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Roberta was a child who lived 14 years affected with Down's Syndrome and died in 1986. Under the instruction of her mother the girl practiced various yoga techniques, recuperating nearly all of her cerebral activity. A few months before she died, She began further yoga studies in Mina Gerais University of Brazil, her native place, and she even became a teacher of yoga to others with a full consciousness of its benefits.

I had the pleasure of meeting Roberta's mother, Sonia Sumar, at the Third National Yoga Encounter a few months ago in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has been working with children born with Down's Syndrome, an in curable genetic disorder, based on her experience with Roberta. She preferred to call them "exceptional children," as she considers that each word is a mantra. In her opinion, we have to be very careful about which words we use. "If I call them 'invalids,' I am underestimating that person. So our work starts with the name we give it," she said.

Sonia taught her daughter breathing exercises, asanas, relaxing techniques and concentration. She affirms that Roberta had a 90% recovery - not that she was cured - but that her social performance was an absolute success. She became self-sufficient to live, act, read, etc. "After Roberta's death," Sonia went on, "I realized that all the work was just beginning. When people pitied me for her death, thinking that my effort had been wasted, I told them that she had lived all those years well and happy. It is quality of life and not quantity of years that matters, as each one of us has a life span and mission that goes with it. Yoga expands our understanding and improve our life, but it doesn't give immortality to our body. Our immortal soul is improved by it. That's what counts. When parents who have children with Down's Syndrome tell me how unhappy they are, and demand why God gave them that burden, I tell they, 'Why not? Why not you or me? Having that

child was wonderful for me."

Now Mrs. Sumar has lost of children practicing yoga and is training teachers for several states of Brazil. Asked to describe her methods, she replied, "First I have some interviews to see if the parents understand the method and if the child is inclined, as some children would rather dance or practice martial arts. If they both accept well, we start work. Each child's mother must participate. First it is individual work. Then according to the evolution we place that child with other children. Lots of them can work with normal children after some time. In our work we not only want the children to recover, but to have a full understanding of themselves as well."

"Think of your children not as burdens." Sonia advises parents, "but as jewels, pearls that will help you evolve. Don't question God, but work in yoga so as to find the answers that will give you great surprises. Parents want their children to do what they couldn't achieve. But I think we must work for understanding inside ourselves. When children such as these make us look inside and remember our real nature, we grow in our infinite spirit, which is the goal. The aim and the reason for our souls on this earth."

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