

THE
PLACE OF INTUITION IN
THE NEW CIVILISATION

Convention Lecture, 1927

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BY

C. JINARAJADASA, M.A.

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IT is perhaps fitting that my subject should be "The Place of Intuition in the New Civilisation," because the moment we try to understand the significance of the word "intuition," we come sooner or later to understand the nature of woman, for the best example that we can find in our midst of intuition is Woman.

A woman, who is intuitive, has a judgment which is conclusive on many things, concerning which she has no experience. She will have a judgment which, to a man, is incomprehensible, because the knowledge which she expresses in her judgment has not been gained from knowable facts. A woman—I might almost say, the average woman—understands certain things in some queer way, queer to us, men. We men approach the problem of knowledge from outside; we examine with the mind. But women, who may not have had any opportunities of examining with the mind, sometimes arrive at judgments as definite and sure as the best organised minds

of men. When a woman expresses to us her judgment, it often seems to us unreasonable, and so we say that her judgment is "fanciful". But, not infrequently, her judgment is borne out by the development of events, and her judgment proves to be the result of what is called in the business world "inside information". In some kind of way, she has, as it were, a "private wire" to facts which are unseen, and she uses them in her judgment.

We all know that, if we ask a woman to justify her intuition, she cannot do so, because it is the very nature of intuition that, unless all the necessary facts are presented to the mind, the facts cannot be grouped by the intuition. A woman cannot sometimes have all the facts. But she arrives at a conclusion, and then gives a decision which is perfectly true, perfectly accurate and perfectly reasonable. But if we ask her how she knows, she will give the reason which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of a typical woman: "I have none but a woman's reason. I think him so, because I think him so." There is nothing further necessary. What I want to emphasise is that the judgment of the intuition is absolutely conclusive; even if one cannot justify the conclusion, that in no way diminishes its truth.

Usually we come to a judgment by examining facts. That is what our mind is for. But it

happens that, when we have pondered over some problem with our mind, and failed to come to any conclusion, suddenly there will come to us, as it were, a flash. We do not know what it is. But that flash links up all that we have been thinking about, for truth has appeared on the scene.

I will give two instances of this in the development of modern science. We all know the story of Newton and the apple. Newton had been pondering over the problem of matter and force. Then, the story goes, one day in the garden he saw an apple fall, and all at once an illuminating flash was born in his mind, and from that observation of the falling of the apple, he went on and on to his conclusion as to the laws of motion. But a scientific wit has well said that what happened was, that gravitation in the form of an apple left a visiting card on Newton's nose. We have all seen cocoanuts fall, but we do not go on and discover great laws. The falling of an apple, a physical phenomenon, started Newton's thought *in the right direction*. Our problem can be put in another way: "But why the mere falling of an apple?" Suddenly to Newton an insignificant event brought truth in a flash, and all the factors present in his mind re-grouped themselves. In other words, the phenomenon of an apple falling gave birth to an intuition, which illuminated the whole problem which he was trying to grasp.

There is a second instance of intuition with regard to a scientific discovery. Robert Mayer is known as the man who formulated a great principle in science, the Conservation of Energy. Mayer did not come to the idea of the conservation of energy by hard thinking. He did not come to the truth by sheer thinking. His ability to think did not give him the solution. Suddenly like a flash there was born in his mind the idea of the conservation of energy: Heim says:

“Robert Mayer’s new thought did not gradually detach itself by dint of revolving it in his mind, from the conception of power transmitted from the past, but belongs to those ideas which are intuitively conceived, which, originating in other spheres of a mental kind, surprise thought, as it were, compelling it to transform its inherited notions conformably with those ideas.”

We have, then, already a recognition that, beyond the mental process which judges by examining the facts before it, there is a process in human nature which is able to get at the truth in some instantaneous fashion, to conceive “intuitively,” as Heim says.

Now, it is this mode, which is known as the intuition, which is being shown to-day by the French biologist and philosopher, Bergson, as something perfectly natural in evolution. Some may say that intuition is a fanciful thing. Then we must accept fancies also as a part of life. We

may hold that intuition is not something which is certain ; nevertheless, we have to accept intuition to-day as part of the evolutionary process. That is what Bergson has taught us. He points out that intuition has come in the natural development of the evolutionary process. He shows that the first stage of understanding objects is shown by the animals in their instinct. Animals have very subtle senses ; through these senses and through the memories gained from them, animals have what we term instinct. The moment a chicken comes out of the egg, it knows what to do. If a dark shadow were to hover over the chicken, it knows instinctively that it should run to its mother for protection under her wing. Animals that are born show at once instincts in all kinds of ways. Instinct is something which is ingrained in the very substance of the body of the creature. Now, Nature is shown by Bergson as carving out several modes of expression and understanding, and the first mode is instinct. Just as a river carves out a pathway and a career for itself to the sea, so Nature's forces carve along the line of instinct a mode of self-expression.

Then, it is pointed out by Bergson, that Nature, as it were, for a while diverges on her course. When man enters on the scene, he makes a new experiment. A savage is like the animal, full of instincts ; he has very sharp senses, and the instincts in his nature are clear, not confused.

But the moment his mind enters on the scene, man begins to fall, as it were, between two stools. He is experimenting with his mind, putting aside the instinct. Man, when there is a new grouping of phenomena, is able to examine them in the light of the memories of past groups, and to judge the new situation in the light of his experience. The animal does not carefully consider and think; the animal goes upon pure instinct. But because the outer world is being re-grouped constantly by the faculty of mind in man, man is able to grapple with the problems of life in a new way. But, on the other hand, as he develops his mental faculties, he loses his instincts. What man gains, as precision of judgment, he loses in sensitiveness to whole ranges of facts, especially when they are invisible. Man is midway between instinct and intuition.

Now, instinct is subtly related to intuition. Bergson's researches show that the intuition is as the upper pole of consciousness, while instinct is as the lower pole. In between these two poles we find mind. As evolution is steadily carving out more and more channels for self-expression, so, sooner or later, all men will possess not only the mental quality, which they have developed, but also intuition, which is curiously allied to instinct.

Intuition, then, according to biological theories, is something natural in the evolutionary process. It will become the dominating expression of life

in the future. For the moment, mankind is at a halfway house between instinct and intuition.

The question is, what way will Nature, will the evolutionary process, work out the problem, so that all men will have the new gift of the intuition, by which they will know the truth, not by a ratiocinating process, but by something more direct? How is evolution slowly moving on beyond the stage of the mind, which examines facts from outside, to some other method? The fault in the method of induction characteristic of scientific training is that we cannot have always *all* the facts before us, necessary for a true induction. That is very much the case with regard to the understanding of human nature. No man reveals himself fully; he is able only partially to express his nature—his dreams and his ideals—in his words, in his thoughts, in his actions; there is always a great deal that is hidden. If you are to do justice to a man, you must know all the facts of his nature. But by the very nature of the problem, you cannot know; you cannot find them, for he cannot reveal. Therefore, if an individual is to be judged rightly, some other factor than mind is necessary for a true judgment. It is here that intuition comes on the scene, that faculty of gaining "inside information" from an individual which he cannot reveal.

It is obvious that the next great stage of evolutionary advance is to perfect this new faculty

of intuition. What is shown by us now on rare occasions will be shown on more occasions, till the faculty of intuition will be the normal faculty for all people in the new civilisation. Obviously, if intuition is to be a normal faculty, it will necessitate certain changes in the brain, because consciousness must always be related to brain mechanism. What are the exact changes necessary, we do not yet know. But it is obvious that some undeveloped areas in the cortex of the brain will slowly be made sensitive, and in that way consciousness working as intuition will become more normal.

In order that intuition may manifest itself, not only are the fundamental changes necessary in the brain, but also there must be changes in the astral and the mental bodies of the people who are going to compose the new civilisation. New layers, so to say, of those vehicles will need to be brought into play. In the new civilisation we shall have more sensitiveness of mind, more sensitiveness of the emotions, and therefore also changes in the physical structure of the brain. But these changes can come about only slowly. The physical organism changes from generation to generation but so slowly that we scarcely note any change. Therefore, it may be many centuries, perhaps thousands of years, before evolution achieves the perfect character which releases intuition.

While, then, in a day to come, in the new civilisation, there will be a type of humanity in whom intuition is the dominating character, and that type of humanity will have a special kind of physical body, nevertheless, we are all being affected to-day by evolution. Our bodies are of the Fifth Root Race, and of various of its sub-races up to the fifth. In the Sixth Root Race, the human body will have been so evolved as to possess intuition as a normal faculty. But as evolution is carving its way onwards, we are all being affected by what may be called the new intuitive era which is coming.

Anyone who analyses the problem of life, realises quickly that it is impossible for him to understand now everything that is being given to him as knowledge. Think of the subjects you studied yourselves in school, when you were children, compared to the number of subjects necessary to-day for your children, especially in a University course. So many more subjects are considered necessary to-day, in order that the boy and girl may have knowledge. Note, too, how the newspapers of to-day are pouring in facts upon us; the "movies," also, are beginning to pour in all kinds of facts. From on all sides facts and information are pouring into us, and we hardly know how to handle the mass of material. Sometimes we can only glance at a few items in the newspaper. More than that, modern science

to-day, with her investigations, is pouring knowledge in department after department. Since science says that we cannot understand life unless we accept the idea of evolution, and since to understand evolution means to understand *all* the facts of science, it is practically impossible for a man, from a strictly scientific attitude, ever to understand life. We can only understand a fragment of life, and the fragment is steadily becoming smaller each day, because of the mass of data which are contributed by science. The whole position is graphically put by an American poet, Vachell Lindsay, when he says: "The American mind has become an overgrown forest of unorganised pictures. And this may be said to be true of the whole world, controlled in the end by the political cartoonists of *London Punch* and the like."

What is the result of the present situation of this multiplicity of knowledge, as applying to education? What can we do to train our children to be the future citizens? It is not enough to teach children now nationalism only; the world is so large to-day that, in any kind of sensible modern education, we must teach the children something of internationalism also. For we must teach them to play their rôle not only in their own nation, but also in the world. Those of us who are reformers know also that we must keep the religious nature of the child extremely

sensitive, for if his religious nature is submerged, he loses a great deal. Not only that; we know that, if a child is to have a rounded character, full ability, his literary capacity must be brought out as well; we must train him in such a way that he will not be a mere repeater of words in books, but one who is able to express himself in fine language, with clear and definite thoughts. Equally, we know that it is no longer possible for a child to be really educated, unless he knows science. Fifty years ago, nobody ever thought of bringing science into the ordinary school. But now before a child can pass his matriculation examination, he must have some knowledge of science. Then, those who are reformers in education are confronted by the fact that, more important than all these things is to bring out in the child self-expression. The child must be made efficient because he feels within himself the urge to express himself.

All these things can be summed up by saying that we should bring out the executive nature in the child. We do not want the child to be merely a philosopher, merely a poet, merely a dreamer, but we want him to have in his character the executive nature, the dynamic character which produces changes. So we, who are reformers in education, want to give the child new possibilities of emotion and self-expression, as well as new kinds of knowledge.

Those are our dreams. What happens in practice, except in a few instances? First, we realise that it is impossible to arrange for the child to have the feelings which he wants to express in school, and therefore we completely ignore the child as one who needs an emotional life, so we do not give him in school life any opportunity to express his emotions. Then we realise that we cannot give the child all the knowledge he needs. There is too much of mere knowledge in us grown-ups, and so in a listless kind of way we give him odd bits of our knowledge. We give him a little algebra, a little geometry, a little geography and history, and we know all the time that we do not go to the root of the problem of really educating the child. We utilise his memory, we make him memorise a number of things. We fill his mind with all sorts of things. Instead of making the child express himself, we dispose of the child in a quick way by putting before him problems, and saying: "My child, here is a problem. Solve it." We do not know how to solve the great problem of life ourselves. Yet we think that the easiest way to educate the child is to put problem after problem to him. The best description of modern education is that given by a French writer, who says that we give "a fragment of education to a fragment of a child". To-day that is inevitable. So long as we use only the mind as an instrument, and so

long as the child is educated to reveal only his mental ability, all education collapses before the problem, to-day, of the mass of knowledge necessary to be acquired.

Is there no other way? The evolutionary processes are pointing out to us that there is a faculty of intuition, which comes to truth from within. In our Theosophical philosophy we know that we can come to knowledge intuitively, by a kind of sudden union with the things to be known. How is that union to be achieved? I will presently dwell upon the process. I want before that, just to mention the fact that in Theosophy we accept the teaching that knowledge can be gained by intuition, not by an examination by the mind, but by the rousing of another faculty.

How are we to arouse this faculty of intuition? There are two ways open to us; of course there may be other ways also. One way is by developing in the individual the sense of brotherhood. You may ask: "What has brotherhood to do with the development of the intuition?" It has a very great deal to do with it. What is brotherhood but a form of love? It is a kind of love, not so intense towards an individual, but widens out to many. Wherever there is love, there is always an identification, a union, especially with the *unseen* aspect of the thing or person loved. It is because of that identification that one is able to understand intuitively. What

is a friend? Not one who is merely an acquaintance. A true friend is as Pythagoras said, "a friend is another I." A friend is a part of myself, and he is a person to whom I need not explain myself. A true friend is one who has somehow known my hidden aspect, and so by the love which he pours towards me, understands me intuitively.

The quality of intuition is roused in people wherever brotherhood is intensified in their character. Feel brotherly, break down the barriers which are erected round you by convention, by tradition, by caste, by religion, and by colour; break down all these, and little by little you will become more and more intuitive. The power of brotherhood is one of the most subtle things in the world. The more you cultivate the sense of brotherhood, the more you will develop the faculty of intuition which lies dormant in you.

There is a second way, and that is by art. What is art? Many descriptions have been given of it. One description which I offer is: "Art is inside information." Art is not the mere meeting of forces round a given point; it is the resultant diagonal of the forces. It is knowing the drift of things, seeing their goal. If you see the goal, then you possess that "inside information" which explains a complicated problem at once. Wherever there is any development of art, you will always find that the artist sees a

thing, not as static, that is, not as remaining always still, but always as kinetic, in a kind of movement. If you take a photograph of this Banyan Tree, you will see every leaf and branch perfectly still. If an artist paints the Banyan Tree, he will not be so accurate to nature as the camera. But on the other hand there will be in the picture of the artist something which you cannot get into the photograph. It is the quality of movement. The Banyan Tree will be living, because the artist has created in the picture the quality of movement. In other words, art is always creative, and creation means always, transformation, which means never standing still, even for one second.

The nature of art in an individual enables him to see constantly a change around him. Everything is constantly changing. The artist senses it. To artistic constitutions, a group of objects or events is always teaching and revealing new things. In other words the artist is creating, he is re-shaping the universe. The moment you make a picture of the Banyan Tree, if you are an artist and live with Nature, you have *changed* the Banyan Tree; and if you are really a great artist, the Spirit of the Tree will be thankful to you, because you teach that Spirit in what way the branches should grow, so that this fine, artistic Tree, may be more artistic still. If you can paint the picture of a person and make it a

great painting, you reveal the individual whom you are painting as changing into a more wonderful person, and so you enable that individual, because you have painted him, to go a few steps nearer to the Archetype which is awaiting him. By the use of imagination, the artist re-shapes the universe, not blindly, but in accordance with the Divine Plan. The whole universe is intended to change. Do we not say that Shiva, the Destroyer, destroys in order that He may make a change in the universe? You will understand now why the artist is always seeing change; that is why the artist is not a photographer. He is one who senses change, and so works with Nature.

Hence it follows that the artist can reveal the Plan of God. The artist, who looks at the Banyan Tree, and expresses it in painting, or in a sonnet, or in a song to the Tree, reveals the Plan of God for the Banyan Tree. In a day to come, this magnificent Banyan Tree will become some majestic animal, as plant life passes into the animal kingdom. But the artist can go millions of years ahead, and see this Tree playing a great rôle as a magnificent type of animal, and still later, as an entity in the Deva evolution; in other words, he sees with his creative faculty the Plan of God for this Tree. When the artist paints a picture, he sees the Plan of God for the thing which he is painting. In every department of life, the artist sees the Plan of God.

When, further, the artist paints a thing, he not only shows you the plan for the thing, but he also shows you its relation to the larger Plan. That is why every work of art, whether it is a poem or statue, is infinitely revealing. It reveals not only its own particular department of life, but it also leads you on to understand every other department.

For this understanding of art, and especially for the calling out of the creative faculty through art, there must be a particular technique. Now, the artist's nature is fundamentally to sense the world through intuition, and not through mind. How are we to draw out a similar intuition from ourselves? The nature of intuition is in each one of us, and especially in simple-minded women and children. How are we to draw it out?

The great problem which we need to understand is the problem of creation. We need a creative education, not the ordinary kind of education. We need something which makes the child always feel the spirit of creation. The child, even in his own simple way, can often teach a subject better than the schoolmaster; for the child feels the urge to create. Every occupation should have the quality of creation. All games should reflect the creative element in life; we want creative education; we want creative happiness; we want creative misery. All of us have karma, and we cannot escape the payment

of our debts. Suffering comes to us, and sometimes we suffer acutely. But we can use our misery to create. Artists are very sensitive to joys and sorrows, and they use both the joys and the sorrows to create something out of them. Take, for instance, the way that one of the greatest poets, Shelley, created. He was one of those in whom there was a greater element of pain than of pleasure. There is a poem of Shelley written when in a mood of dejection. As dejection possessed him, he had artistic ability, and so he analysed his misery, and created a poem out of it.

The moment you create something out of your misery, you liberate yourselves from that misery. There is the clue towards the development of the artistic nature. Write an essay or a poem on your misery; try to paint something while you are miserable. Try to express your misery and it will diminish. Take, for instance, the tender songs which arise within the hearts of the simple-minded Negroes in America; they are intensely pathetic. Many white people, when they are far away, and sing these songs, feel a sense of freedom in the midst of sadness. Songs sung by the people enable the people to free themselves from whatever oppresses them. So we shall always find that, when the artistic faculty is developed, intuition is born.

In the new civilisation, intuition is going to be a great factor. We shall not ourselves be born in

that civilisation for centuries yet to come. In a day to come, when intuition is functioning in all, civilisation and culture will go on a few steps further. To-day, what is our final solution of things? We may call it "God," or we may call it unity, or Solidarity or Love. All these labels will not satisfy us in the future, because with the new faculty of intuition, we shall find new solutions. All the problems of to-day will be re-stated, but in new terms. Even now, you can try to re-state the problems which you have, in the light of your intuitions.

Brotherhood is one necessary factor in the development of intuition. It is, in other words, what St. Augustine meant when he said: "Love, and do what you like." Art is the other factor. It is the message of Sannyāsa of India. What does Sannyāsa, or Renunciation, mean but standing detached from suffering and joy as an artist? With detachment comes freedom from the problems of life in which one is immersed. Look at life, and then create. Only as you create, you come to the liberation which you long for: only as you have the spirit of the artist, can you come to liberation.

In the new civilisation, we shall find intuition playing an important part in our character. Then, we shall no longer understand through our mind; we shall possess another instrument of cognition, and that is intuition.

So, there are new possibilities ahead of mankind. We shall have new arts, new sciences, and new philosophies. True, they are still in the far-off future. But each one of us can possess something of the future civilisation, even to-day. That is the great glory before us all. In spite of misery, in spite of suffering, in spite of limitation, something of the great future which God has in store for us can be grasped by us, provided we will train ourselves to use the faculty of intuition. We must learn how to forget ourselves and to love and to create something beautiful, which will inspire others.

Do not think that, because you are miserable, you cannot help others. You can help others, even though you yourself are miserable. If you analyse yourself, you will find that life wants you to give a message, and Life's message is that there is a unity underlying everything. Life wants you where you are, with all your limitations. Life will help you to break down life's limitations. But for that, you must accept the message of life, not only through the mind, as now, but also through the intuition.

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