths in an appropriate manner. The very fact that the so-called God and the Self have been equated with the Ultimate Reality, with specific definition of the term Ultimate Reality, shows the preciseness of their understanding and the amazing courage with which they spoke and explained the Truths.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the State of the *antahkarana* (the mind-intellect equipment, which is normally in a state of flux) when it remains free from any doubts and oscillations. Normally, to the unilluminated and non-spiritual person, whenever the mind thinks or the intelligence reasons, there will also be doubts and oscillations. Therefore *nirvikalpa samadhi*, for the ordinary seeker, will be attained only when the mind-intellect remain free and still, getting immersed consciously in the Self within unlike in sleep. But this position gradually changes. His wisdom grows and with that he acquires greater and greater stability, clarity and Self-seatedness. And there must and will come a time when it is not necessary that his mind and intellect remain 'still' or 'quiet', as before, in order that he feels the merger with the Self and the consequent peacefulness and other glories. His mind will have become so pure, so Truth-reflecting, that even in a state of its feeble activity, he still feels the Selfness and Peacefulness associated with it. This state can further grow, and he will be taken to more and more of wisdom and steady establishment in it. And there will necessarily be a state for him when he feels very surely that he has realized his goal and that he is the Self always, as is the Self itself always. When and how this period of wholesome enlightenment comes or dawns, no one can say. Read the last portion of Aparokshaanubhooti where Sankara says:

Tatah saadhana-nirmuktah siddho bhavati Yogiraat

Tatswaroopam na chaitasya Vishayo manaso giraam

And thereupon he becomes *saadhana-nirmukta*, which means he no more feels the need for pursuing the so-called *sadhana* so systematically, with routine, etc., as he was doing before. This is when he becomes a *Siddha* – one who has fulfilled his *sadhana*. So far he was a seeker. Now he has found his object of seeking. The nature and feature of such a *Siddha* cannot be described in words. The implication is that they will be variant and divergent on various grounds.

So mere *Samadhi* as it is, is not Self-realization. I think the clarification you seek is lying within these words of truth.

Now about Ashtavakra teaching Janaka and Janaka teaching Ashtavakra, such differences and contradictions will be found here and there. These treatises are or were written by different authors at different times. There may be cases where some one wished to say something and he chose to do so through the mouths of some accepted persons or authorities. Again, there can be more than one person with the same name. Especially Hindus have the custom of naming the new-borns after their grandparents, and this practice will naturally mean duplication and multiplication of names. Even now, this practice is in vogue in some orthodox families. We see many Shankars and Ramas and Narayanas in the same lineage.

Another point is that many of our authors and Seers ascribe the authorship of what they write to some well known personality of the past. Lack of egoism may be one factor to motivate such a step. But there is another factor as well. The use of renowned names gives the author a great amount of leverage with the readers. It is not so much who said to whom, or who wrote the things that counts. What counts is really what was said and what for, with what effects and benefits. In fact a great underlying truth about all our Sastras and Puranas is that Time, Place and Personality are the three fundamental factors on which rests the whole process of narration and communication. These

three only help to say what is said. Beyond that they do not have any additional significance.

So always make use of Ashtavakra and Janaka, their names, to say and remember the spiritual truths which transpired between the two persons in the form of a dialogue. And that can be easily done, no matter whether the former taught the latter or the latter taught the former. Both are equally valid for us.

Let me stop for the time being. This letter has been rather long. I shall keep in my mind the other points you have raised and shall also share them with Mataji here, for ensuring her blessings as well.

With love and *Sivasis*.

Your Own Self

Swamiji

1974

A girl of Indian origin, studying in U.K., intending to get a seat for medicine there wrote asking Swamiji "to pray for her", complaining that her recent results were not up to the mark for her medical admission. The following is Swamiji's reply with a clear message of direction and elevation for all like her and many others.

Dear and blessed child....,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 14th October was duly received here. I had left for New Delhi before it arrived. In Delhi I was too busy this year, and so could not write to any one properly. On coming here, however, on the 9th evening, this is the first long letter I am writing, holding back this month's 'Vicharasetu' preparation.

O.K. I have noted your dissatisfaction about your examination results. The several feelings and concern you and others have in the development are also very much in my mind. But, somehow, dear girl, my heart says that nothing has gone wrong or adverse for you. You are quite safe, and so is your fate as well. May be, you can try and make up for whatever lapses were there earlier by applying a little more to your studies from now on. But realize that a troubled or anxious mind will not help in your efforts. Accept whatever has come to be with full openness and heartiness. If this basic sense of acceptance, and in a way a kind of indifference is there, the mind will be stabler and more confident. That will help you to go ahead and present yourself better, in true light. Think and try to grasp what I am saying.

Yes, your family and elders are an exceptional group. I know how your grandfather feels happy and proud in having built up his lineage by finding prestigious alliances for his daughters and sons.

But, remember at the same time the fact that first and last he was, and is, much devoted to the saintly wisdom and heritage, the ideals which they so richly represent. That is what his Divine Life association clearly denotes. So let me ask, even at this early hour of your life: Is education – academic or professional excellence – alone the sole aim of a good and great life? You, a girl, have a different side to your life, not just what boys and men have in general, or hope to have. When the material and social aspirations are pursued and fulfilled, even then the potential human mind will not sit still, contented or satiated. Surely not. I see you more as a mother, a would-be mother, than just a girl and student. Your role is far higher and nobler than even your brother's in this.

Dear..... do you get to the depth of what I say? We surely need the lofty role of sweet and graceful motherhood, from which alone the best creative progenies can emerge in any land. Let me tell you, and through you, your parents and grand-parents, that they should not feel bad about you at all. At the same time, you should be awakened to this hidden part of your future life, its merit as a progenitor. Educated and accomplished children are a great asset to any family. In yours there are already many of this kind. May I now suggest that you should mark a singular addition to this already enriched lineage. How can you do this? When?

Education, no doubt you need and I am sure you will have it even more. But all the education is ultimately to embellish and give health to your mind, heart and emotions. Doctors and medical men serve the bodies of people. But we must equally have those marked few, who with gracefulness and unsullied love, with spirits anchored in a much loftier plane, will look after the health and well-being of the minds and hearts of people, a small or great number of them. Can you apprehend this loftier role of the chosen cultural doctors of humanity? Will you then rise up to it, despite whatever your educational

excellences will be?

Perhaps your parents will not readily approve of what I say. Not that they will disapprove. Even then, it is quite pleasant and acceptable to me! I know what their daughter will be to themselves and to others in the years to come. Nature always provides for exception, and exceptions contribute as much to the rule as the rules themselves do. O n e o p e n l y , t h e o t h e r h i d d e n ! So do not worry, but as a mother of future worry about what your heart and mind should become pregnant with, right from now on, the cultural depth and insight they must be given to. The seeds of genuine goodness - sublimity, sweetness, loyalty, concern for as many as possible should be planted right now in the growing mind. Once you realize this, I have no anxiety about you or your future. The rest will follow by itself. In any way, I want you to be excellent, promising, and in finding you thus is my fulfillment too. Tell your parents, in all humility and love, that you will not disprove their confidence, but will prove it exceedingly well, may be in the same direction as theirs and also in a higher and more commendable one.

However, study and prepare yourself cheerfully, come what may. Welcome the outcome either way. Here is a mantra for you to chant to improve your intelligence and the sense of discrimination.....

Love and *Sivasis*

Swamiji

1977

Respected Swamiji,

.....There is a thought which often obsesses me; that I am wandering, that I am groping in darkness. I pray and cry for His mercy to show me **the** way, to make me understand what my destination is. What is my nature, in what direction I have to proceed, I am helpless to decide with my own intellect. I feel my intellect is very weak. All other people appear very strong, only I have weakness.

Sometimes I do carry a conviction that God is behind everything which happens. At this I feel that I am myself responsible for everything and why bring God into question. But when I adopt the latter view, I find myself very weak in terms of confidence and courage, and then at once try to take refuge in Him with a prayer that He may show me the way, that he may take full responsibility of directing me.

At times, rather very often, I do argue that the cause of my miseries or unhappiness is my own intellectual dullness, that I am not stable in my perspective. This causes feeling of self-rejection, because I do not feel that I have the **capacity** and **strength** to improve upon my limitations and thus again I turn to Him with pain, with a weeping heart.

Thus, there is a cycle or a chain of thought-processes which do not allow my mind to have a stable and consistent perspective.

I have only learnt to cry. I am a pampered child, full of inconsistencies and indisciplined behaviour. There are desires to become this and that. Sometimes I am drawn to the world, sometimes I am driven to spiritual **bhaava**. I wish to stay **somewhere** and be contented. But this does not happen.

Every saint inspires me. Among others, I have been inspired greatly by Sri Ganapathi Sacchidananda Swamiji through his divine music and sound

vibrations. When I listen to his bhajans, I draw my image in his footsteps. Sri Ramakrishna's life and Sri Ramana Maharshi's writings have had a good influence. But I still feel I am lacking the essence. I want to make sincere individual effort. Will He prompt me to make the right effort? Till now I have not made much effort as such. I have been floating in various directions. This must also be His will.

What is His will for me? I trust Him, but I examine also my experience. I also believe that I have not trusted Him fully. My surrender is not complete. My faith is not complete. Otherwise why should I question any event, why should I change my steps – moving forward and then retracing?

Who is doing all this? Is it the will of the Supreme or my personal weakness?

*I do not know, I do not know
but I want to know;
No, I do not want to know.
Let me have faith in Him
that whatever happens, it so happens
by only his grace.
Let me stick to this faith,
and live with this faith alone.
Bless me Swamiji to discover my real state.....
Narayana.....Narayana.*

Your Own

...

Dear and blessed seeker,

Harih Om Tat Sat. The note you handed to me that day in your residence was with me ever since; but what really counted was yourself, the individual in you, with whatever that meant to my eyes and heart. I had already expressed this in the hurried visit we made to

your house that night. And the personal talk you had with me after your significant song. Nothing more was needed. Yet, because you are a professor and hence given to learning and teaching, I thought of writing these lines for it to serve more than one purpose.

First of all, let me repeat I like you, and unknowingly my heart hosts yourself too. What more do you want! Nothing, besides a practical realization of what this means and conveys. Nothing must be a conflict or an apprehension in the path of a true seeker. Like the stars in the nightly sky, the waves in the ocean, the seasons upon the earth, every event, be it a turn, a drift, a push or a pull, will come of itself to the seeker, if he is but genuine and humble in his seeking and thoughts. The mind, a subtle and complex product of the same Nature of which is the gross creation we see around us, is governed, like its external counterpart fully with a set of inner laws. These laws are not along the same lines as those governing matter and material things but are as forceful and wholesome as the material laws. In many respects the two types of laws are even a contrast to each other. '*Like attracts like*' is an unfailing mental law. But '*unlike poles attract*' is the law governing magnetic pieces. Nevertheless, both are Nature's laws, and are operative for the same reason.

So, be free and confident, relaxed too, if you can. Nothing shall go wrong. If at all, the wrong lies in not finding everything correct and ennobling. And once it is recognized, the redemption is nearly accomplished. It is only a question of some time lag between the wrong-discovery and correction. Always, sincere recognition of an error is in itself half the correction.

Your confessions are typical of any seeking mind. Even in devotional seeking, the laws of seeking cannot be different. The seeker of truth will find these questions relevant to the truth he seeks, and to the seeking that his mind pursues. For a devotee, Truth is substituted by

'God' and seeking goes by another name 'devotion, or surrender'. But nevertheless, the issues are the same, identical. Of course, you have to think of the subject just like you will think of any other subject. Only then clarity will dawn.

I wish you read two or three issues of 'Vicharasetu' in which I have discussed the subject of making one's devotion exclusive. Perhaps they will clarify your points to a large extent.

By beginning and pursuing a set of religious practices, including *bhajan*, you are trying to cultivate in yourself a new attitude, aimed at a certain outcome. The attitude is called devotion, and the outcome, God or God-attainment. Whatever be the object at which the whole pursuit is aimed, the attitude belongs to the mind, and the outcome is also its own. Is this not so? Think! What is the devotional attitude? In truth, it is one of unquestioning acceptance of whatever comes on your way, and whatever threatens or promises to come. But such an acceptance is not in the nature of the normal mind. And that is the reason why we also make a deliberate attempt to cultivate it.

In order to make the mind arrive at and preserve this trait of total acceptance - a state of full reconciliation with the 'is' (the present) and 'will be' (the future) - we build into it the customary quality called devotion. We then define devotion as a state of wholesome surrender, full dedication and the like. Now, what can possibly deserve such a wholesome attitude from us? Naturally comes up the thought and evolution of a God, to whom we start attributing all the qualities we want in order to answer all our needs on the path of surrender.

When something is done by a friend or an enemy of ours, we raise questions about his actions, about him. But when a parallel act is caused by God, in the name of Godliness, unquestionably it goes approved. Thus our Rama is unimpeachable in spite of whatever he is

said to have done on various occasions. It is more so with Krishna, who in his life embodies very grave and more complex contradictions. But if even a semblance of anything of them is noticed on the part of even a relative of ours, we begin to question in full disapproval.

Does this not give your intelligence a clear clue? The world of ours, equally so our life in it, either and both together, throw us into a number and variety of doubts, speculations, assessments, ambitions and ideals. And the process always traps us psychologically on the one hand and intellectually on the other. At the level of the mind, we become emotionally upset, and as a result unpleasantness (in any form) emerges *and is preserved*. In the sphere of intelligence we are assailed by doubts, disapprovals, questions and quests. Other than the body-complex, we have, truly speaking, only the emotional mind and the inquisitive intelligence. If these two are properly harnessed into an integrated unit in our personality, then the real mission of religious life is complete.

In devotion, the devotee looks to his God. In truth-seeking, the seeker looks to or thinks constantly of Truth. One may imply a personal touch, the other an impersonal view. It is just a question of emotional or intellectual preference or possibility. Some approach the whole pursuit taking first their stand on emotion. The others do so with their stand on intelligence, on the knowledge it brings about *prima facie*. But, as they progress, the emotional approach must be climaxed by the evolution of knowledge, and the intellectual pursuit crowned by an emotional attunement too.

In your case emotion was your motivation. It gave you the fillip and acceleration you so much needed at that time. That was the best for you in the circumstances prevailing then. Now emotional ennoblement having been had, at least to a very large measure, the

being naturally yearns to have an intellectual awakening too, to catch up with the mind's evolution. Hence these questions, self-evaluations, assigning duties to oneself, and then compelling corrections. It is natural. Verily it is a process of effervescence within one's being.

Whatever be the object of devotion or seeking, the object only serves to occasion a state in yourself. Devotional object stirs up and stimulates the devotional undercurrent in your mind. The sought after object provokes similarly a sublime quest, in the name of which all other yearnings are sublimated. In both, it is a pursuit of *exclusiveness* by the mind. Exclusiveness in any field whatsoever is not an inborn gift of the mind. In fact, in the course of life, our mind is every moment becoming non-exclusive. Every new object, every new ambition, ideal or code adds to its non-exclusive nature. Hence exclusiveness is antagonistic to it. Verily exclusiveness of the mind is a great, lofty and invaluable quality. Once it is imbibed, the mind becomes supreme in all its workings. The legendary Hanuman jumped across the sea - this is an exaggeration of the Epic, a style they have adopted. Sabari, the outcaste woman offered a fruit to Sri Rama after first biting it herself to verify its taste, the more recent Meera delightfully took the poison given to her (as a punishment for her devotional loyalty and exuberance) - all these are acts caused by the exclusive mind.

In the initial stages, the exclusive mind is even prone to behave exuberantly, sometimes casting aside conventions and rules. But very soon, especially when properly befriended and guided by a Knower of Truth, it will beget its moderation. And as for the intelligence, its pursuit is after *clarity* and *resolution*. The questioning will stop, and then answering also becomes redundant. This is one test of clarity. But generally this will not be, except when the seeker feels fulfillment in his quest both for wisdom and for the exhilaration his mind so much looks to. Fulfillment will at last fill both his emotional and

intellectual sides.

In your case, now the intelligence has begun to be active. And it is natural, inevitable too. The process will be on and with that you will also be moving forward. Let the inner sky of expanse brighten and the pleasant, nourishing, inaudible but sentient vibrations emanating from it, surcharge your system – inside and outside alike – giving no room for doubt or craving. May the wonderful process grip you unawares. You have my benediction for it. It is for you to be susceptible to it, and make it work for what you want. **My dear...., seek Me and My nature and Blessings right within you. There in your innermost recess you will find the essence and bliss that I am, my being is. Externally I may look a human, for else how can you see me? But internally I am the one Spirit that every living being is pulsating with. Realize this in the sweet embrace you will have from your own invisible Self within.**

You have had no loss whatsoever. You have no special gain either to be had. Redeemed from the thought of losses, be also free from the obsession for gains. That state of being is the best in which you are filled with fullness by the simple nature of your own being.

If every object of the eye, of the ear, of the tongue, of the nose and skin has a taste of its own, then of what real taste must be the Spirit which puts us to these tastes. The subject Spirit, the Self, that unknown God whom you speak of, has its own pure wonderful taste. It is all taste in one sense, but transcendental in taste in another sense.

Get lost in its essence. It is there in your body, causing heat, causing thought, raising feelings and emotions. Now you are using it for your songs, words and actions. Stopping to do so, at least for a while, keep quiet, to enjoy its own sweet company. In the silence of your room, in the still sky of your heart, in the mere vibration of the cells in your body, aloof from everything else, but awake to your own inmost

bosom - that lonely presence which abides behind the first thought and the last feeling - linger in its company. Be befriended by it. Get the delight, ease and fulfillment which you are rightly an heir to. I am waiting to see you filled with its enrichment.

Your Own

Swamiji

1977

Respected Gurudev,

.....I find a few obstacles in meditation. Firstly, the mood. For weeks together I remain in a high mood spiritually, followed by a lull; the lull is characterised by indifference and lethargy and the results during this period are far from satisfactory. Secondly, evenings are better suited. I tried to change to mornings. Despite all the efforts, mornings I find are not congenial. I am more oscillated by the previous evening thoughts. I don't know why it is so. Thirdly, I had a series of 'bad luck' for the past three months. However this does not concern me much. But I am amazed at the way bad days do come like a predetermined phase. I don't know whether there is something known as fate. If so, what is its purpose?

I was pained to see a note in the magazine that you had an injury on the finger. How is it now?

My wife joins me in sending our respects both for you and Mataji.

Affectionately,...

Dear and blessed ...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 8th has just been received. I have yet to reply a number of persons. However, yours gets the first response.

Every creature, even the most complex product evolved by Nature, is an aggregate of the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This is a spiritual enunciation to understand and explain creature behaviour and experiences. These three components are there in every seeker too. In his case, he is more aware of them, their workings, than the others. From *sattva* flows wisdom, light, *sukha* and the like. The spell

of elation and joy you mention is an offshoot of *sattva*. When *sattva* thus comes to the forefront and remains so for a certain length of time, it is natural that it must subside there upon, giving place to one of the other two. In your case, *tamas* follows *sattva*, and remains in currency. Linking the two, acting as an intermediate factor, *rajas* gets activated and actions follow as a rule.

This cannot but be. The best outlook to remedy, if at all, is to become harmonious and equal to both *sattva* and the *tamas*. When *sattva* is in domination do not get too elated, and then again when it recedes and *tamas* dominates, be free from the opposite reaction. Recognize both to be equal participants and components in your being, and let them be as they naturally are. Preference to one begets prejudice to the other. Keep your outlook moderate and reconcile with whatever is. On all days none can have an equally effective or successful meditative experience. In fact, the same dual outcome which guides your efforts in the world must also greet you in your spiritual *sadhana*. Only then the culture of moderation and harmony will become real and absolute. You may not agree with my words, even argue against them in a way. It does not matter.

Again, spiritually viewed, a number of obstacles are said to confront the seeker in his *sadhana*. The first two, Sankara says, are *anusandhaana rahitya* and *aalasya* – lack of continuity or clinging to the practice, then lethargy and indifference. Just as smoke and other impurities arise while melting a metal in the furnace, these are inevitable throw-outs from the *sadhaka's* system, they being products which a normal life breeds and perpetuates within it.

With diligence, determination and repeated thoughts and efforts, they are to be overcome. You will need some amount of time to set them at rest. And that should not cause concern. Do the *sadhana*, and you will get over them.

Evenings are quite all right, take to them without any doubt. Evenings have their own advantage.

About bad luck, can you find a world in which you can avoid bad? I think it is also in the heavens as in hell. So it is better that you have it here and now, when you are still with your body, mind and understanding. To think that a series of bad luck has been met, and therefore there is a Fate or plight behind them, is another traditional delusion. By positing a Fate, if you find harmony in meeting them, Fate is O.K. The point is that the mind should be kept open with a full place for bad luck any time, as for their opposites. If the quota for bad is sizeable in your life, why not make use of it well early, leaving the later portion of your life free of bad luck? Let your thought be promotional even in meeting the bad. To meet the bad is as much a part of your *sadhana* as meditation itself.....

Yes, your wife, children and you have my blessings and good wishes.

Sivasis and love.

Yours

Swamiji

1978

Most revered Gurudev,

With a heavy, sorrowful heart, I am writing this letter. I have just lost my saintly father. He was conscious till the last. Just before departing, he chanted the Holy Name of God, counted His Holy Name on his fingers. Before his sad demise I was the son of a learned, considerate father; now I am a fatherless, unfortunate son. My sorrow knows no bound. It is quite impossible for me to express in words how much my father meant to me.

My only consolation is that before his last breath he blessed me and wished my all-round peace and happiness. He has gone, but I am here. I am now like a boatman in an angry sea. I am puzzled, bewildered.

In the absence of my father, you are my father. So please console your helpless unfortunate son, bless him. At this moment you are the only support. You alone can help me in continuing my family life. I always pray to God for His blessings. Please pray for my departed father so that his soul may rest in peace.

At this painful stage of my life I am requesting you for one thing. I do not know the contents of your book "Quietitude of the Mind." I believe this book may give me peace in this painful and critical state of my life. So I most fervently pray to you to send me a copy of the book before my father's funeral rites are over. Just consider my appeal and do what is best for me. But I demand from you something this time – whatever it may be – even if it is a flower consecrated by you, it is invaluable to me.

No more today. Please send me a copy of the book "Quietitude of the Mind" and respond to my letter which will give me peace. With regards.

Your unfortunate son,

...

Dear and blessed son,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 12th came here yesterday. I am writing to you straightway. The book you asked for has been mailed already. It must reach you in time. From that book you will imbibe the lesson of immortality, and your own life from now on will enable you to actualize this lesson. The fulfillment lies in learning the truth in time and then in realizing it by a dedicated pursuit.

I understand your trouble and what the mind misses. But dear son, your father has fulfilled his role as a father in finally shedding this body, governed by the laws of the same Nature which at one time caused the event of his body's birth. Nature is full and carries her harmony in everything and at every time. Sometimes her course is queer. For queerness also has a place in her infinite variety. Should it not? Think well.

By continuing to live indefinitely, no purpose is served. In living and then in dying, in that alone, rests the wholesome purpose and duty of any human being. Does it strike as cruel or strange to you? Even then let me give you a bit of it, as perhaps your natural father has given! Will you resent it?

Let me ask: You are a father now to your children as your father was to you. Will you avoid later in life the fate which your father you say has caused to you now? Can you forestall your own death, and the resultant loss to your children? Why then construe unnecessary misery in what, through your father's death, has befallen your lot? Better wisdom lies in assimilating the event, understanding it in its own place, and developing a larger, deeper and higher mind and emotions. Nature is determined to breathe into us a full range of emotions with the one aim of making our perception comprehensive,

all-embracing. She has designed love, resentment, compassion, pain, grief, agony and what not, to be enjoyed or suffered from time to time. Every emotion has its own gift or curse appended to it. And through each the mind is destined to grow more and more mature and seasoned. The ultimate abode for the mind is the one called *Shanti* and *Tripti* (peace and contentment). In *Shanti*, *Tripti* is natural and effortless in attainment. *Shanti* is also an emotion, a very refined one, subtle, but extremely powerful. No human soul will find its equipoise, freedom or release except on reaching this subtle state of *Shanti*.

The grief which you are put to now is welcome in that it compels you to seek clarity and contentment through wisdom and realization. I have often said that in many cases the living relations are not able to teach the full import of life. Only the dead give the more valuable and lasting lessons to the living. Do not resent or refuse grief at any time. Let the mind, fed by it, bred by it, grow deeper and subtler. Let it rise to the more lofty dimensions, until at last it comes face to face with *fulfillment* in the blazing grace of pure wisdom, bringing with it the assurance of immortality.

About your father : I am happy he was saintly, and left the world as a saintly one to his son. It is a very rare privilege to be so. Generally a saint is never taken to be so by his blood relations. Even after death, the fact of blood-relationship eclipses the nobler reflections in the minds of the survivors. But in your case there is a definite difference. It is welcome in all ways.

As a son of his, you have a lot of benefits and gains. The thought that your father was so noble a soul is itself elevating. That will bless you more than it did while he was alive. What your father wished you to be in life and in spiritual evolution, try to be wholeheartedly. This must please your father, if he were by your side, and will be an ample

reward for yourself. Even by 'death', the saintly do teach the living. Learn that lesson too, and be guided by it.

Surely such a saintly one's soul must ever rest peacefully. The thought of God is itself the medicine for peace. One who has left his mortal frame upon this earth with God on the lips and in the heart is the most blessed. Let many more have this rare blessing.

I don't see you as unfortunate. You are one of the most fortunate. Maybe, it will take some time for you to realize this truth.

Should I say anything more? Words are said, heard or read. The better part lies in rumination, which must lead to the next step of feeling and experience. Until you overcome the grief on account of death, this 'father' will be ringing in your ears:

Dear son, will you be able to avoid what your father has done? Then, why suffer beyond measure? By grieving like this, you will be saddening your father, if he were to come before you. As for me, though it pains me, yet I shall allow you to grieve and sob, a little every time, until you gradually become sublimated by the very process. And then, you must tell me: "Ah, I am all right. The release has come to me. I am fulfilled."

Until then, let me withdraw, giving you my love and Sivasis.

Yours

Swamiji

1978

My dear Swamiji,

Namaskar. In response to the appeal in Vicharasetu of Sept. '78, 3rd cover page, I am sending three gift subscriptions for one year starting from Dec. '78 issue:.....

Recently I experienced an intense grief the like of which I never had in memory. It was and is due to the unexpected sudden passing away, within a few hours, of a dear one, Dr. A. K. S., leaving behind three children and wife. He was 36 years, son of my wife's eldest sister, and had just returned after getting M.R.C.P. from London following five years of service in U.K. He was devoted to serving the sick and poor even at his own expense, very compassionate, always smiling and in perfect health a day before death. On the morning of 15th Dec. '78, he had severe stomach pain and discharge of blood with stool. In the night he died at Willingdon Hospital, New Delhi.

*I feel that the "**Brahmavidya Abhyasa**" and the "Quietitude of Mind" vanished then and specially in the spells of tears. Probably it has exposed the long distance ahead to the goal of perfection of fulfillment. When will I reach it? Nine years are over. How long will it take? The body by nature is becoming weak. Much before it falls, the mind must become the Supreme Self. For hastening the process, your compassion is essentially needed- "**Moksha moolam Guroh kripaa**" (the cause for moksha is the grace of the Teacher).*

With prostrations,

Yours

...

Dear and blessed....,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 10th Jan. '79 to hand....

I have noted and accepted the feelings and prayers you have expressed about the bereavement you suffered recently. After sharing with you what you have experienced, I have a definite message to give you on this. Take it with all the *sraddha* and piety you can.

The sudden death of a close one, especially like the young Dr. S you have mentioned, will surely afflict the mind of any one. For his relations, the affliction is no doubt all the more. The reasons are two. We fondly expect only the very old to die and the young to live. Even in wars, when young healthy fighters meet each other only to die or cause death, where deaths are considered normal and inevitable, the afflictions caused are untold. What to speak then of a premature death befalling a member of the family, wherein neither the profession nor the age and other factors imply such a sudden fate?

Another factor which magnifies the grief for the relatives is the thought and concern for those who suffer the bereavement, and whom the bereavement unsettles in various ways.

Our mind is generally used to meet the departure of elders, when they have grown sufficiently old. Well, that is an inevitable course of our life in this world. But no human mind can normally take in the untimely death of a young one. The mind is given to operate on the plane of *dvandvas*. In being so, there is nothing wrong or unusual too. Naturally the death of a young relative will unleash its sorrowful plight in the minds of the near relations. Do you say this should not be so? Not to feel sorrow on such moving and dejecting situations will be an abnormal trait of your mind as of any others. No abnormality is on any ground welcome, all the more so for a genuine seeker who seeks to achieve the fullness of mind and heart.

You may now wonder as to what does spirituality aim at if not the redressal of sorrows whenever they try to assail the mind. It is this question that I want you, and all others, to raise and persist in seeking a clear answer to!

Dear soul, our mind is a complex product evolved by Nature. Before you can think of your mind's formation and birth, it is there already with you. Far from being inert the mind is sentient in every way, generating in us a large variety of emotions, sentiments, feelings and responses. If it were not doing so, it would not have been the thing which Nature intends it to be! The first part of *viveka* consists in understanding the mind like this. The next part lies in trying to refine and sublimate the complexity of the mind on spiritual lines, thereby enabling us to remain hopeful and stable as long as we remain embodied in the world, that is till the body falls by itself.

What is the course of refinement I am speaking of? Certainly it is not a process of denial, mutilation or annihilation. Whatever is there in the mind should be recognized, understood first. Then a process of gradual sublimation and building up must be attempted.

In building up the mind healthily there is a great role for the emotions to play constantly. To love, to be resentful, to fear – these are the primary and consistent urges of the mind. The absence of any of these will mean the inoperativeness or inertness of the mind to that extent. In other words, the measure of absence (of these primary urges) will imply a corresponding measure of death, or at least stuntedness for the mind. I will not approve of any such absence or dearth to breed in the matter of building up the mind spiritually. What is then the true purpose before us?

A fully healthy mind must be able to react to joyful situations in joyous manner, frightening situations in a fearful manner and

saddening situations in a sorrowful manner. If it is able to do so every time a situation arises, with that also will flow enrichment proportionately. Enrichment is as much by loving and joy, as by disapprovals and resentment, as by sorrowing and sympathy. Joy, sorrow and fear, all these are equally the creations and bounties of Nature. They alike form the full gift of the Creator to mankind. You should first and last know that all these together constitute mind's enrichment, and then with such knowledge give vent to the emotions whenever each of them is evoked from time to time, instance to instance.

If we draw a line between any one and others, or one and its opposite, thereby knowingly or unknowingly struggling hard to foster one emotion (say joy) and eliminate another, or the other two (say sadness and fear), it will be to cause a grave error. The mind which reacts to the joyous with joy must also react with sadness to the sorrowful. Where lies refinement then, you may ask.

Refinement's role is thus in enabling the mind to give vent to each emotion whenever it is called for and yet remain composed and collected. Beneath the surface of emotions, you must find the depth of composure to which your wisdom can be grounded.

The difference between the process of denial and the process of sublimation through the wise course of guarded expression (knowingly giving vent to the emotions, seeking enrichment in the process) is subtle, no doubt, but it is extremely great.

When a man is rowing a boat, does he try to stop the waves coming on the surface of the water? He glides through them skillfully with pleasure by rowing properly. Once you grasp this basic truth, suggestion, it must instantly give you a clue to the solution of the problem you have raised.

May be, until now you never had to face a bereavement of this nature. Naturally the impact will be intense too. It only bespeaks how severe has been the cause and how distressing the consequences of it are. Certainly the young doctor, by his sudden and untimely departure, has caused a marked fissure in all the minds around him.

Psychologically it generates grief and despair; physically it brings in a continuing vacuum which will be very difficult to fill for any one. Are these not considerable enough to make even a sober, elderly man like you to be moved by?

Grieve knowingly and well, perhaps for a half-hour every day, then every other day, once a week later, and less frequently still later, until at last your mind, the bio-psychic system assimilates the reaction, feels satisfied that it has shed enough of it, and then is able to outlive the impact for ever. Even then the objective consequences of his absence in the family will continue to linger. That can be redressed by the objective, external efforts like helping, guiding and befriending the bereaved as long as they need for one reason or the other.

So dear....., do you now get the import? I would like you to bring the event to your mind now and then, as I have explained it and then give vent to the grief that naturally follows. That will then be a more refining *sadhana*, a complement and booster. The mind becomes noble only when it is able to feel grief on account of those to whom it is not related, as it would for the related.

Of all the emotions, sorrow or grief is the most educative and beneficial. But the seeker should know that this is so and get enriched by the instance of grief. There will be a time when the illumined mind will reflect sorrow on the emotional plane when such is the occasion and equally so reflect the Truth, the Self, on the intelligential plane. The emotional responsiveness is not in conflict with the intelligential

response.

On the bodily plane allow hunger and thirst to be, then their appeasement too, equally so the other bodily features and responses. On the mental plane, allow the alternate emotions to be, the happiness-misery *dvandva* to be. On the intelligential plane, let abide the intellectual conditions like knowledge, ignorance and the like. Being in the company of all these, one following the other in the respective planes, be also in the Self-level, graced marvellously by the neutral, impartial, immortal, unaffected Supreme Truth. Thus, dear seeker, it is a question of expansion taking place every time, of deepening up constantly - all a process of widening and expanding. Never is it to be one of negation, suppression or rigidity.

Weepingly be joyous, joyously be weeping, neutrally be either, one after the other. Such a state is the most reassuring one, the real one, consoling to the mind and fulfilling to the heart, blessed indeed for the human individual.

Rather than exposing the long distance lying ahead to reach the goal you have set before yourself, as you put it, I feel this instance reveals to you the hidden truth about the genuine *sadhana* that should grace the seeker. As for *Brahma-vidya* and its fullness, nine years are not an insignificant period, but certainly they do not constitute the full length we have in mind. You have therefore lost nothing, gained instead a great deal too. You are progressing, and will also be henceforward. Only bring about the slight moderation or correction in your approach, assessment.

I don't know whether spiritual wisdom and insight are interpreted and understood in this manner. However, this is the spiritual insight I stand for and I wish to reveal to the seekers who come to me. Spiritual pursuit must be ornamenting our personality at all levels,

never meaning any kind of denial or destruction. Perhaps I may be showing a way quite different from the so-called customary one, but that is what I am for.

Carry on with assurance and hope. Do not leave the world before you have equalled in your mind the place for death with that for birth, the place for sorrow with that for joy, the place for the body with the place for the Soul, also the place for mortality with that for immortality. Console and help the distressed in time, to the extent desirable and possible. Console yourself too, and find your fulfillment in that very pursuit itself.

You have the good wishes and blessings from here as ever. Love and *Sivasis*.

Yours truly,

Swamiji

1979

Beloved Swamiji,

Salutations and prostrations.

*It is over seven years since I took initiation from you. Initially my progress was remarkable but after some time, especially after my marriage, it has received a setback. The reason is obvious. Besides, pre-occupation with my work and the disturbance caused by frequent travels are there. So, I have taken to a **sadhana**: to recite the **Mantra** one crore times. I have started doing it, to start with 5000 times daily and I propose to carry it on wherever I go. I seek Swamiji's blessings to complete the **sadhana**.*

For quite a few months now, I am confronted with query, especially during meditation. I am enclosing a detailed review thereon and would request your comments.

Who am I :

The enquiry 'who am I' is suggested in any Vedantic sadhana to find out the nature of the Self. It is used as a tool for Self-realisation. The great sage Ramana Maharshi used to advocate this enquiry to one and all, which, according to him, will lead to the awareness – Koham, deham, naham, soham. Our Swamiji also emphasises the importance of this enquiry.

I have also taken up this enquiry during meditation. Gradually, this query is proving to be of special significance and relevance to me. Right from my birth or at least from the days I remember, only this subjective personality 'I' has been known to me all these years. All the experience has been only with myself as the centre of experience. But, the indulgence in the objective experience is so much that the identity of the experiencer is lost in the experience. A thought is therefore gaining force that in the whole universe I stand alone as the subject of all experience and everything is the object. In

other words, the world as is known to me, is only my experience of it. There is no world apart from me. I am reminded of the saying. "As you are in the world, the world is in you." Hence, I have to draw the conclusion that what is called the world is only my experience of it.

As the next step in the enquiry, I am led to think that one day I have to face death, which is inevitable. As I have come to this world only by way of birth, similarly I have to leave the world only through death. After my death what will happen to the so-called world? The world may continue to exist, but who will be there to experience it, as I am doing now? Before my birth, who was experiencing it? Somehow I am led to think that there should have been a continuity in the experience, if not by this personality, by some other experiencer. Then what is the relationship between the earlier experiencers and the present one? Or is it that I have always been existing and experiencing the world, though I am not aware of it?

*This also leads to another aspect of the enquiry: **Maya**. What is its nature? Whatever be the theoretical explanation given to it, I find that the forces of nature work with unfailing regularity. Because I forget their existence, electricity or heat does not spare me even once. Is the world called Maya because my perception of it is not complete or, is it really illusory or is it that the experience of the world cannot be had without my awareness?*

It appears that this mystery if unravelled would reveal to me all other secrets, including God-realisation.

Yours

...

Dear and Blessed...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of 17th June, is still unreplied. I wanted quite some time to pass before replying you. For, your new *sadhana* of

a crore *japa* and with that a further channelization of your thought process would have brought some more clarity and insight. Has it been really so?

Your para (2): Think well, delve deeply into the question: The moment you say 'object' or 'objective existence', the 'subject', 'subjective existence', or 'subjectivity' is instantly implied. If the latter were not first there, the former could not have been. The world, an outer and exterior phenomenon, becomes so, has been so, with reference to something inner and interior to it, not to us, to you or to any one in particular; otherwise how could it have been visible and external?

This truth is applicable to the world taken as a whole, and also to any single entity in it – like yourself, the enquirer – on the same basis. Thus a phenomenon implies a noumenon, objectivity implies subjectivity, the world implies the perceiver of it.

What is this noumenon, subjectivity, when enquired deeply into? Relatively speaking, it should be inside the objectivity. All right; apply then the finding to your own being, the exterior existence of it, and see whether inside the objective body you are able to locate a subjectivity with reference to which the body is felt to be objective. And this is what the seeker does through enquiry, contemplation and spiritual realization!

In meditation, do you not get into the subjectivity of your own body in which all the exterior dimensions become unfelt, transcended, negated, and yet the subjectivity prevails as a valid experience? This subjective expanse, without interfering with the body – its nature and dimensions – exists in itself, enabling the exterior objectivity to be. Inside the dense body is felt a totally non-dense, luminous expanse. If you try to relate the two with any known standards of comparison

and inference you will be led to complete failure. In the same way, the truth applies to the universal objectivity too. The universe itself being multi-dimensional and objective, there is a subjectivity in it too (as in your body), which, like your own subjective sphere, transcends all its dimensions, density and the like.

The body, its exterior dimension, is hosting within it a range, an expanse, a kind of thing which totally invalidates and transcends all the characteristics of the body. Is this not a peculiar, un-understandable proposition? Yet is it not true and experiential to us?

Take a mustard, search within its boundaries, into its depths. And suppose you find a huge bottomless lake. What will you then feel and say? Is this not the case with your body too? During meditation, you enter into the inner recesses of your own body to find that there is an unlimited expanse, unbounded and immeasurable in every way? Mind you, the body is still limited, inert, made up of the gross things of the earth and the world.

Once this subjective expanse is traced and felt, found in relation to your single body, then that is the expanse related to the whole world – objectivity as well. Imagine a well dug in your compound and another made in the contiguous plot. The water struck by you in yours is the same sheath as the one which your neighbour strikes in his well in his compound. I am told that the oil struck in one country apparently implies the same oil belt from which the other distant countries are also tapping. The example is still not wholesome, as it is bound to be.

If you mean by the 'I' in you this subjective, impersonal, indivisible, and unidentifiable expanse, then in its dimension it also includes and contains the whole universal objectivity. Differences and distinctions can be there only in the objective entities like your body, earth, moon,

etc. To be different, the things must be objective and space-occupying. Naturally, to be subjective means a full contrast, and hence to deny all distinctions and separateness. The subject expanse – and that is the Consciousness you refer to as 'I' or the 'Self' – when both in your experience and realization, and in your intelligence and understanding, denotes this impersonal, distinction less range, then can you say that it is as well the subject of the whole universe. But mind you, it is a very delicate, magnificent spiritual position, which in one sense sounds absurd and in another sense shines as the pinnacle of spiritual experience and truth of seeking.

Your questions on continuity of births, relationship, etc. do not have any meaning or relevance in such a context, Spiritual perception, in fact, takes one to such a free, unconditioned inner level of stability and contentment. What more can I say now?

Reflect further and see. *Sivasis.*

Yours

Swamiji

1979

Respected Swamiji.

Pranams.

Received your letter. Soon after I wrote to you about my problem with dreams, a feeling of indifference has come in me and hence I feel quite relaxed. Now most of the days I am not at all bothered by dreams and I do not even remember whether I dreamt at all. There are some rare days when I wake up with a heavy mind on account of a bad dream. At that time I try to be indifferent and try not to pay any attention. After some time the heaviness disappears and I find that I have forgotten the matter.

*In an earlier issue of Vicharasetu, I came across an article on **Guru Poornima**. Knowing its importance, this year the day seemed to be a very special one and I felt an intense joy on that day. Decided to start reading Gita again, and have started. These days I very much wish to learn Sanskrit so that I can grasp the rhythm in the **slokas**. I had also thought that starting with **Guru Poornima** day I would wake up early in the morning and sit for meditation for some time, but have remained unsuccessful so far.*

Swamiji, here are some of my problems. I find myself very much self-centred. I feel that I'm not able to love people around me nor do I feel that I love God. Also, I'm always trying to judge people's actions and behaviour. What's the remedy?

As long as I am busy I'm quite happy, but as soon as I'm without work, and my husband is not at home or he is engaged in reading or meditation, I start feeling lonely and feel there's nobody to talk to. One day it so happened that my husband was away and in the evening I started feeling lonely. There were many people around; children were playing in front of our house, but still I felt lonely. That day after much thought, concentration and

exploration, there was a revelation of this kind: there are so many things around me given and arranged beautifully by God – the trees, the big pond, the ducks, the clouds... and the people whom I do not even know. I do not try to belong to Nature, to be one amidst this vastness, do not try to feel the oneness. I look at Nature from a distance and never go close enough. Had I gone I would not have felt lonely at any time. Swamiji, this was my thought. Don't know whether that was the right one.

I always wish to have constant **ananda** and 'bliss' in the mind but this I rarely have. One day I was discussing this with my husband. He pointed out that I do not sit for **pooja** now-a-days, nor do I concentrate my thoughts on God. At leisure times I let my thoughts stray away to other bogus and useless subjects. Exactly so. Swamiji, I even find that the **japa** does not remain inside. At least I'm not aware of it being so. The other day I was thinking everything over and saw that I seem to have lost the aim of **sadhana**. What was it? What do I actually seek and want? And in actual practice, what should be the attitude in activity as well as thought? What I feel is that there should be ananda, a clear and distinct joy in my seeking. Otherwise wouldn't everything be mechanical, a compulsion, rather than being spontaneous? Where is that Joy? What should I do to get that joy? Don't know whether I have been able to express my difficulty. Swamiji, sometimes I feel so confused. I want to hear something to which I can stick.

Previous month I underwent an elaborate check-up. The gynaecologist opined that it is a case of cervical incompetence and prescribes the Shirodkar Operation as a remedy. In this case, the patient has to take absolute rest for several weeks, for five months or more.

The doctor suggests we should not delay the next pregnancy for I'm growing older. But I don't find any 'enthusiasm'. May be that's because I will have to go through such an abnormal process of lying down in bed for 5-6 months. My first requirement is that I would like to have a strong and beautiful mind.

The letter has become so long. Wonder how much it will bother you – with so many questions?

How are you?

Pranams

...

Dear and blessed...,

Hari Om Tat Sat. Your letter of 26th July to hand. I went through all that you wrote about the unconcerned attitude you have gained towards dream. Good that you feel a sense of release and peace. You should learn Sanskrit, as you have felt, and daily recite a few slokas loudly, listening to your own recitation, then getting to a state of absorption and joy in the process. It is the most effective purificatory means in religion and spirituality. Do it at the earliest.

Your self-centredness-- Now that you have discovered it, the condition will gradually decline. By light, darkness vanishes, so too is the case with right understanding and its opposite. To discover a wrong is to remove it 50%. Constant *ananda* cannot be had so easily. Have *ananda* now and then, progressively, and that will be adequate for you. Aim at a sense of moderation in every walk of life. In attaining purity, in giving concession to impurity, in getting nearer to God, in taking to the world, in accepting loneliness, in appreciating, in depreciating, in short in everything that concern's you BE MODERATE. Let there be some wrongs in you, what of them? Let some confusion also be there. Not an excess definitely! In this way, you will start accepting yourself as what you are, and nevertheless trying patiently for improvement.

About the problem which maternity and childbirth pose: you have to

be clear in your mind, although the consequences are quite telling. But you cannot help it being so. The situation implies two distinct considerations, one linked to another: (1) your mind, which is not to your satisfaction, and which you want to build up and improve, and (2) your female body, its characteristics and features, and in which there seems a built-in inadequacy standing in the way of rearing an embryo in the womb. Medical advice is that a possible safety can be sought by doing an operation to help pregnancy to full term. O.K. But, even then, the consequences are quite exacting. Your movement and freedom will be restricted for quite a few months. With your educational background and professional pursuits, will such a spell be acceptable? Even if you accept it mentally, in good faith, will actually your mind and moods cooperate with you in undergoing the persecution? If so, on the strength of what - the sound promise of motherhood and the birth of a child? In that case, there should also be a provision willingly extended by the mind to face the risk in the whole venture. What will your mind have in reply, when something unexpected happens? Think! Medical people want that the pregnancy be not delayed: but that is the bodily part of the whole diagnosis. But the body-problem revolves around the mind-person. The mind is not fully under the medical men, their purview!

The more important consideration is that any venture on the bodily level can be accepted only when the mind is attuned to it, strong enough to bear the challenges and consequences involved. Maternity and child-birth are quite a complex adventure, demanding from the mother a variety of concerns, sacrifices, adjustments and disappointments alike. If you propose to attempt "motherhood" and face it meaningfully, then admittedly it will be a very elegant and noble one. As long as you have difficulties with your mind and its welfare right now, is it not wise to ensure the mind's welfare first, and then impose upon it the task of facing a more complex phase of life? Think well.

With your wisdom and educational career, you must be able to think freely and more gracefully, to see things clearly and rise to any position of height. The feminine temper is inherent as also the wishes and motivations. Do not deny any of them. But add to them the benefit of clear and lofty thinking as well. Try, there is nothing to be fearful or shy. A long life lies ahead. There are mothers who sacrifice their children for the sake of a noble cause - giving them to the nation, or to other women for adoption. Equally so, there can be women who will make sacrifices of even a more generous kind.

I am all right, with the season's aggravation of the rheumatic symptoms on the body. With all this said and done, there is still the course of Nature at work in every walk of life. Rely upon it cheerfully, waiting to meet the outcome without resistance.

I am in good health but for the seasonal aggravation of the rheumatic symptoms. Love and *Sivasis*.

Yours truly,

Swamiji

1979

Revered Swamiji,

..... For the consolation of my mind in removing some doubts, I approach you to kindly throw some light in your brilliant way to the following question:

Who was the Creator and what was His Nature, millions and millions of years ago before the birth of this world and other planets in the universe?

In my humble mind, I feel that the Creator at that time was an Absolute Power who kept some seeds in His lap (analogically) sowing, so to say, the seeds one after another in the ground and watering them to give birth (to trees and Planets) to this world and innumerable planets in the Universe. I sincerely need your guidance to give me a lucid picture of the phenomenon, clearing my query. I am merely an electrical engineer and have not read well-known religious books like Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and others. While reading your Journals and attending religious discourses in Ramakrishna Mission, some questions arise in my mind and I wish to refer them to you to give solace to my enquiring mind.

With best regards to Mataji and you for the New year.

Yours faithfully,

...

Dear and blessed...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 8th Jan. to hand with the enclosure. O.K. The gift copy will be mailed as you have desired. Now about your questions:

(1) Millions of years (incalculable number) ago, this world (our earth) was inert and insentient, quite unlike what it is today.

(2) How the whole world was like cannot be answered, as the reference and judgement cannot be about the whole universe at any time. We only study, understand and imply a portion of the Universe for our purposes.

(3) Still further in the past, the Creator was not the Creator at all. Because there was not the creation, with reference to which alone He can become the 'CREATOR'. Say 'He' was like the earth of millions of years ago, when we could not say that it was the supporter of living beings.

Imaginably, the "Creator" (he was not the creator then) was the Space and Dust we see around us, devoid of the heavenly bodies inside.

Still before, and by now we have reached the finale of our thoughts and reasons, also the beginning of our *very knowledge based on comparisons*, the Creator (He was not anything, not to speak of 'anybody' then) was the objectlessness, from where and when, the objectfulness came to be. Can you imagine the transition from the objectlessness to the objectfulness? If so, the nature of the erstwhile presence (the later Creator) also you can.

This statement is a speculation for those who are unable to get to the areas of understanding, transcending space and spatial dimensions. Nevertheless, the speculation may strike as meaningful and hopeful.

For the real finders and followers, it becomes a step more than a mere speculation. The key to make it something above speculation and near reality lies within the seeking and experiencing mind of the enquirer.

Search the state and area of sleep, where the difference between objectiveness and subjectiveness does not come in at all. This is what I meant by saying 'Objectless entity'.

So, as objectfulness is now there, objectlessness can also be there, and in fact it is there every day for you, as for all others.

Just when the sleep state breaks off, instantly arises the objectfulness. With respect to what (say the subject) does it take place? Think.

Again in our dream, the factor inside us brings about a widespread object-subject phenomenon, thereby proving that the stuff inside our body is capable of giving rise to both a subject and then its object.

However, the conclusion is clear that there is, and so there was (there must have been) a condition namely the objectless presence. The moment you reach that level in your understanding, it instantly becomes the first level and the last level too.

The Creator then was like this. Pronounce yourself whether He was or He was not. Also whether this is the truth for the humans to take in, to abide by and be filled with.

Love and *Sivasis*,

Yours in the ken of space, but really in the incomparable presence above, beneath and inside it.

A big zero, I am

Swamiji

1979

The following letter is to a student in Delhi who wrote to Swamiji expressing his dejection at not having scored the much-needed 'top position' in a crucial examination.

Dear and blessed.....,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 1st to hand just now. I note what you say about your effort and the past disproportionate result. I am not much bothered about the top position you get or lose, except in one sense, that of getting further admission somewhere.

Generally in the actual field of experience, the actual life-situation, it is not the top-classers who flourish. Toppers remain intellectual experts. Actual field of excellence needs more of application, endeavour, which requires health and dedication. These qualities do not belong to the intellect. You need not then get worried the least. By worrying you will only be creating another hurdle before you. Assuming that the outcome you get, will be unfavourable be prepared mentally for that.

The world always has consisted of several individual life patterns. Yours also is one amongst them. Your thought should then be: does not the world in its variety hold out a scope for me, my nature and outcome? The long standing answer is that it does. There is enough place for it. What then? Explore the right possibilities so that you will discover your right place and scope. That will be the effective step for success.

Confrontation, if I can call it so, should make you strive harder, grow keener, cover distance skillfully, faster than even those who run. In any given situation, assess it well, relate it properly to what you

actually are, find out then how best you can harness yourself to produce the best outcome. Such thinking is the real creative power. Before it, no hindrance will prove hindering. By its grace you will not merely be expanding your own inner powers but also be giving forth a kind of creativeness which otherwise you cannot dream of. "How am I to be effective in these circumstances? Maybe I have to strike hard ground, even then what? Let me face the situation boldly with confidence." You will preserve your enthusiasm in this way, avoid the scope for disappointment, be growing every time, creating newer and newer dimensions within yourself. *This is the course of defeatless progress.*

Neither I, nor will your elders blame you if you have made the right effort in time, and then the result turns out unfavourable. But, the right to judge and feel will be ours, mind you.

Remove from your mind the curse called doubt, the enemy called fear. Remain confident that despite whatever comes. 'I shall still be on to my task'. That is the really top position, not in the usual academic sense, but in the broad practical view. In the language of the mind, its horizon!

Yours

Swamiji

1980

*In the following letter written to a close disciple, Swamiji discusses the concept of **sin** and **virtue**, its meaning and scope, and how it should be dealt with in the life of a **sadhaka**.*

Dear and blessed.....,

Harih Om Tat Sat. All along I was not happy with your name. The other day I heard your sister referring to you as 'A', and that instantly suited me. Moreover, there is also a purpose in making use of that name by which you are identified at home by the near and dear ones. All the psychological growth, impressions, and everything that comes along with these generally get wrought in and through the name by which we are addressed, through which we live in others' minds. Psychologically, for near and dear ones, you are what your name implies. Socially also, you may be what they call you.

I am wondering about the make-up of the seeker's psychology. What is its make up? What will be its modifications in the pursuit of Truth? These questions have a fundamental character. They are also quite personal, especially in the case of one who was given to a life-style that does not conform to the pattern of reasonable goodness and nobility.

In other words, do the religious or ethical assessments like 'sinfulness' and 'virtuousness' mean anything to the psychology of the spiritual seeker? If yes, how does he respond to the sense of guilt due to a sinful act, past or present? What is the right nature of his release? Which is the normal healthy note for the mind in case it gets assailed by the religious impact of the past deeds? The more and more one becomes good, noble, ethical and religious, more will be the thought in his mind of the sin he did earlier in his life. An action once done

cannot be undone. It becomes part of his memory, his mind's working. The mind's law makes it remember the past and be concerned with the future. *The constant linking of the two – the past and the future – the process of doing this is what we call the mind or mentation process.*

Naturally, by the very concern and effort to become good and better, the mind will be afflicted by the resentment for whatever bad had occurred in the past. The greater is the present goodness, the more intense will be the sense of the 'past' guilt! And therefore, will not the memory of the guilt co-exist with the prevalence of the present virtue? Even then does the present virtue obliterate the past vice? Is there anything like removal, replacement, in the sphere of the memory storehouse, where the brain cells, like the computer, register and maintain all that has happened?

If the storing in the brain does not imply emptying, refilling, etc., what becomes of the impressions stored there of the past? What do we then mean by recompense, expiating by noble deeds, the consequences of the ignoble acts done and registered in the brain earlier?

Understand the subtle complexity of the whole development. Be personal as also impersonal and universal about the whole thought. You have to work standing apart from it. May be you are one of the most suited for the purpose.

I asked, last night, about the subject to those present here, no one except Nambiar said much by way of solution. He intellectualises it, taking his stand partially upon spiritual wisdom, partially upon the worldly expediency. 'As long as one does not repeat the sinful act in his life, and feels deeply at heart for whatever had been done earlier, the mental impact of the past will be minimised; the gravity of the sinful memory will be lesser and lesser, but will not, by the very

nature of it, become totally extinct.' Savithri said she does not know but has heard that 'repentance is expiation' (*paschaat-taapa* is the *praayaschitta*).

Even then, my question remains unanswered: 'How does repentance mitigate the sin of the past? (By sin you should not mean anything sinful, except the hurting memory of an incorrect act done in the past). The question is vital indeed, especially for you all, Swamiji's children or representatives.

I want a solution afforded by the psychological systems of the individual himself. The explanation should be purely on the basis of the human systems of perception, experience, assessment, of past-present relationship, and of any supreme or final truth about the facts of existence.

Taking the religious concept of sin, you may give a religiously authoritative redemption; That is O.K. Yet, that will only be a treatment given to the psychology of the thinker on the basis of his psychological leaning or susceptibility. The science and process will even then have to be explained in terms of physical, mental, intellectual and perhaps intangible Truth.

To forget, dear seeker, is not the means or answer. By forgetting, the fact of memory does not become extinct. Memory is the safe survival in our brain of the impressions forged by a wilful act, the experience that the act has brought about in the subject consciousness. Once it is forged, it cannot be removed. So by a blind or faithful forgetfulness administered to it, one cannot sit feeling redeemed. Will it not be like the Ostrich burying its head in sand? What are the salvational means then?

Delve into the inmost chambers of your understanding and find out. These are the points I want to be laid open before the storehouse of

wisdom in you.

In Vedantic thought, the bondage - namely the disturbed state of one's psychology and understanding - is described as *kartru-bhoktru bhaava*. What does this mean? Is it not relevant to our questions and thought? That fact and feeling 'I am doing, I have done, I will do', and therefore 'I am experiencing the resultants, have experienced, will have to experience' - the sum total of these concepts and conceptual states - is what the *bhaava* implies. In this basic *bhaava* - fundamental notions of causalness and consequentialness - both sin and virtue weigh equally. 'I commit sin, I also act in virtue', although sinfulness alone stands as a menace. But later on, even virtuous acts will have the same menacing influence. There the deluding force will be that of pride and greed for it. Nevertheless, both are a product of causalness, they go by the name of consequentialness. The causal-consequential feelings, which imply the prevalence of the ego, the crude expression of the 'I', are the basic binding phenomena to be dealt with and disposed of. The entire spiritual pursuit is meant to redress it outright. In fact, the realisation of Self, whatever it may be as a positive acquisition, psychologically means the relief and nirvana from this quality called causalness-cum-consequentialness.

The *kartaa* feeling may be due to any act, sinful or virtuous, strong or weak. Even then it has to be treated and eliminated. Similarly the *bhoktaa* feeling with reference to any karma or *kartru bhaava* also has to be removed. Besides these two feelings, there is also the thought that 'this' enjoyment or 'that' suffering, *bhoga*, is a result of that *kartritva*, causalness. To draw an equation between one doership and another experiencership, linking the cause with the effect, is also the habit of the mind. When *kartaa* and *bhoktaa* feelings stand removed, with that should also subside all such mutual connectedness from the mind. "I am having this experience because I did that before", this is the relationship-thought that prevails in the mind. This relational thought

must also vanish for good. All this must be the experiential outcome of Self-realization.

The question is how this outcome is generated by the Self-knowledge pursuit. A mere knowledge of the Self may not bring about this functional outcome in the seeker's psychology. Much depends upon interpreting the Self in the context of the world, the individual and universal *prakritis*, the knowledge of *prakriti*, and its working. The role of the individual and his responsibilities if any in the scheme of things, all these will have to be distinctly known, realised and lived with. Only then the whole area of release will be validly had. That is why Gita and other texts come out with a variety of approaches, explanations and themes to discuss and dispose of the whole problem of the mind and intelligence.

Creation started when "I laid my egg in the 'Yoni', the 'Mahat Brahma'", says Krishna. If thus the first act of impregnation belongs to the Creator, the Supreme Lord, what is the status of the similar acts done by you or any one else, who come after millions of generations following the first generation directly linked with God? The very birth of one's body is a sequential outcome brought forth by Nature. And within the ken of Nature comes everything and all, including man's mind, intelligence and *ahamkara*(ego). The mind and intelligence work with delusion, deriving for themselves the properties and compulsions from the body-association. Ultimately, all these are due to whom, to what, motivated by what? The final ownership is of Nature, and hence to the Lord! Of course, the role of *paurusha* comes in, but even that is not without its bearing on Nature and its custodian.

Thus, thinking in all the dimensions and complexities, our thought should find the substratum of Nature. Confront Her beginninglessness, incorrigibility, all-comprehensiveness,

inexorableness and many other 'nesses', to finally get dissolved into Herself and Her Lord. That is the state of utter surrender, of full devotion, of jubilant harmony.

If the ego is itself Nature's creation, find Nature's display in the very ego and its offshoots as well. I don't know whether this line of thinking is clear to your mind, and if so what impact it makes on you. Again when the personal history and behaviour are all right, free from anything menacing or hurtful, the facility of this great wisdom, the blessing of the harmony it stimulates, comes easily. But whether in the case of the so-called *paapa-acharins* too, the same note of ultimate reconciliation, harmony, elimination of ego, can become true, is something you and others will have to search, seek and discover.

Theoretically, the Self and the knowledge of it, the knowledge of the fullness of *prakriti*, etc. is available to the virtuous as well the vicious. But does the vicious background lend itself as much as the virtuous background to derive the same benefit from the same source? Or is the vicious at a disadvantage? Think well before arriving at an answer.

The impressions of whatever the individual nature has done and experienced are there indelibly in the brain, or in the spiritual sectors. Naturally nothing in the way of obliterating can be done about them. What is the redress then? Side by side with these impressions, including the beneficial benign impressions, a new note of wisdom will be made to shine, by *sadhana* and wisdom, in the light of which the *kartru* and *bhoktru bhavaas* relating to the virtuous as well as the vicious impressions will become extinct. The process of fusion is what works. What should be the magnitude of sublimity to make the opposite impressions prove ineffective, is the real question, and not one of eliminating either. Is it clear?

Biologically speaking, it is within my experience that our personality remains personal, shaped and moulded physically to what it is, only up to a level. In moments and hours of absorption, also when the personality gets transformed by spiritual nature, the biological massiveness dissolves progressively, and weightless, shapeless depths begin to reveal themselves subjectively. **In those self-felt, natural states of inwardness, I do not find anything like a bodily identity.** The expanse of feeling remains, (where I don't know) and the peripheral (that is the only way I can describe it) segments, in which arise thoughts, emotions or concerns, are also there. In spite of whatever is the nature of the concern, the peripheral processes, the central inner expanse radiates joy and unconditioned freedom, lightness, and what? I don't know. A memory of the past or a concern for the future, or an occupation about the present, all these can be, but only peripherally, circumferentially, and the central joyful expanse is not the least affected by it. This is what I felt and was explaining to those nearby when I had been to Jamshedpur this time.

Will you take this as a proof of the Truth about the state of redemption? But of course I am not that much of a sinner or the vicious. But I can make myself one, any time in relation to this or that of my life. Anything can assume gravity, if we think of it in grave terms. And in that way, I can be a sinner. But will that deliberateness in the making of sin imply an implicit non-sinnerhood, and thereby colour the proposition! Think it out for yourself.

I say all this so that you will sink into your own depths, bring out from them even the most hidden memories, in which there lurk even the remotest notes of '*Kartru*' *bhaava*. It is no use trying to neglect them or forget them. The normal biological laws may permit such disregard or ignoring, but not the subtle spiritual laws. You should be not for yourself alone, but for the others as well. There is no harm in incorporating in oneself a greater dimension, for expansion is always

desirable.

Let the worst memories be revived, activated, stimulated in the brain. Making them a fiery crucible, melt the wisdom or Self-experience you have gained so far in it mercilessly, and then see whether the experience of the Self is able to come out unaffectedly. In that case you can be sure that while these memories exist safely in the brain cells, side by side with them, also lives the present Self-experience by the luminosity of which the earlier memory loses its adverse potency. The salubrious potency prevails no doubt, as a result of which the system of yours refuses *naturally* to enter the same habits or pursue them even in the most diluted form. Does it make sense to you?

So wiping off, getting freed from forgetting, somehow by a much longer memory and association making the earlier memory a trickle, reducing its gravity (as 'N' puts it), none of these will be adequate, if we are to reach a position of salvation within us. *Identify* yourself mentally with the worst sinner of the past or present. And then adjudge the attainment in the background of the most sublime history and identification, relating to yourself or to another. In both cases, how does the system behave and react? Find it out.

My dear soul. I have a special thought and reason to write all this to you. And by writing I fulfill that mission which I am, perhaps, intended to fulfill for you, and hence for several others. May impersonality and the benignness which the deepest wisdom brings with it adorn you as soon as possible.

Yours

Swamiji

1980

Mother Nature has her own rhythm earmarked for shaping the life-course of a genuine seeker. Revealed here are the fundamental Laws of Nature which govern a seeker's life, drawing him on irresistibly, sometimes through adversity and trials, towards his own perfection and fulfillment.

Dear and blessed ...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Every year, for some time now, I move out from the Ashram with a lot of indifference (a state in which my mind and sentiments are not able to get concerned with anything around) – a trait and outcome quite characteristic of one like me. This year too the spell was there, perhaps in a greater measure. The first lap of the journey being to Bombay, the situation only tended to deepen the impact. And when I reached Jamshedpur, virtually I had a non-reacting mind.

But Nature and Providence have their own strange ways and means. And so, although not fully unexpected, I found you and the Srivastavas already there. Perhaps the best thing of my life was this sight of you all there, then, in such a background. We should thank all concerned, the persons of the earth and the planets of the skies, for having done whatever they did to bring about such a situation, which was eluding us earlier.

My dear ..., take it from me that the course of life of a good soul, more so of a genuine seeker, will not usually be in the way he wants it to be. Instead it will be in a way which will mysteriously lead him to his unfolding and fulfillment. The seeker does not generally know what is his inner make-up, and what changes he will need from time to time for its unfolding and further improvement. To realize one's own complex nature, mental and intellectual, is much more difficult than

to know one's Self. For the Self is just one, ever the same, and it remains unaffected at all times. But the mental, emotional and intellectual characteristics that encircle this central Self-entity are varied, complex and multi-pronged. So even after knowing or being in the Self, the *understanding of the complex nature* – the individual nature that is yourself, and the world-nature, that is the society and environment – will be an arduous task. That apart, the supreme truth of the seeker's life, the life in which his complex personality is led to fulfillment is there, which you should reckon as well as possible.

Once you preserve the attitude of wholesome attunement to the Great Order of the world, in which equally there is a mystic, subtle and full order of the individual too, then you will, by dint of your pursuit, be driven to such situations and courses by which your complex nature will get more and more of refinement and enrichment every time. *Thus, the seeker will never have, whatever the developments be, anything like an adverse fate.* What seems to be adverse will be not so, when studied in the light of its impact, especially in the context of his seeking and its fulfillment.

I always quote these few lines of an English poem (from Ralph Waldo Trine's book) to govern this line of thinking, which the true seeker must cherish to preserve:

*Asleep, awake, by night or day
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can draw my bark astray
Or change the tide of destiny!
I make no haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace;
I stand amid eternal ways, and
What is mine shall know my face.
The stars come nightly to the sky*

*The tidal waves unto the sea;
So flows the good with equal law
Unto the soul of pure delight.*

Trying to dabble with things, events and persons in an effort to find the right type of friends is perhaps the usual line. Do not be frantic like that. Let the franticness be dissolved in your own mind. Rather than playing and erring in the external situations, better allow the fight and choice-making to be over in the invisible part of your person, where there is no chance for mistake. It will all be a thought-process, emotion-process, debate-process, ending up in the outcome of calm after the storm. The objective outside consequences are avoided, and elaborate processes of search and seek, missing and rediscovering, etc. are also avoided. Let the whole process be done through the mind within, whereby you remain reassuring yourself about the rhythm of life earmarked for the seeking and elevated minds.

Rather than seeking out the friends you need, let the real friends come out of Providence's hiding and reach themselves out to you. And whatever delays occur in the course of this development, bear them patiently.

Then there is the psychological law, by which is governed the seeker's inner prosperity and fulfillment. That law says that as long as you mean to look for the pure delight – the delight that comes from the pure source, in a pure, non-harming manner – then the good things to encourage and lead you to your destination will perforce come to you, as do the waves and stars in their turn in their respective places at the appointed times.

In the pure delight, in its search and efforts, we do not cross with the others, do not compete with others. We do not deny another what is due to him in a bid to gain a favour for ourselves. Naturally, by the

very nature of it, the course and process are quite intricate. You should be patient enough to allow enough time and delays to the Providence to work things out and get you where you should be.

Dear ..., I want you to look into the whole life of yours – the age from which you have your memory – in this light and see whether you have any complaints to make about anything that happened any time. Naturally, now also you have verily nothing to be complaining about. Open your heart and mind in wisdom, in humility, in pious resignation and resolve to find out that by the very law of Nature, you have been passing through whatever you should have passed through. Every development was in time, propitious, and most effective for your welfare and well-being. Or else, why should anything have taken place? Partly your obstinacy demanded it, partly your derision warranted it, partly the false and misplaced values needed all this for their own correction.

Now it is for you to think and convince yourself that whatever has taken place is ultimately for your own good. How this good comes about, has come about, and how in its absence you would not have been happy, will all become clear. The line of developments from now on will also be to your good.

Neither Nature, nor the bare elements, nor the Almighty has any animosity towards you (though you may have towards them, not knowing what they are and what you are in relation to them). Being so, why should any of them punish you, victimize you at any time? Whatever hindrances or delays or failures took place, it is for some inevitable reason. The reason may lie in the objective facts or situations, in the personal circle of yours, or those with whom you have got allied in one way or another. And Nature, if at all, tries to get you to the path of elevation in spite of all these adverse factors encircling your life. And you can only be grateful to Nature and Her

masterliness in handling you.

In short, it should always be an unflinching note of optimism, confidence, hope and a sense of being protected that should nourish your mind, and be cherished in all situations. You may fall, meaning, slip from the branch of a tree which you have climbed to a great height. Following the slip, your body may have lost its hold, and you will even be on the path of falling fast. But just before striking the earth, you may be held up either by the unseen hands of Providence, or the seen branch of the same tree, thereby preventing a disaster. The system of Divinity is intricate, indeed, very much so.

Now sit, dear ..., reflect and determine whether in the present fate and crisis of yours, you and your relatives have not stood to benefit, and enlightened in every way, with every event. Welcome therefore whatever has come about, and equally open your heart and mind to accept heartily whatever will come from now on. In accepting them all with confidence, clarity and determination lies the evolution. Allow Nature to work and allow things to happen, governed by the law of righteousness alone, not by your preference or prejudice. Remain reconciled at heart and mind, and live in that reconciliation. Under this general note of acceptance and conviction all day-to-day events will then look after themselves.

Love and *Sivasis*,

Yours

Swamiji

1980

Respected Swamiji,

I am thankful to you for your kind letter dated 23rd containing your blessings.

*Regarding the book from which I quoted last time, I had read only the **Dhyana** portion and I have not read the whole book. The book explained the exact experience I get while I am in **Dhyana**. I had no other use of that book. Now to make myself very clear I shall try to narrate in my own way.*

*I have been using the same **mantra** you so kindly gave me a few years back. After repeating the **mantra** with concentration for some time, it disappears. After that there is stillness and no thought and effort. There is also the joy, which I am of late, ignoring. You have explained this in your II Volume. 'Brahma Vidya Abhyasa' Pages 55, 58 (pleasure seeking is bad etc.) and 63. I am seeking at least **Savikalpa Samadhi** in this life alone. Hence, for long and several times, each day, I meditate.*

*On page 64, under the head 'The Ideal State' – in the 2nd paragraph you have said "The mind becomes '**nischala**' due to the power of **viveka** and the effort at meditation." It is to describe this **nischala**- "no thought" and "no effort" state I get into, I quoted from that book, because I wanted to emphasise on the point "no effort" is involved when I get to the **nischala** and "no thought state". It used to be for one second, a few seconds, and now the **nischala** state lasts for a few minutes-how many minutes, I cannot gauge. When I get back to 'thought' state, on repetition of **Mantra** with **ekagrata** (concentration) I go back to the **nischala** state. So to emphasise again, in that stillness state, there is no effort at all-(there is effort when I do '**dharana**' and '**dhyana**' to be in '**ekagrata**' on the mantra) and suddenly it becomes effortless and I get into the "effortless" state and **Mantra** also disappears at that time, to re-appear in a few minutes, may be five*

minutes and sometimes even more.

Now I am eager to know if I have made progress enough to justify the hours of practice every day.

If my questions merit an answer, I will be grateful for your valued opinion and advice.

I am happy to know from your kind letter also, that Mataji liked my place and people. She must have felt that my house is like an ashram, which, in a way it is. You may like this place if you manage to find time to come. I can arrange for your speeches.

Asking for your blessings, I remain,

Your humble pupil,

...

Dear and blessed ...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 29th to hand.

I could not reply you right then, for somehow my being was feeling quite indifferent for the past few days, and writing to you meant some definite time. Even now the indifference continues, and I am trying to see how it fares in the wake of writing this out. To feel indifferent like this is natural for one like me. The spell implies a state of stillness and non-action on the part of the mind, consciousness. That is the condition to which the inside is led by meditation and *sadhana* by *sadhakas*, even in your case, in a way.

I shall give you some clarity, for you to introspect upon.

By means of the unbroken *vritti* (thought, meaning the *Mantra*) the

mind gets free of its multiple *vritti*-involvement and then gets dissolved into a peculiar state of stillness. Viewed as stillness, it is a state of the mind. But a still-mind is not mind at all, for mentation-the function of the mind, denotes activity, thoughts. To be non-thinking is to be non-mental as well. If this is the case, why describe meditation and its fruition as a state at all? Any state is a becoming of that about which you say 'state'. Walking is a state of our legs and feet, sitting is also another state of the same limbs. Opening and closing of the mouth are states of the mouth.

So you should be able to understand and interpret meditation as not a state of the mind, but as something else. What is that something else, of which meditation becomes a definite expression? In meditational fruition, the mind goes into nought, non-existence as in deep sleep. Can there be a total nought, in you, while you are yet alive? In fact, nowhere at no time is there anything like extinction, total and absolute. X disappears all right, but the process does not result in total absence of everything including X. While X becomes absent, something must be present. Think.

If the mind in you becomes still, and there the mentation-for which we give the name 'mind' - gets absent, then find out what else in you becomes active. What is that other factor in the strong presence of which the mind or mentation becomes absent, gets suspended? Study the phenomenon in the language of this other factor and not of the mind. This attempt will take you to the comprehension of that 'thing' other than the mind. And that alone is the search for the Self, the non-mind entity.

So your purpose should not so much, now, be to quieten the mind - you have already done it - but to alert yourself to the existence of the non-mind existence in you.

The stuff that is in the body, other than the materiality, making the body alive, active, sensing etc. is just one. That is the thing which gives rise to the so called mind and mentation, and that alone leads the meditation to a state of suspense in mentation.

As the gross and solid things are seen by the senses (eyes, etc.) this body-different substance can only be apprehended by your understanding. Understanding is the power of consciousness. Using consciousness you have to get nearer and nearer to this inward existence, different from the body, and glimpse it AS IT IS. It is like going near an oven where firewood was burning all along, but having burnt the firewood, the flames receded, the ashes on the firewood lie concealing the glow. When you take your palm nearer, you will feel the heat, but no fire will be seen because of the ashes. But the heat indicates there is still the presence of fire.

Similarly, you have to go nearer, inside the body, to the inmost presence, every time feeling its presence by its own property. The property is partly awareness, partly something more. Mind you, we are discussing about 'something' which is totally incomparable with whatever we know. This incomparability must be the clue for the seeker. Using it, search, seek, feel, try to comprehend, until at last the subject becomes clear.

Do you feel you are striking at something positively during the meditative stillness? If so, what is that something? Can you grasp it distinctly, in its own light, background and property? Does the finding tally with whatever you have understood about the Self? Is the finding and tallying together giving you the surety and consolation, doubt-freeness, fulfilling and consummating your quest? The answers have an everlasting effect, and they have to be repeatedly taken up for one's own consideration and answering.

So leave the words like 'mind becomes quiet and still'. Start using different words, which will tend to denote what other things and expressions are there. *The description will be opposed to the mind and comparable to the Reality. If it is so, you are ascending in the horizon of wisdom and realization.*

Does my summarization make sense? Read, think, reflect upon and let me know if you want anything more. Otherwise, this is enough for the time being.

I have heard more from Mataji about everything in that region, in your house in particular. Very good. This letter largely is also for your wife. So please tell her I remember her very well, and Mataji has a lot of good words to say about her responsible temper and behaviour and tradition-oriented outlook and management.

Love and *Sivasis* to you both.

Yours

Swamiji

1980

Revered Swamiji,

Jai Gurudev! Pranams.

I received your affectionate letter of 5th April and also the first copy of Vicharasetu. Your article on "Knowledge Part II" is very enlightening. I passed on this copy to my friend Dr ..., for reading and benefit. You are a superb Saint, the like of which I have not met in my life. I, indeed, love and adore you. There are others like Paramahansa Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Lahiri Mahashaya and Swami Yoganandaji, whose lives I have read and who have greatly influenced my life. But they all lived before I was born. Among all the living Saints I take liberty to approach you from time to time for some answers. I hope you will reply directly (not philosophically).

Q.1. I (or my body) suffer from fall of hair from all over the body and it has not been cured in spite of treatment by renowned doctors. Why is this disease incurable? Why did Ramakrishna suffer from cancer? Was it of his making? Why after getting knowledge he lived with a sick body? If he did not desire, I at least desire. To what extent "Self-Knowledge" can cure physical ailments?

Q.2. Is it that knowledge of the Self is meant only for better "human behaviour" and a free state of mind, to enjoy peace and tranquility within and it remains ineffective to solve many of life's problems? With proper attitude of mind you can live with the problem. Or is one utterly helpless? It is not a funeral of day-to-day problems!

Q.3. Our Scriptures are totally silent about creatures other than Man. Is their's only an un-intelligent existence and further their helplessness, by being eaten by the so-called intelligent Man?

Q.4. So many people die of starvation or are killed by dictators. Is this their own creation? How?

Q.5. *What is clairvoyance and telepathy? Is all that is written on these achievements true or false? To what extent can it solve world's problems? Do you possess these powers? If so, why don't you reveal them at least amongst your devotees!*

My letter, though silly, is of a very personal nature. I hope you will clarify my doubts. On many previous occasions you have preferred to reserve your opinion on the so-called "Miracle Men". I hope, if time is ripe now, you will kindly explain. With kind regards. You will forgive me for such silly doubts.

Your Own,

...

Dear and blessed child,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of the 4th May to hand. I read it then and there in full, and knew what it would be to give you a reply. Obviously I needed time. Also my nature is under an indifferent spell for weeks now. The association with the world arouses a variety of sentiments and emotions. And "indifference" is also a definite one, the most beneficial and perhaps the ultimate it can produce, especially in one with *Viveka* (discrimination). In the indifference-adorned individual, the mind-functions cease as will in *Samadhi*, the intelligence remains undisturbing again as in *Samadhi*. That is the fruition, then, spiritual *sadhana* brings about.

Now, to give you the reply you need, I will need to write quite a few paragraphs. Let me attempt.

Disease, by its very nature, is a sequel to the violations which take place during the course of living, knowingly or unknowingly. Disorders, on the other hand, may be organic, congenital and also acquired as in accidents, fights, sports, etc. Like day and night,

ingoing and outgoing breath, these will coexist with health.

Now-a-days we are discussing so much about atmospheric and sound pollution. Are these not new developments, man made, which will surely result in an additional variety of health problems? So diseases will be as complex as the living is. Understand this definitely.

When diseases first arose in human beings as in animals, some of them got cured by themselves as a Natural course. But a great many remained uncured, or incurable. What does this mean? Except those which our system can easily cure by its own survival mechanisms, all other diseases become a subject matter for mankind to deal with and redress.

The number of incurable diseases was very large in the early days of mankind. The situation called for systematic efforts to search and discover their causes and remedies. To understand the diseases – the why and what for of them – and on that basis evolve effective cures, was certainly given to man. At every stage in life, we begin with Nature's gifts, and then develop our own creations using them more and more. Even now, there are diseases for which cure has to be evolved by us. And as long as we are not able to find remedies, these will continue to haunt our health.

The course is exactly like incidents coupled with accident, regularity beset with irregularity, remembrance intertwined with forgetfulness. This is the way Nature works. In our country, leprosy is still wild, whereas in the European countries, it has been eradicated.

Body is a biological complex, an outcome of biochemical, biophysical – say bio-psychic – processes. These processes imply the existence of various physical and chemical substances with their respective properties. They belong to the ken of matter and energy. Naturally, they are governed by their own laws and reactive potentials. If there

is irregularity or disorder in these bio-chemical sequences, the condition calls for a bio-chemical or bio-physical treatment. Is it not just obvious?

That is why for diseases and disorders, you find medical people and surgeons administering medical-biochemical and surgico-physical remedies. And generally they are not spiritual people. If spiritual redress alone is the need, how can doctors effect their cures? So dear child, understand diseases and challenges of health to be purely in the material-sphere, a biochemical question. It has nothing to do with spirituality or Self-knowledge. The sphere of matter is ruled by matter-related laws, and the sphere of the mind is ruled by the mind-laws. Of course, the mind and matter are, in the final depths, so closely inter-allied that both have a peculiar relationship, defying complete assessment.

So the trouble you report, like any other disease or disorder, is completely due to a biochemical or physical malfunctioning. The cause may be pre-natal, post-natal or even para-natal. Quite possibly it is due to the reaction of material substances or factors in the material part of your being, namely the body. As long as the chemical or biological cause is not discovered, the condition will continue to prevail. It has nothing to do with your spiritual interests, dedication or otherwise. It is no reflection of your bad spiritual currents. Suppose we have only contaminated air to breathe, the atmosphere is so polluted, is it an individual creation? And will you blame the individual for the plight?

To attribute all this to spiritual causes and then hope for spiritual relief is not sound sense at all. Look at the massive research in medicine going on in the world at the government level or corporate level. All this indicates that the challenge to bodily health is a situation to be handled by purely material, chemical measures. Being

so, why are you relating your disorder to spiritual seeking, its inefficiency or ineffectiveness, or suggesting that through spiritual efforts the disorder should be removed? Think how far is the proposal meaningful.

At the same time, there are instances in which apparently incurable conditions of the body have found amazing reliefs by seemingly spiritual steps. One of our devotees had a kind of swelling on the body. Several doctors examined and studied the condition and finally said the patient himself will have to find out what preceded the development and what exactly could be the cause for it. And ultimately, with the entry into the spiritual path and initiation to Brahma-vidya, the trouble disappeared once and for all. I have nothing to say specially about this, nor do I expect the patient to report anything miraculous.

Some diseases are a result and outcome of mind-disturbances, called *aadhees* in Sanskrit. Those *vyaadhees* (diseases) resulting from *aadhees* will find relief when the mind's disharmonies are redressed, for which spiritual pursuit helps the best. Again, the ultimate truth is that from the *mind substance* alone, through its powers obvious as well as implied, the body with, its different organs is formed, using the biochemical and physical constituents found in nature. As such, the mind-substance can work wonders on the body, especially in distressing situations where there is no other source of correction. But the measure and kind of distress, to determine whether it is one to be looked after providentially by the mind-substance, will have to be left choicelessly by us to what -? I don't know! You cannot say that here is a situation for Providence, and therefore let Him set it right.

Providence will cease to be providential, if it were to listen to the seeker's prayer at the time and in the manner he specifies himself. Surrender is surrender, acceptance is acceptance. There is a clear

difference between your surrendering, expecting that by that your need will be honoured; and the surrendering prompted by the feeling that, that alone is the right step before you – knowing fully well that 'I don't know, nor do I want to know; my cause fulfils itself in making the surrender.' Dear child, there is great difference between the first and the second course. In the second, you are not surrendering, but taking in a treatment. All right, like some treatments, it may be abortive as well!

To interpret Self-knowledge as anything more than subjective, spiritual, is basically wrong. You seek to know the Self because by that knowledge you propose to keep the disturbance-prone mind steady and stable. The need for Self-realization is there because of the chaotic situation of life. To withstand the onslaught of the chaos is the knowledge sought. Nothing except Self-knowledge will give the steadiness and surety you need. The *taapatrayam* (miseries caused by the body, by the world, by strange agencies in a strange manner) are sought to be eliminated by Self-knowledge. This does not mean that the disease will be cured, but that the misery of mind due to the impact of the disease – like for instance the misery of one like you in the present trouble – will be relieved. Will not the Self-realized saint have a body subject to aging and greying? Will not his teeth fall? Will he not pant while negotiating a climb? Diseases too are a feature co-existing with health. Out of the so many factors which compel seeking of Self-knowledge, bodily fates and challenges are also one, a strong one too. For another, it may be the flimsy and agitated state of the mind. For yet others, it may be the need for intellectual clarity and decision.

Your Question. 2-- So, Self-knowledge does not mean the 'burial of the problems of life', and therefore their elimination; but it does mean the progressive and even full ineffectiveness of the problems. We use a word 'dissolution' of the problems. A problem is a problem for the

problematic state it creates in the mind or intelligence. For a Knower, the problematic state will not be there in the mind. The better understanding and interpretation will be:

Emotionally, the mind is victimized by three basic traits *raaga*, *doesha* and *bhaya*. The knowledge of Self eliminates these and makes the mind free from their torturous, painful effects. All diseases of the mind are caused by these three germs. A state of fulfillment of desires, a sense of freedom from all forms of miseries, and freedom from spiritual, worldly and the other-worldly fears; these indeed are the ultimate benefits of Self-realization.

'Ah, why should I have this fate?', 'Should this not be the other way?', 'Is this the symptom of being fortunate?' Does this tally with holiness?' 'How can this be the evidence of fulfillment?' - questions and cravings of these kinds denote discontent thriving in the heart and mind. Such discontent will find its dissolution by Self-knowledge. Rather, as long as the least note of discontent prevails in the seeker, his knowledge is not full and steady, and his purpose is not accomplished. In Vivekachoodamani, you have the best illustration:

Does the one, woken from dream, continue to pursue the pleasurable or painful events or actions which occurred in dream? Does he continue to run away from the tiger that frightened him in dream; or bemoan the loss of his relative, as witnessed in dream?

In fact, the test of having woken up is the cessation of his association with dream and its phenomena! Is it not? You can test your own mind by applying this standard.

The laws under which the body is born and is thriving are the same for both, the Self-knower and the non-knower. The blood from a non-knower can be transfused to the body of a Knower, and vice versa.

This instance proves the sameness of the two bodies. The minds of both make all the difference. The laws of the body are begotten of Nature and ruled by same Nature. And the Knower's intention at every time is to be in close harmony with the Creator's laws about Creation. The Knower will never try to wrestle with these laws at all. To think of doing so - to wrestle - will be to admit a basic contradiction, a self-imposed doubt, discontent and challenge. The moment such a situation prevails, is allowed to be, the harmony the Knower aimed at all long, will fail miserably. A desire of any kind, a resentment of any kind, a fear of any kind is repugnant to Wisdom. The emergence of any of these will only give further and further opportunity to the Knower to examine his own position and try to eliminate the repugnant growth or prevalence with greater care. Thus his thoughts will not be 'why this disease came to be', as if it was not to be there! On the other hand 'in the presence of this condition, why is the mind losing its stability; where recedes the basic Self-wisdom and the task belonging to it?' Do you, my dear boy, get the line of this thinking properly?

Look at the situation from another angle. The Creator is all-glorious. His powers are supreme. With all that, what you see and live with is the situation His world has to present before mankind! That means, His worth or power is only to arouse this miserable condition! Well, being so, what does He think about it, in His own mind? Is it either to His liking, or is it something He cannot redress? In either case, what will be His mind's reaction? If his creation's mind thinks this way, what will His do?

The answers you cull out can as well apply, or must, to your questions about the Knower too! Ill-health, abnormal features, etc. are in the very progressive nature of things, and so there is no question of deducing any disorder or contradiction about them; the phenomenon is not to be interpreted in the way you, and several others do. The

truth lies still beyond, or in between.

What do you say about the frog struggling and wailing, held mercilessly, firmly in the mouth of a snake? Again, the smaller sized lion leaping upon the huge elephant, slapping and clawing him on his weak spot cruelly, putting him to death! Whose is the will or wish in the matter? How will you assimilate these sights and enmities?

So the ultimate answer is a full zero about any question! The last and consummate purpose of any world-thought, a discussion about the world's fate or Nature is to take away from the seeker's mind all forms of discontent and opposition, taking into account anything for the purpose. That is the attitude called indifference. In the Upanishads and the like, to generate indifference (*nirveda*) an infinite variety of contradictions are displayed forcefully before us. Beauty will create attraction, cruelty will evoke resentment. But beauty juxtaposed with cruelty, more so in the background of innocence or unanswerable plight, is the sight which will arouse the right measure of indifference. Until the indifference is generated and preserved, our mind would only remain a worldly product, to suffer like anything else created in the world and tossed about by Nature's laws.

I think I have said enough. The writing may be disjointed due to lack of time. Set it right in your own mind.

In the 13th chapter of Gita, *Jnana* or wisdom is described as a set of virtues and practices. The intention is that only in the presence of these virtues, Self-knowledge will shine. Or, the knowledge of Self is virtually the prevalence of these tenets and practices. Of the things listed, there is one which reads: 'The constant perception of misery and evil in *janma* (birth), *mrityu* (death), *jara* (old age), *vyadhi* (disease), in everything of the world especially the sentient beings.' What does this imply? Diseases, about which you have raised your question, are

a sure feature of the world, and perceiving them constantly as a menace to worldly life conduces to the germination and growth of Wisdom. Is disease then helpful or not?

As long as the world is there, its several traits are inevitable. If the body prevails, its diseases also will. Neither all will have the same disease nor will it be likely there is one free of any disease. To question any disease as pestering any one, as if it were particularly a sinful fate, is a contradiction in the very thinking, religious thinking of one. What you call in religion as 'sin' is, viewed spiritually, an inevitable worldly trait, bodily trait, social trait, or economic outcome.

Your Question. 3- Creation encompasses extremes. As we see it, it ranges from the highest form of sentience to the lowest form of insentience. Animals and birds also have their place in between the extremes. Obviously, they are what they are. To the extent their senses and powers permit, they also take shelter and protection. Snake does not, cannot make a hole for itself, it has no capacity. So it uses the holes made by others, or made naturally. Birds do travel seasonally thousands of miles. They have their methods of avoiding mating, adopting measures in their own ways to suit their needs, avoid dangers, etc. To the extent their abilities permit, they do make use of them. Nothing more is to be construed. You have to be guided by what you see obviously. Deductions can be wild, also be validly real. In making them real, lies effectiveness.

The irony is that with their own levels of sentience, they are sometimes even better off than men with higher sentience! For instance, (this example is not clear in its purport) what do you think of a patient in the last stages of rabies? He is kept in a dark room, and doctors and relatives keep themselves at a safe distance. Even children are denied to go near the father, if he is the victim. Are not the animals equally fated? What is hydrophobia or other such

condition to men, is perhaps the general fate of these animals. There is no clear difference at all.

Your Question. 4. Starvation death and dictators' rule, etc.: An individual does not and cannot live all alone. He lives in a society. The conditions of the society surround him practically in every walk of life. These days we travel comfortably and fast in vehicles invented and developed by technology. But in the earlier times, modes of travel were very bad and slow. There are so many accidents and deaths taking place on journeys now. Are they not a kind of technological dictatorship? When technology rules, it becomes dictatorial in its tyrannies. Starvations, dictatorial rules, are all part of the social set up.

Likewise, in the political or administrative sphere, there is every chance to become victimized. In one sense, mechanical electronic failure takes place. In another case, psychological failures or maladjustments take place. The cause is machine on one hand and mind, the psychic machine on the other. The outcomes are parallel. These are in the very nature of things. Starvation can be an economic outcome, result of mal-distribution of wealth by those who assume power over wealth; or can be due to natural disharmonies like bad weather, etc. In that case, Earth's seasons fail! Is it not? Besides individual factors of the body and mind, that govern our life, there are social, political, economic, agricultural and technological factors too. Each has its own influence and domain, which sometimes proves catastrophic. The situation cannot be helped. As with the failure of the seasons, we have to accept these as well.

Question No. 5. Clairvoyance and telepathy – the question simplified, will be "Can we see, except through the normal external eyes, governed by the usual laws of vision? Can we hear except through the organs called ears? In other words, to see colours and objects, and hear sound can we do without the biological eyes and ears?"

The basic and complete answer is given by Nature through the dream experience of ours. In the dream, everything including the body and its organs is created suddenly, with no external help, by the supra-material mind – Mind that is subtle, spiritual, and not governed by the material laws at all. Again, it is the *mind substance* (not the mind, mind you!) and power that gives shape to the body within the womb, including all organs, ears, eyes as well. So, why should one doubt the capability to see without the eyes, hear without ears, etc.?

But will these phenomena be common for all of mankind? No, it has not been. Can these be acquired systematically? Yes, is the answer which the science of Yoga gives. However I don't deal with the so called Yoga science, as it has not been found of much use to the type of people that come to me.

But Patanjali, who has dealt with the subject rather exhaustively – and whom we can take as the first and last authority so far on the subject – has said that different types of meditation done with objects of the universe like the moon, internal and external objects - as a point or place of imagination either inside the body or outside on the body itself – pursued intentionally will bestow upon the practitioner these powers. The types of meditation and aids are mentioned in his text. Whether any one has practised them in the way Patanjali has said and with what results, I don't know. Nor am I interested to know these.

The powers, not necessarily clairvoyance – maybe a vague semblance of it – or clairaudience, which individuals report, if true, are not acquired by them by consistent practice, but somehow had by them spontaneously. The gift is generally attributed to the merit accrued to them in the past lives. Evidently, they cannot say anything useful about the merit or its operative process. I do not deal with anything like this. On the other hand, I have always thought of avoiding any intrusions in my mind or life, by agencies whose existence and

operation cannot be properly known or assessed. So even if any spiritual powers wanted themselves to bless or curse me, I have disallowed them sternly, for the uselessness and emptiness they hold within. So your question about my having powers like these is answered.

However, there is one power distinctly, and perhaps a few others indistinctly, which are to my liking. By dint of this I propose to interact with others, remaining always unconquerable to their minds and conquering, perhaps, theirs. Making the seeker's mind disappear and withdraw into its own source of origin; making it, when awakened, reflect pure wisdom and delight unharmingly, making them illumined and become themselves 'Masters and Teachers' in due course` has been my mission! Some devotees have alleged mystic powers in me. Dr. Subramaniam of Jamshedpur did mention once, in answer to a sudden question from me, 'Swamiji does have some powers!' To this date I have not asked him, nor have I known what specific powers he meant, that day! You may ask him or the others at Jamshedpur, who have moved with me closely for several years now. I am interested in the replies you get, if anything.

Lastly, I want to say that you, like many others, are mixing up God with what does not go with Him, interpreting Godliness in a manner which does not go with Godliness. God is used and sought for Godly and mind's purposes, not for curing diseases or setting right the biochemistry of the body. Body being born of food and chemical substances, biological and chemical laws alone rule it. For the rules of chemistry are also generated and preserved by the root God. Will Godliness violate its own previous laws? Then why does God at times seem to favour and alter the physical situations in life? That is because faith, a product of the mind and Mind-substance, from which indeed all chemical and physical constituents have been born, sometimes acts upon matter for a reason and in a manner which

remains rather abstruse. The effect is taken into account and praised, like the empirical drugs, whose ultimate effect is not scientifically known, yet the efficacy is seen in actual experience!

In the world, all incidents cannot always be known fully. That is the nature of creation. That is how the Upanishads describe phenomena as inexplicable. Whatever is argued and established, the truth is that we begin first and end last with the mystic creation and the mystic Creator, and vice versa. This fundamental feature will always remain unassailable.

I think you should guide your thoughts and conclusions on these facts and truths. Thinking can be progressive as also retrogressive. To make it progressive is the true effective role of the seeker.

Love and *Sivasis*, let me stop for the time being.

Swamiji

1980

Respected Swamiji,

I am giving you my personal details below:

With a brilliant academic career, having completed my Ph.D thesis from I.I.T. Kharagpur, recently I have joined this Plant and am posted at the mines. I am a native of Bankura district of West Bengal. I am of 28 years age and unmarried. By nature, I am simple, soft, sober with high ideals and moral values. During my academic life I maintained high hopes, guided by reason and ethical values, was isolated when I grew as an individual. I always dream high, above average, for me as well as for my incoming generations (premature thinking) and act in terms of that to build up a fine generation by Self-rise.

Now, after coming to this industrial and practical life, I feel insecure. I feel all my ambitions and dreams are going to fail. I am gradually entering a mechanised, routine type of life like the other millions. This environment and society is not going to be accepted by my mind. I am unhappy and mentally worried, uncomfortable.

Please advise me.

With due regards,

Yours faithfully,...

Dear and blessed Soul ...,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Your letter of 18th to hand. Your ambitious life, following which you say you are in an incompatible industrially oriented society, and hence the consequent depressing notes your mind is driven to, all are noted. And now, you seek a valid, practical redress.

O.K. My dear boy, this is nothing new or unwelcome. Nor is it anything extraordinary, taking into account the mental structure you have portrayed about yourself. Academic career is only to equip you with the right knowledge and insight to meet and pursue the actual life-situations that follow. If the insight or ambition fostered earlier does not fit in with the present situation, all that is called for is a patient re-examination of your own mind and its outlook, and then a timely orientation, by which your mind will survive with what is the best and outstanding in it.

In fact, dear boy, does not actual life-pursuit mean this growth and promotion? If the previous phase of yours was academic in nature, the present is actualistic and professional in nature. That is all the difference.

The right and progressive thinking for you now, will be:

The situation before me being what it is, my mind and upbringing being what they were, they are, how best can I be effective, and yet fulfill my objectives? The situation I am not going to alter, nor is it needed. By my mind, I shall build, rebuild, nourish, strengthen and improve to fuse into itself the past and the present closely well. Am I prevented from this in any way? Well, what more is to be learnt by me now, by which this new challenge will be met, and effectiveness now and success later can be achieved?

Dear boy, never lose heart. There will be no loss for you at all. What looks gloomy really contains promises of sustained growth and fruition. Be prepared for it, and start the new outlook at the earliest. Let me know, what further you need from me for this venture. With love and ashis, yours in Truth & Beauty,

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