

us hope that awareness is increasing, so that people who have these experiences need no longer feel that they are nature's freaks.

Roslyn Langdon

A JOURNEY

It had been suggested to me by my spiritual teacher that it was time I made arrangements to accompany him on one of his boat journeys across the seas: and here I was ten months later, on a Polish cargo boat bound for South America. I wasn't looking forward to the journey; in fact I was distinctly apprehensive. I had a strong feeling it was going to be a difficult experience. We were ten students from Canada, Switzerland and England taking up the whole passenger quota. We had sole use of the passenger lounge for our classes each morning, afternoon, and evening, and were set daily meditational exercises and bioenergetic exercises to practise.

The apprehension persisted. I feared the sea becoming rough, the Teacher's wrath and my teeth needing attention! (I had tried without success to see a dentist in Hamburg before boarding the boat). The biggest problem for me was the food. As a vegetarian I had been warned that I would have to get used to eating meat, and I had begun to break myself in slowly several weeks before the journey. Polish food is particularly heavy, and we were being served meat twice, sometimes three times a day. How ironical considering the situation in Poland! I did my best to eat what I was given, but felt permanently bloated and uncomfortable. After ten days I moved to the Teacher's table and I soon realized that here was where my personal teaching would take place. The attitude to food, acceptance or rejection, style of eating, table talk, all reflected the present mental state, early conditioning and early relationship with the mother - how much emotional nourishment there had been. He could read us like a book.

After two weeks we sighted land. We had reached South America! The boat moved into a wide algae-green river and anchored, together with another dozen ships in the harbour of the oil-rich port of Maracaibo in Venezuela. It wasn't until ten days later, with the tension rising noticeably amongst the crew, that we were allowed to berth. Now we could leave the boat but were warned never to go ashore alone. Purses must be hidden on our person. Rings, watches and spectacles should not be worn as they could be snatched off. We must always return to the boat before dark - 6.30 in the tropics.

After three days of unloading cargo we were on our way again to neighbouring Colombia. We docked at Baranquilla, one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Here there are schools for training thieves. It is no use going to the police for help because they themselves murder and steal. Here I suffered tropical sunburn at one local beach, and the next day at another beach, I was badly stung by a giant jelly-fish. Here I was taken by the ship's agent to visit a dentist who undid half a dozen locks and chains on his front door in order to let me in. He reassured me that the pain in my gums was the result of my unfamiliar diet.

At the next port, Cartagena, prostitutes were brought on board by members of the Mafia for the benefit of the crew, and we were urged to lock cupboards, portholes, cabin doors, corridor doors and doors leading to the deck. On our second day there the Teacher suggested I should stay on board and meditate while the rest of the students went ashore, apart from one woman who was in retreat in her cabin, and I was not to go on deck alone. For several years he has stressed the necessity for clearing the womb i.e. any prenatal or birth traumas, before any real progress could be made. I have re-experienced my birth a number of times but never during meditation. So here I was confined to my cabin for the day in a gently rocking boat - the perfect womb setting. I had been given a meditation practice for clearing the depths, and as I sat in my claustrophobic environment I began to realize I was experiencing the no exit (Grof's BPM2) stage of birth - not able to get out, nowhere to go, only a dangerous situation awaiting me. I wept in despair. The following day my instructions were to sit with my head pressed against a wall.

I guessed this was to simulate the baby's head against the mother's pelvic bone. Whilst practising this I experienced some fear and panic, my breathing changed from deep to short panting breaths, and finally my head arched back and all was quiet. By now we were about to pass through the Panama Canal. I was passing through my birth canal. The night after we came through the Canal I had a dream in which I said that as it was now my daughter's birthday, it was time to cut the umbilical cord.

We were into the Pacific, sailing down the west coast and now there was to be no more communication between the students. However I tried to tell a friend who knew my daughter that today was her (my) birth day, but was only met with a blank stare. I longed for human warmth, to be held, to be touched. I was experiencing my post-natal stage, being well fed to the point of over feeding, without the necessary loving contact. I was desolate.

Grey days followed as we crossed the Equator and landed in Peru. After a week at Callou, the port for Lima, we continued on to Southern Peru, where I left the boat with four other companions. The next day we all went our separate ways and I was left alone in a strange and dangerous world. I remained in Peru for several weeks venturing across the Andes, travelling down a tributary of the Amazon in a rubber dinghy and into the tropical jungle.

It will take me a long time to assimilate what I experienced on this journey, but what I do sense is that some sort of clearing of the psyche has taken place.

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On the whole, people reacted positively to the idea of co-operative selection, and thought we had made the right choice of method. And most people thought that the actual process had been pretty satisfactory, although there were criticisms which we look at later. And of course, **overall emotional reaction** ranged from the very positive to the very negative. Thus some people wrote saying they "felt good", or "feel satisfied with the way we selected