Causes and Remedies of Suffering

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

Causes and Remedies of Suffering

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, *Causes and Remedies of Suffering* is the second 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—Different Causes of Suffering with Their Solutions

1. Ignorance is the cause of suffering, and the moment one re-establishes the union with the Divine source, all suffering disappears

a.

"And it is because of division—because the Possessor no longer possesses and because the possessed no longer possesses the Possessor, division is created and the essential Delight is changed into ignorance, and this ignorance is the cause of all suffering. 'Ignorance', not in the sense in which it is usually understood, for that is what Sri Aurobindo calls Nescience [lack of knowledge or awareness]: that ignorance is a consequence of the other. True ignorance is ignorance of the oneness, the union, the identity. And that is the cause of all suffering.

Ever since division began and creation lost its direct contact with the Creator, ignorance has reigned, and all suffering is its result.

All those who have had the inner experience have had this experience, that the moment one re-establishes the union with the divine source, all suffering disappears." (CWM 9: 7–8)

b.

"Possession in oneness and not loss in oneness is the secret. God and Man, World and Beyond-world become one when they know each other. Their division is the cause of ignorance as ignorance is the cause of suffering." *Aphorisms* (CWSA 13: 202)

c.

"What a strange thing is ignorance, that source of all suffering! How miserable that obscurity which keeps men away from the very thing which would bring them happiness and subjects them to this painful school of ordinary existence fashioned entirely from struggle and suffering!" (CWM 1: 22) [From Prayers and Meditations, June 18, 1913*]

d.

"This world is a world of Ignorance and by Ignorance a world of strife, seeking, error and suffering. We start by knowing nothing and have to learn everything; because our knowledge is a mixture of truth and falsehood and our will constantly mistaken when not perverted, we stumble at every step and pay the price of experience in pain and grief and sorrow. It would seem as if nothing could save us but thought and knowledge translated into right will and action and it is that for which man by his intellect is seeking and yet by his intellect he has never found it and it looks

as if by his intellect he would never find it. Then there is probably something else beyond the intellect which alone can give him the Light—something beyond his mind and greater than himself — a Grace that intervenes, the law of a supernormal Light and Will, a help, an opening from above" (CWSA 29: 167–168)

e.

"Physical sufferings are due to attacks of the forces of the Ignorance. But if one knows how to do it, one can make them a means of purification. There are however better and less difficult means of purification." (CWSA 31: 549)

f.

"The world's dread teacher, the creator, pain.
Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come;
Thy grief is a cry of darkness to the Light;
Pain was the first-born of the Inconscience
Which was thy body's dumb original base;
Already slept there pain's subconscient shape:
A shadow in a shadowy tenebrous womb,
Till life shall move, it waits to wake and be." (CWSA 34: 443)

g.

"*Why do God and Nature 'run from each other when glimpsed'?*1

In order to play. He says so: 'They are at play.' It is in play.

(A young disciple) *Mother, does Nature know it is a game? God knows it is a game, but does Nature know it?*

I think Nature knows it too, it is only man who does not know!

…

Perhaps, when one knows it is a game and plays it for fun, it is amusing. But when one doesn't know it is a game, it is not amusing. You see, it is only when one is on the other side, on the divine side, that one can see it like that; that is, as long as we are in the ignorance, well, inevitably we suffer from what should amuse and please us. Fundamentally, it comes to this: when one does something deliberately, knowing what one is doing, it is very interesting and may even be very amusing. But when it is something you don't do deliberately and don't understand, when it is something imposed on you and endured, it is not pleasant. So the solution, the one which is always given: you must learn, know, do it deliberately." (CWM 9: 9–10)

h.

"Thus the proper function of the life, the vital force, is enjoyment and possession, both of them perfectly

legitimate, because the Spirit created the world for Ananda, enjoyment and possession of the many by the One, of the One by the many and of the many too by the many; but,—this is an instance of the first kind of defect,—the separative ignorance gives to it the wrong form of desire and craving which vitiates the whole enjoyment and possession and imposes on it its opposites, want and suffering." (CWSA 24: 646)

2. Consciousness falling from the unifying knowledge creates division and thus suffering

a.

"If all is in truth Sachchidananda, death, suffering, evil, limitation can only be the creations, positive in practical effect, negative in essence, of a distorting consciousness which has fallen from the total and unifying knowledge of itself into some error of division and partial experience. This is the fall of man typified in the poetic parable of the Hebrew Genesis. That fall is his deviation from the full and pure acceptance of God and himself, or rather of God in himself, into a dividing consciousness which brings with it all the train of the dualities, life and death, good and evil, joy and pain, completeness and want, the fruit of a divided being. … The redemption comes by the recovery of the universal in the individual and of the spiritual term in the physical consciousness. … For then only can the purpose

of its descent into material consciousness be accomplished, when the knowledge of good and evil, joy and suffering, life and death has been accomplished through the recovery by the human soul of a higher knowledge which reconciles and identifies these opposites in the universal and transforms their divisions into the image of the divine Unity." (CWSA 21: 56)

b.

"All undelight, all pain and suffering are a sign of imperfection, of incompleteness; they arise from a division of being, an incompleteness of consciousness of being, an incompleteness of the force of being. To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight of being and to live in this integrated completeness is the divine living. (CWSA 22: 1061)

c.

"That is just the secret of all deformations in the world. It is because there is all the inconscience created by the fact of separation from the Origin. It is due to this inconscience that the Origin, though always there, is not able to manifest itself. It is there, that is why the world exists. But in its expression it is deformed because it manifests itself through the inconscience, ignorance and obscurity.

…

… For the only thing which is the Life of life is the Origin, if you cut yourself off from that, consciousness

naturally is changed into unconsciousness. And then it is due to this very unconsciousness that you are no longer aware of the truth of your being.... It is a process. You cannot argue whether it is inevitable or evitable; the fact is it is like that. This process of formation and creation is the reason why purity no longer manifests in its essence and in its purity but through the deformation of unconsciousness and ignorance.... If you had answered immediately: 'Yes, of course, I know the truth of my being!' it would have finished there, there wouldn't have been any problem.

That is why there is all this ugliness, there is death; that is why there is illness; that is why there is wickedness; that is why there is suffering. There is no remedy, there is only one way for all these things. All this is there in different domains and with different vibrations, but the cause of all is the same. It is inconscience produced because of the necessity of individual formation." (CWM 5: 70–71)

3. The sense, the idea, the experience that I am a separately self-existent being in the universe is the root of all suffering, and liberation from ego and desire results in spiritual freedom

a.

"The liberation from ego, the liberation from desire together found the central spiritual freedom. The sense, the idea, the experience that I am a separately self-existent being in the universe, and the forming of consciousness and force of being into the mould of that experience are the root of all suffering, ignorance and evil. And it is so because that falsifies both in practice and in cognition the whole real truth of things; it limits the being, limits the consciousness, limits the power of our being, limits the bliss of being; this limitation again produces a wrong way of existence, wrong way of consciousness, wrong way of using the power of our being and consciousness, and wrong, perverse and contrary forms of the delight of existence." (CWSA 24: 679)

b.

"It is true that the problem still remains why all this that yet is should have been necessary—those crude beginnings, this long, dark and stormy passage—why should the heavy and tedious price be demanded, why should evil and suffering ever have been there? For to the how of the fall into the Ignorance as opposed to the why, as to the effective cause, there is a substantial agreement in all spiritual experience. It is the division, the separation, the principle of isolation from the Permanent and One that brought it about; it is because the ego set up for itself in the world affirming its own desire and self-affirmation in

preference to its unity with the Divine and its oneness with all; it is because instead of the one supreme Force, Wisdom, Light determining the harmony of all forces each Idea, Force, Form of things was allowed to work itself out as far as it could in the mass of infinite possibilities by its separate will and inevitably in the end by conflict with others. Division, ego, the imperfect consciousness and groping and struggle of a separate self-affirmation are the effective cause of the suffering and ignorance of this world. Once consciousnesses separated from the One Consciousness, they fell inevitably into ignorance and the last result of ignorance was Inconscience; from a dark immense Inconscient this material world arises and out of it a soul that by evolution is struggling into consciousness, attracted towards the hidden Light, ascending but still blindly towards the lost Divinity from which it came." (CWSA 28: 255– 256)

4. To dwell entirely in the ego-sense is to find this world full of suffering, and the Gita insists on the Brahmic consciousness

a.

"To dwell entirely in the ego-sense and its finite conceptions, powers, satisfactions is to find this world for ever full of transience and suffering, *anityam asukham*; the finite life is always troubled by a certain sense of vanity for

this fundamental reason that the finite is not the whole or the highest truth of life; life is not entirely real until it opens into the sense of the infinite. It is for this reason that the Gita opens its gospel of works by insisting on the Brahmic consciousness, the impersonal life, that great object of the discipline of the ancient sages. For the impersonal, the infinite, the One in which all the impermanent, mutable, multiple activity of the world finds above itself its base of permanence, security and peace, is the immobile Self, the Akshara, the Brahman. If we see this, we shall see that to raise one's consciousness and the poise of one's being out of limited personality into this infinite and impersonal Brahman is the first spiritual necessity. To see all beings in this one Self is the knowledge which raises the soul out of egoistic ignorance and its works and results; to live in it is to acquire peace and firm spiritual foundation." (CWSA 19: 128–129)

b.

"But when we strain beyond the normal circle of our energies,—unless we have sought refuge in God first,—then, after the first fervent joy of struggle and partial success, our instruments begin to fail us, the pleasure we are seeking loses itself or turns into pain, pain of effort, pain of longing, pain of disappointment, pain of incapacity. We advance by suffering, & water the tree of our growth with our blood & tears.

All this pain would be unnecessary, the journey as well as the goal would be Ananda, not suffering but delight, if the ego-sense had not taken possession of our heart & reason. We seek our infinity not only through the finite, but by insisting on the conditions of the finite & exaggerating them. Physical, vital & mental man, acting & striving under these conditions, must always be limited in his realisation and in his best satisfactions never entirely or permanently satisfied." (CWSA 17: 473–474)

c.

"I may play entirely at cross-purposes with the All-Will in me. That is when I lend my will-power to be a servant of the nervous part of my mind which, ignorant and passionate, adores self, openly or under many pretences, as its own god. It is this in me, this egoist, this hungerer that feels upon it in the heavy hand of Fate the oppression of a tyrant or the resistance of a blind and unintelligent power. For always absorbed in its own need and view-point it helps the All by that friction and opposition which are so essential to the mechanism of the world. Therefore it misunderstands the firm Teacher and His stern, yet loving compulsion in things and must progress by self-will and struggle and suffering because it cannot yet learn to progress by obedience. But also I may, by an intuition in my nature, an aspiration in my heart and a reason in my mind, put myself at the service of some strong ideal, some intelligent Force that serves God with or without knowledge

of Him. Then is my will a true will; it does its share, it leaves its quota, it returns to its Master with its talent used or increased. And to a certain extent it is free; for a great liberty is this, to be delivered from the Animal and the Rakshasa in ourselves, free to choose the right or be chosen by it." (CWSA 13: 161–162)

d.

"Suffice it at present to observe that the absence or abolition of separatist egoism and of effective division in consciousness is the one essential condition of the divine Life, and therefore their presence in us is that which constitutes our mortality and our fall from the Divine. This is our 'original sin', or rather let us say in a more philosophical language, the deviation from the Truth and Right of the Spirit, from its oneness, integrality and harmony that was the necessary condition for the great plunge into the Ignorance which is the soul's adventure in the world and from which was born our suffering and aspiring humanity." (CWSA 21: 169)

e.

"The ego seems to have been indispensable at one time for the formation of the individual consciousness, but with the ego were born all the obstacles, sufferings, difficulties, all that now appears to us as adverse and anti-divine forces. But these forces themselves were a necessity for

attaining an inner purification and the liberation from ego. The ego is at once the result of their action and the cause of their prolongation. When the ego disappears, the adverse forces will also disappear, having no longer any reason for their existence in the world.

With the inner liberation, with a total sincerity and perfect purity, all suffering will disappear, because it will no longer be necessary for the progress of the consciousness towards its final goal.

Wisdom, then, consists in working energetically at the inner transformation so that you may emerge victorious from a struggle which will have borne its fruits but will no longer have any need to exist." (CWM 3: 218)

f.

"*How can we get rid of abhimana [Hurt pride, self-pity because one feels ill-treated]?*

Oh, good heavens! First of all, see how utterly disastrous it is: it is very petty, it is destructive; and then take a step farther and hold yourself up to ridicule, see to what extent you are ludicrous. So, in this way you get rid of it. But so long as you take it seriously, so long as you justify the movement, so long as somewhere in the mind there's the idea, 'After all, it is quite natural, I was illtreated and I suffer from the ill-treatment', then it is finished, it will never go. But if you begin to understand that it is a sign of

weakness, of inferiority—naturally, of a very considerable egoism, a narrow–mindedness, and above all of a pettiness of the feelings, a small-heartedness—if you understand that, you can fight it. But your thought should be in agreement. If there is the attitude, 'I have been hurt, I am suffering, I am going to show that I am suffering', then it is like that. I am not going so far as to mention people who nurse a fairly secret spirit of vengeance and say, 'I have been made to suffer, I shall make them suffer.' This indeed becomes nasty enough for people to notice that it should not exist—though it is not always easy to resist. It indicates something very petty in the nature. It may be very sensitive, it may be very emotional, it may have a certain intensity but it is quite petty, it is all turned back on oneself, and is quite petty.

Of course, you can use your reason, if you have one which works. You can make use of the reason and can tell yourself something which is very true: that in our being it is only egoism which always suffers, and that if there was no egoism there would be no suffering, and that if one wants the spiritual life, one must overcome his egoism. So the first thing to do is to look straight at this suffering, perceive to what an extent it is the expression of a very petty egoism and then sweep the place clean, make a clean ground and say, 'I don't want this dirt, I am going to clean my inner chamber'." (CWM 6: 404– 405)

g.

"When these forces of destruction attack us, it proves that we are ready to be liberated from the ego and to emerge consciously into the Divine Presence which is at the centre of our being, in full light, in peace and joy, free at last from the sufferings imposed upon us by the ego. It is the ego which changes all the contacts of life into suffering, it is the ego which prevents us from being conscious of the Divine Presence within us and from becoming His calm, strong and happy instruments.

Let us make a complete offering of this ego with all its desires to the Divine, let us be confident and wait for the liberation that is sure to come." (CWM 10: 319)

h.

"That day will come when everything that is now done out of a sense of duty towards the Divine will be done out of love for Him. Progress will be a joy instead of being an effort and often even a struggle. Or, more exactly, progress will be made in joy, with the full adherence of the whole being, instead of by coercing the resistance of the ego, which entails great effort and sometimes even great suffering." (CWM 12: 64)

i.

"In human life the cause of all difficulties, all discords, all moral sufferings, is the presence in everyone of the ego

with its desires, its likes and dislikes. Even in a disinterested work which consists in helping others, until one has learned to overcome the ego and its demands, until one can force it to keep calm and quiet in one corner, the ego reacts to everything that displeases it, starts an inner storm that rises to the surface and spoils all the work.

This work of overcoming the ego is long, slow and difficult; it demands constant alertness and sustained effort. This effort is easier for some and more difficult for others." (CWM 12: 355) (CWM 13: 164)

j.

"It is indeed indispensable that something should change radically in your nature before you are fit for staying here. You are far too ego-centric to lead a spiritual life; and it is also the cause of this catastrophe and of the suffering it has brought to you, which is the natural consequence of the whole affair. Indeed it is good if you go to face the ordinary life now and learn to live with the others and for the others instead of making of the Ashram life an excuse for living selfishly for yourself." (CWM 13: 135)

k.

"Ego is the factor which determines the reactions of error, sorrow, pain, evil, death; for it gives these values to movements which would otherwise be represented in their right relation to the one Existence, Bliss, Truth and Good.

By recovering the right relation we may eliminate the ego-determined reactions, reducing them eventually to their true values; and this recovery can be effected by the right participation of the individual in the consciousness of the totality and in the consciousness of the transcendent which the totality represents. …

… The limited ego is only an intermediate phenomenon of consciousness necessary for a certain line of development. Following this line the individual can arrive at that which is beyond himself, that which he represents, and can yet continue to represent it, no longer as an obscured and limited ego, but as a centre of the Divine and of the universal consciousness embracing, utilising and transforming into harmony with the Divine all individual determinations.

… We have the dualities of life and death, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, truth and error, good and evil as the first formations of egoistic consciousness, the natural and inevitable outcome of its attempt to realise unity in an artificial construction of itself exclusive of the total truth, good, life and delight of being in the universe. We have the dissolution of this egoistic construction by the self-opening of the individual to the universe and to God as the means of that supreme fulfilment to which egoistic life is only a prelude even as animal life was only a prelude to the human. We have the realisation of the All in the individual by the transformation of the limited ego into a

conscious centre of the divine unity and freedom as the term at which the fulfilment arrives. And we have the outflowing of the infinite and absolute Existence, Truth, Good and Delight of being on the Many in the world as the divine result towards which the cycles of our evolution move. This is the supreme birth which maternal Nature holds in herself; of this she strives to be delivered." (CWSA 21: 63–65)

5. In the impersonal Self beyond the ego, one is free from suffering

a.

"It is the ego bewildered by ignorance which attributes these things to itself, because it assumes the responsibility of the doer and chooses to figure as that and not as the instrument of a greater power, which is all that it really is; *ajn˜ a¯nena¯vr.tam. jn˜ a¯nam. tena muhyanti jantavah.*. By going back into the impersonal self the soul gets back into a greater self-knowledge and is liberated from the bondage of the works of Nature, untouched by her gunas, free from her shows of good and evil, suffering and happiness. The natural being, the mind, body, life, still remain, Nature still works; but the inner being does not identify himself with these, nor while the gunas play in the natural being, does he rejoice or grieve. He is the calm and free immutable Self observing all." (CWSA 19: 231–232)

6. Not to know thyself is the fountain of all thy grief, and the divine aim is self-transcending

a.

"… the nature of man is to transcend himself. This is indeed his nature and that is indeed the divine aim of his self-transcending.

What then is the self that thou hast to transcend and what is the self that thou hast to become? For it is here that thou shouldst make no error; for this error, not to know thyself, is the fountain of all thy grief and the cause of all thy stumbling." (CWSA 12: 150)

7. Suffering is due to the false conception that God, the world, and the human soul are different entities, but man is the Lord inhabiting his human temple

a.

"But then there arises the difficulty caused to our darkened minds by the false conception that God & world, God & the human soul are different entities. From this division of the indivisible there arises the notion, the fatal noumenal error, the illogical logic, that God beyond the world is free but God in the world is bound, bound to action, bound to sorrow, bound to death and birth,—the great fundamental error which seals our eyes & creates needlessly the

insoluble problem of suffering & evil and death and limitation,—insoluble because we have created a false first premise for all our conclusions about the world. God in the world is not bound, but only pretends to mind that He is bound. … Thence the conclusion of so many philosophies that man here can never be anything but a suffering victim of his works & slave of illusion & only by annulling his existence in cosmos can become free,—free not in the cosmos but from the cosmos. But it is not so. For man is the Lord inhabiting His human temple, enjoying his own play in this mortal mansion built by himself out of his own cosmic being; he has determined what he is and is determining now by his play in works as he has previously determined by his play in internal consciousness what he shall become." *Isha Upanishad* (CWSA 17: 516–517)

8. Man suffers because, in ignorance, he claims to be the worker or the master, for he is only the instrument of God

a.

"Learn thou first to be the instrument of God and to accept thy Master. The instrument is this outward thing thou callest thyself; it is a mould of mind, a driving-force of power, a machinery of form, a thing full of springs and cogs and clamps and devices. Call not this the Worker or the Master; it can never be the Worker or the Master. Accept

thyself humbly, yet proudly, devotedly, submissively and joyfully as a divine instrument.

…

Because thou hast mistaken the instrument for the worker and the master and because thou seekest to choose by the ignorance of thy desire thy own state and thy own profit and thy own utility, therefore thou hast suffering and anguish and hast many times to be thrust into the red hell of the furnace and hast many times to be reborn and reshaped and retempered until thou shalt have learned thy human lesson.

And all these things are because they are in thy unfinished nature. For Nature is the worker and what is it that she works at? She shapes out of her crude mind and life and matter a fully conscious being." (CWSA 13: 163–164)

9. Pleasures of the vital bring worry and suffering; open to the Divine and conquer the adversary

a.

"My dear child,

I understand your difficulty very well. It is very common and can only be solved with much endurance in the will and much patience.

For on the one hand you want to consecrate yourself to the Divine and take your place in the divine life in the making.

On the other hand you want the satisfactions of ordinary life and the pleasures of the vital—without considering, however, that these pleasures can only be obtained through much struggle and effort and that always they go hand in hand with worry and suffering.

On the first path, there is no question of personal incapacity, since our help and protection are always there. Indeed, you must open yourself to this help and protection and learn to use them to conquer the adversary who is trying to draw you towards the lower animal consciousness.

Love from your mother who never leaves you." (CWM 16: 136)

10. Desire, wrath, inequality, greed, and attachment to outward pleasures and pains are causes of suffering, and they are not part of oneself, so they have to be eliminated

a.

"But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it has not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it,

but to be increased, fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine light and strength and joy and wideness. It is not one's self, but the band of the spirit's inner enemies that we have to discourage, expel, slay upon the altar of the growth of the spirit; these can be ruthlessly excised, whose names are desire, wrath, inequality, greed, attachment to outward pleasures and pains, the cohort of usurping demons that are the cause of the soul's errors and sufferings. These should be regarded not as part of oneself but as intruders and perverters of our self's real and diviner nature; these have to be sacrificed in the harsher sense of the word, whatever pain in going they may throw by reflection on the consciousness of the seeker." (CWSA 23: 108– 109)

11. Desire is the whole root of evil and suffering

a.

"The first movement must be obviously to get rid of desire which is the whole root of the evil and suffering; and in order to get rid of desire, we must put an end to the cause of desire, the rushing out of the senses to seize and enjoy their objects. We must draw them back when they are inclined thus to rush out, draw them away from their objects,—as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, so these into their source, quiescent in the mind, the mind

quiescent in intelligence, the intelligence quiescent in the soul and its self-knowledge, observing the action of Nature, but not subject to it, not desiring anything that the objective life can give.

It is not an external asceticism, the physical renunciation of the objects of sense that I am teaching, suggests Krishna immediately to avoid a misunderstanding which is likely at once to arise. Not the renunciation of the Sankhyas or the austerities of the rigid ascetic with his fasts, his maceration of the body, his attempt to abstain even from food; that is not the selfdiscipline or the abstinence which I mean, for I speak of an inner withdrawal, a renunciation of desire. The embodied soul, having a body, has to support it normally by food for its normal physical action; by abstention from food it simply removes from itself the physical contact with the object of sense, but does not get rid of the inner relation which makes that contact hurtful. It retains the pleasure of the sense in the object, the *rasa*, the liking and disliking,—for *rasa* has two sides; the soul must, on the contrary, be capable of enduring the physical contact without suffering inwardly this sensuous reaction. Otherwise there is *nivṛtti*, cessation of the object, *viṣayā vinivartante*, but no subjective cessation, no *nivṛtti*, of the mind; but the senses are of the mind, subjective, and subjective cessation of the *rasa* is the only real sign of mastery." (CWSA 19: 99–100)

b.

"Desire, the cause of our pain, has itself its cause or rather its secret essence in the ego-sense transferred from the discriminating mind to the responsive heart." (CWSA 17: 472)

c.

"While desire is our counsellor, pain and suffering must always be our heritage." (CWSA 17: 472)

d.

"For desire does not perish easily by enjoyment; it seeks always to renew enjoyment or go beyond; hardly it perishes by surfeit, for it revives or it seeks other objects; nor is it, either, readily slain by coercion, for it sulks concealed in some invisible den awaiting for a treacherous or violent re-emergence and revenge. To finish with desire altogether by attacking & destroying its seed of ego-sense in the heart, is our only escape from present pain and our only safety from renewed suffering." (CWSA 17: 475)

e.

"There is no longer any room there for all the fancies of desire. You see, as soon as one gives way to excesses, to immoderation of any kind and a disorderly life, it becomes quite impossible to control one's body and develop it normally, not to mention that, naturally, one spoils one's

health and as a result the most important part of the ideal of a perfect body disappears; for with bad health, impaired health, one is not much good for anything. And it is certainly the satisfaction of desires and impulses of the vital or the unreasonable demands of certain ambitions which make the body suffer and fall ill.

… but the fact that the control of reason over life is absolutely indispensable even for good health, is not always accepted by the inferior man for whom life has no savour unless he can live out his passions." (CWM 9: 100)

f.

"Desire and the passions that arise from desire are the principal sign and knot of ego. It is desire that makes you go on saying I and mine and subjects you through a persistent egoism to satisfaction and dissatisfaction, liking and disliking, hope and despair, joy and grief, to your petty loves and hatreds, to wrath and passion, to your attachment to success and things pleasant and to the sorrow and suffering of failure and of things unpleasant. Desire brings always confusion of mind and limitation of the will, an egoistic and distorted view of things, a failure and clouding of knowledge." (CWSA 19: 582)

g.

"Saturate your mind and vital with the Truth and remain calm and still. It is from unsatisfied desire that all suffering

arises; take your stand on a calm free from desire. When that has come, all else of the Divine Truth, Love and Ananda can come and stand securely upon it. (CWSA 31: 253)

h.

"If one cherishes desires, there is bound to be disappointment and suffering, especially if at the same time one does Yoga and takes up the spiritual life. For such desires, demand for vital affection and love from men and demand for physical comforts are not consistent with the spirit of Yoga in which one must turn one's heart to the Divine and be vitally pure and in physical things must be content with what one gets and equal-minded in all conditions." (CWSA 31: 258)

12. When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease

a.

"When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease. The Vijnana takes up not only our parts of knowledge and will, but our parts of affection and delight and changes them into action of the divine Ananda. For if knowledge and force are the twin sides or powers of the action of consciousness, delight, Ananda—which is something higher than what we call pleasure—is the very

stuff of consciousness and the natural result of the interaction of knowledge and will, force and self-awareness." (CWSA 23: 495)

b.

"It should be quite clear to you what the two opposite things are, the two things with which every sadhak is faced. One is the vehemence [forcefulness] of earthly egoistic desire which brings only confusion and suffering and the other is the peace, force, joy, light of understanding which is the divine in you and which we are striving to establish in you. When you put yourself on the right side, things become easy; when you hesitate and are divided, there is a double state; when something in you receives and clings to the desires, then all goes wrong. You *must* learn to put always the weight of your choice on the right side. Certainly I shall do all to get the wrong will changed and the right one put in its place—whatever is the resistance or difficulty, that I shall do always. (CWSA 31: 252)

13. Rajas's fruit is suffering, and to be liberated, go beyond the gunas and rise above the gunas

a.

"Rajas [nature of struggle, effort, passion and action], then, is evidently the kinetic force in the modes of Nature.

Its fruit is the lust of action, but also grief, pain, all kinds of suffering; for it has no right possession of its object—desire in fact implies non-possession—and even its pleasure of acquired possession is troubled and unstable because it has not clear knowledge and does not know how to possess nor can it find the secret of accord and right enjoyment. All the ignorant and passionate seeking of life belongs to the rajasic mode of Nature." (CWSA 19: 429)

b.

"Rajasic desire as an initiator of action is a more positive power, but still we can see well enough that desire with its limiting and engrossing hold on man must always be a bondage.

... rajas attaches to action, ... Evidently, in order to be liberated and perfect, we must get back from these things, away from the gunas and above them and return to the power of that free spiritual consciousness above Nature." (CWSA 19: 430–431)

14. Impure life-forces bring suffering

a.

"A way of pure Knowledge is comparatively straightforward and easy to the tread of the seeker in spite of our mental limitations and the pitfalls of the Ignorance; a way of pure Love, although it has its stumbling-blocks and its sufferings

and trials, can in comparison be as easy as the winging of a bird through the free azure. For Knowledge and Love are pure in their essence and become mixed and embarrassed, corrupted and degraded only when they enter into the ambiguous movement of the life-forces and are seized by them for the outward life's crude movements and obstinately inferior motives. Alone of the three powers Life or at least a certain predominant Will-in-Life has the appearance of something impure, accursed or fallen in its very essence. At its contact, wrapped in its dull sheaths or caught in its iridescent quagmires, the divinities themselves become common and muddy and hardly escape from being dragged downwards into its perversions and disastrously assimilated to the demon and the Asura. … It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of this mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to make life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture." (CWSA 23: 170–171)

b.

"In fact, our Life, because it is subservient to the darkened and dividing operation of Mind, is itself darkened and divided and undergoes all that subjection to death, limitation, weakness, suffering, ignorant functioning of which the bound and limited creature-Mind is the parent and cause. The original source of the perversion was, we have seen, the self-limitation of the individual soul bound to self-ignorance because it regards itself by an exclusive concentration as a separate self-existent individuality and regards all cosmic action only as it presents itself to its own individual consciousness, knowledge, will, force, enjoyment and limited being instead of seeing itself as a conscious form of the One and embracing all consciousness, all knowledge, all will, all force, all enjoyment and all being as one with its own." (CWSA 21: 202–203)

c.

"The universal life in us, obeying this direction of the soul imprisoned in mind, itself becomes imprisoned in an individual action. It exists and acts as a separate life with a limited insufficient capacity undergoing and not freely embracing the shock and pressure of all the cosmic life around it. Thrown into the constant cosmic interchange of Force in the universe as a poor, limited, individual existence, Life at first helplessly suffers and obeys the giant

interplay with only a mechanical reaction upon all that attacks, devours, enjoys, uses, drives it. But as consciousness develops, as the light of its own being emerges from the inert darkness of the involutionary sleep, the individual existence becomes dimly aware of the power in it and seeks first nervously and then mentally to master, use and enjoy the play. This awakening to the Power in it is the gradual awakening to self. For Life is Force and Force is Power and Power is Will and Will is the working of the Master-consciousness. Life in the individual becomes more and more aware in its depths that it too is the Will-Force of Sachchidananda which is master of the universe and it aspires itself to be individually master of its own world." (CWSA 21: 203)

d.

"The Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life's desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body; and the body, enslaved and tyrannised over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against the demands made upon it by the Life." (CWSA 21: 227)

15. For the transformation of life, desire must be abolished, the life-impulse must become an instrument of the psychic being, and the ego must disappear

"It is then by a transformation of life in its very principle, not by an external manipulation of its phenomena, that the integral Yoga proposes to change it from a troubled and ignorant into a luminous and harmonious movement of Nature. There are three conditions which are indispensable for the achievement of this central inner revolution and new formation; none of them is altogether sufficient in itself, but by their united threefold power the uplifting can be done, the conversion made and completely made. For, first, life as it is is a movement of desire and it has built in us as its centre a desire-soul which refers to itself all the motions of life and puts in them its own troubled hue and pain of an ignorant, half-lit, baffled endeavour: for a divine living, desire must be abolished and replaced by a purer and firmer motivepower, the tormented soul of desire dissolved and in its stead there must emerge the calm, strength, happiness of a true vital being now concealed within us. Next, life as it is is driven or led partly by the impulse of the life-force, partly by a mind which is mostly a servant and abettor of the ignorant life-impulse, but in part also its uneasy and not too luminous or competent guide and mentor; for a divine life the mind and the life-

impulse must cease to be anything but instruments and the inmost psychic being must take their place as the leader on the path and the indicator of a divine guidance. Last, life as it is is turned towards the satisfaction of the separative ego; ego must disappear and be replaced by the true spiritual person, the central being, and life itself must be turned towards the fulfilment of the Divine in terrestrial existence; it must feel a Divine Force awaking within it and become an obedient instrumentation of its purpose.

16. Grief is the result of an association in the mind, and this association can be changed

a.

"It is held by some thinkers, and not unreasonably if we consider these phenomena, that mind is all and contains all. It is not the body which determines the operations of the mind, it is the mind which determines the laws of the body. It is the ordinary law of the body that if it is struck, pierced or roughly pressed it feels pain. This law is created by the mind which associates pain with these contacts, and if the mind changes its *dharma* and is able to associate with these contacts not pain but insensibility or pleasure, then they will bring about those results of insensibility or pleasure and no other. The pain and pleasure are not the result of the contact, neither is their seat in the body; they are the result of association and their seat is in the mind.

Vinegar is sour, sugar sweet, but to the hypnotised mind vinegar can be sweet, sugar sour. The sourness or sweetness is not in the vinegar or sugar, but in the mind. The heart also is the subject of the mind. My emotions are like my physical feelings, the result of association, and my character is the result of accumulated past experiences with their resultant associations and reactions crystallising into habits of mind and heart summed up in the word, character. These things like all the rest that are made of the stuff of associations are not permanent or binding but fluid and mutable, anityah¯ . sarvasamsk ˙ ar¯ ah¯ .. If my friend blames me, I am grieved; that is an association and not binding. The grief is not the result of the blame but of an association in the mind. I can change the association so far that blame will cause me no grief, praise no elation. I can entirely stop the reactions of joy and grief by the same force that created them. They are habits of the mind, nothing more. In the same way though with more difficulty I can stop the reactions of physical pain and pleasure so that nothing will hurt my body." (CWSA 13: 24–25)

b.

"Yoga is therefore no dream, no illusion of mystics. It is known that we can alter the associations of mind and body temporarily and that the mind can alter the conditions of the body partially. Yoga asserts that these things can be done permanently and completely. For the body conquest

of disease, pain and material obstructions, for the mind liberation from bondage to past experience and the heavier limitations of space and time, for the heart victory over sin and grief and fear, for the spirit unclouded bliss, strength and illumination, this is the gospel of Yoga, is the goal to which Hinduism points humanity." (CWSA 13: 28)

17. When the mind becomes free, unegoistic, and in harmony with all other beings, then the raison d'être of suffering ceases

"But if and when Mind in man becomes capable of being free, unegoistic, in harmony with all other beings and with the play of the universal forces, the use and office of suffering diminishes, its *raison d´ˆetre* must finally cease to be and it can only continue as an atavism of Nature, a habit that has survived its use, a persistence of the lower in the as yet imperfect organisation of the higher. Its eventual elimination must be an essential point in the destined conquest of the soul over subjection to Matter and egoistic limitation in Mind." (CWSA 21: 116)

18. When one part progresses, the other remains behind; this results in disequilibrium, so observe and put it back in order

a.

"Suddenly, for some reason or other, one part of the being—either your feelings or your thoughts or your vital—makes progress, has discovered something, received a light, progressed. It takes a leap in progress. All the rest remains behind. This brings about a disequilibrium. That is enough to make you very tired. But in fact, it is not tiredness: it is something which makes you want to keep quiet, to concentrate, remain within yourself, be like that, and build up slowly a new harmony among the different parts of the being. And it is very necessary to have, at a given moment, a sort of rest, for an assimilation of what one has learnt and a harmonisation of the different parts of the being.

…

… if you enter into the combination of the cells and the inner organisation in order that all this may be ready to respond to the descending Force... First, are you conscious of your physical cells and their different characteristics, their activity, the degree of their receptivity, of what is in a healthy condition and what is not? Can you say with certainty when you are tired, why you are tired? When there's something wrong somewhere, can you say, 'It is because of this that I am suffering'?... Why do people rush to the doctor? Because they are under the illusion that the doctor knows better than they how to look inside their body and find out what's going on there—

which is not very reasonable, but still that's the habit! But for oneself, who can look inside himself quite positively and precisely and know exactly what is out of order, why it is disturbed, how it has been disturbed? And all this is simply a work of observation; afterwards one must do what is necessary to put it back into order again, and that is still more difficult." (CWM 6: 35–37)

b.

"On one side, the action of the forces of Yoga hastens the movement of transformation of the being in those parts that are ready to receive and respond to the power that is at work upon it. Yoga, in this way, saves time. The whole world is in a process of progressive transformation; if you take up the discipline of Yoga, you speed up in yourself this process. The work that would require years in the ordinary course, can be done by Yoga in a few days and even in a few hours. But it is your inner consciousness that obeys this accelerating impulse; for the higher parts of your being readily follow the swift and concentrated movement of Yoga and lend themselves more easily to the continuous adjustment and adaptation that it necessitates. The body, on the other hand, is ordinarily dense, inert and apathetic. And if you have in this part something that is not responsive, if there is a resistance here, the reason is that the body is incapable of moving as quickly as the rest of the being. It must take time, it must walk at its own pace

as it does in ordinary life. What happens is as when grown-up people walk too fast for children in their company; they have to stop at times and wait till the child who is lagging behind comes up and overtakes them. This divergence between the progress in the inner being and the inertia of the body often creates a dislocation in the system, and that manifests itself as an illness. This is why people who take up Yoga frequently begin by suffering from some physical discomfort or disorder. That need not happen if they are on their guard and careful. Or if there is a greater and unusual receptivity in the body, then too they escape. But an unmixed receptivity making the physical parts closely follow the pace of the inner transformation is hardly possible, unless the body has already been prepared in the past for the processes of Yoga." (CWM 3: 86–87)

19. The mind and vital suffer, not the psychic being

a.

"*The suffering we experience proves that the psychic being is far away from the Divine.*

It is not the psychic being which suffers, it is the mind, the vital and the ordinary consciousness of ignorant man. (CWM 16: 166)

20. Escape from suffering through the true attitude of the vital and with the mind on the side of the soul

a.

"At present I will only say that the alternations you feel are there between your psychic being and the mental and vital parts already submitted to it and the revolted vital parts full of the outcry of the vital ego stressing and increasing by brooding in them its own grievances and sufferings. That is a struggle which every sadhak has to go through with more or less acuteness; but the only way to escape from the suffering and struggle is for the mind to put itself wholly on the side of the soul and bring over the whole vital to the true attitude. It is absurd to think that we know nothing of these things; we know them very well but we know also that the solution lies not in the satisfaction of the revolted vital but in its submission and surrender to the soul within and to the Divine." (CWSA 31:149)

21. Give up the bad habit of revolt, and suffering will go away

a.

"My dear child,

You will no longer revolt when you understand that it is the most useless and foolish of all things; and when

you give up this bad habit of revolt, you will see that suffering too will go away and be replaced by an unvarying happiness.

With all my being, I want this progress and this transformation for you.

With love." (CWM 16: 123)

22. Ugly thoughts and feelings are the source of endless sorrow and suffering

a.

"Ugly thoughts bring ugly feelings—ugly feelings take you away from the Divine and throw you defenceless into the arms of the devil who wants only to swallow you up—and that is the source of endless sorrow and suffering." (CWM 14: 342)

23. Get out of wrong thinking, and you will get out of suffering

"Those who think falsely will live in falsehood and misery. Get out of wrong thinking and you will get out of suffering.

An old wise man in China has written, 'Thought creates for itself its own suffering'." (CWM 14: 342)

24. If one does not believe in the Divine, then one suffers by believing that the stars determine one's life

a.

"The stars have no decisive influence. It is only if one does not believe in the Divine that one unnecessarily suffers by believing that they determine one's life.

I have known many astrologers both in Europe and India. So far, nobody has been able to read the future correctly. There are three reasons for the failure. First, the astrologers do not know how to read the future properly. Secondly, the horoscope is always incorrectly made—unless a man is a mathematical genius. And even for such a person it is very difficult to make a correct horoscope. Thirdly, when people say that the stars in this or that house at the time of birth rule your life, they are quite wrong. The stars under which you are born are only 'tape-recorders' of physical conditions. They do not rule the future of the soul. There is something beyond, which rules the stars themselves and everything else. The soul belongs to this Supreme Being. And if it is doing Yoga, then all the more it should never believe in the power of the stars or in any other power.

An astrologer who predicts a catastrophe for you is like a joker. Many jokers say things like, 'Today you will break your neck!' But in spite of the joke nothing happens.

Only a great Yogi can tell you your future correctly. But even then there is the Supreme Will which alone controls and decides everything." (CWM 15: 34)

25. Bring down the Divine Peace if you suffer due to restlessness and agitation

a.

(To someone suffering from stomach and intestinal trouble)

"It is due to restlessness and agitation. What is the matter? Bring down peace, the *Divine Peace*, in your stomach and it will be all right." (CWM 15: 151)

26. Stop imagining wrong things, and your miseries will stop

a.

"*Beloved Mother:*

I am suffering with quite a severe recurrence of swollen ankles due to Dengue fever.

Dr. X is treating me, but I beg your Healing Force and am doing my best to open so that our work may progress at this crucial time.

Stop imagining wrong things and your miseries will stop at the same time.

Blessings." (CWM 15: 145)

27. Do not cherish suffering, and it will leave you

a.

"My word to you is: Do not cherish suffering and suffering will leave you altogether. Suffering is far from being indispensable to progress. The greatest progress is made through a steady and cheerful equanimity." (CWM 14: 247)

"*How can you believe that in Auroville there will be no more suffering so long as people who come to live there are men of the same world, born with the same weaknesses and faults?*

I have never thought that there would no more be suffering in Auroville, because men, as they are, love suffering and call it to them even while they curse it.

But we shall try to teach them to truly love peace and to try to practise equality.

What I meant was involuntary poverty and begging.

Life in Auroville will be organised in such a way that this does not exist—and if beggars come from outside, either they will have to go away or they will be given shelter and taught the joy of work." (CWM 10: 268) (CWM 13: 203)

28. Adverse forces have the will to inflict suffering and act only in the inconscient, subconscient, and half-consciousness

a.

"That kind of will to spoil things: when one sees something beautiful, instead of admiring, loving, being happy, wishing that it grows and progresses (which is the true divine movement), one feels a sort of anger, rage, one wants to destroy, one wants to damage. This is the movement of the adverse forces. Unfortunately, this is quite spontaneous in many people, and even in children... the instinct to destroy and spoil. Well, it is the presence of the adverse forces. And these are forces which come directly from the vital world and incarnate on earth in human consciousness, and at times also in animal consciousness. It is the hatred for things beautiful, for what is pure, what is good, what is true. It is the hatred of the divine Presence. And naturally, with this hatred, the will to destroy and damage, to spoil, mar, deform, disfigure. One step more and it is the will to inflict suffering. And all this is the influence of the adverse forces, which acts quite spontaneously in the inconscient, in the subconscient, in half-consciousness. It is only the pure and luminous consciousness which can oppose this and prevent it from acting. But the state of the world is such that this is a constant battle. (CWM 5: 232–233)

II—Other Causes of Suffering

1. Unsatisfied want is the cause of suffering

a.

"We can just conceive of a positive or absolute realisation of happiness, because the heart to which that instinct for happiness belongs has its own form of certitude, is capable of faith, and because our minds can envisage the elimination of unsatisfied want which is the apparent cause of suffering. But how shall we conceive of the elimination of pain from nervous sensation or of death from the life of the body? Yet the rejection of pain is a sovereign instinct of the sensations, the rejection of death a dominant claim inherent in the essence of our vitality. But these things present themselves to our reason as instinctive aspirations, not as realisable potentialities." (CWSA 21: 61–62)

2. All suffering is the result of disequilibrium

a.

"However, if one observes things a little deeply, one perceives that there is progress, that things become better and better, though apparently they do not improve. And for a consciousness seated a little higher, it is quite evident that all evil—at least what we call evil—all falsehood, all that is contrary to the Truth, all suffering, all opposition is

the result of a disequilibrium. I believe that one who is habituated to seeing things from this higher plane sees immediately that it is like that. Consequently, the world cannot be founded upon a disequilibrium, for if so it would have long since disappeared. One feels that at the origin of the universe there must have been a supreme Equilibrium and, perhaps, as we said the other day, a progressive equilibrium, an equilibrium which is the exact opposite of all that we have been taught and all that we are accustomed to call 'evil'. There is no absolute evil, but *an* evil, a more or less partial disequilibrium.

This may be taught to a child in a very simple way; it may be shown with the help of material things that an object will fall if it is not balanced, that only things in equilibrium can keep their position and duration. (CWM 4: 23–24)

b.

" 'There is no evil. There is only a lack of balance.

"There is nothing bad. Only things are not in their place."

If everything were in its place, in nations, in the material world, in the actions and thoughts and feelings of individuals, the greater part of human suffering would disappear." (CWM 4: 40)

3. Our nature can bring blows upon us

a.

"As for the blows, well, are they always given by the Yoga—is it not sometimes the sadhak of the Yoga who gives blows to himself? There are plenty of blows too in ordinary life according to my experience. Blows are the order of existence, and of Yoga; our nature or the nature of things brings them upon us until we learn to present to them a back which they cannot touch." (CWSA 31: 625)

4. Vital dramatizes and makes itself unhappy without any reason

a.

"*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)

b.

"*I would like to pray to the Mother to kindly explain to me the meaning of the dramatising of everything by the vital nature.*

What I meant is that life is always full of difficulties, hardships and sufferings; this is a common fact and each one has to face his own lot of them. The only way to face them properly is to endure and to put one's interest, hope and faith in the inner life and consciousness turned towards the Divine, aspiring for the Divine and capable of receiving the Divine's Force and Help. But often the vital being or some part of it takes a kind of perverse pleasure in giving a dramatic importance to each and every difficulty and thus cuts the contact with the inner being and the Divine's Force.

This bad habit which is common to many people must be stopped and then each one can and will feel that he receives very concretely the help he needs to go through the ordeals of life." (CWM 14: 230–231)

c.

"I have never said that to overcome grief, depression, gloom and suffering was easy; I have said that it was difficult because something in the human vital clings to it and almost needs it as part of the drama of life. So also I have never said that sex, anger, jealousy etc. were easy to

overcome; I have said it was difficult because they were ingrained in the human vital, and even if thrown out were always being brought back into it either by its own habit or by the invasion of the general Nature and the resurgence of its own old response. (CWSA 31: 198–199)

5. The mind and physical do not like suffering, but the vital likes suffering to give spice to life

"As to the statement about drama and something liking to suffer, nobody doubts that your external consciousness dislikes its suffering. The physical mind and consciousness of man hates its own suffering and if left to itself dislikes also to see others suffer. But if you will try to fathom the significance of your own admission of liking drama or of the turn towards drama—from which very few human beings escape—and if you go deep enough, you will find that there is something in the vital which likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama; it is something below the surface, not on the surface, but it is strong, almost universal in human nature and difficult to eradicate unless one recognises it and gets inwardly away from it. The mind and the physical of man do not like suffering for if they did it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give a spice to life. It is the reason why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of

them, because this in the vital responds, goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is set going and insists on turning the whole round of the often repeated record. It does not really depend on the reasons which the vital gives for starting off the round, these are often of the most trivial character and wholly insufficient to justify it. It is only by a strong will to detach oneself, not to justify, to reject root and branch that one can in the end get rid of this most troublesome and dangerous streak in human nature. When therefore we speak of the vital comedy, the vital drama, we are speaking from a psychological knowledge which does not end with the surface of things and looks at these hidden movements. It is impossible to deal with things for the purposes of Yoga if we confine ourselves to the surface consciousness only." (CWSA 31: 199–200)

6. The vital can take perverse pleasure in suffering

a.

"*Here you have said: "The sadhu's recourse to the bed of nails or the Christian anchorite's resort to the whip and the hair shirt are the result of a more or less veiled sadistic tendency, unavowed and unavowable; it is an unhealthy seeking or a subconscious need for violent sensations."*

Ah! You know there are ascetics who sleep on nails. Have you never seen them? I have seen some photographs myself. This sort of thing is done; they sleep upon a nail-bed. Even quite recently I saw a photograph like that. Well, they do that for... I don't know if it is to prove their saintliness. You know, when they do this in public, one always suspects that it is a bit of histrionics. But still there are those who can do it sincerely, in the sense that they don't do it for display. And so these, if they are asked why they do it, say that it is to prove to themselves that they are detached from the body. And there are others who go still farther: they say that the body must be made to suffer in order to liberate the spirit. Well, if you ask me, I would say that behind this there is a vital taste for suffering which imposes suffering on the body because the vital takes a very perverse pleasure in suffering. I have known children who had hurt themselves somewhere or other and who pressed as hard as they could on the injury to make it hurt still more! And they took pleasure in it. I have known grown-ups also. Morally, it is a very well known fact. I spend my time telling people, 'If you are unhappy, it is because you want to be. If you suffer, it is because you like suffering, otherwise you would not suffer.' This sort of thing I call unhealthy, for it is against harmony and beauty, it is a kind of morbid need for strong sensations.

I don't know if you know that China is a country where the most frightful tortures have been invented,

unthinkable things. When I was in Japan I asked a Japanese, who liked the Chinese very much (which is very rare) and always spoke very highly about China, why this was so. He told me, 'It is because all the peoples of the Far East, including the Japanese themselves, have a very blunted sensitivity. They feel very little; unless the suffering is extremely strong, they feel nothing. And so this has compelled them to use their intelligence to invent extremely acute sufferings.' Well, all these people who are unconscious, the more unconscious they are, the more tamasic they are; the more blunted their sensibility, the more do they need strong sensations to feel something. And usually this is what makes people cruel, for cruelty gives very strong sensations. That kind of nervous tension obtained through suffering imposed upon somebody, that gives a sensation, and they need it in order to feel; otherwise they feel nothing. And that is why entire races are particularly cruel. They are very unconscious—vitally unconscious. They may not be unconscious mentally or otherwise, but they are unconscious vitally or physically—above all, physically." (CWM 6: 70–71)

7. When you identify with what should be rejected, you suffer

"When, for instance, you have a movement you don't like—a movement of anger or spite, all kinds of things like that,

or an insincerity or something you don't like—when you reject it from yourself, when you want to make an effort not to have it any more, it hurts you, doesn't it? It hurts, it is as though something was being pulled out. …

… But in one case, you are open to the adverse forces you want to reject from yourself, and in the other you are not, you are already too far away from them to be affected by them any longer; and so, instead of feeling the negative side they represent, you feel only the positive side the Divine represents in the experience. It is the divine Grace which makes you progress, and with the divine Grace you feel the divine Joy. But instead of identifying yourself with the Grace which makes you progress, you identify yourself with the ugly thing you want to get rid of; and so, naturally, you feel like it and suffer.

That is an experiment you can make if you are just a little conscious. There is something in you which you don't want, something bad—for one reason or another you don't want it, you want to pull it out—well, if you identify yourself ever so little with that thing, you feel the pain of the extraction; if, on the contrary, you identify yourself with the divine Force which comes to liberate you, you feel the joy of the divine Grace—and you experience the deep delight of the progress you have made.

And this is a sure sign for you, a sure indication of what you identify yourself with. If you are identified with the forces from below, you suffer; if you are identified with

the forces from above, you are happy. And I am not speaking about feeling pleasure; you must not think that when one jumps about, dances, shouts and plays, one is identified with the divine forces—one may or may not be. That is not what I am speaking of. I am speaking of the divine Joy, the inner Joy which is unalloyed.

Each time a shadow passes, with what may be just an uneasiness or what may become a severe pain or an unbearable suffering, through the whole range, from the smallest to the greatest—as soon as it appears in your being, you may tell yourself, 'Ah, the enemy is there!'—in one form or another." (CWM 8: 84)

8. Some bad suggestions can be the cause of suffering from a cough

a.

"*Mother, this cough is making me suffer a lot. It is becoming difficult to control it. It gets less when I write to You, but it comes back again after a few days. Mother, what is the cause of it?*

Probably some bad suggestions which you must learn to drive away." (CWM 15: 160)

9. Pleasure accompanies suffering

a.

"*Sweet Mother,*

What is the difference between pleasure, joy, happiness, ecstasy and Ananda? Can we find one in the other?

Ananda belongs to the Supreme Lord.

Ecstasy belongs to the perfected yogi.

Joy belongs to the desireless man.

Pleasure is within the reach of all living beings, but with its inevitable accompaniment of suffering." (CWM 16: 296)

10. You suffer because you have drawn away from your psychic being

a.

"And if in spite of all your efforts the horizon sometimes darkens, if hope and joy fade away, if enthusiasm flags, remember that it is a sign that you have drawn away from your psychic being and lost contact with its ideal. In this way you will avoid making the mistake of throwing the blame on the people and things around you and thus quite needlessly increasing your sufferings and your difficulties." (CWM 12: 47)

b.

"The only way out of your difficulty is to find the psychic being and to live entirely in its consciousness.

Life upon earth as it is now is full of miseries and any sensitive heart is full of sorrow because of that. To get in contact with the Divine Consciousness and to live in its mercy, its strength and its light is the only truly effective way to get out of this difficulty and suffering and by uniting with the psychic we can obtain this condition.

My help and blessings are with you for this purpose." (CWM 14: 231)

11. Humans have the desire to be loved in return, and this is the cause of suffering

a.

"Certainly one has the right to love and true love carries in itself its joy, but unhappily human beings are egoistic and immediately mix with their love the *desire to be loved* in return, and this desire is contrary to spiritual truth and the cause of passions and sufferings.

The one you love must have the right of freedom in her feelings and if you want the truth you must understand this right and accept it. Otherwise there will be no end to your miseries. This is an occasion to surmount your egoism and to open to the true life. If you decide to make this effort my help will be with you." (CWM 14: 119–120)

b.

"When one gives one's love to another human being, the first mistake one generally makes is to want to be loved by the other person, not in his own way and according to his character, but in one's own way and to satisfy one's desires. This is the number one cause of all human miseries, disappointments and sufferings.

To love means to give oneself without bargaining—otherwise it is not love. But this is rarely understood and even more rarely practised. And the consequences are painful." (CWM 17: 370)

12. If one believes that after death one suffers torments, then one will suffer

"Q: *Is it after death that one suffers those torments?*

A:Yes, *if one believes in them*" (CWM 17: 106)

13. We strive for something larger and better; the resulting dissatisfaction is the cause of pain, unease, and grief

a.

"We must always remember that if ego were the truth of our being, limitation would not be painful, grief would not be the reaction of our activity. The heart, incapable of

excessive yearnings, would rest in its proper circle. But we are capable of excessive yearnings because we ourselves exceed our bodies & circumstances. We are driven by an infinite stress towards increase, because we are ourselves elastic and really infinite. There is always something within us which is dissatisfied with the Is & gropes for the May be, something which is soon tired of present accomplishment & possession & reaches out for something larger, better or at the lowest new. … Hence it has this striving, this dissatisfaction, this torture of pain, unease & grief. God puts the heart upon the rack of desire so that it may not be satisfied with smallness. He forces it to aspire towards the greatness & infinity of the Spirit, the mahat, brihat, bhúmá. 'Nalpena sukham asti, bhumna sukham asti," cries the Upanishad. There is no abiding happiness in the small; happiness comes by the vast & free." (CWSA 17: 472–473)

III—Suffering Is Due to the Vital, and That Part of the Human Vital Has to Be Eliminated

1.

"The thing in you which enjoys the suffering and wants it is part of the human vital—it is these things that we describe as the insincerity and perverse twist of the vital; it cries out against sorrow and trouble and accuses the Divine and life and everybody else of torturing it, but for the most part the sorrow and the trouble come and remain because the perverse something in the vital wants them! That element in the vital has to be got rid of altogether." (CWSA 31: 178)

2.

"Even there is something in the vital consciousness that would not feel at home if there were no suffering in life. It is the physical that fears and abhors suffering, but the vital takes it as part of the play of life." (CWSA 31: 178)

3.

"It is the vital that enjoys the drama of life and takes a pleasure even in sorrow and suffering—it [*a movement of depression*] is not a revolt but an acceptance. Of course there are moods of revolt also in the vital in which it takes a pleasure. The part that does not like suffering and would

be glad to get rid of it is the physical consciousness, but the vital pushes it always and so it cannot escape.

It is the rajaso-tamasic vital ego that is responsible both for revolt and for the acceptance of depression. Rajas predominating there is revolt, tamas predominating there is depression." (CWSA 31: 178)

4.

"The surface nature does not enjoy [*groaning and weeping*]—but something within enjoys the *līlā* of 'laughter and tears', joy and grief, pleasure and pain, in a word the play of the ignorance. In some people this comes up to a certain extent on the surface. Many, if you propose to them the removal of suffering from life, look askance at you and feel that it would be terribly boring to have nothing but joy and Ananda and peace—many even have said it." (CWSA 31: 178–179)

5.

"Because people are living here under the Mother's shelter and saved from the great sufferings and tragedies of human life, they must needs spin despairs and tragedies out of nothing. The vital wants to indulge its sorrow sense and shout and groan and weep and if it can't have a good or big reason for doing it, it will use a bad or small one." (CWSA 32: 389)

6.

"What you have noticed about the disturbances is true. There are now two consciousnesses in you, the new one that is growing and what is left of the old. The old has something in it which is a habit of the human vital,—the tendency to keep any touch of grief, anger, vexation etc. or any kind of emotional, vital or mental disturbance, to make much of it, to prolong it, not to wish to let it go, to return to it even when the cause of disturbance is past and could be forgotten, always to remember it and bring it up when it can. This is a common trait of human nature and a quite customary movement. The new consciousness on the contrary does not want these things and when they happen throws them off as quickly as possible. When the new consciousness is fully grown and established, then the disturbances will be altogether rejected. Even if the causes of them happen, there will be no response of grief, anger, vexation etc. in the nature." (CWSA 31: 140–141)

7.

"*What can one do against obsession when there is very intense suffering?*

Look at a beautiful flower.

But when one is in very great suffering, even a beautiful flower is boring, unless I am mistaken.

That would be the sign of a total enslavement to the vital part that is suffering. You must learn to stand back and detach yourself from the lower, external movements." (CWM 17: 103)

8.

"The vital on the other hand is a thing of desires, impulses, force-pushes, emotions, sensations, seekings after life fulfilment, possession and enjoyment; these are its function and its nature;—it is that part of us which seeks after life and its movements for their own sake and it does not want to leave hold of them even if they bring it suffering as well as or more than pleasure; it is even capable of luxuriating in tears and suffering as part of the drama of life." (CWSA 28: 175)

9.

"A man may know he can never have fame in this life but yet work in the hope of posthumous fame or in the chance of it. He may know that the satisfaction of his passion will bring him everything rather than happiness—suffering, torture, destruction—yet he will follow his impulse. So also the mind as well as the larger vital is not bound by the pursuit of happiness. It can seek Truth rather or the victory of a cause. To reduce all to a single hedonistic strain seems to me very poor psychology. Neither Nature nor the vast

Spirit in things are so limited and one-tracked as that." (CWSA 28: 194)

10.

"This vital physical part (supported by the lowest part of the vital proper) is therefore the agent of most of the lesser movements of our external life; its habitual reactions and obstinate pettinesses are the chief stumbling-block in the way of the transformation of the outer consciousness by the Yoga. It is also largely responsible for most of the suffering and disease of mind or body to which the physical being is subject in Nature. (CWSA 28: 203)

11.

"Thus the veiled psychic urge may express itself in the mind by a hunger in the thought for the knowledge of the Divine, what the Europeans call the intellectual love of God. In the vital it may express itself as a hunger or hankering after the Divine. This can bring much suffering because of the nature of the vital, its unquiet passions, desires, ardours, troubled emotions, cloudings, depressions, despairs. The psychic can have a psychic sorrow when things go against its diviner yearnings, but this sorrow has in it no touch of torment, depression or despair. Nevertheless all cannot approach, at least cannot at once approach the Divine in the pure psychic way—the mental and vital approaches are often necessary beginnings and

better from the spiritual point of view than an insensitiveness to the Divine. It is in both cases a call of the soul, the soul's urge—it only takes a form or colour due to the stress of the mind or vital nature." (CWSA 29: 28)

12.

"What he describes is a vital demand of the ego for emotional self-satisfaction; it is Maya. It is not true love, for true love seeks for union and self-giving and that is the love one must bring to the Divine. This vital (so-called) love brings only suffering and disappointment; it does not bring happiness; it never gets satisfied and, even if it is granted something that it asks for, it is never satisfied with it.

It is perfectly possible to get rid of this Maya of the vital demand, if one wishes to do it,—but the will to do it must be sincere. If he is sincere in his will, he will certainly get help and protection. (CWSA 29: 349)

13.

"You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say 'not altogether a wretched life, you will admit'. On paper, it sounds even very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy,—and in the end, it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment,

disillusionment and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces—and then decay and death. That is the vital egoistic life as man has found it throughout the ages, and yet it is that which this part of your vital regrets? How do you fail to see, when you lay so much stress on the desirability of a merely human consciousness, that suffering is its badge? When the vital resists the change from the human into the divine consciousness, what it is defending is its right to sorrow and suffering and all the rest of it, varied and relieved no doubt by some vital or mental pleasures and satisfactions, but very partially relieved by them and only for a time. In your own case, it was already beginning to pall on you and that was why you turned from it." (CWSA 29: 475– 476)

14.

"But is the Divine then something so terrible, horrible or repellent that the idea of its entry into the physical, its divinising of the human should create this shrinking, refusal, revolt or fear? I can understand that the unregenerate vital attached to its own petty sufferings and pleasures, to the brief ignorant drama of life, should shrink from what will change it. But why should a God-lover, a God-seeker, a sadhak fear the divinisation of the consciousness! Why should he object to becoming one in nature with what he seeks, why should he recoil from *sādṛśya-mukti*? Behind this fear there are usually two

causes: first, there is the feeling of the vital that it will have to cease to be obscure, crude, muddy, egoistic, unrefined (spiritually), full of stimulating desires and small pleasures and interesting sufferings (for it shrinks even from the Ananda which will replace them); next, there is some vague ignorant idea of the mind, due, I suppose, to the ascetic tradition, that the divine nature is something cold, bare, empty, austere, aloof, without the glorious riches of the egoistic human vital life." (CWSA 29: 481)

15.

Too many sadhaks cry before the attacks of their lower nature, 'I am helpless, I cannot react, it comes and makes me do what it wants.' This is a wrong passivity.

One must not get into the habit of a state in which one is always in a struggle with suggestions and forces. People very easily fall into this and make it a habit—the vital part takes a sort of glowing satisfaction in crying out, 'I am attacked, overborne, suffering, miserable! How tragic is my fate! Why do you not help, O Divine? There is no help, nor divine Grace? I am left to my misery and downfall etc. etc. etc.' I do not want one more sadhak to fall into this condition—that is why I am calling Halt! before you get entangled in this kind of habit of constant struggle. It is what these forces want—to make you feel helpless, defeated, overborne. You must not allow it." (CWSA 29: 80)

16.

"The Mother speaks or writes much more pointedly and sharply to those whom she wishes to push rapidly on the way because they are capable of it and they do not resent or suffer but are glad of the pressure and the plainness, because they know by experience that it helps them to see their obstacles and change. If you wish to progress rapidly, you must get rid of this vital reaction of *abhimāna*, suffering, wounded feeling, seeking for arguments of self-justification, outcry against the touch that is intended to liberate,—for so long as you have these, it is difficult for us to deal openly and firmly with the obstacles created by the vital nature." (CWSA 32: 348)

17.

"It is not a matter of any particular act or feeling, but a sort of excited vibration with which the vital and physical consciousness meets the vital disturbance—it is evident in the tone and language of what you write when there is the stress of vital suggestion— but it used also to rise when you got the experiences in an excited vibration and bubbling of joy which would easily lapse into some rajasic movement or be replaced by the opposite excitement of suffering and disturbance. Quiet, quiet and more quiet, calm strength, calm gladness are what are needed in mind and nerves and body as a basis for the siddhi—precisely because the Force, the Light, the Ananda that come down

are extremely intense and need a great stillness in the being to bear and support them." (CWSA 30: 450)

18.

"It is indeed in the lower vital that there is the main difficulty for the spiritual change of human nature. If that were not there, the rest could be more easily dealt with and there would be no long resistance. The vital pleasure is not a true Ananda, but only a pleasant excitement which cannot abide—that pleasure and grief and pain are always near to each other and the consciousness passes easily from one to the other. One has to establish peace and quietude there, so that the true psychic and spiritual joy can take the place. It is the touch of the psychic that gives the soothing effect of which you speak." (CWSA 31: 165)

19.

"One must take it quietly and wait for it to turn into the spiritual peace and the psychic happiness which is quite different from vital joy and grief. To have neither vital joy nor vital grief is considered by the Yogins to be a very desirable release,—it makes it possible to pass from the ordinary human vital feelings to the true and constant inner peace, joy or happiness." (CWSA 30: 76)

IV—Suffering Occurs When One Draws Back from the Path, and the Remedy Is to Make Every Effort and Sacrifice to Recover and Climb Back from the Abyss to Find the Path Again

1.

"If you make one mistake in life, then you may have to suffer all your life. It does not mean that everybody suffers like that. There are people who go on making mistakes and yet they do not suffer. But those who are born for a spiritual life have to be very careful." (CWM 14: 234)

2.

"*When one draws back from the path, one draws back for the present life or...*

In this, you see, there are many different cases, and they depend on the nature of the drawing back. If it is a small set-back or a small halt, you can start again. But it is ten times more difficult than before.

Why?

Why? Because it is so. Because you have accumulated obstacles in yourself by your cowardice and weakness. All those difficulties which you must conquer are like spiritual tests which you have to pass. And if you fail in your test,

well, the next one will be much more difficult. This is the general occult law. One can't escape it. …

…

… When one is at a critical moment of one's development, and it is absolutely necessary to cross the step in order to go forward—at that moment, there are always two possibilities: that of crossing the step, and then one immediately makes a terrific progress; or else to become slack, and then this indeed is more than a halt, even more than a set-back, it can be a very serious fall into a chasm. There are abysses from which one does not come up again; and so, in this case it means a life lost.

But if one has within oneself, besides the part that has given way and fallen, if somewhere one has a very ardent flame, if one is ready for anything, all possible suffering, all possible effort, all possible sacrifices to redress what one has done, in order to climb back from the bottom of the abyss, to find the path again, one can do it. This flame has the power to call the Grace. And with the Grace there is nothing impossible. But it must be a real flame, something very powerful, because when one is at the bottom of the hole it is not easy to come out of it. Between the first kind, which is simply a little halt on the way and which makes the next step just a little more difficult, and the last one I am speaking about, there are many degrees; and so one can't say that if one leaves the

path it is for a lifetime. That would be only an extreme case. (CWM 6: 441–443)

V—Is Suffering Due to Karma?

1.

"The law of Karma can be no rigid and mechanical canon or rough practical rule of thumb, but rather its guiding principle should be as supple a harmonist as the Spirit itself whose will of self-knowledge it embodies and should adapt itself to the need of self-development of the variable individual souls who are feeling their way along its lines towards the right balance, synthesis, harmonies of their action. The karmic idea cannot be—for spirit and not mind is its cause—a cosmic reflection of our limited average human intelligence, but rather the law of a greater spiritual wisdom, a means which behind all its dumb occult appearances embodies an understanding lead and a subtle management towards our total perfection.

The ordinary current conception of law of Karma is dominantly ethical, but ethical in no very exalted kind. Its idea of karma is a mechanical and materialistic ethics, a crudely exact legal judgment and administration of reward and punishment, an external sanction to virtue and prohibition of sin, a code, a balance. The idea is that there must be a justice governing the award of happiness and misery on the earth, a humanly intelligible equity and that the law of Karma represents it and gives us its formula. I have done so much good, *puṇya*. It is my capital, my accumulation and balance. I must have it paid out to me

in so much coin of prosperity, the legal currency of this sovereign and divine Themis [*Greek Goddess, a personification of justice*], or why on earth should I at all do good? I have done so much evil. That too must come back to me in so much exact and accurate punishment and misfortune. There must be so much outward suffering or an inward suffering caused by outward event and pressure; for if there were not this physically sensible, visible, inevitable result, where would be any avenging justice and where could we find any deterrent sanction in Nature against evil? And this award is that of an exact judge, a precise administrator, a scrupulous merchant of good for good and evil for evil who has learned nothing and will never learn anything of the Christian or Buddhistic ideal rule, has no bowels of mercy or compassion, no forgiveness for sin, but holds austerely to an eternal Mosaic law, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, a full, slow or swift, but always calm and precisely merciless *lex talionis* [punishment resembles the offence committed in kind and degree]. (CWSA 13: 367–368)

2.

"A good man's sufferings in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious

actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for the good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil." (CWSA 28: 533)

3.

"If indeed rebirth were governed by a system of rewards and punishments, if life's whole intention were to teach the embodied spirit to be good and moral,—supposing that that is the intention in the dispensation of Karma and it is not what it looks like in this presentation of it, a mechanical law of recompense and retribution without any reformatory meaning or purpose,—then there is evidently a great stupidity and injustice in denying to the mind in its new incarnation all memory of its past births and actions. For it deprives the reborn being of all chance to realise why he is rewarded or punished or to get any advantage from the lesson of the profitableness of virtue and the unprofitableness of sin vouchsafed to him or inflicted on him. Even, since life seems often to teach the opposite

lesson,—for he sees the good suffer for their goodness and the wicked prosper by their wickedness,—he is rather likely to conclude in this perverse sense, because he has not the memory of an assured and constant result of experience which would show him that the suffering of the good man was due to his past wickedness and the prosperity of the sinner due to the splendour of his past virtues, so that virtue is the best policy in the long run for any reasonable and prudent soul entering into this dispensation of Nature. It might be said that the psychic being within remembers; but such a secret memory would seem to have little effect or value on the surface." (CWSA 22: 850)

4.

"This looks a little superfluous and a rather redundant justice, and, even, the precise accountant becomes very like an unconscionable hundred per cent usurer. …

… Their first motive seems to be ethical, for justice is an ethical notion; but true ethics is dharma, the right fulfilment and working of the higher nature, and right action should have right motive, should be its own justification and not go limping on the crutches of greed and fear. Right done for its own sake is truly ethical and ennobles the growing spirit; right done in the lust for a material reward or from fear of the avenging stripes of the executioner or sentence of the judge, may be eminently practical and useful for the moment, but it is not in the

least degree ethical, but is rather a lowering of the soul of man; or at least the principle is a concession to his baser animal and unspiritual nature." (CWSA 13: 368–369)

5.

"First, it is sure that Nature has laws of which the observance leads to or helps well-being and of which the violation imposes suffering; but all of them cannot be given a moral significance. Then there is the certainty that there must be a moral law of cause and consequence in the total web of her weaving and this we would perhaps currently put into the formula that good produces good and evil evil, which is a proposition of undoubted truth, though also we see in this complicated world that evil comes out of what we hold to be good, and again out of evil disengages itself something that yet turns to good. Perhaps our system of values is too rigidly precise or too narrowly relative; there are subtle things in the totality, minglings, interrelations, cross-currents, suppressed or hidden significances which we do not take into account. The formula is true, but is not the whole truth, at least as now understood in its first superficial significance." (CWM 13: 371)

6.

"And of all true moral good and real evil this may be said that the one tends towards some supreme Right, the *ṛtam* of the Vedic Rishis, the highest law of a highest Truth of

our being and that Truth is the door of the spirit's Ananda, its beatific nature, the other is a missing or perversion of the Right and the Truth and exposes us to its opposite, to false delight or suffering. And even in the perplexed steps of life some reflection of this identity must emerge.

This correspondence is, still, more essentially true in the inner field, in the spiritual, mental and emotional result and reaction of the good or the evil or of the effects of its outgoing action. But where is the firm link of correspondence between the ethical and the more vital and physical hedonistic powers of life? How does my ethical good turn into smiling fortune, crowned prosperity, sleek material good and happiness to myself and my ethical evil into frowning misfortune, rugged adversity, sordid material ill and suffering,—for that is what the desire soul of man and the intelligence governed by it seem to demand,—and how is the account squared or the transmutation made between these two very different energies of the affirmation and denial of good? We can see this much that the good or the evil in me translates itself into a good or an evil action which among other things brings about much mental and material happiness and suffering to others, and to this outgoing power and effect there ought to be an equal reaction of incoming power and effect, though it does not seem to work itself out immediately or with any discoverable exactness of correspondence." (CWM 13: 372)

7.

"The relation of our consciousness and will to Karma is the thing upon which all the subtler lines of action and consequence must depend; that connexus must be the hinge of the whole significance. The dependence of the pursuit of ethical values on a sanction by the inferior hedonistic values, material, vital and lower mental pleasure, pain and suffering, appeals strongly to our normal consciousness and will; but it ceases to have more than a subordinate force and finally loses all force as we grow towards greater heights of our being. That dependence cannot then be the whole or the final power or guiding norm of Karma. The relation of will to action and consequence must be cast on more subtle and liberal lines. The universal Spirit in the law of Karma must deal with man in the lower scale of values only as a part of the transaction and as a concession to man's own present motives. Man himself puts these values, makes that demand for pleasure and prosperity and dreads their opposites, desires heaven more than he loves virtue, fears hell more than he abhors sin, and while he does so, the world-dispensation wears to him that meaning and colour. But the spirit of existence is not merely a legislator and judge concerned to maintain a standard of legal justice, to dole out deterrents and sanctions, rewards and penalties, ferocious pains of hell, indulgent joys of paradise. He is the Divine in the world,

the Master of a spiritual evolution and the growing godhead in humanity." (CWM 13: 373)

8.

"I have continually to disregard Nature's original warnings and lures in order to get to a higher nature. I have to develop a nobler spiritual law of Karma.

This will be evident if we consider our own greater motives of action. The pursuit of Truth may entail on me penalties and sufferings; the service of my country or the world may demand from me loss of my outward happiness and good fortune or the destruction of my body; the increase of my strength of will and greatness of spirit may be only possible by the ardours of suffering and the firm renunciation of joys and pleasures. I must still follow after Truth, I must do the service to my race my soul demands from me; I must increase my strength and inner greatness and must not ask for a quite irrelevant reward, shun penalty or make a bargain for the exact fruits of my labour. And that which is true of my action in the present life, must be equally true of my connected action and self-development through many births. Happiness and sorrow, good fortune and ill-fortune are not my main concern whether in this birth or in future lives, but my perfection and the higher good of mankind purchased by whatever suffering and tribulation. Spinoza's dictum that joy is a passage to a greater perfection and sorrow a passage to a

lesser perfection is a much too summary epigram. Delight will be indeed the atmosphere of perfection and attends too even the anguish of our labour towards it, but first a higher delight which has often much trouble for its price, and afterwards a highest spiritual Ananda which has no dependence on outward circumstances, but rather is powerful to new-shape their meanings and transform their reactions." (CWSA 13: 374)

9.

"The law of Karma is therefore not simply an extension of the human idea of practical justice into future births and a rectification there of the apparent injustice of life. A justice or rather a justness there must be in all the workings of the world energy; Nature certainly seems to be scrupulous in her measures. But in the life of man there are many factors to be taken into the reckoning; there are too stages, grades, degrees. And on a higher step of our being things do not look the same nor are quite the same as on a lower grade. And even in the first normal scale there are many factors and not only the ethical-hedonistic [*ethical theory that pleasure or satisfaction of desire is the aim of life*] standard. If it is just that the virtuous man should be rewarded with success and happiness and the wicked man punished with downfall and pain at some time, in some life, on earth or in heaven or in hell, it is also just that the strong man should have the reward of his cultivated strength, the

intellectual man the prize of his cultivated skill, the will that labours in whatever field the fruit of its effort and its works. But it does not work rightly, you say, not morally, not according to the ethical law? But what is right working in this connection of will and action and consequence? I may be religious and honest, but if I am dull, weak and incompetent? And I may be selfish and impious, but if I have the swift flame of intellect, the understanding brain, the skill to adapt means to ends, the firm courageous will fixed on its end? I have then an imperfection which must impose its consequences, but also I have powers which must make their way. The truth is that there are several orders of energy and their separate characteristic working must be seen, before their relations can be rightly discovered in the harmonies of Nature. A complex web is what we have to unravel. When we have seen the parts in the whole, the elements and their affinities in the mass, then only can we know the lines of Karma." (CWSA 13: 374–375)

10.

"The universe is not solely an ethical proposition, a problem of the antinomy of the good and the evil; the Spirit of the universe can in no way be imagined as a rigid moralist concerned only with making all things obey the law of moral good, or a stream of tendency towards righteousness attempting, hitherto with only a very poor

success, to prevail and rule, or a stern Justicer rewarding and punishing creatures in a world that he has made or has suffered to be full of wickedness and suffering and evil. The universal Will has evidently many other and more supple modes than that, an infinity of interests, many other elements of its being to manifest, many lines to follow, many laws and purposes to pursue. The law of the world is not this alone that our good brings good to us and our evil brings evil, nor is its sufficient key the ethical-hedonistic rule that our moral good brings to us happiness and success and our moral evil brings to us sorrow and misfortune. There is a rule of right in the world, but it is the right of the truth of Nature and of the truth of the spirit, and that is a vast and various rule and takes many forms that have to be understood and accepted before we can reach either its highest or its integral principle." (CWM 13: 382–383)

VI—Two Categories of Suffering

1. The origin of suffering is one and comes from the initial action of an anti-divine will

"*How can suffering be overcome?*

The problem is not as simple as all that. The causes of suffering are innumerable and its quality also varies a great deal, although the origin of suffering is one and the same and comes from the initial action of an anti-divine will. To make this easier to understand, one can divide suffering into two distinct categories, although in practice they are very often mixed." (CWM 15: 338)

2. The first category is purely egoistic

"The first is purely egoistic and comes from a feeling that one's rights have been violated, that one has been deprived of one's needs, offended, despoiled, betrayed, injured, etc. This whole category of suffering is clearly the result of hostile action and it not only opens the door in the consciousness to the influence of the adversary but is also one of his most powerful ways of acting in the world, the most powerful of all if in addition there comes its natural and spontaneous consequence: hatred and the desire for

revenge in the strong, despair and the wish to die in the weak." (CWM 15: 338)

3. The second category arises from divine compassion for the world's misery

"The other category of suffering, whose initial *cause* is the pain of separation created by the adversary, is totally opposite in nature: it is the suffering that comes from divine compassion, the suffering of love that feels compassion for the world's misery, whatever its origin, cause or effect. But this suffering, which is of a purely psychic character, contains no egoism, no self-pity; it is full of peace and strength and power of action, of faith in the future and the will for victory; it does not pity but consoles, it does not identify itself with the ignorant movement in others but cures and illumines it.

It is obvious that in the purity of its essence, only that which is *perfectly divine* can feel that suffering; but partially, momentarily, like flashes of lightning behind the dark clouds of egoism, it appears in all who have a vast and generous heart. However, most often, in the individual consciousness it is mixed with that mean and petty self-pity which is the cause of depression and weakness. Nevertheless, when one is vigilant enough to refuse this mixture or at least to reduce it to a minimum, one soon realises that this divine compassion is based on a sublime

and eternal joy which alone has the strength and the power to deliver the world from its ignorance and misery.

And this suffering too will disappear from the universe only with the total disappearance of the adversary and all the effects of his action. (CWM 15: 338–339)

VII—How to Deal with the Suffering of Others

1. There is no point in dwelling on the sufferings of others if you do not have the means to relieve them

"*I think it is a weakness not to be able to bear the suffering of other people and to avoid those who suffer.*

If one has neither the psychological nor the material means to bring them relief, I see no point in dwelling on them." (CWM 17: 104)

2. The suffering of others has to be rejected and replaced by higher divine compassion

"The passion of pity with its impure elements of physical repulsion and emotional inability to bear the suffering of others has to be rejected and replaced by the higher divine compassion which sees, understands, accepts the burden of others and is strong to help and heal, not with self-will and revolt against the suffering in the world and with ignorant accusation of the law of things and their source, but with light and knowledge and as an instrument of the Divine in its emergence." (CWSA 23: 353–354)

3. To overcome the suffering of others, one should have overcome all this in oneself

"*My heart is full of compassion for others and I am not insensible to their suffering, but what's the good of this feeling if I cannot come to their aid in their suffering?*

One cannot help others to overcome their sorrows and sufferings unless one has overcome all this in oneself and is master of one's feelings and reactions." (CWM 16: 189)

4. To help others, do not take upon yourself the suffering of others, but help them with the smiling serenity of impersonal love

"It is a stage of evolution in which the being is ready for self-giving, for he is conscious of himself; but, as a result of the work of individualisation, of intellectualisation he has undergone, he has acquired the habit of considering everything in relation to himself and has carried the illusion of personality to its utmost limit.

Thus it is sometimes very difficult for him not to watch himself acting, feeling and thinking, and this results in a lack of spontaneity which verges on insincerity.

The being takes pleasure in his extreme sensitivity; he is a delicate instrument which responds marvellously to the least vibration, and so, instead of exteriorising himself

and forgetting his own self as he should, he withdraws into himself, observes and analyses and almost contemplates himself.

Thus cultivated, the emotional sensitivity goes on increasing, sharpening and refining itself. And since in life opportunities for suffering are more frequent than opportunities for joy, the need to experience and study these subtle movements of feeling develops an inclination, a taste for suffering, a true mystical aberration which is nothing but self-seeking through suffering, a refined but very pernicious form of egoism.

The practical results of this need to suffer are altogether disastrous if you add to it the intuitive but still inaccurate perception that the work you have to accomplish, your purpose in life, is to draw towards yourself, to take upon yourself, the suffering of others and change it into harmony.

As a matter of fact, on one hand this knowledge is incomplete because you do not know that the only way to relieve others, to eliminate a little suffering in this world, is not to allow any sensitivity, however painful it may seem, to arouse suffering in yourself or to disturb your peace and serenity. On the other hand the idea of the work to be accomplished is itself warped by the illusion of personality. The correct idea is not to draw all suffering to yourself, which is unrealisable, but to identify yourself with all suffering, in all others, to become in it and in them a seed

of light and love which will give birth to a deep understanding, to hope, trust and peace.

Until this is well understood, the taste for sacrifice rises in the being; and each time an opportunity for it appears, since you are not *disinterested* in this matter, since you *desire* this sacrifice, it becomes something sentimental and irrational and results in absurd errors which sometimes have disastrous consequences. Even if you are in the habit of reflecting before acting, the reflections preceding the act will necessarily be biased, since they are warped by the taste for suffering, by the desire to have an opportunity to impose a painful sacrifice on yourself.

Thus, consciously or not, instead of sacrificing yourself for the good of others, you sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of it, which is perfectly absurd and of no benefit to anyone.

No action should be deemed good, no action should be undertaken until we know its immediate and, if possible, its distant consequences, and until it appears that they must in the end add, however little, to earthly happiness. But to be able to give a sound judgment on the matter, this judgment must in no way be disturbed by any personal preference, and this implies self-detachment.

Not the detachment which is equivalent to the annihilation of the capacity to feel, but the detachment which brings about the abolition of the capacity to suffer.

By this you should understand that for the time being I am excluding insensitive people, those who do not suffer because the substance they are made of is still too unrefined, too crude to feel, those who are not even ready for suffering.

But of those who have achieved a high development of sensitivity, it can be said that their capacity to suffer is the exact measure of their imperfection.

Indeed, the expression of a true psychic life in the being is peace, a joyful serenity.

Any suffering is therefore a precious indication to us of our weak point, of the point which demands a greater spiritual effort from us.

Thus, to cure in ourselves this attraction for suffering, we must understand the absurdity, the petty egoism of the various causes of our sufferings.

And to cure our excessive and ridiculous desire for sacrifice— too frequently for its own sake, regardless of any useful results—we must understand that if we are to remain in contact with all human sufferings through our sensitivity, we must also be vigilant and discerning enough to dissolve these sufferings as they come; to the clear-sighted, they are purely imaginary.

For, from this point of view, the only way to come to the help of men is to oppose to their suffering an immutable and smiling serenity which will be the highest human expression of Impersonal Love.

Finally, in a case such as the one I have just shown to you, even more than in any other, it is indispensable to keep in mind that true impersonality does not consist only in forgetting ourselves in our acts, but above all in the fact of not being aware that we are forgetting ourselves.

In short, to be truly impersonal, we must stop noticing that we are being impersonal.

And then the work can be accomplished with a large-hearted spontaneity, in all its perfection." (CWM 2: 58–61)

5. If human beings base their relationships on psychic contacts, then suffering will be replaced by peace and bliss

a.

"Human beings are in the habit of basing their relationships with others on physical, vital and mental contacts; that is why there is almost always discord and suffering. If, on the contrary, they based their relationships on psychic contacts (between soul and soul), they would find that behind the troubled appearances there is a profound and lasting harmony which can express itself in all the activities of life and cause disorder and suffering to be replaced by peace and bliss." (CWM 10: 246)

b.

"To want what the Divine wants, in all sincerity, is the essential condition for peace and joy in life. Almost all

human miseries come from the fact that men are nearly always convinced that they know better than the Divine what they need and what life ought to give them. Most human beings want other human beings to conform to their expectations and circumstances to conform to their desires—therefore they suffer and are unhappy.

It is only when one gives oneself in all sincerity to the Divine Will that one has the peace and calm joy which come from the abolition of desires.

The psychic being knows this with certainty; so, by uniting with one's psychic, one can know it. But the first condition is not to be subject to one's desires and mistake them for the truth of one's being." (CWM 16: 433)

VIII—Endurance and Faith Are Required When You Suffer

1.

7 October 1964

"Things have clearly taken a turn for the better, not from the ordinary point of view but from the higher. Yet the material consequences are still there—all the difficulties are as though aggravated. Only, the power of the consciousness is greater—clearer, more precise, and also the action upon those who are of good will; they make quite considerable progress. But the material difficulties are as though aggravated, that is to say, it is... to see if we can stand the test!

It is like that.

It isn't long (since yesterday), something has cleared in the atmosphere. But the way is still long—long, long. I feel it is very long. One must last—hold on, above all, that is the impression—one must have endurance. These are the two absolutely indispensable things: endurance, and a faith that nothing can shake, even an apparently complete negation, even if you suffer, even if you are miserable (I mean to say, in the body), even if you are tired—to last. To hold on and to last—to endure. That is it.

But according to what I have been told, I mean by people who listen to the radio, read newspapers (all the things that I do not do), the whole world seems to be

undergoing an action... which for the moment is upsetting." (CWM 11: 1)

IX—Combating Indulgence in Melancholy

1.

"It seems to me from what you have written that it is the old vital restlessness and indulgence in melancholy [sorrowfulness] that has taken hold of you. It has no special cause, but takes hold of everything to feed itself; in itself it is only a habitual nervous weakness. The more one broods on it, the more it increases." (CWSA 31:180–181)

2.

"There are three ways of combating it [melancholy]. One is to take interest and busy yourself in something else not yourself and to think of your condition as little as possible. Another is to separate yourself from this vital restlessness and melancholia as much as possible and face it, as you were doing, with an energetic and resolute refusal to accept it. The third is to habituate yourself to turn your mind upwards in a call for the Mother's peace. It is there above you waiting to come down if you make yourself open to it; if it came down, it would rid you permanently of all this suffering and trouble." (CWSA 31:180–181)

X—By Grasping the Cause of Suffering, We Can Master Suffering Entirely

1.

"We seek constantly to minimise the causes of error, pain and suffering. Science, as its knowledge increases, dreams of regulating birth and of indefinitely prolonging life, if not of effecting the entire conquest of death. But because we envisage only external or secondary causes, we can only think of removing them to a distance and not of eliminating the actual roots of that against which we struggle. And we are thus limited because we strive towards secondary perceptions and not towards root-knowledge, because we know processes of things, but not their essence. We thus arrive at a more powerful manipulation of circumstances, but not at essential control. But if we could grasp the essential nature and the essential cause of error, suffering and death, we might hope to arrive at a mastery over them which should be not relative but entire. We might hope even to eliminate them altogether and justify the dominant instinct of our nature by the conquest of that absolute good, bliss, knowledge and immortality which our intuitions perceive as the true and ultimate condition of the human being.

The ancient Vedanta presents us with such a solution in the conception and experience of Brahman as the one

universal and essential fact and of the nature of Brahman as Sachchidananda.

In this view the essence of all life is the movement of a universal and immortal existence, the essence of all sensation and emotion is the play of a universal and self-existent delight in being, the essence of all thought and perception is the radiation of a universal and all-pervading truth, the essence of all activity is the progression of a universal and self-effecting good." (CWSA 21: 62–63)

XI—Different Remedies for Suffering

1. If one does not need anything or appreciation, then one cannot suffer

a.

"*With all my failings and weaknesses, I don't need anything at all. I don't need any appreciation.*

Then you can't suffer. Because the only thing that you need is the support of the Divine, and you have it. Then you can't suffer.

But I am suffering very much.

Yes, there is a conflict in your being. One part of your consciousness knows but there is still one part that is the slave of
circumstances." (CWM 15: 401)

2. Instead of suffering, rise above circumstances

a.

"*What does this sentence mean: 'Look life in the face from the soul's inner strength and become master of circumstances'?*

That is precisely the opposite of the method which consists in rejecting the whole of the physical consciousness and all physical events. 'Look life in the face', this means: don't turn your back on it! It means: face life as it is instead of running away from it and call to your aid the inner psychic force—this is what Sri Aurobindo says: 'the soul's inner strength', the inner psychic force—and with the help of this psychic consciousness rise above circumstances and master them. That is to say, instead of submitting to all that comes and suffering all its consequences, one rises above circumstances and lets them pass like things that do not touch you and do not impair your consciousness. That is what it means." (CWM 8: 300)

3. A deep and inward process of individual self-perfection can change suffering into serene and lasting contentment

a.

"True progressive evolution, an evolution which can lead man to his rightful happiness, does not lie in any external means, material improvement or social change. Only a deep and inner process of individual self-perfection can make for real progress and completely transform the present state of things, and change suffering and misery into a serene and lasting contentment." (CWM 2: 69–70)

4. Once you recognize your mistakes, do not suffer but correct them

a.

"It is good to recognise your mistakes, but you must not torment yourself.

You must not suffer, you must correct yourself instead." (CWM 14: 237)

5. True courage is to brave suffering and move towards the light

a.

"And this is true courage: to walk the straight path, to brave storm, darkness and suffering and to persevere, moving ever forward, in spite of everything, towards the light." (CWM 2: 186)

6. The liberation of feelings will be liberation from suffering

a.

"In summary, austerity in feelings consists then of giving up all emotional attachment, of whatever nature, whether for a person, for the family, for the country or anything else, in order to concentrate on an exclusive attachment for the Divine Reality. This concentration will culminate in

an integral identification and will be instrumental to the supramental realisation upon earth.

The liberation of the feelings will be at the same time the liberation from suffering, in a total realisation of the supramental oneness." (CWM 12:71)

7. The healing of suffering comes not from the head but from the heart

a.

"Q: *One single drop of Thy divine love can transform this suffering into an ocean of delight!*

Oh! Let all tears be wiped away, all suffering relieved, all anguish dispelled, and let a calm serenity dwell in every heart.

I am sad, have pity on me.

O Thou who relievest all suffering and dispersest all ignorance, O Thou the supreme healer, have pity on me.

Break this resistance which fills me with anguish.

Why, why this night?"

[The sadhak's prayer is composed of extracts from several prayers of the Mother in *Prayers and Meditations*]

A: I could give many explanations; the how and the why can easily he described—but is it really necessary? This is not what heals. Healing comes not from the head but from the heart.

To *understand* is good, but to *will* is better.
Self-love is the great obstacle.
Divine love is the great remedy." (CWM 16: 19)

8. Pray from the heart for the Divine intervention when everything is steeped in falsehood

a.

"This is because the whole world is steeped in falsehood—so all actions that arise will be false, and this situation may continue for a long time and will bring much suffering to the people and the country.

The only thing to do is to pray—from the heart—for the Divine intervention as that is the only thing that can save us. And all people who can become conscious of this must decide very firmly to stand only on the Truth and to act only in the Truth. *There should be no compromise*. This is very essential. It is the only way.

Even if things seem to go wrong and badly for us, as indeed they will, because of the present prevailing falsehood—we should not be deterred from our own determination to stand on the Truth.

This is the only way." (CWM 13: 372)

9. There is a sovereign power in self-mastery when one smiles in the face of one's sorrows and sufferings

a.

"Generally speaking, man is an animal who takes himself terribly seriously. To know how to smile at oneself in all circumstances, to smile at one's sorrows and disillusions, ambitions and sufferings, indignation and revolt—what a powerful weapon with which to overcome oneself!" (CWM 14: 177)

b.

"Learn to smile always and in all circumstances; to smile at your sorrows as well as your joys, your sufferings as well as your hopes, for in a smile there is a sovereign power of self-mastery." (CWM 14: 177)

10. Immutable peace liberates from suffering

a.

"There are two complementary aspects of the liberating action of the Divine Grace upon earth among men. These two aspects are equally indispensable, but are not equally appreciated.

The sovereign immutable peace that liberates from anxiety, tension and suffering.

The dynamic all-powerful progress that liberates from fetters, bondages and inertia.

The peace is universally appreciated and recognised as divine, but the progress is welcomed only by those whose aspiration is intense and courageous." (CWM 15: 185)

11. When there is acute, unbearable suffering, there is an SOS call, and the suffering disappears

a.

"Now it [the material consciousness] is being given the full possibility to change; well, for that you must allow it full play and not interpose a Power that crushes it—this I understand very well. But this consciousness has the obstinacy of the imbecile [stupid]. How many times during a suffering, for example, when a suffering is there, acute, and one has the impression that it is going to become unbearable, there is the little inner movement (within the cells) of Call—the cells send their S.O.S.—everything stops, the suffering disappears, and often (now more and more) it is replaced by a feeling of blissful well-being; but the very first reaction of this imbecile material consciousness is: 'Ah! We shall see how long that is going to last', and naturally, by this movement it demolishes everything—one must begin all over again." (CWM 11: 3)

12. The only remedy for all human suffering is divine love

a.

"The only remedy for all human suffering: divine love." (CWM 14: 248)

13. Turn towards the Divine, and all your sufferings will disappear

a.

"Turn towards the Divine, all your sufferings will disappear." (CWM 14: 248)

b.

"Total union and the perfect manifestation of the Divine are the sole means of putting an end to the suffering and misery of the physical world which are the cause of subconscient pessimism. It is only in perfect union with the Divine that the consciousness can emerge into the eternal delight. And this conscious union is the true goal of earthly existence." (CWM 16: 427)

14. The world will never come out of suffering unless it gives itself up to the Divine

a.

"I knew a humorist who used to say: 'It won't be so soon that the kingdom of God will come, for those poor philanthropists—what would remain for them? If humanity suffered no longer, the philanthropists would be without work.' It is difficult to come out of that. However, it is a fact that never will the world come out of the state in which it is unless it gives itself up to the Divine. All the virtues—you may glorify them—increase your self-satisfaction, that is, your ego; they do not help you truly to become aware of the Divine." (CWM 5: 14)

15. The divine life is capable of overcoming suffering

a.

"*My physical mind is not yet convinced that human life is capable of overcoming all suffering and even death.*

It may be that human life is indeed incapable of it; but for the divine life nothing is impossible." (CWM 16: 157)

16. By identification with the Divine Consciousness, one can attain and preserve true, unchanging happiness

a.

"Do not attach too much importance to all these things; they are the imaginations of a child who knows nothing of life, of its misery and ugliness. 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.

Keep your confidence and your faith, my little smile, and everything will be all right." (CWM 16: 61)

17. Man must rise to a higher level of consciousness to get rid of his suffering

a.

"No material organisation, whatever its degree of preparation, is capable of bringing a solution to the miseries of man.

Man must rise to a higher level of consciousness and get rid of his ignorance, limitation and selfishness in order to get rid also of his sufferings." (CWM 14: 277)

18. Complete surrender will bring peace and supreme felicity

a.

"Whatever you do in life must be done as a service to the Divine and nobody else.

Whatever you are, think or feel, you are responsible for it to the Divine and to nobody else.

He is the sole Master of your being and your life. If in all sincerity you surrender entirely to Him He will take charge of you and your heart will be in peace.

All the rest belongs to the world of Ignorance and is governed by ignorance which means confusion and suffering." (CWM 14: 105)

b.

"Truly speaking there is no condition more miserable than being responsible for an existence to which one doesn't have the key, that is, of which one doesn't have the threads that can guide and solve the problems. The animal sets itself no problems: it just lives. Its instinct drives it, it relies on a collective consciousness which has an innate knowledge and is higher than itself, but it is automatic, spontaneous, it has no need to will something and make an effort to bring it about, it is quite naturally like that, and as it is not responsible for its life, it does not worry. With man is born the sense of having to depend on himself, and as he does not have the necessary knowledge the result is a perpetual torment. This torment can come to an end only with a total surrender to a higher consciousness than his own to which he can totally entrust himself, hand over his worries and leave the care of guiding his life and organising everything.

How can a problem be solved when one doesn't have the necessary knowledge? And the unfortunate thing is that man believes that he has to resolve all the problems of his life, and he does not have the knowledge needed to do it. That is the source, the origin of all his troubles—that perpetual question, 'What should I do?...' which is followed by another one still more acute, 'What is going to happen?' and at the same time, more or less, the inability to answer.

That is why all spiritual disciplines begin with the necessity of surrendering all responsibility and relying on a higher principle. Otherwise peace is impossible.

And yet, consciousness has been given to man so that he can progress, can discover what he doesn't know, develop into what he has not yet become; and so it may be said that there is a higher state than that of an immobile and static peace: it is a trust total enough for one to keep the will to progress, to preserve the effort for progress while ridding it of all anxiety, all care for results and consequences. …

The next step is to face the problem, but with the calm and certitude of an absolute trust in the supreme Power which knows, and can make you act. And then, instead of abandoning action, one can act in a higher peace that is strong and dynamic.

This is what could be called a new aspect of the divine intervention in life, a new form of intervention of the

divine forces in existence, a new aspect of spiritual realisation." (CWM 9: 304–305)

c.

"We must know how to give our life and also our death, our happiness and also our suffering." (CWM 14: 102)

19. When you suffer, say, "My surrender is not perfect"; then Grace helps you

a.

"And there is no other remedy. It's the only remedy, for *everybody* without exception. To all those who suffer, it is the same thing that has to be said: all suffering is the sign that the surrender is not total. Then, when you feel in you a 'bang', like that, instead of saying, 'Oh, this is bad' or 'This circumstance is difficult,' you say, 'My surrender is not perfect.' Then it's all right. And then you feel the Grace that helps you and leads you, and you go on." (CWM 15: 398)

20. Sincere consecration to the Divine can bring relief from human suffering

a.

"It is in a sincere consecration to the Divine that we can find relief from our too human sufferings." (CWM 14: 100)

b.

"For one who is totally consecrated to the Divine, there can be neither shame nor suffering, for the Divine is always with him and the Divine Presence changes all things into glory." (CWM 10: 293)

21. To lean on the presence of the Supreme Grace is the way out of suffering

a.

"This world is a world of conflict, suffering, difficulty, strain; it is made of it. It has not yet changed, it will take some time before changing. And for each one there is a possibility of getting out. If you lean back on the presence of the Supreme Grace, that is the *only* way out." (CWM 15: 399)

22. Develop equality to conquer suffering

a.

"Not to be disturbed by either joy or grief, pleasure or displeasure by what people say or do or by any outward things is called in Yoga a state of *samatā* equality to all things. It is of immense importance in sadhana to be able to reach this state. It helps the mental quietude and silence as well as the vital to come. It means indeed that the vital itself and the vital mind are already falling silent and

becoming quiet. The thinking mind is sure to follow." (CWSA 31: 335)

b.

"This equality cannot come except by a protracted ordeal and patient self-discipline; so long as desire is strong, equality cannot come at all except in periods of quiescence and the fatigue of desire, and it is then more likely to be an inert indifference or desire's recoil from itself than the true calm and the positive spiritual oneness. Moreover, this discipline or this growth into equality of spirit has its necessary epochs and stages. Ordinarily we have to begin with a period of endurance; for we must learn to confront, to suffer and to assimilate all contacts. Each fibre in us must be taught not to wince away from that which pains and repels and not to run eagerly towards that which pleases and attracts, but rather to accept, to face, to bear and to conquer. All touches we must be strong to bear, not only those that are proper and personal to us but those born of our sympathy or our conflict with the worlds around, above or below us and with their peoples. We shall endure tranquilly the action and impact on us of men and things and forces, the pressure of the Gods and the assaults of Titans; we shall face and engulf in the unstirred seas of our spirit all that can possibly come to us down the ways of the soul's infinite experience." (CWSA 23: 226)

c.

"Since the nature of suffering is a failure of the conscious force in us to meet the shocks of existence and a consequent shrinking and contraction and its root is an inequality of that receptive and possessing force due to our self-limitation by egoism consequent on the ignorance of our true Self, of Sachchidananda, the elimination of suffering must first proceed by the substitution of *titikṣā*, the facing, enduring and conquest of all shocks of existence for *jugupsā*, the shrinking and contraction: by this endurance and conquest we proceed to an equality which may be either an equal indifference to all contacts or an equal gladness in all contacts; and this equality again must find a firm foundation in the substitution of the Sachchidananda consciousness which is All-Bliss for the ego-consciousness which enjoys and suffers. The Sachchidananda consciousness may be transcendent of the universe and aloof from it, and to this state of distant Bliss the path is equal indifference; it is the path of the ascetic. Or the Sachchidananda consciousness may be at once transcendent and universal; and to this state of present and all-embracing Bliss the path is surrender and loss of the ego in the universal and possession of an all-pervading equal delight; it is the path of the ancient Vedic sages. But neutrality to the imperfect touches of pleasure and the perverse touches of pain is the first direct and natural result of the soul's self-discipline and the

conversion to equal delight can, usually, come only afterwards. The direct transformation of the triple vibration into Ananda is possible, but less easy to the human being." (CWSA 21: 117–118)

d.

"It is right and reasonable to endure with equanimity suffering and subjection to defect as the immediate will of God, a present law of imperfection laid on our members, but on condition that we recognise it also as the will of God in us to transcend evil and suffering, to transform imperfection into perfection, to rise into a higher law of Divine Nature. In our human consciousness there is the image of an ideal truth of being, a divine nature, an incipient godhead: in relation to that higher truth our present state of imperfection can be relatively described as an undivine life and the conditions of the world from which we start as undivine conditions; the imperfections are the indication given to us that they are there as first disguises, not as the intended expression of the divine being and the divine nature." (CWSA 21: 412)

e.

"But this steadfast endurance of the flesh and heart and mind must be reinforced by a sustained sense of spiritual submission to a divine Will: this living clay must yield not only with a stern or courageous acquiescence, but with

knowledge or with resignation, even in suffering, to the touch of the divine Hand that is preparing its perfection. A sage, a devout or even a tender stoicism of the God-lover is possible, and these are better than the merely pagan self-reliant endurance which may lend itself to a too great hardening of the vessel of God: for this kind prepares the strength that is capable of wisdom and of love; its tranquillity is a deeply moved calm that passes easily into bliss. The gain of this period of resignation and endurance is the soul's strength equal to all shocks and contacts." (CWSA 23: 226)

f.

"There is next a period of high-seated impartiality and indifference in which the soul becomes free from exultation and depression and escapes from the snare of the eagerness of joy as from the dark net of the pangs of grief and suffering. All things and persons and forces, all thoughts and feelings and sensations and actions, one's own no less than those of others, are regarded from above by a spirit that remains intact and immutable and is not disturbed by these things. … The indifference or the impartiality that we must seek after is a calm superiority of the high-seated soul above the contacts of things; it regards and accepts or rejects them but is not moved in the rejection and is not subjected by the acceptance. It begins to feel itself near, kin to, one with a silent Self and Spirit self-existent and separate from the workings of

Nature which it supports and makes possible, part of or merged in the motionless calm Reality that transcends the motion and action of the universe. The gain of this period of high transcendence is the soul's peace unrocked and unshaken by the pleasant ripplings or by the tempestuous waves and billows of the world's movement." (CWSA 23: 226–227)

g.

"But if this greater perfection is to arrive, the soul's impartial high-seatedness looking down from above on the flux of forms and personalities and movements and forces must be modified and change into a new sense of strong and calm submission and a powerful and intense surrender. This submission will be no longer a resigned acquiescence but a glad acceptance: for there will be no sense of suffering or of the bearing of a burden or cross; love and delight and the joy of self-giving will be its brilliant texture. And this surrender will be not only to a divine Will which we perceive and accept and obey, but to a divine Wisdom in the Will which we recognise and a divine Love in it which we feel and rapturously suffer, the wisdom and love of a supreme Spirit and Self of ourselves and all with which we can achieve a happy and perfect unity. … Then we are at last capable of receiving all contacts with a blissful equality, because we feel in them the touch of the imperishable Love and Delight, the happiness absolute that

hides ever in the heart of things. The gain of this culmination in a universal and equal rapture is the soul's delight and the opening gates of the Bliss that is infinite, the Joy that surpasses all understanding." (CWSA 23: 228)

h.

"And so too we shall have the same equality of mind and soul towards all happenings, painful or pleasurable, defeat and success, honour and disgrace, good repute and ill-repute, good fortune and evil fortune. For in all happenings we shall see the will of the Master of all works and results and a step in the evolving expression of the Divine. He manifests himself, to those who have the inner eye that sees, in forces and their play and results as well as in things and in creatures. All things move towards a divine event; each experience, suffering and want no less than joy and satisfaction, is a necessary link in the carrying out of a universal movement which it is our business to understand and second." (CWSA 23: 225)

i.

"The ripened soul does not condemn but seeks to understand and master, does not cry out but accepts or toils to improve and perfect, does not revolt inwardly but labours to obey and fulfill and transfigure. Therefore we shall receive all things with an equal soul from the hands of the Master. Failure we shall admit as a passage as calmly as success until the hour of the divine victory arrives. Our

souls and minds and bodies will remain unshaken by acutest sorrow and suffering and pain if in the divine dispensation they come to us, unoverpowered by intensest joy and pleasure. Thus supremely balanced we shall continue steadily on our way meeting all things with an equal calm until we are ready for a more exalted status and can enter into the supreme and universal Ananda." (CWSA 23: 225)

j.

"The Gita, making its call on the warrior nature of Arjuna, starts with this heroic movement. It calls on him to turn on the great enemy desire and slay it. Its first description of equality is that of the Stoic philosopher. 'He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and fear and wrath have passed away, is the sage of settled understanding. Who in all things is without affection though visited by this good or that evil and neither hates nor rejoices, his intelligence sits firmly founded in wisdom.' If one abstains from food, it says, giving a physical example, the object of sense ceases to affect, but the affection itself of the sense, the *rasa*, remains; it is only when, even in the exercise of the sense, it can keep back from seeking its sensuous aim in the object, *artha*, and abandon the affection, the desire for the pleasure of taste, that the highest level of the soul is reached. It is by using the mental organs on the objects, 'ranging over them with the senses,' *vis.ay¯an indriyai´s*

caran, but with senses subject to the self, freed from liking and disliking, that one gets into a large and sweet clearness of soul and temperament in which passion and grief find no place. All desires have to enter into the soul, as waters into the sea, and yet it has to remain immovable, filled but not disturbed: so in the end all desires can be abandoned. To be freed from wrath and passion and fear and attraction is repeatedly stressed as a necessary condition of the liberated status, and for this we must learn to bear their shocks, which cannot be done without exposing ourselves to their causes. 'He who can bear here in the body the velocity of wrath and desire, is the Yogin, the happy man.' *Titikṣā*, the will and power to endure, is the means. The material touches which cause heat and cold, happiness and pain, things transient which come and go, these learn to endure. For the man whom these do not trouble nor pain, the firm and wise who is equal in pleasure and suffering, makes himself apt for immortality." The equal-souled has to bear suffering and not hate, to receive pleasure and not rejoice. Even the physical affections are to be mastered by endurance and this too is part of the Stoic discipline. Age, death, suffering, pain are not fled from, but accepted and vanquished by a high indifference." (CWSA 19: 195–196)

k.

"The Lord in our hearts is in the ignorance also the cause of our actions, but through his Maya, through the egoism

of our lower nature which creates the tangled web of our actions and brings back upon our egoism the recoil of their tangled reactions affecting us inwardly as sin and virtue, affecting us outwardly as suffering and pleasure, evil fortune and good fortune, the great chain of Karma. When we are freed by knowledge, the Lord, no longer hidden in our hearts, but manifest as our supreme self, takes up our works and uses us as faultless instruments, *nimitta-mātram*, for the helping of the world. Such is the intimate union between knowledge and equality; knowledge here in the *buddhi* reflected as equality in the temperament; above, on a higher plane of consciousness, knowledge as the light of the Being, equality as the stuff of the Nature." (CWSA 19: 203)

I.

"Equality and self-control are most necessary to Yoga, but also *most difficult*, one has to strive slowly after them; they are not, at least in their completeness, easily attainable. The whole being has to be pervaded by calm and peace; the nerves and cells of the body have to be full of calm and peace. Until then what one has to strive to attain is an inner calm in the inner being which remains even when the outer is disturbed by invasions of grief, unease or anger. The Yogi arrives first at a sort of division in his being in which the inner Purusha fixed and calm looks at the perturbations of the outer man as one looks at the passions of an

unreasonable child; that once fixed, he can proceed afterwards to control the outer man also. Whether he can easily control the actions depends on the temperament of his outer man, whether it is vehement, emotional and passionate or comparatively sedate and quiet. But a complete control of the outer man needs a long and arduous tapasya. It cannot be expected and even the assured inner calm cannot be expected of those who are still in a very early stage of the journey, who are still sadhaks and not Yogis." (CWSA 31: 658)

m.

"In the Gita this element [submissive forbearance] takes the more ample form of an entire surrender of the whole being to God. It is not merely a passive submission, but an active self-giving; not only a seeing and an accepting of the divine Will in all things, but a giving up of one's own will to be the instrument of the Master of works, and this not with the lesser idea of being a servant of God, but, eventually at least, of such a complete renunciation both of the consciousness and the works to him that our being becomes one with his being and the impersonalised nature only an instrument and nothing else. All result good or bad, pleasing or unpleasing, fortunate or unfortunate, is accepted as belonging to the Master of our actions, so that finally not only are grief and suffering borne, but they are

banished: a perfect equality of the emotional mind is established." (CWSA 19: 209)

n.

"But what, asks Arjuna, are the signs of such a man, what his action and how is he said even in action to be above the three gunas? The sign, says Krishna, is that equality of which I have so constantly spoken; the sign is that inwardly he regards happiness and suffering alike, gold and mud and stone as of equal value and that to him the pleasant and the unpleasant, praise and blame, honour and insult, the faction of his friends and the faction of his enemies are equal things. He is steadfast in a wise imperturbable and immutable inner calm and quietude." (CWSA 19: 432–433)

o.

"There are two conditions, one of Ananda, another of great calm and equality in which there is no joy or grief. If one attains the latter, afterwards a greater more permanent Ananda becomes possible." (CWSA 29: 157)

XII—Removing Physical Suffering by Bringing Peace via the Solar Plexus and by Widening to Bring the Divine Reality to the Place of Pain

1.

"If you know how to concentrate, to be quiet, and if you can bring into yourself a certain peace, of any kind—it may be a mental peace, it may be a vital peace, it may be a psychic peace; they have different values and qualities, this is an individual question—you try to realise within yourself a state of peace or attempt to enter into a conscious contact with a force of peace.... Suppose you succeed more or less completely. Then, if you can draw the peace into yourself and bring it down into the solar plexus—for we are not talking of inner states but of your physical body—and from there direct it very calmly, very slowly I might say, but very persistently, towards the place where the pain is more or less sharp, and fix it there, this is very good.

This is not always enough.

But if by widening this movement you can add a sort of mental formation with a little life in it—not just cold, but with a little life in it—that the only reality is the divine Reality, and all the cells of this body are a more or less deformed expression of this divine Reality—there is only one Reality, the Divine, and our body is a more or less deformed expression of this sole Reality—if by my

aspiration, my concentration, I can bring into the cells of the body the consciousness of this *sole* Reality, all disorder must necessarily cease.

If you can add to that a movement of complete and trusting surrender to the Grace, then I am sure that within five minutes your suffering will disappear. If you know how to do it.

You may try and yet not succeed. But you must know how to try again and again and again, until you do succeed. But if you do those three things at the same time, well, there is no pain which can resist." (CWM 8: 213)

XIII—All Those Who Have Suffered Torture for Their Highest Thought and Ideal Have Felt Divine Grace Helping to Keep Them from Suffering

1.

"Generally, all those who have suffered tortures for their faith, that is, for their highest thought, their most sublime ideal, have always felt a kind of divine grace helping them and keeping them from suffering. Of course, outsiders call this a 'sacrifice' (that is understandable, they have sacrificed their life), but one cannot use the word for what personally concerns them, because for them it was not a sacrifice, it was a joy. All depends on the inner attitude. Now, if for a single moment during the torture they had had the least idea, 'Why am I being tortured?' they would have undergone unbearable suffering. A single passing thought suffices.

Almost all events—at least all the important circumstances of human life—may be looked at from two sides: from below or from above. If you see them from below, with the feelings of the ordinary man, you are terrified by the amount of suffering of all those who have preached a new religion or wished to set an example to humanity—they have all suffered, that is, they have all been persecuted by men. Generally speaking, with a very few exceptions, men do not like what is superior to them, and when they meet someone who is far above them (I

am saying, apart from some exceptions), that makes them furious. They suffer an almost insurmountable annoyance in meeting something so infinitely higher than what they are. They have only one idea, to destroy it, and in fact that is what they have done. Throughout human history it has been thus. Those who have come with special abilities, a special grace, and have tried to make men come out of their ordinary rut, have been more or less persecuted, martyred, burnt alive, put on the cross.... The situation now is apparently a little better because now slightly more plausible reasons than those of old are needed to burn men—the habit of doing so is no longer there—but the feelings are not very different. The human race, generally, has a sort of rancour against what surpasses it; it feels humiliated, and men do not like to be humiliated." (CWM 4: 316–317)

XIV—Grace Can Abolish Suffering

1.

"*Sweet Mother,*

In the Darshan message of November 24th, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the influence of the Divine Compassion and the Divine Grace. But what is the difference between the two?

The compassion seeks to relieve the suffering of all, whether they deserve it or not.

The Grace does not recognise the right of suffering to exist and abolishes it." (CWM 16: 345)

2.

"I have said somewhere, or maybe written, that no matter how great your faith and trust in the divine Grace, no matter how great your capacity to see it at work in all circumstances, at every moment, at every point in life, you will never succeed in understanding the marvellous immensity of Its Action, and the precision, the exactitude with which this Action is accomplished; you will never be able to grasp to what extent the Grace does everything, is behind everything, organises everything, conducts everything, so that the march forward to the divine realisation may be as swift, as complete, as total and

harmonious as possible, considering the circumstances of the world.

As soon as you are in contact with It, there is not a second in time, not a point in space, which does not show you dazzlingly this perpetual work of the Grace, this constant intervention of the Grace.

And once you have seen this, you feel you are never equal to it, for you should never forget it, never have any fears, any anguish, any regrets, any recoils... or even suffering. If one were in union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin living a life of exultation, of all-power, of infinite happiness.

And that would be the best possible collaboration in the divine Work." (CWM 8: 250)

XV—When the Sorrow of the Earth Overwhelms Us, the Light from the Depths of Our Being Can Restore Peace and Calm

1.

"If at any time a deep sorrow, a searing doubt or an intense pain overwhelms you and drives you to despair, there is an infallible way to regain calm and peace.

In the depths of our being there shines a light whose brilliance is equalled only by its purity; a light, a living and conscious portion of a universal godhead who animates and nourishes and illumines Matter, a powerful and unfailing guide for those who are willing to heed his law, a helper full of solace and loving forbearance towards all who aspire to see and hear and obey him. No sincere and lasting aspiration towards him can be in vain; no strong and respectful trust can be disappointed, no expectation ever deceived.

My heart has suffered and lamented, almost breaking beneath a sorrow too heavy, almost sinking beneath a pain too strong.... But I have called to thee, O divine comforter, I have prayed ardently to thee, and the splendour of thy dazzling light has appeared to me and revived me.

As the rays of thy glory penetrated and illumined all my being, I clearly perceived the path to follow, the use that can be made of suffering; I understood that the sorrow that held me in its grip was but a pale reflection of

the sorrow of the earth, of this abysm of suffering and anguish.

Only those who have suffered can understand the suffering of others; understand it, commune with it and relieve it. And I understood, O divine comforter, sublime Holocaust, that in order to sustain us in all our troubles, to soothe all our pangs, thou must have known and felt all the sufferings of earth and man, all without exception." (CWM 2: 20)

XVI—Delight Dissolves Every Suffering and Is the Most Powerful Way to Overcome Sorrow

1.

"The only way to make life perfect—I mean here, life on earth, of course—is to look at it from high enough to see it as a whole, not only in its present totality, but in the whole of the past, present and future: what it has been, what it is and what it will be—one must be able to see everything at once. Because that is the only way to put everything in its place. Nothing can be eliminated, nothing *should* be eliminated, but each thing must be in its place in total harmony with all the rest. And then all these things that seem so 'bad', so 'reprehensible', so 'unacceptable' to the puritan mind, would become movements of delight and freedom in a totally divine life. And then nothing would prevent us from knowing, understanding, feeling and living this wonderful laughter of the Supreme who takes infinite delight in watching Himself live infinitely.

This delight, this wonderful laughter that dissolves every shadow, every pain, every suffering! You only have to go deep enough within yourself to find the inner Sun, to let yourself be flooded by it; and then there is nothing but a cascade of harmonious, luminous, sunlit laughter, which leaves no room for any shadow or pain.

In fact, even the greatest difficulties, even the greatest sorrows, even the greatest physical pain—if you

can look at them from that standpoint, from there, you see the unreality of the difficulty, the unreality of the sorrow, the unreality of the pain—and there is nothing but a joyful and luminous vibration.

In fact, this is the most powerful way of dissolving difficulties, overcoming sorrows and removing pain. The first two are relatively easy—I say relatively—the last one [physical pain] is more difficult because we are in the habit of considering the body and its feelings to be extremely concrete, positive; but it is the same thing, it is simply because we have not learnt, we are not in the habit of regarding our body as something fluid, plastic, uncertain, malleable. We have not learnt to bring into it this luminous laughter that dissolves all darkness, all difficulty, all discord, all disharmony, everything that jars, that weeps and wails.

And this Sun, this Sun of divine laughter is at the centre of all things, the truth of all things: we must learn to see it, to feel it, to live it.

And for that, let us avoid people who take life seriously; they are very boring people.

As soon as the atmosphere becomes grave you can be sure that something is wrong, that there is a troubling influence, an old habit trying to reassert itself, which should not be accepted. All this regret, all this remorse, the feeling of being unworthy, of being at fault—and then one

step further and you have the sense of sin. Oh! To me it all seems to belong to another age, an age of darkness.

But everything that persists, that tries to cling and endure, all these prohibitions and this habit of cutting life in two—into small things and big things, the sacred and the profane.... 'What!' say the people who profess to follow a spiritual life, 'how can you make such little things, such insignificant things the object of spiritual experience?' And yet this is an experience that becomes more and more concrete and real, even materially; it's not that there are 'some things' where the Lord is and 'some things' where He is not. The Lord is *always* there. He takes nothing seriously, everything amuses Him and He plays with you, if you know how to play. You do not know how to play, people do not know how to play. But how well He knows how to play! How well He plays! With everything, with the smallest things: you have some things to put on the table? Don't feel that you have to think and arrange, no, let's play: let's put this one here and that one there, and this one like that. And then another time it's different again.... What a good game and such fun!

So, it is agreed, we shall try to learn how to laugh with the Lord." (CWM 10: 155–157)

XVII—By Becoming Entirely Disinterested in Mind and Heart and Detached from the Nervous Being, the Delight of Existence Is Within Our Reach

1.

"This elimination is possible because pain and pleasure themselves are currents, one imperfect, the other perverse, but still currents of the delight of existence. The reason for this imperfection and this perversion is the self-division of the being in his consciousness by measuring and limiting Maya and in consequence an egoistic and piecemeal instead of a universal reception of contacts by the individual. For the universal soul all things and all contacts of things carry in them an essence of delight best described by the Sanskrit aesthetic term, *rasa*, which means at once sap or essence of a thing and its taste. It is because we do not seek the essence of the thing in its contact with us, but look only to the manner in which it affects our desires and fears, our cravings and shrinkings that grief and pain, imperfect and transient pleasure or indifference, that is to say, blank inability to seize the essence, are the forms taken by the Rasa. If we could be entirely disinterested in mind and heart and impose that detachment on the nervous being, the progressive elimination of these imperfect and perverse forms of Rasa would be possible and the true essential taste of the inalienable delight of existence in all its variations would be

within our reach. We attain to something of this capacity for variable but universal delight in the aesthetic reception of things as represented by Art and Poetry, so that we enjoy there the Rasa or taste of the sorrowful, the terrible, even the horrible or repellent; and the reason is because we are detached, disinterested, not thinking of ourselves or of self-defence *(jugupsā*), but only of the thing and its essence. Certainly, this aesthetic reception of contacts is not a precise image or reflection of the pure delight which is supramental and supra-aesthetic; for the latter would eliminate sorrow, terror, horror and disgust with their cause while the former admits them: but it represents partially and imperfectly one stage of the progressive delight of the universal Soul in things in its manifestation and it admits us in one part of our nature to that detachment from egoistic sensation and that universal attitude through which the one Soul sees harmony and beauty where we divided beings experience rather chaos and discord. The full liberation can come to us only by a similar liberation in all our parts, the universal aesthesis, the universal standpoint of knowledge, the universal detachment from all things and yet sympathy with all in our nervous and emotional being." (CWSA 21: 116–117)

XVIII—The True Solution Is to Replace the Present Human Consciousness with a New Supramental Consciousness

1.

"Some of these religions were based on prophetic revelation, others on a philosophical and spiritual ideal, but very soon the revelation changed to rituals and the philosophical ideal to dogmas, and so the truth they contained vanished. Moreover, and most important, all religions, almost without exception, offer man an almost identical other-worldly solution, based on death, not on life. Their solution amounts to this: bear all your miseries without complaining, for this world is irremediably evil, and you shall be rewarded for your meekness after death; or else: renounce all attachment to life and you shall escape forever from the cruel necessity of living. This certainly cannot provide any remedy to the sufferings of humanity on earth nor to the condition of the world in general. On the contrary, if we want to find a true solution to the confusion, chaos and misery of the world, we have to find it in the world itself. And this is in fact where it is to be found. It exists potentially, we have only to discover it; it is neither mystic nor imaginary; it is altogether concrete and disclosed to us by Nature herself, if we know how to observe her. For the movement of Nature is an ascending one; from one form, one species, she brings forth a new

one capable of manifesting something more of the universal consciousness. All goes to show that man is not the last step in terrestrial evolution. The human species will necessarily be succeeded by a new one which will be to man what man is to the animal; the present human consciousness will be replaced by a new consciousness, no longer mental but supramental. And this consciousness will give birth to a higher race, superhuman and divine." (CWM 12: 494)

XIX—The Cessation of Human Suffering Can Be Achieved by Those Who Have Become Conscious of the Eternal

1.

"What then is this goal?

It is one with the purpose of man's life and his mission in the universe.

The goal: 'Call him what you will, for to the wise, he is the Possessor of all names.'

The Tao of the Chinese—The Brahman of the Hindus—The Law of the Buddhists—The Good of Hermes—That which cannot be named, according to the ancient Jewish tradition—The God of the Christians—The Allah of the Muslims—The Justice, the Truth of the materialists.

The purpose of man's life is to become conscious of That.

His mission is to manifest It.

All religions, all the teachings of all the sages are nothing other than methods to reach this goal.

They can be classified into three principal categories.

First method—intellectual: The love of Truth, the search for the Absolute.

By discernment, study, reflection, analysis, control and concentration of the thought, one dispels the illusion of personality, a whirl of atoms in a single substance which

is itself nothing but an appearance: a condensation of the ether.

… Where then is the self, that is to say, something permanent, constant, ever the same? In order to find it, to find this absolute, we must proceed from depth to depth, from relativity to relativity—for all that is in form is relative—until we reach That which is Unthinkable to our reason, Unutterable to our language, but knowable by identification—for we carry That in ourselves, it is the very centre and life of *our* being.

Second method—the love of God. It is the method of those who have a developed religious sense.

Aspiration towards the Divine Essence of all things that we have perceived in a moment of integral illumination.

Then self-consecration to this Divine Essence, to this Eternal Law, integral self-giving, at every moment, in all one's actions. Complete surrender: one is now only a docile instrument, a faithful servant before the Supreme Master. The Love is so complete that it causes a detachment from all that is not the Divine Absolute and perfect concentration on Him.

'Besides, it is not impossible to rise higher than that, for love itself is a veil between the lover and the Beloved.'

Identification.

Third method—the love of humanity.

As a consequence of a clear vision, an intense perception of the immense suffering of humanity, there arises the resolution to consecrate oneself entirely to making this suffering cease.

Self-oblivion in the giving of all one's thoughts, all one's energies, all one's activities to succour others, in however small a degree.

'With your hearts overflowing with compassion, go forth into this world torn by pain, be instructors, and wherever the darkness of ignorance rules, there light a torch.'

This consecration to humanity manifests in four domains. One can give to others in four ways:

Material gifts. Intellectual gifts: knowledge. Spiritual gifts: harmony, beauty, rhythm. The integral gift, which can be made only by those who have followed the three paths, [intellectual the search for the Absolute, the love of God, the love of humanity] who have synthesised within themselves all the methods of development, of becoming conscious of That which is Eternal: the gift of example. The example which is not self-conscious and which one gives because one *is*, because one lives in the Eternal Divine Consciousness." (CWM 2: 129–131)

2.

"All the prophets, all the instructors who have come to bring the divine word to men, have, on one point at least, given an identical teaching.

All of them have taught us that the greatest truths are sterile unless they are transformed through us into useful actions. All have proclaimed the necessity of living their revelation in daily life. All have declared that they show us the path but that we must tread it ourselves; no being, however great, can do our work in our stead.

…

It is indeed very necessary that each one of us should be an example to the world. For it is only by showing to men how an inner commerce with the eternal truths transforms disorder into harmony and suffering into peace, that we shall induce them to follow the way which will lead them towards liberation." (CWM 2: 109)

3.

"Besides, there is a height where all virtues meet in communion: love, goodness, compassion, forbearance, charity are all one and the same in their essence.

From this point of view, charity could be considered as the tangible and practical outer action determined by the application of the virtues of love.

For there is a force which can be distributed to all, always, provided that it is given in its most impersonal

form: this is love, love which contains within itself light and life, that is, all the possibilities of intelligence, health, blossoming.

Yes, there is a sublime charity, one which rises from a happy heart, from a serene soul.

One who has won inner peace is a herald of deliverance wherever he goes, a bearer of hope and joy. Is not this what poor and suffering humanity needs above all things?

Yes, there are certain men whose thoughts are all love, who radiate love, and the mere presence of these individuals is a charity more active, more real than any other.

Though they utter no word and make no gesture, yet the sick are relieved, the tormented are soothed, the ignorant are enlightened, the wicked are appeased, those who suffer are consoled and all undergo this deep transformation which will open new horizons to them, enable them to take a step forward which no doubt will be decisive, on the infinite path of progress.

These individuals who, out of love, give themselves to all, who become the servants of all, are the living symbols of the supreme Charity." (CWM 2: 105–106)

4.

"Only when you find such a world disgusting, unbearable and unacceptable, are you fit for the change of

consciousness. That is why I do not give any importance to the idea of renunciation. To renounce means that you are to give up what you value, that you have to discard what you think is worth keeping. What, on the contrary, you must feel is that this world is ugly, stupid, brutal and full of intolerable suffering; and once you feel in this way, all the physical, all the material consciousness which does not want it to be that, will want it to change, crying, 'I will have something else—something that is true, beautiful, full of delight and knowledge and consciousness!' All here is floating on a sea of dark unconsciousness. But when you want the Divine with all your will, all your resolution, all your aspiration and intensity, it will surely come. But it is not merely a matter of ameliorating the world. There are people who clamour for change of government, social reform and philanthropic work, believing that they can thereby make the world better. *We* want a new world, a true world, an expression of the Truth-Consciousness. And it will be, it must be—and the sooner the better!

It should not, however, be just a subjective change. The whole physical life must be transformed. The material world does not want a mere change of consciousness in us. It says in effect: 'You retire into bliss, become luminous, have the divine knowledge; but that does not alter me. I still remain the hell I practically am!' The true change of consciousness is one that will change the physical

conditions of the world and make it an entirely new creation.” (CWM 3: 128)

XX—Avatars Assume Human Limitations to Show How Sorrow and Suffering Can Be Overcome

1.

"The Avatar does not come as a thaumaturgic magician, but as the divine leader of humanity and the exemplar of a divine humanity. Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show, first, how that suffering may be a means of redemption,—as did Christ,—secondly, to show how, having been assumed by the divine soul in the human nature, it can also be overcome in the same nature,—as did Buddha. The rationalist who would have cried to Christ, 'If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross,' or points out sagely that the Avatar was not divine because he died and died too by disease,—as a dog dieth,—knows not what he is saying: for he has missed the root of the whole matter. Even, the Avatar of sorrow and suffering must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy; the human limitation must be assumed in order to show how it can be overcome; and the way and the extent of the overcoming, whether internal only or external also, depends upon the stage of the human advance; it must not be done by a non-human miracle." (CWSA 19: 165)

2.

"If they [*the difficulties and struggles of the Avatar*] are shams, they have no value for others or for any true effect.

If they have no value for others or for any true effect, they are perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value." (CWSA 28: 472) (CWSA 35: 417)

3.

"The Divine also comes down into the cycle of rebirths, makes the great holocaust, endures shame and obloquy, torture and crucifixion, the burden of human nature, sex and passion and sorrow and suffering, manifests many births before he reveals the Avatar. And when he does reveal it? Well, read the lives of the Avatars and try to understand and see." (CWSA 35: 424)

4.

"We have had sufferings and struggles to which yours are mere child's play,—I have not made our cases equal to yours. I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness—if

nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. X seems to say that there is no Way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug,—there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such an idea makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood—there is no reason in it, no necessity for it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is part of the world arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning." (CWSA 35: 420)

5.

"The very first books on Yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the second over the other.

It is not either because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and the Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer. No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we have had to struggle hundreds of times (in fact that is an

understatement) before we could overcome; many still remain protesting that they have a right until the perfect perfection is there. But we have never consented to admit their inevitable necessity for others. It is in fact to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden. It was with that object that the Mother once prayed to the Divine that whatever difficulties, dangers, sufferings were necessary for the path might be laid on her rather than on others." (CWSA 29: 471– 472)

6.

"To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee." *9 December 1950* (CWM 13: 7)

7.

"There is no disease from which I [the Mother] have not suffered. I have taken all the diseases upon my body to see their course and to have their knowledge by experience in the physical, so that I may be able to work upon them. But as my physical has no fear and it responds to the

higher pressure, it is easier for me to get rid of them." (CWM 13: 59)

8.

"But personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda. In her deep and great love for her children she has consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother." (CWSA 32: 17)

9.

"The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and

shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda." (CWSA 32: 26)

10.
"Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain". (CWSA 33:314)

11.
"Suffering was lost in her immortal smile." (CWSA 33:314)

12.
"*There are many who hold the view that she was human but now embodies the Divine Mother and her Prayers, they say, explain this view. But to my mental conception, to my psychic feeling, she is the Divine Mother who has consented to put on herself the cloak of obscurity and suffering and ignorance so that she can effectively lead us—human beings—to Knowledge and Bliss and Ananda and to Him.*

The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing divine consciousness, not human turning into divine. The Mother was inwardly above

the human even in childhood, so the view held by 'many' is erroneous." (CWSA 32: 31–32) (CWM 1: 384–385)

13.

"The Great who came to save this suffering world
And rescue out of Time's shadow and the Law,
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain; [Savitri] (CWSA 34: 445)

14.

"Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face." (CWSA 33: 344)

15.

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

…

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

is still bound to his cross, suffering perpetually for the salvation of men." (CWM 10: 59)

16.

"But the death of Christ was the starting-point of a new stage in the evolution of human civilisation. This is why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the death of Christ was of greater historical significance, that is to say, it has had greater historical consequences than the death of Caesar. The story of Christ, as it has been told, is the concrete and dramatic enactment of the divine sacrifice: the Supreme Lord, who is All-Light, All-Knowledge, All- Power, All-Beauty, All-Love, All-Bliss, accepting to assume human ignorance and suffering in matter, in order to help men to emerge from the falsehood in which they live and because of which they die." (CWM 10: 61)

17.

"*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)

XXI—The Fighting Instincts of Man Should Be Used Exclusively to Conquer the Causes of Suffering and Misery

1.

"There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment." (CWM 12: 93)

XXII—Change the Capacity for Suffering into the Certitude of Being Happy

1.

"You may open millions of hospitals, that will not prevent people getting ill. On the contrary, they will have every facility and encouragement to fall ill. We are steeped in ideas of this kind. This puts your conscience at rest: 'I have come to the world, I must help others.' One tells oneself: 'How disinterested I am! I am going to help humanity.' All this is nothing but egoism.

In fact, the first human being that concerns you is yourself. You want to diminish suffering, but unless you can change the capacity of suffering into a certitude of being happy, the world will not change. It will always be the same, we turn in a circle—one civilisation follows another, one catastrophe another; but the thing does not change, for there is something missing, something not there, that is the consciousness." (CWM 5: 15)

XXIII—The Mother Never Wants Any of Her Children to Suffer

1.

"*Dear Mother,*

Yes, I know that You know that now I can hide nothing from You and that it is impossible for me to live without You, and this is why, Mother, You like to see me suffer as much as possible—isn't it so?

I understand absolutely nothing of what you mean to say. You *seem to be saying* that I like to see you suffer; but this is so absurd that I cannot believe it is what you *mean*.

When with all my will I am working for the disappearance of suffering from the world, how could I want, much less like, one of my children to suffer! It would be monstrous. (CWM 16: 73)

XXIV—Experience of the Mother Healing People's Suffering

1.

February 22, 1914

"When I was a child of about thirteen, for nearly a year every night as soon as I had gone to bed it seemed to me that I went out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the city, very high above. Then I used to see myself clad in a magnificent golden robe, much longer than myself; and as I rose higher, the robe would stretch, spreading out in a circle around me to form a kind of immense roof over the city. Then I would see men, women, children, old men, the sick, the unfortunate coming out from every side; they would gather under the outspread robe, begging for help, telling of their miseries, their suffering, their hardships. In reply, the robe, supple and alive, would extend towards each one of them individually, and as soon as they had touched it, they were comforted or healed, and went back into their bodies happier and stronger than they had come out of them. Nothing seemed more beautiful to me, nothing could make me happier; and all the activities of the day seemed dull and colourless and without any real life, beside this activity of the night which was the true life for me. Often while I was rising up in this way, I used to see at my left an old

man, silent and still, who looked at me with kindly affection and encouraged me by his presence. This old man, dressed in a long dark purple robe, was the personification—as I came to know later—of him who is called the Man of Sorrows." (CWM 1: 81)

2.

"These surface things have nothing dramatic about them. They seem to me more and more like soap-bubbles, especially since the third of February. [The Mother had an experience of living in supramental world on third of February 1958]

There are people who come to me in despair, in tears, in what they call terrible psychological suffering; when I see them like this, I slightly shift the needle in my consciousness which contains you all, and when they go away they are completely comforted. It is just like a compass needle; one shifts the needle a little in the consciousness and it is all over. Of course, it comes back later, out of habit. They are nothing but soap-bubbles.

I have known suffering also, but there was always a part of myself which knew how to stand behind, apart.

The only thing in the world which still seems intolerable to me now, is all the physical deterioration, the physical suffering, the ugliness, the inability to express that capacity for beauty which is in every being. But that too will be conquered one day. There too the power will come

one day to shift the needle a little. Only, we must rise higher in consciousness: the deeper one wants to go down into matter, the higher is it necessary to rise in consciousness. That will take time. Sri Aurobindo was surely right when he spoke of a few centuries." (CWM 9: 282–283)

XXV—The Ills That Humanity Suffers Stem from the Errors That Lie at the Root of Our Ignorant Nature

"The world will be made better only in proportion as we make ourselves better. The Vedantic truth that the world is only a projection—a function—of our consciousness is as pragmatically true as it is spiritually true. The ills that humanity suffers from—collectively and individually—stem from the errors that lie at the roots of our ignorant nature. We must be cleansed of these evils—individually first of all—if we ever hope to see a clean world outside. A yoga of self-purification is the condition precedent to a yoga of perfection.

But, in the end, a Higher Destiny leans over earth's children and its ways are beyond calculation." (CWM 14: 277)

XXVI—When Will Suffering Be Abolished from the World?

"Every action has its consequences, good or bad, but the idea of reward and punishment is a purely human idea and does not at all correspond to the way in which the Truth-Consciousness acts. If the Consciousness that rules the world had acted according to human principles of punishment and reward, there would have been no men left on earth for a long time.

When men become pure enough to transmit the divine vibrations without distorting them, then suffering will be abolished from the world. That is the only way." (CWM 12: 379)

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