

Children's Day

“In the United States, Children's Day is typically celebrated on the second Sunday in June. The tradition dates back to 1856 when the Reverend Dr. Charles Leonard, pastor of the Universalist Church of the Redeemer in Chelsea, Massachusetts, held a special service focused on children.”

“National Kids Day is celebrated every year on the second Sunday of June in the U.S. This year, it will fall on **June 9**. This day addresses the importance of children in society and the numerous challenges that some still face in different aspects of their lives.” (Online source)

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The following excerpt is taken from Agni Yoga Society, *Letters of Helena Roerich*, (pp. 456-459.)

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“Of course, I fully trust your heart, and your aura is the guarantee of the best possibilities. You write that you are a novice in public life, but this is not to be feared, since experience comes with work; but the most important lies in the spiritual accumulation, in the quality of psychic energy, and no experience can replace the essence of this beautiful energy. Therefore in the basis of everything let us place precisely this gauge.

I rejoice that you are paying attention to children. Indeed, the most urgent, the most essential task is the education of children and youth. In all countries very little and extremely poor attention at that is given to this question on which depends the entire welfare and strength of a people and a country. It is usually customary to confuse education with upbringing, but it is time to understand that school education, as it is established in most cases, not only does not contribute to the moral upbringing of youth, but acts inversely. In the Anglo-Saxon countries the schools are occupied mainly with the physical development of youth to the detriment of their mental development. But the excessive enthusiasm for sports leads to the coarsening of character, to mental degeneration, and to new diseases. True, not much better is the situation in home education under the conditions of the modern family. Therefore, it is time to pay most serious attention to the grave and derelict situation of children and youth from the moral point of view. Many lofty concepts are completely out of habitual use, having been replaced by everyday formulas for the easy achievement of the most vulgar comforts and status.

Without delay one should set up an organization of kindergartens and clubs, or communities, where children of different ages can gather in groups and be given the spiritual food which is lacking in schools and families. We learned recently that in California and elsewhere in America an organization dedicated to Prof. Roerich began its activities. The young people, members of

this organization, call themselves “Torchbearers.” A torch is for them a symbol of knowledge transmitted by great men and women of the past and present. Young Torchbearers choose from these heroes and heroines the image closest to them and strive to emulate it in their life. Their goal is to carry this torch of wisdom and achievement into the future, for the benefit of coming generations. Acquaintance with the self-sacrificing lives of all ages and nations helps the children to realize the grandeur of human dignity and destiny, and teaches them to love self-sacrificing attainment. From history we know that each great epoch was marked by the influx of a powerful wave of reverence for heroism in all its manifestations. The Ordainment of the Great Brotherhood is—create heroes.

If one were to impart to children lessons of high morals from the lives of the heroes of all ages and all peoples, the sacred laws of existence could thus be imparted in the form of attractive narratives and examples from the life of all kingdoms of nature. The accumulated wisdom of the ages can be presented in the simplest forms, and thus many new vistas will be revealed. Actually, such lessons are remembered even better when they are presented to children, as you are doing, in short plays, with the children acting the parts of the heroes. Therefore I highly approve of your program. In their gatherings the children could use the name of their chosen hero.

Also useful are studies of the arts and of the most prosaic handicrafts, as nothing awakens the latent abilities so well as the possibility of a direct personal accomplishment. Good are choral singing, folk dances, and all those studies which demand unified rhythm. And one should especially encourage children to express their opinions about all they have read, heard and seen; such discussions will lay the foundation for thinking. It is equally important to conduct attractive studies and games that demand especial attentiveness. After all, memory is primarily attentiveness. In the senior groups, the keeping of diaries could be introduced so that all the good that has been done during the day and all the acknowledged errors could be written down. And in beginning a new day, a resolution could be made not to allow certain conduct to take place during that day, such as irritation, rudeness, or lies, and, on the contrary to stress special attentiveness, politeness, solicitude for those around, etc. Keeping such a diary, for the purpose of self-analysis, will help considerably in eradicating undesirable habits and affirming new and useful ones. Habits form qualities. Let us also not forget useful excursions for the children in order to become acquainted with various branches of labor, science, and art. It is absolutely essential to teach the children love for nature in all its manifestations. In this respect, all kinds of picnics and walks are useful for assembling botanical, entomological, and mineralogical collections. All in all, assembling various collections greatly assists the acquirement of useful knowledge.

You are right in attempting to get acquainted with different pedagogical and educational systems; thus, one can choose out of each day the very best and animate it with the synthesis of the Teaching of New Life, or the Teaching of Living Ethics. By the way, did you collect in a separate notebook all indications about upbringing and schools from the books of the Teaching?

With the help of the parents one could also organize a cooperative library for children and youth. The significance and influence of the book upon the young consciousnesses cannot be measured, because it is unlimited. This domain must become the subject of special exclusive care of the state. Often, the books read first give an impetus and direction to the further development of thinking. How many mutilated lives, how many crimes committed by minors, if one were to analyze the thinking of these criminals, will prove to be but the results of the books read by them, or plays and crimes seen in the cinema!

I shall read your essay with great joy. The program of education is as broad as life itself. The possibilities for improvement are inexhaustible. Do you not think that we are on the eve of a new approach to and reconstruction of the entire school education? The quantity and speed of new discoveries in all domains of science grow so rapidly that soon contemporary school education will not be able to walk in step with and respond to the new attainments and demands of the time; new methods in the entire system of education will have to be devised. Precisely training in synthesized thinking will become an urgent necessity.

In conclusion I shall quote for you one discourse: “You know to what an extent a word enters into a child’s heart. Especially up to seven years of age one may recall memories of the Subtle World. Children feel how they sensed that special life. It is useful to ask children whether they remember some particular thing. Such touches are called the opening of memory. Even if with years the memory of the past again becomes dim, nevertheless there will remain a spark of beautiful existence. The Great Teacher loved to uncover the memory. He brought the children close to Him and not only asked them questions but also touched them with His hand, thus increasing the vividness of recollection. He not only loved children but also saw in them the advance of humanity. He was right in treating them as grownups, for when the remote past or the Subtle world is recalled, the mind becomes that of a grownup. Children will never forget the one who approached them as an equal. They will retain this memory for their whole life. Maybe the children remembered the Teacher better than did those who were healed by him. Thus, one should remember that the minors will be the continuers of life, and everyone must impart to them his experience. But it will be wiser to awaken in them the memories of the Subtle World. The most profound spiritual life will be molded where the spark of the existence of the Subtle World began to glow, and where communion with the Invisible World was facilitated. The appearances of the Teacher in a subtle body strengthened the disciples in the reality of the Invisible World. Not all could be receptive to the substance of this World, but, nevertheless, the window was set ajar.”

Thus, through cautious touches this knowledge will enter the consciousness of the growing generation. Truly, the work for the expansion of consciousness is without end. It is joyous to see how many hearts already respond to the forgotten truths.

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