

## **September Reading from Hazrat Inayat Khan's Social Gathekas**

### **#17. Sufi Mysticism, III:**

#### **Preparing the Heart for the Path of Love**

In the first place one asks, "What is the heart? Where is the heart?" One is accustomed to saying that the heart is in the breast. Yes, that is true. There is a nerve center in the breast of everyone which has so much to do with the feelings that the heart is always pictured in the breast, that center which is most sensitive to our feelings. When a person is feeling great joy, in that center one feels something light up, and by the lighting up of that center the whole person seems light. The person feels as if he or she flew, there is a great joy in his or her life. Likewise, if depression or despair comes into one's life, this has an effect upon the center. One feels one's throat choked and one's breath is heavy with a load; again it is that center that feels.

But it is not that only which is the heart. It is as if a mirror were standing before the heart, focused on the heart, and every feeling is reflected in this mirror in the physical being of each person. Since people are ignorant of their soul, they know not where their heart is, nor where the center is where their feelings are reflected. This fact is known by the scientists as well that it is the heart which is the beginning of the formation of a child.

In the mystic's conception, it is the heart, which is the beginning of form, which is also the beginning of the spirit which makes each one individual. The depth of that spirit is in reality what we call the heart. By this we understand that there is some such thing as a heart which is the deepest depth of one's being. One first knows something of it from the impression which one receives in this nerve center in the breast of one, and therefore one calls it the heart.

In these days people give less importance to sentiment; they rely more upon the intellect. The reason is that when they meet two sorts of people, the intellectual and the sentimental, they find in an intellectual person greater balance than in the one with sentiment. This is no doubt true, but the lack of balance is for the very reason

that there is a greater power than the intellect, which is the sentiment. The earth is fruitful and creative, but not so living and powerful as the water. The intellect is creative, yet not so powerful as the heart and the sentiment. In reality, the intellectual person in the end will prove unbalanced too, if there is no sentimental side attached to it.

Are there not many people of whom their associates say: "I like him, love him, and admire him, but he closes his heart"? The ones who close their hearts neither fully love others, nor allow others to love them fully. Besides, the person who is only intellectual in time becomes skeptical, doubting, unbelieving, and destructive, as there is no power of the heart to balance it.

The Sufi considers devotion of the heart the best thing to cultivate for spiritual realization. It might seem quite different from what many think, but the ones who close their hearts to others, close their hearts to God. Jesus Christ did not say, "God is the intellect." He said, "God is love." if, therefore, there is a piece of God that can be found anywhere, it is not in any church on the earth, nor in Heaven above; it is in the heart of each person. The best place where you are sure to find God is in the loving heart of a kind person.

It may be that by the help of reason one will act according to a certain standard of morals, but that does not make a person good. If one is good or righteous, one is artificially made good. All the prisoners in the jail can be righteous. But if natural goodness and righteousness can be found anywhere, it is in the spring of the heart from which life rises, a spring of virtue, and every drop of this is a living virtue. That proves that goodness is not person-made, it is one's very being. If one lacks goodness, it is not the lack of training; it is because one has not yet found him or herself.

Goodness is natural. For a normal person it is necessary to be good. No one needs teaching to live a good or a righteous life. If love is the torch on one's path, it shows one what fairness means: the honor of the word, charity of the heart, and righteousness. Do we not sometimes see a young man who, with all his boisterous tendencies, finds a woman whom he begins to love, and if he really loves her, he begins to show a difference in his life. He becomes gentle for he must

train for her sake; he leaves off things he was never before willing to leave off.

In the same way, forgiveness, where there is love, is not a very difficult thing. A child comes before his mother, having offended her a thousand times, and asks her forgiveness. There is no other to go to. It does not take a moment for the heart of the mother to forgive. Forgiveness was waiting there to be manifested. One cannot help being kind when there is feeling. A person whose feeling goes out to another strikes a note of sympathy in every person; the person finds the point of contact in every soul they meet, because they have love. There are people who say, "But is it not unwise to give oneself in outgoing tenderness to everyone, because people are not trustworthy?" I should say, "If a person is good and kind, this goodness ought to be manifested to everyone, the doors of the heart should not be closed."

A mystic like Jesus Christ said, "Love your friend," and he went so far as to say, "Love your enemy." The Sufi treads the same path. In charity of heart to one's neighbors, the Sufi considers it the love of God; and in showing love to everyone, the Sufi considers this as love to God. In this, the method of the Sufi and the Yogi differ. The Yogi is not unkind. The yogi says, "I love you all, but I had better keep away from you, for your souls are always groping in darkness, and my soul is in the light. With your friendship I shall spoil my soul, so I had better keep away and love you from a distance."

The Sufi says, "It is a trial, but it is to be tried. I shall take up my everyday duties as they come to me." Knowing how unimportant the things of the world are and not giving them too much value, still Sufis are attentive to their duties towards those who love them, like them, depend upon them, and follow them. Sufis try for the best way of meeting those who dislike and despise them. They live in the world and yet are not of the world. In this way the Sufis consider loving each person as the main principle in the fulfillment of the purpose of one's life.

How true it is that the life of those who love their enemies and yet lack patience is like a burning lantern with little oil. It cannot endure; in the end the flame becomes faded. The oil in love is patience. In addition to

this, in the path of love, what is the oil? From beginning to end: unselfishness and self-sacrifice. Those who say "give and take" do not know love, they know business. One says, "I have loved dearly once, but I was disappointed," as if a man would say, "I dug in the earth, but when the mud came I was disappointed." It was true that mud came, but with patience one would have reached the water one day. Only patience can endure. Only endurance makes great. It is endurance which makes things valuable and people great.

The imitation of gold can be as beautiful as real gold; the imitation of the diamond as bright as a real diamond. The difference is that one fails in the test of endurance, and the other can stand it. Yet one must not be compared to objects. People have something divine in themselves, and they can prove this by their endurance in the path of love.

Now whom should one love, how should one love? Whatever one loves, whether duty, human beings, art, friends, an ideal, or one's fellow-creatures, one has certainly opened that door through which to pass in order to reach that love which is God. The beginning of love is an excuse; it leads to that ideal of love which is God alone.

Many say, "I can love God, but not human beings." It would be the same if we said to God, "I love you, but not your image." Can one hate the human creatures in which God's image is to be found and yet claim love of God? If one is not tolerant and not willing to sacrifice, can one claim the love of the Lord? The first thing to teach is the broadness of the heart; the awakening of the heart is the inner feeling. If there is a sign of saintliness it is not the power of words, not high position, either spiritual or intellectual, and not magnetism. The proof of the saintly spirit is only expressed in the love of creatures. It is the continuous spring of love from that divine fountain situated in the heart of each person.

Once that fountain is open, it purifies the heart; it makes the heart transparent to see the outer and the inner world. The heart becomes the vehicle for the soul to see all within and without. One not only communicates with another person, but also with God.