Suffering Is NOT Indispensable NOR Necessary

Second Edition

A COMPILATION FROM THE WORKS OF

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla

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Sri Aurobindo Society
AUROPUBLICATIONS
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

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Second Edition

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Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

> "*It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc.*"
>
> (CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

> "*If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the contradictions complement*

one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"*It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.*"

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

As part of our series of comprehensive compilations, we now bring out a new series of compilations on the topic "Suffering". This book, *Suffering Is Not Indispensable Nor Necessary,* is the first volume in this series.

The quotations in this compilation are taken from the volumes of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition. Each quotation is followed by the title of the book, the volume number, and the page number from which it has been taken.

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to read the fuller text are advised to consult *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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I—What Is Suffering?

1. Suffering is a perverse and contrary term to the delight of existence

"Behind in our self and spirit is the All-Delight of the universal being which takes its account of the contact, a delight first in the enduring and then in the conquest of the suffering and finally in its transmutation that shall come hereafter; for pain and suffering are a perverse and contrary term of the delight of existence and they can turn into their opposite, even into the original All- Delight, Ananda." (CWSA 21: 420)

2. Suffering is the reverse term, shadow-forms, and opposite of Their Luminous Opposites

"To Sachchidananda extended in all things in widest commonalty and impartial universality, death, suffering, evil and limitation can only be at the most reverse terms, shadow-forms of their luminous opposites. As these things are felt by us, they are notes of a discord. They formulate separation where there should be a unity, miscomprehension where there should be an understanding, an attempt to arrive at independent harmonies where there should be a self-adaptation to the orchestral whole." (CWSA 21: 57)

3. All suffering is the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being

"This relativity, this mixture is a circumstance of human mentality and the workings of the Cosmic Force in human life; it is not the fundamental truth of good and evil. It might be objected that physical evil, such as pain and most bodily suffering, is independent of knowledge and ignorance, of right and wrong consciousness, inherent in physical Nature: but, fundamentally, all pain and suffering are the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being which makes it unable to deal rightly with self and Nature or unable to assimilate and to harmonise itself with the contacts of the universal Energy; they would not exist if in us there were an integral presence of the luminous Consciousness and the divine Force of an integral Being. (CWSA 21: 622)

4. In illness, all suffering is falsehood

"Illnesses

Truth is supreme harmony and supreme delight.

All disorder, all suffering is falsehood.

Thus it can be said that illnesses are falsehoods of the body and, consequently, doctors are soldiers of the

great and noble army fighting in the world for the conquest of Truth." (CWM 15: 154)

5. All suffering in the last analysis is insincerity

"And mark that weakness is an insincerity, a sort of excuse one gives oneself—not very, very consciously perhaps, but you must be told that the subconscient is a place full of insincerity. And the weakness which says, 'I would like it so much, but I can't' is insincerity. Because, if one is sincere, what one cannot do today one will do tomorrow, and what one cannot do tomorrow one will do the day after, and so on, until one can do it. If you understand once for all that the entire universe (or, if you like, our earth, to concentrate the problem) is nothing other than the Divine who has forgotten Himself, where will you find a place for weakness there? Not in the Divine surely! Then, in forgetfulness. And if you struggle against forgetfulness you struggle against weakness, and to the extent you draw closer to the Divine your weakness disappears.

And that holds good not only for the mind, but also for the vital and even for the body. All suffering, all weaknesses, all incapabilities are, in the last analysis, insincerities." (CWM 4: 252)

II—Suffering Is Not a Judgment Inflicted by God on the Errors or Stumblings which Are Inevitable in the Ignorance

1.

"… if there is suffering, it is … not as a judgment inflicted by God or Cosmic Law on the errors or stumblings which are inevitable in the Ignorance." (CWSA 28: 540)

2.

"It is the lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man—only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you,—blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life." (CWSA 31: 625)

3.

"Suffering is not inflicted as a punishment for sin or for hostility—that is a wrong idea. Suffering comes like pleasure and good fortune as an inevitable part of life in the ignorance. The dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, good fortune and ill fortune are the inevitable results of the ignorance which separates us from our true consciousness and from the Divine. Only by coming back

to it can we get rid of suffering. Karma from the past lives exists, much of what happens is due to it, but not all. For we can mend our karma by our own consciousness and efforts. But the suffering is simply a natural consequence of past errors, not a punishment, just as a burn is the natural consequence of playing with fire. It is part of the experience by which the soul through its instruments learns and grows until it is ready to turn to the Divine." (CWSA 31: 670)

III—The World Contains the Possibility of Intense Enjoyments and Also the Possibility of Equally Enormous Sufferings

1.

"Again, enjoyment of one kind or another being the whole object of desire, that must be the trend of the desire-world; but since wherever the soul is not free,—and it cannot be free when subject to desire,—there must be the negative as well as the positive of all its experience, this world contains not only the possibility of large or intense or continuous enjoyments almost inconceivable to the limited physical mind, but also the possibility of equally enormous sufferings. It is here therefore that there are situated the lowest heavens and all the hells with the tradition and imagination of which the human mind has lured and terrified itself since the earliest ages. All human imaginations indeed correspond to some reality or real possibility, though they may in themselves be a quite inaccurate representation or couched in too physical images and therefore inapt to express the truth of supraphysical realities." (CWSA 23: 452–453)

2.

"For life is not as it is portrayed in novels; day-to-day existence is full of sufferings great and small, and it is only by identification with the Divine Consciousness that one

can attain and preserve the true unchanging happiness." (CWM 16: 61)

3.

"On one side [of man there is] a darkened mind and life, ignorant, suffering, spinning like a top whipped by Nature always in the same obscure and miserable rounds, on the other a soul touched by a ray from the hidden Truth, illumined, conscious, concentrated in a single unceasing effort towards its own and the world's Highest, this is the difference between man's ordinary life and the way of the divine Yoga[.]" (CWSA 12: 349)

4.

"All our standards [moral ideals, ethical systems, absolute love, absolute justice, absolute right reason] turned into action either waver on a flux of compromises or err by this partiality and unelastic structure. Humanity sways from one orientation to another; the race moves upon a zigzag path led by conflicting claims and, on the whole, works out instinctively what Nature intends, but with much waste and suffering, rather than either what it desires or what it holds to be right or what the highest light from above demands from the embodied spirit." (CWSA 23: 200)

IV—The World We Are Going to Build Should Not Have Any Suffering

"The world as it is manifests forces, it does not exist without a manifestation of forces; but what forces does it manifest? For the moment it seems to manifest the forces of obscurity, ignorance, disharmony, suffering and all the rest.

It must have discernment.

You mean it should choose the force which is necessary? Yes, but this is not the transformation of the world, this is for us. It is we who must have discernment to know which force we want to manifest, that's understood. But to come back to our subject, you all agree that in the world we are going to build, there should not be any suffering? You agree?... You are not quite sure of it?... Then you are satisfied with suffering? I don't know, perhaps it has its purpose. But, you see, as long as one is satisfied with a thing, there are many chances that it stays. We have been told in the more or less sacred scriptures that suffering comes from ignorance; hence if you do not think of getting rid of suffering, it means that you want to keep the ignorance also? That becomes very difficult. It is like the artist to whom someone spoke of the future world which would be made all of light, and he said, 'Then I won't be

able to paint any longer' and he was miserable! Perhaps, indeed, there are many people who cling to their ignorance?" (CWM 4: 294)

V—The Human Soul Takes Pleasure in Strife, Effort and Suffering

1.

"Our secret soul takes a pleasure in this strife and effort, and even a pleasure in adversity and suffering, which can be complete enough in memory and retrospect, but is present too behind at the time and often even rises to the surface of the afflicted mind to support it in its passion; but what really attracts the soul is the whole mingled weft of the thing we call life with all its disturbance of struggle and seeking, its attractions and repulsions, its offer and its menace, its varieties of every kind." (CWSA 19: 191–192)

2.

"The ordinary human soul takes a pleasure in the customary disturbances of its nature-life; it is because it has this pleasure and because, having it, it gives a sanction to the troubled play of the lower nature that the play continues perpetually; for the Prakriti does nothing except for the pleasure and with the sanction of its lover and enjoyer, the Purusha. We do not recognise this truth because under the actual stroke of the adverse disturbance, smitten by grief, pain, discomfort, misfortune, failure, defeat, blame, dishonour, the mind shrinks back from the blow, while it leaps eagerly to the embrace of the opposite and pleasurable disturbances, joy, pleasure,

satisfactions of all kinds, prosperity, success, victory, glory, praise; but this does not alter the truth of the soul's pleasure in life which remains constant behind the dualities of the mind. The warrior does not feel physical pleasure in his wounds or find mental satisfaction in his defeats; but he has a complete delight in the godhead of battle which brings to him defeat and wounds as well as the joy of victory, and he accepts the chances of the former and the hope of the latter as part of the mingled weft of war, the thing which the delight in him pursues. Even, wounds bring him a joy and pride in memory, complete when the pain of them has passed, but often enough present even while it is there and actually fed by the pain. Defeat keeps for him the joy and pride of indomitable resistance to a superior adversary, or, if he is of a baser kind, the passions of hatred and revenge which also have their darker and crueller pleasures. So it is with the pleasure of the soul in the normal play of our life." (CWSA 19: 190–191)

3.

"After all, would it not be a monotonous world that consisted only of roses and sweetmeats, virtue and success? Thorns have their necessity, grief has its mission, and without a part of sin, suffering and struggle heaven might not be so heavenly to the blest. I am not prepared even to deny a kind of beneficence to evil; I have sufficient

faith in God's Love & Wisdom to believe that if evil [were] merely evil, it could not continue to exist." (CWSA 1: 555)

4.

"The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul." *Thoughts and Glimpses* (CWSA 13: 208)

5.

"Man is in love with pleasure; therefore he must undergo the yoke of grief and pain. For unmixed delight is only for the free and passionless soul; but that which pursues after pleasure in man is a suffering and straining energy." (CWSA 13: 204)

VI—Man Suffers Due to His Mental Capacity of Watching Himself Live

1.

"It is obvious that what especially characterises man is this mental capacity of watching himself live. The animal lives spontaneously, automatically, and if it watches itself live, it must be to a very minute and insignificant degree, and that is why it is peaceful and does not worry. Even if an animal is suffering because of an accident or an illness, this suffering is reduced to a minimum by the fact that it does not observe it, does not project it in its consciousness and into the future, does not imagine things about its illness or its accident.

With man there has begun this perpetual worrying about what is going to happen, and this worry is the principal, if not the sole cause of his torment. With this objectivising consciousness there has begun anxiety, painful imaginations, worry, torment, anticipation of future catastrophes, with the result that most men—and not the least conscious, the most conscious—live in perpetual torment. Man is too conscious to be indifferent, he is not conscious enough to know what will happen. Truly it could be said without fear of making a mistake that of all earth's creatures he is the most miserable. The human being is used to being like that because it is an atavistic state which he has inherited from his ancestors, but it is truly a

miserable condition. And it is only with this spiritual capacity of rising to a higher level and replacing the animal's unconsciousness by a spiritual super-consciousness that there comes into the being not only the capacity to see the goal of existence and to foresee the culmination of the effort but also a clear-sighted trust in a higher spiritual power to which one can surrender one's whole being, entrust oneself, give the responsibility for one's life and future and so abandon all worries.

Of course, it is impossible for man to fall back to the level of the animal and lose the consciousness he has acquired; therefore, for him there is only one means, one way to get out of this condition he is in, which I call a miserable one, and to emerge into a higher state where worry is replaced by a trusting surrender and the certitude of a luminous culmination—this way is to change the consciousness." (CWM 9: 303–304)

2.

"There will be other consequences [of divine grace] which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful. That must disappear. This is what makes humanity in so many

ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything. Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life." (CWM 9: 299)

3.

"The tree is more perfectly guided than man in its more limited action, precisely because it lives unambitiously according to Nature and is passive in the hands of the Inconscient. Mind enters in to enlarge the field of activity, but also to multiply errors, perversities, revolts against Nature, departures from the instinctive guiding of the Inconscient Self which generate that vast element of ignorance, falsehood and suffering in human life,—that 'much falsehood in us' of which the Vedic poet complains." (CWSA 13: 179)

4.

"Consequently, unhappiness has come into the world with men—here is something serious! That is, with man mind has come upon earth, you see, for man is a mental animal, and with the mind has come misery. The mind is capable

of objectifying, and so it finds that such and such a thing is miserable—without the mind there would be no such discovery and no unhappiness. So, there is no unhappiness for animals nor for plants, and yet less for stones. Are we agreed on this: there is no unhappiness for animals, plants and stones? We say unhappiness has come with the mind which has become conscious of it. Mark that I am trying to lead you to something which is not so stupid, for in the ancient Teaching it was said, 'Change your consciousness and what appears to you unfortunate will not so appear to you any longer.' The Buddha taught that if you are free from desire, things that seemed to you unfortunate would no longer seem to you unfortunate at all. Therefore, we come to this: it is the thought you have about it which makes you consider this or that thing unfortunate. If you thought an event happy, it would become happy for you; and that is what it is, in fact. In most cases when the thought has accepted that a thing *ought* to be, for whatever reason, it is no longer unhappy; when the thought has not accepted this, it finds this unhappy." (CWM 4: 292)

VII—What Suffers Is the Mind, the Vital or the Physical and Not the Psychic Being

1.

"It is not the psychic being that suffers for personal reasons, it is the mind, the vital and the ordinary consciousness of ignorant man. This is because the contact between the outer consciousness and the psychic consciousness is not well established. He in whom the contact has been well established is always happy.

The psychic being works with perseverance and ardour for the union to be made an accomplished fact, but it never complains and knows how to wait for the hour of realisation to come." (CWM 14: 335)

2.

"There is no invariable rule of such suffering. It is not the soul that suffers; the Self is calm and equal to all things and the only sorrow of the psychic being is the sorrow of the resistance of Nature to the Divine Will or the resistance of things and people to the call of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. What is affected by suffering is the vital nature and the body. When the soul draws towards the Divine, there may be a resistance in the mind and the common form of that is denial and doubt—which may create mental and vital suffering. There may again be a resistance in the vital nature whose principal character is

desire and the attachment to the objects of desire, and if in this field there is conflict between the soul and the vital nature, between the Divine Attraction and the pull of the Ignorance, then obviously there may be much suffering of the mind and vital parts. The physical consciousness also may offer a resistance which is usually that of a fundamental inertia, an obscurity in the very stuff of the physical, an incomprehension, an inability to respond to the higher consciousness, a habit of helplessly responding to the lower mechanically, even when it does not want to do so; both vital and physical suffering may be the consequence." (CWSA 31: 668)

3.

"If it [*the consciousness*] is separate, it should not suffer from them [*pains*]. Even for the pains, the body may suffer but the consciousness should not feel itself suffering or overpowered." (CWSA 31: 575–576)

4.

"The psychic-vital seeks after the Divine, but it has a demand in its self-giving, desire, vital eagerness the psychic has not, for the psychic has instead pure self-giving, aspiration, intensity of psychic fire. The psychic-vital is subject to pain and suffering, which there is not in the psychic." (CWSA 28: 108)

VIII—Those Who Developed Higher States of Consciousness Have a Greater Capacity to Bear Suffering

1.

"It is a question of a difference of consciousness. In some it is the external states of consciousness which are most developed; others, on the contrary, have taken care to develop the higher states of consciousness. So, to say 'each one bears his cross' is true of the external consciousness (of material happenings, happenings which touch the vital being, the emotional being and the mental being); for such people there will always be a considerable number of catastrophes, all the more because catastrophes seem to be proportionate to the capacity of the individual, they seem to be dealt out according to his capacity to bear things. It may just be that those who have greater capacities have an over-plus of suffering and misfortune.

But there are people who are above all misfortune and yet misfortunes exist for them. Why? Because the inner consciousness in them is stronger, more developed than the other consciousness (I do not speak here of 'transformed' beings, for in them one can conceive of a state of things in which even the physical being is above suffering; we are speaking of men as they are at present). If your consciousness is seated in a place where these external things do not exist, then it may be said that you

do not bear your cross because you are above it. Yet there are exceptions, there are human beings who are above afflictions, yet carry their cross. How can we reconcile these two apparently contradictory things?

"*Misfortunes are of different kinds.*

No, human miseries and misfortunes are always of the same nature; there are sufferings that come from yourself, from circumstances or from the general state of things, that is, you are subject to these sufferings from your birth and none can escape them. They do not always have the same intensity but they are always there. Hence it seems there is a contradiction and yet this is not correct: because for some people it is as if the thing did not exist, even when it exists! As if it was not, even while it was! Neither the one nor the other is wholly true, neither the one nor the other is wholly false.

There is a state of human consciousness (it is not yet superhuman, it is truly human) in which the two things may coexist. One may have sufferings and not feel them, be as if they did not exist. That is, a misfortune, a 'cross' touches only the outer consciousness, the physical, the mental, the vital, but the psychic—in truth, the psychic is above all suffering. Let us take a very simple example: an illness. A physical disorder brings suffering, at times much suffering, but there are people who are in such a state of

consciousness that their physical sufferings do not exist, they are not real for them. It is the same thing with separation; if you love someone and are separated from that person, you suffer—this is one of the most common of sufferings, it is the ties which are broken—well, in a certain state of consciousness the real link between two beings cannot be broken, for it does not belong to the domain where things break. Therefore one is above what may happen." (CWM 4: 44–45)

IX—When Suffering Occurs Due to a Blow to a Being Who Has Knowledge, the Consequences Are Reduced to a Minimum

"*Mother, when the Divine takes upon Himself human suffering...*

Yes...

... does this suffering have the same effect upon Him as upon us? That is, does He feel pain and sorrow as we feel them?

No! I can say, *No*! For, obviously there is an essential difference between a state of ignorance and a state of knowledge. Something painful happens to you, let us say; and in the ignorance this painful thing takes on a particular quality. But if you receive this painful thing in a state of knowledge, it does not have the same effect. Let us take even a material thing, say, a very material blow, a good blow like this (*gesture*). Well, when one is in the ordinary human state of ignorance the blow has its full effect. It depends exclusively on its violence, on what has given the blow and who has received it, you see. But if the same blow is given in the same way and by the same thing to a being who has knowledge instead of ignorance, *instantaneously* the reaction of the body will be such as to

make the consequences... reduce the consequences to the minimum. And this is a concrete fact! This can go to the extent of even annulling the consequences altogether sometimes. It can go as far as that; that is, it can abolish the consequences, because the reaction is one of knowledge, instead of being a reaction of ignorance. So one cannot say that it is the same thing." (CWM 6: 286–287)

X—By Reasoning One May Not Feel Suffering as If It Did Not Exist

1.

"There is a state of human consciousness (it is not yet superhuman, it is truly human) in which the two things may coexist. One may have sufferings and not feel them, be as if they did not exist. That is, a misfortune, a 'cross' touches only the outer consciousness, the physical, the mental, the vital, but the psychic—in truth, the psychic is above all suffering. Let us take a very simple example: an illness. A physical disorder brings suffering, at times much suffering, but there are people who are in such a state of consciousness that their physical sufferings do not exist, they are not real for them. …

But before one reaches a higher state of consciousness, there is a stage where one can develop in oneself the faculty of reason—a clear, precise, logical reason, sufficiently objective in its vision of things. And when one has developed this reason well, all impulses, feelings, desires, all disturbances can be put in the presence of this reason and that makes you reasonable. Most people, when something troubles them, become very unreasonable. When, for example, they are ill, they pass their time saying, 'Oh, how ill I am, how frightful it is; is it going to last like that all the time?' And naturally it gets worse and worse. Or when some misfortune befalls them,

they cry out: 'It is only to me that these things happen and I was thinking that everything was fine before', and they burst into a fit of tears, a fit of nerves. … in man himself there is a higher capacity called reason, which is able to look at things calmly, coolly, reasonably. And this reason tells you, 'Don't worry, that will improve nothing, you must not grumble, you must accept the thing since it has come.' Then you immediately become calm. It is a very good mental training, it develops judgment, vision, objectivity and at the same time it has a very healthy action upon your character. It helps you to avoid the ridiculousness of giving way to your nerves and lets you behave like a reasonable person." (CWM 4: 45–46)

XI—The Mental Being Is Not Bound to Pain and Suffering

1.

"In the things of the mind this pure habitual relativity of the reactions of pleasure and pain is not difficult to perceive. The nervous being in us, indeed, is accustomed to a certain fixedness, a false impression of absoluteness in these things. To it victory, success, honour, good fortune of all kinds are pleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce joy as sugar must taste sweet; defeat, failure, disappointment, disgrace, evil fortune of all kinds are unpleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce grief as wormwood must taste bitter. To vary these responses is to it a departure from fact, abnormal and morbid; for the nervous being is a thing enslaved to habit and in itself the means devised by Nature for fixing constancy of reaction, sameness of experience, the settled scheme of man's relations to life. The mental being on the other hand is free, for it is the means she has devised for flexibility and variation, for change and progress; it is subject only so long as it chooses to remain subject, to dwell in one mental habit rather than in another or so long as it allows itself to be dominated by its nervous instrument. It is not bound to be grieved by defeat, disgrace, loss: it can meet these things and all things with a perfect indifference; it can even meet them with a perfect

gladness. Therefore man finds that the more he refuses to be dominated by his nerves and body, the more he draws back from implication of himself in his physical and vital parts, the greater is his freedom. He becomes the master of his own responses to the world's contacts, no longer the slave of external touches." (CWSA 21: 113–114)

2.

"In regard to physical pleasure and pain, it is more difficult to apply the universal truth; for this is the very domain of the nerves and the body, the centre and seat of that in us whose nature is to be dominated by external contact and external pressure. Even here, however, we have glimpses of the truth. We see it in the fact that according to the habit the same physical contact can be either pleasurable or painful, not only to different individuals, but to the same individual under different conditions or at different stages of his development. We see it in the fact that men in periods of great excitement or high exaltation remain physically indifferent to pain or unconscious of pain under contacts which ordinarily would inflict severe torture or suffering. In many cases it is only when the nerves are able to reassert themselves and remind the mentality of its habitual obligation to suffer that the sense of suffering returns. But this return to the habitual obligation is not inevitable; it is only habitual. We see that in the phenomena of hypnosis not only can the hypnotised

subject be successfully forbidden to feel the pain of a wound or puncture when in the abnormal state, but can be prevented with equal success from returning to his habitual reaction of suffering when he is awakened. The reason of this phenomenon is perfectly simple; it is because the hypnotiser suspends the habitual waking consciousness which is the slave of nervous habits and is able to appeal to the subliminal mental being in the depths, the inner mental being who is master, if he wills, of the nerves and the body. But this freedom which is effected by hypnosis abnormally, rapidly, without true possession, by an alien will, may equally be won normally, gradually, with true possession, by one's own will so as to effect partially or completely a victory of the mental being over the habitual nervous reactions of the body." (CWSA 21: 114–115)

3.

"Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life, in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kinds, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be

reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection." *Perfection of the Body* (CWSA 13: 526)

XII—The Body Suffers the Consequences of the Orders It Receives from the Mind and the Vital

1.

"It is much easier to organise the body than the vital, for instance. But the mind and the vital, with the character and temperament they have, what do they not do with this poor slave of a body! After having ill-treated it, perhaps ruined it (it protests a little, falls ill a little), this is what the two accomplices say: 'What a beast is this body, it cannot follow us in our movement!' Unhappily, the body obeys its masters, the mind and the vital, blindly, without any discrimination. The mind comes along with its theories: 'You must not eat that, it will harm you; you must not do that, it is bad', and if the mind is not wise and clear-sighted, the poor body suffers the consequences of the orders it receives. I do not speak of the orders it receives from the vital. The mind with its rigid principles and the vital with its excesses and outbursts and passions are quick to destroy the body's equilibrium and to create a condition of fatigue, exhaustion and illness.

'It must be freed from this tyranny; that can be done only through a constant union with the psychic centre of the being.'
"The Science of Living", On Education
That is evidently the cure of all ills." (CWM 4: 53–54)

2.

"*Sweet Mother,*

For the last few days I have been feeling very tired and my liver is upset. Perhaps it is due to my own stupidity. I thought that the more work and exercise I did, the better I would feel. So I was taking long walks. The result is that now even talking is tiring and the slightest exercise just makes me weaker.

Sweet Mother, I will be very happy if you have something to tell me about this.

The mind always tends to want to impose its rule on the body. But that rule is not necessarily the divine wisdom, and so the body suffers.

Now you must give your body the rest it needs in order to recover its balance.

With my blessings." (CWM 17: 339–340)

3.

The body suffers as faith is not in the body

"The faith is in your active consciousness and your will, but it is not yet in your body; that is why your body feels tired and suffers; you must give it some rest. Until you know how to organise your work and eliminate all the useless coming and going, it would be better to give up the sweeping work and leave it to a servant; or if you insist on

doing the sweeping, you should find someone to take care of your garden." (CWM 17: 12–13)

4.

"I know too well the true reason of all these complications and this suffering to give him any advice, because it is only an inner and radical change of his character that can put an end to the ordeal. He has had with him and still has a conscious and steady concentration of force which ought to have cured him long ago. But his inner pessimism and dissatisfaction constantly spoil the working.

Let him have a true faith and then everything will be all right.

Blessings." (CWM 17: 398–399)

XIII—The Body Is Capable of Enduring Such Suffering as Is Normally Impossible to Endure

1.

"*The body has a remarkable capacity of adaptation and endurance. It is fit to do so many more things than one can usually imagine. If instead of the ignorant and despotic masters that govern it, it is ruled by the central truth of the being, one will be surprised at what it is capable of doing."*

During the last war, it was proved that the body was capable of enduring such suffering as is normally impossible to endure. You have surely read or heard these stories of war in which the body was made to suffer and endure terrible things, and it withstood all that, it proved that it had almost inexhaustible capacities of endurance. Some people happened to be under conditions that should have killed them; if they survived, it was because they had in them a very strong will to survive and the body obeyed that will." (CWM 4: 54)

2.

The War

"I have visited trains, each one bringing between five and six hundred wounded from the front. It is a moving sight, not so much because of all that these unfortunate men are suffering, but above all because of the noble manner in

which most of them bear their sufferings. Their soul shines through their eyes, the slightest contact with the deeper forces awakens it. And from the intensity, the fullness of the powers of true love which could, in their presence, be manifested in perfect silence, it was easy to realise the value of their receptivity." (CWM 2: 141)

XIV—How to Master Physical Suffering?

1.

"*How to master physical suffering?*

It is just the experiences I am having now.

The body is in a state in which it sees that everything depends simply on how it is linked with the Divine—upon the state of its receptive surrender. I have had the experience even during these last days. The same thing which is the cause of a—more than a discomfort—a suffering, an almost unbearable ailment, with just a change in the receptivity of the body towards the Divine, disappears all of a sudden—and can even move to a blissful state. I have had the experience several times. For me it is only a question of sincerity become intense—in the consciousness that everything is the action of the Divine and that his action moves towards the quickest possible realisation, in the given conditions.

I might say: the cells of the body must learn to seek their support only in the Divine, until the moment when they are able to feel that they are the expression of the Divine.

This is indeed the experience at present. The experience of changing the effect of things, that I have; but it is not mentalised, so I cannot tell it in words. But truly, the cells have begun to feel, first of all that they are

wholly ruled by the Divine (this is translated by: 'What Thou willest, what Thou willest') , this state, and then a kind of receptivity which is (how to say it?) passive—not immobile, it is... probably one might say a *passive* receptivity (*Mother opens her hands with a smile*) , but I do not know how to explain." (CWM 11: 273)

2.

"And I see very well that the body is quite aware that it is only because of its resistance—its resistance to Truth—that it can suffer. Wherever there is a complete adhesion, suffering disappears immediately." (CWM 11: 223)

XV—How Not to Suffer in the Hot Sun

1.

"I knew young people who had always lived in cities—in a city and in those little rooms one has in the big cities in which everyone is huddled. Now, they had come to spend their holidays in the countryside, in the south of France, and there the sun is hot, naturally not as here but all the same it is very hot (when we compare the sun of the Mediterranean coasts with that of Paris, for example, it truly makes a difference), and so, when they walked around the countryside the first few days they really began to get a terrible headache and to feel absolutely uneasy because of the sun; but they suddenly thought: 'Why, if we make friends with the sun it won't harm us any more!' And they began to make a kind of inner effort of friendship and trust in the sun, and when they were out in the sun, instead of trying to bend double and tell themselves, 'Oh! How hot it is, how it burns!', they said, 'Oh, how full of force and joy and love the sun is!' etc., they opened themselves like this (*gesture*), and not only did they not suffer any longer but they felt so strong afterwards that they went round telling everyone who said 'It is hot'—telling them 'Do as we do, you will see how good it is.' And they could remain for hours in the full sun, bare-headed and without feeling any discomfort. It is the same principle.

It is the same principle. They linked themselves to the universal vital force which is in the sun and received this force which took away all that was unpleasant to them.

When one is in the countryside, when one walks under the trees and feels so close to Nature, to the trees, the sky, all the leaves, all the branches, all the herbs, when one feels a great friendship with these things and breathes that air which is so good, perfumed with all the plants, then one opens oneself, and by opening oneself communes with the universal forces. And for all things it is like that.

"*Can one do the same thing when it is cold?*

Yes, I think so. I think one can always do the same thing in all cases.

The sun is a very powerful symbol in the organisation of Nature. So it is not altogether the same thing; it possesses in itself an extraordinary condensation of energy. Cold seems to me a more negative thing: it is an absence of something. But in any case, if one knows how to enter the rhythm of the movements of Nature, one avoids many discomforts. What makes men suffer, what disturbs the balance of the body is a narrowness, it is always a narrowness. It happens because one is shut up in limits, and so there is, as Sri Aurobindo writes here, a force which presses too strongly for these limits—it upsets everything." (CWM 7: 136–137)

XVI—The Most Common Malady Humanity Suffers from Is Boredom

1.

"And to tell the truth, the most common malady humanity suffers from is boredom. Most of the stupidities men commit come from an attempt to escape boredom. Well, I say for certain that no outer means are any good, and that boredom pursues you and will pursue you no matter what you try to escape from it; but that this way, that is, beginning this work of organising your being and all its movements and all its elements around the central Consciousness and Presence, this is the surest and most complete cure, and the most comforting, for all possible boredom. It gives life a tremendous interest. And an extraordinary diversity. You no longer have the time to get bored.

Only, one must persevere.

And what adds to the interest of the thing is that this kind of work, this harmonisation and organisation of the being around the divine Centre can only be done in a physical body and on earth. That is truly the essential and original reason for physical life. For, as soon as you are no longer in a physical body, you can no longer do it *at all*.

And what is still more remarkable is that only human beings can do it, for only human beings have at their centre the divine Presence in the psychic being. For example, this

work of self-development and organisation and becoming aware of all the elements is not within the reach of the beings of the vital and mental planes, nor even of the beings who are usually called 'gods'; and when they want to do it, when they really want to organise themselves and become completely conscious, they have to take a body." (CWM 8: 174–175)

XVII—Sorrow for the Bodily Death of Relatives Is a Grief to which Wisdom Lends No Sanction

1.

"The sorrow for the bodily death of his friends and kindred is a grief to which wisdom and the true knowledge of life lend no sanction. The enlightened man does not mourn either for the living or the dead, for he knows that suffering and death are merely incidents in the history of the soul. The soul, not the body, is the reality. All these kings of men for whose approaching death he mourns, have lived before, they will live again in the human body; for as the soul passes physically through childhood and youth and age, so it passes on to the changing of the body. The calm and wise mind, the *dhīra*, the thinker who looks upon life steadily and does not allow himself to be disturbed and blinded by his sensations and emotions, is not deceived by material appearances; he does not allow the clamour of his blood and his nerves and his heart to cloud his judgment or to contradict his knowledge. He looks beyond the apparent facts of the life of the body and senses to the real fact of his being and rises beyond the emotional and physical desires of the ignorant nature to the true and only aim of the human existence." (CWSA 19: 61)

2.

"There is no such thing as death, for it is the body that dies and the body is not the man. … The soul is and cannot cease to be. … Finite bodies have an end, but that which possesses and uses the body, is infinite, illimitable, eternal, indestructible. It casts away old and takes up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new; and what is there in this to grieve at and recoil and shrink? This is not born, nor does it die, nor is it a thing that comes into being once and passing away will never come into being again. It is unborn, ancient, sempiternal; it is not slain with the slaying of the body. Who can slay the immortal spirit? Weapons cannot cleave it, nor the fire burn, nor do the waters drench it, nor the wind dry. Eternally stable, immobile, all-pervading, it is for ever and for ever. …

Even if the truth of our being were a thing less sublime, vast, intangible by death and life, if the self were constantly subject to birth and death, still the death of beings ought not to be a cause of sorrow. For that is an inevitable circumstance of the soul's self-manifestation. … The to-do made by the physical mind and senses about death and the horror of death whether on the sick-bed or the battlefield, is the most ignorant of nervous clamours. Our sorrow for the death of men is an ignorant grieving for those for whom there is no cause to grieve, since they have neither gone out of existence nor suffered any painful or terrible change of condition, but are beyond death no less

in being and no more unhappy in circumstance than in life." (CWSA 19: 62–63)

3.

"Thus Arjuna's plea of sorrow, his plea of the recoil from slaughter, his plea of the sense of sin, his plea of the unhappy results of his action, are answered according to the highest knowledge and ethical ideals to which his race and age had attained.

It is the creed of the Aryan fighter. 'Know God,' it says, 'know thyself, help man; protect the Right, do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Thou art the eternal and imperishable Spirit, thy soul is here on its upward path to immortality; life and death are nothing, sorrow and wounds and suffering are nothing, for these things have to be conquered and overcome. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits to which thou climbest, around at this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in stern conflict." (CWSA 19: 66)

4.

"The telegram announces the passing away of your husband.

All has been done that could be done to keep him in life. What has happened must now be accepted calmly as

the thing decreed and best for his soul's progress from life to life though not the best in human eyes which look only at the present and at outside appearance. For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed. Look at it as that and shaking from you all reactions of vital grief—they cannot help him in his journey,—pursue steadfastly the path to the Divine." (CWSA 28: 529)

5.

"But one who gets behind the outward view knows that all that happens in the progress of the soul has its meaning, its necessity, its place in the series of experiences which are leading it towards the turning point where one can pass from the Ignorance to the Light. He knows that whatever happens in the Divine Providence is for the best even though it may seem to the mind otherwise. Look on your wife as a soul that has passed the barrier between two states of existence. Help her journey towards her place of rest by calm thoughts and the call to the Divine Help to aid her upon it. Grief too long continued does not help but delays the journey of the departed soul. Do not brood on your loss, but think only of her spiritual welfare." (CWSA 28: 528)

6.

"I know nothing about any terrible suffering endured by the soul in the process of rebirth; popular beliefs even when they have some foundation are seldom enlightened and accurate. (CWSA 28: 538)

XVIII—Predestined Beings Who Are Destined to Accomplish a Precise Mission Can Be Led by Misfortunes or Tragedies to Where They Had to Arrive

1.

"Most often the things which you took for accidents or misfortunes or even tragedies or even for the blows of fate, for attacks of the adverse forces, all this, almost all without any exception, was a marvellously perspicacious [insightful] and admirably executed plan to lead you just where you had to go by the shortest road.

Of course this is not always absolute, because it depends on the importance of the individual in relation to the importance of the surrounding circumstances. That is why I said at the beginning: every predestined being. What I mean by 'predestined' is a being who has come down upon earth to accomplish a precise mission and who, naturally, will be helped in the accomplishment of this mission. It may be a very modest mission but it is a precise one that he has to accomplish upon earth. Well, all these beings... their life is organised in this way; but ninety nine and a half per cent are not aware of it, and they revolt or lament or... And then, above all, they pity themselves greatly and lament their own difficulties, their own miseries, their own sufferings, and caress themselves gently: 'Oh, my poor little one, how unhappy you are!' But

it is their inner being which has done everything." (CWM 6:386–387)

XIX—Reject Suffering When It Arises

1.

"*Why am I suffering? Why am I so far from the Mother? How can I get over this?*

Reject the suffering. Reject every vital movement that would take you away from the Mother.

Cling close to her always with your inner being—without demand or question, in perfect faith." (CWSA 32: 475)

2.

"You have to stand back from the feeling of suffering, anguish and apprehension, reject it and look quietly at the resistance, affirming always to yourself your will to change and insisting that it shall be done and cannot fail to be done now or later with the divine help, because the divine help is there. It is then that the strength can come to you that will overcome the difficulties." (CWSA 31:141)

3.

"All that [*sense of grief and sorrow*] is probably things that rise from the subconscient—or perhaps the subconscient itself is being worked upon to arrive at a state of light and peace. It sometimes enters into a happy condition, sometimes into a neutral one, sometimes it raises up a

causeless sorrow. The movements of the subconscient take place even without reason, of themselves, owing to the inherent habit in Nature, that is why the grief is without discoverable cause. It is only because it is in the subconscient that you cannot locate it. When the grief comes, you must dissociate yourself from it and reject it, not taking it as your own, until it ceases to come and call down the Mother's peace and Ananda in its place." (CWSA 31: 607–608)

XX—We Must Not Run Away from Suffering nor Cultivate Suffering

1.

Geneva, March 6, 1914

"After having suffered acutely from their suffering, I turned towards Thee, trying to heal it by infusing into it a little of that divine Love which is the source of all peace and all happiness. We must not run away from suffering, we must not love and cultivate it either, we must learn how to go deep down into it sufficiently to turn it into a lever powerful enough for us to force open the doors of the eternal consciousness and enter the serenity of Thy unchanging Oneness.

Surely this sentimental and physical attachment which causes an agonizing wrench when bodies are separated, is childish from a certain point of view, when we contemplate the impermanence of outer forms and the reality of Thy essential Oneness; but, on the other hand, is not this attachment, this personal affection, an unconscious effort in men to realise outwardly, as far as possible, that fundamental oneness towards which they always move without even being aware of it? And precisely because of that, is not the suffering that separation brings one of the most effective means of transcending this outer

consciousness, of replacing this superficial attachment by the integral realisation of Thy eternal Oneness?

This is what I wished for them all; this is what I ardently willed for them, and that is why, assured of Thy victory, certain of Thy triumph, I confided their grief to Thee that by illuminating it Thou mayst heal it.

O Lord, grant that all this beauty of affection and tenderness may be transformed into glorious knowledge.

Grant that the best may emerge from everything and Thy happy Peace reign over the earth." [From Prayers and Meditations] (CWM 1: 89–90)

2.

"For the life in its progress, for the soul in its ascendance, grief and suffering should be only an incident on the way and the vision look always and steadily to a joy and a glory beyond it—let the gloom pass and look beyond it towards Light." (CWSA 31: 196)

XXI—Why Suffer When the Divine Force Is Here to Heal

1.

"Why torment oneself and suffer, why this bitter struggle and painful revolt, why this vain violence, why this inconscient, heavy sleep? Awake without fear, appease your conflicts, silence your disputes, open your eyes and your hearts: the Force is there; it is there, divinely pure, luminous, powerful; it is there as a boundless love, a sovereign power, an indisputable reality, an unmixed peace, an uninterrupted beatitude, the Supreme Benediction; it is self-existence, the endless bliss of infinite knowledge . . . and it is something more which cannot yet be told, but which is already at work in the higher worlds beyond thought as the power of sovereign transfiguration, and also in the inconscient depths of Matter as the Irresistible Healer. . . .

Listen, listen, O thou who wouldst know.

Look, thou who wouldst see, contemplate and live:

The Force is here." [From Prayers and Meditations] (CWM 1: 195)

XXII—Material Wealth Is Powerless to Prevent Suffering, Pain and Sorrow

1.

"For to help is not the same as to cure, nor is escaping the same as conquering. Indeed, to alleviate physical hardships, the solution proposed by Vincent de Paul can in no way be enough to cure humanity of its misery and suffering, for not all human sufferings come from physical destitution and can be cured by material means—far from it. Bodily wellbeing does not inevitably bring peace and joy; and poverty is not necessarily a cause of misery, as is shown by the voluntary poverty of the ascetics of all countries and all ages, who found in their destitution the source and condition of a perfect peace and happiness. Whereas on the contrary, the enjoyment of worldly possessions, of all that material wealth can provide in the way of comfort and pleasure and external satisfaction is powerless to prevent one who possesses these things from suffering pain and sorrow." (CWM 12: 97)

XXIII—Not to Inflict Needless Suffering on Animals or Any Living Beings

1.

"This world is so arranged that it is not possible to live without some destruction of life—so for this there need be no remorse. Only one should not destroy life wantonly or inflict needless suffering on animals or any living things." (CWSA 28: 435)

2.

"Until you are definitively one with the Divinity within, the best way, in your relations with the outside, is to act according to the unanimous advice given by those who have themselves had the experience of this unity.

To be in a state of constant benevolence, with this as your rule, not to be troubled by anything and not to be the cause of trouble to others, not to inflict suffering upon them so far as possible." (CWM 2: 107)

3.

"You would be more justified to ask me: 'Why are there such cruel children?" That indeed is one of the most dreadful things.... But it is due to unconsciousness. It is because they are not even aware that they are making others suffer. And usually, if care is taken to make them understand—for instance, through experience—then they

understand. Children who ill-treat animals (there are many of these)—well, that is because they don't even know that animals feel as they do. When they are made to understand that when they pinch animals or pull their hair or beat them it gives them pain, and if necessary when they are shown on their own bodies how it hurts, they don't do it any more!" (CWM 6: 5)

XXIV—One Must Be Able to See Evil and Ugliness without Suffering and Then Cure It

1.

"To feel and love the God of beauty and good in the ugly and the evil, and still yearn in utter love to heal it of its ugliness and its evil, this is real virtue and morality. [Thoughts and Aphorisms]

…

So in this aphorism Sri Aurobindo forestalls these objections: it is not because of ignorance or unconsciousness or indifference that you do not see the evil—you are quite capable of seeing it, even of feeling it, but you refuse to help to spread it by giving it the force of your attention and the support of your consciousness. And for that you must yourself be above this perception and feeling; you must be able to see the evil or the ugliness without suffering from it, without being shocked or disturbed by it. You see it from a height where these things do not exist, but you have the conscious perception of it, you are not affected by it, you are free. This is the first step.

The second step is to be *positively* conscious of the supreme Good and supreme Beauty behind all things, which sustains all things and enables them to exist. When you see Him, you are able to perceive Him behind this

mask and this distortion; even this ugliness, this wickedness, this evil is a disguise of Something which is essentially beautiful or good, luminous, pure.

Then comes the *true* collaboration, for when you have this vision, this perception, when you live in this consciousness, it also gives you the power to *draw* That down into the manifestation, to the earth, and to bring It into contact with what now distorts and disguises, so that little by little this distortion and this disguise are transformed by the influence of the Truth that is behind.

Here we are at the very summit of the scale of collaboration.

In this way it is not necessary to introduce the principle of love into the explanation. But if you want to know or understand the nature of the Force or the Power that enables or brings about this transformation—particularly where evil is concerned, but also with ugliness to a certain extent—you see that love is obviously the most potent and integral of all powers—integral in the sense that it applies in all cases. It is even more powerful than the power of purification which dissolves all bad will and which is, as it were, the master of the adverse forces, but which has not the direct power of transformation. The power of purification first dissolves in order to allow the transformation afterwards. It destroys one form in order to be able to create a better one, whereas love need not dissolve in order to transform; it possesses the direct

power of transformation. Love is like a flame that changes what is hard into something malleable and even sublimates this malleable thing into a kind of purified vapour—it does not destroy, it transforms.” (CWM 10: 70–72)

XXV—With a Developed Psychic Being, There Is a Growth in the Capacity for Suffering

1.

"And I have noticed that most often those who have many difficulties are those who are in a more or less close contact with their psychic being. If you want to speak about outer circumstances—I am not speaking of the character, that's quite different, but of outer circumstances—the people who have to struggle most and would have most reason to suffer are those who have a very developed psychic being.

First, the development of the psychic being has a double result which is concomitant. That is, with the development of the psychic being, the sensitivity of the being grows. And with the growth of sensitivity there is also the growth of the capacity for suffering; but there is the counterpart, that is, to the extent to which one is in relation with the psychic being, one faces the circumstances of life in an altogether different way and with a kind of inner freedom which makes one capable of withdrawing from a circumstance and not feeling the shock in the ordinary way. You can face the difficulty or outer things with calm, peace, and a sufficient inner knowledge not to be troubled. So, on one side you are more sensitive and on the other you have more strength to deal with the sensitivity." (CWM 7: 21)

XXVI—The Ideal Child Faces Suffering without Grumbling

AN IDEAL CHILD... IS ENDURING

"He faces the inevitable difficulties and sufferings without grumbling." (CWM 12: 149–150)

XXVII—India's Suffering Resulted from Neglecting Matter and the West Suffered by Neglecting Spirit

1.

"India has or rather *had* the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.

This is in short what I wanted to say." (CWM 12: 249)

XXVIII—Suffering During India's Freedom Movement

1.

"Secondly [in *Bal Gangadhar Tilak character there was*] the readiness to sacrifice and face suffering, not needlessly or with a useless bravado, but with a firm courage when it comes, to bear it and to outlive, returning to work with one's scars as if nothing had happened." (CWSA 1: 656)

2.

"The bureaucracy blundered upon an ingenious way of striking us in a very vulnerable point when it hurried Lajpat Rai away to a remote corner of the world among alien men and cut him off from all sight of Indian faces and communion with Indian hearts. But what then? It is but one suffering the more, and the deeper the suffering the greater the glory, the more celestial the reward. We cannot suffer more than Poerio in his Neapolitan dungeon or Silvio Pellico in his Austrian fortress or Mazzini in his lifelong exile. It is with the lifeblood of a nation's best and the unshed tears that well up from the hearts of its strong men that the tree of liberty is watered. The greater the sacrifice, the earlier is its fruit enjoyed." (CWSA 6: 434)

3.

"If they [*leaders of India's freedom*] are not demoralised, if their hearts and hopes are as high as ever, they should

take some trouble to show it. On the other hand, if they are demoralised, if they are suffering from sinkings and searchings of the heart, they ought to take some trouble to hide it. The words of the Mahabharata apply with particular force.

'Never should a prince and leader bow his haughty head to fear,

Let his fortune be however desperate, death however near.

If his soul grow faint, let him imprison weakness in his heart,

Keep a bold and open countenance and play on a hero's part.

If the leader fear and faint, then all behind him faint and fear.

So a king of men should keep a dauntless look and forehead clear'." (CWSA 6: 479)

4.

"God brings other forces to fight against the strength which He Himself has inspired. Because it is always necessary for the divinely appointed strength to grow by suffering; without suffering, without the lesson of selflessness, without the moral force of self-sacrifice, God within us cannot grow. Sri Krishna cannot grow to manhood unless he is called upon to work for others, unless the Asuric forces of the world are about him and

work against him and make him feel his strength. (CWSA 6: 825)

5.

"God is doing everything. We are not doing anything. What He bids us suffer, we suffer because the suffering is necessary to give others strength. When He throws us away, He does so because we are no longer required. If things become worse, we shall have not only to go to jail, but give up our lives and if those who seem to stand in front or to be absolutely indispensable are called upon to throw their bodies away, we shall then know that that also is wanted, that this is a work that God has asked us to do, and that in the place of those who are thrown away, God will bring many more. He Himself is behind us. He Himself is the worker and the work. … He is immortal in the hearts of His people." (CWSA 6: 827)

6.

"When a young worker in Bengal has to go to jail, when he is asked to suffer, he does not feel any pang in that suffering, he does not fear suffering. He goes forward with joy. He says, 'The hour of my consecration has come, and I have to thank God now that the time for laying myself on His altar has arrived and that I have been chosen to suffer for the good of my countrymen. This is the hour of my greatest joy and the fulfilment of my life'." (CWSA 6: 828)

7.

"But when you have a higher idea, when you have realised that you have nothing, that you are nothing and that the three hundred millions of people of this country are God in the nation, something which cannot be measured by so much land, or by so much money, or by so many lives, you will then realise that it is something immortal, that the idea for which you are working is something immortal and that it is an immortal power which is working in you. All other attachments are nothing. Every other consideration disappears from your mind, and, as I said, there is no need to cultivate courage. You are led on by that power. You are protected through life and death by One who survives. In the very hour of death, you feel your immortality. In the hour of your worst sufferings, you feel you are invincible." (CWSA 6: 829– 830)

8.

"I knew all along what He [*the voice of God within Sri Aurobindo*] meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within: 'I am guiding, therefore fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other. Therefore whatever clouds may come, whatever dangers and sufferings, whatever difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is

nothing impossible, nothing difficult. I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay." *Uttarpara Speech* (CWSA 8: 8)

9.

"We are the descendants of those who performed tapasya and underwent unheard-of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain and of their own will submitted to all the sufferings of which humanity is capable. We are the children of those mothers who ascended with a smile the funeral pyre that they might follow their husbands to another world. We are a people to whom suffering is welcome and who have a spiritual strength within them, greater than any physical force. We are a people in whom God has chosen to manifest Himself more than any other at many great moments of our history. It is because God has chosen to manifest Himself and has entered into the hearts of His people that we are rising again as a nation. Therefore it matters not even if those who are greatest and most loved are taken away. I trust in God's mercy and believe that they will soon be restored to us. But even if they don't come again still the movement will not cease. It will move forward irresistibly until God's will in it is fulfilled. He fulfils His purposes inevitably and this too He will fulfil. Those who are taken from us must after all some day pass

away. We are strong in their strength. We have worked in their inspiration. But in the inevitable course of nature they will pass from us and there must be others who will take their places. He has taken them away from us for a little in order that in their absence we might feel that it was not really in their strength that we were strong, in their inspiration that we worked but that a Higher Force was working in them and when they are removed, can still work in the hearts of the people." (CWSA 8: 38–39)

10.

"Great causes which are fought out boldly to the end are made sacred by courage and suffering and their resurrection and final victory is inevitable. Only those which are supported by cowards and meanly abandoned, are erased from the books of the future. The mediaeval movement of civic liberty in France and Italy failed and gave place to Teutonic despotism, but it revived with a hundredfold force in the French Revolution and it was the impetuous rush earthwards of the souls that had fought for it hundreds of years before that shattered to pieces the once victorious feudal system. But if, as we are assured, the movement is upward, then we may persist in absolute confidence, sure that reverses in details are only meant to prepare and point the true way to victory." (CWSA 8: 463)

11.

"I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples. The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom, it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people." Sri Aurobindo [Messages on Indian and World Events 1948–1950] (CWSA 36: 497)

XXIX—Thoughts and Aphorisms on Suffering

1.

"36. Men are still in love with grief; when they see one who is too high for grief or joy, they curse him & cry, 'O thou insensible!' Therefore Christ still hangs on the cross in Jerusalem." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 427)

2.

"134. When thou art able to see how necessary is suffering to final delight, failure to utter effectiveness and retardation to the last rapidity, then thou mayst begin to understand something, however faintly and dimly, of God's workings." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 438)

3.

"138. The force of soul in thee meeting the same force from outside cannot harmonise the measures of the contact in values of mind-experience & body-experience, therefore thou hast pain, grief or uneasiness. If thou canst learn to adjust the replies of the force in thyself to the questions of world-force, thou shalt find pain becoming pleasurable or turning into pure delightfulness. Right relation is the condition of blissfulness, ritam the key of ananda." (CWSA 12: 439)

4.

"168. The Cross is in Yoga the symbol of the soul and nature in their strong and perfect union, but because of our fall into the impurities of ignorance it has become the symbol of suffering and purification." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 444)

5.

"176. When I look back on my past life, I see that if I had not failed & suffered, I would have lost my life's supreme blessings; yet at the time of the suffering & failure, I was vexed with the sense of calamity. Because we cannot see anything but the one fact under our noses, therefore we indulge in all these snifflings and clamours. Be silent, ye foolish hearts! slay the ego, learn to see & feel vastly & universally." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 445)

6.

"177. "The perfect cosmic vision & cosmic sentiment is the cure of all error & suffering; but most men succeed only in enlarging the range of their ego." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 445)

"*What is 'the cosmic vision and cosmic sentiment' and how can they be attained?*

This simply means the vision of the whole earth at the same time and the sentiment which is the result of this

vision of the whole. This whole contains all things *at the same time*, light and darkness, suffering and pleasure, happiness and unhappiness, and all together makes a vibration of adoration turned towards the Divine, just as all sounds heard together make the supreme invocation to the Divine: OM." (CWM 10: 262)

7.

"185. Pity may be reserved, so long as thy soul makes distinctions, for the suffering animals; but humanity deserves from thee something nobler, it asks for love, for understanding, for comradeship, for the help of the equal and brother." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 446)

8.

"212. The tragedies of the heart & the body are the weeping of children over their little griefs & their broken toys. Smile within thyself, but comfort the children; join also, if thou canst, in their play." (CWSA 12: 453–454)

9.

"244. Suffer yourself to be tempted within so that you may exhaust in the struggle your downward propensities." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 457)

10.

"245. If you leave it to God to purify, He will exhaust the evil in you subjectively; but if you insist on guiding yourself,

you will fall into much outward sin and suffering." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 457)

11.

"308. Distrust the man who has never failed and suffered; follow not his fortunes, fight not under his banner." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 464)

12.

"381. For nearly forty years I believed them when they said I was weakly in constitution, suffered constantly from the smaller & the greater ailments & mistook this curse for a burden that Nature had laid upon me. When I renounced the aid of medicines, then they began to depart from me like disappointed parasites. Then only I understood what a mighty force was the natural health within me & how much mightier yet the Will & Faith exceeding mind which God meant to be the divine support of our life in this body." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 474)

13.

"480. When I suffer from pain or grief or mischance, I say 'So, my old Playfellow, thou hast taken again to bullying me,' and I sit down to possess the pleasure of the pain, the joy of the grief, the good fortune of the mischance; then He sees He is found out and takes His ghosts &

bugbears away from me." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 490)

14.

"494. I used to hate and avoid pain and resent its infliction; but now I find that had I not so suffered, I would not now possess, trained and perfected, this infinitely & multitudinously sensible capacity of delight in my mind, heart and body. God justifies himself in the end even when He has masked Himself as a bully and a tyrant." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 490)

15.

"495. I swore that I would not suffer from the world's grief and the world's stupidity and cruelty & injustice and I made my heart as hard in endurance as the nether millstone and my mind as a polished surface of steel. I no longer suffered, but enjoyment had passed away from me. Then God broke my heart and ploughed up my mind. I rose through cruel & incessant anguish to a blissful painlessness and through sorrow and indignation & revolt to an infinite knowledge and a settled peace." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 492–493)

16.

"496. When I found that pain was the reverse side & the training of delight, I sought to heap blows on myself &

multiply suffering in all my members; for even God's tortures seemed to me slow & slight & inefficient. Then my Lover had to stay my hand & cry, 'Cease; for my stripes are enough for thee'." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 493)

17.

"499. The divine Friend of all creatures conceals His friendliness in the mask of an enemy till He has made us ready for the highest heavens; then, as in Kurukshetra, the terrible form of the Master of strife, suffering & destruction is withdrawn & the sweet face, the tender arm, the oft-clasped body of Krishna shine out on the shaken soul & purified eyes of his eternal comrade & playmate." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 493)

18.

"500. Suffering makes us capable of the full force of the Master of Delight; it makes us capable also to bear the utter play of the Master of Power. Pain is the key that opens the gates of strength; it is the high-road that leads to the city of beatitude." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 493)

19.

"501. Yet, O soul of man, seek not after pain, for that is not His will, seek after His joy only; as for suffering, it will

come to thee surely in His providence as often and as much as is needed for thee. Then bear it that thou mayst find out at last its heart of rapture." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 493–494)

20.

"523. A healthy mind hates pain; for the desire of pain that men sometimes develop in their minds is morbid and contrary to Nature. But the soul cares not for the mind & its sufferings any more than the iron-master for the pain of the ore in the furnace; it follows its own necessities and its own hunger." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 496)

21.

"527. To find that saving a man's body or mind from suffering is not always for the good of either soul, mind or body, is one of the bitterest of experiences for the humanly compassionate." Thoughts and Aphorisms (CWSA 12: 497)

22.

"The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the divine into the human and a self-immergence of man in the Divinity.

But that immergence is not in the nature of an annihilation. Extinction is not the fulfilment of all this search and passion, suffering and rapture. The game would never have been begun if that were to be its ending.

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

What then was the commencement of the whole matter? Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being and plunged into numberless trillions of forms so that it might find itself innumerably.

And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations." *Thoughts and Glimpses* (CWSA 13: 203–204)

XXX—The Drama of the Future Will Show the Struggles, the Sufferings and the Victories of the Spirit

1.

"The drama of the future will differ from the romantic play or tragedy because the thing which dramatic speech will represent will be something more internal than the life soul and its brilliant pageant of passion and character. … It will not be limited by any lesser idealisms or realisms, but representing at will this and other worlds, the purpose of the gods and the actions of men, man's dreams and man's actualities each as real as the other, the struggles and the sufferings and the victories of the spirit, the fixities of Nature and her mutabilities and significant perversions and fruitful conversions, interpret in dramatic form the inmost truth of the action of man the infinite. It will not be limited either by any old or new formal convention, but transmute old moulds and invent others and arrange according to the truth of its vision its acts and the evolution of its dramatic process or the refrain of its lyrical or the march of its epic motive." *The Future Poetry* (CWSA 26: 284– 285)

XXXI—The Divine Does Not Want Human Beings to Suffer

1.

"I have received your letter and understand your aspiration.

But the doctor says you have fever still and it is impossible to let you go, because it would be dangerous for your health.

So, the only thing to do is to accept quietly the conditions in which you find yourself, knowing that for him who has faith in the Divine it is always the best for him that happens. The Divine does not want human beings to suffer, but, in their ignorance, human beings react in such a way that they bring suffering upon themselves. In peace, quietness and surrender is the only solution." (CWM 14: 95–96)

XXXII—Suffering Is Neither Indispensable nor Even Necessary

1.

"*How can I detach myself from the sadness that comes from within?*

Do not attach any importance to it.

Obstacles and difficulties should not cause suffering. I think that we create the suffering by our ignorance.

Certainly the suffering is not indispensable, nor even necessary. It is indeed ignorance that makes one suffer.

At least I believe there would be neither suffering nor difficulty in this yoga if I could look at everything calmly and patiently.

Yes, this yoga is based on peace and joy, not on suffering. (CWM 17: 127–128)

2.

"There is no need of suffering. Refuse it when it comes." (CWSA 31: 671)

3.

"There is no reason why suffering should be indispensable for making progress. You bring the suffering on yourself by the wrong ideas of the mind and by the revolts of the vital. The Mother's grace and love are there, but the mind refuses to recognise it. If there is confidence, if the mind and vital consent to surrender and have full faith and reliance, then there may be difficulties but there is no suffering.

There are people who think that the proper way of progress is through revolt, but this is a mistake. Conditions of light followed by darker conditions come to everyone, but to revolt because there is delay and difficulty does not help. One has to go on in the confidence that in spite of all delays and difficulties, if one is faithful, then in the end, the goal will be reached and one will attain to the Divine." (CWSA 31: 671–672)

4.

"*Sweet Mother, I am happy because I love You and because I suffer a little in loving You.*

I don't see the need of your suffering. Psychic love is always peaceful and joyous; it is the vital which dramatises and makes itself unhappy without any reason. I hope, indeed, that you will soon become conscious of my presence always near you, and that it will give you peace and joy." (CWM 16: 171–172)

XXXIII—If One Goes to the Depth, Stripped of Ego, Then One Understands That Suffering Is to Teach the Creation the Delight of Being

1.

"The whole creation, the whole universal manifestation appears at best like a very bad joke if it only comes to this [leave the earth once one has realised the soul]. Why begin at all if it is only to get out of it! What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, of having created something which, at least in its external appearance, is so tragic and dramatic, if it is simply to teach you how to get out of it—it would have been better not to begin at all.

But if one goes to the very depth of things, if, stripped not only of all egoism but also of the ego, one gives oneself totally, without reserve, so completely and disinterestedly that one becomes capable of understanding the plan of the Lord, then one knows that it is *not* a bad joke, *not* a tortuous path by which you return, a little battered, to the starting-point; on the contrary, it is to teach the entire creation the delight of being, the beauty of being, the greatness of being, the majesty of a sublime life, and the perpetual growth, perpetually progressive, of that delight, that beauty, that greatness. Then everything has a meaning, then one no longer regrets having struggled and suffered, one has only the enthusiasm to

realise the divine goal, and one plunges headlong into the realisation with the *certitude* of the goal and victory

… That is what must be done: to cast off one's ego. Then one can know the true goal—and this is the only way!

To cast off one's ego, to let it fall off like a useless garment.

The result is worth the efforts that must be made. And then, one is not all alone on the way. One is helped, if one has trust. If you have had even a second's contact with the Grace—that marvellous Grace which carries you along, speeds you on the path, even makes you forget that you have to hurry—if you have had only a second'ss contact with that, then you can strive not to forget. And with the candour of a child, the simplicity of a child for whom there are no complications, give yourself to that Grace and let it do everything.

What is necessary is not to listen to what resists, not to believe what contradicts—to have trust, a real trust, a confidence which makes you give yourself fully without calculating, without bargaining. Trust! The trust that says, 'Do this, do this for me, I leave it to You.'

That is the best way." (CWM 9: 426–427)

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