

The Mother

BIRTH

February 21, 1878

ARRIVAL IN INDIA

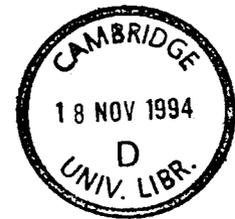
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The Mother and Abdul Baha

I knew Abdul Baha very well, the successor of Baha Ullah, founder of the Bahai religion; Abdul Baha was his son. He was born in prison and lived in prison till he was forty, I believe. When he came out of prison his father was dead and he began to preach his father's religion....¹

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He was the son of the famous Baha Ullah who had been put into prison for spreading ideas that were more progressive and broad-minded than those of the Sufis, and was resented by orthodox Muslims. After his death, his son, the sole heir, became determined to preach his father's religious ideas, and for this purpose he travelled to many countries of the world. He had an excellent nature. He was as simple as his aspiration was great. I liked him very much....

His sincerity and his aspiration for the Divine were simple and very spontaneous. One day, when I went to visit him, he was to give a lecture to his disciples. But he was sick and could not get up. Perhaps the meeting would have to be postponed. When I came near to him, he said, "Go and take my place at today's lecture." I was startled, unprepared as I was to hear such a request. I said to him, "I am not a member of your sect and I know nothing about it, so how can I talk to them about anything?" But he insisted, saying, "It does not matter. Say anything at all, it will be quite all right. Go and talk.... Concentrate in the sitting-room and then speak." At last he persuaded me to do it....

Then one day he asked me to stay in Paris and take the responsibility for his disciples. But I told him that as I did not myself accept the beliefs of his sect, it was out of the question for me to do so....²

¹ Questions and Answers 1950-51 (14 April), pp. 316-17.

² From an unpublished talk.

INTRODUCTION TO A TALK

All the prophets, all the instructors who have come to bring the divine word to men, have, on one point at least, given an identical teaching.

All of them have taught us that the greatest truths are sterile unless they are transformed through us into useful actions. All have proclaimed the necessity of living their revelation in daily life. All have declared that they show us the path but that we must tread it ourselves; no being, however great, can do our work in our stead.

Baha Ullah was no exception to this rule. I shall not quote the texts to you, you know them as well and better than I do. How many times Abdul Baha has said: "Do not talk, act; words are of no use without actions, we must be an example to the world."

It is indeed very necessary that each one of us should be an example to the world. For it is only by showing to men how an inner commerce with the eternal truths transforms disorder into harmony and suffering into peace, that we shall induce them to follow the way which will lead them towards liberation. But Abdul Baha is not content to give us this teaching, he is living it, and therein lies all his power of persuasion.

Indeed, who has seen Abdul Baha and not felt in his presence this perfect goodness, this sweet serenity, this peace emanating from his being?

And the revelations of Baha Ullah imparted through the mouth of his son are all the more comprehensible and convincing to us since he is living them within himself.

To some of you, perhaps, this reflection will occur: "If Abdul Baha can realise this beauty, it is because he is the master, but for us..."

Certainly, our indolence could not formulate a better reason for refusing to make any effort, but this is merely a lazy excuse.

There is, without doubt, an almost ineradicable difference between individuals, the one arising from their special role, their place, their status in the infinite hierarchy of beings; but whatever this role or status may be, within it each one can develop his own qualities to perfection, each one can and must aspire to gain the perfect purity, the perfect sincerity, the deep harmony which bring us into accord with the laws of order in the universe.

I knew an old sage who used to compare men to minerals that were more or less crude, more or less rich, but all containing gold. Let this ore undergo the purifying flames of spiritualisation and at the bottom of the crucible will be found an ingot which is more or less heavy, but always of pure gold.

We must therefore seek to release from its matrix the pure gold that is within us.

How many methods have been recommended for this!

They are all excellent, but each one applies to a special category of mentality and character, and each individual must find the one that best suits his temperament.

That is why, unless I am mistaken, Miss Sanderson asks one person or another to set forth here his own special view of the question or else the method which he finds most effective.

I do not intend today to expound any one of these methods to you in its entirety.

I would like — since we are taught that our first duty is to act and, moreover, that our acts are for ourselves the most powerful agents of transformation — I would like only to draw your attention to two categories of action which, in my opinion, are not always accorded the full importance they have with regard to others and to ourselves.

They are purely mental actions, but nonetheless, very much alive, very powerful and consequently very beneficial or very harmful according to the direction imparted to them.

The first is our faculty of mental formation, thought; the second is our activity in states of sleep, which is usually known

as dream and is very intimately linked with the first, as you will see.¹

The very ancient traditions, whether Chaldean or Hindu, have taught from all time that thoughts are formations: by his thought a human being has the power of giving birth to real, living and active entities.

And it should not be thought that this can be done only through some extraordinary and dangerous practice known as magic. Nothing of the kind.

Any thought that is at all strong and persistent, any desire that is at all intense — which is again a way of thinking — determine mechanically, so to say, in their own medium, a formation whose duration and power of action will depend on the force and intensity of the thought or desire which has given birth to it.

To make myself understood more clearly, I have brought you a few passages from an as yet unpublished philosophical volume.

“All that lives is substantial, but all that is substantial is living. Every state of substance is a world of living forces, of real forms.

“To restrict the real to the sole domain of the forms we perceive is to restrict the universal intelligence to its physical manifestation alone, all light to the one field of our vision.

“However, no space exists where there is no vibration of light, no depth exists where the essence of the intelligible does not assume appropriate forms.”

“So long as we imagine that the whole universal reality is confined to the one order of substance, to the one state of materiality perceived by our senses, we know nothing and can explain nothing.

¹ This introduction seems originally to have preceded the third talk on thought (pp. 83-92) and the talk on dreams (pp. 30-37).

"When science endeavoured to understand what light is, it had to break out of the too narrow space and too limited area of perceptible phenomena, and it postulated, under the name of ether, a subtle state of reality. But, in reaching this state, it has taken only its first steps on the path of infinite transcendence....

"Thus, we can now become aware that the realm of being which we know is merely the field of manifestation, of a more complete materialisation of its own distant and anterior modes, the last among the fields of life."

"If we could perceive the living images which thoughts produce around us at each moment, if we could measure the force of their power of formation, we would understand what can be created by the concourse of our converging wills and the formidable concert of the collective ideas and beliefs of a people, a civilisation, a race."

"Certainly, all ideas are not creative to the same degree. In fact, few minds are capable of thinking real thoughts; and most individual mental formations are no more than distortions, malformations of stereotypes formed by some anonymous thinker which have become common property. The forms they assume in the intellectual substance are usually crude and stupid; besides, they do not last long.

"But as soon as an idea becomes an idea-force, a true mental dynamism, it tends to produce and maintain its plastic representation in a more stable and precise form. And great thoughts, co-ordinated syntheses of intellectual force, are in actual fact, in the substance they have assumed, living creations and active entities."

(At this point, in this talk of 10 March, the Mother presented again some material already given in the third talk on thought, including the "description of the mental atmosphere of a city like Paris" (p. 83) — the "night" referred to in the sentence which follows.)

And yet we must kindle the stars that one by one will come to illumine this night. This is, from the mental point of view, what Abdul Baha expects from us all. This is the way to be intellectually an example to the world.

For such an action more than for any other, perhaps, the usefulness of meetings such as this one becomes clearly visible.

By uniting our thoughts for one or two hours around a very pure and lofty idea, in a common will for disinterested progress, we create a mental atmosphere that is ever more luminous and strong. But this is not enough; it would even be very little if, when leaving these meetings, we were to plunge back defenceless into this coarse and heavy atmosphere. For in the mental as in the physical domain we are in a state of perpetual interchange with the corresponding environment.¹

10 March 1912

NOTES FOR A MEETING

What a true meeting should be.

Mr. Ber. talked to us last Friday about mantras.

2 kinds of masters according to Ramakrishna:

The master who gives the mantra and who is thus an indirect means of spiritualisation.

The master who has had the deep experience of divine union and who by his presence alone transmits spirituality — Abdul Baha.

What a single man can do by his spiritual power can be achieved by a group if it unites in a thought of goodwill:

Chaldean initiation:

"When you are twelve united in righteousness, you will manifest the Ineffable."

Groups are subject to the same laws as individuals.

¹ This talk continues with passages which have come already in *On Thought - III*, etc.

More favourable moments due to collective suggestions.

Renewals: the beginning of each new year, whatever date is chosen as a starting-point.

An opportunity is given to awaken in oneself the idea that all things can be new and the resolution to make them so.

Consequently, the usefulness of meeting at fixed times to make favourable resolutions together.

Reading.

3 January 1913

THE DEPARTURE OF ABDUL BAHA

Last Monday, Abdul Baha took leave of us; in a very few days he will have left Paris, and I know many hearts which will feel a great void and will grieve.

Yet only the body is leaving us, and what is the body if not precisely that in which men are most alike, be they great or small, wise or ignorant, terrestrial or divine? Yes, you may rest assured that only his body is leaving us; his thought will remain faithfully with us, and his unchanging affection will enfold us, and his spiritual influence will always be the same, absolutely the same. Whether materially he is near or far matters little, for the divine forces elude completely the laws of the material world: they are omnipresent, always at work to satisfy every receptivity, every sincere aspiration.

So although it may be pleasant for our outer being to see his physical appearance or hear his voice, to dwell in his presence, we must truly tell ourselves that, inasmuch as it seems indispensable to us, this shows that we are still little conscious of the inner life, the true life.

Even if we do not attain to the marvellous depths of the divine life, of which only very rare individuals are constantly conscious, already in the domain of thought we escape the laws of time and space.

To think of someone is to be near him, and wherever two beings may find themselves, even if they are physically separated by thousands of kilometres, if they think of each other they are together in a very real way. If we are able to concentrate our thought sufficiently and to concentrate sufficiently in our thought, we can become integrally conscious of what we are thinking of, and if it is a man, sometimes see or hear him — in any case know his thought.

Thus separation no longer exists, it is an illusory appearance. And in France, in America, in Persia or in China, we are always near the one we love and think of.

But this fact is all the more real in a case such as ours, where we want to come into contact with an especially active and conscious thought, a thought which assumes and manifests an infinite love, a thought which enfolds the whole earth with a loving and fatherly solicitude that is only too glad to come to the help of those who entrust themselves to it.

Experience this mental communion and you will see that there is no room for sorrow.

Each morning when you get up, before you begin your day, with love and admiration and gratefulness hail this great family, these saviours of mankind who, ever the same, have come, come and will come until the end of time, as guides and instructors, as humble and marvellous servants of their brothers, in order to help them to scale the steep slope of perfection. Thus when you wake up, concentrate on them your thought full of trust and gratitude and you will soon experience the beneficial effects of this concentration. You will feel their presence responding to your call, you will be surrounded, imbued with their light and love. Then the daily effort to understand a little better, to love a little more, to serve more, will be more fruitful and easier at the same time. The help you give to others will become more effective and your heart will be filled with an unwavering joy.

9 June 1913