

## Foreword

THIS BOOK IS AN ACCOUNT of spiritual training according to the ancient Yogic tradition.

**"Keep a diary," said my Teacher, "one day it will become a book. But you must write it in such a way that it should help others. People say, such things did happen thousands of years ago—we read in books about it. This book will be a proof that such things do happen today as they happened yesterday and will happen tomorrow—to the right people, in the right time, and in the right place."**

I preserved the diary form. I found it conveys better the immediacy of experience, and for the same reason I use throughout the first person singular: it happened to me, I am involved in it day by day.

When I tried to write it in an impersonal way, rather like a story, I found that it lost its impact.

The first draft of the manuscript was begun in September 1971, in Tongue, Sutherland, Scotland, nearly ten years after having met my Revered Teacher. I could not face it before, could not even look at the entries. It was like a panic; I dreaded it. Too much suffering is involved in it; it is written with the blood of my heart. A slow grinding down of the personality is a painful process.

Man cannot remake himself without suffering.

For he is both the marble and the sculptor.

Alexis Carrell,  
*Man the Unknown*

Suffering has a redeeming quality. Pain and repetition are fixative agents.

The reader will find it very repetitive. Naturally so. For it is the story of a teaching. And teaching is constant repetition. The pupil has to learn the lesson again and again in order to be able to master it, and the teacher must repeat the lesson, present it in a different light, sometimes in a different form, so that the pupil should understand

and remember. Each situation is repeated many a time, but each time it triggers off a slightly different psychological reaction leading to the next experience, and so forth.

I hoped to get instructions in Yoga, expected wonderful teachings, but what the Teacher did was mainly to force me to face the darkness within myself, and it almost killed me.

In other words he made me "descend into hell," the cosmic drama enacted in every soul as soon as it dares to lift its face to the Light.

It was done very simply, by using violent reproof and even aggression. My mind was kept in a state of confusion to the extent of being "switched off." I was beaten down in every sense till I had to come to terms with that in me which I kept rejecting all my life. It is surprising how the classical method of training, devised perhaps thousands of years ago, is similar to the modern psychological techniques; even dream analysis has a place in it.

Somewhere in one of the *Upanishads*—I don't remember which one—there is a sentence which puts our quest for spirituality in a nutshell: "If you want Truth as badly as a drowning man wants air, you will realize it in a split-second."

But who wants Truth as badly as that? It is the task of the Teacher to set the heart aflame with the unquenchable flame of longing, and it is his duty to keep it burning till it is reduced to ashes. For only a heart which has burned itself empty is capable of love. Only a heart which has become non-existent can resurrect, pulsate to the rhythm of a new life.

" . . . Ye have to die before ye can live again. . . ."

It is my sincere and ardent desire that this work should be a pointer on the Way, at least for some of us. For as a well-known saying goes: "We are both the Pilgrim and the Way."

I.T.

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Whenever the pronoun "He" or "Him" is used in the text with a capital letter, it always refers to God and never to the Teacher.

PART ONE

# ACROSS THE CHASM OF FIRE



## Second Birth\*

2nd October, 1961

COMING HOME . . . MY HEART WAS SINGING. This feeling of joy seized me as soon as I left the train.

The large railway station was like so many others I happened to see during my travels in India—the steel rafters, the roof blackened by smoke, the deafening noise of hissing railway engines, one train just pulling out with much heaving and clatter, the usual crowd of squatting figures surrounded by their belongings, patiently waiting for the departure of some local train, coolies fighting for my luggage, the flies, the heat. I was tired and very hot, but somehow, and I did not know why, I loved this station; just the feeling of having arrived made me feel glad.

Drawn by an old horse, the *tonga* (a two-wheeled carriage) was plodding along for already more than forty minutes, on the way to Aryanagar, the district of my destination. This part of the town seemed fairly clean, even at this time of the day; it was nearly 5 p.m., and still very hot.

I felt light, free and happy, as one would feel when coming home after a long absence. Strange . . . this wonderful sensation of coming home, of arriving at last. . . . Why? It seemed crazy. I wondered, how long am I destined to stay here? Years? All my life? It mattered not; it felt good. That was all I knew for the moment.

We were trotting along a wide avenue flanked with trees. Large bungalows, gleaming white, set well in the gardens behind stone walls and iron fences, announced in large letters the names of banks, insurance companies, engineering firms—large concerns known all the world over. A main post office to the right, a large hospital to the left, then a large bazaar covering a wide open space—passing glimpses into the side-streets lined with shops and barrows, goods displayed on the pavements, and all the noise, all the typical smells composed

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\*According to a very ancient Eastern tradition, the disciple is born, when for the first time the glance of the Teacher falls on him.

of fried oil and garlic, spices and incense of the bazaar. I sniffed the air . . . it was good.

It was just one more Indian city, such as I had seen many a time before; and still . . . and still, this glorious feeling of coming home, there was no earthly reason for it . . . it seemed crazy.

True, I came to meet a great Yogi, a Guru, and I expected much from this encounter. But surely this was no reason to feel so light, so childishly happy. I even caught myself laughing aloud and thinking: For the rest of my life it will be . . . and immediately I was amazed at this idea. You are getting potty, old girl, I said to myself; that's it: potty. But never mind, life was so good—it was such fun to be alive, to breathe, to move, to be a bit mad and . . . to have arrived!!

We were just passing a large cotton mill, then a railway crossing. I noticed the time on a tower clock; it was half-past five. We still went on and on. How slow the horse was, and so thin—all the ribs were sticking out from under a dry parchment-like skin. The driver was very thin, too; he must be tired also, and he looked hungry like his horse. I had a sudden feeling of guilt, for my suitcases were heavy—they nearly filled out all the space in the precariously wobbling two-wheel vehicle. I sat sideways, rather uncomfortable, clasping the handle of one of the suitcases to prevent it from falling off at every jerk. The fact that I was tired and felt very hot were details—they mattered little, for I was coming home. . . .

After many repeated inquiries from the street-vendors and shopkeepers on our way, my *tonga* driver delivered me at last to my destination. It was a low, sprawling terracotta-red bungalow set in the midst of a large open garden, with flower beds in front, and plenty of trees in the back, and trees spaced here and there all around. The street was fairly wide, a tiny post office standing in a garden amongst palm trees was just opposite, and next to it I noticed a bakery. After a hot, dusty journey it looked like heaven, all so fresh and peaceful.

But my joy was short-lived. Mrs. Ghose, the proprietor, told me that she had no accommodation free. She said that she wrote to Miss L. about it and seemed surprised that I knew nothing about it. "But I will take you to Miss L.'s friend, Pushpa; there you are sure to find a place to stay for the time being."

She climbed into the *tonga* beside me and, seated practically on top of my suitcases, was already giving rapid instructions to the driver in Hindi. This time the horse needed plenty of encouragement, and we

started off again. Mrs. Ghose, stout and middle-aged, gathering her voluminous sari around her, kept talking rapidly, something about tenants and some letters, but I hardly listened. Was worried. L. had given me to understand that the place for my stay was assured, and here I was, not knowing where I would spend the night. There were no hotels in the vicinity, so much I knew from what she had told me. After a day's and a night's journey, I badly needed a rest.

I was still occupied with my thoughts when she suddenly ordered the driver to stop. "Here lives Miss L.'s Guruji." She turned to me, "Would you like to meet him?"

I did not like meeting anybody at this particular moment; my dress was covered with dust, my hair sticky with perspiration—all I wanted was a cold shower and a cup of tea. It was the most unsuitable moment to meet anyone, least of all an important personage like a Guru! But my protests were of no avail; she was already disappearing through a wide wooden gate leading into a rather dry-looking garden with several shrubs and a few trees. In the background stood a long white bungalow—a door was at each end of it, and a large, tall doorway with wooden shutters in the middle, leading presumably into an inner courtyard.

Before I even had time to recollect my thoughts, three bearded Indians emerged from the door opposite the gate and were advancing towards me followed by Mrs. Ghose. All three were elderly; all three were dressed in white. I stood up, jumped down from the *tonga* and, joining my palms in the Indian way of greeting, looked at each of them in turn, not being sure which one was the Guru. The oldest and the tallest of the three, who looked exactly like a prophet in a nativity play—long, grey beard, blazing dark eyes—walked ahead of the other two, and, as if in answer to my thoughts, pointed to the one walking closely behind him. This was the Guru.

Next moment he stood in front of me, quietly looking at me with a smile. He was tall, had a kindly face and strange eyes—dark pools of stillness they were, with a sort of liquid light in them, like golden sparks.

I just had time to notice that he was the only one to wear wide trousers and a very long *kurta* (a collarless Indian-style shirt) of immaculate whiteness; the other two were clad in rather worn *kurtas* and *longhi*, (a straight piece of usually cotton material tight around the waist and reaching to the ankles).

My mind had hardly time to register it—then it was as if it turned a

somersault, my heart stood still for a split second. I caught my breath . . . wild cartwheels were turning inside my brain and then my mind went completely blank.

And then it was—it was as if *something in me* stood to attention and saluted. . . . I was in the presence of a Great Man. . . .

"There is no accommodation for me with Mrs. Ghose," I said quickly, looking at him confused and insecure. I was aware that I was saying it just to say something, anything, for I felt helpless, completely lost. Deep down in me there was a sort of complete terror, a kind of excitement, and at the same time I felt annoyed with myself for feeling shy and confused like a child.

"Miss L. wrote to me that you will be coming," he said, and his smile deepened. It was a pleasant, baritone voice; it suited well the general aura of peace which seemed to surround him.

Mrs. Ghose stepped forward and began to tell her story all over again, that she wrote to Miss L., that she had nothing free, but perhaps the letter went astray, etc., etc. He nodded slowly:

"You will be able to stay with Pushpa, and," he added, "I expect you tomorrow at 7 a.m."

Some more polite words were exchanged; he asked me about my journey, but I hardly had any recollection of it, could not think, hardly understood anything.

Shortly afterwards we arrived at Pushpa's place. It was a large two-story house with a very small garden. She herself was pleasant looking, plump with a pretty face. She came to meet us, her father-in-law following her, an impressive figure, dignified, all in white, with a large Alsatian dog at his heels. Mrs. Ghose once more began her explanations.

Soon I found myself installed in the guest room on the ground floor; it had a bathroom attached to it and a ceiling fan. In front of the two windows was a high brick wall covered with a luscious flowering creeper, and the light filtering through the leaves covering the windows made the room look green and cool.

The bliss of a cold shower, a short rest, then a lovely Indian meal with the whole of the family seated around a large round table in the dining room. The Alsatian dog was also present under the table at Babuji's (Grandfather's) feet, licking himself and smelling to high heaven; but again, it was only a detail, and it too fitted somehow into the frame of the whole experience and was accepted as such by me.



3rd October

HOW WELL I SLEPT under the humming fan, but could not go to him at seven in the morning as he told me.

Breakfast was at 9 a.m. All the family kept piling questions on me, about England, my travels, about myself—everybody had something of special interest to ask—and it was only after ten when, at last, I was free to go. Pushpa sent her boy-servant to show me the way.

Already, when passing through the garden gate, I could see him seated in his room in a very large chair opposite the open door, from which he could see part of the garden and the entrance gate. He looked steadily at me coming towards him. With a brief nod he acknowledged my greeting.

**"I expected you at seven,"** he said, fingering his *mala* (a kind of rosary much used in the East). **"It is not exactly seven now."**

I explained that the breakfast was late, and that I could not get away earlier.

He nodded. **"Yes, it would have been discourteous,"** he remarked, and told me to sit down.

The room was silent. He seemed to pray, bead after bead of the *mala* sliding through his fingers. I looked around. It was a corner room, not large, rather narrow. Another door to the right flanked by two windows was also leading into the garden. Two large wooden couches (*tachats*) were standing along the left wall which had two recesses built into it, filled with books. A row of chairs and a small divan for the visitors stood facing the *tachats* with the backs to the windows and the side door, leaving only a narrow passage to the third door at the opposite end of the room. It was covered by a green curtain and led to the next room from which one could reach the inner courtyard. All was clean and orderly—it could easily be a student's room. The sheets, cushions and covers on the *tachats* were spotlessly clean. He was dressed all in white—wide pajama trousers as they used to wear them here in the north of India—but his *kurta* was unusually long, rather like a robe, as I noticed it yesterday.

His name, executed by naive infantile hands, hung in three frames on the wall over the *tachats*. One was in cut-out felt, clumsily and unevenly cut, the other embroidered in cross-stitch, the third in printed letters in Indian ink—things children as a rule give to their parents or relations on birthdays or similar occasions.

While looking at the frames, I mused over this name and was glad that I saw it written before me and did not need to ask him or

anybody else. I remembered vividly how I told L. in a sudden panic that I did not want to know his name when she was giving me his address, in my tent, in Pahalgam, in Kashmir. It was baffling, and I had no explanation why I felt that he had to remain without a name, without even a face for me.

L. told me that the fact of not wanting to know his name had a deep meaning, but refused to clarify the point.

"You will know one day," she said rather mysteriously. And here it was: right in front of me, written three times, hanging on the wall. But I still did not know why she refused to explain and why I had such a fear.

"**Why did you come to me?**"\* he asked, quietly breaking the silence.

I looked at him. The beads in his right hand were resting on the arm support of the chair, and all at once, as if waiting for this very question, I felt a sudden irresistible desire to speak, an urgency to tell everything, absolutely, about myself, my longing, my aspirations, all my life. . . .

It was like a compulsion. I began to speak and talked for a long time. I told him that I wanted God, was searching after Truth. From what I had learned from L., I knew that he could help me and told him what I understood about him and his work from L.'s descriptions.

I went on and on and on. He kept nodding slowly, as if the torrent of my words was a confirmation of his own thoughts, looking at me, no, rather through me, with those strange eyes of his, as if to search out the very intimate, the very hidden corners of my mind.

"I want God," I heard myself saying, "but not the Christian idea of an anthropomorphic deity sitting somewhere, possibly on a cloud surrounded by angels with harps; I want the Rootless Root, the Causeless Cause of the Upanishads."

"**Nothing less than that?**" He lifted an eyebrow. I detected a slight note of irony in his voice. He was silent again, fingering his mala.

I too was silent now. "He thinks I am full of pride," flashed through my mind. Indistinct feelings of resentment surged from the depth of my being and went. He seemed so strange, so incomprehensible.

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\*The traditional question of every Oriental Teacher to an aspirant or a would-be disciple. According to Spiritual Law the human being must clearly state his case himself. The Teacher will do nothing against the free will of the individual.

As he looked out of the window, his face was expressionless. I noticed that his eyes were not very dark, rather hazel-brown with small golden sparks in them as I had noticed yesterday.

I began again telling him that I was a Theosophist, a vegetarian, and . . . **"Theosophist?"** he interrupted inquiringly. I explained. **"Oh yes, now I remember, long ago I met some Theosophists."** Again the silence fell. He closed his eyes. His lips were moving in silent prayer. But I still went on explaining that we don't believe that a Guru is necessary; we must try and reach our Higher Self by our own efforts. **"Not even in a hundred years!"** He laughed outright: **"It cannot be done without a Teacher!"**

I told him that I did not know what Sufism was.

**"Sufism is a way of life. It is neither a religion nor a philosophy. There are Hindu Sufis, Muslim Sufis, Christian Sufis—My Revered Guru Maharaj was a Muslim."** He said it very softly with a tender expression, his eyes dreamy and veiled.

And then I noticed something which in my excitement and eagerness I did not notice before: there was a feeling of great peace in the room. He himself was full of peace. He radiated it; it was all around us, and it seemed eternal—as if this special peace always was and always would be, forever. . . .

I looked at his face. He could be said to be good-looking in a masculine sort of way. There was nothing feminine in his features—the rather strong nose, the very high forehead. The grey beard and mustache gave him a dignified and distinctly Oriental appearance. His hair was short-cut, Western style.

"How shall I address you? What is the custom?" I asked.

**"You can call me as you like, I don't mind. People here call me 'Bhai Sahib,' which in Hindi means 'Elder Brother'."**

So, "Bhai Sahib" is going to be for me too, I thought. That's what he really is: an Elder Brother to us all.

"When I arrived, I had a feeling of coming home; and now I cannot get rid of the impression that I knew you before. That I knew you always. Bhai Sahib, where did we meet last time?"

**"Why ask?"** He smiled, **"Some day you will know yourself. Why ask? But we met before, not once, but many a time, and we will meet many times again; that much I can tell you."**

At 11:30, he sent me away.

**"For the first few days (he put a special emphasis on the word ONLY), you will not stay here for long periods at a time. Be back after 6 p.m."**

I left and took with me the haunting memory of his face, full of infinite sweetness and dignity, and this impression remained with me for quite a while. Who is he? I felt greatly perturbed.

## *Perplexities and Premonitions*

WE HAD LUNCH. Much talk at the table, all the family present. Grandfather is lovely, quite a character. So fair-skinned, he looks European, always dresses in white, a silent man of very few words.

After lunch I went to have a rest in my room. Everybody else did the same, as is the custom in every hot country. The room was cool and tranquil, full of green light like a secluded greenhouse. Only the soft swish of the ceiling fan, an occasional car passing by, and the usual noises and voices of an Indian street. I stretched out luxuriously, the pleasant sensation of cool air on my skin, thinking over lazily this morning's conversation.

It was then I suddenly realized that I did not remember his face . . . I could not recollect what he looked like! It gave me such a shock that I literally gasped. His garment, his mala, his hands, the room and the furniture, I remembered well—and a good part, though not the whole, of our conversation; his slender feet in brown strap-sandals; wait a moment—the feet, those sandals—where have I seen them before? Oh yes, in a dream long ago; I was looking at them, trying to follow their rhythm, when a tall Indian, whose face I did not remember, was leading me in a dance on a stony desert road. They were the same feet, the same sandals. But his face, seen only a few hours ago, I could not recollect. . . .

I realized that I remembered a body, *and no face!* Got such a fright that I sat up on the edge of my bed—am I dreaming? Am I mad? What is it? Who is this man? Did he mesmerize me, or am I going round the bend? Was very disturbed. Lay down again, *forcing* my mind to remember, but to no avail. The more I tried, the more I became confused.

Just to do something, to pass the time, I got up and wrote a short letter to L., just a few lines, that I met him, and hoped that she would be here soon.

I could hardly wait till 6 p.m. When I arrived, he was sitting cross-legged in his chair in the garden talking to some men seated around on chairs. I felt very relieved. Of course, how stupid of me! Here he is

in the flesh, looking very real and solid like everybody else. And sure enough he *had* a face, and he was laughing at this very moment, for he was telling a funny story in Hindi. Everybody laughed, and I was looking fixedly at him. I could not understand how I could be so foolish, to forget something so obvious. I did not want to have the same experience again; it was far too disturbing. I wondered, how far can I trust my mind, my memory. So I looked at his features, to impress them well in my mind. (Little did I know then, that never again would I be able to forget his face.)

After a while he turned to me and said in English: **"I would like you to keep a diary, day-by-day entries of all your experiences. And also to keep a record of your dreams. Your dreams you must tell me, and I will interpret them for you. Dreams are important; they are a guidance."**

4th October

WENT TO BHAI SAHIB in the morning after breakfast, and in the evening after six. My judgment? I still do not know. I cannot even think properly. As on the first day, when I was annoyed with myself, my brain kept getting empty and I could hardly think coherently. Now too, especially when I am at his place, the thinking process seems to slow down considerably. Thoughts come and go, lazily, slowly, just a few, and far in between. I see people come in, touch his feet, sit down quietly, and fall into a deep state, completely oblivious to their surroundings. I was told that this is the state of *Dhyana*, but what this *Dhyana* is supposed to be he did not tell me. He only smiled and said that I will know it myself one day . . . I have heard this one before, so it seems.

Perhaps after all, it is of no importance if he is a great Guru or not. Perhaps it does not even matter to be able to understand who he is. If he can teach me how to abstract the senses (*indrias*, in Sanskrit)—because this is what the *Dhyana* seems to be—to be able to meditate like this, oblivious to everything, I wouldn't ask for more. After all, it is supposed to be a desirable state to which all Yogis aspire; and it is the most difficult state to achieve, especially for us in the West. For us who are used to living and functioning on the mental level, to be beyond it seems a utopia, a sheer impossibility. But here I see it done, so seemingly easily, so effortlessly—and what's more, he told me that I will be able to do it too, one day. Can hardly believe it. I will never be able to do it, so it seems to me.

Bhai Sahib was telling us about his father who died years ago in January, the celebration which is going to be on that day, the anniversary of his death.

**"But until then we will go. . . ."**

A kind of panic seized me: my mind began to reel and then went blank. . . . I could not understand one word of what he was saying, heard the sound of his voice, but the words had no meaning—it was just a sound, nothing more. Something in me *knew* the meaning of what he was saying, but it was *not* the brain, and I was very frightened.

**"Did you get my idea?"** he concluded.

"I did." I lied. "But Bhai Sahib, it is a frightening thought, for it seems to be a journey of no return. And a journey which has no return is always terrifying. The personality is afraid, because it knows that the 'I' will go, that *it has to go*. There comes a time in our life when we have to burn all the bridges behind us, or they are burned for us, which is the same thing. Because the little self will be afraid, it will put up a terrific fight for its life."

All the while I was speaking, I was amazed at my answer, because I really did not hear one word of what he had told me. Still, my answer must have been the right one, for he smiled gently without comment, nodded, and began to speak to others in Hindi.

5th October

ON THE FIRST MORNING, three days ago he had said, **"If you say to a human being: sit in this Asana (posture), or that one, meditate in this way or that, you are putting the human being in prison. Leave the man alone, and he will find God in his own way."**

But is he not trying to put me in prison? This fact of my mind not working? What is the meaning of it?!

Asked him this morning if it was true, as I read in one of Mr. Leadbeater's books, that the *Atma*, when in incarnation, assumes the features of the physical body and can be seen, more or less one foot above the head of the person; and the eyes are the same as the physical eyes?

**"The eyes and the forehead are the same; and yes, it is true, it can be seen above the head of the person."**

Then I asked, why on the second day of our meeting he wanted to know if I was free, completely free, had no dependents, neither relations to look after, nor any obligations to bind me.

"You know that I am free; so why did you ask?"

**"Yes, I know of course that you are free. But I wanted a confirmation from yourself. Sometimes in this physical world we have to behave and speak as if we knew nothing."**

It seemed a strange answer. But I did not ask further.

Looking at me thoughtfully, he said slowly: **"It takes time to make a soul pregnant with God. But it can be done; IT WILL BE DONE. . . ."**

This too seemed a strange statement. I kept very still, looking at him, and wondering.

Later a young man came whom I have already seen here, a handsome, tall Indian with a severe face; he could be about thirty, so I thought. This time he brought his little girl with him; she was three-and-a-half, as he later told me. A pretty child with enormous eyes, like deep pools of innocence. It is strange and wonderful that all the children of all the nations are beautiful. Why do people change so much when they grow up?

The young man touched Guruji's feet bowing down very low, sat down and fell immediately in deep Dhyana, as usual, sitting there perfectly motionless, unconscious of everything, his child standing between his knees, playing quietly with a flower.

**"He is a very evolved human being,"** said Bhai Sahib, as soon as the man had left.

**"He works on the railway and comes here when he can."**

The old man, whom I thought looked like a prophet in a nativity play (by the way, his name is Munshiji), came in with a list in his hand, asking questions. The servant was called in. Bhai Sahib's wife\* came with a dish of rice and a long discussion began in Hindi. His wife does not speak English at all.

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\*Sufis lead the normal life of a householder, and marriage for them does not represent a barrier to reaching the higher states of consciousness.



### 3

## *Doubts*

6th October, 1961

DOUBTS KEPT COMING into my mind. Many doubts. Such ordinary surroundings. Such ordinary people around him. Is he a Great Man? There seems to be no glamor of a Great Guru, a Great Teacher, about him, as we used to read in books. . . . He was so simple, living a simple, ordinary life. Clearly, he took his household duties seriously. I could see that he was the head of a large family, six children, and his brother and his family living also in the same house, all sharing the same courtyard. And I saw also other people there, a few other families—the place was full of comings and goings, full of all kinds of activities, not to count his disciples of whom there seemed to be many.

Decided to speak to L. about it. She will soon be back. She had to remain in Kashmir because of a religious congress in which she took part.

In the meantime I resolved to stay away as much as possible.

Went there after 6 p.m. He was writing letters seated cross-legged on his tachat. I tried to read a book I brought with me. Soon he looked up and asked me if I felt uneasy, if I felt any pain. Told him that if my foot is not better, I will not come tomorrow. My foot was hurting, could hardly walk because of the infection I brought with me from Amritsar. There was a painful sore in between the toes, an inflammation giving me much trouble. I suspected the pools of water one had to cross before entering each temple were the culprits, but I did not tell him so. Besides it was only a suspicion; it could be anything. He made some sympathetic noises. While speaking, I secretly hoped that he would cure it instantly. Did not mention it, but had this idea at the back of my mind. He looked at my foot. **"It will come right by itself,"** he said, as if aware of my thoughts. **"Rest is useful,"** he added and continued to write. Did not stay long and went home.

9th October

PUSHPA'S HOUSE is roomy and comfortable. Ceiling fans are in every

room. With the excuse of the small infection on my foot, did not go to the Guru.

But I went this morning. He was talking nearly all the time about his Guru and how much money he spent on him. I wonder if the old man knows my thoughts about him and talks like that because of it. I have now every possible suspicion about him. Stayed for a very short while.

In the afternoon it was raining heavily, so did not go either. Will try to keep away from him until L's arrival. So much hope shattered. . . . Did I expect too much, perhaps? It seems all so commonplace, so banal, so ordinary. And he hardly bothers to answer my questions:

**"You will know one day."**

Why and how? What prevents him from explaining? What an attitude!

Went to a classical concert with Pushpa's husband and daughter. To a *Gita* class on Sunday morning. Nothing special; the *Gita* class was held by a Ramakrishna Swami of Ramakrishna Mission Order. But the concert was lovely, and the tape recordings of wonderful Indian classical music which Pushpa's husband played to us in the afternoon were exquisitely beautiful. Otherwise boring days. Plenty of worldly chit-chat. Endless waiting for meals never served punctually, and a feeling of great loneliness . . . dark endless longing, and I do not know for what. Much disappointment and much bitterness.

Who are you? Are you what L. told me: a Great Teacher, a man of great spiritual power, or just one of so many pseudo-gurus one meets here in India at every step?

Are you a Teacher at all? You seem to have many disciples—I saw plenty of them already in the short time I have been here. From what I heard from L., you must be a great man. But are you??

*10th October*

IT WAS RAINING in the morning. Went about 5 p.m. Nobody was there. Then the professor of mathematics arrived and sat with us. Later Bhai Sahib suggested to us that we might like to go to a discussion which was held in the park. A platform was erected for this purpose. Plenty of learned Hindus were attending. I refused. Told him that I wanted to be punctual at the *Kirtan* (singing of devotional hymns) which was held at Pushpa's place at 7 p.m.

Left with the professor of mathematics who was also coming to the Kirtan. Walking along he asked me what this discussion was supposed to be about. I said, about the *Avatar* (Divine Incarnation) of Ram; there is a theory that he was the only real incarnation of Vishnu (the second person of the Hindu Trinity; the Preserver) and nobody else. Then I began to tell him about my doubts. Is there any purpose to go to Bhai Sahib at all? Is it not a waste of time? He listened with great seriousness.

"If you are convinced that your Guru is always right, that he is the only great man, then you will progress. Your Guru may not be great at all, but you think that he is, and it is your faith which will make you progress. It is the same with Ram: what does it matter if he is the only incarnation of God or not; for the man who believes it, he is. So why discuss? I refuse to participate in intellectual acrobatics."

I agreed with him. "What disturbs me most with Bhai Sahib," I went on, "is the fact that he does not answer questions. Every time I want to know something, he will say: '**You will know it one day yourself.**' Now, who can tell me if I really will know? Maybe I never will; so why not simply answer it? I want to know NOW, not sometime in a hypothetic future! I begin to wonder if I am wasting my time!"

"You know," he said, "just to give an example, for instance, a son of a rich man inherits the wealth of his father, and then he will have more than you and me. Now, here it is the same in this place. This man has a certain power which will reveal in time something very wonderful within yourself. It happened to others; it happened to me. I have been here for the last twelve years, I speak from experience. I don't know how it happens; I have no explanation for it. I even don't know how one can inherit such a thing, but it is a fact. Stay here for a month, and you will be in a state L. is, and we all are, and then you will think differently. L., when she came years ago, spoke as you do now."

I said that I was sure that it would take longer than one month.

"Of course it takes years," he agreed, "but after one month you will be able to form a judgment."

I told him that I decided at any rate to stay here until March, and he answered that it would be wise to do so. "I have seen strange and wonderful things happen to human beings. It is as I tell you; and Dhyana is definitely NOT a mediumistic trance; it is a yogic state, and has nothing to do with mesmerism either."

We were entering Pushpa's gate. The veranda was brightly lit;

many people were already there. "Dhyana is complete abstraction of the senses, *Indrias*, in Sanskrit; it is a Yogic state, as I have just told you."

We entered the room; the music started. I was in deep thought. So, that was it. Somehow, I felt that this conversation represented a turning point. An intelligent man, an intellectual, with a balanced mind, normal, reasonable, gave me his opinion. I liked and trusted him from the first moment I saw him, a few days ago. In my heart I felt I should give it a try, accept the situation as it presents itself, and see what will happen. . . . Why not? Lights were burning in front of the pictures of Rama, Shiva and Parvati (Hindu deities). The room was crowded, everyone seated on the floor. Kept looking at the faces full of devotion while my heart kept rhythm with the ancient melody—"Hari Rama, Hari, Hari. . ." and I was thinking and thinking . . . and was still thinking deeply when back in my room, hardly aware of howling dogs roaming the streets and the evening noises of a busy Indian street.

"Is Dhyana just sleep?" I asked.

**"If you think that it may be sleep, then it is sleep; if you think it is not, then it is not."** His face was stern. But there was like a faint suspicion of a wicked little twinkle in his eye, a hidden laughter.

Not much of an answer, I must say. Quite in keeping with his general attitude.

12 October

THOUGH EVERYBODY keeps telling me that the climate here is not a good one, I find it healthy and invigorating. It seems to agree with me. I am always well where the sun sees me. My body needs the sun. The food at Pushpa's place is excellent. I am eating too much, sleep well, am hungry, my health is good. The foot healed completely in the last few days.

Arrived about 5 p.m. Nobody was in the room. Sat down in my usual place in the chair opposite his tachat. His wife came in, searching something in the recess amongst the books. Then he came in. I don't remember how we came to talk about Dhyana, but probably I began, because it kept worrying me. As soon as I came into his room, the thinking process slowed down and I felt sleepy. I told him so and he translated it to his wife. She said that I was not the only one—it happens to her too; as soon as she lies down, she falls asleep.

**"I never sleep during the day,"** he remarked.

"How can you keep awake in this place?" I wondered, "I feel sleepy as soon as I sit down!"

He laughed. Then he began to tell me that in 1956 he was very ill, desperately ill, and many people came who could be of some help, in one way or another. But they all sat there fast asleep, and his wife used to say: "What did they all come for? Just to sleep here?"

"So Dhyana does mean to be asleep after all? Is Dhyana and sleep the same thing?"

**"No. It is not. It could be similar at the beginning. But if you remain too long unconscious without being conscious somewhere else, then you are not normal, then something is wrong with you."**

"Do you mean to say that one becomes conscious somewhere else when unconscious on the physical plane? You may remember that I asked you several times about it, but you never answered!"

**"Of course!"** He laughed merrily. **"It comes gradually, little by little. It takes time. But before you can do it, you must forget everything. Leave everything behind."**

I said that it seemed to be a frightening thought. He laughed again softly and gave me a look of kindly amusement. Could not see why he found my answer so funny. . . .

**"How do you swim?"** he began again after a silence. **"You throw water behind and behind you, that's how you propel yourself. Spiritual life is the same; you keep throwing everything behind, as you go on. This is the only way; there is no other."**

"Is there not a danger to become stupid by forgetting everything?" I wondered.

**"Why?"** he retorted, **"If you have ten rupees in your bag, and you get 10,000, you will forget the ten rupees, will you not? The ten rupees are still there, but you don't think of them anymore, isn't it?"**

I could see what he meant and also that he was right. Later I was telling him about a discussion we had with L. about spiritual life, and that she was of the opinion that I could not go on further alone by myself, or progress more than I had already, for she said that a Guru was absolutely necessary.

**"A Guru is a short-cut—a short-cut and a sharp-cut. But not a Guru; a friend, a Spiritual Guide. I have nothing to teach."**

"What do you mean by a System?" He used this expression often in conversation; it seemed an unusual one to me, was not quite sure if I understood its meaning.

**"A System is a School of Yoga, or a Path to Self-Realization—the meaning is the same. We are called Saints, but it is the same as Yogis—in Wisdom there is no difference. The color of our Line is golden yellow, and we are called the Golden Sufis or the Silent Sufis, because we practice silent meditation. We do not use music or dancing or any definite practice. We do not belong to any country or any civilization, but we work always according to the need of the people of the time. We belong to Raja Yoga, but not in the sense as it is practiced by the Vedantins. Raja means simply: Kingly, or Royal, the Direct Road to Absolute Truth."**

**"And why is it that one cannot go on by oneself any further and would need a Guru?"**

**"Because by yourself alone you can never go beyond the level of the Mind. How can you vacate?"**

**"You mean to empty the mind, to clear it from any thought?"** I asked, not being sure what he meant by "vacate."

**"Yes, how can you vacate, clear out your mind, if you are constantly working through the mind? How can the mind empty itself of itself? You must be able to leave it, to forget everything. And this, one cannot do alone. For the mind cannot transcend itself."**

**"Will I ever be able to do it, for I am afraid of this idea,"** I said doubtfully. He laughed again, looking at me sideways.

**"If you are ill, who does the work? Others, of course! If you are unconscious, be sure, there will be many people to look after you!"**

I said that it may be true in theory if, for instance, I can easily be robbed in deep *Samadhi* (a superconscious state, a merging into the Universal Consciousness).

**"No,"** he retorted, **"then you are not in Samadhi. If you are in Samadhi, you go to your Creator, and the Creator will look after you. And even if you are robbed, it is not because you were in Samadhi, but because it was your destiny to be robbed, and it is of no importance to you once you have reached this state of consciousness. When we travel together, you will see that I take nothing with me—I am not afraid."**

**"But if you travel and have no money, somebody has to travel with you and keep the money and be careful that it is not lost, otherwise you both will be in trouble,"** I insisted.

**"Yes, that could be true, but not necessarily so. Perhaps I could travel free, or the money will be forthcoming. God works through many channels. At any rate, I affirm, that he who is in Samadhi, nothing happens to him, and if it does, he does not care."** He fell

silent. **"You have your knowledge,"** he said thoughtfully after a while. **"You will forget it all. You MUST forget it, before you can take any further step."**

I wondered if this is what the scriptures mean—one should forget all books, leave all acquired knowledge behind; only then one can make the big leap into the Unknown beyond the mind. He agreed.

**"There are only very few people in the world nowadays who can teach you the Sufi method. The Sufi method represents complete freedom. You are never forced. To put somebody in Dhyana—it can be done—but it would only show that my will is stronger than yours. In this case it would be mesmerism, there is nothing spiritual about that, and it would be wrong. When the human being is attracted to the Spiritual Guide and wants to become a *Shishya* (disciple), there are two ways open to him: the Path of *Dhyana*, the slow, but the easier way; or the Path of *Tyaga* (complete renunciation), the Road of Fire, the burning away of all the dross, and it is the Guide who has to decide which way is the best suited in each individual case. The Path of *Dhyana* is for the many, the Path of *Tyaga* is for the few. How many would want to sacrifice everything for the sake of Truth? The *Shishya* has every right to test the Guide; but once he is satisfied and accepts the Guide"—here he laughed his young and merry laughter—"then the Guide can take over, and the disciple has no free will for a while."**

He contradicts himself, I thought, but said nothing. Then he began to speak about his Guru, the Great Sufi. **"He is always with me,"** he said.

**"Do you mean that you see him?"** I asked.

He had a tender, faraway look: **"If I say that I see him with these physical eyes, I would be lying; if I say that I don't see him, I also would be lying,"** he said after a brief silence. I knew what he meant: he could reach him in his higher states of consciousness.

Well, perhaps, it is a good thing after all, that I came here . . . and I was thankful for the opportunity of this long conversation.

15th October

WENT TO GITA CLASS this morning. Of no interest. When I arrived at Bhai Sahib's place, he was asleep. His lean figure in white *dhotie* (a loose garment the men wear which is tied on the waist) looked strange and contorted. I sat down quietly, in the corner near the door on the *tachat* which stands along the wall behind his own. Later a young man came and, noticing that the Guru was asleep, sat down

and closed his eyes. He was from Delhi and was here for the first time, Bhai Sahib told me afterwards. I was sitting cross-legged. All was still. Some noises from the street—a child was crying somewhere in the courtyard. Then I became aware of a great power in the room. A tremendous power. For the first time, I felt like this; it was like being in a power-house. I scarcely could breathe; the force was terrific. I had a great disturbance in the throat; the heart was beating, beating and aching . . . and the beat was irregular. Seem to have lost the sense of time.

After a while, perhaps one hour or so, Bhai Sahib sat up, looked around with glazed eyes, and then sat motionless in deep meditation. Cross-legged, looking ahead with unseeing eyes . . . the force in the room seemed greater and deeper, increasing all the time—the room was vibrating, humming with it. One literally could HEAR it like a great sound, high and low at the same time. I remembered how L. looked when she was in deep Samadhi, but this was a different thing altogether. . . .

I sat with closed eyes, trying to endure it . . . it was difficult to bear, this tremendous force. The mind?—it was hardly present at all. Lost somewhere, swallowed up, dissolved, or rather absorbed by the charged atmosphere of the room. Opened my eyes after a while and saw that he was looking directly at me. It gave me kind of a jerk, like an electric shock. The expression of his eyes . . . it did frighten me, but I immediately realized that he was not really looking at me at all. His eyes were wide open, unseeing, empty eyes—he was not in this world at all . . . this was quite evident. I began to feel so sleepy that I had to fight with all my might against falling asleep.

After a while his wife came in and told him that tea was ready. He took the small towel which he always carried with him and went out. Not a word was spoken. The young man, who until then was sitting there silently, now said something to me. I could not reply, could not utter one word. Too great was the peace, the seemingly eternal stillness.

Went home, fell on my bed, and plunged in a deep sleep.

*16th October*

WENT TO HIM in the morning. I did not speak, neither did he. He kept walking up and down on the brick elevation in front of the house, repeating his prayers, mala in his hand.



17th October

ARRIVED IN THE EVENING about six. *Durga Pooja* (devotional service in honor of the goddess Durga) was going on in Deva Singh Park opposite the house, across the street. From a large marquee, brightly illumined by colored lights, loud music was pouring out a rhythmic sing-song of devotional prayers. He was not in the garden but somewhere in the street, so I was told. Something had happened, a fight, or a disturbance of some sort, and he was talking to a police officer.

His wife and the women of Bhai Sahib's household stood in a group discussing the event. A bright lamp was fixed on a branch of one of the trees in the garden. Thousands of moths and insects were dancing madly around it. What was attracting them so much to the brightness of the light to be in such an ecstasy? And I was thinking what a glorious thing it must be to be a tiny moth in the Hands of God, and to die like this in utter ecstasy in the blaze of His light. . . . What force was driving them? It must be a very powerful force or instinct, because though half-burned, they seemed not to be deterred from returning again and again in a mad ecstatic dance until they fell to the ground in the last convulsions of death.

To die burned by Thy Light . . . what a wonderful death!

Jagan Nathji, the professor of mathematics, came walking through the gate, and all the women suddenly disappeared into the passage which leads into the inner courtyard.

Bhai Sahib came stalking in with big steps followed by gesticulating men in dhoties. The atmosphere became more and more charged with excitement and everyone seemed to be shouting except him. Some more men came in. Could not bear the noise; it was jarring on my nerves. Stood up and went into the room. Sat alone in the dark in his big chair. Had much disturbance in the throat. Something must be wrong with the throat *Chakra* (a psychic center). I had better ask him about it, when an opportunity arises.

Soon the chairs were brought in; all men filed into the room, and I left. It was too much for me. It was raining softly. The air was so fragrant, as only the air of India can be. All the year round shrubs are flowering in the gardens around. I walked swiftly, lifting my face to the moist air, breathing deeply.

To vanish dancing in the Light . . . a heavenly thought. . . . To die in the explosion of Thy firework of glory, to burn oneself out in

the blaze of Thy Light. Gentle drizzle on my skin. As on the crest of a wave, the whole of my being was carried away in a powerful longing. It was something new—a new chord, echoing, reverberating in the depth of my being. A yearning to vanish in Thee. . . . I stopped dead, then slowly went home.

*18th October*

WENT IN THE EVENING. Did not speak. Neither did he. He was writing letter after letter, and his wife kept coming and talking and interrupting him. There is no privacy in India. How difficult it must be for him; never alone, interrupted, disturbed at all times during the day, even when in deep meditation. I wondered how he could bear it; but perhaps he was used to it, being Indian himself, and did not mind it at all?

I saw that at Pushpa's place it was the same story: one could not have any conversation without being constantly interrupted by servants walking into the room wanting this or that, or asking questions on household matters. Children wanted attention; one never had any peace at all; there was always incessant coming and going and noise and movement.

*19th October*

CAME IN THE EVENING. Still cannot speak. At Pushpa's place am also very silent. Read most of the time. Do not feel like speaking at all.

Soon after me a man came in and began to talk to him in Hindi. After a while Bhai Sahib turned to me, introduced the man as a professor of history, and told me that he would like to talk to me. Did not feel like talking at all, but could not refuse, and he seemed a nice person. After a few preliminary exchanges of polite sentences he told me that he knew exactly my state of mind. I retorted slightly ironically that if he did, why did he not explain what was that state? He said that I am thinking that what I see here is mesmerism, or sleep, and keep doubting if it is a good thing, or just nonsense, and if I should remain here or go away. Told him that this was in fact my actual state of mind at present. An interesting conversation followed, of which I hardly remember anything, which is a pity. At the end I asked as a conclusion what would be the right attitude according to him.

"First, faith; absolute faith in the Guru. One must have faith that he knows the right road which will lead to the Truth. Without absolute faith in the Guru, it is impossible to achieve anything." He

was speaking seriously with utmost conviction. "When one should feel sleepy, one should relax, close the eyes and wait for something. Mind you, for a long time you may wait, and nothing will happen. It is here, where faith will help you. Feel deeply that you are in the Presence of God, and wait, full of alertness and surrender for His Grace. Then you will not fall asleep, not really, and one day the Grace will strike you."

I asked him how long it takes, as a rule, for such a thing to happen.

"I think not more than two years," he answered. "This is the average."

"Do you mean to say that I have to stay here all the time? Endure the heat of the plains? I surely will die!"

He sat up straight. "By no means. I feel you should not stay at Bhai Sahib's place too long at a time. A little in the morning and a little in the evening. Then go away and come back after one week or two, go away for a few months in summer when the heat becomes unbearable, and so on."

I could not agree with him. If I decide to stay here for the training, to go away from time to time would be a waste of time! Surely if I want spiritual life, the only important thing would be to take the greatest advantage of the opportunity, in spite of the difficult circumstances.

*20th October*

WENT IN THE EVENING. His wife was talking non-stop all the time. There was nobody except myself. It is all so empty and banal. Who is he? How would I know? Perhaps a sign will be given to me? I knew that it happens sometimes that a sign is given. . . .

Feel restless and afraid. He could put me in a state where I could give all my money away, or do something mad, like caressing those dirty children, masses of whom one can see in the streets—as it happened to L. when she felt such love, as she told me one day in Kashmir.

How can I trust him? Have faith? How is it possible? What shall I do? This man has power. There is no doubt about that. And those strange heart conditions, and new surge of feelings: what does it all mean?