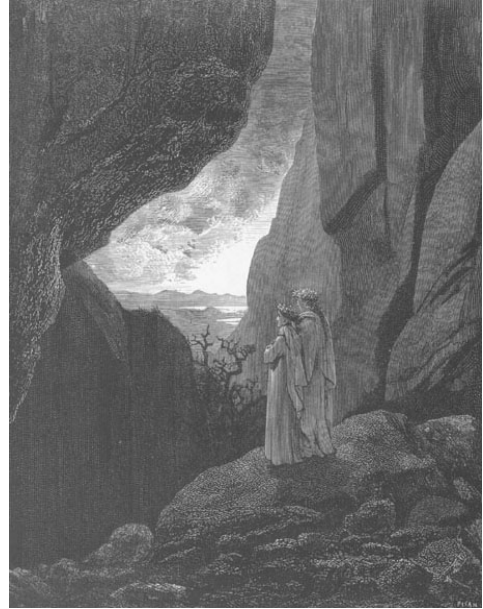


# THE RAGING OF THE STORM <sup>1</sup>

By Rohit Mehta

One of the most baffling problems of spiritual life is to sustain one's interest and enthusiasm in the midst of endless difficulties and the severest trials. It is the routine and the monotony of everyday existence that sap one's vitality and strength. The lives of most human beings are made up of small events and incidents—what one might call the trivialities of existence. Great and extraordinary events occur but rarely in the lives of average men and women. To show forth enthusiasm for extraordinary things is easy—but to maintain it in the midst of daily routine is extremely difficult. The greatest trial of an individual consists in maintaining a spiritual integrity in the midst of the common details of life. To maintain a perfect balance of thought and emotion in the midst of ceaseless provocations caused by events and happenings of daily existence demands a strength which most of us are unable to display. And yet the test of an individual's spiritual life lies in the field of their ordinary activities, not in the spheres of extraordinary achievements.



It was Emerson who said that nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. If this is true then enthusiasm is one of the essential qualities required on the spiritual path. Without enthusiasm the path will seem weary and tiresome. That this is so is evidenced from the lives of countless spiritual aspirants who have returned to mundane existence due to their inability to maintain enthusiasm on the spiritual path.

Now enthusiasm should not be confused with efficient discharge of one's duties. The so-called efficiency of the world is mostly due to the cultivation of certain habits. An efficient life is not necessarily a creative life—it is very often a mechanical life. A machine is efficient—but it is not enthusiastic. It carries out its duties in a flawless manner, but one cannot associate an element of joy in what the machine does. An enthusiastic life, however, has an element of creativity in it. Its actions are not

---

<sup>1</sup> This essay is taken from the Rohit Mehta's book *Seek Out the Way*, which was published in 1955 by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India. It has been slightly edited by the Department of Education.

stereotyped but bear an individuality of their own.

Enthusiasm for anything arises from a condition of deep interest. Once again, enthusiasm should not be confused with mere excitement, which has no depth in it and therefore cannot sustain itself. It needs to be constantly fed by the sensations of the outer world. But enthusiasm, rooted as it is in deep interest, draws its sustenance from that very depth. The mind that is capable of deep interest knows no moment of dullness and is never deterred by obstacles, however great they may be.

The difficulty with most of us is that we live our lives at a very superficial level—our thoughts and emotions are extremely shallow. This tendency towards superficiality is greatly increased in recent times because of an undue emphasis laid on speed. Our civilization is in a state of terrific hurry—although it does not know to



where it is hurrying! A superficial life is in constant need of excitement, be it material or spiritual. There is a continual craving for more and more stimulation, sensation, and entertainment. This demand for more excitement is once again to be seen today at all levels of human existence. Needless to say, a mind that functions at superficial levels can have no deep experiences. Such a mind has only acquaintances; it has no deep friendships. It can dissect and analyze a structure; it cannot comprehend the depths of the indwelling Life. But spirituality is essentially a matter of deep experience. It is the depth of experience that characterizes spirituality and not a particular field of activity. One may be intensely spiritual while in the market place, or one may not be spiritual at all even though dwelling in a temple or shrine.

It is those who live in the shallows that quarrel with the objective conditions of life. They move with a sense of injustice; they have a sense of grievance against the

Lords of Karma; they feel thwarted by the circumstances in which they have been placed. The surface of water is constantly whipped up even by the passing wind. Humanity struggles to be secure from these constant disturbances by trying to control the wind. To strive for security by attempting to alter the objective conditions of life is to display an immature mind. The mind that is devoid of depth engages itself in such pursuits; it feels restricted by the objective environment, be they of things, persons, or ideas. It is when the mind's contact with life is shallow and superficial that the difficulties of the objective world loom very large.

Kabir, a great Indian mystic, says that it is when deep sleep has not come to the eyes that a person makes a great fuss about the making of the bed and the arranging of the pillows. It is only the dancer who has no dance within her that complains about the stage, the floor, and the make-up. It is when the life within has dried up that objective difficulties seem insurmountable. Thus, it is a lack of deep interest that brings a slowing down of a person's enthusiasm. Such a person is dried up within and seeks renewal from without! No change in the objective condition, no alteration in the setting of Karma, will bring renewal to them so long as they do not enter the very depths of their own being.

Is it possible for human beings to cultivate a deep interest for life? Can interest be created at all—or is it only a gift of Karma? Is spiritual life a matter of mere subjectivism denying all reality to objective conditions? Has the spiritual person not to work at changing objective circumstances? The objective conditions are meant to serve as fields of expression for humanity. Therefore, they do need to be changed and altered from time to time so that they may not cause any restriction to mankind's expressional urges. The objective circumstances, in other words, are instruments of expression. One may alter an instrument, decorate it, but if there is no music within the heart, of what use will that instrument be? Thus music in the heart must precede all activities at changing and polishing the instrument. The change in objective conditions must follow—not precede—the arousing of deep interest. If we expect interest to be aroused as a result of objective changes then we are utterly mistaken. We may be placed in a new setting by the Lords of Karma, and yet, if the mind is dull and insensitive it will not see the beauties of the new environment. If deep interest is there, changes in the objective environment—if necessary—will be brought about in a smooth and silent manner. Even if the setting cannot be changed, the individual of deep interest and enthusiasm will put new life and vitality into the old forms of environment. When there is dance within, the dancer will dance anywhere and impart freshness and vitality to the erstwhile dull and drab setting. Is this not what a poet does with the language that is given to him?

It is the experience of all spiritual mystics that objective difficulties are swept

away under the impact of enthusiasm born of deep interest. Enthusiasm and deep interest are a joint phenomena—or to put it differently, one is the expression while the other is the source. Enthusiasm arises only in a state of deep interest intrinsically present—not relatively but absolutely present in the subject. It really means that the interest is not about *something*, not in relation to a *particular thing*. It is the state of pure interest, which alone serves as a ground for real enthusiasm. Interest in *something* only produces superficiality because it serves as a tether to the mind. Sensitivity merely to one thing or another is no sensitivity at all, for by the unconscious process of resistance the mind becomes insensitive to other things. A mind that is open only to certain things is a closed mind. And so it is the condition of pure interest, which is essential for the awakening of enthusiasm.

It is the mind that has enormous space in it which is capable of deep interest. The mind that has no space is a shallow or a superficial mind. To have space is to possess a depth in which to receive and to retain the influences and the impulses of life. A shallow mind receives little and therefore gives to life also very little. When the receiving is shallow, the giving is also meager and devoid of all generosity.

Is it possible for one to create a depth in the mind? The lack of depth is indeed the main subjective difficulty causing the objective handicaps to loom very large. There may be an objective heaven but without a subjective depth it will be of no use. The influences of that heaven cannot pour their richness into a mind that is shallow. The practical problem for all spiritual aspirants is, therefore, the creation of this depth or space in the mind. How can the influences of the Master or Truth pour into a mind that has no space in it? If a space could be created in the mind then life will have deep moments of experience every day. Even the daily routine and the small details of life will seem significant with a new light. They will become the stream and the rivulets, bringing rich treasures to be poured into the sea. The sea with its enormous depth will contain them all—and more.

How is this space to be created in the mind so that its contacts with life may be deep and abiding? It should be remembered that it is not by merely increasing one's points of contact with life that this depth can be created. It is not by a quantitative approach but only by a qualitative transformation that a deep contact with life will become possible.

Now to create space in the mind is to have a mind that has no resisting element in it, whether at the conscious or the unconscious level. If the mind resists, it will lose its pliability and therefore become insensitive. In order to understand the depth of the mind, one must observe the deep silence that descends in nature after a heavy storm. The silence that follows a storm can be experienced at the mountain heights or in deep valleys, near the sea or on the plains. When the storm rages it appears as if everything

will be destroyed under its overwhelming spell. And yet, after the storm there is to be seen a complete cleansing in nature—a purification of the atmosphere—a freshness and a silence that is deep and vibrant. The dead leaves and the branches are swept away and it appears as if a complete renewal of nature has taken place. *Light on the Path* says:

Look for the flower to bloom in the silence that follows the storm; not till then.

It shall grow, it will shoot up, it will make branches and leaves and form buds while the storm continues, while the battle lasts. But not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted—not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience—not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its Higher Self can the bloom open.

The opening of the bloom is the deep spiritual experience which comes after the terrific raging of the storm. It is in the storm that the depth of silence is created. The cleansing of nature by the storm is indeed the creation of space. The silence that follows the storm is most significant. The storm so deeply stirs nature that all dead things are cast off and the burden of the past is swept away.

Similarly, the human mind can be renewed only if the burden of its past is carried away and the mind is then rendered lighter and pliable. Deep silence can come to the mind provided it can be deeply stirred. A mind that is placid, casual, indifferent, or unmoved, can never experience the depths and therefore cannot know what renewal is. Such a mind may become excited but it cannot be enthused. A capacity to be stirred or disturbed is a necessary pre-condition for the arousing of interest and enthusiasm. If nothing disturbs a person then there is something fundamentally wrong with them! Fortunately there are some things in life that do disturb us and shake us from our complacency. This is our saving grace! It shows that we are not dead although we may be asleep.

But if disturbances do occasionally disrupt our lives or if storms rage within us, why is it that they do not create depths in our consciousness? Why do they not cleanse our minds? Why are we not renewed after mental and emotional storms? This is because we resist the storms. We interfere with their movements; we want to control them. We are afraid of allowing the storm to work itself through us. We feel we will be destroyed under its impact; we feel we will be swept away under its fearful sway. And so, when psychological storms rage within us, we resist their arrival, and when they come we try to make our way through them.

Now, to try to navigate one's way through a severe storm is fraught with grave

dangers. When a storm rages one is apt to become disoriented. In a storm there is the howling of the wind, the raising of the dust, and the uprooting of trees and plants. One is naturally confused in the midst of this violent upheaval, and so whatever steps one takes in this moment of turbulence are bound to lead one to greater confusion. Likewise, in the midst of emotional storms and mental disturbances one must “stay put,” as every movement of the confused mind is likely to lead the spiritual pilgrim astray. If the storm is allowed to work itself out—and if no resistance is put forth—then there will be a complete cleansing of the mind; the mind will emerge from the ordeal refreshed and renewed. A new way and a new approach will open before such a mind. And a new way always calls out enthusiasm from within the heart of each human being.

But the question is: Are we to invite storms and disturbances in order to create enthusiasm for life? This remedy seems to be worse than the disease! But what, after all, is a storm or a disturbance? It is obviously a challenge from life. We are disturbed due to these challenges. But since in the river of life new waters come every moment, life is a never-ceasing challenge. There is no moment when life’s challenge does not exist. Why do we not find ourselves in a state of alertness, though a challenge must make a person alert and vigilant? If we are surrounded by challenges and if we are not alert and vigilant, are we not sheltering ourselves under a false security?

There is no doubt that life is sending out in a never-ceasing manner challenges from all sides and at various levels. But the mind, through its responses emanating from the spheres of memory, works as a “shock-absorber” with reference to these challenges. It is this activity of the mind that lulls us to sleep. Thus we are prevented from meeting the challenges of life due to the intervention of the mind. The mind is interested in acting as an intermediary because thus alone can it maintain its continuity. We do not even become aware of the challenges of life due to the mediation of the mind. Sometimes the fortifications of the mind collapse because of the overwhelming nature of the challenge, but such instances come rarely in the life of an ordinary person. We are unaware of the challenges of life that come from moment to moment because of the screen that our mind places between the environment and ourselves. Thus the mind keeps us away from a direct contact with life. It is to a stagnant existence that most of us are committed. How can there be enthusiasm in such a stagnant existence?

If the mind could receive the challenges of life without sending out any response from its centers of memory, it would then remain fresh and vital. Even as nature is cleansed by the storms that rage, so will our mind be cleansed by the challenges of life. To receive the challenges of life but not to react to them from the centers of memory is to “stay put” in the midst of a storm—it is to stand still where one is, for any

movement by the mind in the hour of storm would lead the spiritual pilgrim to greater and greater confusion.

But to stand still in a storm requires tremendous courage. Not to resist the storm or to run away from it implies receiving the full impact of the storm. And in receiving the impact we are rendered absolutely alone. Challenge without response is a state of aloneness. When a storm rages in nature every tree is alone, for it has to rely on its own strength. But in that aloneness, if the tree does not resist, then it become lighter because of the shedding away of the dead leaves and branches. Similarly, if we could stand still, alone in the storm, then will we find ourselves completely renewed. In the subjective renewal, the difficulties of the objective environment will vanish as into thin air, and the aloneness created by the storm is fraught with tremendous spiritual possibilities.