

The True Aim of Life

*In the Words of
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*

*“An aimless life is always a miserable life.
Every one of you should have an aim. But
do not forget that on the quality of your aim
will depend the quality of your life.”*

(CWM 12, p.3)

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I. The Absolute

“Parabrahman being the Absolute is indescribable by any name or definite conception. It is not Being or Non-Being, but something of which Being and Non-Being are primary symbols; not Atman or unAtman or Maya; not Personality or Impersonality; not Quality or Non-Quality; not Consciousness or Non-Consciousness; not Bliss or Non-Bliss; not Purusha or Prakriti; not god nor man nor animal; not release nor bondage; but something of which all these are primary or derivative, general or particular symbols. Still, **when we say Parabrahman is not this or that, we mean that It cannot in its essentiality be limited to this or that symbol or any sum of symbols; in a sense Parabrahman is all this and all this is Parabrahman. There is nothing else which all this can be.**

Parabrahman being Absolute is not subject to logic, for logic applies only to the determinate. We talk confusion if we say that the Absolute cannot manifest the determinate and therefore the universe is false or non-existent. The very nature of the Absolute is that we do not know what it is or is not, what it can do or cannot do; we have no reason to suppose that there is anything it cannot do or that its Absoluteness is limited by any kind of impotency. We experience spiritually that when we go beyond everything else we come to something Absolute; we experience spiritually that the universe is in the nature of a

“Because God is invincibly great, He can afford to be weak; because He is immutably pure, He can indulge with impunity in sin; He knows eternally all delight, therefore He tastes also the delight of pain; He is inalienably wise, therefore He has not debarred Himself from folly.”
(CWSA 12, p. 430)

manifestation proceeding, as it were, from the Absolute; but all these words and phrases are merely intellectual terms trying to express the inexpressible.”(*CWSA 12, pp.104-05*)

The “Why” of This Creation

“The universe is an objectivisation of the Supreme, as if He had objectivised himself outside of himself in order to see himself, to live himself, to know himself, and so that there might be an existence and a consciousness capable of recognising him as their origin and uniting consciously with him to manifest him in the becoming. There is no other reason for the universe. The earth is a kind of symbolic crystallisation of universal life, a reduction, a concentration, so that the work of evolution may be easier to do and follow. And if we see the history of the earth, we can understand why the universe has been created. It is the Supreme growing aware of himself in an eternal Becoming; and the goal is the union of the created with the Creator, a union that is conscious, willing and free, in the Manifestation.

That is the secret of Nature. Nature is the executive Force, it is she who does the work.”(*CWM 9, p. 321*)

The question that naturally arises in one's mind is, “Why should Brahman, perfect, absolute, infinite, needing nothing, desiring nothing, at all throw out force of consciousness to create in itself these worlds of forms?” For we have put aside the solution that it is compelled by its own nature of Force to create, obliged by its own potentiality of movement and formation to move into forms. It is true that it has this potentiality, but it is not limited, bound or compelled by it; it is free. If, then, being free to move or remain eternally still, to throw itself into forms or retain the potentiality of form in

itself, it indulges its power of movement and formation, it can be only for one reason, for delight.”(CWSA 21, p.98)

In this conception of an inalienable underlying delight of existence of which all outward or surface sensations are a positive, negative or neutral play, waves and foamings of that infinite deep, we arrive at the true solution of the problem of the “why” of creation. “The self of things is an infinite indivisible existence; of that existence the essential nature or power is an infinite imperishable force of self-conscious being; and of that self-consciousness the essential nature or knowledge of itself is, again, an infinite inalienable delight of being. In formlessness and in all forms, in the eternal awareness of infinite and indivisible being and in the multiform appearances of finite division this self-existence preserves perpetually its self-delight... but to our ordinary view of self and things which awakes and moves only upon surfaces, it remains hidden, profound, subconscious. And as it is within all forms, so it is within all experiences whether pleasant, painful or neutral. There too hidden, profound, subconscious, it is that which enables and compels things to remain in existence. It is the reason of that clinging to existence, that overmastering will-to-be, translated vitally as the instinct of self-preservation, physically as the imperishability of matter, mentally as the sense of immortality which attends the formed existence through all its phases of self-development... Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases. “From Ananda,” says the Upanishad ‘all existences are born, by Ananda they remain in being and increase, to Ananda they depart.’” (CWSA 21, pp.108-09)

“Not to return as speedily as may be to heavens where

perfect light and joy are eternal or to the supracosmic bliss is the object of this cosmic cycle, nor merely to repeat a purposeless round in a long unsatisfactory groove of ignorance seeking for knowledge and never finding it perfectly, – in that case the ignorance would be either an inexplicable blunder of the All-conscient or a painful and purposeless Necessity equally inexplicable, – but to realise the Ananda of the Self in other conditions than the supracosmic, in cosmic being, and to find its heaven of joy and light even in the oppositions offered by the terms of an embodied material existence, by struggle therefore towards the joy of self-discovery, would seem to be the true object of the birth of the soul in the human body and of the labour of the human race in the series of its cycles. The Ignorance is a necessary, though quite subordinate term which the universal Knowledge has imposed on itself that that movement might be possible, – not a blunder and a fall, but a purposeful descent, not a curse, but a divine opportunity. To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe.” (CWSA 21, p. 613)

“What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being.” (CWSA 13, p.200)

II. The Human Aspiration and the Appearance and the Reality of the Terrestrial Existence

*“A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.”*

(CWSA 33, p.67)

“There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose

“The animal is satisfied with a modicum of necessity; the gods are content with their splendours. But man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good. He is the greatest of living beings because he is the most discontented, because he feels most the pressure of limitations. He alone, perhaps, is capable of being seized by the divine frenzy for a remote ideal.” (CWSA 21, p.51)

consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious." (*CWM 12, p.116*)

"The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation, – for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment, – is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. **The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last, – God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.**

These persistent ideals of the race are at once the contradiction of its normal experience and the affirmation of higher and deeper experiences which are abnormal to humanity and only to be attained, in their organised entirety, by a revolutionary individual effort or an evolutionary general progression. To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental

illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, **to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation, – this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.**”
(*CWSA 21, pp.3-4*)

In the integral spiritual view of existence, “The world is a movement of God in His own being; we are the centres and knots of divine consciousness which sum up and support the processes of His movement. The world is His play with His own self-conscious delight, He who alone exists, infinite, free and perfect; we are the self-multiplications of that conscious delight, thrown out into being to be His playmates. The world is a formula, a rhythm, a symbol-system expressing God to Himself in His own consciousness, – it has no material existence but exists only in His consciousness and self-expression; we, like God, are in our inward being That which is expressed, but in our outward being terms of that formula, notes of that rhythm, symbols of that system. Let us lead forward God’s movement, play out His play, work out His formula, execute His harmony, express Him through ourselves in His system. This is our joy and our self-fulfillment; to this end we who transcend and exceed the universe, have entered into universe-existence.

Perfection has to be worked out, harmony has to be accomplished. Imperfection, limitation, death, grief, ignorance, matter, are only the first terms of the formula – unintelligible till we have worked out the wider terms and reinterpreted the

formulary; they are the initial discords of the musician's tuning. Out of imperfection we have to construct perfection, out of limitation to discover infinity, out of death to find immortality, out of grief to recover divine bliss, out of ignorance to rescue divine self-knowledge, out of matter to reveal Spirit. To work out this end for ourselves and for humanity is the object of our Yogic practice." (CWSA 12, p.97)

* * *

"Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others.

But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself.

To work for your perfection, the first step is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities.." (CWM 12, p.3)

* * *

"Life on earth is essentially a field for progress. But how brief life is for all the progress that has to be made!

To waste one's time seeking the satisfaction of one's petty desires is sheer folly. True happiness is possible only when one has found the Divine." (CWM 16, pp.436-37)

"Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes." (CWSA 13, p.204)

III. The True Aim of Human Life

“...human beings come into a physical body without knowing why, most of them go through life without knowing why, they leave their body without knowing why, and they have to begin the same thing all over again, indefinitely, until one day, someone comes along and tells them, “Be careful! you know, there is a purpose to this. You are here for this work, don’t miss your opportunity!”

And how many years are wasted.” (*CWM 8, p.175*)

“...one is here (*on earth*) because there is something to be done and this something is not anything egoistic. This seems to me the most logical way of entering upon the path – all of a sudden to realise, “Since I am here, it means that I have a mission to fulfil. Since I have been endowed with a consciousness, it is that I have something to do with that consciousness – what is it?”

Generally, **it seems to me that this is the first question one should put to oneself: “Why am I here?”**” (*CWM 4, p.246*)

“Essentially there is but one single true reason for living: it is to know oneself. We are here to learn – to learn what we are, why we are here, and what we have to do. And if we don’t know that, our life is altogether empty – for ourselves and for others.

And so, generally, it is better to begin early, for there is much to learn. If one wants to learn about life as it is, the world as it is, and then really know the why and the how of life, one can begin when very young, from the time one is very, very tiny – before the age of five. And then, when one is

a hundred, one will still be able to learn. So it is interesting. And all the time one can have surprises, always learn something one didn't know, meet with an experience one did not have before, find something one was ignorant of. It is surely very interesting. And the more one knows, the more aware does one become that one has everything to learn. Truly, I could say that only fools believe they know. That indeed is a sure sign, someone coming and telling you, "Oh! I know all that; oh! I know all that"; he is immediately sized up!" (*CWM 6, pp.15-16*)

"...we should tell ourselves, "There must certainly be something I can do better than anyone else, since each one of us is a special mode of manifestation of the divine power which, in its essence, is one in all. However humble and modest it may be, this is precisely the thing to which I should devote myself, and in order to find it, I shall observe and analyse my tastes, tendencies and preferences, and I shall do it without pride or excessive humility, whatever others may think I shall do it just as I breathe, just as the flower smells sweet, quite simply, quite naturally, because I cannot do otherwise."

As soon as we have abolished within us, even for a moment, all egoistic desires, all personal and selfish aims, we can surrender to this inner spontaneity, this deep inspiration which will enable us to commune with the living and progressive forces of the universe.

The conception of our work will inevitably grow more perfect as we grow more perfect ourselves; and to realise this growing perfection, no effort to exceed ourselves should be neglected, but the work we perform must become always more and more joyful and spontaneous, like water welling

from a pure spring.”(CWM 2, pp.53-54)

“Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves siddhas in the purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection. It does not matter if for the present we fall short of our aim, so long as we give ourselves whole-heartedly to the attempt and by living constantly in it and for it move forward even two inches upon the road; even that will help to lead humanity out of struggle and twilight in which it now dwells into the luminous joy which God intends for us. But whatever our immediate success, our unvarying aim must be to perform the whole journey and not lie down content in any wayside stage or imperfect resting place.”
(CWSA 12, p. 98)

* * *

“The individual self and the universal self are one; in every world, in every being, in each thing, in every atom is the Divine Presence, and man’s mission is to manifest it.” (CWM 14, p.3)

* * *

“Is the aim of life to be happy?

This is just putting things topsy-turvy.

The aim of human life is to discover the Divine and to manifest It. Naturally this discovery leads to happiness; but this happiness is a consequence, not an aim in itself. And it is this mistake of taking a mere consequence for aim of life that has been the cause of most of the miseries which are afflicting human life.” (CWM 12, pp.311-12)

“Life has a purpose.

This purpose is to find and to serve the Divine.

The Divine is not far, He is in ourselves, deep inside and above the feelings and the thoughts. With the Divine is peace and certitude and even the solution of all difficulties.

Hand over your problems to the Divine and He will pull you out of all difficulties.” (*CWM 14, p.5*)

“The aim of our life on earth is to become conscious of the Divine.” (*CWM 14, p.4*)

* * *

“The true purpose of life –

To live for the Divine, or to live for the Truth, or at least to live for one’s soul.

And the true sincerity –

To live for the Divine without expecting any benefit from Him in return.” (*CWM 14, p.4*)

“The true aim of life is to find the Divine’s Presence deep inside oneself and to surrender to It so that It takes the lead of the life, all the feelings and all the actions of the body.

This gives a true and luminous aim to existence.” (*CWM 14, p.5*)

“Happiness is not the aim of life.

The aim of ordinary life is to carry out one’s duty, the aim of spiritual life is to realise the Divine.” (*CWM 14, p.7*)

* * *

“In the world, as it is, the goal of life is not to secure personal happiness, but to awaken the individual progressively towards the truth-consciousness.” (*CWM 14, p.7*)

“It is not in order to be happy that we are upon earth, for in the present conditions of terrestrial life happiness is an impossibility. We are upon earth to find and realise the Divine, for the Divine Consciousness alone can give true happiness.” (*CWM 14, p.7*)

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“Man was created to express the Divine. His duty is therefore to become conscious of the Divine and to surrender himself entirely to His Will. All the rest, whatever the appearance, is falsehood and ignorance.” (*CWM 14, p.8*)

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“We seek not our personal salvation but the absolute surrender of our being to the Divine.” (*CWM 14, p.8*)

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“Concentration on the Divine is the only truly valid thing. To do what the Divine wants us to do is the only thing valid.” (*CWM 14, p.8*)

“Above all words, above all thoughts, in the luminous silence of an aspiring faith give yourself totally, unreservedly, absolutely to the Supreme Lord of all existences and He will make of you what He wants you to be.” (*CWM 12, pp.309-10*)

“We are upon earth to manifest the Divine’s will.” (*CWM 14, p.4*)

IV. The Common and the Most Widespread Ideals of Life and the Way the Vast Majority of People Live

“Most people want to be what they call “quiet”, what they call “peaceful”, to have a small organisation in their own measure – which is generally microscopic, and consists of a regular routine of almost the same activities always, within almost the same bounds, in almost the same surroundings – and all that repeated without much difference; with a sufficient variety not to become completely boring, but with nothing that might disturb this regular round which makes what is called a peaceful life. For the vast majority of people this is the ideal.

And so, the realisation of this ideal in its details depends solely on the country where they are born, the society in which they are born, and the customs of their environment. Their ideal is fashioned by the manners of the country and society in which they live.

Of course, there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule. Generally speaking, the most common ideal is to be born in an environment comfortable enough to avoid too many difficulties in life, to marry someone who won't give you too much trouble, to have healthy children who grow up normally – again to avoid trouble – and then a quiet and happy old age, and not be too ill, again to avoid trouble. And then to pass away when one is tired of life, again because one does not want any trouble.

Indeed, this is the most widespread ideal. Naturally, there are exceptions, one may even find the exact opposite. But

existence, as men conceive it, would be rather monotonous. The differences would come in the details, for in one country people prefer one thing and in another, another; and then, in the society in which one is born, there are certain customs and an ideal of happiness, and in another society there are other customs and another ideal of happiness – and that's all.” (CWM 8, pp.57-58)

“Well, to find out what one truly is, to find out why one is on earth, what is the purpose of physical existence, of this presence on earth, of this formation, this existence... the vast majority of people live without asking themselves this even once! Only a small *élite* ask themselves this question with interest, and fewer still start working to get the answer. For, unless one is fortunate enough to come across someone who knows it, it is not such an easy thing to find. Suppose, for instance, that there had never come to your hands a book of Sri Aurobindo's or of any of the writers or philosophers or sages who have dedicated their lives to this quest; if you were in the ordinary world, as millions of people are in the ordinary world, who have never heard of anything, except at times – and not always nowadays, even quite rarely – of some gods and a certain form of religion which is more a habit than a faith and, which, besides, rarely tells you why you are on earth.... Then, one doesn't even think of thinking about it. One lives from day to day the events of each day. When one is very young, one thinks of playing, eating, and a little later of learning, and after that one thinks of all the circumstances of life. But to put this problem to oneself, to confront this problem and ask oneself: “But after all, *why* am I here?” How many do that? There are people to whom this idea comes only when they are facing a catastrophe. When

they see someone whom they love die or when they find themselves in particularly painful and difficult circumstances, they turn back upon themselves, if they are sufficiently intelligent, and ask themselves: “But really, what is this tragedy we are living, and what’s the use of it and what is its purpose?”

And only at that moment does one begin the search to know.

And it is only when one has found, you see, found what he says, found that one has a divine Self and that consequently one must seek to know this divine Self... This comes much later, and yet, in spite of everything, from the very moment of birth in a physical body, there is in the being, in its depths, this psychic presence which pushes the whole being towards this fulfilment. But who knows it and recognises it, this psychic being? That too comes only in special circumstances, and unfortunately, most of the time these have to be painful circumstances, otherwise one goes on living unthinkingly. And in the depths of one’s being is this psychic being which seeks, seeks, seeks to awaken the consciousness and re-establish the union. One knows nothing about it.” (*CWM 9, pp.15-17*)

*“If mankind could but see though in a glimpse of fleeting experience what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all & never rest till they had gained these treasures. But the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, distrust & scepticism are there, sentinels of Nature, to forbid the turning away of our feet from her ordinary pastures.” (*CWSA 12, p.423*)*

V. The Nature and Purpose of the Terrestrial Existence

“Earthly life is the place for progress. It is here, on earth, that progress is possible, during the period of earthly existence. And it is the psychic which carries the progress over from one life to another, by organising its own evolution and development itself.” (*CWM 9, p.270*)

“...psychic starts by being only a kind of tiny divine spark within the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will. The psychic being at its origin is only a spark of the divine consciousness and it is through successive lives that it builds up a conscious individuality. It is a progress similar to that of a growing child. It is a thing in the making. For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is a being in the making. It is not a fully individualised, fully conscious being and master of itself and it needs all its rebirths, one after another, in order to build itself and become fully conscious.” (*CWM 5, p.203*)

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

And what is still more remarkable is that **only human beings can do it, for only human beings have at their centre the divine Presence in the psychic being. For example, this work of self-development and organisation and becoming aware of all the elements is not within the reach of the beings of the vital and mental planes, nor even of the beings who are usually called “gods”; and**

when they want to do it, when they really want to organise themselves and become completely conscious, they have to take a body.” (*CWM 8, p.175*)

“To judge the events of history, a certain distance is needed; similarly, if one knows how to rise high enough above material contingencies, one can see the terrestrial life as a whole. From that moment, it is easy to realise that all the efforts of mankind converge towards the same goal.

It is true that collectively or individually, men follow very different paths to reach it; some of these paths twist and turn so much that they seem at first sight to move away from the goal rather than to lead towards it; but all are going there, consciously or unconsciously, swiftly or more slowly.

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.”
(*CWM 2, p.129*)

“Generally it is believed that things always end badly in Nature. Everyone knows the story of those who have met a lamentable end after having enjoyed great success in their life; of those who had extraordinary capacities and who finally lost them; of a nation which for a long period was the model of a marvellous civilisation – the civilisation vanishes and the nation is changed into something so deplorable that one can no longer recollect what it was. **It seems that the story of the earth is a story of victories followed by defeats and not of defeats followed by victories.**

But in fact, whenever it is a question of universal and divine things, what is needed is the universal vision and divine understanding of things in order to know how the truth expresses itself. There is a kind of general pessimism which says that even if things begin well they end badly, that it is weakness, hypocrisy, falsehood and wickedness which always seem to have the upper hand. That is why those who see the world in their own personal dimension have said that the world is bad and that we have only to finish with it and get out of it as soon as possible. Teachers have taught this but their teaching only proves that their vision is too narrow and in the dimension of their human individuality.

In truth, the movements of Nature are like those of the tides: they advance, they recede, advance and recede; in the universal life and even in terrestrial life, this means a progressive advance, though apparently it is cut up by withdrawals. But these withdrawals are only an appearance, as when one draws back to spring forward. You seem to be drawing back but it is simply in order to go much farther.” (*CWM 4, pp.22-23*)

“The spiritual state is the one thing indispensable;

until the mass of mankind can awaken into it, the dream of a perfect society, an open brotherhood of God's rule, must end in failure and disappointment. The kingdom of God within is the sole possible foundation for the kingdom of God without; for it is the spirit by which man lives that conditions the outer forms of his life."
(*CWSA 1, p.586*)

"Life is a perpetual choice between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, progress and regression, the ascent towards the heights or a fall into the abyss. It is for each one to choose freely." (*CWM 14, p.29*)

"The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. Life is movement, it is effort, it is a march forward, the scaling of a mountain, the climb towards new revelations, towards future realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in the march forward that repose must be found, the true repose of complete trust in the divine Grace, of the absence of desires, of victory over egoism." (*CWM 9, p.66*)

"Never say, "So-and-so does not do this", "So-and-so does something else", "That one does what he should not do" – all this is not your concern. You have been put upon earth, in a physical body, with a definite aim, which is to make this body as conscious as possible, make it the most perfect and most conscious instrument of the Divine. He has given you a certain amount of substance and of matter in all the domains – mental, vital and physical – in proportion to what He expects from you, and all the circumstances around you are also in proportion to what He expects of you, and those

who tell you, “My life is terrible, I lead the most miserable life in the world”, are donkeys! Everyone has a life appropriate to his total development, everyone has experiences which help him in his total development, and everyone has difficulties which help him in his total realisation.

If you look at yourself carefully, you will see that one always carries in oneself the opposite of the virtue one has to realise (I use “virtue” in its widest and highest sense). You have a special aim, a special mission, a special realisation which is your very own, each one individually, and you carry in yourself all the obstacles necessary to make your realisation perfect. Always you will see that within you the shadow and the light are equal: you have an ability, you have also the negation of this ability. But if you discover a very black hole, a thick shadow, be sure there is somewhere in you a great light. It is up to you to know how to use the one to realise the other.

This is a fact very little spoken about, but one of capital importance. And if you observe carefully you will see that it is always thus with everyone. This leads us to statements which are paradoxical but absolutely true; for instance, that the greatest thief can be the most honest man (this is not to encourage you to steal, of course!) and the greatest liar can be the most truthful person. So, do not despair if you find in yourself the greatest weakness, for perhaps it is the sign of the greatest divine strength. Do not say, “I am like that, I can’t be otherwise.” It is not true. You are “like that” because, precisely, you ought to be the opposite. And all your difficulties are there just so that you may learn to transform them into the truth they are hiding.

Once you have understood this, many worries come to an end and you are very happy, very happy. If one finds one has very black holes, one says, "This shows I can rise very high", if the abyss is very deep, "I can climb very high." (CWM 4, pp.117-19)

"If Life alone were and not death, there could be no immortality; if love were alone and not cruelty, joy would be only a tepid and ephemeral rapture; if reason were alone and not ignorance, our highest attainment would not exceed a limited rationality and worldly wisdom.

Death transformed becomes Life that is Immortality; Cruelty transfigured becomes Love that is intolerable ecstasy; Ignorance transmuted becomes Light that leaps beyond wisdom and knowledge." (CWSA 12, p. 433)

"The principle of Love as it exists beyond the Manifested and the Non-Manifested has nothing to do with either tepidness or cruelty. Only, Sri Aurobindo's idea would seem to be that opposites are the quickest and most effective means of shaping Matter so that it can intensify its manifestation." (CWM 10, p.165)

"... all these things are only ways of intensifying the manifestation, of making it progress, of making it more perfect. And if the means are crude, it is because the manifestation itself is very crude. ... It follows that when the earth no longer needs to die in order to progress, there will be no more death. When the earth no longer needs to suffer in order to progress, there will be no more suffering. And when the earth no longer needs to hate in order to love, there will be no more hatred." (CWM 10, p.166)

VI. The Vicissitudes of the Way Towards Perfection

“The only important thing is the goal to be attained. The way matters little, and often it is better not to know it in advance.” (*CWM 14, p.4*)

“...when one wants to understand the deep laws of life, wants to be ready to receive whatever message is sent by the Divine, if one wants to be able to penetrate the secrets of the Manifestation, all this asks for a developed mind, so one studies with that will. But then one no longer needs to choose one’s particular subject of study, for everything, no matter what, the least little circumstance in life, becomes a teacher who can teach you something, teach you how to think and act. Even – I think I said this precisely – even the reflections of an ignorant child can help you to understand something you didn’t understand before. Your attitude is so different. It is always an attitude which is awaiting a discovery, an opportunity for progress, a rectification of a wrong movement, a step ahead, and so it is like a magnet that attracts from all around you opportunities to make this progress. **The least things can teach you how to progress. As you have the consciousness and will to progress, everything becomes an opportunity, and you project this consciousness and will to progress upon all things.**

And not only is this useful for you, but it is useful for all those around you with whom you have a contact.” (*CWM 6, p.154*)

“For to the soul that wholly gives itself to him, God also gives himself altogether. Only the one who offers his whole nature, finds the Self. Only the one who can give everything, enjoys the Divine All everywhere.

Only a supreme self-abandonment attains to the Supreme.” (*CWSA 23, p.110*)

“Those who aspire in their human strength by effort of knowledge or effort of virtue or effort of laborious self-discipline, grow with much anxious difficulty towards the Eternal; but when the soul gives up its ego and its works to the Divine, God himself comes to us and takes up our burden. To the ignorant he brings the light of the divine knowledge, to the feeble the power of the divine will, to the sinner the liberation of the divine purity, to the suffering the infinite spiritual joy and Ananda. Their weakness and the stumblings of their human strength make no difference. “This is My word of promise,”cries the voice of the Godhead to Arjuna, “that he who loves me shall not perish.”” (*CWSA 19, Page 335*)

“Sri Aurobindo: You have to make a choice: the individual is absolutely free in this yoga. I cannot crush your individuality. I mean, I can, but it is not allowed in this yoga. So, the working of the Higher Power depends upon the choice you make.

Sadhaka: But you are there to protect us.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, I can protect you if you have the absolute faith and make the right choice. **If you make the wrong choice I cannot protect you. You must know that this is not a simple affair at all. It is not a revolt against the British Government which any one can easily do. It is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature and so one must think deeply before enrolling oneself with me.**

There will be tremendous forces that will attack you and you have constantly to go on making the right choice and giving consent to the working of the Higher Truth and thereby prove your strength.

If you begin this yoga the first result is likely to be a feverish internal commotion, *asanti*, rather than *santi*, peace, that you are in search of. And when you come to the material plane, – there especially, the odds are almost insurmountable.” (*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Ed. 2007, p.38*)

“...when one has to escape from the lower dharma, one has often to break it so as to arrive at a larger one. E.g. social duties, paying debts, looking after family, helping to serve your country, etc. etc. The man who turns to the spiritual life, has to leave all that behind him often and he is reproached by lots of people for his Adharma. But if he does not do this Adharma, he is bound for ever to the lower life – for there is always some duty there to be done – and cannot take up the spiritual dharma or can do it only when he is old and his faculties impaired.” (*CWSA 28, pp. 438-39*)

“The truest reason why we must seek liberation is not to be delivered, individually, from the sorrow of the world, though that deliverance too will be given to us, but that we may be one with the Divine, the Supreme, the Eternal. The truest reason why we must seek perfection, a supreme status, purity, knowledge, strength, love, capacity, is not that personally we may enjoy the divine Nature or be even as the gods, though that enjoyment too will be ours, but because this liberation and perfection are the divine Will in us, the highest truth of our self in Nature, the always intended goal of a progressive manifestation in the universe. The divine Nature, free and perfect and blissful, must be manifested in the individual in order that

it may manifest in the world. Even in the Ignorance the individual lives really in the universal and for the universal Purpose, for in the very act of pursuing the purposes and desires of his ego, he is forced by Nature to contribute by his egoistic action to her work and purpose in the worlds; but it is without conscious intention, imperfectly done, and his contribution is to her half-evolved and half-conscient, her imperfect and crude movement. To escape from ego and be united with the Divine is at once the liberation and the consummation of his individuality; so liberated, purified, perfected, the individual – the divine soul – lives consciously and entirely, as was from the first intended, in and for the cosmic and transcendent Divine and for his Will in the universe.” (*CWSA 23, p.275*)

“Not to go on for ever repeating what man has already done is our work, but to arrive at new realisations and undreamed-of masteries. Time and soul and world are given us for our field, vision and hope and creative imagination stand for our prompters, will and thought and labour are our all-effective instruments.

What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image.” (*CWSA 13, pp.200-01*)