Chapter Two

Sorrow and Suffering

Joy and Sorrow

Joy is a vital feeling, like its opposite, sorrow.

* There is no real reason why delight should necessarily be followed by sorrow — except that it is the habit of the vital. But that habit can be overcome.

* It is dangerous to have a heart insisting on its own vital emotions. Not to be the slave of vital joy or sorrow is a condition one has to pass through in order to arrive at true Anandam. If people are right [that a heart indifferent to joy and sorrow is not desirable] then there can never be any equality and we have even to say that equality is a bad thing. If so, then the whole of the Gita is a mass of nonsense.

* There are vital joys that are innocent and need not be seriously put down — such as joy in art, poetry, literature. They have to be not put down, but put aside only when they interfere with sadhana.

Sorrow and Pain and Suffering

Sorrow and pain and suffering? The curious thing is that my Yoga does not approve of sorrow and suffering or of taking stumbles and difficulties too seriously, as the Tapaswis do or of viraha pangs as the Vaishnavas do or of vairagya as the Mayavadis do, yet the old ideas and forces bring these things into the Asram through the minds of the sadhaks and there they are. Well, well!
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.

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Yes, it is so [that people themselves indirectly choose pain and misery by not turning to the Divine]. 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.

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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.

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It is not the soul but the vital or rather something in it that takes pleasure in groaning and weeping and in fact in sorrow and suffering of all kinds.

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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.

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The gloom and other difficulties come from a resistance of inertia in the lower vital and physical consciousness. What you have to do is to prepare the consciousness by getting rid of the inertia. A sattwic gladness and calm and confidence is the proper temperament for this Yoga; gloom, depression and weeping should not be indulged in, as they stand in the way of the opening, unless the tears are the psychic weeping of release or adoration or a moved love and bhakti. The progress made in controlling the sex and other rajasic movements of the lower vital is a good preparation, but not enough; by itself it is only the negative side, though indispensable. Aspire for a positive sattwic opening for strength, for light, for peace and do not worry or repine if the progress is slow at first, nor grudge the time and labour of preparation necessary before there can be a rapid advance in the Yoga.

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You should not indulge this sense of grief — remain calm, confident, turned to the one Will in all circumstances; that is the way to secure that each step will be taken in the right measure and produce its best possible consequences. Regard henceforth the question of X and your relation with X as a minor and subordinate thing on the outer side of your sadhana. If you take it as a problem of the first importance it will become that and stand in your way again. Look at it as a question from the past that has been firmly settled and put in its place and turn to the central aim of your sadhana.

For the rest, apart from this circumstance, you need change nothing in the inward aim and concentration of your will and endeavour on the one thing to be done — the entire self-giving and self-dedication of your inner and outer being to the Divine
alone. If you can adopt firmly the right inward attitude, it may even be easier than by an outward rule for your main guidance.

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I hope you will be able to reject this *duḥkha*; it must be an attempt of something of the old consciousness to come back,—for a psychic sorrow would not burn. These things come from the subconscient, so for such a grief no particular reason would be necessary. It is the force of sorrow in itself that rises like that and lays a claim on the nature.

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Tamasic indifference is one thing and the absence of sorrow is another. One has to observe what is wrong and do all that one can to set it right. Sadness in itself has no power to cure what is wrong; a firm quiet persistent will has the power.

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It is clear that the force and peace are descending and working more and more to fix themselves in you.

The other feelings, the wanting to be sad, the fear of being happy, the suggestion of incapacity or unfitness are the usual movements of the vital formation which is not yourself and they come up to try and prevent the change in you. You have only to refuse to accept these suggestions and put yourself persistently on the side of the Truth in you which will make you free and happy, and all will be well.

**Melancholy**

It seems to me from what you have written that it is the old vital restlessness and indulgence in melancholy 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. There are three ways of combating it. 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.