Fear – Its Cause and Cure

Words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Section 1

Fear — The First Obstacle to Growth ... 2

Fear Creates Imaginary Terror ... 3

Fear — Its Cause ... 4

Fear — Its Cure ... 9

Power of Right Attitude ... 14

Why There Is Repulsion ... 15

Section 2

Fear and Yoga Do Not Go Together ... 18

Fear and Illness ... 21

What Are Nightmares ... 27

Use of Fear in Teaching ... 29

Fear of God and Sin ... 30

The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It ... 34

O Son of Ancient Yoga ... 38

Remain Calm and Assured ... 39

Fear is hidden consent. When you are afraid of something, it means that you admit its possibility and thus strengthen its hand. It can be said that it is a subconscient consent.

The Mother

Fear — The First Obstacle to Growth

[*Speaking on the three obstacles, fear, distrust (doubt) and scepticism, in reference to an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother said the following on 'Fear':]*

… even those whose destiny is certain [who are meant for realisation] have to struggle mightily, resolutely, against this "something" which one seems to take in with the very air one breathes: this fear, this dread of what may happen. And this is so stupid, because, in the final analysis, the destiny of each individual is the same: you are born, you live — more or less satisfactorily — and you die; then you wait for a certain length of time, and again you are born, you live — more or less satisfactorily — and again you die, and so on indefinitely, **until you feel you have had enough of it.**

Fear of what? Fear of coming out of the rut? Fear of being free? Fear of no longer being a prisoner?

And then, when you have enough courage to overcome this, when you say, "Come what may! After all, there's not much to lose", then you become wary, you wonder if it is reasonable, if it is true, if all that is not an illusion, if you are not just imagining things, if there is really any substance to it.... And mind you, this mistrust seems stupid, but you encounter it even in the most intelligent, even in those who have repeatedly had conclusive experiences — it is something that you take in with the food you eat, the air you breathe, your contacts with others...

*

Fear is always a very bad advisor.

The Mother

Fear Creates Imaginary Terrors

… fear creates imaginary terrors — even if there is real danger, fear does not help; it clouds the intelligence, takes away presence of mind and prevents one seeing the right thing to do.

*

There is no fear in the higher Nature. Fear is a creation of the vital plane, an instinct of the ignorance, a sense of danger with a violent vital reaction that replaces and usually prevents or distorts the intelligence of things. It might almost be considered as an invention of the hostile forces.

*

Fear and anxiety are perverse forms of will. What thou fearest & ponderest over, striking that note repeatedly in thy mind, thou helpest to bring about; for, if thy will above the surface of waking repels it, it is yet what thy mind underneath is all along willing, & the subconscious mind is mightier, wider, better equipped to fulfil than thy waking force & intellect. But the spirit is stronger than both together; from fear and hope take refuge in the grandiose calm and careless mastery of the spirit.

*

Think this when thy members would fain make love with depression and weakness, "I am Bacchus and Ares and Apollo; I am Agni pure and invincible; I am Surya ever burning mightily."

Sri Aurobindo

Fear — Its Cause

Q: Why does one feel afraid?

I suppose it is because one is egoistic.

There are three reasons. First, an excessive concern about one's security. Next, what one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling which is translated in the consciousness by fear. And above all, one doesn't have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. If you look into things sufficiently deeply, this is the true reason. There are people who do not even know that That exists, but one could tell them in other words, "You have no faith in your destiny" or "You know nothing about Grace" — anything whatever, you may put it as you like, but the root of the matter is a lack of trust. If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid.

*

Years afterwards this talk was followed by a question from a disciple: You say, "If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid." Is it really the best that happens in all circumstances? The Mother replied as under:

It is the best, given the state of the world — it is not an absolute best.

There are two things: in a total and absolute way, at each moment, it is the best possible for the divine Goal of the whole; and for one who is consciously connected with the divine Will, it is the most favourable for his own divine realisation. I believe this is the correct explanation.

For the whole, it is always, at every moment, what is

most favourable for the divine evolution. And for the elements consciously linked with the Divine, it is the best for the perfection of their union.

Only you must not forget that it is constantly changing, that it is not a static best; it is a best which if preserved would not be the best a moment later. And it is because the human consciousness always has the tendency to preserve statically what it finds good or considers good, that it realises that it is unseizable. It is this effort to preserve which falsifies things.

*

Fear is a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from ignorance. One does not know the nature of a certain thing, does not know its effect or what will happen, does not know the consequences of one's acts, one does not know so many things; and this ignorance brings fear. One fears what one does not know. Take a child, if it is brought before someone it does not know (I am not speaking of a child with an awakened inner consciousness, I am speaking of an ordinary child), — you bring it before someone it does not know, its first movement will always be one of fear. Only very rare children — and they have another consciousness — are very bold. It may also be a mixture of apprehension, a kind of instinct. When one instinctively feels that something is dangerous and hasn't the means to remedy it, when one does not know what to do to protect himself from it, then he is afraid. There are, I believe, countless reasons for fear. But it is a movement of unconsciousness, in every case.

That which knows has no fear. That which is perfectly awake, which is fully conscious and which knows, has no fear. It is always something dark that is afraid. . . .

When fear comes, if one succeeds in putting upon it consciousness, knowledge, force, light, one can cure it altogether. There is indeed the Christian religion which says that fear comes of our having eaten the apple in the Garden of Eden — that with knowledge came fear; and upon earth it is always this fear which governs all life, for all human beings. Only, here again I repeat my argument that animals also have fear — animals have not sinned, haven't eaten the apple, so they shouldn't have any fear! It is a half-consciousness mixed with a sort of ignorant instinct which stresses a danger and at the same time does not know its remedy. But certainly, the fact is that the adverse beings, beings of the vital world who fight against the divine Work, make an extensive use of fear. It is through that that they have the strongest hold on human beings. Besides, they are not the only ones: there are also all the political and religious means which are of that type. There are religions which found their power over the believers simply through the fear of death and of what will happen thereafter, and of all catastrophes which await you after death if you do not obey blindly the laws they dictate to you.

This fear may also come from an antipathy, that is, a lack of affinity with something. Some people are especially afraid of fire, some especially fear water, others have a special fear of one animal or another. It comes from a disharmony between the vital vibrations. And then it is translated in this body-unconsciousness by fear. The body is a terribly unconscious thing. How one has to work to give it just a very little consciousness! It lives automatically, by habit. It is terribly unconscious.

*

The first movement of fear comes automatically. There was

a great scientist who was also a great psychologist (I don't remember his name now); he had developed his inner consciousness but wanted to test it. So he undertook an experiment. He wanted to know if, by means of consciousness, one could control the reflex actions of the body (probably he didn't go far enough to be able to do it, for it can be done; but in any case, for him it was still impossible). Well, he went to the zoological garden, to the place where snakes were kept in a glass cage. There was a particularly aggressive cobra there; when it was not asleep, it was almost always in a fury, for through the glass it could see people and that irritated it terribly. Our scientist went and stood in front of the cage. He knew very well that it was made in such a way that the snake could never break the glass and that he ran no risk of being attacked. So from there he began to excite the snake by shouts and gestures. The cobra, furious, hurled itself against the glass, and every time it did so the scientist closed his eyes! Our psychologist told himself, "But look here, I know that this snake cannot pass through, why do I close my eyes?" Well, one must recognise that it is difficult to conquer the reaction. It is a sense of protection, and if one feels that one cannot protect oneself, one is afraid. But the movement of fear which is expressed by the eyes fluttering is not a mental or a vital fear: it is a fear in the cells of the body; for it has not been impressed upon them that there is no danger and they do not know how to resist. It is because one has not done yoga, you see. With yoga one can watch with open eyes, one would not close them; but one would not close them because one calls upon something else, and that "something else" is the sense of the divine Presence in oneself which is stronger than everything.

The Mother



... remember two things: never, never be afraid, and in all circumstances call for the right help to make your strength a hundredfold stronger.

The Mother

Fear — Its Cure

Oh! There are many ways of curing oneself of fear. But in reality everyone finds his own way, the one good for him. There are people to whom you have simply to say: "Your fear is a weakness", and they would immediately find the means to look at it with contempt, for they have a horror of weakness. There are others, you tell them: "Fear is a suggestion from hostile forces, you must push it away, as you drive off hostile forces", and this is very effective. For each one it is different. But first of all you must know that fear is a very bad thing, very bad, it is a dissolvent; it is like an acid. If you put a drop of it on something, it eats into the substance. The first step is not to admit the possibility of fear. Yes, that's the first step. I knew people who used to boast about their fear. These are incurable. That is, quite naturally they would say, "Ah, just imagine, I was so frightened!" And then what! It is nothing to be proud of. With such people you can do nothing.

However, when once you recognise that fear is neither good nor favourable nor noble nor worthy of a consciousness a little enlightened, you begin to fight against it. And I say, one man's way is not another's; one must find one's own way; it depends on each one. Fear is also a terribly contagious collective thing — contagious, it is much more catching than the most contagious of illnesses. You breathe an atmosphere of fear and instantly you feel frightened, without even knowing why or how, nothing, simply because there was an atmosphere of fear. A panic at an accident is nothing but an atmosphere of fear spreading round over everybody. And it is quite curable. There have been numerous cases of a panic being stopped outright simply because some people refused the suggestion and could counteract it with an

opposite suggestion.

For mystics the best cure as soon as one begins to feel afraid of something is to think of the Divine and then snuggle in his arms or at his feet and leave him entirely responsible for everything that happens, within, outside, everywhere — and immediately the fear disappears. That is the cure for the mystic. It is the easiest of all. But everybody does not enjoy the grace of being a mystic.

*

Q: When one feels frightened, what should one do?

That depends upon who you are. There are many ways of curing oneself of fear.

If you have some contact with your psychic being, you must call it immediately and in the psychic light put things back in order. This is the most powerful way.

When one does not have this psychic contact, but is still a reasonable being, that is, when one has a free movement of the reasoning mind, one can use it to reason with, to speak to oneself as one would to a child, explaining that this fear is a bad thing in itself and, even if there is a danger, to face the danger with fear is the greatest stupidity. If there is a real danger, it is only with the power of courage that you have a chance of coming out of it; if you have the least fear, you are done for. So with that kind of reasoning, manage to convince the part that fears that it must stop being afraid.

If you have faith and are consecrated to the Divine, there is a very simple way, it is to say: "Let Your will be done. Nothing can frighten me because it is You who are guiding my life. I belong to You and You are guiding my life." That acts immediately. Of all the means this is the most effective:

indeed, it is. That is, one must be truly consecrated to the Divine. If one has that, it acts immediately; all fear vanishes immediately like a dream. And the being with the bad influence also disappears like a dream along with the fear. You should see it running away at full speed, prrt! *Voilà*.

Now, there are people having a strong vital power in them and they are fighters who immediately lift up their heads and say: "Ah! an enemy is here, we are going to knock him down." But for that one must have the knowledge and a very great vital power. One must be vitally a giant. That does not happen to everyone.

So there are many different ways. They are all good, if you know how to make use of the one that suits your own nature.

Q: In gymnastics when I want to take a jump and feel frightened, why does this happen?

Ah! there, my children, it depends.... You must distinguish two very different things and you must deal with them very differently.

If it is a vital fear, you must reason with yourself and go about it all the same. But if it is a physical instinct (that is possible, it happens very often that there is a kind of physical instinct), in that case you must listen to it, for the instinct of the body is a very sure thing, if it is not disturbed by thought or vital will. The body left to itself knows very well what it can and what it cannot do. . . .

*

One of the great remedies for conquering fear is to face boldly what one fears. You are put face to face with the danger you fear and you fear it no longer. The fear disappears.

From the yogic point of view, the point of view of discipline, this is the cure recommended. In the ancient initiations, especially in Egypt, in order to practise occultism, as I was telling you last time, it was necessary to abolish the fear of death completely. Well, one of the practices of those days was to lay the neophyte in a sarcophagus and leave him in there for a few days, as though he were dead. Naturally, he was not left to die, neither of hunger nor suffocation, but still he remained lying there as though he were dead. It seems that cures you of all fear.

*

Now, there is a *small remedy* which is very very easy. For it is based on a simple personal question of one's common sense.... You must observe yourself a little and say that when you are afraid it is as though the fear was attracting the thing you are afraid of. If you are afraid of illness, it is as though you were attracting the illness. If you are afraid of an accident, it is as though you were attracting the accident. And if you look into yourself and around yourself a little, you will find it out, it is a persistent fact. So if you have just a little common sense, you say: "It is stupid to be afraid of anything, for it is precisely as though I were making a sign to that thing to come to me. If I had an enemy who wanted to kill me, I would not go and tell him: 'You know, it's me you want to kill!' " It is something like that. So since fear is bad, we won't have it. And if you say you are unable to prevent it by your reason, well, that shows you have no control over yourselves and must make a little effort to control yourselves. That is all.

*

To overcome one's fear means that there is one part of the being which is stronger than the other, and which has no

fear and imposes its own intrepidity on the part which is afraid.

*

An indomitable courage, a perfect sincerity and a sincere self-giving, so that one does not calculate or bargain, does not give with the idea of receiving, does not trust with the idea of being protected, does not have a faith which asks for proofs — it is this that is indispensable in order to walk on the path, and it is this alone which can truly shelter you from all danger.

*

The only way to fail in your battle with the hostile forces is not to have a true confidence in the divine help.

*

My protection is always with you and nothing bad can happen.

But you must take the decision to shake off the fear and then my force can work fully.

*

Stop fearing and the bothers will stop also.

A child of mine cannot fear.

*

… fear is an impurity, one of the greatest impurities, one of those which come most directly from the anti-divine forces which want to destroy the divine action on earth; and the first duty of those who really want to do yoga is to eliminate from their consciousness, with all the might, all the sincerity, all the endurance of which they are capable, even the shadow of a fear. To walk on the path, one must be dauntless, and never indulge in that petty, small, feeble, nasty shrinking back upon oneself, which is fear.

The Mother

Power of Right Attitude

…in the zone of immediate influence of each one, the right attitude not only has the power to turn every circumstance to advantage but can change the very circumstance itself. For instance, when a man comes to kill you, if you remain in the ordinary consciousness and get frightened out of your wits, he will most probably succeed in doing what he came for; if you rise a little higher and though full of fear call for the divine help, he may just miss you, doing you a slight injury; if, however, you have the right attitude and the full consciousness of the divine presence everywhere around you, he will not be able to lift even a finger against you. . . .

I have seen crowds saved from catastrophes by one single person keeping the right attitude. But it must be an attitude that does not remain somewhere very high and leaves the body to its usual reactions. If you remain high up like that, saying, "Let God's will be done", you may get killed all the same. For your body may be quite undivine, shivering with fear: the thing is to hold the true consciousness in the body itself and not have the least fear and be full of the divine peace. Then indeed there is no danger. Not only can attacks of men be warded off, but beasts also and even the elements can be affected. I can give you a little example. You remember the night of the great cyclone, when there was a tremendous noise and splash of rain all about the place. I thought I would go to Sri Aurobindo's room and help him shut the windows. I just opened his door and found him sitting quietly at his desk, writing. There was such a solid peace in the room that nobody would have dreamed that a cyclone was raging outside. All the windows were wide open, not a drop of rain was coming inside.

*

Q: Sweet Mother, here [in the Bases of Yoga, Chapter 3] Sri Aurobindo says, "... the difficulty faced in the right spirit and conquered, one finds that an obstacle has disappeared." What is the right spirit?

The right spirit means what he has explained in the following sentence: to keep one's trust, to remain quiet — I think it is there a little farther off — wait patiently for the attack to pass, keep one's trust. It is not there? Then it is in another passage. In any case the right spirit means not to lose courage, not to lose one's faith, not to be impatient, not to be depressed; to remain very quiet and peaceful with as much aspiration as one can have, and not worry about what is happening. To have the certitude that this will pass and all will be well. This indeed is the best thing.

The Mother

Why There Is Repulsion

Q: What is the ground of the repulsion that one instinctively feels towards certain animals, such as snakes and scorpions?

It is not an inevitable necessity that one should feel this or any other repulsion. To have no repulsion at all is one of the fundamental achievements of Yoga.

The repulsion you speak of comes from fear; if there were no fear, it would not exist. This fear is not based on reason, it is instinctive; it is not individual, but racial; it is a general suggestion and belongs to the consciousness of humanity as a whole. When one takes up the human body,

one accepts along with it a mass of these general suggestions, race ideas, race feelings of mankind, associations, attractions, repulsions, fears.

But from another viewpoint there is something very personal in the nature of an attraction or repulsion; for these movements are not the same for everybody and depend mostly on the quality of vibration of the vital being in different people. There are men who not only do not feel any repulsion for creatures like snakes, but have even a liking for them, a vital attraction and preference.

The world is full of things that are not pleasing or beautiful, but that is no reason why one should live in a constant feeling of repulsion for these things. All feelings of shrinking and disgust and fear that disturb and weaken the human mind can be overcome. A Yogi has to overcome these reactions; for almost the very first step in Yoga demands that you must keep a perfect equanimity in the presence of all beings and things and happenings. Always you must remain calm, untouched and unmoved; the strength of the Yogi lies there. An entire calmness and quietness will disarm even dangerous and ferocious animals when they confront you.

Repulsion is a movement of ignorance. It is an instinctive gesture of self-defence. But what best protects you against any danger is not an unreasoning recoil but knowledge, knowledge of the nature of the danger and a conscious application of the means that will remove or nullify it. The ignorance from which these movements rise is a general human condition, but it can be conquered; for we are not bound to the crude human nature from which the external being starts and which is all around us.

Ignorance is dispelled by a growing consciousness; what you need is consciousness and always more consciousness, a consciousness pure, simple and luminous. In the light of

this perfected consciousness, things appear as they are and not as they want to appear. It is like a screen faithfully recording all things as they pass. You see there what is luminous and what is dark, what is straight and what is crooked. Your consciousness becomes a screen or mirror; but this is when you are in a state of contemplation, a mere observer; when you are active, it is like a searchlight. You have only to turn it on, if you want to see luminously and examine penetratingly anything in any place.

The way to attain to this perfect consciousness is to increase your actual consciousness beyond its present grooves and limits, to educate it, to open it to the Divine Light and to let the Divine Light work in it fully and freely. But the Light can do its full and unhindered work only when you have got rid of all craving and fear, when you have no mental prejudices, no vital preferences, no physical apprehensions or attractions to obscure or bind you.

Repulsion is a movement of weakness. It comes because you have been touched and hurt and recoil from what hurts you. The atmosphere of a being or man or animal or its emanations may be harmful for you, although it may not be so felt by everybody, and directly it touches you, you shrink back from it. But if you were strong enough, you could stop the danger at a distance and not let it reach or hurt you. For you would see and know at once that there was something harmful there and put a barrier of defence around you, and, even if the thing came near, it would not be able to touch you; you would remain unhurt and unmoved by its presence.

The Mother

Fear and Yoga Do Not Go Together

If you want to do yoga, you must get rid of fear. Yoga and fear do not go together.

*

It is true that what one fears has the tendency to come until one is able to look it in the face and overcome one's shrinking. One must learn to take one's foundation on the Divine and overcome the fear, relying on the help to carry one through all things even unpleasant and adverse. There is a Force that works even through them for the seeker and carries him towards his goal.

*

It is a mistake to think that by fearing or being unhappy you can progress. Fear is always a feeling to be rejected, because what you fear is just the thing that is likely to come to you: fear attracts the object of fear. Unhappiness weakens the strength and lays one more open to the causes of unhappiness.

One can be quiet, happy, cheerful without being all that in a light or shallow way — and the happiness need not bring any vital reaction. All that you need to do is to be observant and vigilant, — watchful so that you may not give assent to wrong movements or the return of the old feelings, darkness, confusion, etc. If you remain vigilant, then with the increase of the Force upholding you, a power of self-control will come, a power to see and reject the wrong turn or the wrong reaction when it comes. Fear and unhappiness will not give you that. It is only by this vigilance accompanied by an opening to the supporting and guiding Force that it will come.

*

[Ways to remove fear:] By bringing down strength and calm into the lower vital (region below the navel). Also by will and imposing calm on the system when the fear arises. It can be done in either way or both together.

Sri Aurobindo

In life it is the action of the subconscious that has the larger share and it acts a hundred times more powerfully than the conscious parts. The normal human condition is a state filled with apprehensions and fears; if you observe your mind deeply for ten minutes, you will find that for nine out of ten it is full of fears — it carries in it fear about many things, big and small, near and far, seen and unseen, and though you do not usually take conscious notice of it, it is there all the same. To be free from all fear can come only by steady effort and discipline.

And even if by discipline and effort you have liberated your mind and your vital of apprehension and fear, it is more difficult to convince the body. But that too must be done. Once you enter the path of Yoga you must get rid of all fears — the fears of your mind, the fears of your vital, the fears of your body which are lodged in its very cells. One of the uses of the blows and knocks you receive on the path of Yoga is to rid you of all fear. The causes of your fears leap on you again and again, until you can stand before them free and indifferent, untouched and pure. One has a fear of the sea, another the fear of fire. The latter will find, it may be, that he has to face conflagration after conflagration till he is so trained that not a cell of his body quivers. That of which you have horror comes repeatedly till the horror is gone. One who seeks the transformation and is a follower of the Path, must become through and through

fearless, not to be touched or shaken by anything whatever in any part of his nature.

*

This fear comes from weakness of nerves and of the vital. This fear must be got rid of, before any attempt is made to follow the path of Yoga.

*

You are frightened because your breathing seems to stop when you try to concentrate. Don't enter this path if you are so full of fears. Suppose it comes to the worst; then what will happen? You may — die and then? What great harm will be done if you are dead? Our Yoga is not for cowards; if you have no courage, better leave it — your fears will bring disaster.

*

There are physical movements, effects of the pressure of the Yoga, which sometimes create ungrounded fears that may do harm if the fear is not rejected. There is, for instance, a certain pressure in the head of which there has been question and which is felt by many, especially in the earlier stages, when something that is still closed has to open. It is a discomfort that comes to nothing and can easily be got over, if you know that it is an effect of the pressure of the forces to which you are opening, when they work strongly on the body to produce a result and to hasten the transformation. Taken quietly, it can turn into a not unpleasurable sensation. But if you get frightened, you are sure to contract a very bad headache; it may even go as far as a fever. The discomfort is due to some resistance in the nature; if you know how to release the resistance, you are immediately free of the discomfort. But get frightened and the discomfort may turn

into something much worse. Whatever the character of the experience you have, you must give no room to fear; you must keep an unshaken confidence and feel that whatever happens is the thing that had to happen. Once you have chosen the path, you must boldly accept all the consequences of your choice. But if you choose and then draw back and choose again and again draw back, always wavering, always doubting, always fearful, you create a disharmony in your being, which not only retards your progress, but can be the origin of all kinds of disturbance in the mind and vital being and discomfort and disease in the body.

The Mother

Fear and Illness

You must not fear. Most of your troubles come from fear. In fact, ninety per cent of illnesses are the result of the subconscient fear of the body. In the ordinary consciousness of the body there is a more or less hidden anxiety about the consequences of the slightest physical disturbance. It can be translated by these words of doubt about the future: "And what will happen?" It is this anxiety that must be checked. Indeed this anxiety is a lack of confidence in the Divine's Grace, the unmistakable sign that the consecration is not complete and perfect.

As a practical means of overcoming this subconscient fear each time that something of it comes to the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's Will.

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the Divine's working, nothing can harm us. This process must be steadily repeated until all recurrence of fear is stopped. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and duration will be considerably diminished until it is definitively conquered.

*

When physical disorder comes, one must not be afraid; one must not run away from it, must face it with courage, calmness, confidence, with the certitude that illness is a *falsehood* and that if one turns entirely, in full confidence, with a complete quietude to the divine grace, it will settle in these cells as it establishes itself in the depths of the being, and the cells themselves will share in the eternal Truth and Delight.

*

The real disease is fear. Throw the fear away and the disease will go.

*

If you are ill, your illness is looked after with so much anxiety and fear, you are given so much care that you forget to take help from the One who can help you and you fall into a vicious circle and take a morbid interest in your illness.

*

Q: Sweet Mother, when one sees an illness coming, how can one stop it?

Ah! First of all, you must not want it and nothing in the body must want it. You must have a very strong will not to

be ill. This is the first condition.

The second condition is to call the light, a light of equilibrium, a light of peace, quietude and balance, and to push it into all the cells of the body, enjoining them not to be afraid, because that again is another condition.

First, not to want to be ill, and then not to be afraid of illness. You must neither attract it nor tremble. You must not want illness at all. But you must not because of fear not want it; you must not be afraid; you must have a calm certitude and a complete trust in the power of the Grace to shelter you from everything, and then think of something else, not be concerned about this any longer. When you have done these two things, refusing the illness with all your will and infusing a confidence which completely eliminates the fear in the cells of the body, and then busying yourself with something else, not thinking any longer about the illness, forgetting that it exists... there, if you know how to do that, you may even be in contact with people who have contagious diseases, and yet you do not catch them. But you must know how to do this.

Many people say, "Oh, yes, here I am not afraid." They don't have any fear in the mind, their mind is not afraid, it is strong, it is not afraid; but the body trembles, and one doesn't know it, because it is in the cells of the body that the trembling goes on. It trembles with a terrible anxiety and this is what attracts the illness. It is there that you must put the force and the quietude of a perfect peace and an absolute trust in the Grace. And then, sometimes you are obliged to drive away with a similar force in your thought all suggestions that after all, the physical world is full of illnesses, and these are contagious, and because one was in contact with somebody who is ill, one is sure to catch it, and then, that the inner methods are not powerful enough to act

on the physical, and all kinds of stupidities of which the air is full. These are collective suggestions which are passed on from one person to another by everybody. And if by chance there are two or three doctors, then it becomes terrible.
(*Laughter*)

*

From the ordinary point of view, in most cases, it is usually fear — fear, which may be mental fear, vital fear, but which is almost always physical fear, a fear in the cells — it is fear which opens the door to all contagion. Mental fear — all who have a little control over themselves or any human dignity can eliminate it; vital fear is more subtle and asks for a greater control; as for physical fear, a veritable yoga is necessary to overcome it, for the cells of the body are afraid of everything that is unpleasant, painful, and as soon as there is any unease, even if it is insignificant, the cells of the body become anxious, they don't like to be uncomfortable. And then, to overcome that, the control of a conscious will is necessary. It is usually this kind of fear that opens the door to illnesses. And I am not speaking of the first two types of fear which, as I said, any human being who wants to be human in the noblest sense of the word, must overcome, for that is cowardice. But physical fear is more difficult to overcome; without it even the most violent attacks could be repelled. If one has a minimum of control over the body, one can lessen its effects, but that is not immunity. It is this kind of trembling of material, physical fear in the cells of the body which aggravates all illnesses.

Some people are spontaneously free from fear even in their body; they have a sufficient vital equilibrium in them not to be afraid, not to fear, and a natural harmony in the rhythm of their physical life which enables them to reduce

the illness spontaneously to a minimum. There are others, on the other hand, with whom the thing always becomes as bad as it can be, sometimes to the point of catastrophe. There is the whole range and this can be seen quite easily. Well, this depends on a kind of happy rhythm of the movement of life in them, which is either harmonious enough to resist external attacks of illness or else doesn't exist or is not sufficiently powerful, and is replaced by that trembling of fear, that kind of instinctive anguish which transforms the least unpleasant contact into something painful and harmful. There is the whole range, from someone who can go through the worst contagion and epidemics without ever catching anything to one who falls ill at the slightest chance. So naturally it always depends on the constitution of each person; and as soon as one wants to make an effort for progress, it naturally depends on the control one has acquired over oneself, until the moment when the body becomes the docile instrument of the higher Will and one can obtain from it a normal resistance to all attacks.

But when one can eliminate fear, one is almost in safety. For example, epidemics, or so-called epidemics, like those which are raging at present — ninety-nine times out of a hundred they come from fear: a fear, then, which even becomes a mental fear in its most sordid form, promoted by newspaper articles, useless talk and so on.

*

Q: Can one get ill through fear?

Yes. I knew someone who was so full of fear that he got cholera! There was cholera in the next house and he got so frightened that he caught the illness and without any other reason, there was no other reason for his catching it: it was

through sheer fright. And it is a very common thing; in an epidemic, it is so in the majority of cases. It is through fear that the door is opened and you catch the illness. Those who have no fear can go about freely and generally they catch nothing. But still as I have said there, you may have no fear in the mind, you may have no fear even in the vital, but who has no fear in the body?... Very few.

Q: What is the difference between mental, vital and physical fear?

... As for the mental, it is very simple: thoughts come. You begin thinking, for example, there is this illness and this illness is very contagious, perhaps you are going to catch it, and if you catch it, it is going to be a terrible affair and what is to be done so as not to catch it?... So the mind begins to tremble: what is going to happen tomorrow? Etc.

As for the vital, you feel it. You feel it in your sensations. All at once you feel hot, you feel cold, you perspire or all kinds of unpleasant things happen. And then you feel your heart beating fast and suddenly you have fever and then the circulation stops and you become cold.

Physically, well... When you do not any longer have the other two fears, you can become aware of the physical fear. Generally, the other two are much more conscious. They hide the physical fear from you. But when you have no longer any mental or vital fear, then you become aware of it. It is a curious little vibration that gets into your cells and they begin shivering that way. But the cells are not like a heart beating very fast. It is in the very cells: they tremble with just a slight quivering. And it is very difficult to control this. Yet it can be controlled.

The Mother

What Are Nightmares

Vital beings move in a supraphysical world where human beings, if they chance to enter, feel at sea, helpless and defenceless. The human being is at home and safe in the material body; the body is his protection. There are some who are full of contempt for their bodies and think that things will be much better and easier after death without them. But in fact the body is your fortress and your shelter. While you are lodged in it the forces of the hostile world find a difficulty in getting any direct hold upon you. What are nightmares? These are your sorties into the vital world. And what is the first thing you try to do when you are in the grip of a nightmare? You rush back into your body and shake yourself into your normal physical consciousness. But in the world of the vital forces you are a stranger; it is an uncharted sea in which you have neither compass nor rudder. . . .

*

In dreams… you must remember that you are in the space and time of the vital world and not try to act as if you were still in your physical body. If you have the necessary knowledge of the state of things there, you can deal much more effectively with those vital beings who terrify you and give you such unpleasant nightmares. One of the characteristics of activity in the vital space and time is that these beings are able to assume huge shapes at will and create the vibration of fear in you which is their most powerful means of invading and possessing you. You must bear in mind their power of terrifying illusion, and cast out all fear. Once you face them boldly, unflinchingly, and look them straight in the eyes, they lose three-quarters of their power. And if

you call upon us for help, then even the last quarter is gone and they either take to their heels or dissolve. A friend of mine who used to go out in his vital body once complained that he was always being confronted with a gigantic tiger which made the night very wretched for him. I told him to banish all fear and walk straight up to the beast and stare it in the face, calling of course for assistance if necessary. He did so and lo! the tiger suddenly dwindled into an insignificant cat!

You have no idea of the almost magical effect of staring fearlessly into the eyes of a vital being. Even on earth, if you deal in this way with all those incarnations of the vital powers which we ordinarily call animals, you are assured of easy mastery. A physical tiger will also flee from you, if without the least tremor you look him straight in the eyes. A snake will never be able to bite you if you manage to rivet its gaze to yours without feeling the slightest dread. Merely staring at it with shaking knees will not help. There must be no disturbance in you: you must be calm and collected when you catch its gaze as it keeps swaying its head in order to fascinate you into abject fear. Animals are aware of a light in the human eyes which they are unable to bear if it is properly directed towards them. Man's look carries a power which nullifies them, provided it is steady and unafraid.

So, to sum up, remember two things: never, never be afraid, and in all circumstances call for the right help to make your strength a hundredfold stronger.

The Mother

Use of Fear in Teaching

You should not allow any fear to come between you and your child; fear is a pernicious means of education: it invariably gives birth to deceit and lying. Only a discerning affection that is firm yet gentle and an adequate practical knowledge will create the bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to be able to educate your child effectively.

*

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.

*

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.

The Mother

---

* Later Mother added: "This is the first step. When he has come so far he can then make further progress and learn the joy of being good."

Fear of God and Sin

It [The fear of God] is of importance chiefly in the ethical field when the soul has not yet grown sufficiently to follow good for its own sake and needs an authority above it whose wrath or whose stern passionless judgment it can fear and found upon that fear its fidelity to virtue. When we grow into spirituality, this motive can no longer remain except by the lingering on of some confusion in the mind, some persistence of the old mentality. Moreover, the ethical aim in Yoga is different from that of the external idea of virtue. Ordinarily, ethics is regarded as a sort of machinery of right action, the act is everything and how to do the right act is the whole question and the whole trouble. But to the Yogin **action is chiefly important not for its own sake, but rather as a means for the growth of the soul Godward.** Therefore what Indian spiritual writings lay stress upon is not so much the quality of the action to be done as the quality of the soul from which the action flows, upon its truth, fearlessness, purity, love, compassion, benevolence, absence of the will to hurt, and upon the actions as their outflowings. The old western idea that human nature is intrinsically bad and virtue is a thing to be followed out in despite of our fallen nature to which it is contrary, is foreign to the Indian mentality trained from ancient times in the ideas of the Yogins. Our nature contains, as well as its passionate rajasic and its downward-tending tamasic quality, a purer sattwic element and it is the encouragement of this, its highest part, which is the business of ethics. By it we increase the divine nature, *daivī pṛakrti*, which is present in us and get rid of the Titanic and demoniac elements. Not therefore the Hebraic righteousness of the God-fearing man, but the purity, love, beneficence, truth, fearlessness, harmlessness of the saint and the God-lover are

the goal of the ethical growth according to this notion. And, speaking more largely, **to grow into the divine nature is the consummation of the ethical being.** This can be done best by realising God as the higher Self, the guiding and uplifting Will or the Master whom we love and serve. Not fear of him, but love of him and aspiration to the freedom and eternal purity of his being must be the motive.

Certainly, fear enters into the relations of the master and the servant and even of the father and the child, but only when they are on the human level, when control and subjection and punishment figure predominantly in them and love is obliged to efface itself more or less behind the mask of authority. The Divine even as the Master does not punish anybody, does not threaten, does not force obedience. It is the human soul that has freely to come to the Divine and offer itself to his overpowering force that he may seize and uplift it towards his own divine levels, and give it that joy of mastery of the finite nature by the Infinite and of service to the Highest by which there comes freedom from the ego and the lower nature. Love is the key of this relation, and this service, *dāsyam*, is in Indian Yoga the happy service of the divine Friend or the passionate service to the divine Beloved. The Master of the worlds who in the Gita demands of his servant, the *bhakta*, to be nothing more in life than his instrument, makes this claim as the friend, the guide, the higher Self, and describes himself as the Lord of all the worlds who is the friend of all creatures, *sarvalokamaheśvaram suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*; the two relations in fact must go together and neither can be perfect without the other. So too it is not the fatherhood of God as the Creator who demands obedience because he is the maker of our being, but the fatherhood of love which leads

us towards the closer soul-union of Yoga. Love is the real key in both, and perfect love is inconsistent with the admission of the motive of fear. Closeness of the human soul to the Divine is the object, and fear sets always a barrier and a distance; even awe and reverence for the divine Power are a sign of distance and division and they disappear in the intimacy of the union of love. Moreover, fear belongs to the lower nature, to the lower self, and in approaching the higher Self must be put aside before we can enter into its presence.

*

[Says the divine Teacher to Arjuna:] You are shrinking from the results of your works, you desire other results and turn from your right path in life because it does not lead you to them. But this idea of works and their result, desire of result as the motive, the work as a means for the satisfaction of desire, is the bondage of the ignorant who know not what works are, nor their true source, nor their real operation, nor their high utility. ... But this is the great fear which besieges humanity, its fear of sin and suffering now and hereafter, its fear in a world of whose true nature it is ignorant, of a God whose true being also it has not seen and whose cosmic purpose it does not understand.

...it is because he acts ignorantly, with a wrong intelligence and therefore a wrong will in these matters, that man is or seems to be bound by his works; otherwise works are no bondage to the free soul. It is because of this wrong intelligence that he has hope and fear, wrath and grief and transient joy; otherwise works are possible with a perfect serenity and freedom.

Sri Aurobindo



Turn all things to honey; this is the law of divine living.

Sri Aurobindo

The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It

Generally speaking, perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of man's progress is fear, a fear that is many sided, multiform, self-contradictory, illogical, unreasoning and often unreasonable. Of all fears the most subtle and the most tenacious is the fear of death. It is deeply rooted in the sub-conscient and it is not easy to dislodge. It is obviously made up of several interwoven elements: the spirit of conservatism and the concern for self-preservation so as to ensure the continuity of consciousness, the recoil before the unknown, the uneasiness caused by the unexpected and the unforeseeable, and perhaps, behind all that, hidden in the depths of the cells, the instinct that death is not inevitable and that, if certain conditions are fulfilled, it can be conquered; although, as a matter of fact, fear in itself is one of the greatest obstacles to that conquest. For one cannot conquer what one fears, and one who fears death has already been conquered by it.

How can one overcome this fear? Several methods can be used for this purpose. But first of all, a few fundamental notions are needed to help us in our endeavour. The first and most important point is to know that life is one and immortal. Only the forms are countless, fleeting and brittle. This knowledge must be securely and permanently established in the mind and one must identify one's consciousness as far as possible with the eternal life that is independent of every form, but which manifests in all forms. This gives the indispensable psychological basis with which to confront the problem, for the problem remains. Even if the inner being is enlightened enough to be above all fear, the fear still remains hidden in the cells of the body, obscure, spontaneous, beyond the reach of reason, usually almost

unconscious. It is in these obscure depths that one must find it out, seize hold of it and cast upon it the light of knowledge and certitude.

Thus life does not die, but the form is dissolved, and it is this dissolution that the physical consciousness dreads. And yet the form is constantly changing and in essence there is nothing to prevent this change from being progressive. Only this progressive change could make death no longer inevitable, but it is very difficult to achieve and demands conditions that very few people are able to fulfil. Thus the method to be followed in order to overcome the fear of death will differ according to the nature of the case and the state of the consciousness. These methods can be classified into four principal kinds, although each one includes a large number of varieties; in fact, each individual must develop his own system.

The first method appeals to the reason. One can say that in the present state of the world, death is inevitable; a body that has taken birth will necessarily die one day or another, and in almost every case death comes when it must: one can neither hasten nor delay its hour. Someone who craves for it may have to wait very long to obtain it and someone who dreads it may suddenly be struck down in spite of all the precautions he has taken. The hour of death seems therefore to be inexorably fixed, except for a very few individuals who possess powers that the human race in general does not command. Reason teaches us that it is absurd to fear something that one cannot avoid. The only thing to do is to accept the idea of death and quietly do the best one can from day to day, from hour to hour, without worrying about what is going to happen. This process is very effective when it is used by intellectuals who are accustomed to act according to the laws of reason; but it would be less successful for

emotional people who live in their feelings and let themselves be ruled by them. No doubt, these people should have recourse to **the second method**, the method of inner seeking. Beyond all the emotions, in the silent and tranquil depths of our being, there is a light shining constantly, the light of the psychic consciousness. Go in search of this light, concentrate on it; it is within you. With a persevering will you are sure to find it and as soon as you enter into it, you awake to the sense of immortality. You have always lived, you will always live; you become wholly independent of your body; your conscious existence does not depend on it; and this body is only one of the transient forms through which you have manifested. Death is no longer an extinction, it is only a transition. All fear instantly vanishes and you walk through life with the calm certitude of a free man.

The third method is for those who have faith in a God, their God, and who have given themselves to him. They belong to him integrally; all the events of their lives are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely with calm submission but with gratitude, for they are convinced that whatever happens to them is always for their own good. They have a mystic trust in their God and in their personal relationship with him. They have made an absolute surrender of their will to his and feel his unvarying love and protection, wholly independent of the accidents of life and death. They have the constant experience of lying at the feet of their Beloved in an absolute self-surrender or of being cradled in his arms and enjoying a perfect security. There is no longer any room in their consciousness for fear, anxiety or torment; all that has been replaced by a calm and delightful bliss.

But not everyone has the good fortune of being a mystic.

Finally there are those who are born warriors. They cannot accept life as it is and they feel pulsating within them their right to immortality, an integral and earthly immortality. They possess a kind of intuitive knowledge that death is nothing but a bad habit; they seem to be born with the resolution to conquer it. But this conquest entails a desperate combat against an army of fierce and subtle assailants, a combat that has to be fought constantly, almost at every minute. Only one who has an indomitable spirit should attempt it. The battle has many fronts; it is waged on several planes that intermingle and complement each other. . . .

There is yet another way to conquer the fear of death, but it is within the reach of so few that it is mentioned here only as a matter of information. It is to enter into the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive, and then to return from this region and re-enter the physical body, resuming the course of material existence with full knowledge. But for that one must be an initiate.

The Mother

Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound for ever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility.

Sri Aurobindo

O Son of Ancient Yoga

…once Ahankar [ego-sense] is there, likes and dislikes are born, रागद्वेषौ the primal couple of dualities, liking for what farthers the satisfaction of desire, dislike for what hinders it, the sense of possession, the sense of loss, attraction, repulsion, charm, repugnance, love, hatred, pity, cruelty, kindness, wrath, — the infinite and eternal procession of the dualities. Admit but one pair, and all the others come tumbling in in its wake. But the man who sees himself in all creatures, cannot hate; he shrinks from none, he has neither repulsion nor fear, ततो न विजुगुप्सते.* ....

O son of the ancient Yoga, realise thy Self in all things; fear nothing, loathe nothing; dread none, hate none, but do thy part with strength and courage; **so shalt thou be what thou truly art**, God in thy victory, — God in thy defeat, God in thy very death & torture, God who will not be defeated & who cannot die. Shall God fear any? shall He despair? shall He tremble & shake? Nay 'tis the insects that form thy body & brain which shake & tremble; Thou within them sittest looking with calm eyes at their pain & terror; for they are but shadows that dream of themselves as a reality. Realise the Self in all creatures, realise all creatures in the Self; then in the end terror shall flee from thee in terror, pain shall not touch thee, lest itself be tortured by thy touch; death shall not dare to come near to thee lest he be slain.

Sri Aurobindo

---

* Thereafter he shrinks not from aught. —Isha Upanishad, 6th verse.

Remain Calm and Assured

The first thing from which you must cure yourself once for ever, is *Fear*.

It is more dangerous than the worst disease.

*

There is *nothing* to fear — all is the Lord — there is *nothing else* than the Lord; the *Lord alone* exists and all that tries to frighten us is only a silly and meaningless disguise of the Lord.

Cheer up — the way is open before you, shake off this obsession... and bring down the Divine Calm.

*

What can he fear who belongs to the Divine? Can he not walk, his soul expanding and his brow illumined, upon the path the Divine traces for him, whatever it may be, even if it is altogether incomprehensible to his limited reason?

*

All fear must be overcome and replaced by a total confidence in the Divine Grace.

*

Face everything with a constant consciousness of the divine Presence, with a total self-giving to the Divine, and the whole being unified in this will; then one can go forward in life, can face anything whatever.

*

... whatever the domain, whatever the danger, the attitude remains the same — calm and assured.

The Mother

Sources of the Passages Published in this Booklet:

Page 1: CWM Vol. 14, p. 262. **Page 2:** CWM Vol. 10: pp. 11-12; Vol. 14, p. 258. **Page 3:** SABCL 24: 1416, 1417; 17: 124, 113. **Pages 4-7:** CWM 4: 211-12, 213; 6: 50-51; 4: 212. **Page 8:** CWM 3: 166. **Pages 9-13:** CWM 5: 319-20; 5: 118-20; 6: 50; 5: 318; 7: 31; 8: 261-62; 3: 34; 14: 258, 258; 8: 261. **Pages 14-15:** CWM 3: 154-55; 7: 9-10. **Pages 15-17:** CWM 3: 100-02. **Pages 18-21:** SABCL 24: 1416, 1416, 1416-17, 1417. CWM 3: 57; 14: 259, 259; 3: 91. **Pages 21-26:** CWM 15: 151, 152, 152, 155; 7: 144-45; 9: 121-22; 5: 168-69. **Pages 27-28**: CWM 3: 47, 165-66. **Page 29:** CWM 12: 11, 14, 364. **Pages 30-32:** SABCL 21: 540-42; 13: 87-88. **Page 33:** SABCL 17: 115. **Pages 34-37:** CWM 12: 82-87; Quote: SABCL 16: 386. **Page 38:** SABCL 12: 487-89. **Page 39:** CWM 14: 260, 260, 259, 259; 7: 31; 14: 181.

SABCL denotes Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library edition: 30 Volumes. **CWM** denotes Collected Works of the Mother: **1st** edition, 17 Volumes. Titles and captions to the passages are chosen by the editor highlighting the theme of the excerpts. The excerpts selected are the editor's choice to give the reader some basic idea on the subject. These are by no means exhaustive.

Tail-piece

Death was entering a city one morning and the sentry asked, "What are you going to do?" "I am going to take 100 people," Death replied. The sentry said, "That's horrible!" "That is the way it is; that's what I do," Death replied. The sentry hurried to warn everyone he could in the city about the death's plan. However one thousand persons died during the day.

As evening fell Death was returning and the sentry asked him, "You told me that you were going to take 100 people, why did 1,000 die?" Death responded, "I kept my word; I only took 100 people. Worry and Fear took the others!"

(Author Unknown)