Chapter Eight

Faith

Faith, Belief, Confidence, Trust

Faith is a general word = śraddhā — the soul's belief in the Divine's existence, wisdom, power, love and grace — confidence and trust are aspects of faith and results of it.

Confidence is a feeling of sureness that the Divine will hear when sincerely called and help and that all the Divine does is for the best.

Trust is the mind's and heart's complete reliance on the Divine and its guidance and protection.

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Faith — a dynamic entire belief and acceptance.
Belief — intellectual acceptance only.
Conviction — intellectual belief held on what seem to be good reasons.
Reliance — dependence on another for something, based on trust.
Trust — the feeling of sure expectation of another's help and reliance on his word, character etc.
Confidence — the sense of security that goes with trust.

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Faith is a feeling in the whole being, belief is mental; confidence means trust in a person or in the Divine or a feeling of surety about the result of one’s seeking or endeavour.

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You have seized the right principle again, to be all for the Mother and to have full confidence that one has only to go on quietly in that confidence and all will come that needs to come and all be done that the Divine wills to be done. The workings of the
world are too subtle and strange and complex for the human mind to understand it — it is only when the knowledge comes from above and one is taken into the higher consciousness that the understanding can come. Meanwhile what one has to follow is the dictates of the deeper psychic heart within based on that faith and love which is the only sure guiding star.

Faith in its essence is a light in the soul which turns towards the truth even when the mind doubts or the vital revolts or the physical consciousness denies it. When this extends itself to the instruments, it becomes a fixed belief in the mind, a sort of inner knowledge which resists all apparent denial by circumstances or appearances, a complete confidence, trust, adhesion in the vital and in the physical consciousness, an invariable clinging to the truth in which one has faith even when all is dark around and no cause of hope seems to be there.

Faith in the spiritual sense is not a mental belief which can waver and change. It can wear that form in the mind, but that belief is not the faith itself, it is only its external form. Just as the body, the external form, can change but the spirit remains the same, so it is here. Faith is a certitude in the soul which does not depend on reasoning, on this or that mental idea, on circumstances, on this or that passing condition of the mind or the vital or the body. It may be hidden, eclipsed, may even seem to be quenched, but it reappears again after the storm or the eclipse; it is seen burning still in the soul when one has thought that it was extinguished for ever. The mind may be a shifting sea of doubts and yet that faith may be there within and, if so, it will keep even the doubt-racked mind in the way so that it goes on in spite of itself towards its destined goal. Faith is a spiritual certitude of the spiritual, the divine, the soul’s ideal, something that clings to that even when it is not fulfilled in life, even when the immediate facts or the persistent circumstances seem to deny it. This is a common experience in the life of the human being; if
it were not so, man would be the plaything of a changing mind or a sport of circumstance.

**A Problem of Faith**

How to conciliate these two notions:

1. that the Divine’s Will is behind all movements and happenings,
2. that the Divine Will is distorted in the manifestation.

There are two kinds of faith:

- The faith that calls down the equanimity and the faith that calls down the realisation.

These two faiths correspond to two different aspects of the Divine.

- There is the Transcendent Divine and there is the Cosmic Divine.
- The Will of realisation is that of the Transcendent Divine.
- The Cosmic Divine is what is concerned with the actual working out of things under the present circumstances. It is the Will of that Cosmic Divine which is manifested in each circumstance, each movement of this world.
- The Cosmic Will is not, to our ordinary consciousness, something that acts as an independent power doing whatever it chooses; it works through all these beings, through the forces at play in the world and the law of these forces and their results. It is only when we open ourselves and get out of the ordinary consciousness that we can feel it intervening as an independent power and overriding the ordinary play of the forces.

Then too we can see that even in the play of the forces and in spite of their distortions the Cosmic Will is working towards the eventual realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The supramental realisation is the Will of the Transcendent Divine which we have to work out. The circumstances under which we have to work it out are those of an inferior consciousness in which things can be distorted by our own ignorance, weaknesses and mistakes, and by the clash of conflicting forces. That is why faith and equanimity are indispensable.
We have to have the faith that in spite of our ignorance and errors and weaknesses and in spite of the attacks of hostile forces and in spite of any immediate appearance of failure the Divine Will is leading us, through every circumstance, towards the final realisation. This faith will give us equanimity; it is a faith that accepts what happens not definitively but as something that has to be gone through on the way. Once equanimity is established there can be established too another kind of faith, supported by it, which can be made dynamic with something from the supramental consciousness and can overcome the present circumstances and determine what will happen and help to bring down the realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The faith that goes to the Cosmic Divine is limited in the power of its action by the necessities of the play. To get entirely free from these limitations one must reach the Transcendent Divine.

**Faith and Knowledge**

Faith is a thing that precedes knowledge, not comes after knowledge. It is a glimpse of a truth which the mind has not yet seized as knowledge.

* Until we know the Truth (not mentally but by experience, by change of consciousness) we need the soul’s faith to sustain us and hold on to the Truth — but when we live in the knowledge, this faith is changed into knowledge.

Of course I am speaking of direct spiritual knowledge. Mental knowledge cannot replace faith; so long as there is only mental knowledge, faith is still needed.

* The phrase [“blind faith”] has no real meaning. I suppose they mean they will not believe without proof — but the conclusion formed after proof is not faith, it is knowledge or it is a mental opinion. Faith is something which one has before proof or
knowledge and it helps you to arrive at knowledge or experience. There is no proof that God exists, but if I have faith in God, then I can arrive at the experience of the Divine.

**Faith and Experience**

Mental theories are of no fundamental importance, for the mind forms or accepts the theories that support the turn of the being. What is important is that turn and the call within you.

The knowledge that there is a Supreme Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which is not merely a negative Nirvana or a static and featureless Absolute, but dynamic, the perception that this Divine Consciousness can be realised not only beyond but here, and the consequent acceptance of a divine life as the aim of Yoga, do not belong to the mind. It is not a question of mental theory — even though mentally this outlook can be as well supported as any other, if not better, — but of experience and, before the experience comes, of the soul’s faith bringing with it the mind’s and the life’s adhesion. One who is in contact with the higher Light and has the experience can follow this way, however difficult it may be for the lower members to follow; one who is touched by it, without having the experience, but having the call, the conviction, the compulsion of the soul’s adherence, can also follow it.

*There is much in your letter that would need long explanation for an adequate reply — but I want to say something about the faith which you say you don’t have and can’t have in the absence of experience. First of all, faith does not depend upon experience; it is something that is there before experience. When one starts the Yoga, it is not usually on the strength of experience, but on the strength of faith. It is so not only in Yoga and the spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. All men of action, discoverers, inventors, creators of knowledge proceed by faith and, until the proof is made or the thing done, they go on in spite of disappointment, failure, disproof, denial, because of something*
in them that tells them that this is the truth, the thing that must be followed and done. Ramakrishna even went so far as to say, when asked whether blind faith was not wrong, that blind faith was the only kind to have, for faith is either blind or it is not faith but something else — reasoned inference, proved conviction or ascertained knowledge.

Faith is the soul’s witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving. This thing within us can last even when there is no fixed belief in the mind, even when the vital struggles and revolts and refuses. Who is there that practises the Yoga and has not his periods, long periods of disappointment and failure and disbelief and darkness — but there is something that sustains him and even goes on in spite of himself, because it feels that what it followed after was yet true and it more than feels, it knows. The fundamental faith in Yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after — nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that. It was this faith growing in you that made you come for Yoga and this faith has not died or diminished — to judge from what you say in your letters, it has become more insistent and abiding. So long as a man has that, he is marked for the spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life.

What you really have not yet a fixed faith in is the guidance of the Divine, his will to manifest to you or your capacity to receive him. It is this that the adverse attacks which began when you were on the threshold of the inner experience — as so often happens in the Yoga — try constantly to fix in your brain. They want to have a fixed mental formation there, so that whenever you make the attempt there will be in the physical mind an expectation of difficulty, a dwelling on the idea of difficulty and uns success and incapacity, if not always in the front of the mind, yet at the back and by that they hope to prevent the experience
from coming. It is these mental formations that you must reject, for they are a much greater obstacle than the vital failings to which you give such an exaggerated importance. It is not a fact that you have not had experiences — you had them but you did not give them their full value, because you were expecting something else. Otherwise the sense of the Divine Guidance and the faith in attainment would have formed in spite of difficulties and relapses such as everyone has in the Yoga. It is this faith that you need to develop, — a faith which is in accordance with reason and common sense — that if the Divine exists and has called you to the Path, as is evident, then there must be a Divine Guidance behind and that through and in spite of all difficulties you will arrive. Not to listen to the hostile voices that suggest failure or to the voices of impatient vital haste that echo them, not to believe that because great difficulties are there, there can be no success or that because the Divine has not yet shown himself he will never show himself, but to take the position that everyone takes when he fixes his mind on a great and difficult goal, “I will go on till I succeed and I will succeed — all difficulties notwithstanding.” To which the believer in the Divine adds, “The Divine exists, he is there, and since he exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail. I will go on through everything till I find him.”

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I am rather surprised at Krishnaprem’s surprise about my statement of faith. I thought he had said once you should not hanker after experiences. As for experience being necessary for faith and no faith possible without it, that contradicts human psychology altogether. Thousands of people have faith before they have experience and it is the faith that helps them to the experience. The doctrine “No belief without proof” applies to physical science, it would be disastrous in the field of spirituality — or for that matter in the field of human action. The saints or bhaktas have the faith in God long before they get the experience of God — the man of action has the faith in his cause long before his cause is crowned with success — otherwise they would not have been able to struggle persistently towards their end in spite of defeat,
Faith

I don’t know what Krishnaprem means by true faith. For me faith is not intellectual belief but a function of the soul; when my belief has faltered, failed, gone out the soul has remained steadfast, obstinately insisting, “This path and no other; the Truth I have felt is the Truth whatever the mind may believe or not believe.” On the other hand experiences do not necessarily lead to faith. One sadhak writes to me, “I feel the grace of the Mother descending into me, but I cannot believe it because it may be a vital imagination.” Another has experiences for years together, then falls down because he has, he says, “lost faith”. All these things are not my imagination, they are facts and tell their own tale.

All that, however, is by the way. I have no objection to you or anybody having experiences. I am not a fool. Let everybody have as many experiences as possible. What I say is that the hankering for experiences should not be there in such a way as to replace the true attitude and bring disappointment and revolt. Bhakti is not an experience, it is a state of the heart and soul. It is a state which comes when the psychic being is awake and prominent. It is for that reason that I asked you to cleave to the psychic way and not go back to that of vital desire. I have not said that your psychic being was “in front” in such a way as to be proof against all attack. What I said was that it was becoming awake and active, giving you the right attitude and helping you towards the change of your nature. I certainly did not mean a moral but a spiritual change. Freedom from ego is not a moral but a spiritual change—a moral man may be chock full of ego, an ego increased by his sense of goodness and rectitude. Freedom from ego is spiritually valuable because then one can be centred, no longer in one’s personal self, but in the Divine, and that too is the condition of bhakti.

The Gospel of Faith

I spoke of a strong central and if possible complete faith because your attitude seemed to be that you only cared for the full response—that is, realisation, the Presence, regarding all else as
quite unsatisfactory, and your prayer was not bringing you that. But prayer by itself does not usually bring that at once — only if there is a burning faith at the centre or a complete faith in all the parts of the being. That does not mean that those whose faith is not so strong or surrender complete cannot arrive, but usually they have to go at first by small steps and to face the difficulties of their nature until by perseverance or tapasya they make a sufficient opening. Even a faltering faith and a slow and partial surrender have their force and their result, otherwise only the rare few could do sadhana at all. What I mean by the central faith is a faith in the soul or the central being behind, a faith which is there even when the mind doubts and the vital despairs and the physical wants to collapse, and after the attack is over, reappears and pushes on the path again. It may be strong and bright, it may be pale and in appearance weak, but if it persists each time in going on, it is the real thing. Fits of despair and darkness are a tradition in the path of sadhana — in all Yogas oriental and occidental they seem to have been the rule. I know all about them myself — but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose. That is why whenever they come in you or others I try to lift up before them the gospel of faith. If still they come, one has only to get through them as soon as possible and get back into the sun. Your dream of the sea was a perfectly true one — in the end the storm and swell do not prevent the arrival of the state of Grace in the sadhak and with it the arrival of the Grace itself. That I suppose is what something in you is always asking for — the suprarational miracle of Grace, something that is impatient of the demand for tapasya and self-perfection and long labour. Well, it can come, it has come to several here after years upon years of blank failure and difficulty or terrible internal struggles. But it comes usually in that way — as opposed to a slowly developing Grace — after much difficulty and not at once. If you go on asking for it in spite of the apparent failure of response, it is sure to come.
Faith and Doubt

I see you have let the demons of self-doubt and doubt in general and melancholy get inside again and sit down at your table. There is no other reason for your troubles than this readiness to listen to their knock and open the door. You speak of X, but that is why X gets on because when they knock, he turns them out at once. If you resolutely do that, you will arrive also at security and perfect ease — for there are only two things that create insecurity — doubt and desire. If you desire only the Divine, there is an absolute certitude that you will reach the Divine. But all these questioning and repinings at each moment because you have not yet reached, only delay and keep an impeding curtain before the heart and the eyes. For at every step when one makes an advance, the opposite forces will throw this doubt like a rope between the legs and stop one short with a stumble — it is their métier to do that. One must not give them that advantage. Instead of saying, “I want only the Divine, why is the Divine not already here?”, one must say, “Since I want only the Divine, my success is sure, I have only to walk forward in all confidence and his own hand will be there secretly leading me to him by his own way and at his own time.” That is what you must keep as your constant mantra and it is besides the only logical and reasonable thing to do — for anything else is an irrational self-contradiction of the most glaring kind. Anything else one may doubt — whether the supermind will come down, whether this world can ever be anything but a field of struggle for the mass of men, — these can be rational doubts — but that he who desires only the Divine shall reach the Divine is a certitude much more certain than that two and two make four. That is the faith every sadhak must have in the bottom of his heart, supporting him through every stumble and blow and ordeal. It is only false ideas still casting their shadow on your mind that prevent you from having it. Push them aside for good and see this simple inner truth in a simple and straightforward way — the back of the difficulty will be broken.

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As for the doubts, such occurrences happen to almost all sadhaks from time to time so long as there is not such a fixity of continuous experience as makes any fundamental doubt impossible, although there may still be questionings about this or that until the knowledge and experience are made complete.

The nature of the doubts and misbeliefs were such as are always suggested to everybody when this kind of Influence envelops — the part of the mind which responds to them is the physical mind — for the other parts are covered over at such times and the physical mind left to itself naturally doubts everything supraphysical and believes only in its own domain.

Mental faith is very helpful, but it is a thing that can always be temporarily shaken or quite clouded — until the higher consciousness and experience get fixed for good. What endures even if concealed is the inner being’s aspiration or need for something higher which is the soul’s faith. That too may be concealed for a time but it reasserts itself — it undergoes eclipse but not extinction.

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It is quite sufficient if there is the firm and constant will towards faith and self-offering. It is understood that it is not possible for the human nature to be always without movements of doubt, obscurity or things not yet offered until the inner consciousness has sufficiently grown to make these impossible. It is because it is so that the will is necessary so that the Force may work to remove these things with full consent and will of the mind and heart of the sadhak. To try to reject these things and make the will permanent is sufficient, — for it is this effort that brings eventually the permanence.

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It is possible for anyone to attain to a complete and living faith in the Divine if he has the sincere will to do so, even though he may not be sattwic in his nature; but, if he is sattwic, it will be easier for him — he will not be hampered by doubts and revolts such as afflict the rajasic man on his way.
Types of Faith

Mental faith combats doubt and helps to open to the true knowledge; vital faith prevents the attacks of the hostile forces or defeats them and helps to open to the true spiritual will and action; physical faith keeps one firm through all physical obscurity, inertia or suffering and helps to open to the foundation of the true consciousness; psychic faith opens to the direct touch of the Divine and helps to bring union and surrender.

* Faith can be tamasic and ineffective, e.g. “I believe the Mother will do everything, so I will do nothing. When she wants, she will transform me.” That is not a dynamic but a static and inert faith.

Faithfulness

When I spoke of being faithful to the light of the soul and the divine Call, I was not referring to anything in the past or to any lapse on your part. I was simply affirming the great need in all crises and attacks, — to refuse to listen to any suggestions, impulses, lures and to oppose to them all the call of the Truth, the imperative beckoning of the Light. In all doubt and depression, to say “I belong to the Divine, I cannot fail”; to all suggestions of impurity and unfitness, to reply “I am a child of Immortality chosen by the Divine; I have but to be true to myself and to Him — the victory is sure; even if I fell, I would be sure to rise again”; to all impulses to depart and serve some smaller ideal, to reply “This is the greatest, this is the Truth that alone can satisfy the soul within me; I will endure through all tests and tribulations to the very end of the divine journey.” This is what I mean by faithfulness to the Light and the Call.

* I do not see how the method of faith in the cells can be likened to eating a slice of the moon. Nobody ever got a slice of the
moon, but the healing by faith in the cells is an actual fact and a law of Nature and has been demonstrated often enough even apart from Yoga. The way to get faith and everything else is to insist on having them and refuse to flag or despair or give up until one has them — it is the way by which everything has been got since this difficult world began to have thinking and aspiring creatures upon it. It is to open always, always to the Light and turn one’s back on the darkness. It is to refuse the voices that cry persistently, “You cannot, you shall not, you are incapable, you are the puppet of a dream” — for these are the enemy voices, they cut one off from the result that was coming by their strident clamour and then triumphantly point to the barrenness of result as a proof of their thesis. The difficulty of the endeavour is a known thing, but the difficult is not the impossible — it is the difficult that has always been accomplished and the conquest of difficulties makes up all that is valuable in the earth’s history. In the spiritual endeavour also it shall be so.

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For the sadhana, your strong distaste (to say the least) for the methods which we find most useful but you find grim and repellant, makes a great obstacle. But I maintain my idea that if you remain faithful to the seeking for the Divine, the day of grace and opening will come. Nobody will be more pleased than ourselves if it comes over there in the Himalayas, or for that matter anywhere. The place does not matter — the thing itself is all.

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I ask you to have faith in the Divine, in the Divine Grace, in the truth of the sadhana, in the eventual triumph of the spirit over its mental and vital and physical difficulties, in the Path and the Guru, in the existence of things other than are written in the philosophy of Haeckel or Huxley or Bertrand Russell, because if these things are not true, there is no meaning in the Yoga.
If his faith depends on the perfection of the sadhaks, obviously it must be a rather shaky thing! Sadhaks and sadhikas are not supposed to be perfect. It is only siddhas for whom one can claim perfection and even then not according to a mental standard.

**Keep Firm Faith**

Do not allow any discouragement to come upon you and have no distrust of the Divine Grace. Whatever difficulties are outside you, whatever weaknesses are inside you, if you keep firm hold on your faith and your aspiration, the secret Power will carry you through and bring you back here. Even if you are oppressed with opposition and difficulties, even if you stumble, even if the way seems closed to you, keep hold on your aspiration; if faith is clouded for a time, turn always in mind and heart to us and it will be removed. As for outer help in the way of letters we are perfectly ready to give it to you. But keep firm on the way — then in the end things open out of themselves and circumstances yield to the inner spirit.

*Whatever adverse things present themselves you must meet them with courage and they will disappear and the help come. Faith and courage are the true attitude to keep in life and work always and in the spiritual experience also.*

*In moments of trial faith in the Divine protection and the call for that protection; at all times the faith that what the Divine wills is the best.

> It is what turns you towards the Divine that must be accepted as good for you — all is bad for you that turns you away from the Divine.*

*That is the true resolution. Keep it firm inside you even if waves of other consciousness cover on the surface. If one plants a faith*
or resolution like that firmly in oneself, then it remains and even if the mind for a time gets clouded or the resolution dimmed, yet one finds it reemerging automatically like a ship out of a covering wave, and goes invincibly on with the journey through all vicissitudes till it reaches the harbour.

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They [faith, surrender and samata] have to be put into every part and atom of the being so that there may be no possibility of a contrary vibration anywhere.

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You must keep the faith always that however the lower nature may rise or hostile forces attack, victory will be yours and the transformation is sure.

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Keep firm faith in the victory of the Light and face with calm equanimity the resistances of Matter and human personality to their own transformation.

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Even if there is much darkness — and this world is full of it and the physical nature of man also — yet a ray of the true Light can prevail eventually against a tenfold darkness. Believe that and cleave to it always.