

# THE INDIVIDUAL NATURE

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by

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The location of the individual in the scheme of things makes it inadequate in every way. Its reactions cannot eliminate some amount of error. All individual experience is a form of error in some degree, though all error becomes an element of perfection in the Absolute. The aim of life of the individual is to overcome the urge for organic reactions in relation to external perceptible objects and to transcend itself in the all-comprehensive Absolute, which is the essential reality of all individuals. These reactions among individual natures are either unconscious or conscious. The unconscious urges are termed instincts and the conscious ones are those which constitute the rational processes in the individuals. Beyond these reactions of a twofold nature, there is the supreme integrating principle, viz., intuition and direct realisation of the highest essence of experience.

These instinctive urges are powerful, and being ingrained in the very constitution of the individual, refuse to be easily subdued. The most powerful of these involuntary unconscious urges are those of self-preservation and self-reproduction. The instinct of self-preservation is sometimes wrongly called 'food-seeking' instinct. Food is not the end that is sought by the individual; food is only a means to the fulfilment of the will-to-live or the love of life which is inherent in everyone, and which is the end. One does not desire to eat food as an end in itself; the purpose of food and drink is living as an individual personality, possessed of a body. This urge is not within the control of the rational

intellect, and it overcomes the other urges by its intensity of expression. It manifests itself in various forms, and has several ramifications, primarily connected with, as well as secondarily related to it. It tethers the individual to bodily life and thwarts all ordinary attempts at turning a deaf ear to it. This instinct, this craving for life, this love of individual personality can be overcome only in a higher understanding and feeling relating to a wider experience transcending gross physicality and distorted psychic personality. But any unwise meddling with this urge, without properly understanding its deeper meaning, may make it run riot and ruin the individual attempting to control it. Intimately connected with the self-preservative urge is the self-reproductive urge, the nature of which has to be analysed before any method of overcoming instincts may be discovered.

The self-reproductive instinct is misnamed 'sex-instinct'. This urge has, really, little to do with the sexual personality, as such; the sexual personality is only a means to the propagation of the species, and it is this urge for the production of a new individual of the species that makes use of sex as a cat's paw. What becomes the object of craving is not sex, but the pleasure caused by the release of the tension brought about by the urge for being instrumental in bringing forth a new individual. Homosexual intercourse and fixation on objects which do not help actual reproduction are only cases of perversion or regression of this original urge, due either to a defect in the formation of the sex glands, or to frustration and non-fulfilment. The aim of the urge for reproduction is not to bring pleasure to the individual; its purpose is the continuation of the species.

Those characteristics of the sexual personality which become the source of attraction for the opposite sex are merely the external indications of the development of the gonadal hormones which, through these indications, make known their maturity and readiness for the act of the production of a new individual. This attraction is not concerned with the pleasure of anyone, but is merely the process of the externalisation of cellular and nervous

vibration seeking intercourse with the counterpart of the constitution of the attracted individual. It is not the external feature or the form of the opposite sex that is the source of attraction, but it is the meaning which is read in it by the individual that gives value to it and forces the individual to conform itself to that value. It is the suggestiveness and the expressiveness of the form that evokes the stimulation and vibration of the entire constitution in its counterpart. The more does something mean to one, the more is the value that one attaches to it, and the more is one concerned with it. The reading of meaning in the opposite sex is not a rational act of the individual, but it is the 'general' urge of the species that materialises itself in a specific individual as an involuntary instinct for physical action.

All stimuli set the organism in vibration, and this disturbs its equilibrium. In this process there is release of nervous energy, affecting, not merely the body, but, to a great extent, even the mind. The pleasure that is experienced at the time of being stimulated by an 'intended' external agency is really the warmth and affection felt in yielding to an inner command of the physical nature, when motor reactions take place in the organism, on account of the magnetic properties called forth in it. What ravishes the personality and makes it leap up in ecstasy at the time of a desirable objective reaction in the physical world is the total disintegration of the parts of this organism and the peace that follows as a consequence of the cessation of this disturbance, on the fulfilment of the purpose of this reaction. All instinctive pleasure is ultimately the recognition of harmony and equilibrium and joy in consciousness on account of the banishing of disturbance in it by the fulfilment of the meaning of the instinct through the possession and utilisation of the object which plays the role of an agent in loosening and removing the nervous and psychic tension created by the expression of the instinct.

Even the urge for self-reproduction may be explained in terms of the urge for self-preservation. It is really the will-to-live of the individual of the species to be manifested in the physical universe that asserts in what is termed the self-

reproductive urge. The parent becomes the medium of the self-manifestation of a new individual, which is the intention of the physical nature. The lower nature of any 'specific' individual has no control over this instinct, because it is the intention of the 'general' nature or the species which exceeds the natural powers of the former. The will-to-reproduce is only the will-to-live of the would-be member of this physical universe. The fulfilment of this will-to-live is not really the good or the delight of any individual, but is only an execution of the orders of the lower diversified nature, the fulfilment of the purpose of the species as a whole, which is wider than any individual in comprehensiveness. The will of the race or the species supersedes all individual wills and subjects these latter to its own purposive rule. Sexual love or beauty has thus a reference to a need extending beyond the individual and so it is stronger than any other form of love known on earth. If anyone, however, is to know that the meaning of the self-reproductive urge is not the pleasure or the good of oneself, but is only a service done to a more powerful nature which makes use of everyone as its drudge, no one would indulge in the fulfilment of this urge. Hence nature covers the consciousness of the individual and steeps it in the delusion that the purpose of the urge is the pleasure of the individual, by preventing the discriminative understanding from functioning in it. This illusion is called the 'instinct for sex', and this is the pleasure derived thereby!

These self-expressing energies in individuals have a common source, an original form and their sum is constant at all times; it never decreases or increases; only it sometimes gets distributed in unequal proportions due to disturbance of equilibrium in consciousness. This sum-total of objectified energy is the matrix of all irrational and rational urges. These externalising urges or tendencies to organic reactions are not cut off even by the death of the physical body, for they are rooted in the very principle of the psychic individuality. They cease to exist only when they are absorbed into the Universal Consciousness, by the process of meditation on the essential Self-hood of all individuals in it.

There are certain minor instincts which are less powerful than those of self-preservation and self-reproduction, but which, nevertheless, exert a great influence on the personality and subject it to involuntary actions. The self-assertive instinct is one among these. This instinct is meant either to compensate for one's sense of inferiority, or to preserve one's thwarted power, importance and distinction (many times merely imagined), or to expand one's ego by adding to it qualifications from outside (though this addition is purely artificial). It is the inherent tendency to preserve the complex of one's psycho-physical organism. The gregarious instinct is another, which manifests itself in love of company of the group to which one 'belongs'. This is the instinct of identification of the group with one's self. Metaphysically, this appears to be an unconscious expression of one's love for one's larger social self or organism which comprises the individuals within it. But this love ceases to be a virtue when one is unconscious of the existence of such a larger self, and is merely goaded to love society independently of one's understanding and will. The protective or the parental instinct expresses itself in the biological attraction of the physical organism (influencing the mind, of course) to its own 'other self'. This attraction ceases when its purpose, viz., protection of the offspring, is fulfilled. Parental love is one of the manifestations of the biological nature of the individual affiliated to the purpose of the propagation of the individuals of the species.

All urges, it is suggested, are ultimately a symptom of spirit calling spirit, under the cloak of outward bondage to forms, objects, notions and actions.

The desire to understand, or to know is a rational urge. There are various forms of this urge, working through different channels, but aiming at the fulfilment of the desire to know. Sometimes, it is merely curiosity, and at other times, it is a necessity felt on account of problems that have arisen in life, that rouses in the individual the desire to know. At first, the knowledge that is desired is only a means to vaster and higher acquisitions, and later on, it becomes an

end in itself. Except the desire for higher knowledge which is self-existent, and the instinct of self-preservation (the latter when not carried beyond the limit of real necessity), all these urges are outlets for the externalisation of energy towards objects other than what is indispensable to the individual for its self-evolution. Desire for knowledge, however, should be called a supernatural urge, though it becomes really supernatural only in the end, and involves some amount of effort and spending of energy in the beginning stages. The highest self-existent knowledge is not really an urge, but is the end of lower knowledge, and only this latter can be included among urges.

One special feature to be noted, however, in the functioning of the urge for knowledge is that it can be valid only on a dualistic basis, and so it involves, to some extent, a directing of energy to something which is external to consciousness. On account of this reason, it can be included among the several urges in the individual, though the higher knowledge which is not a means to any other end, but is an end in itself, cannot be called an individual urge, for this latter is not directed to anything external, but is itself self-existence. What is meant by the rational urge is, therefore, not the self-existent independent absolute knowledge, but the aspiration to know, the desire to understand, the tendency to outgrow limited knowledge.

Except the longing for knowledge, all urges or instincts are to be subdued and transformed into the integrating energy of the higher consciousness, for these natural urges of the physical nature are inconsistent with the higher aspiration for the unity of consciousness in the Universal Being. The art of overcoming these instincts which are antagonistic to spiritual seeking consists, ultimately, in certain processes which are related to the essential nature of Consciousness itself. The end being the realisation of supreme oneness, the means to it has to bear an intimate relation to it.

The transmutation of the individual constitution is necessary for the experience of the Absolute, and this can be achieved by recognising the true nature of the relation existing between the individual and the Absolute, as detailed in the foregoing pages. All forms of the externalisation of energy, which are called urges, instincts, etc., are ultimately movements of consciousness in the direction of the not-self. There can be no individual urge when consciousness ceases to function in this way. The way of self-control, therefore, is that of the recession of the modes of the objectified consciousness to their wider and deeper source, which finally converge and merge in the Absolute. Only a conscious endeavour on the part of the individual to outgrow itself, to rise above particularity, can bring about this great achievement and realisation. For this, clear understanding, dispassionate feeling, longing for freedom and perseverance are necessary.

Study, reflection and meditation are the processes of the method of self-transcendence. A careful analysis and study of the nature of experience, under the guidance of an able spiritual teacher, is indispensable for meditation on the spiritual Reality. The defects involved in relative experience, and the fact of its being finally centred in and reducible to the reality of the Absolute, are to be discovered in order that attachment to external forms of experience may be withdrawn, and all energy be focussed on the supreme Self-consciousness. The nature of instinctive reactions and blind urges have to be clearly understood before any attempt to control them may be made. No practice can be of any lasting value, if it is not preceded by a correct knowledge of the inner anatomy and constitution of the meaning and method of that practice. One must act only after knowing how to act, why to act and what the act really is. Action must be based on a knowledge thereof. This knowledge, on which all spiritual practices are based, is the forerunner of dispassion for all externalisation towards things. True renunciation is not the abandonment of any 'thing', but the relinquishment of the thingness in things, the objectness in objects, the externality

in experience, the projectedness in consciousness. This renunciation is the condition of the supreme fulfilment in the Absolute. There can be no hope of this ultimate realisation without the total surrender of personality and all its concomitants to this one goal. The moment this surrender is done, attachments cease, the mind becomes calm, the senses are abstracted from forms, passions subside, consciousness gets concentrated, joy ensues, and an immense strength is felt within. All these are the results of an attunement of the individual to Reality, the coalescence of all forces with it, the dissolution in it of all distinction and objectivity. By this act the individual draws sustenance from and becomes the Universal Centre. The actual experience is possible through intense meditation on it.

Every act of one's life should become an expression of conscious contemplation on the Absolute. Unless all acts are based on this consciousness, there cannot be any ultimate value in these acts. The Absolute is the life-principle of all things, acts and thoughts, and so, without it, everything becomes lifeless and devoid of meaning. Spirituality is a state of consciousness; it is not merely certain forms of action. When consciousness is properly trained to exist in this harmony, all acts become universal processes, and cease to be individual efforts directed towards a phenomenal end. It is the duty of everyone in all one's conscious states to attempt to unite oneself with the Absolute, and perform one's duties with the consciousness of this unity. Such an individual is a sage, the supremely blessed one. The very presence of this hallowed being exerts a magnetic spiritual influence on the entire environment. "This universe is his; and, indeed, he is the universe," says the Upanishad. This is the glorious consummation of life.