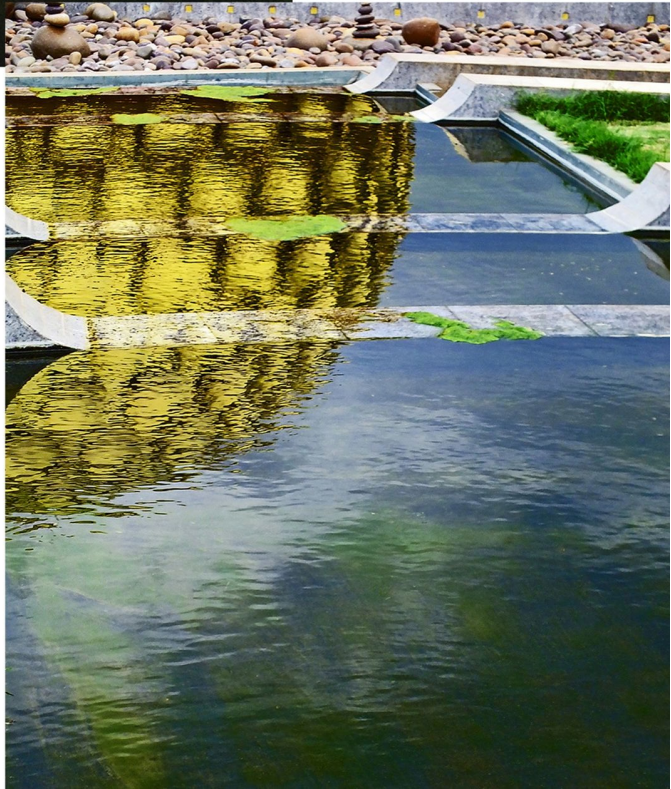


AVATARHOOD HUMAN AND DIVINE

compiling from Sri Aurobindo





AVATARHOOD
HUMAN AND DIVINE



Bush

AVATARHOOD

HUMAN AND DIVINE

A compilation from Sri Aurobindo's writings
with additional texts by the Mother

Compiled by Paulette Hadnagy.

Our acknowledgments to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry,
for permission to use extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo
and the Mother.

First published with a grant from the Government of India
as part of the Centenary Celebrations
for Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry, 1910.

First Edition – 2010.

Second Edition, enlarged – 2011.

Third Edition, revised and enlarged – 2022.

Cover photographs by Paulette Hadnagy.

Illustration by Gino Baldo (1884-1961).

Bronze by Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916).

Drawing by Michelangelo (1475-15670).

Roger Anger, the Galaxy model after July 1971.

Engraving by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528).

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Printed at Mother's Grace
169 Eswaran Koil Street
Pondicherry 605001

ISBN

Published by PRISMA, an imprint of Digital Media Initiatives
www.prisma.haus, www.dmi.systems

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	I
COMPILER'S NOTE	XII
THE VEDANTIC VIEW	1
Excerpts from "Essays on the Gita", Chapter XV	
SRI AUROBINDO REPLIES TO NIRODBARAN	17
Selection from "Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo"	
MISCELLANEA	53
Selection from "Letters on Himself and the Ashram"	
THE PURPOSE OF AVATARHOOD	60
Selection from "Letters on Yoga"	
LEADERS OF EVOLUTION	72
Selection from "On Himself"	
SANATANA DHARMA, A WORLD-UNION, THE UNIVERSAL EQUAL GODHEAD	78
INVOLUTION, HOSTILE FORCES, TRANSFORMATION, EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE	90
Selection from "Letters on Himself and the Ashram"	
REALISTIC ADWAITA AND THE GNOSTIC EVOLUTION	99
THE MOTHER ON AVATARHOOD	102
Selection from CWM, second edition, 2003	
A GOD'S LABOUR	110
From "Collected Poems"	
SABDA review by Julian Lines - May 2011	117



INTRODUCTION

God is both the One Existence and the All Existence. Not only is there a transcendent Being, but in the apparent finiteness of name and form lies concealed a veiled manifestation of the immanent Divine. There is a progressive gradation of being as the soul, shrouded in ignorance, ascends into self-knowledge. But when a “full and conscious descent of the Godhead” takes the appearance of a human birth, in a direct incarnation of divine Consciousness and Power, then the Avatar manifests.

When a culture of *adharma* reigns sovereign, when an epochal crisis threatens civilization at its very roots there is a call from below, from imperiled humanity, for divine intervention – and there is a response from above that only a divine dispensation can resolve. The Supreme Lord descends and incarnates in a human body, at a particular point in space-time, initiating a path that opens the vistas to a new Aeon; through successive incarnations, this has been the mission of the Avatar. The avatic descent has to access multidimensional and multivalent qualities of being so as to fulfill ever-mutating conditions according to the evolutionary urge of different cultures and epochs. This partly answers why the Avatars, who are incarnations of the same divine Truth, take birth with such a variety of forms, character-traits and actions.

The Bhagavad-Gita presents Avatarhood in the light of Vedanta, of which it is a major canon. The one Self in all, the Godhead seated in the heart of every creature is the key. Each incarnation of the Avatar proclaims the oneness of his human nature with the divine being. With awareness of the Avatar’s divine birth and action humans can turn 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.”¹ The Avatar’s example is the gateway to humanity’s gradual ascent to the divine Consciousness.

The divorce, in the modern era, from the numinous world of archetypal images makes avatarhood too mystical for the mind of contemporaries. The rationalist, the materialist look upon it as superstition Sri Aurobindo comments, explaining the tremendous resistances the concept of Avatarhood evokes. Among those who accept the Avatar phenomenon, a certain mentality expects him to be free of faults from the beginning, arguing that the perfect cannot be burdened with human imperfection. But these are dualists, as Sri Aurobindo calls them in “Essays on the Gita”; what they opine would nullify the purpose for the divine descent.

To re-establish justice and virtue is only one aspect; as Sri Aurobindo clarifies, for this task the divine Omnipotence can also use *vibhūtis* – great personalities – and great movements. “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 āgatah*; 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.” The “rising of man into the Godhead”² is the Avatar’s ultimate mission.

Outside is within, society is the sum of countless souls. The purpose of the divine incarnation is to bring about a leap of consciousness in the mass of individuals constituting the collective, in harmony with the spirit of the oncoming age. The Avatar manifests to lead the march towards a new law of being and a new ordering of society; transformation of the human race is his *magnum opus*. At the crossroads we have

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA 19, 149.

² *Ibid.*, 148.

reached, the Avatar's mission is to prepare the ground for the advent of a society of gnostic supramental beings.

The Avatar shows the way to the foreordained transformation of our transitional existences, taking upon himself the burden of human impossibilities; to make the Avatar's message accessible demands partaking humanness. In charting the path for a new species the Avatar undergoes many trials, Sri Aurobindo explains, guiding mortals towards a more perfect state of being by his example, showing how obstructions can be overcome and the goal attained. This points to the self-sacrifice of the Divine in the deepest and most integral sense of the word: the sacrifice of his inborn perfection.

With regards to the Supramental Yoga Sri Aurobindo warns that his is a most difficult path, not to be commenced unless determined to pursue it till the end. His disciples are, by necessity, "not spotless Saints or perfect born Yogis but men who carry in them their human nature and typify each in his own way what is in the world and what has to be changed". And he continues, "The influence of the hostile Forces was on them as on all human beings". *Sadhana* involves coming to terms with the play of the hostile forces, whereas not to deal with them "would have been to leave the problem unsolved and the work undone."¹ These forces are as much universal and connected to the world-scene as they are individual. In another letter Sri Aurobindo observes, "As for attacks, they can attack anybody. Christ and Buddha too had to bear the assaults of the Asura. But invasion in a man is only possible if there is something in him that gives a response and opens the gate."² The above considerations, essential to grasp the ground-reality in which the Avatar operates, go hand in hand with the tremendous resistances those engaged in the evolutionary transformation have to face all along.

Sri Aurobindo highlights that, depending on the particular

¹ *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35, 9 December 1933, 641-2.
² *Ibid.*, 25 January 1934, 655.

nature of his mission answering the needs of the age, the Avatar may not be predominantly spiritual. He quotes, as an example, Rama, whose task was to establish ethical laws, a value much emphasized at that time in history and now largely lost; this explains the preponderance in Rama's incarnation of traits that are ethical in nature rather than spiritual. Referring again to Rama, but also as a general statement, Sri Aurobindo observes that married life with all that this implies may not necessarily be incompatible with Avatarhood, as all aspects of life – in their intrinsic truth, divine – must undergo transformation and the Avatar's mission is to show "the Way." The following exchange between Sri Aurobindo and a disciple helps clarifying the matter:

"When the Divine descends 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.

Exactly.

But behind he is perfectly conscious of what happens. The universal forces cannot make him their tool as they make us.

That does not prevent the Avatar from acting as men act and using the movements of Nature for his life and work."¹

In 1948 the Mother asked Sri Aurobindo to write a message for the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, the newly launched quarterly journal of the JSASA (Jeunesse Sportive de l' Ashram de Sri Aurobindo) to be published on the occasion of each Darshan; the title was afterwards changed to *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*. The eight essays Sri Aurobindo wrote, successively published in the volume entitled "*The Supramental Manifestation*",

¹ *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35, 23 July 1936, 430-1.

constitute the last set of his prose writings. In the third of these essays, “*The Divine Body*”, Sri Aurobindo explains that all aspects of human nature, down to the most material, can be integrated and transformed as part of the divine life. However, he warns, this happens in stages, and not the whole of humanity can follow at once. He brings clarity to the subject by writing: “[The sex principle] is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation, necessary too in their association and interchange for the play of its psychological working and in their manifestation as soul and Nature fundamental to the whole process of the Lila.” Sri Aurobindo further elucidates, “In its human action on the mental and vital level sex is not altogether an undivine principle; it has its nobler aspects and idealities and it has to be seen in what way and to what extent these can be admitted into the new and larger life.”¹

As the Avatar’s mission is not only, spiritually, to show “the Way”, but also to restore the social and ethical order, the *dharma*, while leading individuals and society one step forward evolutionarily, there is a substantial difference with the ordinary human guru. The latter ascends to higher ranges of consciousness by his *tapasya*, in most cases under another guru’s guidance. In contrast, the moment the Avatar becomes aware of his double nature, human but also divine, he knows from within, without the need for guidance by an external guru, that the Divine, whose nature he partakes, in requiring him to tread an unprecedented path is the drive impelling him to fulfill his mission. Furthermore, Avatarhood indicates a

¹ *Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL 16, 27-8. The text continues: “All gross animal indulgence of sex desire and impulse would have to be eliminated; it could only continue among those who are not ready for the higher life or not yet ready for a complete spiritual living.”

primary movement not of ascent, but of descent: the Divine descends into a human body. His teachings, impacting society as a whole, not just elitarian fringes, are addressed to all human beings potentially ready for the epochal leap he heralds. His action is for the whole of humanity, not just a restricted circle of disciples as it is the case with an ordinary guru.

The full significance of this process can only be understood in terms of evolution; but as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother indicate, this implies the prior necessity of the phenomenon of divine involution. “This world was created for evolution and not for an immediately luminous manifestation such as already exists on some other planes” Sri Aurobindo highlights. *Avidyā*, ignorance – Sri Aurobindo continues – “existed before the earth life was evolved in the form of Inconscience. The meaning of evolution is the evolving or slow manifestation of life, mind and conscious supermind out of matter with its original Inconscience.”¹

In “*The Life Divine*”, chapter on the *Gnostic Being*, differentiating between the authentic spiritual life leading to gnostic individuality, versus living according to ethical and moral codes, Sri Aurobindo expounds that the Vedantic “liberation signifies an emergence into the true spiritual nature of being where all action is the automatic self-expression of that truth and there can be nothing else. ... all is self-determined by truth of consciousness and truth of being, there can be no standard, no struggle to observe it, no virtue or merit, no sin or demerit of the nature. The power of love, of truth, of right will be there, not as a law mentally constructed but as the very substance and constitution of the nature and, by the integration of the being, necessarily also the very stuff and constituting nature of the action. To grow into this nature of our true being, a nature of spiritual truth and oneness, is the liberation attained by an evolution of the spiritual being: the gnostic evolution gives us the complete dynamism of that

¹ *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35, 9 December 1933, 641-2.

return to ourselves. Once that is done, the need of standards of virtue, dharmas, disappears; there is the law and self-order of the liberty of the Spirit, there can be no imposed or constructed law of conduct, dharma. All becomes a self-flow of spiritual self-nature, Swadharma of Swabhava.”¹

This is the call: preparing for the unfolding of the divine *svadharma* and *svabhava* of the Gnostic being and society. Everything and everyone is the Self, the One in All and All in One. Each and every being is, in essence, divine and even the trivial actions of daily life spring from the same One Source. Spiritual rebirth, the birth of a new humanity, involves the realization of the oneness of spirit and matter, of heaven and earth. A true synthesis beyond the play of opposites, everlasting oneness, is the dawning new consciousness awaiting us.

With regard to the term guru, Sri Aurobindo explains, “It is not usual to use the word Guru in the supramental yoga, here everything comes from the Divine himself. But if anybody wants it he can use it for the time being.”² Furthermore, “The relation of Guru and disciple is only one of many relations which one can have with the Divine, and in this Yoga which aims at a supramental realisation, it is not usual to give it this name; rather, the Divine is regarded as the Source, the living Sun of Light and Knowledge and Consciousness and spiritual realisation and all that one receives is felt as coming from there and the whole being remoulded by the Divine Hand. This is a greater and more intimate relation than that of the human Guru and disciple, which is more of a limited mental ideal. Nevertheless, if the mind still needs the more familiar mental conception, it can be kept so long as it is needed; only do not let the soul be bound by it and do not let it limit the inflow of other relations with the Divine and larger forms”, leaving it to his disciples to decide for themselves. He did

1 *The Life Divine*, SABCL 19, 996-8.

2 *Letters on Yoga*, November 1929, 395.

the same with those asking whether he was an Avatar; to one disciple commenting: “Elsewhere people try to find out various qualities in their Guru to prove him an Avatar; here some try to find out reasons to disprove even the possibility”, Sri Aurobindo humorously replied, “It is a modern Asram, that’s why!”¹

*

To further explore the Avatar conundrum I have added texts from the Mother, whose observation on atavism and other themes are of cardinal importance. People’s frame of mind and feelings, down to their convictions and religious beliefs, are the outcome of their ancestral heritage and upbringing; this also determines the varied approaches to the elusive mystery of Avatarhood. Ethnic and national stereotypes; ingrained values of family, teachers and peers; educational and cultural conventions; social milieu; the spirit of the age and the so-called common wisdom – the Mother explains as people’s ordinary consciousness is based on customs handed down from one generation to the next, to which one blindly adheres, rather than proceeding by self-examination and conscious choice. Clinging to past traditions, being caged by categories and contents that are pre-determined leads to taken-for-granted ideologies, all sort of isms, attitudes and behaviours devoid of relationship to one’s inward life, depleted of its trove of archetypal realities that are deliberately suppressed or denied. In addition, mass-media indoctrination and corporate agendas are extremely influential in aligning the individual and collective psyche along pre-set patterns. The answer is not re-calibrating the mind – denying one’s background, while embracing from without a new set of norms mechanically assembled – but awakening to a living relationship with one’s truth of being. With reference to Avatarhood, atavism today reflects the incapacity of a largely utilitarian mind to acknowledge

1 *Letters on Yoga*, 14 November 1935, 400.

the possibility, and call, for the divine descent; this goes along with interpretations that are subjectively prejudiced.

The Mother had a tremendous knowledge of the occult world and forces, in Integral Yoga to be mastered. Avatarhood is not to be confused with emanations from the involutory beings we call gods, she explains; these belong to the intermediary plane of the Overmind. When an advanced psychic being aspires for greater perfection, “it generally draws towards itself” one of those overmental entities and “shares in the nature of the being incarnated in it”. There can be several simultaneous emanations of this being, all of them having “the same origin, psycho-divine” and carrying “in themselves something of that godhead”¹. In this case too there is a descent: a being from the overmental plane incarnates a part of itself into a human psychic being; but the Avatar is the direct descent of the Supreme into a human body.

Regarding the many misconceptions flourishing, one is to treat the Avatar as one’s personal guru, narrowing his societal mission to the handling of a few disciples’ spiritual progress – as if a *sangha* could contain him. As for the believers in the avatic incarnation, a widely spread misunderstanding is the belief in compulsory saintliness, where haloes are needed and, conversely, signs of human nature’s imperfections are abhorred as sinful. The Mother also stresses that another grievous commonplace, in order to believe in its redemptive powers, is the expectation that the divine incarnation has to suffer and die. In this respect, asked to explain Sri Aurobindo’s statements in “Thoughts and Aphorisms” about the various Avatars, commenting on aphorism no.38 the Mother concludes defining Jesus’ Avatarhood as “the concrete and dramatic enactment of the divine sacrifice: the Supreme Lord accepting to assume suffering in matter”. Rather than deification, it is this – the Avatar’s extreme sacrifice of divine perfection – that helps us to come a little closer to the mystery.

1 CWMCE, ed. 2003, 5, 264.

Not the constrictive boundaries of sin and pain, but pointing the way to a new humanity by its divine example, this is the reason for the divine descent and mission of the Avatar, truly “the Way and the Life” incarnating in a human body. Commenting on Sri Aurobindo’s Aphorism no. 36 regarding Jesus, the Avatar of Love, the Mother observes that he “had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message might be heard. For men cherish suffering and hatred and want their God to suffer with them”. But expounding the Avatarhood of Krishna, she explains that “he came upon earth to bring freedom and delight. He came to announce to men, enslaved to Nature, to their passions and errors, that if they took refuge in the Supreme Lord they would be free from all bondage and sin.”

The Avatar is the Divine descending into a human body; but to regenerate society demands people with integrity of heart, with empathy and overwhelming compassion; people surrendering needs and personal cravings to the wellbeing of all, finding felicity and bliss in the felicity and bliss of their wider selves, loving their neighbours and co-citizens as oneself – for they are, indeed, oneself. The wider one’s consciousness, the wider is the embrace of self and others as indivisible atoms of the same one substance: the Self, ‘one without a second’. The creed of Vedanta and Advaita is the key to the ideal society: this is the Avatar’s mission. Abolition of the ego and of the ordinary mind – the second transformation of Integral Yoga, the spiritual one – is the gateway to the ultimate ideal society, the gnostic society of supramental beings. Embracing Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s Path goes along with the eternal, universal quest of a perfect society by perfect beings. As ancient as the human errand, this is bound to remain unfulfilled as long as the ego’s boundaries are not cut and we merge into what we truly are: the Self.

*

Discovering the vistas of the ideal society Sri Aurobindo and the Mother unveil as the next evolutionary stage has been an

incredible journey. When I first reached the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in 1973, my only reading was “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance”, the main exhibit in the Alipore trial case against Aurobindo Ghose and his companions. Three days after reaching there I asked Purna Prema, Mother’s granddaughter, to introduce me to Nolini Kanta Gupta – the only one in jail with the Master still alive, along with Sudhir Sarkar, the teenager who attended his needs as a recluse, and whom I met next. Beings from another world... As a tribute to the Path Sri Aurobindo has charted in full, in this third edition of “Avatarhood: Human and Divine” I have added one chapter, in his words, expanding from the consciousness of the nation and ‘guru of nations’ to the world-union of all nations, up to the ‘the true communism of the equal godhead in the race’ that Sri Aurobindo sees as the summit of the agelong quest. He warns, “This is not certain; but in any case, if this is not the solution, then there is no solution, if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind. Then the terrestrial evolution must pass beyond man as it has passed beyond the animal and a greater race must come that will be capable of the spiritual change, a form of life must be born that is nearer to the divine.”

It is not for humble sadhaks to assess the following statement in regards to Sri Aurobindo’s status, but in my heart these words contain the secret:

"I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion new or old for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter."¹

At the One Guru’s lotus feet

Paulette Hadnagy

Auroville, 2010-2023

1 *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35, 696.

COMPILER'S NOTE

Section I, "The Vedantic view", introducing most diverse avataric manifestations, gathers excerpts from Essays on the Gita, chapter XV, The Possibility and Purpose of Avatarhood.

In Section II, "Sri Aurobindo's replies to Nirodbaran", are extracts from the disciple's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo. The discussion between the Master and his 'dualist' sadhak, resisting the human side of the Avatar, reaches peaks of sublime humour.

Section III, "Miscellanea", is a selection from Letters on Yoga where divine incarnations are purported to take birth according to the need of the Age. Stereotypes on morals and saintliness, already debated with Nirodbaran, are further clarified.

Section IV, "The Question of Avatarhood", is a broad presentation quoting from Letters on Himself and the Ashram.

Section V, "Leaders of Evolution", gathers excerpts from On Himself where Sri Aurobindo shows how the Avatar must surmount all sorts of human difficulties, pointing the way to the disciples by his example.

Section VI, "Sanatana Dharma, World-Union, The Equal Universal Godhead", is a tribute to integral Advaitin Sri Aurobindo for whom all is the Brahman, while acknowledging infinite possibilities of expression. Sri Aurobindo's avataric mission, ever-changing along with history, widens from the nation-soul to a one world family, based upon identity but stretching to overlapping universalities; from nationalist leader to world-union prophet of the pluralism of a confederation of nations heralding "the true communism of the equal godhead

in the race”.

Section VII, “Involution, Hostile Forces, Transformation and the Evolutionary Change”, featuring more excerpts from Letters on Himself and the Ashram, stresses that the work of the Avatar cannot be split from the involution/evolution axioms. From abysmal depths to the highest peaks the One Origin is Truth, Light, Love and Compassion. Sacchidananda.

Section VIII, “Realistic Adwaita and the Gnostic Evolution”, is about the last stage of the transformational process leading to the supramental consciousness of the Gnostic being. This is the next stage awaiting humanity, the crowning mission of the divine Descent in its successive manifestations.

Section IX, “The Mother on Avatarhood”, introducing themes complementary to Sri Aurobindo’s, presents some of Mother’s experience of the occult worlds and of in-depth psychology – from involution-evolution to atavism, the sense of sin and suffering etc. This selection concludes with the Mother’s description of the origin of all Avatars, the first universal Avatar.

In Section X the poem A God’s Labour depicts the trials that the Divine, descending into a human vessel, has to undertake to fulfil his mission.



THE VEDANTIC VIEW

India has from ancient times held strongly a belief in the reality of the Avatara¹, 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 being² of the Divine and the consciousness shrouded partly or wholly by ignorance of self in the finite. The conscious embodied soul³ 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, ordinarily in an efflorescence of its powers, in energies and magnitudes of its knowledge, love, joy, developed force of being⁴ in degrees and faces of its divinity. But when the divine Consciousness

1 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.

2 *para bhava*.

3 *dehi*.

4 *vibhuti*.

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.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 13-14

We have to remark carefully that the upholding of Dharma in the world is not the only object of the descent of the Avatar, that great mystery of the Divine manifest in humanity; for the upholding of the Dharma is not an all-sufficient object in itself, not the supreme possible aim for the manifestation of a Christ, a Krishna, a Buddha, but is only the general condition of a higher aim and a more supreme and divine utility. For 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 āgatah*; 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, *mānusīm tanum āsritam*, 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. ...

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. ...

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, *ātmānam*; 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 Avatar 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 19, 147-157 passim

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, *sadhunam*, 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.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 158-60

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 *vibhuti* 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 *vibhuti* 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 (*amsa*) 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, *bhutagrama*, 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, *atmanam srjami*, and conscious not only behind the veil but in the outward nature.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 160-1

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, *brahmabhuta*, 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, *mamaivamsah*. 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 superconscious 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, the virgin Mother, *para prakrti, para maya*, 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 Prakriti 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 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.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 161-3

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, *adhithaya*. 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, *prakrtim svam*, and not

the special nature of the Jiva that the Lord of all existence thus takes upon himself the human birth.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 163-4

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 supernatural 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.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 164-5

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 *atmanam srijami*, 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, *catvaro manavah*, 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.

Essays on the Gita, CWSA 19, 165-6

SRI AUROBINDO'S REPLIES TO NIRODBARAN

There are two things – Yoga-Force in its original totality, which is that of the Divine spiritual force, always potentially all-powerful, and Yoga force doing its work under the conditions of the evolutionary world here.

It is not a question of “can” or “cannot”¹ at all. All is possible, but all is not licit – except by a recognisable process; the Divine Power itself imposes on its action limits, processes, obstacles, vicissitudes. 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. Psychologically analogous changes do take place. I have myself in my time changed cowards into heroes and that can be done even without Yogashakti, merely by an inner force. How can you say what is latent in man or what is incurably absent? I have developed many things by Yoga, often even without any will or effort to do so, which were not in my original nature. I may even say that I have transformed my whole nature and it is in many respects the opposite of what I began with. There can be no question about the power to change, to develop, to awaken faculties that were not there before; this power exists already, but it can be raised to an acme by being lifted to the spiritual plane.

The force put on the gentleman you speak of at least made it necessary for him to change if he remained here. He had no will in the vital to change and so did not remain here but

1 An earlier question was: “K. then seems to be right when he says that if one has not got a particular possibility in him the Divine cannot make him develop in that direction”.

went to his fate.

The rest is for the indefinable future. One day I shall certainly try to explain methodically and by examples what the spiritual force is; how it has worked on the earth-plane, how it acts and under what conditions – conditions not rigidly fixed, but plastic and mutable.

Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, 7 February 1935, 133-4

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

¹ The divine part.

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.

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 Ashram, 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 "Oh, 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 Jarasandha¹ 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?² What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine! 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 recognizable 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

¹ A powerful king, ally of the Kauravas.

² Duryodhan was the king of Kauravas who fought against the Pandavas in the great battle of Kurukshetra.

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.

9 February 1935, pp. 135-8

You say that since “these things”¹ 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, 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-

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

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!¹ 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

¹ Urdu term meaning “Glory to God”.

Narayan oil¹ on your head.”

I have no objection to that. Plenty of the middle Narayan is needed in this Ashram. 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 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.

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

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

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 lightning like 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 that anyone 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 the social scale can manifest a great spirituality and even a great spiritual 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 and conditional 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 action of Divine Power, of Divine Grace, and reduce all to a matter of 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 down 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?

10 February 1935, 138-43

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 or 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.

11 February 1935, 143-4

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,¹ 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

¹ “He makes the dumb talk” (Tulsi Ramayana, 1st part).

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. 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? *sadrishyamukti, sadharmyam agatah*. 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.

13 February 1935, 145-51

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).

14 February 1935, 151

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.

Considerably subdued after the beating I received, I am beginning to understand what you say about omnipotence, the conditions of the game that have to be observed, latency, etc. This letter is not to dispute any of the things you have stated, but just to express that I am boiling inside with impotent rage to see how you have “unfairly” cornered me with the very arguments I was maintaining all the while. Alas! my pen derives its power only from terrestrial planes!

You were the reporter of the discussion, so naturally you had to be the whipping boy for all sides. You can't complain of that. There must be somebody to tilt at – otherwise how the deuce is the argument to be done?

I have, however, jotted down a few points for you to see.

Point No 1. I never said that only moral capacities can be latent, and not mental.

No, but it was implied in the argument to which you gave voice. It may not have been your argument, but what does that matter?

Point No 2. I did not say that poetry or music, or any art not evident, cannot be manifested. I distinctly used the word latent, and not evident.

Evident is the opposite of latent; so “not evident” or “evidently not there” as you put it is equal to “latent” – my use of the word is therefore perfectly apposite.

Our point was that faculties not yet evident may be made evident because they may be unmanifest, latent, in some inner region of the being; just as in Shunyam everything exists, so also in man – whatever comes out of him.

How can they be evident when they are latent? “Latent” means “hidden”, therefore not evident. When you say that a capacity is evidently not there, you mean only that to all evidence it is not there = there is no evidence of its being there to the observer, ergo, the observer concludes that it is not there. All that you can really say is that it appears to be non-existent – you cannot say with certitude more than that.

The whole discussion collapses if we deny that the unevident can be made evident.

You said “people who have evidently no music in them” – that can only mean people in whom music is not evident – for none can say whether it is or is not there latent.

It does so also if you admit that the unevident can be made evident.

By latency we mean what is not evident, that is, not on the surface, but somewhere behind or below. If it is in the surface mind, it is no longer latent, because one can say with some certitude that such faculties exist, though not quite developed yet – that is, neither latent nor fully evident.

Evidently not there on the surface, but how can you say that it is evidently not there below?

You say, if I understand you right, that since the inner being is open to the universal, anything can manifest through it even if it is not there latent; you further add that it is impossible to say what will or will not manifest once the universal acts upon it. But is this impossible for Yogis also? For example, can't you say whether a man has a capacity for Yoga or for something else? Do you simply gamble when you accept someone?

I have never said anything about how I choose people. I was answering the argument that what has not been or is not in manifestation, cannot be. That was very clearly the point in the discussion – that the Divine cannot manifest what is not yet there – even He is impotent to do that. He can only manifest what is either already manifest or else latent in the field (person) he is working in. I say no – he can bring in new things. He can bring it in from the universal or he can bring it down from the transcendent. For in the Divine cosmic and transcendent all things are. Whether He will do so or not in a particular case is quite another matter. My argument was directed towards dissipating this “can't, can't” with which people try to stop all possibility of progress.

You have raised another new point about the universal.

These are not new points, they are as old as the hills.

You can cut me, Sir, or beat me, but don't forsake me. In imitation of the librarian of my College who came out with a similar appeal when the professor of English caught him smoking one day.

Never! But beat – a lot.

I repeat – a little pathetically – that my brain is sclerotic and psychic smoky; no intellect and no Yogic capacity, as you yourself must have realised by making “word-punctures”.

Well, to see that they are non-evident shows you at once that they are latent and will be evident and even if they are not latent they are waiting for you in the universal! So in every blessed way you are very quite all right. Be consoled therefore.

Rather a long letter, because a closing one. When will these two weeks be over! Give me a little extra force for doing something, just to keep me out of mischief – an idle brain is the devil's workshop. Who knows what I'll be up to!

Man, don't talk lightly like that of the devil. He is too active to be trifled with in that way. My devils? they are only expletive.

15 February 1935, 152-4

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. [Underlined]

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

1 I.e. a typed letter of 5 pages taking up the subject of Avatarhood. See letter of March 6, 1935.

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.

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.”¹

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.”²

Does it follow that the breaking through had not to be done, or was a mere trifling impediment? The power of the form

1 Centenary Edition, Vol. 13, p. 149.

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

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 suffering he must assume and use so as to show... how that suffering may be a means of redemption."'¹ 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."

1 Centenary Edition, Vol. 13, pp. 155-56.

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 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.”¹

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

1 Centenary Edition, Vol.13, p. 157.

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.

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.

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 Arjuna only to whom alone Krishna seems to have addressed the Gita.

[Sri Aurobindo underlined “Arjuna only”.]

What a waste of words and energy! Yet Krishna said “even Chandala 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.¹

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, – 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 Note that Sri Aurobindo wrote X and Y in the MS. Here they are not editorial substitutions.

(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 a 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 any one 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 Y¹ 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.

6 March 1935, 165-74

[Whatever correspondence on Avatarhood follows now, refers only to Sri Aurobindo's short reply of March 6, 1935 (see above, pp. 165-6) written on the chit: "Nirod ... chimera – then?" or before.]

You seem 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

¹ Here also Sri Aurobindo wrote X and Y in the MS.

all terrestrial conditions, etc.? However, I did say 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.

7 March 1935, 174-7

My logic again, Sir: Sri Aurobindo is bound to become wholly supramental and is being supramentalised in parts. If that is true – and it is – well, he can't die till he is supramental – and once he is so, he is immortal.

It looks very much like a non-sequitur. The first part and the last are all right – but the link is fragile. How do you know I won't take a fancy to die in between as a joke?

Now, if that is accepted, then those whom you know for certain as would-be supramentals and have been accepted as such, are immortal – follows as a corollary.

Again the fallacy comes in in the “would-be”. A “supramental” may be immortal but why should a W.S.¹ be immortal?

It may be a “comfortable doctrine” but that's my philosophy of sadhana. What is the good of the Avatar if we do everything by ourselves? We have come to you and taken shelter at your feet so that you may, as the Gita says, deliver us from all sins...

But what if the Avatar gets frightened at the prospect of all this hard labour and rushes back scared behind the veil?

March 30, 1935, 196-7

1 Would-be supramental.

MISCELLANEA

How can the Divine, who is the All or Omnipresent, containing the Infinite, incarnate in the small space of a human body? I believe it is because this seems impossible to the mind that the Arya Samajists do not accept the possibility of incarnation.

The objection is founded on human three-dimensional ideas of Space and division in spaces, which are again founded upon the limited nature of the human senses. To some beings space is one-dimensional, to others two-dimensional, to others three-dimensional—but there are other dimensions also. It is well recognised in metaphysics that the Infinite can be in a point and not only in extension of space—just as there is an eternity of extension in Time but also an Eternity which is independent of Time so that it can be felt in the moment—one has not to think of millions and millions of years in order to realise it. So too the rigid distinction of One against Many, a One that cannot be many or of an All that is made up by addition and not self-existent are crude mental notions of the outer finite mind that cannot be applied to the Infinite. If the All were of this material and unspiritual character, tied down to a primary arithmetic and geometry, the realisation of the universe in oneself, of the all in each and each in all, of the universe in the Bindu would be impossible. Your Arya Samajists are evidently innocent of the elements of metaphysical thinking or they would not make such objections.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 1 April 1936, 401-2

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?

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 11 May 1937, 402

Is it true that the Avatar is the full manifestation of the Divine Vibhuti?

If you consider it from the earth's point of view. But it may be truer to say that the Avatar holds himself back and manifests as a Vibhuti in many lives till the time comes for his manifesting as the Avatar.

Ibid., 27 September 1933, 402

Were the Avatars—the ten that have already come—known as Avatars in their own times?

Only to a few, according to the accounts.

Ibid., 14 November 1935, 431

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 at its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the Divine from doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being.

Ibid., 18 December 1935, 402-3

What could be the Divine's purpose in leaving Arjuna in such a helpless condition after his withdrawal from the world?

It is said that it was done to break Arjuna's pride so that he

might see his strength was not his, but the Divine's alone.

Throughout the history of human evolution we see that the Avatar brings light into the world. But when he retires, very little of this light remains. There is no substantial change. Does the Divine will it to be so?

You have only to consider what the state of humanity would have been if Krishna and others had not come. They would have been still near to the beast with no openings on the heights of the spirit.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 20 October 1933, 431-2

Sri Krishna when asked by Arjuna after the destruction of the Yadavas to repeat the sacred lore of the Gita, replied that the teaching of the Gita came into him once but that it was no more and he could not repeat it. Can one who has attained to the supermind fall?

Srikrishna did not say that he was in the supermind when he spoke the Gita to Arjuna—he was in Yoga, but one can be in Yoga without being in the Supermind. So this is not a point in instance.

Ibid., 25 January 1934, 653-4

Some say November 24th is a day of victory. By that some mean that the Supermind (supramental consciousness) descended into the physical consciousness of Sri Aurobindo. Others say it was the coming down of Krishna into the physical consciousness. If it was the descent of Krishna, does that mean the descent of the supramental light?

Krishna is not the supramental light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya, he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.

Ibid., 2 November 1935, 272

How is it that later Avatars often find fault with the actions and movements of their predecessors?

Who finds fault with whom? I have not found fault with any Avatar. To discern what they expressed and what they did not express, is not to find fault.

Avatars are supposed to be infallible, they are supposed to have Knowledge directly from Above!

What is infallible? I invite your attention again to Rama and the Golden Deer. The Avatar need have no theoretical “Knowledge” from above—he acts and thinks whatever the Divine within him intends that he should act and think for the work. Was everything that Ramakrishna said or thought infallible?

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 22 April 1935, 430

About the question of the Avatar, I do not think it is useful to press in the matter. It has become very much the tendency, especially in Bengal, to regard the Guru as the Avatar. To every disciple the Guru is the Divine, but in a special sense—for the Guru is supposed to live in the divine consciousness, to have attained union and when he gives to the disciple, it is the Divine that gives and what he gives is the consciousness of the Divine who is within the Guru. But that and Avatarhood are two different things. It is mostly in East Bengal recently that those have come who were acclaimed as Avatars; those who came had each of them the idea of a work to be done for the world and the sense of a Divine Power working through them, which shows that there was a pressure for manifestation there and something came in each case, for something of the Divine Power always comes when it is called, but it does not look as if there was anywhere the complete descent. It is this that may have created the idea that the Avatar was born there. It has always been said of the Advent that is to come now that there would be many in whom it would seem that it had come, but the real Avatar would work behind a veil until the destined hour came.

I do not gather from what is quoted as said by your Guru that he claimed to be the Avatar. It seems to me that he claimed to be a Power preparing the way for the work of the Divine Mother and even to indicate that all that he meant would be manifested not only by his own followers but by other groups [Sanskrit], consisting evidently of those who had not had him for Guru but had some other Head and Teacher. This is also confirmed by the saying that some other one than his disciples might be the means of his [Sanskrit]—that is to say, would be the means of carrying on his work and aiding the manifestation of the Mother. If this meant proclaiming him as the Avatar, I do not see how it can agree with the other saying that after his leaving his body the Avatar would come to the Ashram he had created.

I do not quite know what is meant by *ayoni-sambhava*. An incarnation is always through a human mother, though there have been one or two cases in which a virgin birth has been proclaimed (Christ, Buddha). The only other meaning—unless we suppose an unprecedented miracle—might be a descent such as sometimes happens, the Godhead manifesting in somebody who at birth was a Vibhuti, not at once the full incarnation.

I have written this much as an answer to your question, but I doubt whether it is necessary or advisable to write anything of it to your friends. They have their own feeling about the matter; it seems to me better not to challenge or disturb it.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 25 August 1935, 400-1

Elsewhere people try to find out various qualities in their Guru to prove him an Avatar; here some try to find out reasons to disprove even the possibility.

It is a modern Ashram, that's why!

Ibid., 14 November 1935, 400

Every Avatar descended to relieve the world from falsehood, darkness, vice, etc. Also, everyone preached

against them.

I am not concerned with what the Avatars did or are supposed to have done (though in that case Krishna seems to have done some very queer and undivine things). My business is with rising above the human consciousness and not with fulfilling limited human ideals; and I look at things from that standpoint.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 20 April 1936, 430

Avatars, unlike Vibhutis, do not need to satisfy their vital.

Why should they not?

For the Avatar's vital has no cravings and desires as our vital has. He is above them. And if he seems to be satisfying them, it is only to acquire experience and knowledge of the vital world.

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 descends 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.

Exactly.

But behind he is perfectly conscious of what happens. The universal forces cannot make him their tool as they make us.

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

Ibid., 23 July 1936, 430-1

Avatars can of course be married and satisfy their vital movements. But do they really indulge them as ordinary people? Don't they even before they begin the practice of Yoga, remain conscious of their union with the Divine above even while satisfying their outer being?

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 dependent on the practice of Yoga.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 25 July 1936, 431

You can't expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna's. The question itself would be relevant only if there were two sectarian religions in opposition, Aurobindoism and Vaishnavism, each insisting on its own God's greatness. That is not the case. And then what Krishna must I challenge,—the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottama, the cosmic Deity, master of the universe, Vasudeva who is all, the immanent in the heart of all creatures, or the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity? All that is not to me something philosophical or mental but a matter of daily and hourly realisation and intimate to the stuff of my consciousness. Then from what position can I adjudicate this dispute? X thinks I am superior in greatness, you think there can be nothing greater than Krishna; each is entitled to have his own view or feeling, whether it is itself right or not. It can be left there; it can be no reason for your leaving the Asram.

Ibid., 25 February 1945, 432-3

THE PURPOSE OF AVATARHOOD

Avatarhood would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution. The Hindu procession of the ten Avatars is itself, as it were, a parable of evolution. First the Fish Avatar, then the amphibious animal between land and water, then the land animal, then the Man-Lion Avatar, bridging man and animal, then man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence, then the rajasic, sattwic, nirguna Avatars, leading the human development from the vital rajasic to the sattwic mental man and again the overmental superman. Krishna, Buddha and Kalki depict the last three stages, the stages of the spiritual development – Krishna opens the possibility of overmind, Buddha tries to shoot beyond to the supreme liberation but that liberation is still negative, not returning upon earth to complete positively the evolution; Kalki is to correct this by bringing the Kingdom of the Divine upon earth, destroying the opposing Asura forces. The progression is striking and unmistakable.

As for the lives in between the Avatar lives, it must be remembered that Krishna speaks of many lives in the past, not only a few supreme ones, and secondly that while he speaks of himself as the Divine, in one passage he describes himself as a Vibhuti, *vr̥sn̄nām vāsudevah*. We may therefore fairly assume that in many lives he manifested as the Vibhuti veiling the fuller Divine Consciousness. If we admit that the object of Avatarhood is to lead the evolution, this is quite reasonable, the Divine appearing as Avatar in the great transitional stages and as Vibhutis to aid the lesser transitions.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 401-2

I only took the Puranic list of Avatars and interpreted it as a parable of evolution, so as to show that the idea of evolution is implicit behind the theory of Avatarhood. As to whether one accepts Buddha as an Avatar or prefers to put others in his place (in some lists Balaram replaces Buddha), is a matter of individual feeling. The Buddhist Jatakas are legends about the past incarnations of the Buddha, often with a teaching implied in them, and are not a part of the Hindu system. To the Buddhists Buddha was not an Avatar at all, he was the soul climbing up the ladder of spiritual evolution till it reached the final stage of emancipation – although Hindu influence did make Buddhism develop the idea of an eternal Buddha above, that was not a universal or fundamental Buddhistic idea. Whether the Divine in manifesting his Avatarhood could choose to follow the line of evolution from the lowest scale, manifesting on each scale as a Vibhuti is a question again to which the answer is not inevitably in the negative. If we accept the evolutionary idea, such a thing may have its place.

If Buddha taught something different from Krishna, that does not prevent his advent from being necessary in the spiritual evolution. The only question is whether the attempt to scale the heights of an absolute Nirvana through negation of cosmic existence was a necessary step or not, having a view to the fact that one can make the attempt to reach the Highest on the *neti neti* as well as the *iti iti* line.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 403-4

He [Buddha] affirmed practically something unknowable that was Permanent and Unmanifested. Advaita does the same. Buddha never said he was an Avatar of a Personal God but that he was the Buddha. It is the Hindus who made him an Avatar. If Buddha had looked upon himself as an Avatar at all, it would have been as an Avatar of the impersonal Truth.

Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the overmind Godhead

preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the overmind leading it towards the Ananda.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 404

One can be the head of a spiritual organisation or the Messiah of a religion or an Avatar without in this life reaching the supermind and beyond.

Ibid., 405

Yuge yuge may be used in a general sense, as in English “from age to age” and not refer technically to the *yuga* proper according to the Puranic computation. But the *bahūni* has an air of referring to very numerous lives especially when coupled with *tava ca*. In that case all these many births could not be full incarnations, – many may have been merely Vibhuti births carrying on the thread from incarnation to incarnation. About Arjuna’s accompanying him in each and every birth, nothing is said, but it would not be likely – many, of course.

Ibid., 405

But each being in a new birth prepares a new mind, life and body – otherwise John Smith would always be John Smith and would have no chance of being Piyusha Kanti Ghose. Of course inside there are old personalities contributing to the new life – but I am speaking of the new visible personality, the outer man, mental, vital, physical. It is the psychic being that keeps the link from birth to birth and makes all the manifestations of the same person. It is therefore to be expected that the Avatar should take on a new personality each time, a personality suited for the new times, work, surroundings. In my own view of things, however, the new personality has a series of Avatar births behind him, births in which the intermediate evolution has been followed and assisted from age to age.

Ibid., 406

I suppose very few recognised him [Krishna] as an Avatar, – certainly it was not at all a general recognition. Among the few those nearest him do not seem to have counted – it was less prominent people like Vidura etc.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 406

Those who were with Krishna were in all appearance men like other men. They spoke and acted with each other as men with men and were not thought of by those around them as gods. Krishna himself was known by most as a man – only a few worshipped him as the Divine.

Ibid., 406

An Avatar, roughly speaking, is one who is conscious of the presence and power of the Divine born in him or descended into him and governing from within his will and life and action; he feels identified inwardly with this divine power and presence.

A Vibhuti is supposed to embody some power of the Divine and is enabled by it to act with great force in the world, but that is all that is necessary to make him a Vibhuti: the power may be very great, but the consciousness is not that of an inborn or indwelling Divinity. This is the distinction we can gather from the Gita which is the main authority on this subject. If we follow this distinction, we can confidently say from what is related of them that Rama and Krishna can be accepted as Avatars; Buddha figures as such although with a more impersonal consciousness of the Power within him. Ramakrishna voiced the same consciousness when he spoke of Him who was Rama and who was Krishna being within him. But Chaitanya's case is peculiar; for according to the accounts he ordinarily felt and declared himself a bhakta of Krishna and nothing more, but in great moments he manifested Krishna, grew luminous in mind and body and was Krishna himself and spoke and acted as the Lord. His contemporaries saw in him an Avatar of Krishna, a manifestation of the Divine Love. Shankara and Vivekananda were certainly Vibhutis;

they cannot be reckoned as more, though as Vibhūtis they were very great.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 406-7

As for the Divine and the human, that also is a mind-made difficulty. The Divine is there in the human, and the human fulfilling and exceeding its highest aspirations and tendencies becomes the Divine. ... 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 there is only a weakling without any divine Presence within or divine Force behind him – 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 you complained. If you look upon the human alone, looking with the external eye only and 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.

Ibid., 409

It is true that it is impossible for the limited human reason to judge the way or purpose of the Divine, – which is the way of the Infinite dealing with the finite.

Ibid., 410

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of a 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.

Ibid., 410

Men's way of doing things well is through a clear mental connection; they see things and do things with the mind and what they want is a mental and human perfection. When they think of a manifestation of Divinity, they think it must be an extraordinary perfection in doing ordinary human things – an extraordinary business faculty, political, poetic or artistic faculty, an accurate memory, not making mistakes, not undergoing any defeat or failure. Or else they think of things which they call superhuman like not eating food or telling cotton-futures or sleeping on nails or eating them. All that has nothing to do with manifesting the Divine.... These human ideas are false.

The Divinity acts according to another consciousness, the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and It acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to man's ideas of what It should or should not do. This is the first thing one must grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 410-1

Vibhuti, 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.

Ibid., 413-4

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 Rama-rajya – 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 Vanara and Rakshasa. 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 Kshatriya with the formidable brute beast that was Bali, it was his business to kill him and get the Animal 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 of even Rakshasa Vibhishana. All that he was in a brilliant, striking but above all spontaneous and inevitable way, not with 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 Rakshasa 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 Vibhutis. 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.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 415-6

Why should not Rama have kâma (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".

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 418

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 Seely 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. ...

By sattvic 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 vicious 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. ...

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.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 418-20

The question was if certain perfections must not be demanded of the Divine Manifestation which seemed to me quite irrelevant to the reality. I put forward two propositions which appear to me indispensable 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 to be the necessary and intended way.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 421-2

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 an Avatar must be a saint or a yogi.

Ibid., 422

He [Buddha] had a more powerful vital than Ramakrishna's, a stupendous will and an invincible mind of thought. If he had led the ordinary life, he would have been a great organiser, conqueror and creator. If a man rises to a higher plane of consciousness, it does not necessarily follow that he will be a greater man of action or a greater creator. One may rise to spiritual planes of inspiration undreamed of by Shakespeare and yet not be as great a poetic creator as Shakespeare. "Greatness" is not the object of spiritual realisation any more than fame or success in the world – how are these things the standard of spiritual realisation?

Ibid., 423

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 Christ or Buddha are not much more than what has happened in many other lives – what is it that gives Buddha or Christ their enormous place in the spiritual world? It was because something manifested through them that was more than any outward event or any teaching. The verifiable historicity gives us very little of that, yet it is that only that matters. So it seems to me that X 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 even dynamically potential) in others. Also, evidently, sectarian walls are a mistake, an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth which may serve a mental, but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar, the Guru have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal; it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.

Letters on Yoga, SABCL 22, 428-9

LEADERS OF EVOLUTION

Q: 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 the previous lives?

A: Carrying on the evolution.

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

A: 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.

On Himself, SABCL 26, 445

Q: The common mass of mankind in the past may have not recognized 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?

A: 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.

Ibid., 445

Q: If you were on the earth all the time 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.

A: 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 a Vibhuti.

On Himself, SABCL 26, 446

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

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

Q: 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.

A: 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.

Ibid., 446

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

A: An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work, they need not to have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what is 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.

On Himself, SABCL 26, 446-7

Q: 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 (of ignorance) in order to recognise you?

A: 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.

Ibid., 447

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

A: We were not on earth as Avatars.

Ibid., 448

Q: 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 the earth carrying on the evolution, what was the necessity for the coming

down of the Avatars who are portions of Himself?

A: 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.

On Himself, SABCL 26, 448

We have had sufferings and struggles to which yours is a mere child's play; I have not made our cases equal to yours. I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness—if nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is also that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. X seems to say that there is no way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug,—there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such a conception makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood; there is then no reason in it, no necessity in it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is a part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning.

Ibid., 463

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 and 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, roundabout and difficult journey.”

On Himself, SABCL 26, 463-4

No, the supramental has not descended into the body or into Matter—it is only at the point where such a descent has become not only possible but inevitable; I am speaking, of course, of my experience. But as my experience is the centre and condition of all the rest, that is sufficient for the promise.

My difficulty is that you all seem to expect a kind of miraculous fairy-tale change and do not realise that it is a rapid and concentrated evolution which is the aim of my Sadhana and that there must be a process for it, a working of the higher in the lower and a dealing with all the necessary intervals—not a sudden feat of creation by which everything is done on a given date. It is a supramental but not an irrational process.

What is to be done will happen—perhaps with a rush

On Himself, SABCL 26, 146

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy: I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things; it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it.

Ibid., 153

I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile. But it does not follow either that if or when I become supramental, everybody will become supramental. Others can so become who are ready for it, when they are ready for it—though, of course, the achievement in myself will be to them a great help towards it. It is therefore quite legitimate to have the aspiration for it—provided:

- 1) One does not make a too personal or egoistic affair of it turning it into a Nietzschean or other ambition to be a superman.
- 2) One is ready to undergo the conditions and stages needed for the achievement.
- 3) One is sincere and regards it as part of the seeking of the Divine and consequent culmination of the Divine Will in one and insists on no more than the fulfilment of that will whatever it may be, psychicisation, spiritualisation or supramentalisation. It should be regarded as the fulfilment of God's working in the world, not as a personal chance or achievement.

Ibid., 144-5

SANATANA DHARMA
A WORLD-UNION
THE EQUAL UNIVERSAL GODHEAD

There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary. This is the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion. Under the stress of alien impacts she has largely lost hold not of the structure of that *dharma*, but of its living reality. For the religion of India is nothing if it is not lived. It has to be applied not only to life, but to the whole of life; its spirit has to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character, affections and aspirations. To understand the heart of this *dharma*, to experience it as a truth, to feel the high emotions to which it rises and to express and execute it in life is what we understand by Karmayoga. We believe that it is to make the *yoga* the ideal of human life that India rises today; by the *yoga* she will get the strength to realise her freedom, unity and greatness, by the *yoga* she will keep the strength to preserve it. It is a spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex. ...

The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge,—that

wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This *sanatana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga. *Karmayogin, The ideal of the Karmayogin, SABCL 2, 19 June 1909, 17-9 passim*

I knew I would come out. The year of detention was meant only for a year of seclusion and of training. How could anyone hold me in jail longer than was necessary for God's purpose? He had given me a word to speak and a work to do, and until that word was spoken I knew that no human power could hush me, until that work was done no human power could stop God's instrument, however weak that instrument might be or however small. Now that I have come out, even in these few minutes, a word has been suggested to me which I had no wish to speak. The thing I had in my mind He has thrown from it and what I speak is under an impulse and a compulsion.

When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar Hajat I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, "What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?" A day passed and a second day and a third, when a voice came to me from within, "Wait and see." Then I grew calm

and waited, I was taken from Lal Bazar to Alipore and was placed for one month in a solitary cell apart from men. There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what He had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me. I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go in seclusion and to look into myself, so that I might enter into closer communion with Him. I was weak and could not accept the call. My work was very dear to me and in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it would suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it. It seemed to me that He spoke to me again and said, "The bonds you had not the strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that that should continue. I have had another thing for you to do and it is for that I have brought you here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work." Then He placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the sadhana of the Gita. I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently. I realised what the Hindu religion meant. We speak often of the Hindu religion, of the Sanatan Dharma, but few of us really know what that religion is. Other religions are preponderatingly religions of faith and profession, but the Sanatan Dharma is life itself; it is a thing that has not so much to be believed as lived. This is the Dharma that for the salvation of humanity was cherished in the seclusion

of this peninsula from of old. It is to give this religion that India is rising. She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world. India has always existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great.

Therefore this was the next thing He pointed out to me,—He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion. He turned the hearts of my jailors to me and they spoke to the Englishman in charge of the jail, “He is suffering in his confinement; let him at least walk outside his cell for half an hour in the morning and in the evening.” So it was arranged, and it was while I was walking that His strength again entered into me. I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies. Amongst these thieves and dacoits there were many who put me to shame by their sympathy, their kindness, the humanity triumphant over such adverse circumstances. One I saw among them especially, who seemed to me a saint, a peasant of my nation who did not know how to read and write, an alleged dacoit sentenced to ten years' rigorous

imprisonment, one of those whom we look down upon in our Pharisaical pride of class as Chhotalok. Once more He spoke to me and said, "Behold the people among whom I have sent you to do a little of my work. This is the nature of the nation I am raising up and the reason why I raise them."

When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the Magistrate I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, "When you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to me, where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel." I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled. "Now do you fear?" He said, "I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their words. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear. This case which is brought against you, leave it in my hand. It is not for you. It was not for the trial that I brought you here but for something else. The case itself is only a means for my work and nothing more." ... I knew all along what He meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within: "I am guiding, therefore fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other. Therefore whatever clouds may come, whatever dangers and sufferings, whatever difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is nothing impossible, nothing difficult. I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay."

Meanwhile He had brought me out of solitude and placed

me among those who had been accused along with me. You have spoken much today of my self-sacrifice and devotion to my country. I have heard that kind of speech ever since I came out of jail, but I hear it with embarrassment, with something of pain. For I know my weakness, I am a prey to my own faults and backslidings. I was not blind to them before and when they all rose up against me in seclusion, I felt them utterly. I knew them that I the man was a man of weakness, a faulty and imperfect instrument, strong only when a higher strength entered into me. Then I found myself among these young men and in many of them I discovered a mighty courage, a power of self-effacement in comparison with which I was simply nothing. I saw one or two who were not only superior to me in force and character,—very many were that,—but in the promise of that intellectual ability on which I prided myself. He said to me, "This is the young generation, the new and mighty nation that is arising at my command. They are greater than yourself. What have you to fear? If you stood aside or slept, the work would still be done. If you were cast aside tomorrow, here are the young men who will take up your work and do it more mightily than you have ever done. You have only got some strength from me to speak a word to this nation which will help to raise it." This was the next thing He told me.

Then a thing happened suddenly and in a moment I was hurried away to the seclusion of a solitary cell. What happened to me during that period I am not impelled to say, but only that day after day, He showed me His wonders and made me realise the utter truth of the Hindu religion. I had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign. About many things in Hinduism I had once been inclined to believe that they were imaginations, that there was much of dream in it, much that was delusion and Maya. But now day after day I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in the body the truths of the Hindu religion. They became living

experiences to me, and things were opened to me which no material science could explain. When I first approached Him, it was not entirely in the spirit of the Jnani. I came to Him long ago in Baroda some years before the Swadeshi began and I was drawn into the public field.

When I approached God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta. So when I turned to the Yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if my idea was right, I did it in this spirit and with this prayer to Him, "If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life." I strove long for the realisation of Yoga and at last to some extent I had it, but in what I most desired I was not satisfied. Then in the seclusion of the jail, of the solitary cell I asked for it again. I said, "Give me Thy Adesh. I do not know what work to do or how to do it. Give me a message." In the communion of Yoga two messages came. The first message said, "I have given you a work and it is to help to uplift this nation. Before long the time will come when you will have to go out of jail; for it is not my will that this time either you should be convicted or that you should pass the time, as others have to do, in suffering for their country. I have called you to work, and that is the Adesh for which you have asked. I give you the Adesh to go forth and do my work." The second message came and it said, "Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth

of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do, they can do nothing but help in my purpose. They also are doing my work, they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment."

This then is what I have to say to you. The name of your society is "Society for the Protection of Religion". Well, the protection of the religion, the protection and upraising before

the world of the Hindu religion, that is the work before us. But what is the Hindu religion? What is this religion which we call Sanatan, eternal? It is the Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it, because in this Peninsula it grew up in the seclusion of the sea and the Himalayas, because in this sacred and ancient land it was given as a charge to the Aryan race to preserve through the ages. But it is not circumscribed by the confines of a single country, it does not belong peculiarly and for ever to a bounded part of the world. That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion, because it is the universal religion which embraces all others. If a religion is not universal, it cannot be eternal. A narrow religion, a sectarian religion, an exclusive religion can live only for a limited time and a limited purpose. This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy. It is the one religion which impresses on mankind the closeness of God to us and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach God. It is the one religion which insists every moment on the truth which all religions acknowledge that He is in all men and all things and that in Him we move and have our being. It is the one religion which enables us not only to understand and believe this truth but to realise it with every part of our being. It is the one religion which shows the world what the world is, that it is the Lila of Vasudeva. It is the one religion which shows us how we can best play our part in that Lila, its subtlest laws and its noblest rules. It is the one religion which does not separate life in any smallest detail from religion, which knows what immortality is and has utterly removed from us the reality of death.

This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you today. What I intended to speak has been put away from me, and beyond what is given to me I have nothing to say. It is only the word that is put into me that I can speak to you. That word is now finished. I spoke once before with

this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.

Karmayogin, Uttarpara Speech, SABCL 2, 30 June 1909, 2-10 passim

There are many who perceive the necessity of the religious and moral regeneration, who are inclined to turn from the prosaic details of politics and commerce and regret that any guide and teacher of the nation should stoop to mingle in them. That is a grievous error. The men who would lead India must be catholic and many-sided. When the Avatar comes, we like to believe that he will be not only the religious guide, but the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of cooperative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist. He will be in short the summary and grand type of the future Indian nation which is rising to reshape and lead the world.

Karmayogin, SABCL 2, 25 September 1909, 214

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts

and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand forever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Autobiographical notes, CWSA 36, 14 August 1947, 479-80

It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution, no other can replace it. But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where they can be met, baffled or deflected by opposite reasonings and other discordant instincts. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the brotherhood or,

let us say,—for this is another feeling than any vital or mental sense of brotherhood, a calmer more durable motive-force,—the spiritual comradeship which is the expression of an inner realisation of oneness. For so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race; for the Spirit, the inmost self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all, in the universal life and nature.

This is a solution to which it may be objected that it puts off the consummation of a better human society to a far-off date in the future evolution of the race. For it means that no machinery invented by the reason can perfect either the individual or the collective man; an inner change is needed in human nature, a change too difficult to be ever effected except by the few. This is not certain; but in any case, if this is not the solution, then there is no solution, if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind. Then the terrestrial evolution must pass beyond man as it has passed beyond the animal and a greater race must come that will be capable of the spiritual change, a form of life must be born that is nearer to the divine.

The Human Cycle, CWSA 25, 220-1

INVOLUTION, HOSTILE FORCES, TRANSFORMATION, AND THE EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

It seems to me that the evolution out of matter could have taken place without the hostile forces. It could have happened quickly, by the descent of the Supramental and other lights, powers and joy of the Transcendent.

Anything could have happened—but if the Supramental was to descend immediately, there was no need of matter or evolution—the only reasonable thing would have been to create a supramental world at once without any slow evolution of matter, of life in matter, of mind in living matter or of the spiritual or supramental in spiritualised life in the material body.

Without the hostile forces and the self-contradictory consciousness of an exclusive division, avidyā, the manifestation would have been self-luminous and perfect and there would have been no need of an evolution from imperfection to perfection.

Obviously—but this world was created for evolution and not for an immediately luminous manifestation such as already exists on some other planes.

Whoever gave the hostile forces the power of avidyā to enter into and interfere with the earth-evolution has allowed tremendous pain and suffering to grow in the earth-consciousness.

Avidyā did not interfere with the earth evolution, it existed before the earth life was evolved in the form of Inconscience. The meaning of evolution is the evolving or slow manifestation

of life, mind and conscious supermind out of matter with its original Inconscience. Avidyā is one thing and the intervention of the hostile forces is another.

Even if the hostile forces go back to their own region, they will certainly wage war against the transformed divine world. The only way for God to save us from this would be for him to put some pressure on them for self-transformation.

It is supposed that the supramental Light and Force is to descend—if the descent is so complete that these forces are driven back to their own world, it is not likely that any efforts on their part would have any success. It is the darkness or the insufficient Light that gave them their chance to intervene. If there is the victory of the true light, they cannot any longer.

The Mother has said that the hostile forces are necessary in the life of the Asrama for testing the sincerity of the sadhakas.

The work of this Yoga and therefore the principle of the Asram life is to take the world as it is and deal with it by a transformation of which the supramental descent is not the first but the final process. The presence of the hostile forces is a part of the world as it is and not to deal with them at all or to act as if they were not there would have been to leave the problem unsolved and the work undone. The sadhaks of the Asram are not spotless Saints or perfect born Yogis but men who carry in them their human nature and typify each in his own way what is in the world and what has to be changed. The influence of the hostile Forces was on them as on all human beings in a less or greater degree, and so long as they open themselves to that influence, it works on them as on the world,—it is only by a perfect sincerity and by a perfect opening to the Light that it can disappear. In that sense the presence of these forces is a test and the world that has to be changed being what it is and their nature being what it is, it could not be otherwise.

I believe that each divine being has a hostile being associated with it for some unknown purpose in the Asrama.

It is not only in the Asram but everywhere that it is like that. It is a well-known principle of all occult knowledge that there are these two elements overstanding each seeker of the Truth.¹

The Mother once said that she never upheld the hostile forces, nor was she their Mother.

The hostile forces are upheld not by the Mother but by something in the sadhaks themselves which opens the doors to them by concentrated egoism, mental arrogance, vital revolt and many other things, e.g. lying, sex etc.

Please give me the highest solutions and not temporary truths of a passing evolution.

The highest solutions cannot be brought in like that, as if one were acting in a clear field. If the “temporary” truths of the evolution could be got rid of so easily, there would have been no need of preparation or of a trying and difficult sadhana. It was necessary to deal with what had come into existence in the evolution so that the supramental descent might become possible.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 9 December 1933, 641-4

1 Sri Aurobindo's observation introduce the theme of the 'evil persona' (the French translation in the *Bulletin* is 'le double mauvais'), which in "*Letters on Yoga*", p.1660, SABCL, he describes as follows: "What you say about the "Evil Persona" interests me greatly as it answers to my constant experience that a person greatly endowed for the work has, always or almost always,—perhaps one ought not to make a too rigid universal rule about these things — a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or, if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, be solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that seem very disconcerting on the surface."

What I meant in my first question [p. 641] was that, as far as I can see, evolution is not necessary for the divine manifestation.

There is no question about the possibility of a non-evolutionary manifestation—but that is quite irrelevant, for this *is* an evolutionary manifestation and it was evidently intended to be so from the beginning.

But on account of the interference of an exclusive avidyā, the manifestation has been perverted into what it now is.

What do you mean by an interference? The exclusive Avidyā, that is the Inconscience of Matter, was the starting point, not something that came in after life had begun.

If there had been a gradual descent of the supramental light in the beginning, the true life, mind and higher planes might have been released and organised.

A gradual descent of the Supramental Light into what? Matter being the starting point, life and mind had to evolve first—to begin with a supramental descent would have reversed the order of the creation.

Thus the hostile forces and the perversion that they bring might have been dispensed with.

All that depends on the original statement that it might have been otherwise—if a rapid supramental creation had been intended and not an evolution. As this is in its nature an evolutionary world, there is no practical use in pressing that possibility.

My point is that the hostile forces could have been dispensed with, and that they still can be dispensed with, at present.

As for what can be done at the present time, that is just what is being fought out. But there are two parties to the issue, the higher consciousness and the earth consciousness, the latter largely represented by the sadhaks here. If the earth consciousness is ready an easy descent is quite possible, but

if it resists, then there is in the nature of things difficulty and struggle and the Asuric forces have their chance.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 25 December 1933, 644-5

I for my part am not prepared to bear any part of the burden of transformation of the hostile forces.

So much the better. I am not asking anybody to transform the Asuras—I am only asking them to reject them.

I spoke of having seen and heard someone who showed me how he had organised, in the being of every sadhak here, a “dark being” veiling his “divine being”.

I do not know what you mean by this someone. The existence of a double being is a preexistent fact, it has not been organised by anyone here. ...

You once said that the ascension to the supermind and individual transformation must precede the manifestation of the Sangha. But why did you allow the Sangha to manifest before this condition was fulfilled?

Which Sangha? I have never called this Asram the Sangha. The Asram is a field of growth, not a manifestation of perfection.

Is there no possibility of an individual rising up to the Supramental separately, and then turning down towards manifestation with a fuller light, knowledge, power and joy, individually?

There is no possibility of shooting up suddenly to the Supermind—one has to go step by step—though it may be done more or less quickly—but not with any railway-train speed. Nor is it possible for the supramental to descend without a preparation of the lower parts.

Have you still the idea of transforming the hostile forces? If so, how?

I do not know what you mean by the transformation of the hostile forces. It is the lower nature that has to be transformed into the higher nature. The object of the Yoga is the

transformation of terrestrial beings, not of the Asuras.

The hostile beings generally attack, then make some way in, lay siege and create conditions for invasion and ultimately lead or compel the human being to fall.

I am quite aware of the way in which the unconverted hostile beings, who have a hostile intention, get inside—there have been plenty of cases like that, and their method besides has been known by occultists and Yogins all through the ages. As for attacks, they can attack anybody. Christ and Buddha too had to bear the assaults of the Asura. But invasion in a man is only possible if there is something in him that gives a response and opens the gate.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 25 January 1934, 646-8

Summing up, I understand you to say:

(1) That the hostile forces were permitted by God to pervert this creation at the time of the evolution of the human type.

No, I said “when life began to appear”, that is before the human evolution.

(2) That when the supermind comes down and manifests itself in the transformed earth consciousness they will go away or be driven out as there would be no need of their presence in this creation or Asrama,

No possibility either, if the supermind is once dominant.

(3) for here they serve some purpose (which I have not quite understood).

The purpose they serve *in the world* is to give a full chance to the possibilities of the Inconscience and Ignorance—for this world was meant to be a working out of these possibilities with the supramental harmonisation as its eventual outcome. The life, the work developing here in the Asram has to deal with the world problem and had therefore to meet, it could not avoid, the conflict with the working of the hostile Powers in the human being. ...

(7) *That the Supermind can be attained individually though a force may descend by which men can profit according to the self-preparation—though you once said that it could not be done individually.*

You have missed altogether the qualifying words which I put with great care and prominent emphasis—if you don't read carefully, you will necessarily misunderstand what I write. I said "*This transformation cannot be done individually in a solitary way only*" [p. 649]. No individual solitary transformation apart from the work for the earth (which means more than any individual transformation) would be either possible or useful. (Also no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the Yoga to create an individual superman here and there.) The object of the Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life. Therefore the existence of the Asram, whatever difficulties it created for ourselves or for the individual, was inevitable. The method was the preparation of the earth consciousness in the human being as represented by the members of the Asram and others (with also a certain working in the general earth consciousness) so as to make the descent of the supramental Force possible. That Force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion.

8) *This world was originally intended to be an evolution out of ignorance in matter to knowledge through struggle and duality. Thus there was no original divine creation in the image of Heaven, or an original Satya Yuga.*

It is quite possible that there have been periods of harmony on different levels, not supramental, which were afterwards disturbed—but those could only be a stage or resting place in

a world of spiritual evolution out of the Ignorance.

(9) That a perfect manifestation is quite possible without need of evolution. But you have not said anything about whether an unfolding of the Inconscience (involved Sat-Chit-Ananda) without ignorance is possible.

I don't see how there can be, given the starting point of the Inconscience. An unfolding of anything involved must necessarily be an evolution.

(10) As for Krishna, he was God, who is everything consciously not excluding the Vijnana (the Supermind).

I have said nothing about that.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 31 January 1934, 656-9

In a letter of November 1933 [p. 639], you wrote that the intervention of the hostile forces was no longer necessary. But it seems that they have come full force this year and driven several people away. That suggests that the hostile forces will remain forever—or at least until the final transformation.

When I said “no more necessary”, I did not mean that their action could not go on—I think I expressly said that if the sadhaks persisted in opening themselves to it, it would continue. There is a difference between the action of the hostile powers and the ordinary action of the lower nature. The latter of course goes on until it is changed but there is no necessity for it to take the form of hostile attacks and upsettings; it can be treated as a machinery that has to be set right and with the aid of the higher Light and Power can be set right. There are several who were once taken by hostile attacks who have now reached the point where they can follow this method, others are approaching it—some of course have always followed and never were attacked, at least in their mind and vital. But there are still many who are very far from it and so the action of the Hostiles continues.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 14 October 1935, 659

The hostile forces exist and have been known to Yogic experience ever since the days of the Veda and Zoroaster in Asia (and the mysteries of Egypt and Chaldea and the Cabbala) and in Europe also from old times.

Letters on Yoga, CWSA 28, 461

Yes, they [the hostile forces] have their own world and, if they kept to it, there could be no objection to their existence. There is a world that is natural to them and has its own rhythm, its own dharma—just as the lesser gods have theirs. But, they want to dominate the evolution and for that purpose they have taken their station in the vital worlds which influence the earth nature and give it its materials for life.

They were created or rather manifested like other orders of being as a type or several types expressing some cosmic stress, some possibility in the Infinite, the expression of a certain kind of consciousness and force. When the work that they are permitted to do on earth, the work of negation, perversion, miscreation is finished they will be destroyed here, but there is no reason to suppose that they may not exist in their own universe, as it were, outside the system here. For here their presence is an Adharma, a disturbance of the true harmony and natural evolution there should be on the earth plane; it is an intrusion and not a natural presence.

How did the Ignorance come into being out of Sachchidananda? Or ego? The Hostile Forces in their own world embody ego self-fulfilled and having its own free play—ego on earth is not self-fulfilled and not meant to be, it is in conflict with a cosmic Force greater than itself and is only a temporary expedient for bringing forth individuality out of the indeterminateness of just conscient life and inconscient Matter.

Ibid., 462-3

REALISTIC ADWAITA AND THE GNOSTIC EVOLUTION

There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Adwaita. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* is such a realistic Adwaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. But here in the material world or at its basis he has hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy; but this is only an appearance, for we find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the working of a supreme secret intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. The apparently inconscient Energy which creates is in fact the Consciousness-Force of the Divine and its aspect of consciousness, secret in Matter, begins to emerge in Life, finds something more of itself in Mind and finds its true self in a spiritual consciousness and finally a supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is what we call evolution which is an evolution of consciousness and an evolution of the Spirit in things and only outwardly an evolution of species. Thus also, the delight of existence emerges from the original insentience first in the contrary forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the

bliss of the Spirit or as it is called in the Upanishads, the bliss of the Brahman. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*.

Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA 35, 91-2

All the character of the life and action of the gnostic being would arise self-determined out of this nature of his gnostic individuality. There could be in it no separate problem of an ethical or any similar content, any conflict of good and evil. There could indeed be no problem at all, for problems are the creations of mental ignorance seeking for knowledge and they cannot exist in a consciousness in which knowledge arises self-born and the act is self-born out of the knowledge, out of a pre-existent truth of being conscious and self-aware. An essential and universal spiritual truth of being manifesting itself, freely fulfilling itself in its own nature and self-effectuating consciousness, a truth of being one in all even in an infinite diversity of its truth and making all to be felt as one, would also be in its very nature an essential and universal good manifesting itself, fulfilling itself in its own nature and self-effectuating consciousness, a truth of good one in all and for all even in an infinite diversity of its good. The purity of the eternal Self-existence would pour itself into all the activities, making and keeping all things pure; there could be no ignorance leading to wrong will and falsehood of the steps, no separative egoism inflicting by its ignorance and separate contrary will harm on oneself or harm on others, self-driven to a wrong dealing with one's own soul, mind, life or body or a wrong dealing with the soul, mind, life, body of others, which is the practical sense of all human evil. To rise beyond virtue and sin, good and evil is an essential part of the Vedantic idea of liberation, and there is in this correlation a self-evident sequence. For liberation signifies an emergence into the true spiritual nature of being where all action is the automatic self-expression of that truth and

there can be nothing else. In the imperfection and conflict of our members there is an effort to arrive at a right standard of conduct and to observe it; that is ethics, virtue, merit, *punya*, to do otherwise is sin, demerit, *pāpa*. Ethical mind declares a law of love, a law of justice, a law of truth, laws without number, difficult to observe, difficult to reconcile. But if oneness with others, oneness with truth is already the essence of the realised spiritual nature, there is no need of a law of truth or of love,—the law, the standard has to be imposed on us now because there is in our natural being an opposite force of separateness, a possibility of antagonism, a force of discord, ill-will, strife. All ethics is a construction of good in a Nature which has been smitten with evil by the powers of darkness born of the Ignorance, even as it is expressed in the ancient legend of the Vedanta. But where all is self-determined by truth of consciousness and truth of being, there can be no standard, no struggle to observe it, no virtue or merit, no sin or demerit of the nature. The power of love, of truth, of right will be there, not as a law mentally constructed but as the very substance and constitution of the nature and, by the integration of the being, necessarily also the very stuff and constituting nature of the action. To grow into this nature of our true being, a nature of spiritual truth and oneness, is the liberation attained by an evolution of the spiritual being: the gnostic evolution gives us the complete dynamism of that return to ourselves. Once that is done, the need of standards of virtue, dharmas, disappears; there is the law and self-order of the liberty of the Spirit, there can be no imposed or constructed law of conduct, dharma. All becomes a self-flow of spiritual self-nature, Swadharmā of Swabhava.

The Life Divine, SABCL 19, 996-8

THE MOTHER ON AVATARHOOD

If you want to appraise the real value of the religion in which you are born or brought up or to have a correct perspective of the country or society to which you belong by birth, if you want to find out how relative a thing the particular environment is into which you happened to be thrown and confined, you have only to go round the earth and see that what you think good is looked upon as bad elsewhere and what is considered as bad in one place is welcomed as good in another. All countries and all religions are built up out of a mass of traditions. In all of them you will meet saints and heroes and great and mighty personalities as well as small and wicked people. You will then perceive what a mockery it is to say, "Because I am brought up in this religion, therefore it is the only true religion; because I am born in this country, therefore it is the best of all countries." One might as well make the same claim for his family, "Because I come of this family that has lived in the same place for so many years or so many centuries, therefore I am bound by its traditions; they alone are the ideal."

Things have an inner value and become real to you only when you have acquired them by the exercise of your free choice, not when they have been imposed upon you. If you want to be sure of your religion, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your country, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your family, even that you must choose. If you accept without question what has been given you by Chance, you can never be sure whether it is good or bad for you, whether it is the true thing for your life. Step back from all that forms your natural

environment or inheritance, made up and forced upon you by Nature's blind mechanical process; draw within and look quietly and dispassionately at things. Appraise them, choose freely. Then you can say with an inner truth, "This is my family, this my country, this my religion."

If we go a little way within ourselves, we shall discover that there is in each of us a consciousness that has been living throughout the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms. Each of us has been born in many different countries, belonged to many different nations, followed many different religions. Why must we accept the last one as the best? The experiences gathered by us in all these many lives in different countries and varying religions, are stored up in that inner continuity of our consciousness which persists through all births. There are multiple personalities there created by these past experiences, and when we become aware of this multitude within us, it becomes impossible to speak of one particular form of truth as the only truth, one country as our only country, one religion as the only true religion. There are people who have been born into one country, although the leading elements of their consciousness obviously belong to another. I have met some born in Europe who were evidently Indians; I have met others born in Indian bodies who were as evidently Europeans. In Japan I have met some who were Indian, others who were European. And if any of them goes to the country or enters into the civilisation to which he has affinity, he finds himself there perfectly at home.

If your aim is to be free, in the freedom of the Spirit, you must get rid of all the ties that are not the inner truth of your being, but come from subconscious habits. If you wish to consecrate yourself entirely, absolutely and exclusively to the Divine, you must do it in all completeness; you must not leave bits of yourself tied here and there.

16 November 1955, 7, 369-70

Can a psychic being take birth in two bodies?

It is not quite so simple as that.... The psychic being is the result of evolution, that is to say, evolution of the divine Consciousness which spread into Matter and slowly lifted up Matter, made it develop to return to the Divine. The psychic being was formed by this divine centre progressively through all the births. There comes a time when it reaches a kind of perfection, perfection in its growth and formation. Then, most often, as it has an aspiration for realisation, for a greater perfection to manifest yet better the Divine, it generally draws towards itself a being from the involution, that is to say, one of those entities belonging to what Sri Aurobindo calls Overmind, who comes then to incarnate in this psychic being. It can be one of those entities men generally call gods, some kind of deities. And when this fusion occurs the psychic being naturally is magnified and shares in the nature of the being incarnated in it. And then it has the power to produce emanations. These beings have the power to produce emanations, that is to say, they project out of themselves a part of themselves which becomes independent and goes into others to incarnate itself. So there can be not only two, but three, four or five emanations. That depends upon cases, it can happen thus. That is to say, one can have the same origin, psycho-divine, we might say. And generally when there are a number of emanations, the different persons feel themselves to be that being, and rightly so, for they carry in themselves something of that godhead: it is as though a part of the godhead has cast itself out of itself and become independent in another being. It is not a self-duplication but a kind of self-projection.

16 September 1953, 5, 263-4

We said the other day that “Vibhutis” are aspects, qualities (what are called in occultism emanations) of a being. They are like certain forces, powers, qualities,

—a physical form, for instance—and which manifest themselves through this form. This may be a human form. The Avatar (at least when understood in the true sense) is the incarnation upon earth of the supreme Truth. Now, many meanings are given to this word. There is even a word *avatar* in French which has a very special meaning! It is said that an adventurer has many *avatars*, that is, he changes his appearance, personality, occupation.... But originally (as it is said in the Gita, for example) when the Supreme decides to manifest himself upon earth for a particular reason and takes an earthly body, it is said that he is an Avatar. He may take many successive bodies according to the needs and circumstances, but it is always what could be called the “central being” which takes an earthly body. That is what is called an Avatar. I thought you knew that. Sri Aurobindo has explained this in many places.

11 May 1951, 4, 397-8

In one case it is the peak of humanity. “Supreme” means the human being who is at the peak of humanity, that is, the perfect man. In the other case, it is God who has entered a human body. What is human is only the body, the outer form, not the consciousness. In the first case it is the human consciousness which has attained its perfection.

23 November 1955, 7, 375

Nevertheless, even the Divine, when incarnate on earth, is subject to the same law of progress. His instrument of manifestation, the physical being he has assumed, should be in a constant state of progress, and the law of his personal self-expression is in a way linked to the general law of earthly progress. Thus, even the embodied god cannot be perfect on earth until men are ready to understand and accept perfection.

Bulletin, April 1953, 12, 63

Mother, about the Buddha I have a question. You said that the Avatar comes to the earth to show that the Divine can live upon the earth. Then why did he preach just the contrary? Is he an Avatar or not? That!... Some people say he was an Avatar, others say no, but this, to tell you the truth, it is... I think that this first thing, that the Avatar comes to the earth to prove that the Divine can... it is not so much to prove by words as to prove by a certain realisation; and I think that it would be rather this aspect of the Divine which is constructive and preservative, rather than a transformative and destructive aspect. You see, to use the Indian names known in India, well, I think they are Avatars of Vishnu who come rather to prove that the Divine can come upon earth; whereas each time Shiva has manifested he has always manifested like this, in beings who have tried to fight against an illusion and demolish what is there. I have reasons to think that the Buddha was one. To speak more accurately, he manifested something of the power of Shiva: it was the same compassion, the same understanding of all the misery, and the same power which destroys—obviously with the intention of transforming, but destroys rather than constructs. His work does not seem to have been very constructive. It was very necessary to teach men practically not to be egoistic; from that point of view it was very necessary. But in its deeper principle it has not helped very much in the transformation of the earth. As I said, you see, instead of helping the descent of the higher Consciousness into the terrestrial life, it has strongly encouraged the separation of the deeper consciousness, which he said was the only true one, from all outer expression.

7 September 1955, 7, 292-3

In the Essays on the Gita Sri Aurobindo mentions the names of three Avatars, and Christ is one of them. An Avatar is an

emanation of the Supreme Lord who assumes a human body on earth. I heard Sri Aurobindo himself say that Christ was an emanation of the Lord's aspect of love. The death of Caesar marked a decisive change in the history of Rome and the countries dependent on her. It was therefore an important event in the history of Europe.

But the death of Christ was the starting-point of a new stage in the evolution of human civilisation. This is why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the death of Christ was of greater historical significance, that is to say, it has had greater historical consequences than the death of Caesar. The story of Christ, as it has been told, is the concrete and dramatic enactment of the divine sacrifice: the Supreme Lord, who is All-Light, All-Knowledge, All-Power, All-Beauty, All-Love, All-Bliss, accepting to assume human ignorance and suffering in matter, in order to help men to emerge from the falsehood in which they live and because of which they die.

16 June 1960, 10, 61

Men tolerate the presence of the Divine upon earth only on condition that He suffers there.

15, 18

Only when men depend exclusively on the Divine and on nothing else, will it no longer be necessary for the incarnate god to die for them.

2 August 1952, 15, 18

When Christ came upon earth, he brought a message of brotherhood, love and peace. But he had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message might be heard. For men cherish suffering and hatred and want their God to suffer with them. They wanted this when Christ came and, in spite of his teaching and sacrifice, they still want it; and they are so attached to their pain that, symbolically, Christ is still bound to his cross, suffering perpetually for the salvation of men.

As for Krishna, he came upon earth to bring freedom and delight. He came to announce to men, enslaved to Nature, to their passions and errors, that if they took refuge in the Supreme Lord they would be free from all bondage and sin. But men are very attached to their vices and virtues (for without vice there would be no virtue); they are in love with their sins and cannot tolerate anyone being free and above all error.

That is why Krishna, although immortal, is not present at Brindavan in a body at this moment.

3 June 1960, 10, 59-60

I could speak to you of a very old tradition, more ancient than the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition, that is, the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions, in which it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces—known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras—the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most inconscient matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love. In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the work of Awakening.

If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his

Light; and he will continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world—and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.

And it is remarkable that this wonderful Being strangely resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the Being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended *directly* from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.

In every country, every tradition, the event has been presented in a special way, with different limitations, different details, particular features, but truly speaking, the origin of all these stories is the same, and that is what we could call a direct, conscious intervention of the Supreme in the darkest matter, without going through all the intermediaries, in order to awaken this Matter to the receptivity of the Divine Forces.

The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.

28 May 1958, 9, 332-4

A GOD'S LABOUR

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
 To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
 Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
 Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
 And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
 His drama can endure.

 All around is darkness and strife;
 For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
 Cast by the Undying Ones.

 Man lights his little torches of hope
 That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
 An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
 The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
 Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
 Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
 Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I dare not rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
“Thy hope is Chimera’s head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

“Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life’s iron doom?

“This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god’s desires?

“Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace.”

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, “Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate.”

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gauds of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn.

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stairway wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness' end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

Collected Poems, CWSA vol. 2, 534-8



A God's Labour



[The Avatar] 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.

SRI AUROBINDO



The work of achieving a continuity which permits one to go up and down and bring into the material what is above, is done inside the consciousness. He who is meant to do it, the Avatar, even if he were shut up in a prison and saw nobody and never moved out, still would he do the work, because it is a work in the consciousness, a work of connection between the Supermind and the material being. He does not need to be recognised, he needs have no outward power in order to be able to establish this conscious connection. Once, however, the connection is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world.

THE MOTHER

SABDA Newsletter October 2010

Avatarhood: Human and Divine

Among the books introduced in this issue are three publications from Auroville. The first is a compilation from Sri Aurobindo's writings titled *Avatarhood: Human and Divine*. Its first section presents the Vedantic view of Avatarhood, with extracts from Chapter 15 of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, where he explains that the descent of the Avatar for the upholding of the Dharma is but one aspect of Avatarhood's purpose. Sri Aurobindo reminds us of the Gita's teaching that the divine birth also signifies an ascent, a new birth for man, the possibility for him to rise into the divine nature and consciousness. "It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve."

Those who have read *Letters on Yoga* and Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* may well recall the numerous misunderstandings and misconceptions on the subject of Avatars and Vibhutis penned by disciples and put before Sri Aurobindo for elucidation. The next two sections of the book address these issues and others related to the purpose of Avatarhood. Sri Aurobindo begins his reply to a question about Rama's Avatarhood thus:

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.

The final section contains excerpts from *Sri Aurobindo On Himself* that help to explain the Avatar's life in the world as a leader of the evolution.

SABDA Review May 2011

Avatarhood: Human and Divine

Publisher: Auroville Foundation, Auroville

74 pp, Rs 70

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

The word "Avatar" has been carelessly used in popular culture over the years, most recently thanks to a very successful movie by the same name. James Cameron, the film's writer and director, was quoted in *Time* magazine, "It's an incarnation of one of the Hindu gods taking a flesh form. In this film what that means is that the human technology in the future is capable of injecting a human's intelligence into a remotely located body, a biological body." The term is also used in an online computer game "Second Life", where your "virtual persona" in the game's "virtual reality" is an "avatar". So much of the Western world believes that something you create and control with computers remotely or lives in cyberspace is an avatar. Meher Baba of Pune claimed he was the avatar of the

age. The devotees of Sathya Sai Baba and Mother Meera, among others, make similar statements. But one only understands that there is some claim of superiority for their teacher without knowing what the function and purpose of the Avatar is in the Divine Play.

Therefore, one is grateful to Paulette Hadnagy for making a brief and informative compilation from Sri Aurobindo's writings and conversations entitled *Avatarhood: Human and Divine*. A resident of Auroville, Paulette has a reverence and abiding affection for the elder disciples she first met upon arriving at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She has made a deep study of Advaita Vedanta and the psychology of Carl Jung and is enthusiastic about architecture, but little of her background or personality comes through in this booklet. Rather, she has gathered many quotes from Sri Aurobindo on the topic of Avatarhood and has let him speak for himself.

Even in her introduction, Paulette keeps largely to Sri Aurobindo's words, providing linking phrases together with a number of quotes from *Essays on the Gita*. She again chooses selections from Chapter Fifteen of the *Essays* for the book's first chapter. She then moves to excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's replies to Nirodbaran, including a number of humorous comments addressed to the persistent, self-deprecating doctor. She continues with selections from *Letters on Yoga* in a chapter entitled "The Purpose of Avatarhood" and then to comments from *Sri Aurobindo On Himself*, finally ending with Sri Aurobindo's glorious poem, "A God's Labour". By culling excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's exposition on the subject in *Essays on the*

Gita, from the conversational "debates" with Nirod, from the broader comments in reply to queries from devotees, and then ending with the poetic, it is like turning the concept of Avatarhood around in Sri Aurobindo's vision and experience and presenting a multifaceted perspective.

In the middle of the second chapter, which is compiled from *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran, one comes across this gem of an exchange. First we have Nirod's comment:

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.

Sri Aurobindo replies,

I had no urge toward 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.

Nirod then writes: "If a man has transformed his nature, he couldn't have done it all by himself, as you have done." To which Sri Aurobindo answers, "I also did not do it 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."

There was something touching and profound in going back and seeing this quote in context, in rediscovering the patience and playfulness and profundity of the teacher in relationship to his disciple, as Nirodbaran struggles with his concepts and presuppositions about a Divine incarnation on earth.

In the next section there are references to the ten Puranic avatars of Vishnu from the Fish Avatar to Kalki, the Avatar of the Satya Yuga, a procession which Sri Aurobindo interprets as a parable of evolution to demonstrate that "the idea of evolution is implicit" behind the very theory of Avatarhood. What emerges from Sri Aurobindo's thought is how the calling and work of the Avatar is "something essential and radical needed for the terrestrial evolution".

One can debate who should be on the list of Avatars, and Sri Aurobindo joins the fray with a detached logical analysis, especially concerning the Buddha. But this is in response to questions posed to him. His focus always returns to the work to be done, with little concern for labels and claims and

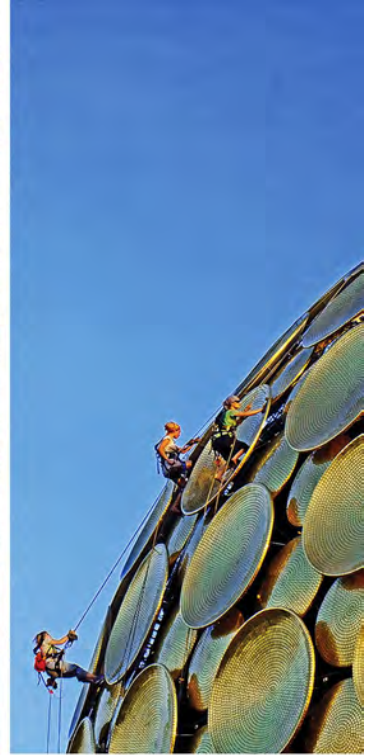
comparisons. He especially does not speak for the Mother, but only from his own experiences.

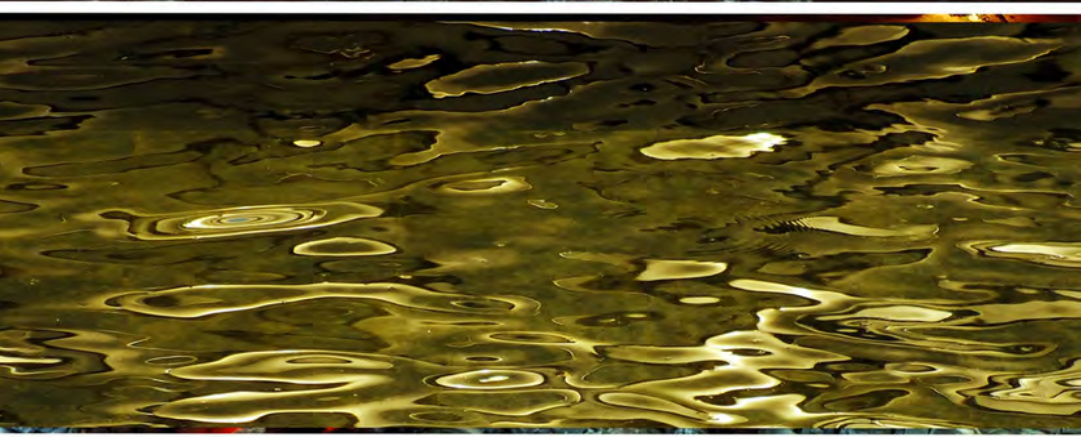
Many selections make this booklet a worthwhile purchase, but one excerpt, from *Letters on Yoga*, especially stands out:

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of a 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.

Julian Lines

Julian is President of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center in Mount Tremper, NY, USA, and Executive Director of Auroville International. He currently serves on Auroville's International Advisory Council.





ISBN 978-81-955260-4-8