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

Freedom from the Past

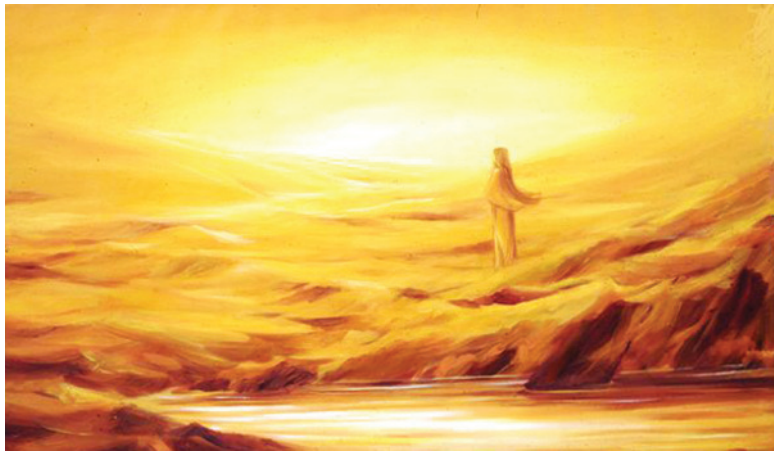
Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

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... development into forms is an imperative rule of effective manifestation; yet all truth and practice too strictly formulated becomes old and loses much, if not all, of its virtue; it must be constantly renovated by fresh streams of the spirit revivifying the dead or dying vehicle and changing it, if it is to acquire a new life. To be perpetually reborn is the condition of a material immortality.

CWSA 23:5 (SABCL 20:1) Sri Aurobindo



Extracts from a Prophetic Poem of Sri Aurobindo

The old shall perish; it shall pass away,
Expunged, annihilated, blotted out;
And all the iron bands that ring about
Man's wide expansion shall at last give way. ...

The Iron Age is ended. Only now
The last fierce spasm of the dying past
Shall shake the nations, and when that has passed,
Earth washed of ills shall raise a fairer brow.

This is man's progress; for the Iron Age
Prepares the Age of Gold. What we call sin,
Is but man's leavings as from deep within
The Pilot guides him in his pilgrimage.

He leaves behind the ill with strife and pain,
Because it clings and constantly returns,
And in the fire of suffering fiercely burns
More sweetness to deserve, more strength to gain.

Poem: *In the Moonlight* CWSA 2: 243 - 44 (SABCL 5: 61)

Past Dawns and Future Noons

The past is both a drag and a force for progress

The past is both a drag and a force for progress. It is all that has created the present and a great part of the force that is creating the future. For the past is not dead; its forms are gone and had to go, otherwise the present would not have come into being: but its soul, its power, its essence lives veiled in the present and ever-accumulating, growing, deepening will live on in the future. Every human being holds in and behind him all the past of his own race, of humanity and of himself; these three things determine his starting-point and pursue him through his life's progress. It is in the force of this past, in the strength which its huge conservations give to him that he confronts the unillumined abysses of the future and plunges forward into the depths of its unrealised infinities. But also it is a drag, partly because man afraid of the unknown clings to the old forms of which he is sure, the old foundations which feel so safe under his feet, the old props round which so many of his attachments and associations cast their tenacious tendrils, but also partly because the forces of the past keep their careful hold on him so as to restrain him in his uncertain course and prevent the progress from becoming a precipitation.

The future repels us even while it irresistibly attracts. The repulsion lies partly in our own natural recoil from the unknown, because every step into this unknown is a wager between life and death; every decision we make may mean either the destruction or the greater fulfilment of what we now are, of the name and form to which we are attached. But also it lies in the future itself; for there, governing that future, there are not only powers which call us to fulfil them and attract us with an irresistible force but other pow-

ers which have to be conquered and do not desire to yield themselves. The future is a sphinx with two minds, an energy which offers itself and denies, gives itself and resists, seeks to enthrone us and seeks to slay. But the conquest has to be attempted, the wager has to be accepted. We have to face the future's offer of death as well as its offer of life, and it need not alarm us, for it is by constant death to our old names and forms that we shall live most vitally in greater and newer forms and names. Go on we must; for if we do not, Time itself will force us forward in spite of our fancied immobility. And this is the most pitiable and dangerous movement of all. For what can be more pitiable than to be borne helplessly forward clinging to the old that disintegrates in spite of our efforts and shrieking frantically to the dead ghosts and dissolving fragments of the past to save us alive? And what can be more dangerous than to impose immobility on that which is in its nature mobile? This means an increasing and horrible rottenness; it means an attempt to persist on as a putrid and stinking corpse instead of a living and self-renewing energetic creature. The greatest spirits are therefore those who have no fear of the future, who accept its challenge and its wager; they have that sublime trust in the God or Power that guides the world, that high audacity of the human soul to wrestle with the infinite and realise the impossible, that wise and warrior confidence in its ultimate destiny which mark the Avatars and prophets and great innovators and renovators.

Sri Aurobindo

CWSA 13: 129-30 (SABCL 16: 317-19)

The Time-Spirit Destroys the Forms of the Past

So much depends on Time & God's immediate purpose that it is more important to seek out His purpose than to attach ourselves to our own nostrums. The Kala Purusha, Zeitgeist & Death Spirit, has risen to his dreadful work — lokakshayakritpravriddhas — increasing to destroy a world, — and who shall stay the terror & mightiness & irresistibility of Him? But He is not only destroying the world that was, He is creating the world that shall be; it is therefore more profitable for us to discover & help what He is building than to lament & hug in our arms what He is destroying. But it is not easy to discover His drift, & we often admire too much temporary erections which are merely tents for the warriors in this Kurukshetra and take them for the permanent buildings of the future.

The Pandits are therefore right when they make a difference between the practice of the Satya & the practice of the Kali. But in their application of this knowledge, they do not seem to me to be always wise or learned. They forget or do not know that Kali is the age for a destruction & rebirth, not for a desperate clinging to the old that can no longer be saved. They entrench themselves in the system of Kalivarjya, but forget that it is not the weaknesses but the strengths of the old harmony that are being subjected to varjanam, abandonment. That which is saved is merely a temporary platform which we have erected on the banks of the sea of change awaiting a more stable habitation; and it too must one day break down under the crash of the waves, must disappear into the engulfing waters. Has the time arrived for that destruction? We think that it has. Listen to the crash of those waters, — more formidable than the noise of assault, mark that slow, sullen, remorseless sapping, —

watch pile after pile of our patched incoherent ramshackle structure corroding, creaking, shaking with the blows, breaking, sinking silently or with a splash, suddenly or little by little into the yeast of those billows. Has the time arrived for a new construction? We say it has. Mark the activity, eagerness and hurrying to and fro of mankind, the rapid prospecting, seeking, digging, founding — see the Avatars & great vibhutis coming, arising thickly, treading each close behind the other. Are not these the signs and do they not tell us that the great Avatar of all arrives to establish the first Satya Yuga of the Kali?

CWSA 12: 55-56

We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within the four corners of the teaching of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future.

CWSA 19: 9–10 (SABCL 13: 7-8)

The wheel of change

The individual frequently enough, the community at any moment of its life is seen to turn away from the Shastra, becomes impatient of it, loses that form of its will and faith and goes in search of another law which it is now more disposed to accept as the right rule of living and regard as a more vital or higher truth of existence. This may happen when the established Shastra ceases to be a living thing and degenerates or stiffens into a mass of customs and conventions. Or it may come because it is found that the Shastra is imperfect or no longer useful for the progress demanded; a new truth, a more perfect law of living has become imperative. If that does not exist, it has to be discovered by the effort of the race or by some great and illumined individual mind who embodies the desire and seeking of the race. The Vedic law becomes a convention and a Buddha appears with his new rule of the eightfold path and the goal of Nirvana; and it may be remarked that he propounds it not as a personal invention, but as the true rule of Aryan living constantly rediscovered by the Buddha, the enlightened mind, the awakened spirit. But this practically means that there is an ideal, an eternal Dharma which religion, philosophy, ethics and all other powers in man that strive after truth and perfection are constantly endeavouring to embody in new statements of the science and art of the inner and outer life, a new Shastra. The Mosaic law of religious, ethical and social righteousness is convicted of narrowness and imperfection and is now besides a convention; the law of Christ

comes to replace it and claims at once to abrogate and to fulfil, to abrogate the imperfect form and fulfil in a deeper and broader light and power the spirit of the thing which it aimed at, the divine rule of living. And the human search does not stop there, but leaves these formulations too, goes back to some past truth it had rejected or breaks forward to some new truth and power, but is always in search of the same thing, the law of its perfection, its rule of right living, its complete, highest and essential self and nature.

CWSA 19: 478-79 (SABCL 13: 461-62)

The spirit, the truth must be the same, but the formations may be different with advantage to the spirit. To insist on one form only might well bring in that rigidity which grew upon Indian society and its civilization in the past and brought about an imprisonment and decline of the spirit. India was strongest and most alive when she had many variations of form but one spirit. And I think,—that at least was the prevision that came on me in the Alipur jail and I do not yet see a different prospect,—that this will be the case also in the future.

CWSA 36: 238 (SABCL 27: 488-89)

Custom and law may be altered

One is astonished at the position of the orthodox. They labour to deify everything that exists. Hindu society has certain arrangements and habits which are merely customary. There is no proof that they existed in ancient times nor any reason why they should last into the future. ...Neither antiquity nor modernity can be the test of truth or the test of usefulness. All the Rishis do not belong to the past; the Avatars still come; revelation still continues. ... To recreate Manu entire in modern society is to ask Ganges to flow back to the Himalayas. Manu is no doubt national, but so is the animal sacrifice and the burnt offering. Because a thing is national of the past, it need not follow that it must be national of the future. It is stupid not to recognise altered conditions. ...

To all things there is a date and a limit. All long-continued customs have been sovereignly useful in their time, even totemism and polyandry. We must not ignore the usefulness of the past, but we seek in preference a present and a future utility.

Custom and Law may then be altered. For each age its Shastra. But we cannot argue straight off that it must be altered, or even if alteration is necessary, that it must be altered in a given direction. One is repelled by the ignorant enthusiasm of social reformers. Their minds are usually a strange jumble of ill-digested European notions. Very few of them know anything about Europe, and even those who have visited it know it badly. But they will not allow things or ideas contrary to European notions to be anything but superstitious, barbarous, harmful and benighted, they will not suffer what is praised and practised in Europe to be anything but rational and enlightened. ...

CWSA 12: 50-52 (SABCL 17: 120) **Sri Aurobindo**

Never get discouraged

This is how something bad can be turned into something very good, when one has the power. It is an unlimited power, this, in the sense that if one has made a mistake and done something serious, if one has the power to bring this truth-consciousness, this supramental force, and let it act, it is an occasion for a tremendous progress.

CWM 6: 289 (2nd ed.) The Mother



The Mother in Japan

The Utility of the Past

A stepping stone to lead farther

All the past should always be simply like a stepping-stone or a ladder, something to lead you farther; it should not have any other use except to push you forward. And if you can feel this and always turn your back on what is past and look at what you want to do, then you go much faster, you don't waste time on the way. What makes you lose time is always this clinging to what has been, to what is, what seemed to you beautiful and good in what is past. This must only help you, you must not reject it, but it must help you to go forward, it must simply be something on which you lean to take a step forward.

Now, at a particular time, a set of circumstances, inner and outer, has caused one to be receptive to a certain vibration; for example, as you say, while looking at the stars or contemplating a landscape or reading a page or hearing a lecture, one has suddenly an inner revelation, an experience, something that strikes him and gives him the impression of being open to something new. But if you want to hold on to this tightly like that, you will lose everything, because one can't keep the past, one must always go forward, advance, advance. This illumination must prepare you so that you can organise your whole being on this new level, in order to be able suddenly, one day, to leap up again to a higher step.

CWM 7: 35

A common mistake: Holding on to the past

It is very good to keep the memory of the past if it helps you, but it should not prevent you from going forward. And the teaching which was good at one time is no longer so at

another, that's absolutely certain. ..

But, usually, those who are attached to the past want to keep the past by itself, and the others who want to go forward want to reject everything and keep only what they have found. And so both of them make a common mistake... that is, of limiting themselves and making their consciousness narrow instead of widening it.

CWM 7: 345

Old forms can endure as a vibration lasts, but their purpose historically, it could be said, was momentary, and one form is replaced by another in order that a new step forward may be taken. The mistake humanity makes is that it always hangs on to what is behind it and wants to perpetuate the past indefinitely. These things must be used at the time when they are useful. For there is a history of *each* individual development; you may pass through stages in which these disciplines have their momentary utility, but when you have gone beyond that moment you ought to enter into something else and see that historically it was useful but now is so no longer. Certainly, to those who have reached, for instance, a certain state of development and mental control, I won't say, "Read the Dhammapada and meditate on it"; it would be a waste of time. I give it to those who have not gone beyond the stage where it is necessary. But always man takes upon his shoulders an interminable burden. He does not want to drop anything of the past and he stoops more and more under the weight of a useless accumulation.

You have a guide for a part of the way but when you have travelled this part leave the road and the guide and go farther! This is something men find difficult to do. When they get hold of something which helps them, they cling

to it, they do not want to move any more. Those who have progressed with the help of Christianity do not want to give it up and they carry it on their shoulders; those who have progressed with the help of Buddhism do not want to leave it and they carry it on their shoulders, and so this hampers the advance and you are indefinitely delayed.

Once you have passed the stage, let it drop, let it go! Go farther.

CWM 9: 198

You must not confuse a religious teaching with a spiritual one.

Religious teaching belongs to the past and halts progress.

Spiritual teaching is the teaching of the future — it illumines the consciousness and prepares it for the future realisation.

Spiritual teaching is above religions and strives towards a global Truth.

It teaches us to enter into direct relations with the Divine.

CWM 12: 120

Q: I have been laying great stress on the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and on the songs of Kabir, Mira, etc. Is it against your way to continue these old things?

Not at all — it is the attitude that is important. The past must be a spring-board towards the future, not a chain preventing from advancing. As I said, all depends on the attitude towards the past.

CWM 12: 147

All studies, or in any case the greater part of studies con-

sists in learning about the past, in the hope that it will give you a better understanding of the present. But if you want to avoid the danger that the students may cling to the past and refuse to look to the future, you must take great care to explain to them that the purpose of everything that happened in the past was to prepare what is taking place now, and that everything that is taking place now is nothing but a preparation for the road towards the future, which is truly the most important thing for which we must prepare.

It is by cultivating intuition that one prepares to live for the future.

CWM 12: 168

Q: What should be the attitude of the sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's yoga towards the various forms of God worshipped by different religions in the past and the present? If he continues to worship them, will it create an obstacle to his progress and prevent his realisation of his aim?

A benevolent goodwill towards all worshippers.

An enlightened indifference towards all religions.

As for the relation with the beings of the Overmind, if this relation exists already, each case must have its own solution.

CWM 12: 308

Past limits disappear and new possibilities come in

Every time a new element is introduced into the total set of possible combinations, it causes what may be called a tearing of its limits: the introduction of something which makes all past limits disappear and new possibilities come in and multiply infinitely the possibilities of old.

CWM 8: 313 **The Mother**

Changing Past Formations of Character

Forget as entirely as possible what you do not want to be

Whatever may be the past, whatever may be the faults committed, whatever the ignorance in which one might have lived, one carries deep within oneself the supreme purity which can translate itself into a wonderful realisation.

The whole point is to think of that, to concentrate on that and not to be concerned with all the difficulties and obstacles and hindrances.

Concentrate exclusively on what you want to be, forget as entirely as possible what you do not want to be.

CWM 3: 215 **The Mother**

Need of a quiet mind and a quiet will

What is needed is a quiet mind and a quiet will, patient, persistent, refusing to yield either to excitement or discouragement, but always insisting [tranquilly] on the change needed in the being. A quiet will of this kind cannot fail in the end. Its effect is inevitable. It must first reject in the waking state, not only the acts habitual to the vital being, but the impulses behind them which it must understand to be external to the person even though manifested in him and also the suggestions which are behind the impulses. When thus rejected, the once habitual thoughts and movements may still manifest in the dream-state, because it is a well-known psychological law that what is suppressed or rejected in the waking state may still recur in sleep and dream because they are still there in the subconscient being. But if the waking state is thoroughly cleared, these dream-movements must gradually disappear because they lose their food and the impressions in the subconscient are gradually effaced. ...

(1) Realise that these things in you do not come from

any true moral depravity, for that can exist only when the mind itself is corrupted and supports the perverse vital impulses. Where the mind and the will reject them, the moral being is sound and it is a case only of a weakness or malady of the vital parts or the nervous system.

(2) Do not brood on the past but turn your face with a patient hope and confidence towards the future. To brood on the past failure will prevent you from recovering your health and will weaken your mind and will, hampering them in the work of self-conquest and rebuilding of the character.

(3) Do not yield to discouragement if success does not come at once, but continue patiently and steadfastly until the thing is done.

(4) Do not torture your mind by always dwelling on your weakness. Do not imagine that they unfit you for life or for the fulfilment of the human ideal. Once having recognised that they are there, seek for your sources of strength and dwell rather on them and the certainty of conquest.

CWSA 36: 306 (SABCL 24:1658) **Sri Aurobindo**

A reversal of consciousness

Q: If someone who has been bad and wicked, suddenly decides to change, does he immediately hear the small inner voice which warns every time one does something bad?

Everything depends upon the form the reversal, the inner conversion has taken. If the change is sudden, yes, one can immediately become conscious of the small voice, but if it is gradual, the best effects will also be gradual. It depends absolutely on each case, one cannot tell. If a kind of tearing, an illumination takes place, then yes, one has immediately the inner indication. It can even be retrospective. That is, while thinking of certain past acts, one may get a clear vision of what one was compared with what one now is. Besides, each time there is a true change in the being, each time one overcomes a fault, one has the clear vision of a whole set of things which seemed quite natural and which now pass across the screen like a dark spot; you see the origin, the causes and the effects. If you have a precise, exact memory and have for a certain length of time, say a period of ten years, made sincere efforts to transform yourself, to consecrate yourself more and more, and if you could recollect what you were before, you would say, "It is not possible, I was not like that!" And yet you were indeed like that. There is such a distance between what one was before, what seemed quite natural to you before and what seems to you natural now, that you cannot believe you are the same person. This is the surest indication that you have truly progressed.

CWM 4: 102

Q: Is it the same thing, the same work, to be conscious that the nature must be changed and to master the different parts of the being?

One precedes the other. First of all one must be conscious, then control, and by continuing the mastery one changes one's character. Changing the character is what comes last. One must control bad habits, the old habits, for a very long time for them to drop off and the character to change.

We may take the example of someone who has frequent depressions. When things are not exactly as he would like them to be, he becomes depressed. So, to begin

with, he must become aware of his depression— not only of the depression but of the causes of depression, why he gets depressed so easily. Then, once he has become conscious, he must master the depressions, must stop being depressed even when the cause of depression is there—he must master his depression, stop it from coming. And finally, after this work has been done for a sufficiently long time, the nature loses the habit of having depressions and no longer reacts in the same way, the nature is changed.

CWM 4: 340-41

Escape from the consequences of past errors

So long as one repeats one's mistakes, nothing can be abolished, for one recreates them every minute. When someone makes a mistake, serious or not, this mistake has consequences in his life, a 'Karma' which must be exhausted, but the Divine Grace, if one turns to It, has the power of cutting off the consequences; but for this the fault must not be repeated. One shouldn't think one can continue to commit the same stupidities indefinitely and that indefinitely the Grace will cancel all the consequences, it does not happen like that! The past may be completely purified, cleansed, to the point of having no effect on the future, but on condition that one doesn't change it again into a perpetual present; you yourself must stop the bad vibration in yourself, you must not go on reproducing the same vibration indefinitely.

CWM 9: 58 fn **The Mother**

Use the past as a spring-board to leap towards the future.

CWM 15: 70 The Mother

Q: Will not past action come in the way of sadhana?

Complete consecration to the Divine wipes out what one has been in the past.

CWM 15: 72

My dear child, your prayer has been heard. Your past has disappeared. Prepare to grow in consciousness, in light, in peace.

Our blessings are always with you.

CWM 15: 72

Supreme love can dissolve a whole past

In its essence, in its origin, love is like a flame, a white flame which overcomes *all* resistances. You can experience this yourself: whatever the difficulty in your being, whatever the burden of accumulated error, ignorance, incapacity and bad will, a single *second* of this pure, essential, supreme love dissolves it as in an all-powerful flame; a single moment and a whole past can disappear; a single instant in which you *touch* it in its essence and a whole burden is consumed.

CWM 10: 72-73

Give yourself to the future

Q: Please tell me how I can get rid of the past, which clings so heavily.

To get rid of the past is something so difficult that it seems almost impossible.

But if you give yourself entirely and without reserve to the future, and if this giving is constantly renewed, the past will fall away by itself and no longer encumber you.

CWM 16: 364

Old habits and formations

Q: What is the difference between the "old habits" and the "old formations" Sri Aurobindo speaks about?

It is almost the same thing. Your body, for instance, has certain reactions to cold, heat, hunger, and you are in the habit of having these reactions, and this habit has made a kind of formation in your physical nature, that is, a crease, a fixed crease of the body, and that's how it is. Formations are the result of habits. Similarly, there are "formations" of character; for instance, if you are in the habit of getting angry when things do not please you, the habit makes a sort of inner crease in your nature, and every time a thing doesn't please you, automatically, without any control, you will get angry. This is what is called a "formation", they are habits which have become like a part of your character.

CWM 4: 344

A question of sincerity

But if sincerely one wants to be healed, if one has a real aspiration to overcome the obstacle, to rise — rise above oneself, to give up all that pulls one back, to break the limits, become clear, purify oneself of all that blocks the way, if truly one has the *intense* will not to fall back into past errors, to surge up from the darkness and ignorance, to rise into the light, stripped of all that is too human, too small, too ignorant— then that works. It works, works powerfully. At times it works definitively and totally. But there must be nothing that clings to the old movements, keeps quiet at the moment, hides itself, and then later shows its face and says, "Yes, yes, it is very fine, your experience, but now it is my turn!" Then, when that happens, I do not answer for anything, because sometimes, as a reaction it becomes worse.

That is why I always come back to the same thing, say always the same thing: one must be truly sincere, truly.

One must be ready, if there is something which is clinging, clinging tightly, one must be ready to tear it away completely, without its leaving any trace behind. This is why at times one makes the same mistake and repeats it, until the suffering is sufficiently great to impose a total sincerity. One must not try that method, it is bad. It is bad because it destroys many things, it wastes much energy, spreads bad vibrations. But if one can't do otherwise, well, in the intensity of suffering one can find the will for perfect sincerity.

And there is a moment — in everyone's life there is a moment — when this need for perfect sincerity comes as a definitive choice. There is a moment in one's individual life, also a moment in the collective life when one belongs to a group, a moment when the choice *must* be made, when the purification *must* be done. Sometimes this becomes very serious, it is almost a question of life and death for the group: it *must* make a decisive progress... if it wants to survive.

CWM 6: 146

Dealing with one's shadow

Q: Mother, last time you said that often there is in us a dark element which... which suggests to us... which makes us commit stupidities. So you said that when one is conscious of this element, it must be pulled out. But does pulling it out mean... For example, when one is conscious that this element comes to make us do stupid things, then, if by an effort of will one abstains from doing it, can one say that one has pulled it out?

For that, first of all, you must become conscious of it, you see, put it right in front of you, and cut the links which

attach it to your consciousness. It is a work of inner psychology, you know.

One can see, when one studies oneself very attentively.... For example, if you observe yourself, you see that one day you are very generous. Let us take this, it is easy to understand. Very generous: generous in your feelings, generous in your sensations, generous in your thoughts and even in material things; that is, you understand the faults of others, their intentions, weaknesses, even nasty movements. You see all this, and you are full of good feelings, of generosity. You tell yourself, "Well... everyone does the best he can!"—like that.

Another day — or perhaps the very next minute — you will notice in yourself a kind of dryness, fixity, something that is bitter, that judges severely, that goes as far as bearing a grudge, has rancour, would like the evil-doer punished, that almost has feelings of vengeance; just the very opposite of the former! One day someone harms you and you say, "Doesn't matter! He did not know"... or "He couldn't do otherwise"... or "That's his nature"... or "He could not understand!" The next day — or perhaps an hour later — you say, "He must be punished! He must pay for it! He must be made to feel that he has done wrong!" — with a kind of rage; and you want to take things, you want to keep them for yourself, you have all the feelings of jealousy, envy, narrowness, you see, just the very opposite of the other feeling.

This is the dark side. And so, the moment one sees it, if one looks at it and doesn't say, "It is I", if one says, "No, it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself", one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face; and with the knowledge and light of the other, one doesn't try so much to convince — because that is very difficult — but one compels it to remain quiet... first to stand

farther away, then one flings it very far away so that it can no longer return — putting a great light on it. There are instances in which it is possible to change, but this is very rare. There are instances in which one can put upon this being — or this shadow — put upon it such an intense light that it transforms it, and it changes into what is the truth of your being.

But this is a rare thing.... It can be done, but it is rare. Usually, the best thing is to say, "No, this is not I! I don't want it! I have nothing to do with this movement, it doesn't exist for me, it is something contrary to my nature!" And so, by dint of insisting and driving it away, finally one separates oneself from it.

CWM 6: 262

The needed change is to change oneself

In this last day of the year, let us take the resolution that all our weaknesses and obstinate obscurities will drop from us along with the finishing year.

CWM 14: 239

A strong and effective resolution not to commit the same faults any more and a complete trust in the Divine's Grace are the only remedy.

CWM 14: 239

When one is in need of outward changes, it means that he is not progressing within; for he who progresses within can live always under the same outward conditions: they constantly reveal to him new truths.

All outward change should be the spontaneous and inevitable expression of an inner transformation. Normally, all improvement of the conditions of physical life should be the blossoming to the surface of a progress realised within.

CWM 14: 216

By changing house you cannot change character.

If you change your character you need not change your environment.

CWM 14: 217

Exterior things must be of little importance when one does "sadhana". The needed inner peace can be established in any surroundings.

CWM 14:217

... one should never feel discouraged; or even if one has made mistakes many a time, one must keep the will not to make them any longer, and be sure that one day or another one will triumph over the difficulty if one persists in one's will.

CWM 6:289

The only safety in life, the only way to escape from the consequences of past errors, is an inner development leading to conscious union with the Divine Presence; the only effective guide, the Truth of our being and of all beings.

CWM 10: 275 **The Mother**

If thy heart is troubled within thee, if for long seasons thou makest no progress, if thy strength faint and repine, remember always the eternal word of our Lover and Master, "I will free thee from all sin and evil; do not grieve."

CWSA 12: 461 Sri Aurobindo

Do Not Cling to the Past

We cling to the past for want of faith in the future

Ah, my child, we have no faith. As soon as one has faith... We say, "We want the divine life" — yet we are afraid of it! But as soon as fear goes away and we are sincere... everything changes truly.

We say, "We do not want any more this life", and (*Mother laughs*) something is there that clings to it! It is so ridiculous.

We cling to our old ideas, our old... to this old world which must disappear—and we are afraid!

And the Divine child seated on the head of the mind and playing!... I wish I could draw this picture, it is wonderful. We are so stupid that we even come to say (Mother assumes a tone of offended dignity): "The Divine is wrong, he should not do like that." It is comical, my child.

(Silence)

For me, the best remedy (that is to say, the easiest) is: "What Thou willest. What Thou willest", in all sincerity. And then — then comes understanding. Then you understand. But you do not understand mentally, it is not there *(Mother touches her head)*.

"What Thou willest."

CWM 11: 312

Best is not to have preconceived ideas

The best one can do is not to take sides, not to have preconceived ideas or principles. Oh! The moral principles, the set rules of conduct, what one must do and what one must not and the preconceived ideas from the moral point of view, from the point of view of progress, and all the social and mental conventions... no worse obstacle than that. There are

people, I know people who have lost decades in surmounting one such mental construction!... If one can be like that, open—truly open in a simplicity, well, the simplicity that knows that it is ignorant—like that *(gesture upward, of self-abandon)*, ready to receive whatever comes. Then something can happen.

And naturally, the thirst for progress, the thirst for knowledge, the thirst for transformation and, above all, the thirst for Love and Truth — if one keeps that, one goes quicker. Truly a thirst, a need, a need.

All the rest has no importance; it is that one has need of.

To cling to something one believes that one knows, to cling to something that one feels, to cling to something that one loves, to cling to one's habits, to cling to one's so-called needs, to cling to the world as it is, it is that which binds you. You must undo all that, one thing after another. Undo all the ties. And it has been said thousands of times and people continue to do the same thing.... Even they who are most eloquent and preach that to others, do c-l-i-n-g — they cling to their way of seeing, their way of feeling, their habit of progress, which seems for them the only one.

No more bonds—free, free. Always ready to change everything, except one thing: to aspire, this thirst.

I understand well, there are people who do not like the idea of a "Divine", because immediately it gets mixed up with all those European or Occidental conceptions (which are horrible) and then that complicates their life somewhat—but you are not in need of that! — the "Something" one is in need of, the Love one is in need of, the Truth one is in need of, the supreme Perfection one is in need of — and that is all. The formulas... the fewer formulas there are the better. But that: a need, which the Thing alone can satisfy — nothing else, no half-measure, only that. And then, you go!... Your

way will be your way, that has no importance — whatever the way, it does not matter, it does not matter; even the extravagances of the modern American youth can be a way; that has no importance.

CWM 11: 5-6 **The Mother**

Overcoming past constructions of the Divine

If we are to attempt an integral Yoga, it will be as well to start with an idea of the Divine that is itself integral. There should be an aspiration in the heart wide enough for a realisation without any narrow limits. Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the Ineffable in a restricting mental formula.

CWSA 23: 82 (SABCL 20: 76) **Sri Aurobindo**

Q: Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by an integral idea of the Divine?

Everyone forms an idea of the Divine for himself according to his personal taste, his possibilities of understanding, his mental preferences, and even his desires. People form the idea of the Divine they want, the Divine they wish to meet, and so naturally they limit their realisation considerably.

But if we can come to understand that the Divine is all that we can conceive of, and infinitely more, we begin to progress towards integrality. Integrality is an extremely difficult thing for the human consciousness, which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself. But still, with a little effort, for those who know how to play with mental activities, it is possible to widen oneself sufficiently to approach something integral.

You form an idea of the Divine which suits your own

nature and your own conception, don't you? So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do a truly integral yoga, you must try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be—and in addition something that nobody can think and feel.

So, if you understand this, you have taken the first step on the path of integrality. Instinctively, and without even being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their own conceptions. For, without thinking, quite spontaneously, they tell you, "Oh, this is divine, this is not divine!" What do they know about it? And then there are those who have not yet set foot on the path, who come here and see things or people, and tell you, "This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine." But if you ask them, "What is divine?", they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that's an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less can one pronounce judgments on things.

And there comes a time when all one can do is observe, but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place they now are in and the one they ought to occupy — for this is the great disorder in the world—but one does not judge. One simply observes.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say, "This is divine and that is not divine", for a time comes when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take away anything from it without disturbing everything.

CWM 8: 1-2 **The Mother**

The Way Towards the Future

Shed the past to be reborn into a new life

O LORD, grant that this collective convention of the ending year be for us also the occasion to put an end to a whole lot of bonds and attachments, illusions and weaknesses which have no longer any purpose in our lives. At every moment we must shake off the past like falling dust, that it may not soil the virgin path which, at every moment also, is opening before us.

May our mistakes, acknowledged and rectified within us, be no more than vain mirages powerless to bring any consequences and, pressing our foot down firmly upon all that no longer should exist, on all ignorance, all obscurity, all egoism, may we take our flight boldly towards wider horizons and intenser light, a more perfect compassion, a more disinterested love. . . . towards Thee.

I hail Thee, O Lord, Master of our life, and I want to proclaim Thy reign over all the earth.

CWM 1: 42

WE must know at each moment how to lose everything that we may gain everything; we must be able to shed the past like a dead body that we may be reborn into a greater plenitude. . . . It is so that the constant aspiration of the inner being expresses itself; turned to Thee, it wants to reflect Thee in an ever purer mirror; and Thy unchanging Beatitude is translated in it into a propelling force of progress of an incomparable intensity; and this force is transformed in the most external being into a calm and assured will which no obstacle can vanquish.

CWM 1: 283



Cling to the Divine alone and not to the past

Keep your mind absolutely blank and receive the Divine's Force. Cling to the Divine alone and not to the past. The Divine is Truth, the Divine is Love, the Divine is Happiness...

Mother You Said So, p. 88 *The Mother*

Every moment the universe is created a new

EVERY moment all the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unknown is before us, every moment the universe is created anew in its entirety and in every one of its parts. And if we had a truly living faith, if we had the absolute certitude of Thy omnipotence and Thy sole reality, Thy manifestation could at each moment become so evident that the whole universe would be transformed by it. But we are so enslaved to everything that is around us and has gone before us, we are so influenced by the whole totality of manifested things, and our faith is so weak that we are yet unable to serve as intermediaries for the great miracle of transfiguration. . . . But, Lord, I know that it will come one day. I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who come to us; Thou wilt transform them so radically that, liberated completely from the bonds of the past, they will begin to live in Thee an entirely new life, a life made solely of Thee, with Thee as its sovereign Lord. And in this way all anxieties will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certainties, all ugliness into harmony, all egoism into self-giving, all darkness into light and all suffering into immutable happiness.

*

Be like a blank page before the Lord for His Will to be written

OH, I would be before Thee, Lord, always like an absolutely blank page, so that Thy will may be written in me without any difficulty, any mixture.

The very remembrance of past experiences should sometimes be swept away from the thought so as not to obstruct this work of perpetual reconstruction which alone in a world of relativities permits Thy perfect manifestation.

Often one clings to that which was, fearing to lose the

result of a precious experience, to give up a vast and high consciousness, to fall back into a lower state.

And yet, what should he fear who is Thine? Can he not walk with joyful soul and illumined brow upon the path Thou tracest for him, whatever it may be, even if this path be altogether incomprehensible to his limited reason?

O Lord, break the old frames of thought, abolish past experiences, dissolve the conscious synthesis if Thou thinkest it necessary, so that Thy work may be accomplished better and better, Thy service upon earth be perfected.

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The death of the past: the birth of a new life

In an indrawn state I contemplate this turning page, vanishing into the dream of the past and look at the new page all full potentially of the dream of the future. . . . And yet how trifling this seems, how childish and unimportant, when seen in the light of Thy eternity. The only thing that is important is to obey Thy law with love and joy.

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All the past in its external form seems ridiculously arbitrary to me, and yet I know it was useful in its own time.

But now all is changed: a new stage has begun.

*

IT seems to me that I am being born to a new life and all the methods, the habits of the past can no longer be of any use. It seems to me that what I thought were results is nothing more than a preparation. I feel as though I have done nothing yet, as though I have not lived the spiritual life, only entered the path that leads to it, it seems to me that I know nothing, that I am incapable of formulating anything, that all experience is yet to begin. It is as though I were stripped of my entire past, of its errors as well as its conquests, as though all that has vanished and made room for a new-born child whose whole existence is yet to be lived, who has no Karma, no experience to learn from, but no error either which has to be set right. My head is empty of all knowledge and all certitude, but also of all vain thought. I feel that if I learn how to surrender without any resistance to this state, if I do not try to know or understand, if I consent to be completely like an ignorant and candid child, some new possibility will open before me. I know that I must now definitively give myself up and be like an absolutely blank page on which Thy thought, Thy will, O Lord, can be inscribed freely without danger of any deformation.

*

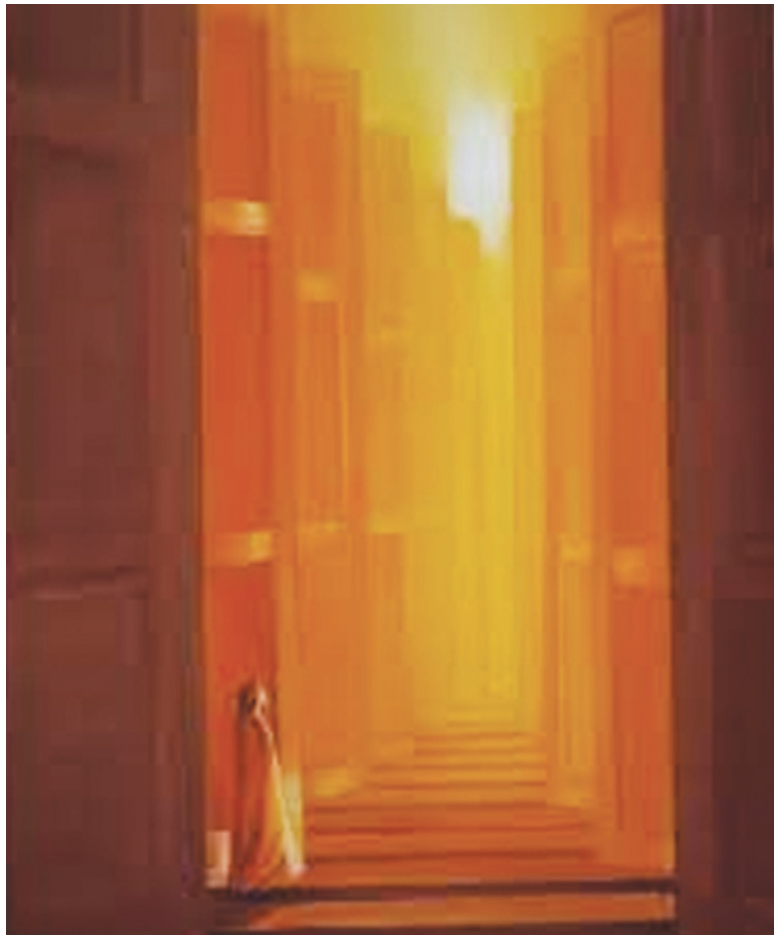
Even more forcibly than during these last days the past is dead and as though buried under the rays of a new life.

The last glance that I have just thrown backward as I read a few pages of this book definitely convinced me of this death, and lightened of a great weight I present myself before Thee, O my divine Master, with all the simplicity, all the nudity of a child. . . . And still the one only thing I perceive is that calm and pure immensity. . . .

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When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clingings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE.

CWM 1: 54, 277, 88, 114, 116, 123; 3: 83-84 **The Mother**



The light has come, the road has opened; with a grateful bow to the laborious past, we shall move swiftly forward on the new way opened wide by Thee before us.

On the threshold of this new field of a vaster and more conscious realisation, we bow before Thee, O Lord, in an integral surrender and adoration. We give ourselves to Thee without reservation.

CWM 1: 230 *The Mother*

Sutras for Dealing with Past Errors and Mistakes

Correcting past mistakes

Break the moulds of the past, but keep safe its gains and its spirit, or else thou hast no future.

CWSA 12: 456 **Sri Aurobindo**

If errors and mistakes could not be effaced at every moment, there would be no hope of salvation for the world.

CWM 14:234

If you make one mistake in life, then you may have to suffer all your life. It does not mean that everybody suffers like that. There are people who go on making mistakes and yet they do not suffer. But those who are born for a spiritual life have to be very careful.

CWM 14: 234

It is good to recognise your mistakes, but you must not torment yourself.

You must not suffer, you must correct yourself instead.

CWM 14: 237

When a mistake is made, it must always be used as a means for progress; once the necessary change is realised, the mistake and its cause disappear and there can be no repetition.

CWM 14: 238

Before going to sleep every night, we must pray that the mistakes we may have committed during the day should not be repeated in future.

CWM 14: 239

The very memory of the past experience has sometimes to be swept away from the thoughts that it may not impede the work of perpetual reconstruction which alone, in this world of relativities, permits the perfect manifestation of the Divine.

CWM 15: 70

Often we cling to that which was, afraid of losing the result of a previous experience, of giving up a vast and high consciousness and falling again into an inferior state. But we must always look forward and advance.

CWM 15: 70

Never regret what is past or imagine what will be.

Check pessimism in your thoughts as much as you can and become a voluntary optimist.

CWM 12: 141

At every moment one must know how to lose everything in order to gain everything, to shed the past as a dead body and be reborn into a greater plenitude.

CWM 15: 71

For each person, everything depends on knowing whether one belongs to the past that perpetuates itself, to the present that is exhausting itself or to the future that longs to be born.

CWM 15: 71

A generous heart always forgets the past offences and is ready to reestablish harmony.

Let us all forget all that is dark and ugly in the past, in order to make us ready to receive the luminous future.

With love and blessings.

CWM 16: 357 **The Mother**



To do yoga, one of the most important things to achieve is to get rid of all attachment to the past.

Let the past be past and concentrate only on the progress you want to make and the surrender to the Divine you have to achieve.

*

Unless we break with the habits and beliefs of the past, there is little hope of advancing rapidly towards the future.

*

Let the waves of the past flow far from you, carrying away with them all attachments and all weaknesses. The luminous joy of the divine consciousness is waiting ready to take their place.

*

Let the past be past.

Concentrate only on the Eternal.

Blessings.

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Q: I have forgotten the Divine for so long in this life and in former lives. But a drop of Your Grace can enable me to make up for all the lost time.

Whatever the past may have been, it is not time that is needed to establish contact with the Divine, but sincerity of aspiration.

CWM 15: 71-72; 16: 371 **The Mother**