

Why suffering?

Suffering, where does it come from? What do I do with it? What is its purpose?

Like two sides of a coin, suffering comes with life. They are inseparable on earth. Yet everyone tries to escape from suffering, in a foolish evasion, by desperately seeking fleeting pleasures, in the hope of an illusory happiness.

Don't run away from suffering, it runs faster than you do!

Some ask: "If a God exists, why does he allow suffering?"

The answer will come by understanding the usefulness, even the necessity of suffering on earth.

Origins of suffering

There are many causes of suffering, but most of them stem from:

- The **low consciousness** of humanity.

Few people are aware of the globality, the interconnection, the interdependence of humans.

Many individuals "play it alone", in a short-term thinking and cut off from life. Out of **selfishness**, they are ready to sacrifice others and nature, in a self-centred survival instinct.

- **Fear.**

Fear pushes humans to act at the expense of others: fear of lack of love, of food, of death, of life, of love, of suffering too...

The mismanagement of these fears leads to internal and external violence, the monopolisation of resources, possessiveness in relationships, self-sabotage...

- The **escape** from suffering through **cowardice**.

Instead of facing it, of seeing what is going on within, of taking responsibility, it seems easier to shift the blame on the outside, to daze or distract oneself. One example is to choose to have a toothache all your life for fear of the dentist. Better the friend who tells the truth than the flatterer.

Carrying your cross

Having a physical body allows us to experience suffering and pleasure with intensity, to learn to love and forgive... Without a body, psycho-emotional wounds would not have the same impact.

The human body, vertical, is like the intermediary between heaven and earth, their meeting place to create love.

The love of the Divine would remain theoretical and virtual without the presence of beings to love. The meaning of our presence is to discover Him and to learn Love.

Before coming to earth, the soul was lightly constrained. When it descends, it confines itself into a body and experiences the suffering of being a prisoner of the flesh, in-carnate (= in the flesh). This is the fall from heaven.

Once nestled in the maternal womb, one must leave it. It is the loss of the earthly paradise and the beginning of worries. It is like a horizontal line, down to earth, after the vertical line of the great descent. The cross is drawn.

Types of suffering

- Physical

Pain protects the body, whether it is organic or mechanical, neuralgic or inflammatory, constant or temporary... It prevents, for example, of a burn or a destructive effort. It informs of a lesion in order to take care of the body, to repair it. It reminds us of the body's existence in order to stay alive, in the flesh, and not to "go off in your thoughts" for too long.

Trying to have a spiritual journey without a body would be like staying in your car without turning on the engine, to only imagine one's life without living it.

Hence the importance of anchoring in the body at the beginning of the meditation to better enjoy it. The body makes it possible to appreciate the pleasure, the relaxation, rest... and to have gratitude.

- Emotional

Emotions are the spices of life, but if there are too many it tingles!

Identification with emotions creates suffering. Fear, anger, sadness, shame... and their by-products surge in a wave that overwhelms the person. The lack of self-control gives power to emotional excess, to self-pity, to complaining, and eventually to rejection of oneself or of others.

It is necessary that the mind and body regain their place in the management of life and its completeness. The observation of emotions, allows to welcome them, to live them, as if playing with the waves of the ocean, without drama. This is one of the goals of meditation, to find harmony between its different constituents.

- Mental

When the mind is stuck in the past, it is likely to dwell on it, to be overwhelmed with regrets, even reproaches, resentment, bitterness, which lead to sadness and anger, even revenge.

It would be better to simply gather the lessons from lived experiences, to be grateful for all the gifts received, the encounters, the good times...

The preoccupied mind is often stressed by a thousand possibilities. It tries to control the future, instead of planning for what is necessary and accepting in advance the experiences to come.

It is right to look regularly at the past or the future, with a factual and constructive eye. Balance is essential in order to avoid escaping present life. The more the mind is attentive to the present moment, as in meditation, the more serenity, joy and pleasure are to be found every day.

Happiness is now!

- Spiritual

By spiritual body, I refer more to the soul than to the aura.

(Some authors describe around the physical body, first a parapsychical body (in 3 layers, as vibratory emanations of the dense body), an etheric body (2 layers) and a spiritual body (2 layers).)

The suffering of the spiritual body manifests itself as a deep sadness, an anxiety, a nostalgia, a melancholy. It corresponds to a loss of meaning and an absence of answers to the big questions: who am I? What is my purpose? What is there after death? And above all, what is the point of living? Why get up in the morning?

The spirit can express itself through physical symptoms, either as a cry for attention, or on the contrary as an acknowledgement to validate that the information is being processed.

Centrifugal language: the body expresses a message from the subconscious to the consciousness, from the inside to the outside.

(Centrifugal, literally: fleeing from the centre. The centripetal force, on the contrary, attracts from orbit, the periphery, towards the centre).

Centripetal language: a transformation, a message at a conscious level is received, integrated by the body.

During changes in rhythm, for example in the case of illness, holidays, especially with the family, a romantic encounter... the habits of meditation, spiritual connection and resourcing are quickly forgotten. It is then that the manifestations of spiritual suffering reappear: selfishness, impatience, bad mood, aggressiveness, gloom, dissatisfaction, weariness...

Separation

Death causes visceral fear and sadness, it can also be accompanied by anger.

Separation, whether ephemeral or definitive, often brings about these emotions as well, because it is experienced as a small death of the relationship. The suffering then reveals the inner emotional void, the lack of connection to the infinite source of Love.

Attachment causes suffering!

Meditation leads to love without emotional dependence and without possessiveness, on a path of freedom and happiness. Meditation teaches to watch your emotions as you would watch a film.

Don't run away from fear, don't run after pleasure, choose life in the present moment!

Meditation invites us to welcome pleasure with gratitude in order to better appreciate it, and then to let it evolve. One pleasure replaces another.

Emotions are welcomed, experienced, and even relished. Even if the intensity is uncomfortable, there is no drama. The meditator does not become attached to his emotions, does not wallow in them. He lets them pass like a cloud in the sky; after the rain, the good weather. Joy and serenity come back to illuminate the heart.

Functions of suffering

body to body

Physical

- **Humility:** without suffering, humans would think themselves all powerful and self-sufficient. It is suffering that pushes them to ask for help from others, to recognise their limits, their incapacities.

Emotional

- **Compassion:** experiencing pain makes it easier to remember it and to better put oneself in another person's shoes, who is suffering in turn. Suffering can be seen as a key, sometimes even as a lever, because it opens us to empathy, towards an understanding of what the other is experiencing. It is also called the *door of the heart*, as the ability to decentre oneself and to place oneself in the place of the other.

Mental

- **Stimulation:** Psychological suffering manifests itself through stress in all its forms. If it is well managed, stress leads to efficiency. It spurs one to finish a task within a time limit. It increases the speed of thinking and acting, especially in the face of danger. It can manifest itself, for example, as the flight reflex in front of a predator. It can also help during an examination. Conversely, an excessive amount of stress, an inability to use it, can overwhelm the mind and lead to paralysis, like the syndrome of the hedgehog who stops in front of the car's headlights instead of running away.

Spiritual

- **Meaning:** it is often spiritual suffering that awakens humans from their lethargy, which pushes them to seek meaning to their existence, to look for support, to turn towards something greater than oneself, to plunge into oneself, to build a relationship with the divine. The spiritual approach also aims to make better use of suffering, to transform it into an element of fulfilment, towards more generosity and openness of heart.

Alterations: the gifts

The suffering linked to alterations is experienced by each person according to the type of alteration, life history and personal resources.

Alterations can be natural or accidental, physical or peripheral. They include ageing, illness, disability... as well as external disasters, diminishing resources, deteriorating living conditions...

These changes, even if foreseeable, still have a surprise effect and upset a vague hope that it will only happen to others. The dream fades away.

As a child, we imagined that we would become independent, that we would no longer need anyone and that we would do what we want to do as it pleased us. As an adult, there is still an inner child who would like to rule, to reign. But circumstances wake the child up and bring it back to reality.

The child's belief in his "omnipotence" collapses and he realises that he is but a straw carried by the wind, until he accepts to be carried by the flow of life.

"To be autonomous is to need others and to know that others need you."
Anonymous.

"Our autonomy is measured by the quality of our friends." Daniel Desbiens.

Everything that was taken for granted, as acquired definitively and that is taken away, gradually or suddenly, can teach us gratitude in the past and in everyday life. Alterations also appeal us to have gratitude for what remains, in functionality and appearance, with a greater awareness of our bodies as a precious and ephemeral vehicle, like a sacred link to life and nature.

All alterations can have similar effects. The reaction to change is up to each individual.

We will discuss the different alterations together, including the most common one, ageing, as it affects or will affect everyone.

It is not always easy to see ageing as a gift. However, it essentially allows us to grow in humility and compassion.

The suffering is obvious: humiliation of the physical body, withering, decrepitude, slowness, dependence, pain, incapacity, incontinence, limitations... Simple gestures become more complicated.

Sometimes humiliation of the mental body as well, of the memory, of the capacity to learn, understand, verbalise...

On the other hand, this degradation leads to a time of assessment, with gratitude or regrets, towards a slow preparation for departure, for detachment. It progressively invites us to the great Journey, towards the next birth, without a physical body, the death of the incarnated life.

Old age can bring wisdom and contentment. Even if sexuality is still possible, sometimes almost as it was in youth, it is no longer of the same importance. The yearning for connection, for tenderness becomes predominant.

Withering raises the question of the authenticity of love. How many men and women choose their relationships according to aesthetic criteria? I love you for who you are on the inside... but only as long as your outer beauty remains!

With time, the power to charm, the seduction games and narcissism wither away. Old age brings back true and deep relationships. We must then choose between becoming bitter or growing in tenderness and wisdom.

Meditation helps to welcome evolution, by privileging the being and the inner experience over external appearance and validation. It leads to emotional autonomy and tranquillity. Consciousness frees us from imposed standards, harsh criticism and dependence upon the gaze of others.

Accepting changes in the body does not mean giving up on self-care. Aesthetics, dietetics, sport, care, etc. contribute to well-being. They are no longer motivated by a search for approval or for a power of seduction. They are now a mark of love for oneself, and even of respect for others. For example, the motivation may be simply to honour a guest with a harmonious outfit, or to take care of one's appearance out of respect for one's partner.

The efforts are proportionate and peaceful. An organisation that functions well allows one to be even better in service. With the alterations comes another way of being beneficial to others, particularly through maturity and listening.

All alterations, physical or circumstantial, momentary or long-lasting, reveal our attachments to appearances and functionality. It offers us the opportunity to progressively free ourselves from the identification with the body, to renounce it without regret, without remorse, and to prepare for the separation in order to leave it in peace. It is only necessary to see people suffering from serious illnesses, severe

handicaps, or locked up in prison who achieve a state of serenity, contentment and kindness towards others.

4 births

The births' cycle

- Physical birth

It begins when the gametes of each parent meet. The miracle of life continues for 9 months, in utero, more or less hidden from view. A tremendous amount of activity takes place to prepare the little being that will emerge from the womb. At the same time as he enters the outside world, he is expelled from the amniotic paradise where "everything is swimmingly fine", in a carefree state. He finds himself in a dry, cold, hard, dazzling environment... He must breathe on his own; the air rushes into his lungs, or he is at risk of asphyxiation.

It is undoubtedly the first intense pain in his life, which gives rise to the first cry, the first tears. With birth, he also discovers pain. Then, the body will grow. It develops in size and skills. Despite the blows and pain, the body grows stronger through the efforts, and the individual too. The physical suffering includes injuries, diseases, limitations, disabilities...and old age, which will be given its own paragraph.

- Emotional birth

During gestation, there was only one direct, immediate relationship with the mother (the sea, her womb as a nourishing ocean), and a few sounds echoes in the distance. As the first years go by, relationships are woven. In incomprehension, people appear, then disappear, alternating satisfactions and frustrations, ranging from fullness to emotional emptiness.

Relationships and circumstances are naturally accompanied by joy and tenderness, but also fear, anger, sadness, shame and the whole range of emotions, which cause suffering, especially when they are rejected and dramatised.

And one day, first love comes! By its intensity, the sentimental life can represent a climax, a new emotional birth, with its wonderful delights and its abysmal suffering, with the torments of despair, jealousy, uncertainty, possessiveness, dependence...

- Mental birth

It manifests itself very early on via curiosity and a thirst for knowledge and understanding, a form of bulimia for knowledge, in an avalanche of why.

Humans are perhaps an exception to nature in their ability to learn throughout their life, especially if they maintain this capacity.

With the progressive birth of the mental body also comes the notion of individual and collective responsibility. From childhood, from school, humans learn to be

accountable and to have duties. Worries, stress, rumination, shame, guilt, are all sufferings.

They are generally exacerbated by the difficulty of being rooted in the present moment. Regrets, remorse and blame are directed towards the past. Anxiety, apprehension, stress are oriented towards the future.

Towards adolescence, literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, geopolitics, biology and all the sciences can provide elements of understanding how the world works. Reflection leads to metaphysical questions that prepare the spiritual birth: Who am I? What am I doing on earth? What is the purpose of my life, and whom does it serve? Where does the universe come from? Is there a life after death?

- Spiritual birth

The individual seeks his place in the universe. Deep questions call for answers.

Suffering comes from a lack of meaning, from a feeling of uselessness, of futility, of derision, of impotence. The individual is lost in the face of infinity and eternity.

Meditation, in whatever form, gradually opens up access to one's deepest interiority, in order to enter into a true connection with oneself, until discovering a space of resourcefulness. It also facilitates awareness of the greater than oneself, in order to build a relationship with the Universe, the Divine, and to find meaning in life.

Welcoming

The 4 bodies, with their specific sufferings, develop in very different ways from one individual to another, and at different ages.

With maturity comes the development of the spiritual body, at different ages depending on the person and their life path. Finally, the death of the material body corresponds to the ultimate birth of the Light body, a rebirth in heaven, following the idea of a cycle.

After a varying time period as a Light body, one may be reborn in a new physical body, which is itself made of light ($E=mc^2$, thank you Einstein, thank God). In the end, we are made up of energy and life.

The meditator learns to dis-identify with his body, "I am not this body", in order to take a healthy distance, a right height, with regard to what is happening to him. Suffering increases when it is denied, when the situation is rejected and turned into a drama. If suffering is relativised, it becomes a discomfort that does not prevent one from continuing to live, or even from enjoying the good things of the present moment.

When we have gone through all the sufferings, received all their teachings, learned all their lessons, we will be able to remain in an inner happiness. "Circumstantial happiness" depends on external satisfactions and is in essence ephemeral. Attachment to circumstances is a great source of suffering, for they are always changing. Change is a constant in the universe. Many of the sources of pleasure are only present for a certain period of time, whether it be sexuality, food, art...

Meditation teaches welcoming of what is, including change, in order to move from one experience to another with harmony and serenity. It allows one to embrace suffering, when it comes, with its gifts. It opens us to better appreciate the beauties and delights of life, with gratitude and wonderment.

O present

By Rémi

I look at my past with gratitude
I build my future with joy and wisdom
Peace and forgiveness come with power
Confident in the future, I have faith in its promises.

Under a sun of love, intoxicated with consciousness
I celebrate life in freedom
In wonderment my trust is rooted
I taste the present with bliss.