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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE MOTHER AND THE PURPOSE OF HER EMBODIMENT (Some Answers from Sri Aurobindo)

WHO IS THE MOTHER?

Q: Do you not refer to the Mother (our Mother) in your book, “The Mother”?

A: Yes.

Q: Is she not the “Individual” Divine Mother who has embodied “the power of these two vaster ways of her existence” — Transcendent and Universal?

A: Yes.

Q: Has she not descended here (amongst us) into the Darkness and Falsehood and Error and Death in her deep and great love for us?

A: Yes.

17-8-1938

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Q: There are many who hold the view that she was human but now embodies the Divine Mother and her “Prayers”¹, they say, explain this view. But, to my mental conception, to my psychic feeling, she is the Divine Mother who has consented to put on her the cloak of obscurity and suffering and ignorance so that she can effectively lead us — human beings — to Knowledge and Bliss and Ananda and to the Supreme Lord.

A: The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing divine consciousness, not human turning into divine. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood, so the view held by “many” is erroneous.

1. *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*

Q: I also conceive that the Mother's "Prayers" are meant to show us — the aspiring psychic — how to pray to the Divine.

A: Yes.

17-8-1938

THE MOTHER'S MANIFESTATION AND THE SUPRAMENTAL DESCENT

Q: Is there any difference between the Mother's manifestation and the descent of the Supramental?

A: The Mother comes in order to bring down the Supramental and it is the descent which makes her full manifestation here possible.

23-9-1935

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Q: The Mother does not work on the Sadhak directly from her own plane above, though she can do so if she wants to — she can even supramentalise the world in a day, but in that case the supramental Nature created here would be the same as it is above, and not the earth in Ignorance evolving into the supramental earth, a manifestation which will not be in appearance quite the same as what the Supermind is.

A: That is a very important truth.

17-6-1935

PURPOSE OF THE MOTHER'S EMBODIMENT

Q: Am I right in thinking that she as an individual embodies all the Divine Powers and brings down the Grace more and more to the physical plane, and her embodiment is a chance for the entire physical consciousness to change and be transformed?

A: Yes. Her embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a further transformation by the Supramental, but the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised — there will be first a

new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind.

13-8-1933

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There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here — it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine.

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There are not many Mothers, there is One in many forms. The transcendental is only one aspect of the Mother. I don't know what is meant by the embodied aspect of the transcendental Mother. There is the embodied aspect of the One Mother — what she manifests through it depends on herself.

7-7-1936

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Q: Why does the Mother in her universal action act according to the law of things, but in her embodied physical by constant Grace?

A: It is the work of the Cosmic Power to maintain the cosmos and the law of the cosmos. The greater transformation comes from the Transcendent above the universal, and it is that transcendent Grace which the embodiment of the Mother is there to bring into action.

13-8-1933

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Q: What would you say about the utility of the physical approach to the Mother?

A: There is the utility of the physical approach to the Mother — the approach of the embodied mind and vital to her embodied Power. In her universal action the Mother acts according to the law of things — in her embodied physical action is the opportunity of a constant Grace — it is for that that the embodiment takes place.

12-8-1933

DIFFERENT APPEARANCES OF THE MOTHER

The Mother has many different personalities and her appearance varies according as one or another predominates. The something common, of course, exists. There is first, the one whom all these personalities manifest but that cannot be expressed in name or word — there is also the supramental personality which from behind the veil presides over the aim of the present manifestation.

9-11-1933

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The Mother has not only one appearance, but many at different times.

Behind the physical body there are many forms and powers and personalities of the Mother.

14-5-1933

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Q: Two days back I saw in a vision that the fire of aspiration was rising from my heart and going upward with the constant remembrance of the Mother. Then I saw that the Mother, as we see her in her physical body, was descending in the fire and filling all my parts with peace and strength. What does this vision indicate? Why did I see the Mother exactly as we see her in her physical body and not in her divine form?

A: It indicates an aspiration and an action for realisation in the external nature and not only in the inner being. When it is an inner action or an action of another plane one can see the Mother in any of her forms, but for realisation in the physical her appropriate form is that which she wears here.

15-7-1933

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Q: Why does the Mother appear different at different times, as at Pranam or Prosperity or while giving the interview? Sometimes even anatomical differences are visible. What is the reason of these differences in her appearance? Does it depend on the extent to which she turns outwards?

A: It is rather, I think, dependent on the personality that manifests in front — as she has many personalities and the body is plastic enough to express something of each when it comes forward.

4-12-1933

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Q: Often when I see the Mother I feel as if she is the image of divine Ananda and her form looks like that of a young girl. Is there any truth in my feeling?

A: Ananda is not the only thing — there is Knowledge and Power and Love and many other powers of the Divine. As a special experience only it may stand.

30-4-1933

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Yes. Many see like that, as if the Mother were taller than her ordinary physical appearance.

29-9-1933

REVELATION OF THE MOTHER'S COMING

Q: When Ramakrishna was doing Sadhana, Mother was on earth physically for the first eight years of her childhood, from 1878 to 1886. Did he know that Mother had come down? He must have had some vision at least of her coming, but we do not read anywhere definitely about it.

And when Ramakrishna must have been intensely calling Mother, she must have felt something at that age.

A: In Mother's childhood's visions she saw myself whom she knew as "Krishna" — she did not see Ramakrishna.

It was not necessary that he should have a vision of her coming down as he was not thinking of the future nor consciously preparing for it. I don't think he had the idea of any incarnation of the Mother.

11-7-1935

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I don't say on what plane X is, but his method is that of Adwaita Knowledge and Moksha — so there is no necessity for him to recognise the arrival of the Divine. Y's Guru was a *bhakta* of the Divine Mother, believed in the dynamic side of existence, so it was quite natural for him to have the revelation of the coming of the Mother.

23-1-1936

*

X is very much of a Vedantist. He does not believe in what we believe or in the descent etc. At the same time he himself had experiences in which the Mother interfered in a visible free material form and prevented him from doing what he intended to do.

7-7-1936

SEEING THE DIVINE IN THE MOTHER

Q: This morning I perceived a great beauty in the Mother. It was as if her whole body was glowing with a supernatural light. In fact I felt as if a Supreme Goddess had come down from the heavens above. Kindly explain that.

A: It was only that you felt the Divinity with her which is always there.

20-7-1933

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As for seeing the Divine in the Mother at first sight, he is not the only one to do that. Plenty of people have done that . . . e.g. X's cousin, a Musulman girl, who as soon as she met her declared, "This is not a woman, she is a goddess", and has been having significant dreams of her ever since, and whenever she is in trouble, thinks of her and gets helped out of the trouble. It is not so difficult to see the Divine in the Mother as you make it out to be.

23-7-1935

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Q: I don't know what the Musulman lady exactly saw. From what you say it seems to be a flash of intuition.

A: Not at all, it was a direct sense of the Godhead in her — for I suppose you mean by intuition a sort of idea that comes suddenly? That is what people usually understand by intuition. It was not that in her case nor in X's.

29-7-1935

*

Q: But is it not extremely difficult to see the fully flaming resplendent Divine Mother?

A: I don't believe X or anybody would have that at first view. That can only come if one has already developed the faculty of vision in the occult planes. What is of more importance is the clear perception or intimate inner feeling or direct sense, "This is She." I think you are inclined to be too romantic and poetic and too little spiritually realistic in these things.

With many people the faculty of this kind of occult vision is the first to develop when they begin Sadhana. With others it is there naturally or comes on occasions without any practice of Yoga. But with people who live mainly in the intellect (a few excepted) this faculty is not usually there by nature and most have much difficulty in developing it. It was so even with me.

It would be something of a miracle to see things without the faculty of seeing. We don't deal much in miracles of that kind.

29-7-1935

RECOGNITION OF THE MOTHER'S DIVINITY

There are people who start at once, others take time.

X recognised the Mother as divine at first sight and has been happy ever afterwards; others who rank among Mother's devotees took years to discover or admit it, but they arrived all the same. There are people who had nothing but difficulties and revolts for the first five, six, seven or more years of the Sadhana, yet the psychic ended by awaking. The time taken is a secondary matter: the one thing needful is — soon or late, easily or with difficulty, to get there.

*

Q: Many times I find that old Sanskaras come up and disturb my faith in the Mother and her divinity. How is it possible to prevent it?

A: It is only if you see the divinity of the Mother that there can be a settled conviction — that is a question of the inner consciousness and vision.

5-6-1937

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Q: How to convince the mind that Mother is divine and that her workings are not human?

A: It is by opening up the psychic and letting it rule the mind and vital that this can be done — because the psychic knows and can see what the mind cannot.

*

Q: It seems that part of my external being which was not accepting the Mother is now recognising her divinity. But why do I forget it when I physically come before her?

A: It is the physical mind in its most external action that sees physical things as only physical.

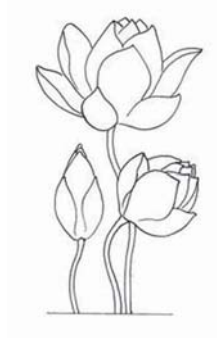
15-8-1937

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This struggle in you [between *bhakti* for Sri Krishna and the sense of the divinity of the Mother] is quite unnecessary; for the two things are one and go perfectly together. It is he who has brought you to the Mother and it is by adoration of her that you will realise him. He is here in the Ashram and it is his work that is being done here.

1933

(*The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, pp. 47-56)



BELIEF IN THE REALITY OF THE AVATARA

INDIA has from ancient times held strongly a belief in the reality of the Avatara, the descent into form, the revelation of the Godhead in humanity. In the West this belief has never really stamped itself upon the mind because it has been presented through exoteric Christianity as a theological dogma without any roots in the reason and general consciousness and attitude towards life. But in India it has grown up and persisted as a logical outcome of the Vedantic view of life and taken firm root in the consciousness of the race. All existence is a manifestation of God because He is the only existence and nothing can be except as either a real figuring or else a figment of that one reality. Therefore every conscious being is in part or in some way a descent of the Infinite into the apparent finiteness of name and form. But it is a veiled manifestation and there is a gradation between the supreme being¹ of the Divine and the consciousness shrouded partly or wholly by ignorance of self in the finite. The conscious embodied soul² is the spark of the divine Fire and that soul in man opens out to self-knowledge as it develops out of ignorance of self into self-being. The Divine also, pouring itself into the forms of the cosmic existence, is revealed ordinarily in an efflorescence of its powers, in energies and magnitudes of its knowledge, love, joy, developed force of being,³ in degrees and faces of its divinity. But when the divine Consciousness and Power, taking upon itself the human form and the human mode of action, possesses it not only by powers and magnitudes, by degrees and outward faces of itself but out of its eternal self-knowledge, when the Unborn knows itself and acts in the frame of the mental being and the appearance of birth, that is the height of the conditioned manifestation; it is the full and conscious descent of the Godhead, it is the Avatara.

The Vaishnava form of Vedantism which has laid most stress upon this conception expresses the relation of God in man to man in God by the double figure of Nara-Narayana, associated historically with the origin of a religious school very similar in its doctrines to the teaching of the Gita. Nara is the human soul which, eternal companion of the Divine, finds itself only when it awakens to that companionship and begins, as the Gita would say, to live in God. Narayana is the divine Soul always present in our humanity, the secret guide, friend and helper of the human being, the "Lord who abides within the heart of creatures" of the Gita; when within us the veil of that secret sanctuary is withdrawn and man speaks face to face with God, hears the divine voice, receives the divine light, acts in the divine power, then becomes

1. *para bhāva*.

2. *dehī*.

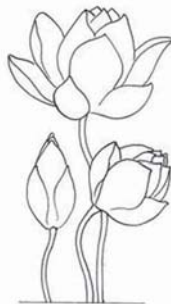
3. *vibhūti*.

possible the supreme uplifting of the embodied human conscious-being into the unborn and eternal. He becomes capable of that dwelling in God and giving up of his whole consciousness into the Divine which the Gita upholds as the best or highest secret of things, *uttamam rahasyam*. When this eternal divine Consciousness always present in every human being, this God in man, takes possession partly⁴ or wholly of the human consciousness and becomes in visible human shape the guide, teacher, leader of the world, not as those who living in their humanity yet feel something of the power or light or love of the divine Gnosis informing and conducting them, but out of that divine Gnosis itself, direct from its central force and plenitude, then we have the manifest Avatar. The inner Divinity is the eternal Avatar in man; the human manifestation is its sign and development in the external world.

When we thus understand the conception of Avatarhood, we see that whether for the fundamental teaching of the Gita, our present subject, or for spiritual life generally the external aspect has only a secondary importance. Such controversies as the one that has raged in Europe over the historicity of Christ, would seem to a spiritually-minded Indian largely a waste of time; he would concede to it a considerable historical, but hardly any religious importance; for what does it matter in the end whether a Jesus son of the carpenter Joseph was actually born in Nazareth or Bethlehem, lived and taught and was done to death on a real or trumped-up charge of sedition, so long as we can know by spiritual experience the inner Christ, live uplifted in the light of his teaching and escape from the yoke of the natural Law by that atonement of man with God of which the crucifixion is the symbol? If the Christ, God made man, lives within our spiritual being, it would seem to matter little whether or not a son of Mary physically lived and suffered and died in Judea. So too the Krishna who matters to us is the eternal incarnation of the Divine and not the historical teacher and leader of men.

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 13-15)

4. Chaitanya, the Avatar of Nadiya, is said to have been thus partly or occasionally occupied by the divine Consciousness and Power.



THE POSSIBILITY AND PURPOSE OF AVATARHOOD

. . . there are two aspects of the divine birth; one is a descent, the birth of God in humanity, the Godhead manifesting itself in the human form and nature, the eternal Avatar; the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead, man rising into the divine nature and consciousness, *madbhāvam āgataḥ*; it is the being born anew in a second birth of the soul. It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve. This double aspect in the Gita's doctrine of Avatarhood is apt to be missed by the cursory reader satisfied, as most are, with catching a superficial view of its profound teachings, and it is missed too by the formal commentator petrified in the rigidity of the schools. Yet it is necessary, surely, to the whole meaning of the doctrine. Otherwise the Avatar idea would be only a dogma, a popular superstition, or an imaginative or mystic deification of historical or legendary supermen, not what the Gita makes all its teaching, a deep philosophical and religious truth and an essential part of or step to the supreme mystery of all, *rahasyam uttamam*.

If there were not this rising of man into the Godhead to be helped by the descent of God into humanity, Avatarhood for the sake of the Dharma would be an otiose phenomenon, since mere Right, mere justice or standards of virtue can always be upheld by the divine omnipotence through its ordinary means, by great men or great movements, by the life and work of sages and kings and religious teachers, without any actual incarnation. The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may by moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood transfigure itself into the divine. The law, the Dharma which the Avatar establishes is given for that purpose chiefly; the Christ, Krishna, Buddha stands in its centre as the gate, he makes through himself the way men shall follow. That is why each Incarnation holds before men his own example and declares of himself that he is the way and the gate; he declares too the oneness of his humanity with the divine being, declares that the Son of Man and the Father above from whom he has descended are one, that Krishna in the human body, *mānuṣīṁ tanum āśritam*, and the supreme Lord and Friend of all creatures are but two revelations of the same divine Purushottama, revealed there in his own being, revealed here in the type of humanity.

That the Gita contains as its kernel this second and real object of the Avatarhood, is evident even from this passage by itself rightly considered; but it becomes much clearer if we take it, not by itself, — always the wrong way to deal with the texts of the Gita, — but in its right close connection with other passages and with the whole teaching. We have to remember and take together its doctrine of the one Self in all, of

the Godhead seated in the heart of every creature, its teaching about the relations between the Creator and his creation, its strongly emphasised idea of the *vibhūti*, — noting too the language in which the Teacher gives his own divine example of selfless works which applies equally to the human Krishna and the divine Lord of the worlds, and giving their due weight to such passages as that in the ninth chapter, “Deluded minds despise me lodged in the human body because they know not my supreme nature of being, Lord of all existences”; and we have to read in the light of these ideas this passage we find before us and its declaration that by the knowledge of his divine birth and divine works men come to the Divine and by becoming full of him and even as he and taking refuge in him they arrive at his nature and status of being, *madbhāvam*. For then we shall understand the divine birth and its object, not as an isolated and miraculous phenomenon, but in its proper place in the whole scheme of the world-manifestation; without that we cannot arrive at its divine mystery, but shall either scout it altogether or accept it ignorantly and, it may be, superstitiously or fall into the petty and superficial ideas of the modern mind about it by which it loses all its inner and helpful significance.

For to the modern mind Avatarhood is one of the most difficult to accept or to understand of all the ideas that are streaming in from the East upon the rationalised human consciousness. It is apt to take it at the best for a mere figure for some high manifestation of human power, character, genius, great work done for the world or in the world, and at the worst to regard it as a superstition, — to the heathen a foolishness and to the Greeks a stumbling-block. The materialist, necessarily, cannot even look at it, since he does not believe in God; to the rationalist or the Deist it is a folly and a thing of derision; to the thoroughgoing dualist who sees an unbridgeable gulf between the human and the divine nature, it sounds like a blasphemy. The rationalist objects that if God exists, he is extracosmic or supracosmic and does not intervene in the affairs of the world, but allows them to be governed by a fixed machinery of law, — he is, in fact, a sort of far-off constitutional monarch or spiritual King Log, at the best an indifferent inactive Spirit behind the activity of Nature, like some generalised or abstract witness Purusha of the Sankhyas; he is pure Spirit and cannot put on a body, infinite and cannot be finite as the human being is finite, the ever unborn creator and cannot be the creature born into the world, — these things are impossible even to his absolute omnipotence. To these objections the thoroughgoing dualist would add that God is in his person, his role and his nature different and separate from man; the perfect cannot put on human imperfection; the unborn personal God cannot be born as a human personality; the Ruler of the worlds cannot be limited in a nature-bound human action and in a perishable human body. These objections, so formidable at first sight to the reason, seem to have been present to the mind of the Teacher in the Gita when he says that although the Divine is unborn, imperishable in his self-existence, the Lord of all beings, yet he assumes birth by a supreme resort to the action of his Nature and by force of his self-Maya; that he whom the deluded despise because

lodged in a human body, is verily in his supreme being the Lord of all; that he is in the action of the divine consciousness the creator of the fourfold Law and the doer of the works of the world and at the same time in the silence of the divine consciousness the impartial witness of the works of his own Nature, — for he is always, beyond both the silence and the action, the supreme Purushottama. And the Gita is able to meet all these oppositions and to reconcile all these contraries because it starts from the Vedantic view of existence, of God and the universe.

For in the Vedantic view of things all these apparently formidable objections are null and void from the beginning. The idea of the Avatar is not indeed indispensable to its scheme, but it comes in naturally into it as a perfectly rational and logical conception. For all here is God, is the Spirit or Self-existence, is Brahman, *ekamevādvitīyam*, — there is nothing else, nothing other and different from it and there can be nothing else, can be nothing other and different from it; Nature is and can be nothing else than a power of the divine consciousness; all beings are and can be nothing else than inner and outer, subjective and objective soul-forms and bodily forms of the divine being which exist in or result from the power of its consciousness. Far from the Infinite being unable to take on finiteness, the whole universe is nothing else but that; we can see, look as we may, nothing else at all in the whole wide world we inhabit. Far from the Spirit being incapable of form or disdaining to connect itself with form of matter or mind and to assume a limited nature or a body, all here is nothing but that, the world exists only by that connection, that assumption. Far from the world being a mechanism of law with no soul or spirit intervening in the movement of its forces or the action of its minds and bodies, — only some original indifferent Spirit passively existing somewhere outside or above it, — the whole world and every particle of it is on the contrary nothing but the divine force in action and that divine force determines and governs its every movement, inhabits its every form, possesses here every soul and mind; all is in God and in him moves and has its being, in all he is, acts and displays his being; every creature is the disguised Narayana.

Far from the unborn being unable to assume birth, all beings are even in their individuality unborn spirits, eternal without beginning or end, and in their essential existence and their universality all are the one unborn Spirit of whom birth and death are only a phenomenon of the assumption and change of forms. The assumption of imperfection by the perfect is the whole mystic phenomenon of the universe; but the imperfection appears in the form and action of the mind or body assumed, subsists in the phenomenon, — in that which assumes it there is no imperfection, even as in the Sun which illumines all there is no defect of light or of vision, but only in the capacities of the individual organ of vision. Nor does God rule the world from some remote heaven, but by his intimate omnipresence; each finite working of force is an act of infinite Force and not of a limited separate self-existent energy labouring in its own underived strength; in every finite working of will and knowledge we can discover, supporting it, an act of the infinite all-will and all-knowledge. God's rule is not an

absentee, foreign and external government; he governs all because he exceeds all, but also because he dwells within all movements and is their absolute soul and spirit. Therefore none of the objections opposed by our reason to the possibility of Avatarhood can stand in their principle; for the principle is a vain division made by the intellectual reason which the whole phenomenon and the whole reality of the world are busy every moment contradicting and disproving.

But still, apart from the possibility, there is the question of the actual divine working, — whether actually the divine consciousness does appear coming forward from beyond the veil to act at all directly in the phenomenal, the finite, the mental and material, the limited, the imperfect. The finite is indeed nothing but a definition, a face-value of the Infinite's self-representations to its own variations of consciousness; the real value of each finite phenomenon is an infinite value, is indeed the very Infinite. Each being is infinite in its self-existence, whatever it may be in the action of its phenomenal nature, its temporal self-representation. The man is not, when we look closely, himself alone, a rigidly separate self-existent individual, but humanity in a mind and body of itself; and humanity too is no rigidly separate self-existent species or genus, it is the All-existence, the universal Godhead figuring itself in the type of humanity; there it works out certain possibilities, develops, evolves, as we now say, certain powers of its manifestations. What it evolves, is itself, is the Spirit.

For what we mean by Spirit is self-existent being with an infinite power of consciousness and unconditioned delight in its being; it is either that or nothing, or at least nothing which has anything to do with man and the world or with which, therefore, man or the world has anything to do. Matter, body is only a massed motion of force of conscious being employed as a starting-point for the variable relations of consciousness working through its power of sense; nor is Matter anywhere really void of consciousness, for even in the atom, the cell there is, as is now made abundantly clear in spite of itself by modern Science, a power of will, an intelligence at work; but that power is the power of will and intelligence of the Self, Spirit or Godhead within it, it is not the separate, self-derived will or idea of the mechanical cell or atom. This universal will and intelligence, involved, develops its powers from form to form, and on earth at least it is in man that it draws nearest to the full divine and there first becomes, even in the outward intelligence in the form, obscurely conscious of its divinity. But still there too there is a limitation, there is that imperfection of the manifestation which prevents the lower forms from having the self-knowledge of their identity with the Divine. For in each limited being the limitation of the phenomenal action is accompanied by a limitation also of the phenomenal consciousness which defines the nature of the being and makes the inner difference between creature and creature. The Divine works behind indeed and governs its special manifestation through this outer and imperfect consciousness and will, but is itself secret in the cavern, *guhāyām*, as the Veda puts it, or as the Gita expresses it, "In the heart of all existences the Lord abides turning all existences as if mounted on a machine by Maya." This

secret working of the Lord hidden in the heart from the egoistic nature-consciousness through which he works, is God's universal method with creatures. Why then should we suppose that in any form he comes forward into the frontal, the phenomenal consciousness for a more direct and consciously divine action? Obviously, if at all, then to break the veil between himself and humanity which man limited in his own nature could never lift.

The Gita explains the ordinary imperfect action of the creature by its subjection to the mechanism of Prakriti and its limitation by the self-representations of Maya. These two terms are only complementary aspects of one and the same effective force of divine consciousness. Maya is not essentially illusion, — the element or appearance of illusion only enters in by the ignorance of the lower Prakriti, Maya of the three modes of Nature, — it is the divine consciousness in its power of various self-representation of its being, while Prakriti is the effective force of that consciousness which operates to work out each such self-representation according to its own law and fundamental idea, *svabhāva* and *svadharma*, in its own proper quality and particular force of working, *guṇa-karma*. “Leaning — pressing down upon my own Nature (Prakriti) I create (loose forth into various being) all this multitude of existences, all helplessly subject to the control of Nature.” Those who know not the Divine lodged in the human body, are ignorant of it because they are grossly subject to this mechanism of Prakriti, helplessly subject to its mental limitations and acquiescent in them, and dwell in an Asuric nature that deludes with desire and bewilders with egoism the will and the intelligence, *mohinīm prakṛtiṁ śritāḥ*. For the Purushottama within is not readily manifest to any and every being; he conceals himself in a thick cloud of darkness or a bright cloud of light, utterly he envelops and wraps himself in his Yogamaya.¹ “All this world,” says the Gita, “because it is bewildered by the three states of being determined by the modes of Nature, fails to recognise me, for this my divine Maya of the modes of Nature is hard to get beyond; those cross beyond it who approach Me; but those who dwell in the Asuric nature of being, have their knowledge reft from them by Maya.” In other words, there is the inherent consciousness of the divine in all, for in all the Divine dwells; but he dwells there covered by his Maya and the essential self-knowledge of beings is reft from them, turned into the error of egoism by the action of Maya, the action of the mechanism of Prakriti. Still by drawing back from the mechanism of Nature to her inner and secret Master man can become conscious of the indwelling Divinity.

Now it is notable that with a slight but important variation of language the Gita describes in the same way both the action of the Divine in bringing about the ordinary birth of creatures and his action in his birth as the Avatar. “Leaning upon my own Nature, *prakṛtiṁ svām avaśṭabhya*,” it will say later, “I loose forth variously, *viśṛjāmi*,

1. *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyā-samāvṛtaḥ*.

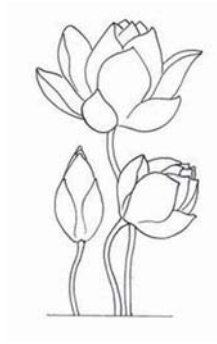
this multitude of creatures helplessly subject owing to the control of Prakriti, *avaśaṁ prakṛter vaśāt*.” “Standing upon my own Nature,” it says here, “I am born by my self-Maya, *prakṛtiṁ svām adhiṣṭhāya . . . ātmamāyayā*, I loose forth myself, *ātmānaṁ sṛjāmi*.” The action implied in the word *avaṣṭabhya* is a forceful downward pressure by which the object controlled is overcome, oppressed, blocked or limited in its movement or working and becomes helplessly subject to the controlling power, *avaśaṁ vaśāt*; Nature in this action becomes mechanical and its multitude of creatures are held helpless in the mechanism, not lords of their own action. On the contrary the action implied in the word *adhiṣṭhāya* is a dwelling in, but also a standing upon and over the Nature, a conscious control and government by the indwelling Godhead, *adhiṣṭhātri devatā*, in which the Purusha is not helplessly driven by the Prakriti through ignorance, but rather the Prakriti is full of the light and the will of the Purusha. Therefore in the normal birth that which is loosed forth, — created, as we say, — is the multitude of creatures or becomings, *bhūtagrāmam*; in the divine birth that which is loosed forth, self-created, is the self-conscious self-existent being, *ātmānaṁ*; for the Vedantic distinction between *ātmā* and *bhūtāni* is that which is made in European philosophy between the Being and its becomings. In both cases Maya is the means of the creation or manifestation, but in the divine birth it is by self-Maya, *ātmamāyayā*, not the involution in the lower Maya of the ignorance, but the conscious action of the self-existent Godhead in its phenomenal self-representation, well aware of its operation and its purpose, — that which the Gita calls elsewhere Yogamaya. In the ordinary birth Yogamaya is used by the Divine to envelop and conceal itself from the lower consciousness, so it becomes for us the means of the ignorance, *avidyā-māyā*; but it is by this same Yogamaya that self-knowledge also is made manifest in the return of our consciousness to the Divine, it is the means of the knowledge, *vidyā-māyā*; and in the divine birth it so operates — as the knowledge controlling and enlightening the works which are ordinarily done in the Ignorance.

The language of the Gita shows therefore that the divine birth is that of the conscious Godhead in our humanity and essentially the opposite of the ordinary birth even though the same means are used, because it is not the birth into the Ignorance, but the birth of the knowledge, not a physical phenomenon, but a soul-birth. It is the Soul’s coming into birth as the self-existent Being controlling consciously its becoming and not lost to self-knowledge in the cloud of the ignorance. It is the Soul born into the body as Lord of Nature, standing above and operating in her freely by its will, not entangled and helplessly driven round and round in the mechanism; for it works in the knowledge and not, as most do, in the ignorance. It is the secret Soul in all coming forward from its governing secrecy behind the veil to possess wholly in a human type, but as the Divine, the birth which ordinarily it possesses only from behind the veil as the Ishwara while the outward consciousness in front of the veil is rather possessed than in possession because there it is a partially conscious being, the Jiva lost to self-knowledge and bound in its works through a phenomenal subjection to

Nature. The Avatar² therefore is a direct manifestation in humanity by Krishna the divine Soul of that divine condition of being to which Arjuna, the human soul, the type of a highest human being, a Vibhuti, is called upon by the Teacher to arise, and to which he can only arise by climbing out of the ignorance and limitation of his ordinary humanity. It is the manifestation from above of that which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that divine birth of the human being into which we mortal creatures must climb; it is the attracting divine example given by God to man in the very type and form and perfected model of our human existence.

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 148-57)

2. The word Avatara means a descent; it is a coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status.



THE PROCESS OF AVATARHOOD

... In the Avatar, the divinely-born Man, the real substance shines through the coating; the mark of the seal is there only for form, the vision is that of the secret Godhead, the power of the life is that of the secret Godhead, and it breaks through the seals of the assumed human nature; the sign of the Godhead, an inner soul-sign, not outward, not physical, stands out legible for all to read who care to see or who can see; for the Asuric nature is always blind to these things, it sees the body and not the soul, the external being and not the internal, the mask and not the Person. In the ordinary human birth the Nature-aspect of the universal Divine assuming humanity prevails; in the incarnation the God-aspect of the same phenomenon takes its place. In the one he allows the human nature to take possession of his partial being and to dominate it; in the other he takes possession of his partial type of being and its nature and divinely dominates it. Not by evolution or ascent like the ordinary man, the Gita seems to tell us, not by a growing into the divine birth, but by a direct descent into the stuff of humanity and a taking up of its moulds.

But it is to assist that ascent or evolution the descent is made or accepted; that the Gita makes very clear. It is, we might say, to exemplify the possibility of the Divine manifest in the human being, so that man may see what that is and take courage to grow into it. It is also to leave the influence of that manifestation vibrating in the earth-nature and the soul of that manifestation presiding over its upward endeavour. It is to give a spiritual mould of divine manhood into which the seeking soul of the human being can cast itself. It is to give a dharma, a religion, — not a mere creed, but a method of inner and outer living, — a way, a rule and law of self-moulding by which he can grow towards divinity. It is too, since this growth, this ascent is no mere isolated and individual phenomenon, but like all in the divine world-activities a collective business, a work and the work for the race, to assist the human march, to hold it together in its great crises, to break the forces of the downward gravitation when they grow too insistent, to uphold or restore the great dharma of the Godward law in man's nature, to prepare even, however far off, the kingdom of God, the victory of the seekers of light and perfection, *sādhūnām*, and the overthrow of those who fight for the continuance of the evil and the darkness. All these are recognised objects of the descent of the Avatar, and it is usually by his work that the mass of men seek to distinguish him and for that that they are ready to worship him. It is only the spiritual who see that this external Avatarhood is a sign, in the symbol of a human life, of the eternal inner Godhead making himself manifest in the field of their own human mentality and corporeality so that they can grow into unity with that and be possessed by it. The divine manifestation of a Christ, Krishna, Buddha in external humanity has for its inner truth the same manifestation of the eternal Avatar within in our own

inner humanity. That which has been done in the outer human life of earth, may be repeated in the inner life of all human beings.

This is the object of the incarnation, but what is the method? First, we have the rational or minimising view of Avatarhood which sees in it only an extraordinary manifestation of the diviner qualities moral, intellectual and dynamic by which average humanity is exceeded. In this idea there is a certain truth. The Avatar is at the same time the Vibhuti. This Krishna who in his divine inner being is the Godhead in a human form, is in his outer human being the leader of his age, the great man of the Vrishnis. This is from the point of view of the Nature, not of the soul. The Divine manifests himself through infinite qualities of his nature and the intensity of the manifestation is measured by their power and their achievement. The *vibhūti* of the Divine is therefore, impersonally, the manifest power of his quality, it is his outflowing, in whatever form, of Knowledge, Energy, Love, Strength and the rest; personally, it is the mental form and the animate being in whom this power is achieved and does its great works. A pre-eminence in this inner and outer achievement, a greater power of divine quality, an effective energy is always the sign. The human *vibhūti* is the hero of the race's struggle towards divine achievement, the hero in the Carlylean sense of heroism, a power of God in man. "I am Vasudeva (Krishna) among the Vrishnis," says the Lord in the Gita, "Dhananjaya (Arjuna) among the Pandavas, Vyasa among the sages, the seer-poet Ushanas among the seer-poets," the first in each category, the greatest of each group, the most powerfully representative of the qualities and works in which its characteristic soul-power manifests itself. This heightening of the powers of the being is a very necessary step in the progress of the divine manifestation. Every great man who rises above our average level, raises by that very fact our common humanity; he is a living assurance of our divine possibilities, a promise of the Godhead, a glow of the divine Light and a breath of the divine Power.

It is this truth which lies behind the natural human tendency to the deification of great minds and heroic characters; it comes out clearly enough in the Indian habit of mind which easily sees a partial (*aṁśa*) Avatar in great saints, teachers, founders, or most significantly in the belief of southern Vaishnavas that some of their saints were incarnations of the symbolic living weapons of Vishnu, — for that is what all great spirits are, living powers and weapons of the Divine in the upward march and battle. This idea is innate and inevitable in any mystic or spiritual view of life which does not draw an inexorable line between the being and nature of the Divine and our human being and nature; it is the sense of the divine in humanity. But still the Vibhuti is not the Avatar; otherwise Arjuna, Vyasa, Ushanas would be Avatars as well as Krishna, even if in a less degree of the power of Avatarhood. The divine quality is not enough; there must be the inner consciousness of the Lord and Self governing the human nature by his divine presence. The heightening of the power of the qualities is part of the becoming, *bhūtagrāma*, an ascent in the ordinary manifestation; in the Avatar there is the special manifestation, the divine birth from above, the eternal and universal

Godhead descended into a form of individual humanity, *ātmānam sṛjāmi*, and conscious not only behind the veil but in the outward nature.

There is an intermediary idea, a more mystical view of Avatarhood which supposes that a human soul calls down this descent into himself and is either possessed by the divine consciousness or becomes an effective reflection or channel of it. This view rests upon certain truths of spiritual experience. The divine birth in man, his ascent, is itself a growing of the human into the divine consciousness, and in its intensest culmination is a losing of the separate self in that. The soul merges its individuality in an infinite and universal being or loses it in the heights of a transcendent being; it becomes one with the Self, the Brahman, the Divine or, as it is sometimes more absolutely put, becomes the one Self, the Brahman, the Divine. The Gita itself speaks of the soul becoming the Brahman, *brahmabhūta*, and of its thereby dwelling in the Lord, in Krishna, but it does not, it must be marked, speak of it as becoming the Lord or the Purushottama, though it does declare that the Jiva himself is always Ishwara, the partial being of the Lord, *mamaivāṁśaḥ*. For this greatest union, this highest becoming is still part of the ascent; while it is the divine birth to which every Jiva arrives, it is not the descent of the Godhead, not Avatarhood, but at most Buddhahood according to the doctrine of the Buddhists, it is the soul awakened from its present mundane individuality into an infinite superconsciousness. That need not carry with it either the inner consciousness or the characteristic action of the Avatar.

On the other hand, this entering into the divine consciousness may be attended by a reflex action of the Divine entering or coming forward into the human parts of our being, pouring himself into the nature, the activity, the mentality, the corporeality even of the man; and that may well be at least a partial Avatarhood. The Lord stands in the heart, says the Gita, — by which it means of course the heart of the subtle being, the nodus of the emotions, sensations, mental consciousness, where the individual Purusha also is seated, — but he stands there veiled, enveloped by his Maya. But above, on a plane within us but now superconscient to us, called heaven by the ancient mystics, the Lord and the Jiva stand together revealed as of one essence of being, the Father and the Son of certain symbolisms, the Divine Being and the divine Man who comes forth from Him born of the higher divine Nature,¹ the virgin Mother, *parā prakṛti*, *parā māyā*, into the lower or human nature. This seems to be the inner doctrine of the Christian incarnation; in its Trinity the Father is above in this inner Heaven; the Son or supreme Prakṛti become Jiva of the Gita descends as the divine Man upon earth, in the mortal body; the Holy Spirit, pure Self, Brahmic consciousness is that which makes them one and that also in which they communicate; for we hear of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus and it is the same descent which

1. In the Buddhist legend the name of the mother of Buddha makes the symbolism clear; in the Christian the symbol seems to have been attached by a familiar mythopoeic process to the actual human mother of Jesus of Nazareth.

brings down the powers of the higher consciousness into the simple humanity of the Apostles.

But also the higher divine consciousness of the Purushottama may itself descend into the humanity and that of the Jiva disappear into it. This is said by his contemporaries to have happened in the occasional transfigurations of Chaitanya when he who in his normal consciousness was only the lover and devotee of the Lord and rejected all deification, became in these abnormal moments the Lord himself and so spoke and acted, with all the outflooding light and love and power of the divine Presence. Supposing this to be the normal condition, the human receptacle to be constantly no more than a vessel of this divine Presence and divine Consciousness, we should have the Avatar according to this intermediary idea of the incarnation. That easily recommends itself as possible to our human notions; for if the human being can elevate his nature so as to feel a unity with the being of the Divine and himself a mere channel of its consciousness, light, power, love, his own will and personality lost in that will and that being, — and this is a recognised spiritual status, — then there is no inherent impossibility of the reflex action of that Will, Being, Power, Love, Light, Consciousness occupying the whole personality of the human Jiva. And this would not be merely an ascent of our humanity into the divine birth and the divine nature, but a descent of the divine Purusha into humanity, an Avatar.

The Gita, however, goes much farther. It speaks clearly of the Lord himself being born; Krishna speaks of his many births that are past and makes it clear by his language that it is not merely the receptive human being but the Divine of whom he makes this affirmation, because he uses the very language of the Creator, the same language which he will employ when he has to describe his creation of the world. “Although I am the unborn Lord of creatures, I create (loose forth) my *self* by my Maya,” presiding over the actions of my Prakriti. Here there is no question of the Lord and the human Jiva or of the Father and the Son, the divine Man, but only of the Lord and his Prakriti. The Divine descends by his own Prakriti into birth in its human form and type and brings into it the divine Consciousness and the divine Power, though consenting, though willing to act in the form, type, mould of humanity, and he governs its actions in the body as the indwelling and over-dwelling Soul, *adhiṣṭhāya*. From above he governs always, indeed, for so he governs all nature, the human included; from within also he governs all nature, always, but hidden; the difference here is that he is manifest, that the nature is conscious of the divine Presence as the Lord, the Inhabitant, and it is not by his secret will from above, “the will of the Father which is in heaven,” but by his quite direct and apparent will that he moves the nature. And here there seems to be no room for the human intermediary; for it is by resort to his own nature, *prakṛtiṁ svām*, and not the special nature of the Jiva that the Lord of all existence thus takes upon himself the human birth.

This doctrine is a hard saying, a difficult thing for the human reason to accept; and for an obvious reason, because of the evident humanity of the Avatar. The Avatar

is always a dual phenomenon of divinity and humanity; the Divine takes upon himself the human nature with all its outward limitations and makes them the circumstances, means, instruments of the divine consciousness and the divine power, a vessel of the divine birth and the divine works. But so surely it must be, since otherwise the object of the Avatar's descent is not fulfilled; for that object is precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works, precisely to show that the human type of consciousness can be compatible with the divine essence of consciousness made manifest, can be converted into its vessel, drawn into nearer conformity with it by a change of its mould and a heightening of its powers of light and love and strength and purity; and to show also how it can be done. If the Avatar were to act in an entirely supernormal fashion, this object would not be fulfilled. A merely supernormal or miraculous Avatar would be a meaningless absurdity; not that there need be an entire absence of the use of supernormal powers such as Christ's so-called miracles of healing, for the use of supernormal powers is quite a possibility of human nature; but there need not be that at all, nor in any case is it the root of the matter, nor would it at all do if the life were nothing else but a display of supernormal fireworks. The Avatar does not come as a thaumaturgic magician, but as the divine leader of humanity and the exemplar of a divine humanity. Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show, first, how that suffering may be a means of redemption, — as did Christ, — secondly, to show how, having been assumed by the divine soul in the human nature, it can also be overcome in the same nature, — as did Buddha. The rationalist who would have cried to Christ, "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross," or points out sagely that the Avatar was not divine because he died and died too by disease, — as a dog dieth, — knows not what he is saying: for he has missed the root of the whole matter. Even, the Avatar of sorrow and suffering must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy; the human limitation must be assumed in order to show how it can be overcome; and the way and the extent of the overcoming, whether internal only or external also, depends upon the stage of the human advance; it must not be done by a non-human miracle.

The question then arises, and it is the sole real difficulty, for here the intellect falters and stumbles over its own limits, how is this human mind and body assumed? For they were not created suddenly and all of a piece, but by some kind of evolution, physical or spiritual or both. No doubt, the descent of the Avatar, like the divine birth from the other side, is essentially a spiritual phenomenon, as is shown by the Gita's *ātmānam sṛjāmi*, it is a soul-birth; but still there is here an attendant physical birth. How then were this human mind and body of the Avatar created? If we suppose that the body is always created by the hereditary evolution, by inconscient Nature and its immanent Life-spirit without the intervention of the individual soul, the matter becomes simple. A physical and mental body is prepared fit for the divine incarnation by a pure or great heredity and the descending Godhead takes possession of it. But the

Gita in this very passage applies the doctrine of reincarnation, boldly enough, to the Avatar himself, and in the usual theory of reincarnation the reincarnating soul by its past spiritual and psychological evolution itself determines and in a way prepares its own mental and physical body. The soul prepares its own body, the body is not prepared for it without any reference to the soul. Are we then to suppose an eternal or continual Avatar himself evolving, we might say, his own fit mental and physical body according to the needs and pace of the human evolution and so appearing from age to age, *yuge yuge*? In some such spirit some would interpret the ten incarnations of Vishnu, first in animal forms, then in the animal man, then in the dwarf man-soul, Vamana, the violent Asuric man, Rama of the axe, the divinely-natured man, a greater Rama, the awakened spiritual man, Buddha, and, preceding him in time, but final in place, the complete divine manhood, Krishna, — for the last Avatar, Kalki, only accomplishes the work Krishna began, — he fulfils in power the great struggle which the previous Avatars prepared in all its potentialities. It is a difficult assumption to our modern mentality, but the language of the Gita seems to demand it. Or, since the Gita does not expressly solve the problem, we may solve it in some other way of our own, as that the body is prepared by the Jiva but assumed from birth by the Godhead or that it is prepared by one of the four Manus, *catvāro manavaḥ*, of the Gita, the spiritual Fathers of every human mind and body. This is going far into the mystic field from which the modern reason is still averse; but once we admit Avatarhood, we have already entered into it and, once entered, may as well tread in it with firm footsteps.

There the Gita's doctrine of Avatarhood stands. We have had to advert to it at length in this aspect of its method, as we did to the question of its possibility, because it is necessary to look at it and face the difficulties which the reasoning mind of man is likely to offer to it. It is true that the physical Avatarhood does not fill a large space in the Gita, but still it does occupy a definite place in the chain of its teachings and is implied in the whole scheme, the very framework being the Avatar leading the *vibhūti*, the man who has risen to the greatest heights of mere manhood, to the divine birth and divine works. No doubt, too, the inner descent of the Godhead to raise the human soul into himself is the main thing, — it is the inner Christ, Krishna or Buddha that matters. But just as the outer life is of immense importance for the inner development, so the external Avatarhood is of no mean importance for this great spiritual manifestation. The consummation in the mental and physical symbol assists the growth of the inner reality; afterwards the inner reality expresses itself with greater power in a more perfect symbolisation of itself through the outer life. Between these two, spiritual reality and mental and physical expression, acting and returning upon each other constantly the manifestation of the Divine in humanity has elected to move always in the cycles of its concealment and its revelation.

DIVINITY IN MAN AND DIVINE MAN — 1

(Excerpts from Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo)

*We are a little puzzled when you give your own example to prove your arguments and defend your views, because that really proves nothing. I need not explain why: what Avatars can achieve is not possible for ordinary mortals like us to do. So when you say that you had a sudden "opening" in the appreciation and understanding of painting, or that you freed your mind from all thoughts in three days, or transformed your nature, it is very poor consolation for us. Then again, when you state that you developed something that was not originally there in your nature, can it not be said that it was already there in your divya amsa?*¹

I don't know what the devil you mean. My sadhana is not a freak or a monstrosity or a miracle done outside the laws of Nature and the conditions of life and consciousness on earth. If I could do these things or if they could happen in my Yoga, it means that they can be done and that therefore these developments and transformations are possible in the terrestrial consciousness.

There are many who admit that faculties which are latent can be developed, but they maintain that things which are not there in latency cannot be made manifest. My belief is that even that can be done. The Divine is everywhere, and wherever he is, there everything exists. Still, I don't think that I could be turned into, say, an artist or a musician!

How do you know that you can't?

As for your statement, "All is possible, but all is not licit — except by a recognisable process . . . It is possible that an ass may be changed into an elephant, but it is not done, at least physically, because of the lack of a process", people say that there is no point in saying this, because it is no use knowing that a thing can be done when it is not licit, and is therefore not done.

[Sri Aurobindo made the following brief marginal comment on this remark but gave a longer answer to it at the end of the letter:] You had said it can't be done or somebody had said it.

1. Divine part.

About your changing “cowards into heroes”, they put forward the same “latency theory”. True, it is not possible to know what is latent or what is not, but that does not refute either theory.

How do they prove their theory — when they don’t know what is or is not latent? In such conditions the theory can neither be proved nor refuted. To say “O, it was latent” when a thing apparently impossible is done, is a mere *post factum* explanation which amounts to an evasion of the difficulty.

They state very strongly that a servant of the Asram, like Muthu, for example, cannot be changed into a Ramakrishna, or a Yogi for that matter, even by the Divine.

If he were, they would say “O, it was latent in him”.

Well, Ramakrishna himself was an ignorant, unlettered rustic according to the story.

Another point, one can’t say categorically and absolutely that the Divine is omnipotent, because there are different planes from which he works. It is when he acts from the Supramental level that his Power is omnipotent.

If the Divine were not in essence omnipotent, he could not be omnipotent anywhere — whether in the supramental or anywhere else. Because he chooses to limit or determine his action by conditions, it does not make him less omnipotent. His self-limitation is itself an act of omnipotence.

The fact that P was not changed by the mental-spiritual force put on him proves that.

It does not prove it for a moment. It simply proves that the omnipotent unconditioned supramental force was not put out there — any more than it was when Christ was put on the cross or when after healing thousands he failed to heal in a certain district (I forget the name) because people had no faith (faith being one of the conditions imposed for his working) or when Krishna after fighting eighteen battles with Jarasandha² failed to prevail against him and had to run away from Mathura.

Why the immortal Hell should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What if the gentleman in question had to be given his chance as Duryodhan was given his chance when Krishna went to him as ambassador in a last effort to avoid the massacre of Kurukshetra?³ What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine!

2. A powerful king, ally of the Kauravas.

3. Duryodhan was the king of the Kauravas who fought against the Pandavas in the great battle of Kurukshetra.

And what about my explanation of how the Divine acts through the Avatar? It seems all to have gone into water.

By the way about the ass becoming an elephant — what I meant to say was that the only reason why it can't be done is because there is no recognisable process for it. But if a process can be discovered whether by a scientist (let us say transformation or redistribution of the said ass's atoms or molecules — or what not) or by an occultist or by a Yogi, then there is no reason why it should not be done. In other words certain conditions have been established for the game and so long as those conditions remain unchanged certain things are not done — so we say they are impossible, can't be done. If the conditions are changed, then the same things are done or at least become licit — allowable, legal, according to the so-called laws of Nature, — and then we say they can be done. The Divine also acts according to the conditions of the game. He may change them, but he has to change them first, not proceed, while maintaining the conditions, to act by a series of miracles.

February 9, 1935

Excuse my writing today, since all days are Sundays for you it is all right, I suppose.

The whole Asram seems to reason in the same way and to draw the farther consequence that the perpetual Sunday is the proper day for each writing his special letter to me! What a touching proof of unanimity and solidarity in the communal mind!

You say that since "these things"⁴ have been possible in you, they are possible in the earth-consciousness. Quite true but have they been done? Has any sweeper or street beggar been changed into a Buddha or a Chaitanya by the Divine? We see in the whole history of spirituality only one Christ, one Buddha, one Krishna, one Sri Aurobindo and one Mother. Has there been any breaking of this rule? Since it has not been done, it can't be done.

The question was not whether it had been done but whether it could be done. The street-beggar is a side-issue. The question was whether new faculties not at all manifested in the personality up to now in this life could appear, even suddenly appear, by force of Yoga. I say they can and I gave my own case as proof. I could have given others also. The question involved is also this — is a man bound to the character and qualities he has come with into this life — can he not become a new man by Yoga? That also I have proved in my sadhana, it can be done. When you say that I could do this only in my case because I am an Avatar (!) and it is impossible in any other case,

4. Cf. the last letter: Sudden opening in the understanding of painting, liberation of the mind in three days, transformation of Nature.

you reduce my sadhana to an absurdity and Avatarhood also to an absurdity. For my Yoga is done not for myself who need nothing and do not need salvation or anything else, but precisely for the earth-consciousness, to open a way to the earth-consciousness to change. Has the Divine need to come down to prove that he can do this or that or has he any personal need of doing it? Your argument proves that I am not an Avatar but only a big human person. It may well be so as a matter of fact, but you start your argument from the other basis. Besides, even if I am only a big human person, what I achieve shows that that achievement is possible for humanity. Whether any street-beggar can do it or has done it is a side-issue. It is sufficient if others who have not the economic misfortune of being street-beggars can do it.

What a wonderful argument! Since it has not been done, it cannot be done! At that rate the whole history of the earth must have stopped long before the protoplasm. When it was a mass of gases, no life had been born, ergo, life could not be born — when only life was there, mind was not born, so mind could not be born. Since mind is there but nothing beyond, as there is no supermind manifested in anybody, so supermind can never be born. Sobhanallah!⁵ Glory, glory, glory to the human reason!! Luckily the Divine or the Cosmic Spirit or Nature or whoever is there cares a damn for the human reason. He or she or it does what he or she or it has to do, whether it can or cannot be done.

Kindly excuse the impudence of the next question; it has been hovering at the back of my mind for some time. Can a Muthu or a sadhak be ever a Sri Aurobindo, even if he is supramentalised? I say that it is absolutely impossible, impossible, a thousand times so.

What need has he to be a Sri Aurobindo? He can be a supramentalised Muthu!

If anybody comes and says “Why not?” I would answer, “You had better rub some Madhyam Narayan oil⁶ on your head.”

I have no objection to that. Plenty of the middle Narayan is needed in this Asram. This part of your argument is perfectly correct — but it is also perfectly irrelevant.

And how can it be otherwise? You are looked upon by us here, and even by many outside, as a full Incarnation of the Divine. The sadhaks here at best are misty sparks of the Divine. I cannot by any empyrean flight of imagination conceive of this possibility even for a second.

5. Urdu term meaning “Glory to God”.

6. Oil used for insanity, composed of thirteen herbs and barks. Madhyam literally means “middle”.

The psychic being is more than a spark at this stage of its evolution. It is a flame. Even if the flame is covered by mist or smoke, the mist or smoke can be dissipated. To do that and to open to the higher consciousness is what is wanted, not to become a Sri Aurobindo or equal to the Mother. But if we are the Divine, what is the harm of evolving into a portion of the Divine, living in the divine Consciousness even if in a lesser degree? No middle Narayan will then be needed for anybody's head.

Once when Y had said she wanted to be like the Mother — you thundered saying, “How can it be? That is an ambition!” Do you say now it's possible?

Certainly not, it is not intended and I never said that [she] could as a practical matter.

All this is really too much for me. Please give a more direct answer — is it possible or not? Can a Muthu be changed into a being as great as an Avatar? If he can be, I have nothing further to say; if not, there is a limit to the omnipotence of the Divine. It is for this reason that I said that your own example doesn't prove much.

Not at all. You are always making the same elementary baby stumble. It is not because the Divine cannot manifest his greatness anywhere, but because it is not in the conditions of the game, because he has chosen to manifest his centrality in a particular line that it is practically impossible.

Next point: it is hoped that the sadhaks will be supramentalised. Since it is a state surpassing the Overmind, am I to deduce that the sadhaks would be greater than Krishna, who was the Avatar of the Overmind level? Logically it follows, but looking at others and at myself, I wonder if such a theory will be practically realised. Past history does not seem to prove it. In Krishna's time, no disciple of his was a greater spiritual figure than the preceding Avatar Rama, even though Krishna was an Avatar of a higher plane.

What is all this obsession of greater or less? In our Yoga we do not strive after greatness. It is not a question of Sri Krishna's disciples, but of the earth-consciousness — Rama was a mental man, there is no touch of the overmind consciousness (direct) in anything he said or did, but what he did was done with the greatness of the Avatar. But there have since been men who did live in touch with the planes above mind — higher mind, illumined mind, Intuition. There is no question of asking whether they were “greater” than Rama; they might have been less “great”, but they were able to live from a new plane of consciousness. And Krishna's opening the overmind certainly made it possible for the attempt at bringing Supermind to the earth to be made.

I would not mind your fury in revenge if only you would crush me with a convincing assault. I hope to close the chapter on "Divine Omnipotence" with this last letter, but you keep me hoping with that promise of yours to write at length some day —

"Peace, peace, O fiery furious spirit! calm thyself and be at rest." Your fury or furiousness is wasted because your point is perfectly irrelevant to the central question on which all this breath (or rather ink) is being spent. Muthu and the sadhaks who want to equal or distance or replace the Mother and myself and so need very badly Middle Narayan oil — there have been several — have appeared only as meaningless foam and froth on the excited crest of the dispute. I fear you have not grasped the internalities and modalities and causalities of my high and subtle reasoning. It is not surprising as you are down down in the troughs of the rigidly logically illogical human reason while I am floating on the heights amid the infinite plasticities of the overmind and the lightninglike subtleties and swiftnesses of the intuition. There! what do you think of that? However!!

More seriously. I have not stated that any Muthu has equalled Ramakrishna and I quite admit that Muthu here *in ipsa persona* has no chance of performing that feat. I have not said one here can be Sri Aurobindo or the Mother — I have pointed out what I meant when I objected to your explaining away my sadhana as a perfectly useless piece of Avatarian fireworks. So in my comment on the Muthu logic, I simply pointed out that it was bad logic — that someone quite ignorant and low in scale can manifest a great spirituality and even a great knowledge. I hope you are not bourgeois enough to deny that or to contend that the Divine or the spiritual can only manifest in somebody who has some money in his pockets or some University education in his pate? For the rest as I myself have been pointing out all the time there is a difference between essential truth, paramartha and vyavaharika, the latter being relative and conditional and mutable. In mathematics one works out problems in infinite and in unreal numbers which exist nowhere on earth and yet these are extremely important and can help scientific reasoning and scientific discovery and achievement. The question of a Muthu becoming a Ramakrishna, i.e. a great spiritual man may look to you like being an exercise in unreal numbers or magnitudes because it exceeds the actual observable facts in the case of *this* Muthu who very evidently is not going to be a great spiritual man — but we were arguing the matter of essential principle. I was pointing out that in the essentiality all things are possible — so you ought not to say the Divine cannot do this or that. But at the same time I was pointing out too that the Divine is not bound to show his omnipotence without rhyme or reason when he is working by his own will under conditions. For by arguing that the Divine cannot, that he is impotent, that he cannot do what has never yet been done etc., you deny the possibility of changing conditions, of evolution, of the realisation of the unrealised, of the Divine Power, of Divine Grace, and reduce all to a rigid and unalterable status

quo. Which is an insolent defiance to both fact and reason (!) and suprareason. See now?

About myself and the Mother, — there are people who say, “If the supramental is to come down, it can come down in everyone, why then in them first? Why should we not get it before they do? Why through them, not direct?” It sounds very rational, very logical, very arguable. The difficulty is that this reasoning ignores the conditions, foolishly assumes that one can get the supramental into oneself without having the least knowledge of what the supramental is and so supposes an upside-down miracle — everybody who tries it is bound to land himself in a most horrible cropper — as all have done hitherto who tried it. It is like thinking one need not follow the Guide, but can reach up to the top of the mountain from the narrow path one is following on the edge of a precipice by simply leaping into the air. The result is inevitable.

About greater and less, one point. Is Captain John Higgins of S.S. Mauretania a greater man than Christopher Columbus because he can reach America without trouble in a few days? Is a university graduate in philosophy greater than Plato because he can reason about problems and systems which had never even occurred to Plato? No, only humanity has acquired greater scientific power which any good navigator can use or a wider intellectual knowledge which anyone with a philosophic training can use. You will say greater scientific power and wider knowledge is not a change of consciousness. Very well, but there are Rama and Ramakrishna. Rama spoke always from the thinking intelligence, the common property of developed men; Ramakrishna spoke constantly from a swift and luminous spiritual intuition. Can you tell me which is the greater? the Avatar recognised by all India? or the saint and Yogi recognised as an Avatar only by his disciples and some others who follow them?

February 10, 1935

I am a little taken aback to hear that a “certain note of persiflage” dilutes the grave discussion I am having with you.

Look here, don’t tell me that because you are a doctor, therefore you can’t understand a joke. It would have the effect of making me dreadfully serious.

I am sorry I can’t detect the adulteration of the Divine philosophy with persiflage. My medical appliance is hardly capable of doing it.

A sense of humour (not grim) ought to be a sufficient appliance.

No doubt, I enjoy heartily the humour but I should like to be able to suck up the cream and give the rest its proper place.

The cream = the persiflage — the rest is the solemn part of the argument.

I would like to know something about my “bad logic” before I write anything further to you.

Helps to finding out your bad logic. I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

- ” ” 2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.
3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana cannot happen in anybody else’s sadhana (i.e. neither descent, nor realisation, nor transformation, nor intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties) — because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not.
4. A street beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate — because, well, one doesn’t know why the hell not.
5. (and last because of want of space) Because I am a doctor, I can’t see a joke when it is there.

[. . .]

February 11, 1935

But how terrifying is your “Look here”! What I have heard about your extreme seriousness in former days,⁷ is quite enough not to invite it farther on my poor head!

Bad logic again! when I write “Look here!” it means I am not serious, however terrifying I may be.

Only I find that you have beaten me right and left for what I did not even intend to say.

Of course! One is most responsible for what one does not intend. It is besides the nature of bad logic to imply what the logician did not mean or did not know that he meant. Ignorance is no defence in law and non-intention is no defence in logic. Such is the beauty of life!

[. . .]

February 12, 1935

7. “The man who never smiles”, said Henry W. Nevins, English writer and journalist who met Sri Aurobindo in 1907 during his full revolutionary activities.

Excuse me — I did not say that a street beggar or a proletarian can't manifest a great spirituality; I know that there have been cases where fishermen, barbers and robbers have been transformed into spiritual men by the touch of saints, prophets and Avatars. So I don't deny the action and the effectiveness of the Divine Power.

Then why bring in the poor street-beggar at all?

But others say — and it was the central question — that wherever the Divine Power has successfully acted upon and miraculously changed those who were in their external nature robbers and social pariahs, there was probably in them, interiorly, something latent. And they say — excuse my reiteration — that from those who have evidently no music or poetry latent in them the Divine cannot bring out these elements in spite of His omnipotence.

What is the use of this argument based on a “probably”? You say that in one in whom poetry and music are not *evident*, the omnipotent Divine is impotent to create poetry and music. Yet in one in whom virtue and sainthood is not *evident* at all, criminals, debauchees, etc., he can produce sainthood and virtue. When it appears, it is supposed to have been “probably” latent. But why can't poetry and music also be “probably” latent even when they are not evident? To say that only moral capacities are latent and mental capacities cannot be, is a sheer absurdity. There are plenty of examples of particular mental capacities manifesting in men who had them not before — A man makes one magnificent speech in his life, writes one or two splendid poems — all the rest is either silence or twaddle. The eye dull to beauty of painting becomes aware of line and colour; the man who was “no good” at logic or philosophy can develop into a logician or a philosopher. When he was “no good” these capacities were not “evident”, — they become evident only when they appear.

Moreover, what is meant by latency — where do these things lie in their latency? If you say in the surface mind, then show me how their secret existence can be discovered while they are still latent. Otherwise how can we affirm an undiscoverable latency? If you say it is in the subliminal, I answer that the subliminal is the inner being which is open to the universal and plastic to it. All things exist in the universal, so it is impossible to say what will or will not manifest in the inner being, once the universal acts on it.

If the Divine is omnipotent, he can do it. If he can't do it, he is not omnipotent. What is this absurd self-contradiction of an Omnipotent who is impotent? If the Divine does not, it is because he does not choose to for one reason or another and I have tried to explain to you how the thing works — it is because he conditions his own working to suit his own self-made law and purpose.

When I argue with these people I say that maybe these things are latent, but even if they are not, the Divine can make them manifest if He chooses to. "Then you mean to say," they reply, "that a Muthu can be metamorphosed into a saint or an Avatar? A very big jump indeed!" I tell them, "Leave out the Avatars; they are perilous examples. But a Muthu can surely be turned into a great spiritual man by the omnipotent Divine; that is quite possible." Then these people answer, "Yes, maybe it is possible but we are in no way wiser for it, because it is not done."

Now we don't know what is latent and what is not latent, but great Yogis and Avatars do; so we request you to tell us what is meant by mūkam karoti vācālam,⁸ and whether the Divine can sow a seed in a barren, unproductive plot of land and reap the harvest of music, poetry and spirituality out of it, or whether He brings these things out from seeds which are already there in the soil — latent?

It means exactly what it says — that a man in whom there was no "evident" capacity, can suddenly or rapidly manifest that capacity by the Divine Grace. Indeed such things happen even without the direct intervention of the Divine Grace, so *a fortiori* the Grace can do it. He can make the barren unproductive land productive and fertile. Even a man can do that, say, Mussolini or the Japanese agriculturist. Seeds are thrown into the soil — they don't lie there for a thousand years and then sprout. But first make clear what is meant by the soil? The surface man? The subliminal man? In every human being there are these two, and if you can say something about the first, how much can you say about the other?

The examples of an unlettered Ramakrishna or a St. Peter and others do not prove much; one may say that big spiritual figures can and do take birth in humble social disguises. When all is said and done, the "latent" theory cannot be entirely waved aside. It seems that the Divine too usually follows the path of least resistance — I mean he brings out generally those tendencies and capacities that one is born with, that is, things that are latent.

It is a mere word — this "latent". It is like the materialist's "coincidence" and "hallucination" to explain away the appearance of the supernormal. At least it is so unless you define its action and modalities.

Certainly, it is the usual case. But the usual is not the limit of the possible.

Now, about your personal example. You speak of the evolution theory to prove that "it can be done", though the domain I touched upon was only the spiritual.

8. "He makes the dumb talk" (*Tulsi Ramayana*, 1st part).

If the scientists say that man has not been able to create living things up to now, and therefore he will not be able to do so in the future — that “it can’t be done”, what will be your answer? And if similarly, I say that a Tom, Dick or Harry cannot be a Rama, Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, what reply will you give?

I have brought in the evolution theory or rather fact of evolution, to disprove your argument that because a thing has not been done, it is thereby proved that it could not be done. I don’t understand your argument. If a scientist says that, he is using bad logic. I have never said it can’t be done. I dare say some day in the right conditions the creation of life will become possible.

They may not be Ram or Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, but they may become a spiritualised super-Tom, super-Dick or super-Harry. I have answered about the Avatar.

I have never said that you are only a big human person. On the contrary, you are not, and hence nobody can be like you. Nevertheless, I don’t quite follow what you mean when you state that whatever you achieve is possible for humanity to achieve, your attainments opening the way for others to follow.

It is singular that you cannot understand such a simple thing. I had no urge towards spirituality in me, I developed spirituality. I was incapable of understanding metaphysics, I developed into a philosopher. I had no eye for painting — I developed it by Yoga. I transformed my nature from what it was to what it was not. I did it by a special manner, not by a miracle and I did it to show what could be done and how it could be done. I did not do it out of any personal necessity of my own or by a miracle without any process. I say that if it is not so, then my Yoga is useless and my life was a mistake — a mere absurd freak of Nature without meaning or consequence. You all seem to think it a great compliment to me to say that what I have done has no meaning for anybody except myself — it is the most damaging criticism on my work that could be made.

If a man has transformed his nature, he couldn’t have done it all by himself, as you have done.

I also did not do it all by myself, if you mean by myself the Aurobindo that was. He did it with the help of Krishna and the Divine Shakti. I had help from embodied sources also.

I should say that Avatars are like well-fitted, well-equipped Rolls Royce machines.

All sufficient to themselves — perfect and complete from the beginning, hey? Just roll, royce and ripple!

They do have plenty of difficulties on their journey, but just because they are like Rolls Royce they can surmount them — whilst the rest of humanity is either like loose and disjointed machines or wagons to be dragged along by Avatars and great spiritual personages. Floating on the heights of the Overmind, you have overlooked what this earth-bound clod crawling over low plateaus has meant.

Great Scott! What a penal servitude for the great personages and the Avatars! And where are they leading them? All that rubbish into Paradise? How is that any more possible than creating a capacity where there was none? If the disjointed machines cannot be jointed, isn't it more economical to leave them where they are, in the lumber-shed?

I don't know about Avatars. Practically what I know is that I had not all the powers necessary when I started, I had to develop them by Yoga, at least many of them which were not in existence in me when I began, and those which were I had to train to a higher degree. My own idea of the matter is that the Avatar's life and actions are not miracles, and if they were, his existence would be perfectly useless, a mere superfluous freak of Nature. He accepts the terrestrial conditions, he uses means, he shows the way to humanity as well as helps it. Otherwise what is the use of him and why is he here?

I was not always in the overmind, if you please. I had to climb there from the mental and vital level.

Really, Sir, you have put into my mouth what I never mentioned or even intended to.

You may not have mentioned it but it was implied in your logic without your knowing that it was implied. Logic has its own consequences which are not apparent to the logiciser. It is like a move in chess by which you intend to overcome the opponent but it leads, logically, to consequences which you didn't intend and ends in your own checkmate. You can't invalidate the consequences by saying that you didn't intend them.

Let me remind you of what I wrote about the Avatar. There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness behind and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forward the instrumental personality in Nature, under the conditions of Nature, and it uses it according to the rules of the game — though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a

coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipresent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

As for the Muthu affair, that was only a joke as ought to have been clear to you at once. Nobody has any intention of making Muthu a saint or an Avatar. But that is only because the Divine is not going to play the fool, not because he is impotent. Muthu's only business in life is to prepare himself for something better hereafter and exhaust some of his lower tendencies in the meantime. That is not the question — the question is whether as a general rule rigid and unalterable man is bound down to his outward nature as it appears to be built at the moment and even the Divine cannot or will not under any circumstances change it or develop something new in it, something not yet "evident", not yet manifested. or is there a chance for human beings becoming more like the Divine? *sādrishyamukti; sādharmyam āgatāḥ*.⁹ If not, there is no use in anybody doing this Yoga; let the Krishnas and Ramakrishnas rocket about gloriously and uselessly in the empty Inane and the rest wriggle about for ever in the clutch of the eternal Devil. For that is the logical conclusion of the whole matter.

February 13, 1935

It seems that before I could come out of the pit of "latency", the Avatar-pyramid has fallen on my head, sending me down to the bottom again! But I am afraid, you are making me admit something I never wrote, nor implied in what I wrote. However, I shall consult your Essays on the Gita to see what you say about the Avatar.

Can you not understand that it was the natural logical result of the statements made on either side about the unbridgeable distance between "Man Divine" and the human being moving in the darkness towards the Divine? If you admit the utility of my sadhana, the controversy ceases. But so long as you declare that what I have done in my sadhana has no connection with what can be done, I shall go on beating you. (What the Avatar says in the "Essays" is only an explanation of the Gita; it is not the full statement of the issue.) But still if you read three or four chapters there, you will get some idea of the general principles. For the rest I propose that all discussion be postponed till after the 21st (not immediately after). This will give time for you to clear your ideas and for me to pursue my "Avataric" sadhana (not for myself, but for this confounded and too confounded earth race).

[. . .]

February 14, 1935

9. *sādrishyamukti; mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ*: Identity of the soul's liberated nature with the divine nature; they have attained to one law of being with Me (the Divine) (*Bhagavat Gita* 14.2).

I accept your proposal of postponement and send this last letter, which incidentally brings to an end the topic of latency and omnipotence. We shall all be anxiously waiting to hear what you have gained in two weeks for “this confounded earth race” for which you always seem to have such great love. (Please don’t forget this confounded little earth creature.)

Now I would like to mention one thing more. Sometimes I think that the Avatar’s work, Buddha’s sadhana, Christ’s preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven etc., were not so unselfish. I don’t mean that they did anything for personal gain; nevertheless it was a kind of selfishness — let us say of the noblest kind.

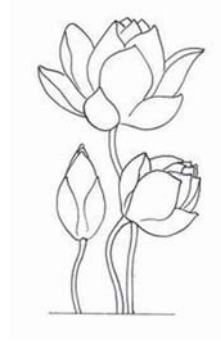
No objection — if to do things for the Divine in the world rather than for individual gain is a high selfishness, that is all right. Only selfishness usually means doing something for one’s own sole profit.

[. . .]

February 15, 1935

(Nirodbaran’s Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 135-52)

(Continued on p. 169)



A SPECIAL MANIFESTATION

(Excerpts from Nagin Doshi's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo)

I — On Avatarhood

What is an incarnation? From what plane does it take place?

An incarnation is the Divine Consciousness and Being manifesting through the body. It is possible from any plane.

When the Divine descends here as an incarnation, does not that very act mould his infinity into a limited finite? How then does he still continue to rule over the universe?

Do you imagine that the Divine is at any time not everywhere in the universe or beyond it? Or that he is living at one point in space and governing the rest from it, as Mussolini governs the Italian Empire from Rome?

11-5-37

I was speaking of the Divine in the body, and not of the Divine in his supreme plane above in an impersonal and formless aspect. Does not his incarnation on earth necessarily limit him? Living in such a world he has to govern all the three universes!

It is the omnipresent cosmic Divine who supports the action of the universe; if there is an incarnation, it does not in the least diminish the cosmic presence and the cosmic action in the three or thirty million universes.

When the Avatar comes down here, how does he take on a mind, vital and body? It is, I think, the soul that is Divine, but the Adhar has to be built up from the cosmos?

Everybody has to do that when he is born. It is the soul that is permanent.

Does an Avatar create a new mind, life and body from the cosmos for himself, or take hold of some liberated human being and use his outer personality for his manifestation?

That would be a possession, not an Avatar. An Avatar is supposed to be from birth. Each soul from its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the Divine doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being.

You wrote: "The Avatar is a special manifestation, while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working with the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti." Does not the Divine find it difficult to mould himself into a Vibhuti and accept the human limits?

Why should it be difficult? Even the Avatar accepts limits for his work.

There are quite a number of Yogis in India. At least in some of them, like Sri Ramana Maharshi, there is truly something great. That means they are open directly to the Divine in some way or other. If the Divine manifests on earth in human form — as we believe has happened here — would they not be aware of it?

There is no reason, why they should. Each has approached the Divine in his own way. He may not recognise if the Divine manifests in another way or a new form.

Since an Avatar comes here with a divine Power, Light and Ananda why should he pass through the same process of sadhana as an ordinary sadhak?

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way — he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed and done things from there.

The Avatar, though not the Vibhuti, does not need to satisfy his vital. (Sri Aurobindo's marginal remark, "Why should they not?") For his vital has no cravings and desires as our vitals have. He is above them. And if he seems to be satisfying them, it is only to acquire experience and knowledge of the vital worlds.

All that is wrong. The Avatar takes upon himself the nature of humanity in his instrumental parts, though the consciousness acting behind is divine.

When the Divine condescends here (as the Avatar), he has to veil himself and deal with the world and its movements like an ordinary man of the cosmic product. (Sri Aurobindo's marginal remark: "Exactly") But behind he is perfectly conscious of what happens. The universal forces cannot make him their tool as they do with us.

That does not prevent the Avatar from acting as men act and using the movements of Nature for his life and work.

Does your above answer mean that the Avatars too satisfy the vital desires, cravings, lust, etc. as a layman?

What do you mean by lust? Avatars can be married and have children and that is not possible without sex; they can have friendships, enmities, family feelings, etc, etc. — these are vital things. I think you are under the impression that the Avatar must be a saint or a yogi.

The Avatars can of course be married and satisfy the vital movements. But do they really indulge them as ordinary people? While satisfying their outer being do they not remain conscious of their union with the Divine above?

There is not necessarily any union above before the practice of yoga. There is a connection of the consciousness with the veiled Divinity and an action out of that, but this is not dependant on the practice of yoga.

II — The Impulse towards Laya

When the human soul has reached perfection of the spiritual state it feels the attraction of laya irresistible. It feels that the purpose for which it was sent here on earth is accomplished and it must at once return to and rest in the Divine above, unless it is a special soul, an Avatar.

If it were so, then the soul would have to go into laya, Avatar or no Avatar. For if the purpose for which it is here is fulfilled, then there is no reason for it to remain any longer here.

When the old yogis made spiritualisation their goal, it was not because they were ignorant or selfish, seeking their own personal perfection and not the perfection of the terrestrial existence. They simply could not restrain their souls from Laya. It is natural that one should not go against the impulse of one's soul. Moreover, it is by no means an illusion, otherwise the Divine too will be an illusion. We are saved from this impulse by the descent of the Avatar.

I do not understand the reasoning. If the soul's natural impulse is to seek Laya and that is the true theory, otherwise the Divine would be an illusion, then anything contrary to it (e.g. my teaching that the true purpose of existence here is the manifesta-

tion of the Divine in the world and not Laya) must be false. The Divine being here can only delay the Laya, it can't alter the nature of things or the purpose of existence.

It is the descent of the Mother and yourself that helped us to transform the attraction for laya into one for the supramental life on earth. It must have demanded of you a herculean work.

What work? You said the purpose of existence is for the soul to have laya in the Divine. There can be no work — the only divine work is to get ready for the laya and once ready, to go into laya.

But the other alternative became possible only because the Divine is here in a personal form. The soul may prefer now to live with Him and act as His instrument rather than disappear into laya.

The Divine being here in a personal form is only for the work of further manifestation. How can it alter the fundamental purpose of soul's presence here — which always was, according to the laya theory, to come into the world in order to go out of it again?

The old impulse will remain if the sadhaka himself does not abide with the will of the Supermind. And the Supramentalisation can never be achieved unless he accepts the personal aspect of the Divine. It is the personal aspect that creates the possibility of saving the soul from laya. Is all this correct?

No. The impulse towards laya is a creation of the mind, it is not the sole possible destiny of the soul. When the mind tries to abolish its own ignorance, it finds no escape from it except laya, because it supposes that there is no higher principle of cosmic existence beyond itself — beyond itself is only the pure Spirit, the absolute impersonal Divine. Those who go through the heart (love, bhakti) do not accept laya, they believe in a state beyond of eternal companionship with the Divine or dwelling in the Divine without laya. All this quite apart from supramentalisation. What then becomes of your starting-point that laya is the inevitable destiny of the soul and it is only the personal descent of the Avatar that saves it from inevitable laya?

III — The Divine and the Avatar

We believe that both you and the Mother are Avatars. But is it only in this life that both of you have shown your divinity? It is said that you and she have been on the earth constantly since its creation. What were you doing during your previous lives?

Carrying on the evolution.

I find it difficult to understand so concise a statement. Can't you elaborate it?

That would mean writing the whole of human history. I can only say that as there are special descents to carry on the evolution to a farther stage, so also something of the Divine is always there to help through each stage itself in one direction or another.

The common mass of mankind in the past may not have recognised your presence amongst them, especially when outwardly both of you may have had personalities like those of ordinary human beings. But how is it that even Sri Krishna, Buddha or Christ could not detect your presence in this world?

Presence where and in whom? If they did not meet, they would not recognise, and even if they met there is no reason why the Mother and I should cast off the veil which hung over these personalities and reveal the Divine behind them. Those lives were not meant for any such purpose.

If you were on earth constantly it would mean that you were here when those great beings descended. Whatever your external cloak, how could you hide your inner self — the true divinity — from them? It could not have mattered whether you and any of them were born in the same country or not. They ought to have discovered by their own higher light that the Divine Consciousness from which they had descended was already here in a physical form.

But why can't the inner self be hidden from all in such lives? Your reasoning would only have some force if the presence on earth then were as the Avatar but not if it was only as Vibhuti.

You have asked, "Presence where and in whom?" Why have you put those question-words? What exactly is conveyed by them?

... It is "presence" in or behind somebody and behind some outer personality. Also "presence" in what part of the world? If the Mother were in Rome in the time of the Buddha, how could Buddha know as he did not even know the existence of Rome?

I did not mean that you or the Mother needed to cast off your veil. It is those Great men who should have recognised you in spite of the veil.

One can be a great man without knowing such things as that. Great Men or even great Vibhutis need not be omniscient or know things which it was not useful for them to know.

You said, "But why can't the inner self be hidden from all in such lives?" I fail to understand how any one could hide one's inner self from Avatars and Vibhutis.

An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work, they need not have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what was going on in Rome. An Avatar even does not manifest all the divine omniscience and omnipotence; he has not come for any such unnecessary display; all that is behind him but not in the front of his consciousness. As for the Vibhuti, the Vibhuti need not even know that he is a power of the Divine. Some Vibhutis like Julius Caesar for instance have been atheists. Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God, only in some impersonal and indescribable Permanent.

Still I can't understand one thing: even though you did not cast off your veil, how could people like Buddha or Christ not help casting off their veil (or ignorance) in order to recognise you?

Why should they? The veil was there necessary for their work. Why should it be thrown off? So if the Mother was present in the life of Christ, she was there not as the Divine Manifestation but as one altogether human. For her to be recognised as the Divine would have created a tremendous disorder and frustrated the work Christ came to do by breaking its proper limits.

You must have heard that just before Christ was born some Rishis from India knew of the divine Descent, and set out for Jerusalem merely by their intuition, though they had not known what and where Jerusalem was.

I never heard of Rishis from India going there. There is a legend of some Magi getting an intuition that a divine Birth was there on earth and following a star that led them to the stable in which Christ was born. But this is a legend, not history.

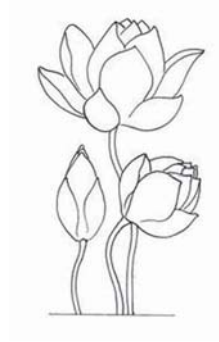
Since you and the Mother were on earth constantly from the beginning what was the need for Avatars coming down here one after another?

We were not on earth as Avatars.

You say that you both were not on earth as Avatars. And yet you were carrying on the evolution. Since the Divine Himself was on earth carrying on the evolution, what was the necessity for the coming down of the Avatars who are portions of Himself?

The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crises of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti.

(I – *Sri Aurobindo: A Garland of Tributes*, Ed. Arabinda Basu, published by Sri Aurobindo Research Academy, 1973, pp. 39-41; II – *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a young disciple*, by Nagin Doshi, published by Sri Aurobindo Society, pp. 235-37; III – *Ibid.*, pp. 282-85)



THE EXPRESSION OF THE SUPREME

(Excerpts from Dilip Kumar Roy's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo)

[The following passages are taken from the 3 volumes of Sri Aurobindo to Dilip published by Hari Krishna Mandir Trust, Pune, 2003, 2005, 2007.]

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of the true and divine consciousness within you. If the Divine were to unveil and reveal itself in all its glory the mind might feel a Presence, but it would not understand its action or its nature. It is in the measure of your own realisation and by the birth and growth of that greater consciousness in yourself that you will see the Divine and understand its action even behind its terrestrial disguises.

(A Message of November 1929)

(I – p. 32)

* * *

The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, — in the past; but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.

There is the rub that you seem all to ignore entirely the difficulties of the physical embodiment and the divine realisation on the physical plane. For most, it seems to be a simple alternative; either the Divine comes down in full power and the thing is done, no difficulty, no necessary conditions, no law or process, only miracle and magic, — or else, well, this cannot be the Divine! Again you all (or almost all) insist on the Divine becoming human, remaining in the human consciousness and you protest against any attempt to make the human Divine; on the other hand, there is an outcry of disappointment, bewilderment, distrust, perhaps indignation, if there are human difficulties, if there is strain in the body, a swaying struggle with adverse forces, obstacles, checks, illness — and some begin to say, “Oh, there is nothing Divine here!” As if one could remain vitally and physically in the untransformed individual human consciousness, in unchanged contact with it, satisfy its demands, and yet be immune under all circumstances and in all conditions against strain and struggle and illness. If I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it, to create there a great fullness of Truth and Light and Power and Bliss and Love, the

response is repulsion or fear or unwillingness — or a doubt whether it is possible. On one side there is the claim that illness and the rest should be impossible, on the other a violent rejection of the only condition under which these things can become impossible. I know that this is the natural inconsistency of the human vital mind wanting two inconsistent and incompatible things together; but that is one reason why it is necessary to transform the human and put something a little more luminous in its place.

14 January 1932

(I – pp. 155-56)

* * *

You say that this way is too difficult for you or the likes of you and it is only “avatars” like myself or the Mother that can do it. That is a strange misconception, for it is on the contrary the easiest and simplest and most direct way and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet; even those who have a tenth of your capacity can do it. It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endeavour that is difficult and needs a great force of Tapasya. As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer — a work such as I am certain none else had to do before us. For the Leader of the Way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent or embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience not in a mere play or *lila* but in grim earnest all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled and hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the Path. But it is not necessary nor tolerable that all that should be repeated over again to the full in the experience of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others — if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others, “Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly upbearing you — if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time — do not insist on the hard, hampered, round-about and difficult journey.”

5 May 1932

(I – pp. 197-98)

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It is quite possible for the Divine to have defeats — the Bhagawat Purana even enumerates running away from battle, *palāyanamani*, as one of the usual incidents in the life of the Avatar; only there is usually a method or at least a meaning in his flight, and what matters is the future and not the difficulties of the present.

31 July 1932

(I – p. 226)

* * *

As for faith, you write as if I never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than anyone living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. But even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe. But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week, every day — once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour — brings me so much nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and Night itself carries in it the burden of the Light that has to be.

5 January 1933

(I – p. 296)

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The whole world knows, spiritual thinker and materialist alike, that the world for the created or naturally evolved being in the ignorance or the inconscience of Nature is neither a bed of roses nor a path of joyous Light. It is a difficult journey, a battle and struggle, an often painful and chequered growth, a life besieged by obscurity, falsehood and suffering. It has its mental, vital, physical joys and pleasures, but these bring only a transient taste — which yet the vital self is unwilling to forego — and they end in distaste, fatigue or disillusionment. What then? To say the Divine does not exist is easy, but it leads nowhere — it leaves you where you are with no prospect or issue — neither Russell nor any materialist can tell you where you are going or even where you ought to go. The Divine does not manifest himself so as to be recognised in the external world-circumstances — admittedly so. These are not the works of an irresponsible autocrat somewhere — they are the circumstances of a working out of Forces according to a certain nature of being, one might say a certain proposition or problem of being into which we have all really consented to enter and

co-operate. The work is painful, dubious, its vicissitudes impossible to forecast? There are either of two possibilities then, to get out of it into Nirvana by the Buddhist or the illusionist way or to get inside oneself and find the Divine there since he is not discoverable on the surface. For those who have made the attempt, and there were not a few but hundreds and thousands, have testified through the ages that he is there and that is why there exists the Yoga. It takes long? The Divine is concealed behind a thick veil of his Maya and does not answer at once or at any early stage to our call? Or he gives only a glimpse uncertain and passing and then withdraws and waits for us to be ready? But if the Divine has any value, is it not worth some trouble and time and labour to follow after him and must we insist on having him without any training or sacrifice or suffering or trouble? It is surely irrational to make a demand of such a nature. It is positive that we have to get inside, behind the veil to find him — it is only then that we can see him outside and the intellect be not so much convinced as forced to admit his presence by experience — just as when a man sees what he has denied and can no longer deny it. But for that the means must be accepted and the persistence in the will and patience in the labour.

As for the Divine and the human, that also is a mind-made trouble. The Divine is there in the human, and the human fulfilling and exceeding its highest aspirations and tendencies becomes the Divine. That is what your silly X could not understand — that when the Divine descends, he takes upon himself the burden of humanity in order to exceed it — he becomes human in order to show humanity how to become Divine. But that cannot be if he is himself a weakling without the Divine Forces behind — he has to be strong in order to put his strength into all who are willing to receive it. There is therefore in him a double element — human in front, Divine behind — and it is that which gives the impression of unfathomableness of which X complained — indulging in that the iconoclast in him who cannot bear anything he feels to be superior to himself. If you look upon the human alone, looking with the external eye only and are not willing or ready to see anything else, you will see a human being only — if you look for the Divine, you will find the Divine.

10 September 1933

(I – pp. 361-62)

* * *

But why allow *anything* to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident; when you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.

What value have mental ideas about the Divine, ideas about what he should be, how he should act, how he should not act — they can only come in the way. Only the

Divine Himself matters. When your consciousness embraces the Divine, then you can know what the Divine is, not before. Krishna is Krishna, one does not care what he did or did not do, only to see Him, meet Him, feel the Light, the Presence, the Love, the Ananda is what matters. So it is always for the spiritual aspirations — it is the law of the spiritual life.

Don't waste time any longer in these ideas of the mind or in any starts of the vital — blow these clouds away. Keep fixed on the one thing indispensable.

8 May 1934

(II – p. 57)

* * *

I do not know why you should be suddenly bewildered by what I wrote — it is nothing new and we have been saying it since a whole eternity. I wrote this short answer in reference to a question which supposed that certain “perfections” must be demanded of the Divine Manifestation which seemed to me quite irrelevant to the reality. I put forward two propositions which appear to me indisputable unless we are to reverse all spiritual knowledge in favour of modern European ideas about things.

First, the Divine Manifestation even when it manifests in mental and human ways has behind it a consciousness greater than the mind and not bound by the petty mental and moral conventions of this very ignorant human race — so that to impose these standards on the Divine is to try to do what is irrational and impossible. Secondly this Divine Consciousness behind the apparent personality is concerned with only two things in a fundamental way — the Truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation and it does what is necessary for that in the way its greater than human consciousness sees like the necessary and intended way. I shall try if I can develop that when I write about it — perhaps I shall take your remarks about Rama and Krishna as the starting point — but that I shall see hereafter.

But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the divine purpose, it has to be done. Ramakrishna himself whom you quote for a capability of asking questions answered thousands of questions, I believe. But the answers must be such as Ramakrishna gave and such as I try to give, answers from a higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not lucubrations of the logical intellect trying to co-ordinate its ignorance; still less can there be a placing of the Divine or the Divine Truth before the judgment of the intellect to be condemned or acquitted by that authority — for the authority here has no sufficient jurisdiction or competence. This also I shall try to explain — it is what I have started to do in a longer letter.

20 May 1934

(II – pp. 59-60)

* * *

I am rather perplexed by your strictures on Rama. Cowardice is the last thing that can be charged against Valmiki's Rama; he has always been considered as a warrior and it is the "martial races" of India who have made him their god. Valmiki everywhere paints him as a great warrior. His employment of ruse against an infrahuman enemy does not prove the opposite — for that is always how the human (even great warriors and hunters) has dealt with the infrahuman. I think it is Madhusudan who has darkened Valmiki's hero in Bengali eyes and turned him into a poor puppet, but that is not the authentic Rama who, say what one will, was a great epic figure, — Avatar or no Avatar. As for conventional morality, all morality is a convention — man cannot live without conventions, mental and moral, otherwise he feels himself lost in the rolling sea of the anarchic forces of the vital Nature. Even the Russells and Bernard Shaws can only end by setting up another set of conventions in the place of those they have skittled over. Only by rising above mind can one really get beyond conventions — Krishna was able to do it because he was not a mental human being but an overmental godhead acting freely out of a greater consciousness than man's. Rama was not that, he was the Avatar of the sattwic mind — mental, emotional, moral — and he followed the Dharma of the age and race. That may make him temperamentally congenial to Gandhi and the reverse to you; but just as Gandhi's temperamental recoil from Krishna does not prove Krishna to be no Avatar, so your temperamental recoil from Rama does not establish that he was not an Avatar. However, my main point will be that Avatarhood does not depend upon these questions at all, but has another basis, meaning and purpose.

August 1934

(II – p. 88)

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No, I have no intention of entering into a supreme defence of Rama — I only entered into the points about Bali etc. because these are usually employed nowadays to belittle him as a great personality on the usual level. But from the point of view of Avatarhood I would no more think of defending his moral perfection according to modern standards than I would think of defending Napoleon or Caesar against the moralists or the democratic critics or the debunkers in order to prove that they were *Vibhūtis*. *Vibhūti*, Avatar are terms which have their own meaning and scope, and they are not concerned with morality or immorality, perfection or imperfection according to small human standards or setting an example to men or showing new moral attitudes or giving new spiritual teachings. These may or may not be done, but they are not at all the essence of the matter.

Also, I do not consider your method of dealing with the human personality of Rama to be the right one. It has to be taken as a whole in the setting that Valmiki gave it (not treated as if it were the story of a modern man) and with the significance that he gave to

his hero's personality, deeds and works. If it is pulled out of its setting and analysed under the dissecting knife of a modern ethical mind, it loses all its significance at once. Krishna so treated becomes a [mere] debauchee and trickster who no doubt did great things in politics — but so did Rama in war. Achilles and Odysseus pulled out of their setting become, one a furious egoistic savage, and the other a cruel and cunning savage. I consider myself under an obligation to enter into the spirit, significance, atmosphere of the *Mahabharata*, *Iliad*, *Ramayana* and identify myself with their time-spirit before I can feel what their heroes were in themselves apart from the details of their outer actions.

As for the Avatarhood, I accept it for Rama because he fills a place in the scheme — and seems to me to fill it rightly — and because when I read the *Ramayana* I feel a great afflatus which I recognise and which makes of its story — mere faery-tale though it seems — a parable of a great critical transitional event that happened in the terrestrial evolution and gives to the main character's personality and action a significance of the large typical cosmic kind which these actions would not have had if they had been done by another man in another scheme of events. The Avatar is not bound to do extraordinary actions, but he is bound to give his acts or his work or what he is — any of these or all — a significance and an effective power that are part of something essential to be done in the history of the earth and its races.

All the same, if anybody does not see as I do and wants to eject Rama from his place, I have no objection — I have no particular partiality for Rama — provided somebody is put in who can worthily fill up the gap his absence leaves. There *was* somebody there, Valmiki's Rama or another Rama or somebody else not Rama.

Also I do not mean that I admit the validity of your remarks about Rama, even taken as a piecemeal criticism; but that I have no time for today. I maintain my position about the killing of *Bālī* and the banishment of Sita in spite of *Bālī*'s preliminary objection to the procedure, afterwards retracted, and in spite of the opinion of Rama's relatives. Necessarily from the point of view of the antique dharma — not from that of any universal moral standard — which besides does not exist, since the standard changes according to clime or age.

23 August 1934

(II – pp. 89-90)

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No, certainly not — an Avatar is not at all bound to be a spiritual prophet — he is never in fact merely a prophet, he is a realiser, an establisher — not of outward things only, though he does realise something in the outward also, but, as I have said, of something essential and radical needed for the terrestrial evolution which is the evolution of the embodied spirit through successive stages towards the Divine. It was not at all Rama's business to establish the spiritual stage of that evolution — so he did not at all concern himself with that. His business was to destroy Ravana and

to establish the Ramarajya —in other words, to fix for the future the possibility of an order proper to the sattwic civilised human being who governs his life by the reason, the finer emotions, morality, or at least moral ideals, such as truth, obedience, co-operation and harmony, the sense of domestic and public order, — to establish this in a world still occupied by anarchic forces, the Animal Mind and the powers of the vital Ego making its own satisfaction the rule of life, in other words, the *Vānara* and *Rākṣasa*. This is the meaning of Rama and his life-work and it is according as he fulfilled it or not that he must be judged as Avatar or no Avatar. It was not his business to play the comedy of the chivalrous *Kṣatriya* with the formidable brute beast that was *Bāli*, it was his business to kill him and get the Animal Mind under his control. It was his business to be not necessarily a perfect, but a largely representative sattwic Man, a faithful husband and a lover, a loving and obedient son, a tender and perfect brother, father, friend — he is friend of all kinds of people, friend of the outcast Guhaka, friend of the Animal leaders, Sugriva, Hanuman, friend of the vulture Jatayu, friend even of *Rākṣasa* Vibhishana. All that he was in a brilliant, striking but above all spontaneous and inevitable way, not with a forcing of this note or that like Harishchandra or Shivi, but with a certain harmonious completeness. But most of all, it was his business to typify and establish the things on which the social idea and its stability depend, truth and honour, the sense of Dharma, public spirit and the sense of order. To the first, to truth and honour, much more than to his filial love and obedience to his father — though to that also — he sacrificed his personal rights as the elect of the King and the assembly and fourteen of the best years of his life and went into exile in the forests. To his public spirit and his sense of public order (the great and supreme civic virtue in the eyes of the ancient Indians, Greeks, Romans, for at that time the maintenance of the ordered community, not the separate development and satisfaction of the individual was the pressing need of the human evolution) he sacrificed his own happiness and domestic life and the happiness of Sita. In that he was at one with the moral sense of all the antique races, though at variance with the later romantic individualistic sentimental morality of the modern man who can afford to have that less stern morality just because the ancients sacrificed the individual in order to make the world safe for the spirit of social order. Finally, it was Rama's business to make the world safe for the ideal of the sattwic human being by destroying the sovereignty of Ravana, the *Rākṣasa* menace. All this he did with such a divine afflatus in his personality and action that his figure has been stamped for more than two millenniums on the mind of Indian culture, and what he stood for has dominated the reason and idealising mind of man in all countries, and in spite of the constant revolt of the human vital, is likely to continue to do so until a greater ideal arises. And you say in spite of all these that he was no Avatar? If you like — but at any rate he stands among the few greatest of the great *Vibhūtis*. You may dethrone him now — for man is no longer satisfied with the sattwic ideal and is seeking for something more — but his work and meaning remain stamped on the

past of the earth's evolving race.

When I spoke of the gap that would be left by his absence, I did not mean a gap among the prophets and intellectuals, but a gap in the scheme of Avatarhood — there was somebody who was the Avatar of the sattwic Human as Krishna was the Avatar of the overmental Superman — I can see no one but Rama who can fill the place. Spiritual teachers and prophets (as also intellectuals, scientists, artists, poets, etc.) — these are at the greatest *Vibhūti*s, but they are not Avatars. For at that rate all religious founders would be Avatars — Joseph Smith (I think that is his name) of the Mormons, St. Francis of Assisi, Calvin, Loyola and a host of others as well as Christ, Chaitanya or Ramakrishna.

For faith, miracles, Bejoy Goswami, another occasion. I wanted to say this much more about Rama — which is still only a hint and is not the thing I was going to write about the general principle of the Avatar. Nor, I may add, is it a complete or supreme defence of Rama. For that I would have to write about what the story of the Ramayana meant, appreciate Valmiki's presentation of his chief characters (they are none of them copy-book examples, but great men and women with the defects and merits of human nature, as all men even the greatest are), and show also how the Godhead, which was behind the frontal and instrumental personality we call Rama, worked out every incident of his life as a necessary step in what had to be done. As to the weeping Rama, I had answered that in my other unfinished letter. You are imposing the colder and harder Nordic ideal on the Southern temperament which regarded the expression of emotions, not its suppression, as a virtue. Witness the weeping and lamentations of Achilles, Ulysses and other Greek, Persian and Indian heroes — the latter especially as lovers.

24 August 1934

(II – pp. 90-93)

* * *

But what about X and the māyāmṛga of Rama?

Well, I thought I had finished with Rama who after all belongs to the past. The *Māyāmṛga* was an absolute necessity for removing Rama from the Ashram, otherwise Ravana could not have been able to carry Sita off, so the Divine or Valmiki (to whichever you like to give the credit of the incident) arranged it in that way (a very poetic way, you must admit) and the instrumental Personality accepted the veiling of the consciousness so that his work might be done, just as Krishna clean forgot all he had said to Arjuna in the Gita so that he might teach him something else. You must expect such things from the Avatar!

31 August 1934

(II – p. 101)

* * *

But krodha [wrath] also? . . . Also I find myself in a typhoon of confusion to puzzle over your admission of such a thing as an unconscious avatar. For that to me seems a contradiction in terms — an impossibility: that of an Avatar being blind! Good Lord, then the Upanishad was wrong after all in ridiculing the trustfulness of the “blind who are led by the blind”!

Why should not Rama have *kāma* (lust) as well as *prema* (love)? They were supposed to go together as between husband and wife in ancient India. The performances of Rama in the *viraha* of Sita are due to Valmiki's poetic idea which was also Kalidasa's and everybody else's in those far-off times about how a complete lover should behave in such a quandary. Whether the actual Rama bothered himself to do all that is another matter.

As for the unconscious Avatar, why not? Chaitanya is supposed to be an Avatar by the *Vaishnavas*, yet he was conscious of the Godhead behind only when that Godhead came in front and possessed him on rare occasions. Christ said “I and my father are one”, but yet he always spoke and behaved as if there were a difference. Ramakrishna's earlier period was that of one seeking God, not aware from the first of his identity. These are the reputed religious Avatars who ought to be more conscious than a man of action like Rama. And supposing the full and permanent consciousness, why should the Avatar proclaim himself except on rare occasions to an Arjuna or to a few bhaktas or disciples? It is for others to find out what he is — though he does not deny when others speak of him as That, he is not always saying and perhaps never may say or only in moments like that of the Gita, “I am He.”

2 September 1934

(II – pp. 102-03)

* * *

No time for a full answer to your renewed remarks on Rama tonight. You are intrigued only because you stick to the modern standard, modern measuring-rods of moral and spiritual perfection (introduced by [?] and Bankim) for the Avatar — while I start from another standpoint altogether and resolutely refuse these standard human measures. The ancient Avatars except Buddha were *not* either standards of perfection or spiritual teachers — in spite of the Gita which was spoken, says Krishna, in a moment of supernormal consciousness which he lost immediately afterwards. They were, if I may say so, representative cosmic men who were instruments of a divine Intervention for fixing certain things in the evolution of the earth-race. I stick to that and refuse to submit myself in this argument to any other standard whatever.

I did not admit that Rama was a blind Avatar, but offered you two alternatives of which the latter represents my real view founded on the impression made on me by the Ramayana that Rama knew very well but refused to be talkative about it — his

business being not to disclose the Divine but to fix mental, moral and emotional man (not to originate him, for he was there already) on the earth as against the Animal and the *Rākṣasa* demoniacal forces. My argument from Chaitanya (who was for most of the time first a pandit and then a bhakta, but only occasionally the Divine himself) is perfectly rational and logical, if you follow my line and don't insist on a high specifically spiritual consciousness for the Avatar. I shall point out what I mean in my next.

By sattwic man I do not mean a moral or an always self-controlled one, but a predominantly mental (as opposed to a vital or merely physical man) who has rajasic emotions and passions, but lives predominantly according to his mind and its will and ideas. There is no such thing, I suppose, as a purely sattwic man — since the three gunas go always together in a state of unstable equilibrium — but a predominantly sattwic man is what I have described. My impression of Rama from Valmiki is such — it is quite different from yours. I am afraid your picture of him is quite out of focus — you efface the main lines of the characters, belittle and brush out all the lights to which Valmiki gave so much value and prominence and hammer always at some details and some parts of shadow which you turn into the larger part of Rama. That is what the debunkers do — but a debunked figure is not the true figure.

By the way, a sattwic man can have a strong passion and strong anger — and when he lets the latter loose, the normally violent fellow is simply nowhere. Witness the outbursts of anger of Christ, the indignation of Chaitanya — and the general evidence of experience and psychology on the point. All this however by the way — I shall try to develop later.

P.S. The trait of Rama which you give as that of an undeveloped man, viz., his decisive spontaneous action according to the will and the idea that came to him, is a trait of the cosmic man and many *Vibhūtis*, men of action of the large Caesarean or Napoleonic type. That also I hope to develop some time.

3 September 1934

(II – pp. 103-05)

* * *

When I said, “Why not an unconscious Avatar?” I was taking *your* statement (not mine) that Rama was unconscious and how could there be an unconscious Avatar. My own view is that Rama was not blind, not unconscious of his Avatarhood, only uncommunicative about it. But I said that even taking your statement to be correct, the objection was not insuperable. I instanced the case of Chaitanya and the others, because there the facts are hardly disputable. Chaitanya for the first part of his life was simply Nimai Pandit and had no consciousness of being anything else. Then he had his conversion and became the bhakta Chaitanya. This bhakta at times seemed to be possessed by the presence of Krishna, knew himself to be Krishna, spoke,

moved and appeared with the light of the Godhead — none around him could think of or see him as anything else when he was in this glorified and transfigured condition. But from that he fell back to the ordinary consciousness of the bhakta and, as I have read in his biography, refused then to consider himself as anything more. These, I think, are the facts. Well, then what do they signify? Was he only Nimai Pandit at first? It is quite conceivable that he was so and the descent of the Godhead into him only took place after his conversion and spiritual change. But also afterwards when he was in his normal bhakta-consciousness, was he then no longer the Avatar? An intermittent Avatarhood? Krishna coming down for an afternoon call into Chaitanya and then going up again till the time came for the next visit? I find it difficult to believe in this phenomenon. The rational explanation is that in the phenomenon of Avatarhood there is a Consciousness behind, at first veiled or sometimes perhaps half-veiled which is that of the Godhead and a frontal consciousness human or apparently human or at any rate with all the appearance of terrestriality which is the instrumental Personality. In that case, it is possible that the secret Consciousness was all along there, but waited to manifest until after the conversion; and it manifested intermittently because the main work of Chaitanya was to establish the type of a spiritual and psychic bhakti and love in the emotional vital part of man, preparing the vital in us in that way to turn towards the Divine — at any rate, to fix that possibility in the earth-nature. It was not that there had not been the emotional type of bhakti before; but the completeness of it, the élan, the vital's rapture in it had never manifested as it manifested in Chaitanya. But for that work it would never have done if he had always been in the Krishna consciousness; he would have been the Lord to whom all gave bhakti, but not the supreme example of the divine ecstatic bhakta. But still the occasional manifestation showed who he was and at the same time evidenced the mystic law of the Immanence.

Voilà — for Chaitanya. But, if Chaitanya, the frontal consciousness, the instrumental Personality, was all the time the Avatar, yet except in his highest moments was unconscious of it and even denied it, that pushed a little farther would establish the possibility of what you call an unconscious Avatar, that is to say, of one in which the veiled Consciousness might not come in front but always move the instrumental Personality from behind. The frontal consciousness might be aware in the inner parts of its being that it was only an instrument of something Divine which was its real Self, but outwardly would think, speak and behave as if it were only the human being doing a given work with a peculiar power and splendour. Whether there was such an Avatar or not is another matter, but logically it is possible.

4 September 1934

(II – pp. 105-06)

* * *

I do not understand also why you shall assume that I am displeased with the karma-questioning. I castigated or fustigated Nirod not from displeasure, not even “more in sorrow than in anger,” but for fun and also from a high sense of duty; for that erring mortal was bold enough to generalise from his very limited experience and impose it as a definite law of Yoga, discrediting in the process my own immortal philosophy. What then could I do but jump on him in a spirit of genial massacre?

I am afraid your letter does very much the same thing. In spite of your disclaimer you practically come to the conclusion that all my nonsense about integral Yoga and karma being as much a way to realisation as *jnana* and *bhakti* is either a gleaming chimera or practicable only by Avatars or else a sheer laborious superfluity — since one can bump straight into the Divine through the open door of Bhakti or sweep majestically in him by the easy high road of meditation; so why this scramble through the jungle of karma by which nobody ever reached anywhere? The old Yogas are true, are they not? Then why a newfangled more difficult Yoga with unheard talk about the supramental and god knows what else? There can be no answer to that; for I can only answer by a repetition of the statement of my own knowledge and experience — that is what I have done in today’s answer to Nirod — and that amounts only to a perverse obstinacy in riding my gleaming and dazzling chimera and forcing my nuisance of a superfluity on a world weary of itself and anxious to get a short easy cut to the Divine. Unfortunately, I don’t believe in short cuts — at any rate none ever led me where I wanted to go. However, let it rest there.

23 December 1934

(II – p. 185)

* * *

(. . .) *these mental conceptions — since all such conceptions are suspect from your Supramental vision. But do you seriously want me to swallow this mountainous absurdity that any man can be made a Krishna or a Sri Aurobindo, any woman a Mother, any X a Tyagaraj, any Y a Tansen, any Z a Shakespeare, any A a Raphael, any B a Vyas or Valmiki. You really want me to swallow this [even?] if I suffocate? If you do I will try to but then you mustn’t blame me if I do suffocate in the end. Agreed? For your logical proposition “Everything is possible” reduces all human experience to look so hopeless, so childish, and so frightening for a poor — Dilip — who finds it so difficult to believe that any amount of Divine Grace will make a C into a Sri Aurobindo or a D into a Sri Mira. Is it for this preconception that the Divine Grace will shun me like one past all hope? I am not joking. I mean it. All mental conceptions must go! This too? It is urged, thanks to your logic, that with the Supramental descent every sadhak here will become greater than Krishna since Krishna was — pooh-pooh, an Overmental pigmy god compared with what supramentalised C will be. Logic irrefutable. But — O tears! flow! flow!*

I have never said any of all these things. These egoistic terms are not those in which I think — any more than these egoistic ambitions even are those in which my vital moves. It is a higher Truth I seek, whether it makes men greater or not is not the question but whether it will give them truth and peace and light to live in and make life something better than a struggle with ignorance and falsehood and pain and strife. Then even if they are less great than the men of the past, my object would have been achieved. For me mental conceptions cannot be the end of all things. I know that the supermind is a truth.

You do not seem to have followed the sense of my reasoning very well — perhaps because I clothe my arguments with Nirod in a tone of humour. You have taken my humorous comment about Muthu with a particular seriousness — if you really are not joking: but I suppose you are in spite of your disclaimer.

It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth consciousness. I see it above and know what it is — I feel it overseeing my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness there to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of C or D or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself — whether it is the Divine will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption — I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.

10 February 1935

(II – pp. 238-40)

* * *

I did not mean that anyone here could replace or equal myself and the Mother; much less the persons you name — or the actual Muthu equal the actual Ramakrishna. But certainly it is possible for X and Y and Z (I won't repeat the names) to change, to throw off their present perversities or limitations and come nearer to us than they are now — if they have the sincere will and make the endeavour. I have explained my meaning to Nirod — so I do not repeat it here. Of course in my writing to Nirod, there is a certain note of persiflage and humorous insistence of which you must take

account if you want to get the exact measure of my reasoning and its significance . . .
[incomplete]

10 February 1935

(II – pp. 241)

* * *

I am rather taken aback by the interpretation you have put on my letter. There was absolutely nothing in it of dismissal or giving you up. You had written that you found you desired Krishna only and in the old way with desire for the Ananda and the Milan, that you could not arrive at *ahaitukī bhakti* and that the Supramental glories of my Yoga and the greatness of my Avatarhood were beyond you and not for you and that you wanted only Krishna. You concluded that I should find you unfit and send you away. My answer was intended to show that none of these things need constitute unfitness. I had not asked you to seek after the Supermind, my writing about it was only in answer to questions for intellectual discussion and knowledge; for none can attain to Supermind unless Supermind comes to them, unless, as I put it, it descends into the earth-consciousness. As for Avatarhood, we had agreed that you should regard me as Guru and it was not necessary for you to accept or see me as the Divine. I had also said several times that I had no objection to your seeking after the Divine in the form and personality of Krishna. All these things had been agreed upon between us — at least so I understood it — some time ago. So I did not see why for these things I should declare you unfit or send you away. So long as you have the seeking for the Divine as Krishna that is quite sufficient. As for *ahaitukī bhakti*, I wanted to point out that to think I insisted on it is a mistake; it is the highest and most powerful method, but in its absence *sahaitukī bhakti* is quite enough. I emphasised my point by saying that even if that were absent [. . .] a man need not despair of reaching the Divine, for there were other ways, such as that of Knowledge, or even without any way a sincere pressure of seeking on the nature would end by finding whatever it sought of the Divine in whatever form. Therefore it was sufficient to follow the urge in you and not force yourself to seek other things or consider them indispensable for fitness.

I hope this will make my meaning clear to you . . .

31 October 1935

(II – pp. 334-35)

* * *

But what strange ideas again! — that I was born with a supramental temperament and had never any brain or mind or any acquaintance with human mentality — and that I know nothing of hard realities. Good God! My whole life has been a struggle

with hard realities, from struggle and hardships and semi-starvation in England through the fierce difficulties and perils of revolutionary leadership and organisation and activity in India to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, internal and external. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle; the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But, of course, as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for the sadhaks to think I am living in an august, glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or nature present themselves. But what an illusion all the same!

8 December 1935

(II – p. 366)

* * *

Then as to the Avatar and the symbols. There is, it seems to me, a cardinal error in the modern insistence on the biographical and historical, that is to say, the external factuality of the Avatar, the incidents of his outward life. What matters is the spiritual Reality, the Power, the Influence that come with him or that he brought down by his action and his existence. First of all, what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not ?) but what he was and did within; it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all. It is the inner life that gives to the outer any power it may have and the inner life of a spiritual man is something vast and full and, at least in the great figures, so crowded and teeming with significant things that no biographer or historian could ever hope to seize it all or tell it. Whatever is significant in the outward life is so because it is a symbol of what has been realised within himself and one may go on and say that the inner life also is only significant as an expression, a living representation of the movement of the Divinity behind it. That is why we need not enquire whether the stories about Krishna were transcripts, however loose, of his acts on earth or are symbol-representations of what Krishna was and is for men, of the Divinity expressing itself in the figure of Krishna. Buddha's renunciation, his temptation by Mara, his enlightenment under the Bo-tree are such symbols, so too the virgin birth, the temptation in the desert, the crucifixion of Christ are such symbols, true by what they signify, even if they are not scrupulously recorded historical events. The outward facts as related of Buddha or Christ are not much more than what has happened in many other lives — what is it that gives Buddha or Christ their enormous place in the spiritual world ? It was because something manifested through them that was more than any outward event or any teaching. The verifiable historicity gives us very little of that, yet it is that only that matters. So it seems to me that Krishnaprem is fundamentally right in what

he says of the symbols. To the physical mind only the words and facts and acts of a man matter; to the inner mind it is the spiritual happenings in him that matter. Even the teachings of Buddha and Christ are spiritually true not as mere mental teachings but as the expression of spiritual states or happenings in them which by their life on earth they made possible (or at any rate more dynamically potential) in others. Also, evidently, sectarian walls are a mistake, an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth which may serve a mental, but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar or Guru have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal; it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.

It is also a fact that nobody can give you any spiritual realisation which does not come from something in one's own true Self, it is always the Divine who reveals himself and the Divine is within you; so He who reveals must be felt in your own heart. Your query here simply suggests that this is a truth which can be misinterpreted or misused, but so can every spiritual truth if it is taken hold of in the wrong way — and the human mind has a great penchant for taking Truth by the wrong end and arriving at falsehood. All statements about these things are after all mental statements and at the mercy of the mind that interprets them. There is a snag in every such statement created not by the Truth that it expresses but in the mind's interpretation. The snag here (what you call the slip) lies not in the statement itself which is quite correct, but in the light in which it may be taken by ignorant or self-sufficient minds enamoured of their ego. Many have put forward the "own self" gospel without taking the trouble to see whether it is the true Self, have pitted the ignorance of their "own self" against the knowledge of the Guru or made it or something that flattered and fostered it the Ishta Devata. The snag in the worship of Guru or Avatar is a sectarian bias which insists on the Representative or the Manifestation but loses sight of the Manifested; the snag in the emphasis on the other side is the ignoring of the need of them or belittling of the value of the Representative or Manifestation and the substitution, not of the true Self one in all, but of one's "own self" as the guide and light. How many have done that here and lost the way through the pull of the magnified ego which is one of the great perils on the way! However that does not lessen the truth of the things said by Krishnaprem, only in looking at them one must put each thing in its place in the harmony of the All which is for us the expression of the Supreme.

9 February 1936

(III – pp. 45-47)

* * *

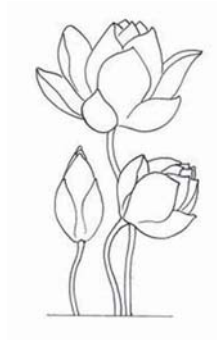
Your description of the Avatars is magnificent in colour — I wish it were a sober fact that the Divine refuses us nothing — if He would start doing that, it would be glorious and I should not at all insist on constant beatitude. But from his representatives, Vibhutis and Avatars he rather exacts a good deal and expects them to

overcome under rather difficult conditions. No doubt they do not call for compassion — but, well, surely you can permit them an occasional divine right to a grumble? Most of them have grumbled — at least once or twice — and ours, like Mother's about the *agacement* or mine about the tons of correspondence is a semi-humorous *plainte* [complaint].

10 February 1937

(III – p. 263)

* * *



DIVINITY IN MAN AND DIVINE MAN — 2

(Excerpts from Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo)

(Continued from p. 143)

Enclosed is a long, perhaps too long controversy.¹ But the subject demands it. You may read it at one, two or three stretches. Please write an exhaustive reply, but in ink.

Nirod.

On the back the rational and logical result of your arguments. I shall write certain irrational answers on your MS. — in ink.

You have won all along the line. Who could resist such a lava-torrent of logic? slightly mixed but still! You have convinced me (1st) that there never was nor could be an Avatar, (2) that all the so-called Avatars were chimerical fools and failures, (3) that there is no Divinity or divine element in man, (4) that I have never had any true difficulties or struggles, and that if I had any, it was all my fun (as K.S. said of my new metres that they were only Mr. Ghose's fun); (5) that if ever there was or will be a real Avatar, I am not he — but that I knew before, (6) that all I have done or the Mother has done is a mere sham — sufferings, struggles, conquests, defeats, the Way found, the Way followed, the call to others to follow, everything — it was all make-believe since I was the Divine and nothing could touch me and none follow me. That is truly a discovery, a downright knock-out which leaves me convinced, convicted, amazed, gasping. I won't go on, there is no space; but there are a score of other luminous convictions that your logic has forced on me. But what to do next? You have put me in a terrible fix and I see no way out of it. For if the Way, the Yoga is merely sham, fun and chimera — then?

[Here begins my typed letter. Sri Aurobindo's answer, written in hand on the same sheets, was never sent. I first read it after it was discovered among some old papers of Sri Aurobindo in 1981.]

I have read your Essays on the Gita, Synthesis of Yoga, letter on Rama and, though I am wiser, my original and fundamental difficulty remains as unsolved as ever. What is so simple to you, as everything is, appears mighty complex and abstruse to my dense intellect. So no alternative but to submit to a fresh beating.

1. A typed letter of five pages taking up the subject of Avatarhood.

What your view comes to, put in a syllogism, is this: Since I have done it and I am an Avatar, every other blessed creature can do it.

This is idiotic. I have said “Follow my path, the way I have discovered for you through my own efforts and example. Transform your nature from the animal to the spiritual, grow into a higher divine consciousness. All this you can do by your own aspiration aided by the force of the Divine Shakti.” That, if you please, is not the utterance of a madman or an imbecile. I have said, “I have opened the Way; now you with the Divine help can follow it.” I have not said “Find the way for yourself as I did.”

In the Essays on the Gita you say, man “is ignorant because there is upon the eyes of his soul and all its organs the seal of . . . Nature, Prakriti, Maya . . . she has minted him like a coin out of the precious metal of the divine substance, but overlaid with a strong coating of the alloy of her phenomenal qualities, stamped with her own stamp and mark of animal humanity, and although the secret sign of the Godhead is there, it is at first indistinguishable.”²

Does it follow that the coating cannot be dissolved nor the mark effaced? Then stamp the stamp of the chimera on all efforts at spirituality and catalogue as asses and fools all who have attempted to rise beyond the human animal — all who have tried to follow the path of the Christ, the Buddha; stigmatise as folly Vedanta, Tantra, Yoga, the way of the Jinas, Christ himself and Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, and any other pathfinder and seeker.

On the other hand you write that in the Avatar, “the divinely born Man, the real substance shines through the coating; the mark of the seal is there only for form, the vision is that of the secret Godhead, the power of the life is that of the secret Godhead, and it breaks through the seals of the assumed human nature.”³

Does it follow that the breaking through had not to be done, or was a mere trifling impediment? The power of the form can be exceedingly great as every thinker and observer of life can tell you.

After this you say that the Avatar’s descent is “precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works . . . Even human sorrow and physical suffer-

2. SABCL, Vol. 13, p. 149.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

ing he must assume and use so as to show . . . how that suffering may be a means of redemption.”⁴ Well, Sir, it will have no go with me, my heart won’t leap up at such a divine possibility, such a dream of Paradise!

Your heart not leaping up does not make my statement a falsehood, a non-sequitur or a chimera.

My fellow-brothers may venture to reach there through such a thin hanging bridge, but if they do, I am afraid it will be into a fool’s Paradise.

The fool being myself, eh? For it is my Paradise and it is I who call them to it.

The difficulties you face, the dangers you overcome, the struggles you embrace would seem to be mere shams. [Sri Aurobindo underlined “mere shams”.]

Truly then what a humbug and charlatan I have been, making much of sham struggles and dangers — or, in the alternative, since I took them for realities, what a self-blinded imbecile!

Mother knew she was an Avatar at a very early age.

At what age? But I shall say nothing about the Mother — I cannot bring her into such arguments, only myself.

She was thus able to follow the path of travails through volcanoes and earthquakes. But if she says to me, “You can also do it,” I will cry out, “Forbear, Mother, forbear.”

Nobody asks you to go through volcanoes and earthquakes or to proceed unhelped. You are simply asked to follow the Leader and Guide with the Divine help and with courage, in the face of whatever difficulties come.

If I knew I was an Avatar (pardon my bold hypothesis) do you think I would cry or wail for fear of any amount of crashes and collisions or would it matter if I began with a nature with not a grain of spirituality in me? I would jump from peak to peak in somersaults, go down the abysses, rise up the steeps without fear of mortal consequences since I would know that I was the Divine.

Would you? I wish you had been in my place then! You would have been a hundred times more fit than myself, if you could really have done that. And how easily things

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

would have been done! while I did them and am still doing them with enormous difficulty because I lead and have to make the path so that others may follow with less difficulty.

There could be no death or failure for me.

The Divine in the body is not subject to death or failure? Yet all those claimed to be Avatars have died — some by violence, some by cancer, some of indigestion etc., etc. You yourself say that they were all failures. How do you reconcile these self-contradictory arguments?

You say, “A physical and mental body is prepared fit for the divine incarnation by a pure or great heredity and the descending Godhead takes possession of it.”⁵

Like my heredity? It was “pure”? But of course I am not a divine incarnation. Only why put all that upon me whom it does not fit?

To his beloved children created in his own image the Divine says with gusto, “I send you through this hell of a cycle of rebirths. Don’t lose heart, poor boys, if you groan under the weight of your sins and those of your ancestors to boot. I will come down and take hold of a pure heredity with no coating around me and say unto you — come and follow my example.”

Who gave this message? It is your own invention. The Divine does not come down in that way. It is a silly imagination of yours that you are trying to foist on the truth of things. The Divine also comes down into the cycle of rebirths, makes the great holocaust, endures shame and obloquy, torture and crucifixion, the burden of human nature, sex and passion and sorrow and suffering, manifests many births before he reveals the Avatar. And when he does reveal it? Well, read the lives of the Avatars and try to understand and see.

Nobody ever said there was no coating — that is your invention.

Not a very inspiring message, Sir!

No, of course not — but it is yours, not any Avatar’s.

Jatakas tell us that in every life small or great, Buddha’s frontal consciousness was always above the level of others.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Jatakas are legends.

Ramakrishna and Chaitanya began yoga in their cradle, it seems.

Did they? I know nothing about it; but if they told you that! Anyhow one died by drowning and the other of a cancer.

*I don't know if Avatars ever play the part of the rogue or the eternal sinner.
[Sri Aurobindo underlined "rogue or the eternal sinner".]*

Krishna was a rogue and a sinner even in his Avatar life, if tales are true! Don't you think so?

Now about your absence of urge towards spirituality. Even though that sounds like a story, pray tell us how you could free your mind from all thoughts in 7 days or be established in Brahmic consciousness in a few days.

3 if you please. You are terribly inaccurate in your statements. It was simply through the Divine Grace, because it had been done by thousands before me throughout the centuries and millenniums, and the Divine did not want me to waste time over that; other things in the Yoga were not so damned easy!

And even apart from spirituality, what of your waiting for the gallows for your country's sake, with perfect equanimity? [Sri Aurobindo underlined "perfect equanimity".]

Who told you that? I was perfectly sure of release. But even so plenty of ordinary men did it before me.

What of your profoundly bold assertion that you would free the country by a Force which was under your feet?

Never said that, surely. Under my feet?

What of your brilliant career?

My career was much less brilliant than many others'. They ought to have progressed then farther in Yoga than myself, e.g. Mussolini, Lenin, Tilak, Brajendranath Seal, the admirable Crichton, Gandhi, Tagore, Roosevelt, Lloyd George etc., etc. All Avatars or all full of the essential principle.

If one has the essential principle, what does it matter if one has no urge towards spirituality? The inner consciousness is there.

All that does not apply to me alone. There are hundreds of others. The inner consciousness is not so rare a phenomenon as all that.

There are some people, I hear, who are to all external appearance debauchees or moral insolvents but whose psychic is much developed or “can be touched”.

That gives away the whole case. For mark that I have never asked the whole human race to follow me to the supramental — that is your invention, not mine.

Still you go on saying that what you have done is possible for me and not for Arjunas only to whom alone Krishna seems to have addressed the Gita.
[Sri Aurobindo underlined “Arjunas only”.]

What a waste of words and energy! Yet Krishna said “even Chandalas can follow my way.”

I prophesy that your message will reverberate in the rarefied atmosphere evoking a loud rebellious echo from human hearts.

I admit that you have successfully proved that I am an imbecile.

But if you say, “I come to raise you bodily by my divine omnipotence, not by my example,” I am all for it. If you insist that I follow your example, it would be as well to insist on my leaving you bag and baggage at once.

All this is a purely personal argument concerning yourself. Up to now you were making general assertions — so was I. I was concerned with the possibility of people following the Path I had opened as Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, etc. opened theirs. You were declaring that no human being could follow and that my life was perfectly useless as an example — like the lives of the Avatars. Path, life, example all useless — even Power useless because all have been failures. These are general questions. Whether X or Y is able or willing to follow the path or depends on divine Omnipotence only is a personal question. Even if X or Y does so, he has no right to pass a general decree of impossibility against others.⁶

There are some who claim that they are here and remain here by their soul’s call. But I am not one of those fortunate ones. Where they hear the soul’s call, I hear the calls of a thousand devils and if it were not for your love — well, no,

6. Note that here Sri Aurobindo wrote X and Y in the MS; they are not editorial substitutions.

— for your Power (which I firmly believe in), I would end up myself by being one of those devils. I hope you will believe that this is not a conceited statement.

It is very conceited. To be a devil needs a considerable personal capacity or else a great openness to the Beyond. If you had said, I can only be an ordinary human being, that might be modest.

We don't mean to give you a compliment when we say these things.

Of course not. It is the reverse of complimentary, since you prove me to be an ignorant and mistaken fellow of an Avatar, who merrily wastes his time doing things which are of no earthly use to any human being — except perhaps Arjuna who is not here.

We say that the Sun is a thing apart, not to be measured by any human standards.

The Sun's rays are of use to somebody — you say all my acts and life and laborious opening of the way I thought I had made for spiritual realisation, are of no use to anybody — since nobody is strong enough to follow the path, only the Avatar can do it. Poor lonely ineffective fellow of an Avatar!

We respect him, adore him, lay ourselves bare to his light, but we do not follow him.

Who is this we? Editorial “we”?

Let me point out one or two facts in a perfectly serious spirit.

(1) It has always been supposed by spiritual people that divine perfection, similitude to the Divine, *sadrishya*, *sadharmya* is part of the Mukti. Christ said “Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect” — the very Divine himself, mind you, not a mere Avatar or luminous projection from him. His followers strive to be Christ-like. Thomas à Kempis, meditating and striving, wrote a book on the Imitation of Christ. Francis of Assisi and many others arrived at Christlikeness. [Krishna in] the Gita insists on *sadharmya*, gives himself as an example, and tells Arjuna that many before him from ancient times reached to it. Buddha in teaching *karuna*, the eightfold path, the rejection of *sanskaras*, gave it as an ideal to all true followers of his path, thus placing before them not only his own path but his own example. All this is trash and humbug? Christ and Buddha were fools? Myself even a bigger fool? It is not a question of greatness — it is a question of acquiring a certain consciousness to which the way is laid open. It is not a question of acquiring cosmic omniscience and

omnipotence, but of reaching the essential divine consciousness with all its *spiritual* consequences, peace, light, equality, strength, Ananda etc., etc. If you say that that cannot be done, you deny all possibility of spiritual perfection, transformation or any true Yoga. All that anyone can do is to lie helpless and wait for the divine Omnipotence to do something or other. The whole spiritual past of man becomes a fantastic insanity, with the Avatars as the chief lunatics. That is the materialist point of view; but I am unable to envisage it as a basis for sadhana. That example is not all, is true; I have not said it is; there is Influence, there is spiritual help — but the truth of the Way and the Example cannot be belittled in this scornful fashion.

(2) You make nothing of the Divine in man. If there is no divinity in man, then there is no possibility of Avatarhood; also spirituality can just as well pass away into silence — it has no foundation here. If the divinity is there in man, it can break through its coatings. You admit that it can do it in debauchees and moral insolvents — that it can manifest in ignorant and uncultured men and women is a proved fact; the Gita itself declares that all *kinds* of men and women can follow its path. Whether X or Y⁷ does or does not [do] so does not depend then on these things and it is no use trying to bar the path to people because of either their ignorance or their immorality. To do so is to betray a bottomless ignorance of spiritual things. As to the possibility of awakening the psychic being, on what intellectual grounds or by what fixed ethical or rational rules are you going to fix that and declare “No entry here for you”? You cannot generalise in the way you try to do by an intellectual reasoning. The mystery of the Spirit is too great for such a puny endeavour.

March 6, 1935

[Whatever correspondence on Avatarhood follows now, refers only to Sri Aurobindo's short reply of March 6, 1935 written on the chit: “Nirod . . . chimera — then?” or before.]

You seem to attribute to me things which I never said, or is it my clumsy way of putting things? Probably that. But even then, you have put into my mouth exactly the opposite of what I have been trying to say. For instance — when did I say that you are not an Avatar? On the contrary I wrote to you that you are an Avatar.

You don't say, but if your theory or description of an Avatar is right, I am not one. I am proceeding on the necessary consequences of your logic.

When did I say that you or Mother had no difficulties or struggles? Did I not write that the Avatar accepts all terrestrial conditions, etc.? However, I did say

7. Here also Sri Aurobindo wrote X and Y in the MS.

that the difficulties and struggles are all shams, that is, not as real as our difficulties.

If they are shams, they have no value for others or for any true effect. If they have no value for others or for any true effect, they are perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves — the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. It is strange that you cannot understand or refuse to admit so simple and crucial a point. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of it?

I never said that there could be no Avatars nor that they are failures.

Good Lord! You said most emphatically that they were all failures and that is why the Divine had to come back again and again — to “atone for his failures”.

If your argument is that the life, actions, struggles of the Avatar (e.g. Rama’s, Krishna’s) are unreal because the Divine is there and knows it is all a Maya, in man also there is a self, a spirit that is immortal, untouched, divine; you can say that man’s sufferings and ignorance are only put on, shams, unreal. But if man feels them as real and if the Avatar feels his work and difficulties to be serious and real?

I don’t think I said that there is no divinity in man. In the quotation I gave from the Gita it is said that man is made out of the divine substance but has a thick coating on him.

If the existence of the Divinity is of no practical effect, what is the use of a theoretical admission? The manifestation of the Divinity in the Avatar is of help to man because it helps him to discover his own divinity, find the way to realise it. If the difference is so great that the humanity by its very nature prevents all possibility of following the way opened by the Avatar, it merely means that there is no divinity in man that can respond to the divinity in the Avatar.

You make a flourish of reasonings and do not see the consequence of your reasonings. It is no use saying “I believe this or that” and then reasoning in a way which leads logically to the very negation of what you believe.

Also, I find that some important points on which my whole case stands and without which my “fury” has no meaning, have been left out by you. I admitted

that Avatars have many difficulties, but because they know, as Mother did, that they are Avatars, because the “real substance” shines through the alloy in all that they do, they have a fixed faith and conviction that they will never fail. Now take the case of man; he has usually no such conviction because of the blessed “coating”. So he groans and writhes in agony, doubt and despair. How many times in the midst of struggles have I not said to myself that Yoga is beyond my capacities! Now, if I knew for certain that I was an extraordinary being, say an Avatar, I would not despair. This is why I said that the difficulties of Avatars are not real, but shams — not that they have no sting in them, but that the luminous consciousness bears them easily and goes on in spite of them.

You think then that in me (I do not bring in the Mother), there was never any doubt or despair, no attacks of that kind. I have borne every attack which human beings have borne, otherwise I would be unable to assure anybody “This too can be conquered”. At least I would have no right to say so. Your psychology is terribly rigid. I repeat, the Divine when he takes on the burden of terrestrial nature, takes it fully, sincerely and without any conjuring tricks or pretence. If he has something behind him which emerges always out of the coverings, it is the same thing in essence, even if greater in degree, that there is behind others — and it is to awaken that that he is there.

The psychic being does the same for all who are intended for the spiritual way, — men need not be extraordinary beings to follow Yoga. That is the mistake you are making, to harp on greatness as if only the great can be spiritual.

Regarding the divinity in man — what is the use of this divinity if it is coated layer after layer with Maya? How many can really become conscious of it?

Exactly! Why admit any divinity then at all, if humanity is an insuperable bar to any following in the Way pointed out by the Avatar? That was your contention that humanity and divinity are unbridgeably opposite things, that it is no use the Avatar asking others (except Arjuna) to follow in his Path — they, being human, cannot do it.

You had defeats, struggles, but had at the same time the spirit of absolute surrender, faith which we find shining through Mother’s prayers as well. Did you not leave your great work for the country at one word of Krishna?

Lots of people leave things at the word of a human being like Gandhi, they do not need the word of Krishna.

Does the average man have this faith etc.? If he has not, but has instead struggles, sufferings etc., picture what his condition would be!

If *absolute* surrender, faith etc. from the beginning were essential for Yoga, then nobody could do it. I myself could not have done it, if such a condition had been demanded of me.

Let me make it clear that in all I wrote I was not writing to prove that I am an Avatar! You are busy in your reasonings with the personal question, I am busy in mine with the general one. I am seeking to manifest something of the Divine that I am conscious of and feel — I care a damn whether that constitutes me an Avatar or something else. That is not a question which concerns me. By manifestation, of course, I mean the bringing out and spreading of that Consciousness so that others also may feel and enter into it and live in it.

March 7, 1935

I await your “irrational” remarks on my type-script.⁸ I hope you haven’t thrown it into the waste paper basket.

I had written a good deal the same day as I got your type-script — but I have a sanguinary eye, so I have to wait a day or two before pursuing my irrationalities.

March 8, 1935

I am surprised and sad to hear that you can still be affected by these physical ailments!

What I am surprised at is that I have any eye left at all after the last two or three years of half-day and all night work. The difficulty for resting is that the sadhaks have begun pouring paper again without waiting for the withdrawal of the notice — not all of course, but many. And there is a stack of outside correspondence still unanswered! I am persuading my eye, but it is still red and sulky and reproachful. Revolted, what? Thinks too much is imposed on it and no attention paid to its needs, desires, preferences etc. Will have to reason with it for a day or two longer.

How I wish, as a medical man, I mean, I could enforce absolute rest to the eyes and issue a bulletin.

[*Underlining “absolute rest”*]: It does not exist in this world — not even in the Himalayas — except of course for the inner being which can always be in absolute rest.

March 9, 1935

(*Nirodbaran’s Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 165-78)

8. As noted above, Sri Aurobindo’s long reply to my type-script was never sent.

NOT SO SIMPLE AS IT IS THOUGHT

(Excerpts from A. B. Purani's Record of the Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo)

IN the *Vishnu Purana*, Buddha is regarded as an Avatar of Vishnu who came to deceive the Asuras. He is not referred to by name but is called Mayamoha. The reference to Buddha is very clear; it repeats “Buddhyaswa! Buddhyaswa.” This *Purana* is a fine work.

(p. 95)

* * *

But if a descent of Truth is to take place there must be a very solid preparation to hold it. That is a more important work than holding up somebody as an Avatar.

(p. 146)

* * *

We say everything that happens happens according to the Divine Will, i.e. nothing happens without it. So the defeat of France happened according to the Divine Will, i.e. according to Sri Aurobindo's will!

“Everything” does not mean every individual act or event. You can say Sri Aurobindo's will on another level of consciousness willed it. For instance, you can't say that I willed to break my leg!

People think of God as a kind of super-dictator. The Divine Will lays down general lines — but in the actual Play it consents to limitations that are self-imposed. It has also to pay the price in the play of forces. Otherwise you can argue that Rama willed that Sita may be taken away by Ravana! And that Christ knew that he had to be crucified for the work and yet something in him wished it might be otherwise!

So, it is not all my ‘will’; it is the Karma of France and England also that is working.

I am almost getting sympathy and admiration for the British, which I never had before. They are standing up alone against Hitler's power without allies — just as they did in Napoleon's time.

[. . .]

Is the Divine limited?

Everyone who descends for a spiritual purpose has to be limited. Of course such a limitation is self-imposed, — he consents to the rules of the play of forces and works through the play. This may include running away — like Krishna who fled from the *Kāla Yavana*.

(pp. 744-45)

* * *

... But I don't understand why people demand external signs of an Avatar. What has it to do with the external life?

The idea is that there must be Aishwarya, divine Powers, in an Avatar.

Aishwarya is all right. But it is essentially a consciousness. What external sign can there be of an inner spiritual consciousness?

But I suppose these two things, the inner spiritual consciousness of the Divine and the Aishwarya are not incompatible.

Not at all. But there are lots of people who have power, whatever their nature, but may not have any spiritual consciousness. For instance, Coué has a certain power, and so have some occultists in Europe. But they are far from any spiritual consciousness. Generally the man who has some such power is very ordinary and turned downwards in his ordinary vital movements.

(*After a long pause*) It is not essential that the Higher Consciousness must manifest itself in life and in action upon large masses of men. It is not merely a question of power. The question is what power is manifested, from where does one bring it? For instance, Napoleon had a certain power but that does not mean that he had a spiritual consciousness. So there may be power or powers but no spiritual consciousness. The higher up one goes one finds that the ordinary men are left behind and cannot reach him, and so his power cannot work upon them.

Again, you cannot expect work from the Avatar in the same way as from ordinary men. He can work directly upon universal forces and thus work on humanity without seemingly doing anything and nobody can know what work he has done. It would look ridiculous and arrogant if I were to say that I worked for the success of the Russian Revolution for three years. Yet I was one of the influences that worked to make it a success. I also worked for Turkey.

What about India?

It takes time. I worked through some people, but the Power stops when people become intoxicated with success.

(pp. 473-74)

* * *

Suppose this time we succeed in the Yoga and the Supermind comes down into the physical; I do not expect it in one day but in the course of time.

You mean Kalpas — cycles of ages — afterwards? Even then, do you suppose that the whole human race will be transformed suddenly into the Supramental race?

In that case nothing can be done for humanity. One can only write books for humanity.

I don't say nothing is, or can be, done for humanity. What I say is that there is nothing radically altered, no fundamental change in humanity, in spite of all that has been done.

Time after time something comes down from Above, but again you find humanity the same as ever. Look at Christianity, all the millions in Europe who profess it. Do you think they believe in Christianity? Not even ten percent try to live out Christianity. That is the difficulty with humanity. Something comes down from Above. In order to make it available to the whole community you have to give it such a form as to make it suitable to all capacities and in that change the Truth gets mixed with their falsehood — so much so that it no longer remains what it was. Buddha came and tried and did not succeed, and I think any such effort would not succeed.

[. . .]

As a radical change in this mental consciousness cannot be brought about by the mind, we want to change it by something which is not mind, we call it Supermind. As man is removed from the animal, so would be the Superman from man.

(pp. 142-43)

* * *

... What on earth does it matter if he [Krishna] lived on the physical plane or not? If a thing is true on the psychic and spiritual planes it is all that matters. As long as you find Krishna as a divine Power on the psychic or on the spiritual plane nothing else matters. He is true for us. The physical is merely the shadow of the psychic.

[. . .]

Whenever the Avatar comes, does he not undergo a period of Sadhana to make it possible for humanity to attain a higher consciousness?

What exactly do you mean?

In the Bhāgawata Krishna is represented as a Pūrṇa Avatār — as manifesting full knowledge, power and delight, even from his childhood. Had he done any Sadhana?

The *Bhāgawata* is a book of religion, it is not history. Even the Mahabharata is not history. It is poetry, legend and tradition all woven into poetry, all arranged round certain facts.

But that apart, the question is: “Do all Avatars come to raise the consciousness of humanity?” Those that come to do that work practise Sadhana.

It seems Krishna had done Sadhana.

Yes, he seems to have done Sadhana with Ghora Rishi. But the *varāha* (Boar) incarnation does not seem to have done any Sadhana. (*Laughter*)

Nor the matsya — the Fish Avatar!

And what do you mean by the Purna Avatar?

I mean complete embodiment of the Truth.

Of what Truth?

An Avatar embodying the Sachchidananda — Divine knowledge, infinite power and delight, etc. — on the physical plane.

What do you mean by “embodying on the physical plane?”

Bringing the infinite Ananda on the physical plane.

What was the sign that he embodied the divine Ananda?

Did anyone in the past supramentalise the body?

What do you understand by “a supramentalised body”?

I mean mastery over the physical laws.

The scientists have mastery over the physical.

No. I mean spiritual mastery.

For instance, Tailanga Swami's remaining in water; would you call it mastery over the physical? The power to work miracles, — does it constitute the supramentalised physical?

I want to know if this Yoga has been tried before. Did anyone bring down the Truth to the material plane?

Of course there is no evidence. If someone did it in the past we need not be doing it and struggling as we do. It is obvious it was not done in the past.

Did no one try it?

That way, nothing is done for which there has not been a previous trial and preparation; whatever is done has been tried with partial success before. If any one did it, it was lost by tradition and forgotten in the cycles of Time.

Is it not possible that Truth may have come down and then receded?

If an Avatar came it was a promise. The Truth was not made a fact in Matter. I can say this, that it may have been tried but it was never made a dynamic factor in the world. The difficulty in bringing down the Truth is not so much in the upper physical layers as in gross matter, in the most material plane.

The earth-law has to be changed and a new atmosphere is to be created. The question is not merely to have knowledge, power, etc., but to bring it down; the whole difficulty is to make it flow down.

People have very simple ideas about this thing, but it is not so simple as it is thought. It is a very complex movement. There is the truth above and when you go on increasing in knowledge you go on ascending higher and higher, but it does not descend, does not come down at once. It comes down only when everything is ready. If the Truth could be made once the law of the earth-plane then it would endure. It is difficult to make it flow down so long as there is a mixed movement.

Do you think that the work will be done this time?

You want me to prophesy? Wait and see.

I want to know it from you.

I know that it can be done, but I can't prophesy: I cannot say, "It will be done." But this I can say: "Something will be done this time."

There is a doubt somewhere in the mental being, some uncertainty. The whole thing is ready behind. If there had been the certainty on the mental plane the work would have been done. It was not done till now because probably the hostile forces were very strong. You do not know how strong they are, I alone know it; you have only a glimpse of it.

(pp. 381-83)

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If this work of bringing down the Truth does not succeed in India, do you think India will lose the chance for ever?

India has the greatest chance because of her past and because the spiritual force is accumulated here. The real movement is from Above — the truth trying to come down. Then there is a general upheaval and the vague feeling of the Truth coming down — the idea of Avatars, a general questioning of all sorts of ideas — and also perversions of the same Truth. But all is due to that movement from Above.

But if India remains indifferent and sticks to old worn-out forms and refuses to move forward, or listen to the call of her soul, then the Truth may recede and try somewhere else. The Truth is not confined to India, it not India's property. But there is very little chance of its succeeding elsewhere if it fails in India. It may make an unsuccessful, or partially successful, effort somewhere else, like Christianity, and then retire.

(p. 399)

* * *

There is the Supreme beyond description, who manifests himself as Sat, Chit, Ananda; in this Sat is the universal individuality of beings. Then comes the Supermind with its four Maha Shaktis, great powers. In the Supermind unity is the governing principle.

Then comes the world of the Gods, below the Supermind and behind the manifestation. The Gods of the Hindu culture — Shiva, Vishnu, etc. — are names and representations in the mind, but they point to the gods who represent the Divine Principles governing the manifestation of the universe. There is a hierarchy of these beings.

Below this is the manifested universe. The purpose of this manifestation is to go back to the Ananda.

The Devas and the Asuras — the Gods and the Titans — manifest in man to lead this world or creation to the goal. The Devas manifest to effect a new principle or bring about a change.

The Avatar does not come to do that kind of work, i.e., the work of the Gods. He comes to uphold Dharma. Some beings also come with him for the purpose.

(p. 501)

* * *

The materialist and scientist say that Yogis have done nothing for human happiness. Buddhas and Avatars have come and gone but the sufferings of humanity are just the same.

Did Avatars come to relieve the sufferings of humanity? It was only Buddha who showed the way of release from suffering. But his path was to get away from the world and enter into Nirvana. Does mankind follow him? And if they do not and cannot get rid of their suffering, it is not Buddha's fault!

(p. 588)

* * *

Our people cannot understand why one who has the Divine Consciousness or the Brahmic Consciousness should take up sides in a fight. That is all right if you want to remain in the Static Brahman. Then you can look upon the whole thing as Maya and it may not exist for you. But I believe in Brahman siding against Brahman — that is what the Brahman, I think, has always been doing.

[. . .]

Krishna took sides openly in the Mahabharata and Rama also in the Ramayana. But Rama, some people do not consider an Avatar: they say he was not Self-conscious because he was weeping. Why? An Avatar cannot weep?

(p. 768)

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Now suppose we supramentalise the body. In that case we can carry the full physical experience and return with the fullest physical, vital and mental force and manifest the Divine. That is what happens in the case of Avatars and Vibhutis, — there is full memory of the past vital and mental experiences and in the case of the Avatar even of the physical experiences.

(p. 405)

(Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, recorded by A. B. Purani, 2007.)