

April 28, 1996, Sunday

Dear Ambar,

I received your April 14th letter on April 26. That is good delivery time. I am glad to hear from you again. I really liked your letter. It was quite well written with a lot of in-depth thinking. I think you "short change" yourself in not recognizing your own talents in writing.

Tomorrow morning I have to go to a meeting at one of our fossil plants. This will keep me away from home for about four days. This letter I am writing this evening is more in the nature of a short note. I will write you a "long winded letter" later.

I have attempted to send you e-mail via America On-line Internet and also through my TVA internet address. But the servers have been unable to locate your address. You sent the following address as being your Internet address: rssoft@giasc101.vsnl.net.in Is this correct? Usually the address will end with .com

My TVA address is: ndowning@mhs-tva.attmail.com

My AOL address is goloka@aol.com

The TVA address is best. I access it where ever I am since it is part of the office information distribution system.

In Calcutta there is a BBS similar to AOL. I have been successful in sending and receiving messages from them via the internet. In just hours I have a reply. The place is:

livewire, BBS Calcutta, phone 91-33-466-7920, fax 466-7915. The operator is Loyola Joseph, and Raji Rajeswari. There WEB site is: <http://www.lwbbs.com> There internet address for mail is skhemka@lwbbs.com 113 Southern ave, Calcutta, 700 029

You would need a modem (get 28k if you get one) and I think that it is expensive in rupee terms. But you could check it out. Let me know regarding the cost since it might be to my benefit to subscribe. If I return to India via TVA then TVA will use that system because they are located in all the major cities of India.

Regarding my returning to India via TVA: I personally think that the TVA involvement is fizzling out. But then again, Arun is returning to India for another meeting on April 28. And a month ago there were more high level meetings in India between TAT/TVA and NTPC/TVA. But I no longer wait in anticipation. So I am not counting on returning again until 1997 when I may do so for vacation.

Regarding your experience on the Calcutta bus - you concluded with the insight,

"I realized that we do not get an answer to 'how I can help' because it

is tainted with another thought, 'what are we going to get back from this? If we do not care about the second, I think we have the answer. And that is, no matter what kind of work one is doing, one should do it properly -- that is all."

I agree 100 percent. In Vedic teaching, particularly the Bagavad Gita, we are taught to work without regard to the fruits thereof, the rewards. Krishna teaches that we should work without attachment. He doesn't say we should be disinterested in the work that we do. He says we should work without attachment, to be detached from the comforts and rewards of our work and the expectations of additional pleasures and the fulfillment of additional desires which rise from the action we do.

The emphasis is on doing one's duty for the sake of doing one's duty.

Lord Gautama (the Buddha) teaches¹ that human sufferings arise from the mind of attachment. Lord Gautama teaches:

If a person is to avoid being caught in the current of his desires, he must learn at the very beginning not to grasp at things lest he should become accustomed to them and attached to them.

The cause of human suffering is undoubtedly found in the thirst of the physical body and in the illusions of worldly passion. If these thirsts and illusions are traced to their source, they are found to be rooted in the intense desires of physical instincts. Thus desire, having a strong will-to-live as its basis, seeks that which it feels desirable, even if it is sometimes death.

... for the world is filled with suffering and if anyone wishes to escape from suffering, he must sever the ties of worldly passion which is the sole cause of suffering.

All of the great spiritual Saints of this world teach the same message. Lord Christ Jesus, Lord Krishna, Lord Gautama, the Saint Ramakrishna, the Saint Mother Terresa, all teach the same message. Let me share with you just a few more thoughts from Lord Gautama the Enlightened One:

Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from good deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and peaceful mind. To walk safely through the maze of human life, one needs the light of wisdom and the guidance of virtue.

Human beings tend to move in the direction of their thoughts. If they harbor greedy thoughts, they become more greedy; if they think angry thoughts, they become more angry; if they hold foolish thoughts, their feet move in that direction.

A day does not go by where I have not thought about India, about you, about

¹"The Teaching of Buddha" Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, Tokyo, Japan

the many friends whom I came to know. A strange thing indeed for me to dwell so long on this place so far away. I can understand how you felt and reacted when the public bus got jammed in the Calcutta traffic. The heat must have been unbearable. I have no easy answers. I would not desire such physical discomfort. But, interestingly, at no time during my days in Calcutta did I feel uncomfortable. At the Ramakrishna mission I met a man who was a leper. He was quite disfigured. He was begging. I walked over to him. He smiled at me, a warm and loving smile. And he reached out to me with his two arms. His fingers had decayed away into stubs. But I was not repelled. I could only see his smile and his eyes, which seemed to sparkle. I handed the rupee notes to him and he clasped them with the stubs of his hands. Then I gave him a slight bow and proceeded with my other activities. My regret was that he could not speak English, and thus I could not engage him in conversation.

Near the Delhi railroad station I came upon a boy, not much older than 12 or 13. He was quite disfigured. I had never before seen such disfigurement in a child. He too was begging. I placed some rupees in his bowl. I was not repelled by his presence. Neither was I outraged. I felt sadness, that is true. My heart wept for him, silently. Throughout my travels in India such sights did I often see. But at no time did I feel discomfort.

As I near the ^{4th} fourth quadrant of my life I find in myself that the true treasures of life are to be found in our love and our relationships with other people, with other human beings. Your experience on the bus - indeed there was much physical discomfort. But how did everyone "take it well" as we say in the U.S. If there is one thing in India that has stood out for me it is the tolerance of the people, the acceptance of things that cannot be changed.

What life has taught me is the value of investing in other human beings. Lord Buddha has emphasized that this world is full of suffering, that life is of constant suffering. But I have discovered that when we commit our heart and Soul to the love and appreciation of our fellow brothers and sisters, I feel no suffering, no pain. Mother Teresa is constantly surrounded by the dead and the dying, the suffering of this life. But is she suffering? I have read of the pain and suffering experienced by Ramakrishna shortly before his death. But did he cry out in anguish? I desire to know God, though I do not know Him. But I know that the Spirit world exists. This I know from experience. When I return from the business activities I will try to explain my thoughts and reasoning more clearly.

In the January issue of Prabuddha Bharata, a publication of the Ramakrishna Mission, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, there was an article about a school. The school is The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, in Deoghar. I have found Deoghar on the map and it is in Bihar about 75 miles north of Dhanbad. This school expresses 100 percent my values and my sentiments. I too had attended residential schools. And until I was 9, as you know, I lived in orphanages. I am including a copy of the article. It is indeed a small world. One of the engineers with whom I work has a brother who is a medical doctor. This brother lives not too far from Deoghar. I have asked my friend to contact the doctor to inquire as to the address of the school and the name of the director/head. With your letter we are now in communications again. You must know what I am thinking. But such plans must be made step-by-step, carefully,

and over a long period of time, in much the manner that a novice enters a Catholic monastery. Our motivations, our expectations, and many other factors have to be critically examined. I would expect to make two trips before any final decision is made. And too, the school must weigh all factors and see a benefit to them. It is much as planning an engineering project.

As a first step I would be most beholden to you if you would informally visit the school some time - "to check it out" as the Americans love to say. The first step is to get a feel for the place from an objective observer. I remember your offering to be my contact point in India. So now I shall take you up on that offer and request that you be my representative in "feeling out the place." I shall reimburse you amply for all costs associated with this task. And you should ride in comfort and eat in comfort. For no matter how much of this you do (traveling in comfort) the exchange rate makes it quite comfortable for me to pay.

OK, Ambar. I must go for now. Please do write. And try my e-mail internet addresses.

Best regards and namaskar,

Your friend *Nevad*