



A Sufi Message

The Deeper Side of Life The Soul's Search for Knowledge

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From last month's Sufi Message class: Exaltation, which is a greater bliss, a higher pleasure, and which makes a us independent of the outer life for our happiness does not seem to be known or understood by the majority. What is exaltation? The soul can go through different experiences which are all in reality the longing of the soul. Mistakenly a person does not seek those experiences but instead experiences something else. For instance, it is a constant yearning of the soul to experience happiness, and instead of that it becomes connected with what one calls pleasure; but pleasure belongs to sensation and happiness to exaltation. Pleasure is only the suggestion; happiness is reality.

Every soul yearns for knowledge, that knowledge which will give exaltation. But the soul cannot be satisfied by the knowledge one gathers from books, by learning, or by the study of outside things. For instance, the knowledge of science, the knowledge of art, are outside knowledge. They give one a kind of strength, a kind of satisfaction, but this does not last. *(Example inserted here on audio/video to illustrate.)* It is another knowledge that the soul is really seeking. The soul cannot be satisfied unless it finds that knowledge.

But that knowledge does not come by learning names and forms. On the contrary it comes from unlearning. Do not be surprised therefore if you read in some books of the East that Mahatmas went into the mountains and sat there for many years. I do not say that we should follow their example, but we can appreciate what they have brought from there. They went there to explore life, that aspect of life which is unseen and remains unexplored. They sat there for years in meditation. They lived on leaves and fruits, on what they could find in the forest. They contemplated. What they have gathered is not a knowledge learned from this world, but a greater knowledge which can be learned from within. *(Story inserted here on audio/video to illustrate.)*

Seven Limb Prayer

*Reverently, I prostrate with my body speech and mind.
I make every type of offering actually offered and mentally transformed.
I confess all my sins from beginningless time, and
I rejoice in the virtuous deeds of ordinary and special beings.
Please remain until Samsara ends and turn the wheel of dharma, freeing all beings from samsaric cyclic existence.
This I request and dedicate for the benefit of all sentient beings.
Svaha*

Practice: Ya Shahid (yaa sha-HEED) – O Divine Witness

- Shahid is the Omniscient Witness, having complete and unlimited knowledge.

- Shahid is the One who directly and ever-presently observes everything in creation.
- Shahid is the One from whose knowledge nothing is hidden.
- Shahid witnesses both that which is seen and that which is unseen. (*Retreat example here on audio/video to illustrate.*)
- Shahid has knowledge of all that happens everywhere at all times.
- As Al-Ghazali has said: "Sufism is based upon experience and not premises." Many ancient Sufi writers stressed the lifting of veils. As veils are lifted, a whole new universe seems to come to consciousness. It has always been there; each new vista only makes one better aware of what has always been there. (*In Buddhism this is called removing the obscurations of the Mind.*)

One can see pictures of Buddha, with closed eyes, sitting cross-legged. What does that symbol convey to us? That there is a knowledge that can be learnt by closing not only the eyes but also the mind from the outside world. Closing the eyes does not make the concentration any greater. Most people go as far as closing the eyes, and no further; but if the eyes are closed and the mind is pondering over things, that is not concentration. (*Story inserted here of Tibetan Buddhist Lama in three year retreat on audio/video to illustrate.*) Those who can concentrate can do it without having to close the eyes.

I once saw, when traveling in the East, a person working in a telegraph-office; and however busy he was, his concentration continued. I said, "It is very wonderful, that with all this work you can go on concentrating." He smiled and said, "That is the way of concentration."

The soul yearns for happiness. That can be gained also by getting in touch within oneself. The soul yearns for peace. It cannot be gained by outer means, by outer comfort and rest alone. It can only be gained when the mind is at rest.

Practice: Ya Salām – O Divine Peace

- The Source of Peace, The Flawless, The Source of Wholeness and Well-Being
- Salām to be peaceful, quiet, tranquil, content, friendly, reconciled
- Salām to be free from imperfections, free from faults, complete, whole, sound
- Salām to be safe, secure, well, healthy, prosperous

Practice: Khatum recited slowly on the breath. Breathe in and out each line of the Prayer Khatum. **Italics indicates out breath.** (*Commentary first and then practice*)

*O Thou, Who art the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty.
The Lord of Heaven and earth,
Open our hearts that we may hear Thy Voice,
which constantly cometh from within;
Disclose to us Thy Divine Light,
which is hidden in our souls,
that we may know and understand life better;
Most Merciful and Compassionate God,
Give us Thy great Goodness;*

Teach us Thy loving forgiveness;
Raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide men;
Send us the peace of Thy Divine Spirit,
And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being.
– Amen

- *Whenever you are alone, remind yourself that God has sent everyone else away so that there is only you and God.* – Rumi
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- Dedication of Merit
- Year-End Gifting

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