



## Religious Gatheka – Hazrat Inayat Khan

### 18. The Coming World Religion

There are many prophecies and several beliefs on this subject, but in this lecture I have no desire to make any prophecy on the subject. I only wish to explain what religion means. The present religion or the coming religion, or the past religion is for those who divide the truth, which is one, into many. As a point of fact what was is, and what is will be. Was this idea not supported by Jesus Christ, who said: “I have not come to give a new law, I have come to fulfill the law”? If Jesus Christ said this, who else can come out and say: “I give you a new religion”?

There cannot be a new religion; one could as well say: “I wish to teach you a new wisdom”. There cannot be a new wisdom, wisdom is the same, which was and is and always will be.

There arises the question in the heart of the enquirers, ”Then what is this variety of religions which has engaged humanity for years in conflict with one another, so that most of the wars and battles were fought in the name of religion?” This only shows the childish character of human nature. The religion which was given for unity, for harmony, for brotherhood was used by the childish nature to fight and to dispute and to engage themselves in battles for years and years. And the most amusing thing for a thoughtful person is to think and to see how they have given in the past history a most sacred character to war, to battle, and called it sacred war or holy war.

And the same tendency of making war with one another which began in their religion, persisted in the time of materialism; the same tendency turned into war between nations. And at the same time the differences and distinctions which existed between the different faiths and beliefs still exist, and that prejudice and that difference and the bigotry which existed between nations still exist in a smaller or greater degree. What does it show? It shows that the meaning of true religion has not been understood by the majority. And therefore that mission that religion has to fulfill in

connection with humanity still remains unfulfilled. And it is at that fulfillment that Jesus Christ has hinted: 'I have come to fulfill the law, not to give a new law.'

Religion can be seen from five different point of views:

One: Religion which is known to us as certain dogmas, laws of teachings.

When we think and see the condition of the world, we see that the law is now given by the nation. Every nation now is responsible for the order and peace of the people.

The second aspect of religion is the church and the form of service. In this of course there are differences and there will always be differences; it is a matter of temperament, it is a matter of tendency and it also depends upon the customs and beliefs of the people who have inherited that tendency from their ancestors.

Some of them have in their house of prayer different forms and different ceremonies which help them to feel elevated; the others have a simple service. One appeals to one and the other appeals to the other. No doubt the world is evolving to uniformity, and as now we see no very great difference between the form, the form of everything, of different customs of meeting, of dressing and many other things, so people are coming to a certain uniformity. At the same time when we look at the subject from a different point of view we shall find that uniformity very often takes away the beauty of life. The countries so civilized and advanced where the architecture and houses are all built on the same custom, all dressed in the same way, they become so tired that they like to go to a different country and see houses distinct and different one from the other, and also the people. For instance the method of writing music and the form of notation for the whole Western world is the same, but the distinction between the music of the French, Italian, German and Russian gives a stimulus to the lover of music. And so it is in the distinction of the forms. To want to make all people live alike and do alike means to turn all people into the same form and same face, and what would happen then? The world would become very uninteresting. It is like turning all the keys of the piano to the same note. It is not necessary to change the notes of the piano. What is necessary is to know the way of harmony, to know how to create harmony between the different notes.

The third aspect of religion is the religious ideal: the Lord and Master of the religion. the Lord and Master that a soul has esteemed as the ideal. It is something which cannot be discussed, something which cannot be argued upon. The less spoken about it, the better it is. It is the outcome of the devotion of a sincere heart which gives birth to that ideal which is too sacred to mention, an ideal which cannot be compared, an ideal which cannot be explained. And when the followers of diverse religions come to this question and dispute over their ideals, the sacred ideals of which they have only some tradition, – which they have not known, but of which they have only had a tradition, – and wish to prove one better than the other, they merely lose time and they destroy that sacred sentiment which can only be preserved in the heart.

The religious ideal is the medium, the medium by which one rises towards perfection. Whatever name a person gives to his ideal, that name is for him, and that name is most sacred for him. But that does not mean that that name limits that ideal. There is only one ideal, the divine ideal ...call him Christ, and let the same Christ be known by different names, given to him by various communities. For instance, a person who has great devotion, a great love and attachment for his friend, is speaking of friendship in high words and he is saying what a sacred thing it is to become friends. But then there is another one who says: “Oh, I know your friend, what he is; he is no better than anybody else.” The answer to this idea is given by Majnun, in the story told by the ancients, where someone said to Majnun, “Leila, your beloved is not as beautiful as you think.” He said. “My Leila must be seen with my eyes. If you wish to see how beautiful Leila is, you must borrow my eyes.” Therefore if you wish to regard the object of devotion of whatever faith, or whatever community, of whatever people you will have to borrow their eyes, you will have to borrow their heart. There is no use in disputing over the points of history, over each tradition in history; they are made by prejudice. Devotion is a matter of heart and is made by the devotee.

The fourth aspect of religion is the idea of God. There will always be fights and discussions that ‘The God of our family is one and the God of your family is another.’ There have always been fights. In the old times there was a dispute between the people saying that the God of Beni Israel was a special God; and so every community and every church made its God a special God.

If there is a special God it is not only a special God of a community, but a God of every individual. For man has to make his own God before he realizes the real God. But that God which man makes within himself becomes in the end, the door by which he enters that shrine of his innermost being, the real God, which is in the heart of man. And then he begins to realize that God is not a God of a certain community or people, but God is the God of the whole being.

And then we come to another aspect of religion, which is not necessarily the law or ceremony or the divine ideal or God, which is apart from all these four. That is something living in the soul, in the mind, and in the heart of man, the absence of which keeps man as dead, and the presence of which gives him life. If there is any religion it is that particular sense. And what is that sense?

The Hindus have called it in the Sanskrit language '*Dharma*', which in the ordinary meaning of the word is 'duty'. But it is something much greater than we know in our every-day life as duty. I do not call it duty. I call it life itself. When a person is thoughtful, when a person is considerate, when a person feels obligations that he has towards his fellowman, towards his friend, towards his father or mother, or in whatever relation he stands to man; it is something living, it is something like water which gives the sense of the living soul; the soul is not dead. It is this living soul which really makes a person alive. And the person who is not conscious of this, this tenderness, this sacredness of life, he lives but the soul is in the grave. You do not need to ask that man what is his religion, what is his belief, for he is living it; life itself is his religion and this is the true religion. The man conscious of honour, the man who has the sense of shame, who has the feeling of sincerity, whose sympathy, whose devotion is alive, that man is living, that man is religious.

And it is this religion which has been the religion of the past and which will be the religion of the future. Religion if ever it was taught by Christ or any other great ones, was to awaken in man that sense which is awakened when this religion is living.

It does not matter in which house you go and pray, for every moment of your life there is religion. Then it is not a religion in which you believe, but it is a religion which you live.

What is the Message of Sufism? Sufism is the message of digging out that water like life which has been buried by the impressions of the material life.

There is an English phrase: 'A lost soul'. The soul is not lost, the soul is buried, when it is dug then the divine life springs out like a spring of water. And then the question is: "What is digging? What does one dig in oneself?" Is it not true, is it not said in the scriptures that God is love? Then where is God to be found? Is He to be found in the seventh heaven, or is He to be found in the heart of man? He is to be found in the heart of man which is his shrine. But if this heart is buried, - the heart which has lost that light, that life, that warmth, what does this heart become? It becomes as a grave. There is a popular song in English, a beautiful line which says: 'the lights of life dies when love is done.' That living being in the heart is love. It may come as kindness, as friendship, as sympathy, as tolerance, as forgiveness. In whatever form this living water rises from the heart, it proves the heart to be a divine spring. And when once this spring is open and rising, all that man does as an action, as a word, as a feeling, it is all religion; that man becomes religious.

If there is any coming religion, a new religion to come, it will be this religion, the religion of the heart. After all the suffering that has been caused to humanity by the recent war, man is beginning to open his eyes. And as the time will pass he will open his eyes to know and understand that the true religion is in opening his heart, in widening the outlook and in living the religion which is one religion.