



A Sufi Message

Transforming Grief Towards Joy

Selected Teachings by Hazrat Inayat Khan

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Put your trust in God for support and see God's bidden hand working through all sources.

– Hazrat Inayat Khan –

Today, September 11th, marks a fateful and tragic day in the history of the United States of America. In 2001, now 21 years later we still remember 9/11. All the attacks occurred about this time:

- At 8:46:40 Flight 11 crashes into the North Tower of the World Trade Center
- At 9:03:02 Flight 175 crashes into the South Tower of the World Trade Center
- At 9:37:46 Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon

Let us now take a few moments to offer a silent prayer remembering all those who lost their lives, all those touched by this loss, for ourselves and for all the citizens and friends of the United States of America. (Moment of silence)

If we allow it, our faith and courage lifts us up and carries us through such moments, and this faith and courage will continue to uplift us through our bewilderment when tragedy strikes and when we encounter trials and tribulations, which are inevitable in life. The First Noble Truth the Buddha taught was, “There is suffering”. If we trust in the teachings and we gain perspective from our own life’s experiences, then we know there is suffering, but what we do with this suffering brings us to an essential understanding of the meaning of suffering in life. Hazrat Inayat Khan teaches us: *“The pain of life is the price paid for the quickening of the heart.”*

In Psalm 27 we read, “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, Whom Shall I fear? The Lord protects me from danger, why should I be afraid”. And I heard many times throughout my life from my own Mother and Grandmother during tough times, *“That which does not destroy you makes you stronger.”* Who knew they were quoting Friedrich Nietzsche.

Just a few days ago, on September 8th, the Beloved Queen Elizabeth II of England passed away. Tomorrow, September 12th will be the 6th Urs of Hidayat Inayat-Khan. Let us offer the Prayer for the Dead given to us by Hazrat Inayat Khan for this Beloved Queen and our dear Murshid Hidayat.

PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

*O Thou
the Cause and Effect of the whole universe
the Source from whence we have come
and the Goal toward which all are bound
receive these souls, who are coming to Thee,
into Thy parental arms.
May Thy forgiving Glance heal Queen Elizabeth's and Murshid Hidayat's hearts.
Lift them from the denseness of the earth.
Surround them with the Light
of Thine own Spirit.
Raise them up to heaven
which is their true dwelling place.
We pray Thee, grant them the blessing
of Thy most exalted Presence.
May Queen Elizabeth's and Murshid Hidayat's life upon earth
become as a dream to their waking soul,
And let their thirsting eyes behold
the glorious vision of Thy Sunshine. Amen*

So let me ask, who here today has not been touch by loss in their life? This loss might have been a missed opportunity, a loss of relationship, or the death of a loved one. I'd be willing bet we all have been. The further question is how do we handle loss. Does it define us or propel us to greater insight, wisdom, understanding, and compassion?

In the book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Sogyal Rinpoche writes, "Each time the losses of life teach us about impermanence, they bring us closer to the truth. When you fall from a great height, there is only one possible place to land: on the ground—the ground of truth. And if you have the understanding that comes from spiritual practice, then falling is in no way a disaster, but the discovery of an inner refuge".

Hazrat Inayat Khan further teaches:

- The heart is not living until it has experienced pain.
- The pain of love is the dynamite that breaks up the heart, even if it be as hard as a rock.
- The heart sleeps until it is awakened to life by a blow; it is as a rock, and the hidden fire flashes out when struck by another rock.
- Every blow in life pierces the heart and awakens our feeling to sympathize with others; and every swing of comfort lulls us to sleep, and we become unaware of all.

All of these quotes can be found in the succession of a week within the book titled, *Bowl of Saki*.

Now one may ask, 'Is Murshid telling us to our seek pain in life'. The answer is 'no, absolutely not', but what he is tell us is if we are willing to let pain, which naturally arises in life, to do its work on our hearts, then this pain becomes the catalyst to awaken within us more compassion, more tolerance, and more understanding of life and others. When we summon our courage to endure and

let God's hand knead our hearts, which makes our heart pliable and subtle. As Hazrat Inayat Khan also teaches: *In the heart of sorrow there is a seed of joy.*

We have words of inspiration that are spoken around loss, but do we believe and trust in these words? For example, "It's always darkest before the dawn". "There's a silver lining in every dark cloud". "There's a Light at the end of the tunnel". "Your Faith will heal you". I'm wearing this beautiful mala made of pearls who my sister, Mudita Cecily Sabato, brought to me as a gift from India years ago. Today I wear it to remind myself that these pearls were cultivated when something foreign entering into the oyster shell. From that foreign element something beautiful is created. Can we let our pain of loss, our grief create something beautiful within us?

There is a practice that Hazrat Inayat Khan gave us, that goes like this. While making the sign of the cross we first draw a horizontal line of negation also signifying limitation (in Sufic terms, fana) while saying, "This is not my body". Then we draw a vertical descending line the signifying the descent of Divine Consciousness piercing the plane of limitation (in Sufi terms, baqa), and we do this while affirming, "This is the Temple of God".

PRACTICE: While making the sign of the cross.

- Draw the horizontal line while saying, *"This is not my body"*
- Draw the vertical line of the cross while saying, *"This is the Temple of God"*.

This practice can serve as a reminder to tune to a higher plane during difficult times. Take a moment and ask yourself silently, "What belongs in here in my heart, which is God's temple?"

When troubles come, keep your faith. Pain and loss may be a blessing in disguise. When viewed as transitional points, bridges to new experiences, new places, new quests, new understandings. If we can discipline and turn our minds towards thinking in this way it will create within us the light of patience fortified with prayer. See all hurts, disappointments, and loss as temporary. The writer, Sir Tom Stoppard once remarked, *"Look on every exit as being an entrance somewhere else."*

I would like to share with you a story of a woman by the name of Kisa Gotami (KE-Sa GU-ta-mE) who lived during the time of the Buddha. In my grief over our Parker Sparky black lab, who transitioned 5 weeks ago today, my husband, Joe, reminded me of this story from the Buddhist tradition. It goes like this. Kisa's (KE-Sa) only child, a very young son, had died. Unwilling to accept his death, she carried him from neighbor to neighbor and begged for someone to give her medicine to bring him back to life. One of her neighbors told her to go to Buddha, located nearby, and ask him if he had a way to bring her son back to life.

Kisa found Buddha and pleaded with him to help bring her son back to life. The Buddha instructed her to go back to her village and gather mustard seeds from the households of those who have never been touched by the loss and death. From those mustard seeds, the Buddha promised he would create a medicine to bring her son back to life. Relieved, she went back to her village and began asking her neighbors for mustard seeds. All her neighbors were willing to give her mustard seeds, but they all told her that their households had been touched by loss and death. As the day turned to

night she was still without any mustard seeds, and then she realized the universality of loss and death. According to the Buddhist verse her story comes from, Kisa said:

It's not just a truth for one village or town, nor is it a truth for a single family. But for every place and everything and everyone. This indeed is what is true everything is impermanent.

With this new understanding, Kisa's grief was calmed. She buried her son in the forest and then returned to Buddha. She confessed to Buddha that she could not obtain any of the mustard seeds he had instructed her to collect because she could not find even one house untouched by death.

Here is an interpretation of what Buddha imparted upon Kisa:

"Dear One, the life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and inseparable from suffering, for there is not any means, nor will there ever be, by which those that have been born can avoid dying. All living beings are of such a nature that they must die whether they reach old age or not.

As early-ripening fruits are in danger of falling, so mortals when born are always in danger of dying. Just as the earthen vessels made by the potter end in shards, so is the life of mortals. Both young and old, both those who are foolish and those who are wise – all fall into the power of death, all are subject to death.

Of those who depart from this life, overcome by death, a father cannot save his son, nor relatives their kinsfolk. While relatives are looking on and lamenting, one by one the mortals are carried off.... People die, and their fate after death will be according to their deeds.

Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind. On the contrary, their pain will be all the greater, and will ruin one's health. Dead bodies cannot be restored by lamentation.

Buddha instructs Kisa (KE-Sa), to reject grief, do not allow it to enter your mind. Seeing one dead, know for sure: "I shall never see him again in this existence." And just as the fire of a burning house is quenched, so does the contemplative wise person scatter grief's power, expertly, swiftly, even as the wind scatters cottonseed.

The one who seeks peace should pull out the arrow lamentations, useless longings, and the self-made pangs of grief. The one who has removed this unwholesome arrow and has calmed himself will obtain peace of mind. Verily, the one who has conquered grief will always be free from grief – sane and immune – confident, happy, and close to Nirvana".

Kisa entered the first stage of enlightenment from her experience. She decided to become a disciple of Buddha and went on to become the first female arahat. An Arahata is one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence by unmasking the ego, which hides one's true self. With this spiritual attainment, Kisa was able to dispel all illusions and misapprehensions, thus understanding the true nature of reality leading to a state of liberation from the endless cycle of rebirth.

So here we can ask ourselves, can we find a blessing that has come from your own loss and pain like the Arahata Kisa? Perhaps a missed opportunity was really the cosmic pause button getting pushed until a better opportunity arises. Perhaps a broken relationship leads to even a more fruitful, loving

relationship? The pain and despair of the death of a loved one may serve to lead to a greater understanding that open us up towards a more open and compassionate heart, which God Willing may lead us to our own enlightenment. The bottom line is “nothing lasts forever” nor should it. Be patient, remain calm, look ahead, and *‘Put your trust in God for support and see God’s hidden hand working through all sources.*

Concluding Practice: OM MANI PADME HUNG

OM MA-NI PAD-ME HUNG = Six Syllables = Six Perfections

Each syllable represents one of the Six Perfections, also known as the Six Paramitas (Paramita literally means "perfection"). These Six Perfections are antidotes to some of our biggest mental obstacles such as: anger, greed, jealousy, laziness and so on – the six attitudes work together, enabling us to deal with everything that life throws at us. By developing these attitudes, we can slowly but certainly realize our full potential, bringing the highest benefit to ourselves and others. The Six Paramitas are: 1. Generosity (dana) · 2. Ethical Discipline (sila) · 3. Patience (ksanti) · 4. Diligent Exertion & Effort (virya) · 5. Meditation/Concentration (dhyana) · 6. Wisdom (prajna).

CLOSING:

- Dedication of Merit
- Wishing you a blessed Heijrat Day on September 13 honoring the birth of the Message coming to the West.
- Khatum

We pray this teaching resonates and benefits YOU!

Gratitude is expressed through Generosity!

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