

A photograph of a tree with dark, gnarled branches and numerous small, five-petaled flowers. The flowers are primarily white with some orange or yellow centers. The background is a soft, hazy, light grey or greenish mist, creating a serene and atmospheric scene. The text is overlaid on the upper and lower portions of the image.

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Seasons of Life



*O Lord! Grant that this year may be the year of Thy
Victory. We aspire for a perfect faithfulness
which would make us worthy of it.*

The Mother

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SEASONS OF LIFE

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial Note: The cycle of life passes through certain stages with each bringing its own challenges and joy like the change of seasons. To navigate through these changes and transitions is an important aspect of living. This issue deals with the changing seasons of life and what they imply.



*Bonne Année
blessings*

BONNE ANNÉE

The Four Asramas

The Indian system did not entirely leave this difficult growth to the individual's unaided inner initiative. It supplied him with a framework; it gave him a scale and gradation for his life which could be made into a kind of ladder rising in that sense. This high convenience was the object of the four Asramas. Life was divided into four natural periods and each of them marked out a stage in the working out of this cultural idea of living. There was the period of the student, the period of the householder, the period of the recluse or forest-dweller, the period of the free super social man, *parivrājaka*. The student life was framed to lay the groundwork of what the man had to know, do and be. It gave a thorough training in the necessary arts, sciences, branches of knowledge, but it was still more insistent on the discipline of the ethical nature and in earlier days contained as an indispensable factor a grounding in the Vedic formula of spiritual knowledge. In these earlier days this training was given in suitable surroundings far away from the life of cities and the teacher was one who had himself passed through the round of this circle of living and, very usually, even, one who had arrived at some remarkable realisation of spiritual knowledge. But subsequently education became more intellectual and mundane; it was imparted in cities and universities and aimed less at an inner preparation of character and knowledge and more at instruction and the training of the intelligence. But in the beginning the Aryan man was really prepared in some degree for the four great objects of his life, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma*, *mokṣa*. Entering into the householder stage to live out his knowledge, he was able to serve there the three first human objects; he satisfied his natural being and its interests and desire to take the joy of life, he paid his debt to the society and its demands and by the way he discharged his life functions he prepared himself for the last greatest purpose of his existence. In the third stage he retired to the forest and

worked out in a certain seclusion the truth of his spirit. He lived in a broad freedom from the stricter social bonds; but if he so willed, gathering the young around him or receiving the inquirer and seeker, he could leave his knowledge to the new rising generation as an educator or a spiritual teacher. In the last stage of life he was free to throw off every remaining tie and to wander over the world in an extreme spiritual detachment from all the forms of social life, satisfying only the barest necessities, communing with the universal spirit, making his soul ready for eternity. This circle was not obligatory on all. The great majority never went beyond the two first stages; many passed away in the *vānaprastha* or forest stage. Only the rare few made the last extreme venture and took the life of the wandering recluse. But this profoundly conceived cycle gave a scheme which kept the full course of the human spirit in its view; it could be taken advantage of by all according to their actual growth and in its fullness by those who were sufficiently developed in their present birth to complete the circle.

CWSA 20: 174-76

Sri Aurobindo

From birth to death, life is a dangerous thing.

The brave pass through it without care for the risks.

The prudent take precautions.

The cowardly are afraid of everything.

But ultimately, what happens to each one is only what the Supreme Will has decided.

*

Some of the living are already half-dead. Many of the dead are very much alive.

CWM 15: 118

The Mother

Childhood

The child does not worry

The child does not worry about his growth, he simply grows.

*

There is a great power in the simple confidence of a child.

*

When a child lives in normal conditions, it has a spontaneous confidence that all it needs will be given to it.

This confidence should persist, unshaken, throughout life; but the limited idea, ignorant and superficial, of its needs which a child has, must be replaced progressively by a wider, deeper and truer conception which culminates in the perfect conception of needs in accordance with the supreme wisdom, until we realise that the Divine alone knows what our true needs are and rely upon Him for everything.

*

The most important condition is trust, a child-like trust, the candid feeling that knows that needed things will come, that there is no question about it. When the child has need of anything he is certain that it is coming. This kind of simple trust or reliance is the most important condition.

*

Fear in children

Why do children have fear? Because they are weak.

Physically they are weaker than the grown-ups around them and, generally, they are also weaker vitally and mentally.

Fear stems from a sense of inferiority.

However, there is a way to be free from it: it is to have faith in the Divine Grace and to rely on It to protect you in all circumstances.

*

Contact with the soul frees us from fear

The more you grow up, the more will you get over your fear if you let the contact with your soul develop in you — that is to say, with the truth of your being — and if you always strive that all you think, all you speak, all you do should be more and more the expression of this deep truth.

*

When you will consciously live in it, you will fear nothing any longer, in any domain of your being, because you will be united with the universal Truth which governs the world.

CWM 12: 124-25

A new method of teaching children

It would be interesting to formulate or work out a new method of teaching for the children, taking them very young. Very young, it's easy. We need people (oh, we would need remarkable teachers) who have, first of all, sufficient documentation on what is known to be able to answer any question; and at the same time, at least the knowledge, if not the experience (the experience would be better) of the true intuitive intellectual attitude, and ... (naturally, the capacity would be still preferable) but in any case the knowledge that the true way to know is mental silence: an attentive silence turned towards the truer Consciousness, and the capacity to receive what comes from there. The best would be to have that capacity; in any case, it should be explained that it's the true thing, a kind of demonstration, and that it works not only with regard to what must be learned, the whole field of knowledge, but also with regard to the whole field of what must be done: the capacity to receive the exact indication of how to do it, and as one progresses, it turns into a very clear perception of what must be done, and the precise indication of when it must be done. At the very least, as soon as the children have the capacity to reflect (it begins at seven, but around fourteen or fifteen it's

very clear), they should be given some first hints at the age of seven, and a complete explanation at fourteen, of how to do it and that it's the sole means of being in contact with the deeper truth of things; that all the rest is a more or less clumsy mental approximation of something you can know directly.

The conclusion is that the teachers themselves should have at least a sincere beginning of discipline and experience: it is not a question of piling up books and of repeating them like that. That's not the way to be a teacher — the whole earth is like that, let it be like that outside if it makes them happy! As for us, we aren't propagandists, we simply want to show what can be done and try to prove that it must be done.

When you begin with very small children, it's wonderful! With them, there's so little you have to do: you just have to be.

The Mother: Conversation with a Disciple, April 5, 1967

Teachers and children

Never make a mistake.

Never get angry.

Always understand.

Understand and see clearly why this movement took place, why that impulse, what the child's inner constitution is, which point needs to be strengthened and brought to the fore. That's all you have to do, and then leave them: leave them free to blossom, just give them the opportunity to see many things, touch many things, do as many things as possible. It's great fun. And above all, do not try to impose on them something you think you know.

Never scold, always understand, and, if the child is capable, explain. If he isn't capable of understanding an explanation (if you are yourself capable of it), replace the false vibration by a true one. But that... that's asking of the teachers a perfection they rarely have.

But it would be very interesting to draw up a program for the

teachers, and the real program for study, starting with the very small ones — they are so plastic and anything leaves such a deep stamp on them! If they were given a few drops of truth when they are very small, they would blossom out quite naturally as their being grows.

That would be a lovely work to do.

The Mother: Conversation with a disciple, April 5, 1967

Rule of moral training

The first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily converse and the books read from day to day. These books should contain, for the younger student, the lofty examples of the past given, not as moral lessons, but as things of supreme human interest, and, for the elder student, the great thoughts of great souls, the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest ideals and aspirations, the records of history and biography which exemplify the living of those great thoughts, noble emotions and aspiring ideals. This is a kind of good company, *satsaiga*, which can seldom fail to have effect, so long as sententious sermonising is avoided, and becomes of the highest effect if the personal life of the teacher is itself moulded by the great things he places before his pupils. It cannot, however, have full force unless the young life is given an opportunity, within its limited sphere, of embodying in action the moral impulses which rise within it. The thirst of knowledge, the self-devotion, the purity, the renunciation of the Brahmin, — the courage, ardour, honour, nobility, chivalry, patriotism of the Kshatriya, — the beneficence, skill, industry, generous enterprise and large open-handedness of the Vaishya, — the self-effacement and loving service of the Shudra, — these are the qualities of the Aryan. They constitute the moral temper we desire in our young men, in the whole nation. But how can we get them if we do not

give opportunities to the young to train themselves in the Aryan tradition, to form by the practice and familiarity of childhood and boyhood the stuff of which their adult lives must be made?

Every boy should, therefore, be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in his nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad *saWskDras* whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the Rajayogic method of *saWyama*, rejection and substitution. He should be encouraged to think of them, not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will, — falsehood being rejected whenever it rises into the mind and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love. Great care will have to be taken that unformed virtues are not rejected as faults. The wildness and recklessness of many young natures are only the over flowings of an excessive strength, greatness and nobility. They should be purified, not discouraged.

CWSA 1: 390-92

Sri Aurobindo

Conscious aspiration in children

When one is very young and as I say "well-born", that is, born with a conscious psychic being within, there is always, in the dreams of the child, a kind of aspiration, which for its child's consciousness is a sort of ambition, for something which would be beauty without ugliness, justice without injustice, goodness without limits, and a conscious, constant success, a perpetual miracle. One dreams of miracles when one is young, one wants all wickedness to disappear, everything to be always luminous, beautiful, happy, one likes stories which end happily. This is what one should rely on. When the body feels its miseries, its limitations, one must establish this dream in it — of a strength which would have no limit, a beauty which would have no ugliness, and of marvellous

capacities: one dreams of being able to rise into the air, of being wherever it is necessary to be, of setting things right when they go wrong, of healing the sick; indeed, one has all sorts of dreams when one is very young.... Usually parents or teachers pass their time throwing cold water on it, telling you, "Oh! it's a dream, it is not a reality." They should do the very opposite! Children should be taught, "Yes, this is what you must try to realise and not only is it possible but it is *certain* if you come in contact with the part in you which is capable of doing this thing. This is what should guide your life, organise it, make you develop in the direction of the *true reality* which the ordinary world calls illusion."

Cultivate enthusiasm and faith

This is what it should be, instead of making children ordinary, with that dull, vulgar common sense which becomes an inveterate habit and, when something is going well, immediately brings up in the being the idea: "Oh, that won't last!", when somebody is kind, the impression, "Oh, he will change!", when one is capable of doing something, "Oh, tomorrow I won't be able to do it so well." This is like an acid, a destructive acid in the being, which takes away hope, certitude, confidence in future possibilities.

When a child is full of enthusiasm, never throw cold water on it, never tell him, "You know, life is not like that!" You should always encourage him, tell him, "Yes, at present things are not always like that, they *seem* ugly, but behind this there is a beauty that is trying to realise itself. This is what you should love and draw towards you, this is what you should make the object of your dreams, of your ambitions."

And if you do this when you are very small, you have much less difficulty than if later on you have to undo, undo all the bad effects of a bad education, undo that kind of dull and vulgar common sense which means that you expect nothing good from life, which makes it insipid, boring, and contradicts all the hopes, all the

so-called illusions of beauty. On the contrary, you must tell a child — or yourself if you are no longer quite a baby — "Everything in me that seems unreal, impossible, illusory, *that is what is true, that is what I must cultivate.*" When you have these aspirations: "Oh, not to be always limited by some incapacity, all the time held back by some bad will!", you must cultivate within you this certitude that *that is what is essentially true and that is what must be realised.*

Then faith awakens in the cells of the body. And you will see that you find a response in your body itself. The body itself will feel that if its inner will helps, fortifies, directs, leads, well, all its limitations will gradually disappear.

CWM 9: 162-63

Wrong education to children

But if when very young, from your earliest childhood, you have been taught all sorts of disappointing, depressing things — things that cause decomposition, I could say, disintegration — then this poor body does its best but it has been perverted, put out of order, and no longer has the sense of its inner strength, its inner force, its power to react.

If one takes care not to pervert it, the body carries within itself the certitude of victory. It is only the wrong use we make of thought and its influence on the body which robs it of this certitude of victory. So, the first thing to do is to cultivate this certitude instead of destroying it; and when it is there, no effort is needed to aspire, but simply a flowering, an unfolding of that inner certitude of victory.

The body carries within itself the sense of its divinity. There. This is what you must try to find again in yourself if you have lost it. When a child tells you a beautiful dream in which he had many powers and all things were very beautiful, be very careful never to tell him, "Oh! life is not like that", for you are doing something wrong. You must on the contrary tell him, "*Life ought to be like that, and it will be like that!*"

CWM 9: 165

The body knows

From one's very childhood, one should know that one eats in order to give strength and health to the body and not to enjoy the pleasures of the palate. Children should be given food that suits their temperament, prepared in a way that ensures hygiene and cleanliness, that is pleasant to the taste and yet very simple. This food should be chosen and apportioned according to the age of the child and his regular activities. It should contain all the chemical and dynamic elements that are necessary for his development and the balanced growth of every part of his body.

Since the child will be given only the food that helps to keep him healthy and provide him with the energy he needs, one must be very careful not to use food as a means of coercion and punishment. The practice of telling a child, "You have not been a good boy, you won't get any dessert," etc., is most harmful. In this way you create in his little consciousness the impression that food is given to him chiefly to satisfy his greed and not because it is indispensable for the proper functioning of his body.

CWM 12: 14

Not to instill fear

Another thing should be taught to a child from his early years: to enjoy cleanliness and observe hygienic habits. But, in obtaining this cleanliness and respect for the rules of hygiene from the child, one must take great care not to instil into him the fear of illness. Fear is the worst instrument of education and the surest way of attracting what is feared. Yet, while there should be no fear of illness, there should be no inclination for it either. There is a prevalent belief that brilliant minds are found in weak bodies. This is a delusion and has no basis. There was perhaps a time when a romantic and morbid taste for physical unbalance prevailed; but, fortunately, that tendency has disappeared. Nowadays a well-built, robust, muscular, strong and well-balanced body is appreciated at

its true value. In any case, children should be taught to respect health and admire the healthy man whose vigorous body knows how to repel attacks of illness. Often a child feigns illness to avoid some troublesome obligation, a work that does not interest him, or simply to soften his parents' hearts and get them to satisfy some caprice. The child must be taught as early as possible that this does not work and that he does not become more interesting by being ill, but rather the contrary. The weak have a tendency to believe that their weakness makes them particularly interesting and to use this weakness and if necessary even illness as a means of attracting the attention and sympathy of the people around them. On no account should this pernicious tendency be encouraged. Children should therefore be taught that to be ill is a sign of weakness and inferiority, not of some virtue or sacrifice.

That is why, as soon as the child is able to make use of his limbs, some time should be devoted every day to the methodical and regular development of all the parts of his body. Every day some twenty or thirty minutes, preferably on waking, if possible, will be enough to ensure the proper functioning and balanced growth of his muscles while preventing any stiffening of the joints and of the spine, which occurs much sooner than one thinks. In the general programme of the child's education, sports and outdoor games should be given a prominent place; that, more than all the medicines in the world, will assure the child good health. An hour's moving about in the sun does more to cure weakness or even anaemia than a whole arsenal of tonics. My advice is that medicines should not be used unless it is absolutely impossible to avoid them; and this "absolutely impossible" should be very strict. In this programme of physical culture, although there are well-known general lines to be followed for the best development of the human body, still, if the method is to be fully effective in each case, it should be considered individually, if possible with the help of a competent person, or if not, by consulting the numerous

manuals that have already been and are still being published on the subject.

Sleep exercise relaxation

But in any case a child, whatever his activities, should have a sufficient number of hours of sleep. The number will vary according to his age. In the cradle, the baby should sleep longer than he remains awake. The number of hours of sleep will diminish as the child grows. But until maturity it should not be less than eight hours, in a quiet, well-ventilated place. The child should never be made to stay up late for no reason. The hours before midnight are the best for resting the nerves. Even during the waking hours, relaxation is indispensable for all who want to maintain their nervous balance. To know how to relax the muscles and the nerves is an art which should be taught to children when they are very young. There are many parents who, on the contrary, push their child to constant activity. When the child remains quiet, they imagine that he is ill. There are even parents who have the bad habit of making their child do household work at the expense of his rest and relaxation. Nothing is worse for a developing nervous system, which cannot stand the strain of too continuous an effort or of an activity that is imposed upon it and not freely chosen. At the risk of going against many current ideas and ruffling many prejudices, I hold that it is not fair to demand service from a child, as if it were his duty to serve his parents. The contrary would be more true, and certainly it is natural that parents should serve their child or at least take great care of him. It is only if a child chooses freely to work for his family and does this work as play that the thing is admissible. And even then, one must be careful that it in no way diminishes the hours of rest that are absolutely indispensable for his body to function properly.

Respect good health

I have said that from a young age children should be taught to respect good health, physical strength and balance. The great importance of beauty must also be emphasised. A young child should aspire for beauty, not for the sake of pleasing others or winning their admiration, but for the love of beauty itself; for beauty is the ideal which all physical life must realise. Every human being has the possibility of establishing harmony among the different parts of his body and in the various movements of the body in action. Every human body that undergoes a rational method of culture from the very beginning of its existence can realise its own harmony and thus become fit to manifest beauty. When we speak of the other aspects of an integral education, we shall see what inner conditions are to be fulfilled so that this beauty can one day be manifested.

So far I have referred only to the education to be given to children; for a good many bodily defects can be rectified and many malformations avoided by an enlightened physical education given at the proper time. But if for any reason this physical education has not been given during childhood or even in youth, it can begin at any age and be pursued throughout life. But the later one begins, the more one must be prepared to meet bad habits that have to be corrected, rigidities to be made supple, malformations to be rectified. And this preparatory work will require much patience and perseverance before one can start on a constructive programme for the harmonisation of the form and its movements. But if you keep alive within you the ideal of beauty that is to be realised, sooner or later you are sure to reach the goal you have set yourself.

CWM 12: 14-17

The Mother

Students

Disease called utilitarianism

Why are no diplomas and certificates given to the students of the Centre of Education?

For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax in our times; it is what we may call "utilitarianism". People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful — useful to whom, to what, for what?

For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know

the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money.

Children who are infected with this disease are out of place at the Centre of Education of the Ashram. And it is to make this quite clear to them that we do not prepare them for any official examination or competition and do not give them any diplomas or titles which they can use in the outside world.

We want here only those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true.

There is plenty of room in the world for all the others.

*

The contents of the consciousness must change, the level of the consciousness must be raised, the quality of the consciousness must progress.

Things are as you have described them, because most children have their consciousness centred in the physical which is tamasic and reluctant to make any effort. They want an easy life, and only the excitement or the rivalry of a game or a competition awakens enough interest in them so that they consent to make an effort. For this, a vital passion has to be aroused to intensify the will.

The idea of progress belongs to the intelligent will which is active only in very few who are in contact with their psychic being; later on, in those who are mentally more developed and begin to understand the need to develop and control themselves.

I said that the remedy is to raise the consciousness to a higher level. But, naturally, one must start with the level of the conscious-

ness of the captains and instructors themselves.

*

Concentration before the classes

Sweet Mother, We have a minute of concentration before and after group every day. What should we try to do during this concentration?

Before, make an offering to the Divine of what you are going to do, so that it may be done in a spirit of consecration.

Afterwards, ask the Divine to increase the will for progress in us, so that we may become instruments that are more and more capable of serving Him.

You may also, before starting, offer yourselves to the Divine in silence.

And at the end, give thanks to the Divine in silence.

I mean a movement of the heart without any words in the head.

*

The cause of all difficulties

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.

We are here in the Ashram to do this work together with the help of Sri Aurobindo's knowledge and force, in an attempt to realise a community that is more harmonious, more united, and consequently much more effective in life.

As long as I was physically present among you all, my presence was helping you to achieve this mastery over the ego and so it was not necessary for me to speak to you about it individually very often.

But now this effort must become the basis of each individual's existence, more especially for those of you who have a responsible position and have to take care of others. The leaders must always set the example, the leaders must always practise the virtues they demand from those who are in their care; they must be understanding, patient, enduring, full of sympathy and warm and friendly goodwill, not out of egoism to win friends for themselves, but out of generosity to be able to understand and help others.

To forget oneself, one's own likings and preferences, is indispensable in order to be a true leader.

That is what I am asking of you now, so that you can face your responsibilities as you should. And then you will find that where you used to feel disorder and disunity, they have vanished, and harmony, peace and joy have taken their place.

You know that I love you and that I am always with you to sustain you, help you and show you the way.

Blessings.

*

Spending holidays

Sweet Mother, Some children ask me what is the best way of spending their holidays here.

It is an excellent opportunity to do some interesting work, to learn something new or develop some weak point in their nature or their studies.

It is an excellent opportunity to choose some occupation freely and thus discover the true capacities of their being.

Blessings.

*

Teaching by example

Sweet Mother, Is it possible to teach the ideal to those who do not understand it, and how can it be taught to them? Are we, instructors and teachers, worthy of this formidable task?

What we want to teach is not only a mental ideal, it is a new idea of life and a realisation of consciousness. This realisation is new to all, and the only true way to teach others is to live according to this new consciousness oneself and to allow oneself to be transformed by it. There is no better lesson than that of an example. To tell others: "Do not be selfish," is not much use, but if somebody is free from all selfishness, he becomes a wonderful example to others; and someone who sincerely aspires to act in accordance with the Supreme Truth, creates a kind of contagion for the people around him. So the first duty of all those who are teachers or instructors is to give an example of the qualities they teach to others.

And if, among these teachers and instructors, some are not worthy of their post, because by their character they give a bad example, their first duty is to become worthy by changing their character and their action; there is no other way.

CWM 12: 357-58

Sweet Mother, For the students who know that they will go away from here after their studies, is it not necessary for them to go out from time to time in order to be able to adjust themselves later to ordinary life?

There is no difficulty in adapting to ordinary life; it is a bondage to which one is subjected from birth, for all carry it in themselves by atavism, and even those who are born to be freed need to struggle seriously and continuously to get rid of this atavism in order to be truly free.

*

Sweet Mother, What do you expect of those students who are going to leave after their studies here? Surely there must be a great difference between them and ordinary people. What is the difference?

Often, as soon as they find themselves in the midst of ordinary life, many of them realise the difference and regret what they have lost. Few of them have the courage to give up the comforts they find in their ordinary surroundings, but even the others no longer face life with the same unconsciousness as those who have never been in contact with the Ashram.

The work we do is not done with the expectation of something in return, but simply to help the progress of humanity.

Blessings.

*

Imposing discipline

Sweet Mother, How far do you consider it the duty of a teacher or an instructor to impose discipline on the students?

To prevent the students from being irregular, rude or negligent is obviously indispensable; unkind and harmful mischief cannot be tolerated.

But as a general and absolute rule, the teachers and especially the physical education instructors must be a constant living example of the qualities demanded from the students; discipline, regularity, good manners, courage, endurance, patience in effort, are taught much more by example than by words. And as an absolute rule: never to do in front of a child what you forbid him to do.

For the rest, each case implies its own solution, and one must act with tact and discernment.

That is why to be a teacher or an instructor is the best of all disciplines, if one knows how to comply with it.

*

A child ought to stop being naughty because he learns to be

ashamed of being naughty, not because he is afraid of punishment.

In the first case, he makes true progress.

In the second, he falls one step down in human consciousness, for fear is a degradation of consciousness.

CWM 12: 360-62

Aim of education

The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society, but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost.

Do not aim at success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the threshold of a *new world*, participating in its birth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worth-while.

In a general way, education, culture, refinement of the senses are the means of curing movements of crude instinct and desire and passion. To obliterate them is not curing them; instead they should be cultivated, intellectualised, refined. That is the surest way of curing them. To give them their maximum growth in view of the progress and development of consciousness, so that one may attain to a sense of harmony and exactitude of perception is a part of culture and education for the human being.

CWM 12: 120-21

You who are young, are the hope of the country. Prepare yourselves to be worthy of this expectation.

Blessings.

Of one thing you can be sure — *your future is in your hands*. You will become the man you *want to be* and the higher your ideal and your aspiration, the higher will be your realisation, but you must keep a firm resolution and never forget your true aim in life.

To be young is to live in the future.

CWM 12: 122

The Mother

Youth

Youth is the capacity to progress

Youth does not depend on the small number of years one has lived, but on the capacity to grow and progress. To grow is to increase one's potentialities, one's capacities; to progress is to make constantly more perfect the capacities that one already possesses. Old age does not come from a great number of years but from the incapacity or the refusal to continue to grow and progress. I have known old people of twenty and young people of seventy. As soon as one wants to settle down in life and reap the benefits of one's past efforts, as soon as one thinks that one has done what one had to do and accomplished what one had to accomplish, in short, as soon as one ceases to progress, to advance along the road of perfection, one is sure to fall back and become old.

One can also teach the body that there is almost no limit to its growth in capacities or its progress, provided that one discovers the true method and the right conditioning. This is one of the many experiments which we want to attempt in order to break these collective suggestions and show the world that human potentialities exceed all imagination.

CWM 12: 72-73

Energy Inexhaustible

One of the most powerful aids that yogic discipline can provide to the sportsman is to teach him how to renew his energies by drawing them from the inexhaustible source of universal energy.

Modern science has made great progress in the art of nourishment, which is the best known means of replenishing one's energies. But this process is at best precarious and subject to all kinds of limitations. We shall not speak about it here, for the subject has already been discussed at great length. But it is quite obvious that so long as the world and men are what they are, food is an

indispensable factor. Yogic science knows of other ways of acquiring energy, and we shall mention two of the most important.

The first is to put oneself in relation with the energies accumulated in the terrestrial material world and to draw freely from this inexhaustible source. These material energies are obscure and half unconscious; they encourage animality in man, but, at the same time, they establish a kind of harmonious relationship between the human being and material Nature. Those who know how to receive and use these energies are usually successful in life and succeed in everything they undertake. But they are still largely dependent on their living conditions and their state of bodily health. The harmony created in them is not immune from all attack; it usually vanishes when circumstances become adverse. The child spontaneously receives this energy from material Nature as he expends all his energies without calculating, joyfully and freely. But in most human beings, as they grow up, this faculty is blunted by the worries of life, as a result of the predominant place which mental activities come to occupy in the consciousness.

However, there is a source of energy which, once discovered, is never exhausted, whatever the outer circumstances and physical conditions of life may be. It is the energy that can be described as spiritual, and is received no longer from below, from the inconscient depths, but from above, from the supreme origin of the universe and man, from the all-powerful and eternal splendours of the superconscient. It is there, all around us, permeating everything; and to enter into contact with it and to receive it, it is enough to aspire sincerely for it, to open oneself to it in faith and trust, to widen one's consciousness and identify it with the universal Consciousness.

At the outset, this may seem very difficult, if not impossible. Yet by examining this phenomenon more closely, one can see that it is not so alien, not so remote from the normally developed human consciousness. Indeed, there are very few people who have

not felt, at least once in their lives, as if lifted up beyond themselves, filled with an unexpected and uncommon force which, for a time, has made them capable of doing anything whatever; at such moments nothing seems too difficult and the word "impossible" loses its meaning.

This experience, however fleeting it may be, gives a glimpse of the kind of contact with the higher energy that yogic discipline can secure and maintain.

The method of achieving this contact can hardly be given here. Besides, it is something individual and unique for each one, which starts from where he stands, adapting itself to his personal needs and helping him to take one more step forward. The path is sometimes long and slow, but the result is worth the trouble one takes. We can easily imagine the consequences of this power to draw at will and in all circumstances on the boundless source of an energy that is all-powerful in its luminous purity. Weariness, exhaustion, illness, old age and even death become mere obstacles on the way, which a persistent will is sure to overcome.

CWM 12: 261-62

Thinking about old age

Everybody, everybody is constantly thinking about old age and death, and death and old age and illness... oh, they're such a nuisance! Me, I never think of it. That's not the question. The difficulty lies in the Work itself; it doesn't depend on a certain number of years, which besides is completely... it's nothing, one second in eternity, a mere nothing!

The Mother: Conversation with a Disciple, Feb 13, 1962

Transformation and the Body

It is quite true that the surrender and the consequent transformation of the whole being is the aim of the Yoga — the body is not excluded, but at the same time this part of the endeavour is the most difficult and doubtful — the rest, though not facile,

is comparatively less difficult to accomplish. One must start with an inner control of the consciousness over the body, a power to make it obey more and more the will or the force transmitted to it. In the end as a higher and higher Force descends and the plasticity of the body increases, the transformation becomes possible.

It is absolutely idle to think of transforming the body when other things that are so much easier to do — though of course none is easy — are not done. The inner must change before the outermost can follow. So what is the use of such a concentration — unless one thinks that everything else is perfect, which would be a rather astonishing claim. What has to be done with the body at first is to make it open to the Force, so as to receive strength against illness and fatigue — when they come, there must be the power to react and throw them off and to keep a constant flow of force into the body. If that is done, the rest of the bodily change can wait for its proper time.

The supramental perfection means that the body becomes conscious, is filled with consciousness and that as this is the Truth consciousness all its actions, functionings etc. become by the power of the consciousness within it harmonious, luminous, right and true — without ignorance or disorder.

CWSA 28: 305

Sri Aurobindo

Progress is youth

Sincerity, humility, perseverance and an insatiable thirst for progress are essential for a happy and fruitful life. Above all, one must be convinced that the possibility of progress is unlimited. Progress is youth; one can be young at a hundred.

CWM 16: 431

Cultivate the instruments

Consequently, we are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new con-

sciousness and a new life. That is why I address myself to you, the students, that is, to all who wish to learn, to learn always more and always better, so that one day you may be capable of opening yourselves to the new force and of giving it the possibility of manifesting on the physical plane. For that is our programme and we must not forget it. To understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that we want to become instruments that are as perfect as possible, instruments that express the divine will in the world. And if the instruments are to be perfect, they must be cultivated, educated, trained. They must not be left like fallow land or a formless piece of stone. A diamond reveals all its beauty only when it is artistically cut. It is the same for you. If you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, give it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses. That is why you go to school, my children, whether you are big or small, for one can learn at any age — and so you must go to your classes.

CWM 12: 73

Choosing to progress

Sometimes, if you are not in a very good mood, you say, "How boring it is going to be!" Yes, perhaps the teacher who is taking your class does not know how to amuse you. He may be a very good teacher, but at the same time he may not know how to entertain you, for it is not always easy. There are days when one does not feel like being entertaining. There are days, for him as for you, when one would like to be elsewhere than in school. But still, you go to your class. You go because you must, for if you obey all your fancies you will never have any control over yourselves; your fancies will control you. So you go to your class, but instead of going there and thinking, "How bored I am going to be; I am sure it is not going to be interesting", you should tell yourselves, "There is not a single minute in life, not one circumstance that is not an opportu-

nity for progress. So what progress am I going to make today? The class I am going to now is on a subject that does not interest me. But perhaps that is because something is lacking in me; perhaps, in my brain, a certain number of cells are deficient and that is why I cannot find any interest in the subject. If so, I shall try, I shall listen carefully, concentrate hard and above all drive out of my mind this aimlessness, this superficial shallowness which makes me feel bored when there is something I cannot grasp. I am bored because I do not make an effort to understand, because I do not have this will for progress." When one does not progress, one feels bored, everyone, young or old; for we are here on earth to progress. How tedious life would be without progress! Life is monotonous. Most often it is not fun. It is far from being beautiful. But if you take it as a field for progress, then everything changes, everything becomes interesting and there is no longer any room for boredom. Next time your teacher seems boring to you, instead of wasting your time doing nothing, try to understand why he bores you. Then if you have a capacity of observation and if you make an effort to understand, you will soon see that a kind of miracle has occurred and that you are no longer feeling bored at all.

Remedy for boredom

This remedy is good in almost every case. Sometimes, in certain circumstances, everything seems dull, boring, stupid; this means that you are as boring as the circumstances and it clearly shows that you are not in a state of progress. It is simply a passing wave of boredom, and nothing is more contrary to the purpose of existence. At such a moment you might make an effort and ask yourself, "This boredom shows that I have something to learn, some progress to make in myself, some inertia to conquer, some weakness to overcome." Boredom is a dullness of the consciousness; and if you seek the cure within yourself, you will see that it immediately dissolves. Most people, when they feel bored, instead

of making an effort to rise one step higher in their consciousness, come down one step lower; they come down even lower than they were before and do stupid things, they make themselves vulgar in the hope of amusing themselves. That is why men intoxicate themselves, spoil their health, deaden their brains. If they had risen instead of falling, they would have made use of this opportunity to progress.

In fact, the same thing holds true in all circumstances, when life gives you a severe blow, one of those blows which men call a misfortune. The first thing they try to do is to forget, as if they did not forget too soon! And in order to forget, they do all kinds of things. When something is very painful, they try to distract themselves — what they call distracting themselves, that is, doing stupid things, lowering their consciousness instead of raising it. If something extremely painful happens to you, never try to deaden yourself; you must not forget, you must not sink into unconsciousness. Go right to the heart of the pain and there you will find the light, the truth, the strength and the joy which are hidden behind this pain. But for that you must be firm and refuse to let yourself slide.

In this way every event in life, great or small, can be an opportunity for progress. Even the most insignificant details can lead to revelations if you know how to profit from them. Whenever you are engaged in something which does not demand the whole of your attention, use it as an opportunity to develop your faculty of observation and you will see that you will make interesting discoveries. To help you to understand what I mean, I shall give you two examples. They are two brief moments in life which are insignificant in themselves, but still leave a deep and lasting impression.

*

Life full of wonder

The first example takes place in Paris. You have to go out into this immense city; here all is noise, apparent confusion, bewilder-

ing activity. Suddenly you see a woman walking in front of you; she is like most other women, her dress has nothing striking about it, but her gait is remarkable, supple, rhythmic, elegant, harmonious. It catches your attention and you are full of wonder. Then, this body moving along so gracefully reminds you of all the splendours of ancient Greece and the unparalleled lesson in beauty which its culture gave to the whole world, and you live an unforgettable moment — all that just because of a woman who knows how to walk!

The second example is from the other end of the world, from Japan. You have just arrived in this beautiful country for a long stay and very soon you find out that unless you have at least a minimum knowledge of the language, it will be very difficult for you to get along. So you begin to study Japanese and in order to become familiar with the language you do not miss a single opportunity to hear people talking, you listen to them carefully, you try to understand what they are saying; and then, beside you, in a tram where you have just taken your seat, there is a small child of four or five years with his mother. The child begins to talk in a clear and pure voice and listening to him you have the remarkable experience that he knows spontaneously what you have to learn with so much effort, and that as far as Japanese is concerned he could be your teacher in spite of his youth.

In this way life becomes full of wonder and gives you a lesson at each step. Looked at from this angle, it is truly worth living.

CWM 12: 73-76

The Mother

Young and the future

The future belongs to the young. It is a young and new world which is now under process of development and it is the young who must create it. But it is also a world of truth, courage, justice, lofty aspiration and straightforward fulfilment which we seek to create. For the coward, for the self-seeker, for the talker who goes forward at the beginning and afterwards leaves his fellows in the

lurch there is no place in the future of this movement. A brave, frank, clean-hearted, courageous and aspiring youth is the only foundation on which the future nation can be built.

CWSA 8: 168

Sri Aurobindo

Progress is Youth

For a happy and effective life, the essentials are sincerity, humility, perseverance and an insatiable thirst for progress. Above all, one must be convinced of a limitless possibility of progress. Progress is youth; at a hundred years of age one can be young.

If the growth of consciousness were considered as the principal goal of life, many difficulties would find their solution.

The best way of not becoming old is to make progress the goal of our life.

*

One must learn always not only intellectually but also psychologically, one must progress in regard to character, one must cultivate the qualities and correct the defects; everything should be made an occasion to cure ourselves of ignorance and incapacity; life becomes then tremendously interesting and worth the trouble of living it.

CWM 12: 123-24

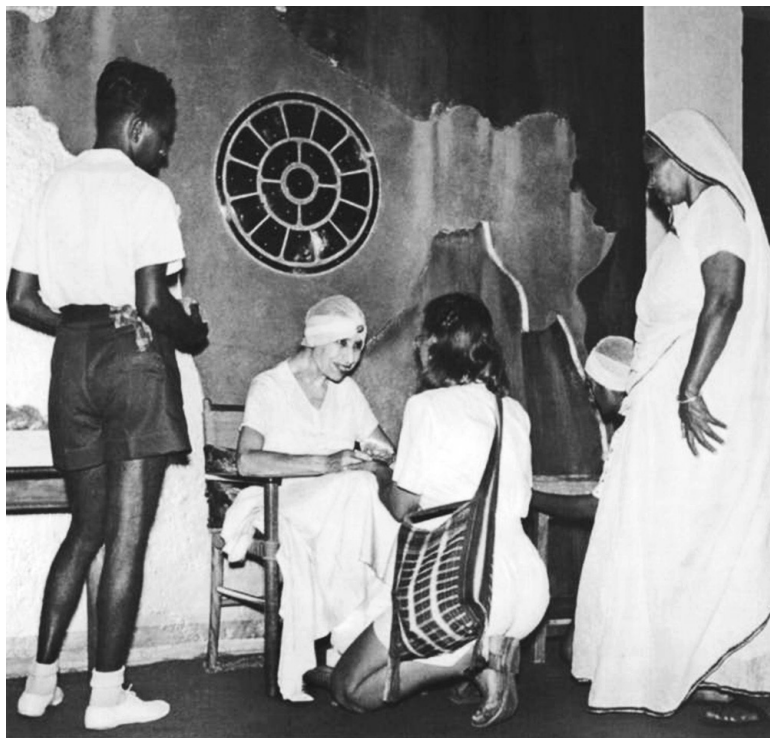
The Mother

To be young is to live in the future for the future. To be young is to be always ready to abandon what one is in order to become what one ought to be....

And above all, the most important:

"To be young is never to admit the irreparable.

The Mother: Conversation with a Disciple, March 29, 1967



*So long as we are in a body,
whatever its age and difficulties,
it is certain that we have something to do
or learn in it, and this conviction gives
the necessary strength
to face all vicissitudes.*

The Mother

Old Age

Young who are old and old who are young

There is one thing certain which is not clearly stated here, but which is at least as important as all the rest. It is this, that there is an old age much more dangerous and much more real than the amassing of years: the incapacity to grow and progress.

As soon as you stop advancing, as soon as you stop progressing, as soon as you cease to better yourself, cease to gain and grow, cease to transform yourself, you truly become old, that is to say, you go downhill towards disintegration.

There are young people who are old and there are old people who are young. If you carry in you this flame for progress and transformation, if you are ready to leave everything behind so that you may advance with an alert step, if you are always open to a new progress, a new improvement, a new transformation, then you are eternally young. But if you sit back satisfied with what has been accomplished, if you have the feeling that you have reached your goal and you have nothing left to do but enjoy the fruit of your efforts, then already more than half your body is in the tomb: it is decrepitude and the true death.

CWM 3: 238

The weight of passing years

Only those years that are passed uselessly make you grow old.

A year spent uselessly is a year during which no progress has been accomplished, no growth in consciousness has been achieved, no further step has been taken towards perfection.

Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years.

It is not the number of years you have lived that makes you grow old. You become old when you stop progressing.

As soon as you feel you have done what you had to do, as soon as you think you know what you ought to know, as soon as you want to sit and enjoy the results of your effort, with the feeling you have worked enough in life, then at once you become old and begin to decline.

When, on the contrary, you are convinced that what you know is nothing compared to all which remains to be known, when you feel that what you have done is just the starting-point of what remains to be done, when you see the future like an attractive sun shining with the innumerable possibilities yet to be achieved, then you are young, however many are the years you have passed upon earth, young and rich with all the realisations of tomorrow.

And if you do not want your body to fail you, avoid wasting your energies in useless agitation. Whatever you do, do it in a quiet and composed poise. In peace and silence is the greatest strength.

CWM 12: 122-23

So long as we are in a body

So long as we are in a body, whatever its age and difficulties, it is certain that we have something to do or learn in it, and this conviction gives the necessary strength to face all vicissitudes.

*

For me the Grace is an active reality which guides our destiny through the ages.

One must not be in a hurry and hasten the departure, even if it is for the eternal repose or the beatitude of nothingness. As long as we are in a body, undoubtedly we have yet something to do or learn therein.

This suggestion of death comes from the "ego" when it feels that soon it will have to abdicate. Keep quiet and fearless. Everything will be all right.

You speak of absolute renunciation, but to give up the body

is not the absolute renunciation. The true and total renunciation is to give up the ego which is a much more arduous endeavour. If you have not renounced your ego, to give up the body will not bring freedom to you.

*

Strange behaviour in old age

Even those who have been here for a very long time become strange in their old age. Is it because consciousness depends on one's health?

In no way. Consciousness is eternal and nothing can affect it. But the physical body is rarely infused with consciousness, and, even when it is, it is only partly infused.

The body, as it is at present, is like a musical instrument (piano or violin) and if some strings or notes are missing, then even the most perfect musician cannot perfectly express music through them.

The consciousness is intact, but its expression is incomplete.

Conquering death and winning immortality

The vital world is mostly like that and those who live exclusively in the physical and vital go there after death. But there is the Grace!...

Death is not at all what you believe it to be. You expect from death the neutral quietness of an unconscious rest. But to obtain that rest you must prepare for it.

When you die you lose only your body and at the same time the possibilities of relation with and action on the material world. But all that belongs to the vital world does not disappear with the material substance; all your desires, attachments, cravings persist with the sense of frustration and disappointment, and all that prevents you from finding the expected peace. To enjoy a peaceful and eventless death you must prepare for it. And the only effec-

tive preparation is the abolition of desires.

So long as we have a body we have to act, to work, to do something: but if we do it simply because it has to be done, without seeking for the result or wanting it to be like this or like that, we get progressively detached and thus prepare ourselves for a restful death.

If you wish to escape from death, you must not bind yourself to anything perishable.

One can conquer that alone which one fears not, and he who fears death has already been vanquished by death.

In order to be able to conquer death and win immortality, one must neither fear death nor desire it.

The target at which we are aiming is immortality.

And of all the habits, death is surely the most obstinate.

From the viewpoint of spiritual knowledge, decrepitude and decay — disintegration — are quite simply and undoubtedly the result of a wrong attitude.

*

Body of a dead person

1) *Why are men obliged to leave their bodies?*

Because they do not know how to keep up with Nature in her progress towards the Divine.

2) *Should one respect the body of a dead person? If so, how?*

One should respect everything, living and dead, and know that everything lives in the Divine Consciousness.

The respect should be felt in the heart and the inner attitude.

3) *Is the Divine there in the body of a dead person?*

The Divine is everywhere; and I repeat that for the Divine there are no living or dead — everything lives eternally.

4) *What should we do to make the soul happy, so that it*

reincarnates in good conditions, for example in a spiritual environment?

Have no sorrow and remain very peaceful and quiet, while keeping an affectionate remembrance of the one who has departed.

5) Do souls weep?

When something separates them from the Divine.

6) *How can one stop someone from weeping?*

Love him sincerely and deeply without trying to stop his tears.

Not to hurry the funeral

Normally the consciousness of the departed ought to feel no pain for what happens to the body after his or her departure. But there is in the material body itself a consciousness called the "spirit of the form" which takes some time to get completely out of the aggregated cells; its departure is the starting point of a general decomposition, and before its departure it may have a kind of feeling of what happens to the body. That is why it is always better not to be in a hurry for the funeral.

Grieve not

Your father died because it was his time to die. Circumstances can be an occasion but surely not a *cause*. The cause is in the Divine's will and nothing can alter it.

So, grieve not and surrender your sorrow at the feet of the Divine. He will give you peace and freedom.

*

Now you are no longer able to bend over this body and take care of it, you can no longer express through your acts your deep affection, and it is this which is painful. But you must overcome this sorrow and look within, look above, for it is only the material body that will be dissolved. All that you loved in her is in no way affected

by the dissolution of the material envelope; and if, in the calm of a deep love, you concentrate your thought and your energy on her, you will see that she will remain close to you and that you can have a conscious contact with her, a contact more and more concrete.

*

Life is immortal. It is only the body that dissolves.

CWM 15: 119-23

The Mother

Life and Death

Life, death, — death, life; the words have led for ages
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
Life only is, or death is life disguised,—
Life a short death until by life we are surprised.

CWSA 2:216

Sri Aurobindo



(To someone who was thinking of taking her life in order to have a better life in her next birth)

All these are unhealthy imaginations. Who says that your next life will be as you desire? On the contrary, if you leave your body prematurely — in other words, before having achieved the purpose for which the psychic has incarnated — the consequence will be conditions far more difficult in the next life.

The only solution is to fight and conquer the present obstacles — and in the particularly favourable circumstances in which you find yourself.

My blessings

The Mother, 10 January 1957



*Those who are ready for the transformation
can do it anywhere. And those who
are not ready cannot do it wherever they are.*

The Mother



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