

THE CONFLUENCE
A PLAY

SURI V. SUBRAHMANYAM

THE CONFLUENCE : A PLAY

By SURI V. SUBRAHMANYAM, B. A., A. I. S. M.

Characters : INTELLECT
HEART
SOUL

Time of Play : Evening

[Enter Intellect in a neat evening suit with a bow collar and a pince-nez, which he often removes when he wants to assert his opinion and puts it on when he is referring to one of the big books on his table. He looks rather up than down, with a sort of "I am all" air; often attempts to smile whenever he hears something to his taste, as if he is in a mood of patronising condescension. Rather grim in face, with a sort of pessimism settled on his forehead. He seems as though he is moving in an atmosphere which is considerably light and therefore unworthy of him. He is to be seen reposing in an easy chair.

Enter Heart into Intellect's study, with long curling hair curled just above the shoulders; a sweet delicate face, with eyes shadowed with a mist of imagination. Wears a long silk gown reaching up to his ankles. His neck is bare and is perfectly modelled. On the whole his gait and manner are more delicate than those of the fair sex, but his neck and arms show a Greek god. He slowly turns the handle of Intellect's study, silently enters the room, and closes the door again without any creaky noise. Intellect is rather absorbed and does not notice him.]

Heart : Hullo—Good evening. Hope you are....

Intellect : Hullo—(pause) I am awfully surprised, pleasantly surprised though. What! you never intimated to me about.... Never mind—Hullo, Good evening first—Give me your hand. (Heart gives his hand and after a warm shake of recognition, takes his seat in a chair offered by Intellect.)

Heart : Long since though! It looks like returning home after a long voyage. In a foreign land to meet one of your own people—look! it is immensely pleasing, why, it is exhilarating. How do you feel?

Intellect : I have nothing to feel or rather I cannot feel anything, I suppose. I have become incapable of feeling. The

one thing which appeals to me is that pile of books you see there. They are all intellectual, with no feeling. . . . However I should like to hear a lot about you.

Heart : I think so friend—it may be my own feelings—that we were better in Heaven when all of us three yourself, myself and Soul—I do not know what he is about now—were together moving hand in hand, playing, inventing and feeling only for Him. I can't understand why He should separate us like this and send each his own way; of course He said, 'you may all be united even in the world.' I am looking for that opportunity, dear friend, and am almost pining for it as an old maid for a lover.

Intellect : Oh Heart ! look here. Now that you are before me, I recollect the old days. We were chums, like three seeds in a fruit nestling together surrounded by a thick pulp of sweetness. They were so sweet, it was hardly possible to know oneself fully. That is why, I think, we were separated here just to understand more fully the sweetness of the union. We are like those mad men who knock their heads against the wall of Misery just to feel how happy they would be after the knock. It isn't a bad experience, however, to be separated, provided you know that you ought to meet. I almost forgot about our meeting. I am so glad you put me back on the right way. The trouble with us, intellectuals, is that we have no heart. That is why you see some of us sometimes perverse. These perverse intellectuals give virtue a flavouring of vice and vice a flavouring of virtue, and try to turn every human relationship upside down. I told you, everything, to me and to such other intellectuals like me, is an experience. I understand everything, even the obstruse metaphysics, explain everything, excuse everything but feel for nothing.

Heart : Oh yes. I understand, you simply peck at thought even as a wanton bird at an unripe fruit, allowing it neither to ripen nor to be useful for any purpose. When you forget me, friend, how can you hope to have peace in life? You look like some of those flowers plucked from the stem and displayed in painted glass jars in a drawing-room. Your bloom is temporary, sooner or later you will be forced to acknowledge that you have missed Life, having sought exclusion from me. I suppose you yourself without my beneficial help would prove a greater menace to the world's happiness than, say, I would prove, acting alone without your help.

Intellect : Having been reminded of our happy days when we were together, I shall not contradict you because I am able to

feel something in your presence. Without you, of course, I couldn't feel anything. We convert even our own difformities of mind into use like some of those actors and actresses on the screen. We produce literature out of our barren lives, lives devoid of feeling. We give it, of course, a big name 'Art for Art's sake.' Look how funny it sounds and how I feel its littleness before you, as if anything can exist in this world for its own sake! I am sick of our attempts. Having no real feeling, we can afford to be indulgently tolerant to others' weaknesses. We develop sometimes a morbid humanitarianism which breaks down the distinction between good and evil. We express a sentimental pity for the 'sacred and irresponsible human' in the criminal. It looks like the sentimentality of an old man in dotage. Doesn't it?... (pauses). I assure you, friend, I have lost my ground before you. I have never confessed my weaknesses before, for it requires a heart to understand one's weakness and to confess it—Intellectuals never bend their head low, for humility is a quality belonging to you alone. I almost forgot, as I told you before, that I had a dear old friend, Heart, in whose company I was happy. We intellectuals, following the religion of reason, stifle you. If only men were to know the happiness of having you! Oh, how foolish I have been! I am talking off all about myself like a spring unwound—I haven't heard anything about you. It takes one off his senses, you know, when he meets suddenly a happiness he has forgot all these years; tell me how are you getting on in this world?

Heart: Thank you; you are very entertaining. My story is similar to yours. I wonder, we seem to be rivals, each shunning the other with these human beings. I have no place, as you said, amongst those of your following. But by those who have some feeling I am either over-indulged like the young wife of an old man, or ill-treated like a junior clerk in an office, that often has to bear the short temper of all above him when a fault decidedly belonging to none happens. Most of these who have a good heart have so little of intellect, that they are not able to control their emotions. It is mostly the fair sex that favours me, and I should add a section of the poets too—whom I think to be bisexual. But all these behave childishly. Most of them understand only my passive part—neglecting completely my active manifestation. They have the feminine pity but not the heroic heart which is dynamic. They have love, sometimes healthy, for an individual but not for an ideal or cause. They can serve only a few but not a just cause or a nation. There is another section which is unhealthy in its affection towards me. They

are either sentimental on trifles, or egoistic. In most cases their love is extended only to themselves. When selfish happiness is the sole aim of life, life is soon left without a purpose ; it becomes blank and bleak like the vast expanse of the desert, priding only in its emptiness. You intellectuals, with no heart, can at least do something for others, you can create happiness for others. But these people with only this kind of heart do nothing positively good. Their love of self excludes every other consideration. Even when they love others, that love is only another name for captivity. Each is a prison for the other. They must have the intellect to choose an ideal and a heart to love it and work for it.

Intellect : But we write strange stories idolising love—making it the only thing worth living for in this world ; of course we do not feel when we write. We write for others to feel.

Heart : Oh yes, the whole world is oppressed by these intellectual suggestions. Imagine, a few of these people having only heart, feel that they ought to be like those characters you describe in your stuffy strange books and actually behave like them. You almost make them believe that love of an individual is divine. In cases of love between opposit sexes, it is mostly the sex attraction. They mistake it for love and grow sentimental over it. Naturally it begins to wane, like the moon in the dark fortnight, after the marriage. Not having intellect they never understand that this love must become more impersonal every day, and that this love has to develop into that which knows not sex nor person nor partiality, 'but which seeks virtue and wisdom' everywhere as the end of everincreasing virtue and wisdom' and that 'true marriage is the purification of the intellect and the heart from year to year.' Oh Lord ! I am speaking like an intellectual—Amn't I ? I reflect your capacity. True friends are like that. Each bears a reflection of the other. I am reminded now of our great friend Soul. I wonder if we can meet him today. Oh ! the happiness of all the three of us meeting ! What is it—you look serious ?

Intellect : Nothing, Heart, it is getting late. The evening sun is just hanging himself on yonder stem of the west like an over-ripe melon, ready to drop down into the sea beneath. It is at this time I expect our friend Soul, who generally prefers silent evening hours to visit. It is getting late, would you like to take a drink ?

Heart : Thank you. Just wait. What is that noise, that looks like the flutter of the wings of an angel ? It looks like the

sound of tender leaflets smiling when caressed by the gentle wind. Oh yes, the sound is approaching—It must be our friend—(opens the door and looks) Oh God, it is he—he, Intellect, it is he—our Soul.

[Enter Soul, Heart having opened the door into Intellect's closet. Both Heart and Intellect stand up. Their faces express joy and radiance. Heart is closer to soul.]

Soul is dressed like an angel with a pair of wings to his sides. Whenever he asserts, the wings flutter as if his asserted idea is something of heaven and wants to go back. His forehead is shining. He has bare arms and neck. His whole appearance is like a vision and he speaks slowly with a distinct accent....]

Intellect and Heart (together): Good evening, Soul, good evening.

Soul: Very good evening. Thanks. Give me your hands (shakes hands with both of them).

Heart: It looks like the acme of happiness—our meeting here today. We were just talking about you, Soul. You are wonderful. When Intellect and Heart think about you jointly, you at once make your appearance. Friend, how do you do?

Soul: Thanks. The world seems like an ill-tuned instrument. I can't play any note. A few of the strings are, of course, in tune. But the whole of my music cannot be played on only a few strings. The intellectual strings are not in harmony with the heart strings. Your fellows, Heart, when they want me, almost kill me by their ignorant ways of worship. They love me like an old mother that only knows how to love her son, but does not understand him. They are either superstitious or sentimental in their devotion. Such of your fellows, Intellect, that sometimes think of me, only do so to bring me into ridicule. They are not at all human. They are like flint, nothing can penetrate them but they break every thing they touch. They break me with their subtle discussions, sharp as a cutting edge and are proud of their dissective capacity. They talk of me more to exhibit their pedantry than with any love for me. That synthesis, that co-ordination of the attributes of all the three of us, that harmony, that balance is what is wanted for the happiness of the world.

(Coming a bit forward, he speaks loudly addressing the audience).

Not till then, not till man feels for me with all the poignancy that Heart is capable of, and works with the supreme power of Intellect for the realisation of my manifestation, shall he attain peace. This sort of one-sided favouring of either Heart or Intellect can only be, like lumbago, a hindrance to progress. (Turning to his friends).

Friends, I am very glad we all met here today. Let us work together, let us produce again the white radiance out of these divergent rays of light. Let us be together and, working through one favoured man, evolve a better world. He shall have all the attributes of all the three of us in so perfect a unison that a contact with him produce melodies ineffable. He shall verily be a confluence of the triple stream of the powers of us three, and the world shall know itself respecting him.

Friends, let us come closer.

[They all embrace. The lights go off on the stage but the light on Soul's forehead shines. The curtain is dropping slowly.]

Soul : (In a loud voice) Goodbye friends, till we meet again in our favoured mortal. Good night to you all.

[A white Gandhi cap is seen floating in the air before the curtain drops completely.]