

Death and Rebirth

OLD AGE AND DEATH

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.

21 February 1958

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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.

19 June 1966

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

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Dear friend,

Your letter came bringing me news I knew already, because often your thought comes bringing me your remembrance and keeps me in touch with your tribulations. Everyone, in truth, has his own and you know as well as I that it is only in the inner attitude that peace is found.

Death and Rebirth

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.

I had hoped, in putting you into touch with the Tibetan refugees, that among them there would be one who would be happy to consecrate his or her life to have the opportunity to develop intellectually and learn all that you would be able to teach him or her in exchange for this service.

Would this not be possible?

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.

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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.

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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.

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(About the regions of night and sorrow described in Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Love and Death”)

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!...

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Words of the Mother – III

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 effective 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.

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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.

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

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The target at which we are aiming is immortality.

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

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

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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.

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Normally the consciousness of the departed ought to feel no pain for what happens to the body after his or her departure.

Words of the Mother – III

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.

13 November 1966

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You say that it is through a newspaper that the news came of your nephew’s death. So the child died a few days ago. Did X and Y find any difference in their atmosphere, their feelings, their thoughts, their sensations — a difference, an uneasiness or a sense of loss, which would give a real ground for their sorrow? I am pretty sure that they did not. So their sorrow, if they have any, is not *true* but the result of conventional thoughts and feelings; it is all illusion coming from the family idea, which is one of the most artificial and false of all conventions.

In truth the child was *not* in their atmosphere, otherwise they would have become aware of his death without needing to receive the news of it; he was no more in their atmosphere than any one of the two hundred thousand human beings who die every day — for the average death of human beings is two hundred thousand a day. Do they know that? Is not death the most common and everyday happening and can they reasonably expect that none of those they know will escape this general law?

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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.

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(To someone whose friend had died)

Death and Rebirth

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.

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

10 March 1969

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Why do we call Death a god? Is he not an Asura like the Lord of Falsehood?

It is in the consciousness of man that he became a god and that is why it is so difficult to transform him.

29 October 1972

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REBIRTH

Sri Aurobindo says that some time after death the vital and mental sheaths dissolve, leaving the soul free to retire to the psychic world before it takes up new sheaths. What becomes of the Karma and of the impressions — Samskaras — on the old sheaths? Do they also dissolve without producing any result, good or bad, which they should according to the theory of Karma? Also, what becomes of the vital and mental beings after the dissolution of the vital and mental sheaths?

Words of the Mother – III

The outer form only dissolves, unless that too is made conscious and is organised round the divine centre. But the true mental, the true vital and even the true subtle physical persist: it is that which keeps all the impressions received in earthly life and builds the chain of Karma.

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If we go a little way within ourselves, we shall discover that there is in each of us a consciousness that has been living throughout the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms.

24 January 1935

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In rebirth it is not the external being, that which is formed by parents, environment and circumstances — the mental, the vital and the physical — that is born again: it is only the psychic being that passes from body to body. Logically, then, neither the mental nor the vital being can remember past lives or recognise itself in the character or mode of life of this or that person. The psychic being alone can remember; and it is by becoming conscious of our psychic being that we can have at the same time exact impressions about our past lives.

Besides, it is much more important for us to fix our attention upon what we want to become than upon what we have been.

2 April 1935

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My dear child,

The sudden departure of X is a painful loss for all here. He was perfect in consecration and honest in his work, a man on whom one could count, which is a truly exceptional quality. He has departed into a solar light and is enjoying the conscious rest which he truly deserved.

5 July 1965

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Death and Rebirth

In my dreams I see X very happy. One day I saw him leaning over my table and he said to me, "I had no opportunity to tell you anything while I was leaving, because Sri Aurobindo's call made me hurry away immediately." Is there any truth in this dream, Mother?

This dream is surely true because X went straight to join Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, I would like to know the answers to these questions, which often come to me since his departure. Is a soul which is conscious of You reborn immediately after its departure? Or does it have to wait long?

Every fully conscious and developed psychic being is free to choose what its next life will be and when that life will take place.

Does this soul come to the Ashram after its birth to accomplish Your divine mission?

That is its usual choice when it reincarnates immediately.

Is this soul capable of choosing its birth and enjoying the happiness of the Ashram life?

If it is fully developed, it is capable of doing so.

What is the relation between the Supramental Light and the solar light?

The solar light is the symbol of the supramental light.
Blessings.

2 July 1966

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Words of the Mother – III

Sweet Mother,

In the Bulletin You have said: “Psychic memories possess a very special character, they have a wonderful intensity.... They are unforgettable moments of life when the consciousness is intense, luminous, strong, active, powerful, and sometimes turning-points in life that have changed the direction of one’s life. But you will never be able to say what dress you put on or the gentleman with whom you spoke or about your neighbours and the kind of field where you were.”¹ And about these memories of small details You said: “That is absolute childishness.”²

But then how is it that in newspapers one quite often reads stories of small children who remember their past lives and that the details have been verified? And it is the study of such events that leads parapsychologists to assert the existence of reincarnation. So are they not on a completely wrong track? And how can reincarnation be demonstrated scientifically in any other way?

The memories you refer to, which are mentioned in newspapers, are memories of the vital being that, exceptionally, has gone out of one body in order to enter another. It is something that can happen, but it is not frequent.

The memory that I refer to is that of the psychic being, and one is conscious of it only when one is in conscious relation with one’s psychic being.

There is no contradiction between the two things.

29 November 1967

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Is it necessary to know what I was in my previous life?

¹ *Bulletin*, November 1967, p. 41.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

If it is necessary you will know it.

14 February 1973

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Except for very rare cases, animals are not individualised and when they die they return to the spirit of the species.

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SUICIDE

Mother Divine,

Something is going wrong with my brain. I often think of suicide. Please pardon me and give me Thy protection and blessings.

If you are sincere in your aspiration to see me, you must throw far away from you these morbid ideas of suicide which are quite contrary to any divine life. Be patient, firm and steady, face quietly the difficulties of life and still more quietly the difficulties of “sadhana” — then you will be sure of the final success.

With blessings.

21 August 1964

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I feel that I am your blank child born with blank fortune; such a child has no mission to fulfil in life. Isn't it better to go away from the world?

It is *in this world* that you have to change and that the change is possible. If you run away from this world, you will have to come again probably in worse conditions and you will have to do everything all over again.

It is much better not to be a coward, to face now the situation and to make the necessary effort to conquer. The help is always with you; you must learn to avail yourself of it.

Words of the Mother – III

Love and blessings.

13 November 1967

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Know for certain that to commit suicide is the most foolish action that a man can do; because the end of the body does not mean the end of the consciousness and what was troubling you while you were alive continues to trouble you when you are dead, without the possibility of diverting your mind which you can get when you are alive.

16 July 1969

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I have received a rather pathetic letter from a reader of Mother India. He writes:

“Though I am sincerely trying to follow the Mother’s instructions in my life, I have been very much surrounded by difficulties — to such an extent that suicide is the only solution. So I request you to be kind enough to see that my prayer reaches the Mother’s personal notice.”

Mother, what should I reply?

Suicide, far from being a solution, is a stupid aggravation of the situation, that for perhaps centuries will make life intolerable.

12 June 1972

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The Ramayana says that when Rama saw that his work on earth was finished, he entered the river Sarayu along with his companions. This looks like mass suicide and suicide is regarded as the greatest sin. How to understand this?

1. For the Supreme there is no sin.
2. For the devotee there is no greater sin than to be far from the Lord.

3. At the time when the Ramayana was conceived and written, the knowledge revealed by Sri Aurobindo that the earth will be transformed into a divine world and an abode of the Supreme was not known or accepted.

If you consider these three points you will understand the legend. (Although it may be that the actual facts were not as they have been told.)