

The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan

Volume I

The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan Volume I

The Way of Illumination

The Inner Life

The Soul, Whence and Whither?

The Purpose of Life

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

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Contents

Preface	v
The Way of Illumination	1
Part I: Sufi Thoughts	2
Part II: Some Aspects of Sufism	24
Part III: The Sufi	76
The Inner Life	113
Bibliography	114

Preface

THE present volume is the first of a series which will include all the works intended for publication of Hazrat Inayat Khan, the great Sufi mystic who came to the Western world in 1910 and lectured and taught there until his death in 1926. Most of these works have already appeared in book-form at different intervals, mainly between the two wars, but have been out of print for some time.

In addition, Hazrat Inayat Khan left a large number of hitherto unpublished lectures. These will be collected according to their subject-matter and published together with those of his lectures which were not included

in any of his books, but appeared separately in different periodicals.

The teachings and discourses in which he developed his philosophy were taken down as Hazrat Inayat Khan spoke, and when they were prepared for publication great care was taken, not only to avoid distortion of their intent and meaning, but also to leave intact, as far as possible, the flow of mystical inspiration and poetical expression which add so much to their spell, and without which a significant part of his message would be lost. Although speaking in a tongue foreign to him, he moulded it into a perfect vehicle for his thought, at times somewhat ungrammatical and unusual, but always as clear and precise as his often difficult and abstruse subjects would allow.

In the present edition some of the irregularities, due to the fact that his teaching was mostly oral, have been rectified; but nothing has been altered which would involve even the slightest deviation from the author's

intention and no attempt has been made to transform his highly personal and colourful language into idiomatically unimpeachable English. Already so much is necessarily lost by the transfer of the spoken word to the printed page, that every effort has been made, as it should, to preserve the Master's melodious phrasing, the radiance of his personality, and the subtle sense of humour which never left him.

Hazrat Inayat Khan's teaching, now to be published, was nearly all given during the years 1918-1926. It covers a great many subjects, several of which were grouped in series of lectures and taken up again some years later. Certain subjects may cover nearly the same ground as others; stories and examples which abound in most of his work are met again elsewhere; and much of what he taught one finds repeated in several places. This was intentional, as repetition belonged to Hazrat Inayat Khan's method of teaching; it is for the student to become aware

of the subtle differences in each context. For these and other reasons it would be difficult to follow a rigid system in editing Hazrat Inayat Khan's works; a chronological grouping of his lectures would be very unsatisfactory, and a stringent classification according to subject-matter hardly feasible. The following course has therefore been decided upon.

In the first volume four books are published which can be regarded either as an introduction to Sufism or as representative of Sufi mystical conception and thought as developed by Hazrat Inayat Khan. *The Way of Illumination* was one of the first books published and was intended as a kind of guide-book; some of the contents, which were not by Hazrat Inayat Khan himself, have therefore now been omitted. *The Inner Life and The Soul, Whence and Whither?* contain lectures for his pupils during the Summer Schools 1922-1923. *The Purpose of Life* was first published in *The Sufi Quarterly* in 1926-1927, and later issued as a reprint.

Volume II will contain several of Hazrat Inayat Khan's books on metaphysical subjects, mostly connected with music and sound. Books in which social and moral problems are discussed will be collected in Volume III.

In all ten to twelve volumes are foreseen.

The Way of Illumination

Part I: Sufi Thoughts

THERE are ten principal Sufi thoughts, which comprise all the important subjects with which the inner life of man is concerned.

I

'There is One God, the Eternal, the Only Being; none exists save He.'

The God of the Sufi is the God of every creed, and the God of all. Names make no difference to him. Allah, God, Gott, Dieu, Khuda, Brahma, or Bhagwan, all these names and more are the names of his God; and yet to him God is beyond the limitation of name. He sees his God in the sun, in the fire, in the idol which diverse sects

worship; and he recognizes Him in all the forms of the universe, yet knowing Him to be beyond all form: God in all, and all in God, He being the Seen and the Unseen, the Only Being. God to the Sufi is not only a religious belief, but also the highest ideal the human mind can conceive.

The Sufi, forgetting the self and aiming at the attainment of the divine ideal, walks constantly all through life in the path of love and light. In God the Sufi sees the perfection of all that is in the reach of man's perception and yet he knows Him to be above human reach. He looks to Him as the lover to his beloved, and takes all things in life as coming from Him, with perfect resignation. The sacred name of God is to him as medicine to the patient. The divine thought is the compass by which he steers the ship to the shores of immortality. The God-ideal is to a Sufi as a lift by which he raises himself to the eternal goal, the attainment of which is the only purpose of his life.

II

'There is One Master, the Guiding Spirit of all Souls, Who constantly leads His followers towards the light.'

The Sufi understands that although God is the source of all knowledge, inspiration, and guidance, yet man is the medium through which God chooses to impart His knowledge to the world. He imparts it through one who is a man in the eyes of the world, but God in his consciousness. It is the mature soul that draws blessings from the heavens, and God speaks through that soul. Although the tongue of God is busy speaking through all things, yet in order to speak to the deaf ears of many among us, it is necessary for Him to speak through the lips of man. He has done this all through the history of man, every great teacher of the past having been this Guiding Spirit living the life of God in human guise. In other words, their human guise consists of various coats worn by the

same person, who appeared to be different in each. Shiva, Buddha, Rama, Krishna on the one side, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad on the other; and many more, known or unknown to history, always one and the same person.

Those who saw the person and knew Him recognized Him in whatever form or guise; those who could only see the coat went astray. To the Sufi therefore there is only one Teacher, however differently He may be named at different periods of history, and He comes constantly to awaken humanity from the slumber of this life of illusion, and to guide man 'onwards towards divine perfection. As the Sufi progresses in this view he recognizes his Master, not only in the holy ones, but in the wise, in the foolish, in the saint and in the sinner, and has never allowed the Master who is One alone, and the only One who can be and who ever will be, to disappear from his sight.

The Persian word for Master is Murshid. The Sufi recognizes the Murshid in all beings of the

world, and is ready to learn from young and old, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, without questioning from whom he learns. Then he begins to see the light of *Risalat*, the torch of truth which shines before him in every being and thing in the universe. Thus he sees *Rasul*, his Divine Message Bearer, a living identity before him. Thus the Sufi sees the vision of God, the worshipped deity, in His immanence, manifest in nature, and life now becomes for him a perfect revelation both within and without.

15

It is often for no other reason than clinging to the personality of their particular teacher, claiming for him superiority over other teachers, and degrading a teacher held in the same esteem by others, that people have separated themselves from one another, and caused most of the wars and factions and contentions which history records among the children of God.

What the Spirit of Guidance is, can be further explained as follows: as in man there is a faculty for art, music, poetry and science, so in him is the

faculty or spirit of guidance; it is better to call it spirit because it is the supreme faculty from which all the others originate. As we see that in every person there is some artistic faculty, but not everyone is an artist, as everyone can hum a tune but only one in a thousand is a musician, so every person possesses this faculty in some form and to a limited degree; but the spirit of guidance is found among few indeed of the human race.

A Sanskrit poet says, 'Jewels are stones, but cannot be found everywhere; the sandal tree is a tree, but does not grow in every forest; as there are many elephants, but only one king elephant, so there are human beings all over the world, but the real human being is rarely to be found.'

When we arise above faculty and consider the spirit of guidance, we shall find that it is consummated in the Bodhisatva, the spiritual teacher or divine messenger. There is a saying that the reformer is the child of civilization, but

the prophet is its father. This spirit has always existed, and must always exist; and in this way from time to time the message of God has been given.

III

'There is one holy book, the sacred manuscript of nature, the only scripture which can enlighten the reader.'

Most people consider as sacred scriptures only certain books or scrolls written by the hand of man, and carefully preserved as holy, to be handed down to posterity as divine revelation. Men have fought and disputed over the authenticity of these books, have refused to accept any other book of similar character, and, clinging thus to the book and losing the sense of it, have formed diverse sects. The Sufi has in all ages respected all such books, and has traced in the Vedanta, Zendavesta, Kabala, Bible, Qur'an, and all other sacred scriptures, the same truth

which he reads in the incorruptible manuscript of nature, the only Holy Book, the perfect and living model that teaches the inner law of life: all scriptures before nature's manuscript are as little pools of water before the ocean.

To the eye of the seer every leaf of the tree is a page of the holy book that contains divine revelation, and he is inspired every moment of his life by constantly reading and understanding the holy script of nature.

When man writes, he inscribes characters upon rock, leaf, paper, wood or steel; when God writes, the characters He writes are living creatures.

It is when the eye of the soul is opened and the sight is keen that the Sufi can read the divine law in the manuscript of nature; and that which the teachers of humanity have taught to their followers was derived by them from the same source; they expressed what little it is possible to express in words, and so they preserved

the inner truth when they themselves were no longer there to reveal it.

IV

'There is one religion, the unswerving progress in the right direction towards the ideal, which fulfils the life's purpose of every soul.'

Religion in the Sanskrit language is termed *Dharma*, which means duty. The duty of every individual is religion. 'Every soul is born for a certain purpose, and the light of that purpose is kindled in his soul', says Sa'di. This explains why the Sufi in his tolerance allows every one to have his own path, and does not compare the principles of others with his own, but allows freedom of thought to everyone, since he himself is a freethinker.

Religion, in the conception of a Sufi, is the path that leads man towards the attainment of his ideal, worldly as well as heavenly. Sin and virtue, right and wrong, good and bad are not

the same in the case of every individual; they are according to his grade of evolution and state of life. Therefore the Sufi concerns himself little with the name of the religion or the place of worship. All places are sacred enough for his worship, and all religions convey to him the religion of his soul. 'I saw Thee in the sacred Ka'ba and in the temple of the idol also Thee I saw.'

V

'There is one law, the law of reciprocity, which can be observed by a selfless conscience, together with a sense of awakened justice.'

Man spends his life in the pursuit of all that seems to him to be profitable for himself, and when so absorbed in self-interest in time he even loses touch with his own real interest. Man has made laws to suit himself, but they are laws by which he can get the better of another. It is this that he calls justice, and it is only that

which is done to him by another that he calls injustice. A peaceful and harmonious life with his fellow-men cannot be led until the sense of justice has been awakened in him by a selfless conscience. As the judicial authorities of the world intervene between two persons who are at variance, knowing that they have a right to intervene when the two parties in dispute are blinded by personal interest, so the Almighty Power intervenes in all disputes however small or great.

It is the law of reciprocity which saves man from being exposed to the higher powers, as a considerate man has less chance of being brought before the court. The sense of justice is awakened in a perfectly sober mind; that is, one which is free from the intoxication of youth, strength, power, possession, command, birth, or rank. It seems a net profit when one does not give but takes, or when one gives less and takes more; but in either case there is really a greater loss than profit; for every such

profit spreads a cover over the sense of justice within, and when many such covers have veiled the sight, man becomes blind even to his own profit. It is like standing in one's own light. 'Blind here remains blind in the hereafter.'

Although the different religions, in teaching man how to act harmoniously and peacefully with his fellow-men, have given out different laws, they all meet in this one truth: do unto others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee. The Sufi, in taking a favour from another, enhances its value, and in accepting what another does to him he makes allowance.

18

VI

'There is one brotherhood, the human brotherhood which unites the children of earth indiscriminately in the Fatherhood of God.'

The Sufi understands that the one life emanating from the inner Being is manifested on the surface as the life of variety; and in this

world of variety man is the finest manifestation, for he can realize in his evolution the oneness of the inner being even in the external existence of variety. But he evolves to this ideal, which is the only purpose of his coming on earth, by uniting himself with another.

Man unites with others in the family tie, which is the first step in his evolution, and yet families in the past have fought with each other, and have taken vengeance upon one another for generations, each considering his cause to be the only true and righteous one. Today man shows his evolution in uniting with his neighbours and fellow-citizens, and even developing within himself the spirit of patriotism for his nation. He is greater in this respect than those in the past; and yet men so united nationally have caused the catastrophe of the modern wars, which will be regarded by the coming generations in the same light in which we now regard the family feuds of the past.

There are racial bonds which widen the circle of unity still more, but it has always happened that one race has looked down on the other.

The religious bond shows a still higher ideal. But it has caused diverse sects, which have opposed and despised each other for thousands of years, and have caused endless splits and divisions among men. The germ of separation exists even in such a wide scope for brotherhood, and however widespread the brotherhood may be, it cannot be a perfect one as long as it separates man from man.

The Sufi, realizing this, frees himself from national, racial, and religious boundaries, uniting himself in the human brotherhood, which is devoid of the differences and distinctions of class, caste, creed, race, nation, or religion, and unites mankind in the universal brotherhood.

VII

'There is one moral, the love which springs forth from self-denial and blooms in deeds of beneficence.'

There are moral principles taught to mankind by various teachers, by many traditions, one differing from the other, which are like separate drops coming out of the fountain. But when we look at the stream, we find there is but one stream, although it turns into several drops on falling. There are many moral principles, just as many drops fall from one fountain; but there is one stream that is at the source of all, and that is love. It is love that gives birth to hope, patience, endurance, forgiveness, tolerance, and to all moral principles. All deeds of kindness and beneficence take root in the soil of the loving heart. Generosity, charity, adaptability, an accommodating nature, even renunciation, are the offspring of love alone. The great, rare and chosen beings, who for ages have been looked

up to as ideal in the world, are the possessors of hearts kindled with love. All evil and sin come from the lack of love.

People call love blind, but love in reality is the light of the sight. The eye can only see the surface; love can see much deeper. All ignorance is the lack of love. As fire when not kindled gives only smoke, but when kindled, the illuminating flame springs forth, so it is with love; it is blind when undeveloped, but, when its fire is kindled, the flame that lights the path of the traveller from mortality to everlasting life springs forth; the secrets of earth and heaven are revealed to the possessor of the loving heart, the lover has gained mastery over himself and others, and he not only communes with God but unites with Him.

'Hail to thee, then, O love, sweet madness! Thou who healest all our infirmities! Who art the physician of our pride and self-conceit! Who art our Plato and our Galen!' says Rumi.

VIII

20

'There is one Object of Praise, the beauty which uplifts the heart of its worshippers through all aspects from the seen to the unseen.'

The Qur'an says: 'God is beautiful, and He loves beauty.'

This expresses the truth that man, who inherits the Spirit of God, has beauty in him and loves beauty, although that which is beautiful to one is not beautiful to another. Man cultivates the sense of beauty as he evolves, and prefers the higher aspect of beauty to the lower. But when he has observed the highest vision of beauty in the Unseen by a gradual evolution from praising the beauty in the seen world, then the entire existence becomes to him one single vision of beauty.

Man has worshipped God, beholding the beauty of sun, moon, stars, and planets; he has worshipped God in plants, in animals; he has recognized God in the beautiful merits of man,

and he has with his perfect view of beauty found the source of all beauty in the Unseen, from whence all this springs, and in Whom all is merged.

The Sufi, realizing this, worships beauty in all its aspects, and sees the face of the Beloved in all that is seen, and the Beloved's spirit in the Unseen. So wherever he looks his ideal of worship is before him. 'Everywhere I look, I see Thy winning face; everywhere I go, I arrive at Thy dwelling-place.'

IX

'There is One Truth, the true Knowledge of our being, within and without, which is the essence of all wisdom.'

Hazrat Ali says, 'Know thyself, and thou shalt know God.' It is the knowledge of self which blooms into the knowledge of God. Self-knowledge answers such problems as: whence have I come? Did I exist before I

became conscious of my present existence? If I existed, as what did I exist? As an individual such as I now am, or as a multitude, or as an insect, bird, animal, spirit, jinn, or angel? What happens at death, the change to which every creature is subject? Why do I tarry here awhile? What purpose have I to accomplish here? What is my duty in life? In what does my happiness consist, and what is it that makes my life miserable? Those whose hearts have been kindled by the light from above, begin to ponder such questions but those whose souls are already illumined by the knowledge of the self understand them. It is they who give to individuals or to the multitudes the benefit of their knowledge, so that even men whose hearts are not yet kindled, and whose souls are not illuminated, may be able to walk on the right path that leads to perfection.

This is why people are taught in various languages, in various forms of worship, in various tenets in different parts of the world.

It is one and the same truth; it is only seen in diverse aspects appropriate to the people and the time. It is only those who do not understand this who can mock at the faith of another, condemning to hell or destruction those who do not consider their faith to be the only true faith.

The Sufi recognizes the knowledge of self as the essence of all religions; he traces it in every religion, he sees the same truth in each, and therefore he regards all as one. Hence he can realize the saying of Jesus, 'I and my Father are one.' The difference between creature and Creator remains on his lips, not in his soul. This is what is meant by union with God. It is in reality the dissolving of the false self in the knowledge of the true self, which is divine, eternal, and all-pervading. 'He who attaineth union with God, his very self must lose,' said Amir.

X

'There is one path, the annihilation of the false ego in the real, which raises the mortal to immortality, in which resides all perfection.'

'I passed away into nothingness—I vanished; and lo! I was all living!' All who have realized the secret of life understand that life is one, but that it exists in two aspects. First as immortal, all-pervading and silent; and secondly as mortal, active, and manifest in variety. The soul being of the first aspect becomes deluded, helpless, and captive by experiencing life in contact with the mind and body, which is of the next aspect. The gratification of the desires of the body and the fancies of the mind do not suffice for the purpose of the soul, which is undoubtedly to experience its own phenomena in the seen and the unseen, though its inclination is to be itself and not anything else. When delusion makes it feel that it is helpless, mortal and captive, it finds itself out of place. This is the tragedy of life,

which keeps the strong and the weak, the rich and poor, all dissatisfied, constantly looking for something they do not know. The Sufi, realizing this, takes the path of annihilation, and, by the guidance of a teacher on the path, finds at the end of this journey that the destination was himself. As Iqbal says:

‘I wandered in the pursuit of my own self; I was the traveller, and I am the destination.’

Part II: Some Aspects of Sufism

23

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

Every soul at times asks itself, 'Why am I here?' This question arises according to the development of one's intelligence. A man may say, 'I am here to eat, drink, and to make merry,' but this even the animals do; therefore what more has he accomplished by being human? Another might affirm that the attainment of power and position is important, but he must know that both of these are transitory. Power of any kind has its fall as well as its rise. All things we possess are taken from others, and others in their turn await with outstretched hands to seize them.

A man may say, 'We are here to gain honour.' In this case someone has to be humbled in order to give him the honour he seeks; but he in his turn may have to be humbled by a still more ardent seeker of honour. We may think that being loved is all-important, but we should know that the beauty in ourselves which makes another love us is transient. Furthermore the beauty we possess may pale in comparison with the beauty of another. When we seek the love of another we are not only dependent upon their love, but are ourselves devoid of love. If we think that it is desirable to love someone who deserves our love, we are mistaken, for we are always liable to be disappointed in the object of our love, who may perhaps never prove to be our ideal. One is led to suppose and believe that virtue is the only thing that matters in life, but it will be found that the greater number of sufferers from moral hallucination are to be met with among the self-righteous.

Then the only purpose of our life here on earth, if there be any, is the successful attainment of life's demands. It may seem strange at first sight that all which life demands should be allowable and worth while attaining; but on a closer study of life we see that the demands of our external self are the only ones we know, and we are ignorant of the demands of the true self, our inner life. For instance, we know that we want good food and nice clothes, comfort of living and every convenience for moving about; honour, possessions, and all necessary means for the satisfaction of our vanity, all of which for the moment appear to us as our life's only demands; but neither they nor their joy remain with us constantly. We then come to think that what we had was but a little and that perhaps more would satisfy us, and still more would suffice our need; but this is not so. Even if the whole universe were within our grasp it would be impossible fully to satisfy our life's demands. This shows that

our true life has quite different demands from those with which we are familiar. It does not want the joy experienced by this individual self only; it desires joy from all around. It does not wish for a momentary peace, but for one that is everlasting. It does not desire to love a beloved held in the arms of mortality. It needs a beloved to be always before it. It does not want to be loved only for today and perhaps not tomorrow. It wishes to float in the ocean of love.

It is therefore that the Sufi seeks God as his love, lover and beloved, his treasure, his possession, his honour, his joy, his peace; and this attainment in its perfection alone fulfils all demands of life both here and hereafter.

Then again it may be said, there is a purpose above each purpose, and there is again a purpose under each purpose; and yet beyond and beneath all purposes there is no purpose. The creation is, because it is.

Life is a journey from one pole to another, and the perfection of the conscious life is the final destiny of the imperfect life. In other words, every aspect of life in this world of variety gradually evolves from imperfection to perfection; and if life's evolution were not so in its nature, there would be no difference between life and death, for life on the surface is nothing but the phenomena of contrast. This, then, is another way of expressing what is the purpose of life.

LIFE IN THIS WORLD

25

One may try to see from the point of view of another as well as from one's own, and so give freedom of thought to everybody because one demands it oneself; one may try to appreciate what is good in another, and overlook what one considers bad; if somebody behaves selfishly towards one, one may take it naturally, because it is human nature to be selfish, and so one is not disappointed; but if one appears oneself

to be selfish, one should take oneself to task and try to improve. There is not anything one should not be ready to tolerate, and there is nobody whom one should not forgive. Never doubt those whom you trust; never hate those whom you love; never cast down those whom you once raise in your estimation. Wish to make friends with everyone you meet; make an effort to gain the friendship of those you find difficult; become indifferent to them only if you cannot succeed in your effort. Never wish to break the friendship once made.

If anyone causes harm, one should try to think it is because one has deserved it in some way, or else it is that the one who harms knows no better. Remember that every soul that raises its head in life gets much opposition from the world. It has been so with all the prophets, saints and sages, so one cannot expect to be exempt. In this is the law of nature, and also God's plan working and preparing something desirable. No one is either higher or lower

than oneself. In all sources that fulfil one's need, one may see one source, God, the only source; and in admiring and in bowing before and in loving anyone, one may consider one is doing it to God. In sorrow one may look to God, and in joy one may thank Him. One does not bemoan the past, nor worry about the future; one tries only to make the best of today. One should know no failure, for even in a fall there is a stepping-stone to rise; but to the Sufi the rise and fall matter little. One does not repent for what one has done, since one thinks, says, and does what one means. One does not fear the consequences of performing one's wish in life, for what will be, will be.

VOCATION

Every being has a definite vocation, and his vocation is the light which illuminates his life. The man who disregards his vocation is a lamp unlit. He who sincerely seeks his real purpose in life is himself sought by that purpose. As

he concentrates on that search a light begins to clear his confusion, call it revelation, call it inspiration, call it what you will. It is mistrust that misleads. Sincerity leads straight to the goal.

Each one has his circle of influence, large or small; within his sphere so many souls and minds are involved; with his rise, they rise; with his fall, they fall. The size of a man's sphere corresponds with the extent of his sympathy, or we may say, with the size of his heart. His sympathy holds his sphere together. As his heart grows, his sphere grows; as his sympathy is withdrawn or lessened, so his sphere breaks up and scatters. If he harms those who live and move within his sphere, those dependent upon him or upon his affection, he of necessity harms himself. His house or his palace or his cottage, his satisfaction or his disgust in his environment, are the creation of his own thought. Acting upon his thoughts, and also part of his own thoughts, are the thoughts of those near to him; others depress him and destroy him, or they

encourage and support him, in proportion as he repels those around him by his coldness, or attracts them by his sympathy.

Each individual composes the music of his own life. If he injures another, he brings disharmony. "When his sphere is disturbed, he is disturbed himself, and there is a discord in the melody of his life. If he can quicken the feeling of another to joy or to gratitude, by that much he adds to his own life; he becomes himself by that much more alive. Whether conscious of it or not, his thought is affected for the better by the joy or gratitude of another, and his power and vitality increase thereby, and the music of his life grows more in harmony.

NUR-ZAHUR

To the view of a Sufi this universe is nothing but a manifestation of the divine Being, and this divine manifestation is called in Sufi terms *Nur-Zahur*. The supreme God, from His existence as the single and only Being, has, so to speak,

journeyed as far as He could towards the surface. Through His activity and His will behind it, He has manifested on the surface, from the heavens He has descended upon earth. From the most unconscious state of existence, blind, unaware of His being, as is the rock, He has gradually awakened to consciousness of the surroundings on the surface. As it says in the Qur'an, 'The world was created out of darkness'. The gradual progress of the journey brings the inner Being to the condition of a plant, flower and fruit, then to the state of worm, germ, and animal, until He manifests as man, Ashráf al-Makhluqát, the ruler of this universe and the controller of the heavens. In man He reaches the final goal of His destiny, when He realizes Himself as the whole being, which He has not done hitherto. 'In Our own image We have created man', as it is said in the Qur'an.

Hazrat Ali says, 'The secret of God can be studied in His nature.' Every traveller on foot as a rule lights his torch at the approach of night.

So also this heavenly traveller. Seeing darkness overwhelming him in the lower spheres on His path. He lights a torch. It is the light of this torch, which is called in the Qur'an, Nur-e Mohammadi, that has guided Him to the surface, whence He could clearly discern and find His path back. 'I have made thee of My light and of thy light have I created this whole universe.' To the knower's eye, this Nur, this light, is the real Mohammad. This light it is which has beamed forth through all the Masters of humanity and is known as the Light of Guidance.

It is the nature of every luminous object to shed light all around, and yet a particular beam of light coming forth from it gives more illumination than light spread all around. This may be seen in the light of the sun. The souls which happen to be in the zone of that beam of the Light of Guidance, whether by intention or accident, have been known to the world as the chosen ones of God. They saw God sooner, they heard Him more quickly than others, they

have been nearer to Him than others. They may be called the elect of God as it is said in the *Song to the Soul of the Saint*:

Before the righteous soul.

Servant of God, even the angels bend;

His lotus feet the long-desired goal

Where weary pilgrims find their journey's end

In pardon for their sin.

Thus, as the saint God comes, and man is healed,

And fortunate that happy one, within

Whose heart the mystic vision is revealed.

28

All souls since the creation of man who have been in this light have been Masters, coming one after the other connected by the link of the one current which first springs from the innermost being and broadens and expands in this universe.

The saints, sages, and mystics, who fare forth from the highest spheres are attracted by this light and they seek refuge in it from life's dark

clouds. The invisible ones, who floated in this light even before man was created, are the angels.

The divine light has shone upon the mineral and vegetable kingdoms; and there too it has shown its phenomena, although its full radiance has been reached only in man. It can be seen in the developed intelligence, and this can be observed in the cosmic system as well as in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. It is the light of the sun which shines upon the moon and the planets; each star is but a reflection of the same light; thus the whole cosmic system is illuminated by the sun alone.

In the vegetable kingdom we see one little plant, a fruit or flower, spreading its influence around it, covering that part of the forest in time with the same sweet fruit or with the same fragrant flower.

When we watch the animal kingdom closely, we see the special gift of intelligence in some animals. We find that among all birds there is a

leader for every flock. Among the elephants of the forest specially, there is the wise elephant who walks in front of the herd, carefully carrying the stem of a tree with his trunk. He uses it as a stick, and examines with it the path he walks upon to discover whether there are any pits in that way, for his own safety as well as that of his followers. In the jungle a troop of monkeys can be seen following the command of one among them; after he has jumped, they all jump. The foxes and dogs in the jungle have among them one who is most wary, who gives the alarm before every coming danger. In a flock of birds one wise and courageous bird leads the whole flock. And this is the case with many other birds and beasts also. This faculty of guidance, with the maturity of intelligence, fulfils the purpose of manifestation in the evolution of man.

‘Man was destined to be the Khalif of all beings.’ This sura of the Qur’an can be rightly understood when we see that all beings in the world serve man, are being controlled and

ruled by him, obeying his command. The secret of their nature is disclosed to him, that he may use them for the purpose for which they are meant. Moreover it is man who may rightly be called the seed of God, for in him alone intelligence develops so perfectly that he not only appreciates God's works and worships Him, but he is even enabled to attain self-sufficiency and all-pervading consciousness of the everlasting life of God. 'Man realizes his perfection in Allah, and Allah realizes His perfection in man.'

We see this tendency of guidance in a small degree in parents, who, whatever their own life may have been, yet wish their children to benefit by their experience—that the children may live rightly. There are some people to be found, in this world of selfishness, who warn their friends against going astray; and we find a leader in a community who sacrifices his own life and welfare for the benefit of his fellow-men, uniting them in the bond of love and

harmony. The same attribute of self-sacrifice, in its higher grade of evolution, is seen among the Masters of humanity, who act as officials of the infinite government and are known in the world as messengers. Among them are holy beings of different grades, designated by Sufis as Wali, Ghauth, Qutb, Nabi, and Rasul. They differ one from the other in degree, according to the depth to which they penetrate into the world unseen, or to the breadth of the space they occupy in the universal consciousness, and also according to the width of the circle of humanity that is placed in their charge for its guidance. Nabi is the guide of a community, Rasul has a message for the whole of humanity, and each has a certain cycle of time for his message.

This can be seen by an intelligent study of the cosmos. The laws of nature teach us and prove to the knower the influence of each planet upon souls, both individually and collectively, as families, nations, and races; and even upon

the whole world, the condition of each and all being in accordance with the nature of the planet under whose influence they are. Over birth, death, and every rise and fall, and over all life's affairs the planet acts as ruler. If planets, the reflections of the sun, have power upon the external affairs of humanity, how much greater must be the power of the God-conscious, the reflections of the divine light, of which the sun is merely a shadow! These are the Awatads, whom the Hindus call Avatars, who are not in power, as the earthly kings are, only for the time of their life on earth, but remain in power even after they have passed from this earthly plane. The knower therefore sees in the Masters of humanity, not only the deliverers of the divine message, but also the spiritual sovereigns, controllers of the universe during their cycles.

THE MASTERS

Every aspect of the life of an individual and of the life of the world has its cycle. In the life of an

individual the period from his birth to his death is the first part, and from death to assimilation in the Infinite the second part. The sub-cycles in man's life are from infancy to youth, where one part ends and from youth to old age, which is the close. There are again under-cycles: infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, senility; and there are the cycles of man's rise and fall.

So there is a cycle of the life of the world, and the cycle of the creation of man and his destruction, the cycles of the reign of races and nations, and cycles of time, such as a year, a month, a week, day, and hour.

The nature of each of these cycles has three aspects, the beginning, the culmination and the end, which are named Uruj, Kemal and Zeval; like, for example, new moon, full moon, and waning moon; sunrise, zenith and sunset. These cycles, sub-cycles and under-cycles, and the three aspects of their nature, are divided and distinguished by the nature and course of light. As the light of the sun and moon and of the

planets plays the most important part in the life of the world, individually and collectively, so the light of the Spirit of Guidance also divides time into cycles. And each cycle has been under the influence of a certain Master with many controllers under him, working as the spiritual hierarchy which controls the affairs of the whole world, mainly those concerning the inward spiritual condition of the world. The Masters have been numberless since the creation of man; they have appeared with different names and forms; but He alone was disguised in them who is the only Master of eternity.

Rejection of the stranger, and belief only in the one whom he has once acknowledged, has kept man in darkness for ages. If he believed one message he would not accept the succeeding message, brought by another Master, who was perhaps a stranger to him. This has caused many troubles in the lives of all the Masters. Man refused to believe the Masters

and their teachings, whether of the past or future, if their names were not written in the particular tradition he believed, or if he had not heard their names in the legends handed down for ages among his people. Therefore the people of that part of the world who have acknowledged the Hebrew prophets do not for instance recognize Avatars such as Rama, Vishnu, Shiva, and Krishna, simply because they cannot find these names in their scriptures. The same thing occurs in the other part of humanity, which does not count Abraham, Moses or Jesus among its Devatas,¹ as it does not find those names written in the legends with which it is familiar. Even if it were true that Brahma was the same Devata whom the Hebrews called Abraham, and if Christ was the same Master whom the Hindus have called Krishna, yet man would not recognize as one those whom he has distinguished as different, having a higher

¹ Devatas are Messengers of God.

opinion of one of them and a lower opinion of the other.

If the Masters were not the same in their mortal garb, yet in spirit they were one; if it were not so, how could one and the same truth be disclosed by them all? The Masters of humanity have been the elder brothers who guided the younger ones out of their brotherly love, and owing to their love of the Father. It is humane to sympathize with ones fellow-man when he is striving for something and cannot gain it, and to help him to the attainment of the ideal for which he strives.

This is very well illustrated by the myth of Ramachandra. It is said in the Purana that once Sita, the consort of Ramachandra, was staying in the guardianship of Vashista Rishi with her sons. The younger son, Lahu, one day went to see the neighbouring town. He saw Kalanki, a most beautiful horse, running about the city without a rider. When he enquired whose the horse was, people told him that

this horse had been let loose so that whoever was able to catch it should be made the king of that kingdom. This tempted the youth, and he ran after the horse in order to catch it. He continued running a long time, and met with nothing but disappointments. Every time he came close to the horse, thinking now he would catch it, it slipped from his hand. When he reached the point of utter disappointment, he saw his brother coming in search of him, sent by his mother, and he told him that he would not come back till he had caught the horse. The brother said, 'That is not the way to catch a horse; in this way you will perhaps run for ever and will not be able to catch it. Therefore, instead of running after the horse, run to meet it.' This caused the younger brother to succeed in a moment's time. Then both brothers were taken to the presence of Ramachandra, their father, who embraced both, acknowledging the guidance of the one and the achievement of the other.

All the Teachers who came before taught for whatever community or group of people they were born, and prophesied the coming of the next Teacher, foreseeing the possibility and the necessity of the continuation of the Message until its fulfilment.

That the Messengers came successively did not mean that they were to give different Messages, but that they should correct the corruptions made in the message of the past by its followers; and also to revive principles in order to suit the evolution of the period, and to recall the same truth to the human mind which had been taught by the past Masters but had become lost from memory. It was not their personal message, but the divine message. They were obliged to correct the errors made by the misinterpretation of the religions, thereby renewing the same truth given by the past Masters, which had in the course of time been changed from its real character. Man has ignorantly quarrelled about the names and

forms of Masters, traditions, principles, and their limited groups, forgetting that they are one in that which unites them.

Their messages differ from one another in their outer appearance, each message being given in accordance with the age of man's evolution, and also in order to add a particular part in the course of divine wisdom. Certain laws and principles were prescribed by them to suit the country where the message was given, the climate, the period, customs, manners and requirements.

It was most necessary for the Messengers to claim some exceptional position which might attract humanity to receive the message they had to give. Some were called Avatar, an incarnation of Brahma, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, and Krishna, while others were called *Payghambar*, prophet, intercessor. Their followers have had foolish disputes about the greatness of their assumption, or about what they did and taught, or about the sort of life

they led while admiring and hating according to their personal liking.

The divine message has always been sent through those fitly endowed. For instance when wealth was esteemed the message was delivered by King Solomon; when beauty was worshipped, Joseph, the most handsome, gave the message; when music was regarded as celestial David gave his message in song; when there was curiosity about miracles Moses brought his message; when sacrifice was highly esteemed Abraham gave the message; when heredity was recognized, Christ gave his message as the Son of God; and when democracy was necessary, Mohammad gave his message as the Servant of God, one like all and among all; this put an end to the necessity for more prophets, because of the democratic nature of his proclamation and message. He proclaimed *_la elaha ill'Allah* (none exists but God). God constitutes the whole being, singly, individually and collectively, and every soul

has the source of the divine message within itself. This is the reason why there is no longer the need for mediation, for a third person as a saviour between man and God. For man has evolved enough to conceive the idea of God being all and all being God, and has become tolerant enough to believe in the divine message given by one like himself, who is liable to birth, death, joy, and sorrow, and all the natural vicissitudes of life.

All Masters from the time of Adam till the time of Mohammad have been the one embodiment of the Master-ideal. When Jesus Christ is represented as saying, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,' it is not meant that either the name or the visible person of Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, but the Master-spirit within. It was this spirit which proclaimed this, moved by its realization of past, present, and future life, confident of its eternity. It is the same spirit which spoke through Krishna, saying, 'We appear on earth

when Dharma is corrupted,' which was long before the coming of Christ. During his divine absorption Mohammad said, 'I existed even before this creation and shall remain after its assimilation.' In the holy traditions it is said, 'We have created thee of Our light and from thy light We have created the universe.' This is not said of the external person of Mohammad as known by this name. It refers to the spirit which spoke through all the blessed tongues and yet remained formless, nameless, birthless and deathless.

But the blind world, absorbed in its phenomena and impressed by a certain name and form, has clung to the name, forgetting the true being. It is this ignorance which has divided the children of men into so many divisions and separated one from the other by their own delusions; whereas in reality there exists one religion and one single Master, the Only God. Man has considered his faithfulness to the Master in whom he believed his true

religion; and to believe in the next teacher he considered a breach of faith. This is pictured in the following allegory.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

There was a man living with his wife and children in a little village. He was called away by the inner voice of his soul, and he renounced his life with his wife and children and went into the wilderness, to a mountain called Sinai, taking with him his eldest son, the only one of his children who was grown up. The children having a faint remembrance of their father wondered at times where he was, and longed to see him; they were then told by their mother that he had gone away long ago, and perhaps had passed from this earth. At times in answer to their longing she would say, 'Perhaps he will come or send word, for so he promised before his departure.' Sometimes the children grieved at their father's absence, their father's silence; and whenever they felt the need for him to be

among them they would comfort themselves with the hope, perhaps some day he will be with us as he has promised'.

After some time the mother also passed away, and the children were left with guardians who were entrusted with their care, together with the care of the wealth left by their parents.

After some years, when their brother's smooth face had become bearded and when his cheerful look had given place to a serious expression, and his fair skin, now in the strong sun for years, had turned brown, he came home. He went away with his father in grandeur; he returns in poverty and knocks at the door. The servants do not recognize him, and do not allow him to enter. His language is changed, the long stay in a foreign country has made him forget all. He says to the children, 'Come, O brothers, ye are my father's children; I have come from my father, who is perfectly peaceful and happy in his retirement in the wilderness, and has sent me to bring you his love and his message, that

your life may become worth while, and that you may have the great happiness of meeting your father, who loved you so greatly.'

They answered, 'How can it be that thou comest from our father who has been gone so long, and has given us no sign?' He said, 'If ye cannot understand, ask your mother. She will be able to tell you.' But the mother had already passed away; only her grave was left, which could never tell. He said, 'Then consult your guardians. Perhaps they will be able to tell you from the recollections of the past; or things that our mother may have said to them might bring to their memory the words of our father about my coming.' The guardians had grown careless, indifferent, blind, quite happy in the possession of all the wealth, and enjoying the treasured gold left in their charge, and using their undisputed power and complete hold over all the children. Their first thought on hearing he had come was of annoyance; but when they saw him they were quite heedless,

for they found in him no trace of what he had been like before, and as they saw he was without power or wealth, and was altered in looks, in dress, in everything, they cared not for him. They said, 'By what authority claimest thou to be the son of our father, of our master, who has long since passed away, and may perhaps be dwelling in the heavens by now?' He then said to the children, 'I love you, O children of my father, although you cannot recognize me, and even if you do not acknowledge me as your brother, take my helping word for your father's word, and do good in life and avoid evil, for every work has its reward like unto it.'

36

The older ones, who were hardened in their ways, paid no heed, and the little ones were too young to understand; but the middle ones who hearkened to his words followed him quietly, won by his magnetism and charmed by his loving personality.

The guardians became alarmed at the thought that the children in their charge might

be tempted and carried off. They thought, 'Some day even the remaining ones may be charmed by his magic; and our control over them, with the possession of their wealth and our comfort in their home, and our importance and honour in their eyes will all be lost if we let this go on any longer.' They made up their minds to kill him and incited the remaining brothers against him, declaring before them the pity of their dear brothers being led astray and carried away from their home and comfort, and how unfounded was the claim he made.

They came up to this man and arrested him, and bound his arms and legs and threw him into the sea. But those children who had looked upon him as their guide and brother grieved and lamented at this. The brother consoled them, saying, 'I will come to you again, O children of my father. Do not give up hope, and the things that you have not understood, being young, will be taught to you fully; and as these people have behaved so harshly towards me, it

will be shown them what it is to be heedless of our father's message brought by his own son; and you will be enlightened, O children of my father, with the same light with which I came to help you.'

This man was a master swimmer. The sea had no power to drown him. He seemed to them to have sunk, but then he drew his hands and feet out of the knots, rose upon the water and began to swim in a masterly way, as he had been taught. He went to the father in the wilderness and told him all his experiences on his long journey, and showed his love and desire to obey his father's will and fulfil all his commandments; to go to the children of his father again with renewed strength and power, in order to bring them to that ideal which was the only desire of the father.

A bearer of the message of their father appeared again after a few years. He did not insist on proving himself to be the son of their father, but tried to guide them and help them

towards the ideal set for them by their father. The guardians, disturbed already by one who came and went, insulted him, stoned him, and drove him out of their sight; but he, renewed in his power, strength, and courage, and coming fresh from the mighty influence of his father, withstood it courageously with sword and shield, and sought refuge among those of the brothers who responded to him and sympathized with him on his last coming. They said, 'Surely he who came before was from our father, whom our brothers did not recognize and have sunk in the sea, but we are awaiting his coming, for he promised us that he would come.' He answered, 'It is myself who promised, and went to our father, and now I have come, for the promise given to you was of two natures: "I will come again" was said to those who could recognize me in a different garb, suited to the time and the situation; and "I will send another" or "Another will come" was said to those who were likely to be confused by the external

garb. It was said to them so that they might not refuse the word of guidance sent by our most loving father.' They understood his word better, but refused to acknowledge him to be the same as the first, whom they had formerly seen and now expected. He spoke, and he showed in his works the signs of their father, but they clung to the person whom they had seen at first, forgetting his word and their father.

But the little ones, who had not known him before, felt the tie of the blood relationship, for neither were their hearts hardened nor were they set strongly in their ideas. They loved him, and they recognized him more than had ever been his experience at his former coming, while the other brothers, under the influence of the guardians, fought and rebelled against all that this man did. But, in spite of all their resistance and the suffering caused to him, he guided the children of his father, as many as he could, until the name of his father was again glorified and his brothers were guided, directly or indirectly,

through the puzzles of the world and the secrets of the heavens.

This story illustrates what has happened in the lives of the messengers, especially of Jesus Christ and Mohammad, though the terms Father, Son, Brother, are merely metaphorical. There has been one Teacher only, and He alone will be. All the names which the world has fought over are His names, and all the physical forms that have won the adoration of the truth-seeking world are His forms. Therefore, though the foolish reject the message, there are wise ones who accept it.

SOME ESOTERIC TERMS

There are two aspects of intelligence: intellect, and wisdom.

Intellect is the knowledge of names and forms, their character and nature, gathered from the external world. It shows in an infant from birth, when he begins to be curious about all he sees; then, by storing in his mind the various forms

and figures he sees, he recognizes them as an addition to his knowledge of variety. Man thus gathers the knowledge of numberless forms of the whole world in his mind and holds them; some of them stand out luminously and predominate over, and cover, others. He also retains those forms which interest him. The nature of forms is to overpower one another in proportion to their material concreteness. The more concrete they are, the more luminous they appear; so the intellectual person takes an interest in their variety and law of change, and as knowledge is the food of the soul, he at least becomes increasingly interested in the knowledge of names and forms, and calls that 'learning'. This becomes his world, although it neither gives him a sense of unchanging comfort, nor does he thereby gain an everlasting peace.

Wisdom is contrary to the above-named knowledge. It is the knowledge which is illumined by the light within; it comes with the maturity of the soul, and opens up the sight to

the similarity of all things and beings, as well as the unity in names and forms. The wise man penetrates the spirit of all things; he sees the human in the male and female, and the racial origin which unites nations; and he sees the human in all people and the divine immanence in all things in the universe, until the vision of the whole being becomes to him the vision of the One Alone, the most beautiful and beloved God.

39

In giving a definition for some terms used in esotericism, one may say that *consciousness* is the wakeful state of the knowing faculty; *knowledge* is that of which the Consciousness is conscious; *conscience* is a sense which is born when consciousness holds before itself in a scale, on the one side an action, and on the other side an ideal; and *intelligence* is the grasping faculty of consciousness, which by every means recognizes, distinguishes, perceives, and conceives all that is around it.

Ignorance is the state of the mind when it is in darkness.

When mental vibrations flow into the astral plane, without conscious direction, it is called *imagination*; when they do so under conscious direction, it is called *thought*. When the imagination is experienced during sleep it is called a *dream*.

Impression is a feeling which rises as a reaction on receiving a reflection coming from the external world (physical, mental, or astral).

Intuition is an inner message, given in the nature of warning or guidance, perceived by the mind independently of any external source.

Inspiration is the rising of a stream from the depth of the heart of the jinns and manifests in the realm of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, or any art.

Vision is a spiritual dream which is witnessed either when awake or asleep. It is called a dream because the radiance of the vision brings about a semi-sleep to the seer, even when awake.

Revelation is the disclosing of the inner self. The consciousness throughout manifestation facing towards the surface, turns its back to the world within, the sight of which is therefore lost to it. But when it begins to look within, the world unseen is disclosed, and *Choudatabaq*, the fourteen planes, consisting of the seven heavens and the seven earths, are revealed. 'The veil shall be lifted from thine eyes and thy sight shall be keen; as it is said in Qur'an. And *annihilation* is equivalent to 'losing the false self' which again is equivalent to what is called Eternal Life.

ALIF

In the life of Bullah Shall, the great saint of Panjab, one reads a most instructive account of his early training when he was sent to school with boys of his own age. The teacher taught him Alif, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. The other boys in his class finished the whole alphabet while he was mastering the same

letter. When weeks had passed, and the teacher saw that the child did not advance any further than the first letter Alif, he thought that he must be deficient and sent him home to his parents, saying, 'Your boy is deficient, I cannot teach him.'

The parents did all in their power for him, placing him under the tuition of various teachers, but he made no progress. They were disappointed, and the boy in the end escaped from home, so that he should no longer be a burden to his own people. He then lived in the forest and saw the manifestation of Alif which has taken form in the forest as the grass, the leaf, the tree, branch, fruit, and flower; and the same Alif was manifested as the mountain and hill, the stones and rocks; and he witnessed the same as a germ, insect, bird and beast, and the same Alif in himself and others. He thought of one, saw one, felt one, realized one, and none else besides.

After mastering this lesson thoroughly he returned to pay his respects to his old teacher who had expelled him from school. The teacher, absorbed in the vision of variety, had long ago forgotten him; but Bullah Shah could not forget his old teacher who had taught him his first and most inspiring lesson which had occupied almost all his life. He bowed most humbly before the teacher and said, 'I have prepared the lesson you so kindly taught me; will you teach me anything more there may be to learn?' The teacher laughed at him and thought to himself, 'After all this time this simpleton has remembered me.' Bullah Shah asked permission to write the lesson, and the teacher replied in jest, 'Write on this wall,' He then made the sign of Alif on the wall, and it divided into two parts. The teacher was astounded at this wonderful miracle and said, 'Thou art my teacher! That which thou hast learnt in the one letter Alif, I have not been able to master with all my learning,' and Bullah Shah sang this song:

Oh! friend now quit thy learning,
One Alif is all thou dost need.
By learning thou hast loaded my mind,
With books thou hast filled up thy room.
But the true knowledge was lost by pursuing the false,
So quit now, oh friend, the pursuit of thy learning.

44

Every form seems to be derived from another, all figures being derived from Alif, which is originally derived from a dot and represents zero, nothingness.² It is that nothingness which creates the first form Alif. It is natural for everyone when writing to make a dot as soon as the pen touches the paper, and the letters forming the words hide the origin. In like manner the origin of the One Being is hidden in His manifestation. That is why Allah, whose name comes from Alif, is hidden under His own manifestation. The same form of Alif is the figure one in English, and in both aspects this form reveals its meaning. This meaning in

2 In Arabic the zero is written as a dot.

its various forms is seen in all aspects of nature. As Omar Khayyám says.

A hair perhaps divides the false and true;
 Yes, and a single Alif were the clue.
 Could you but find it—to the treasure house,
 And, peradventure, to the Master too.
 My soul said, 'I desire the mystic knowledge:
 Teach me if it be in thy power.'
 I said, 'Alif! She answered, 'Say no more;
 If one is at home, a single letter is enough.'

SUMA, THE MUSIC OF THE SUFIS

It is very well known to all who have any knowledge of Sufis and Sufism, that music plays a great part in their spiritual attainment. The Chishtis, a particular school of Sufis, take a special interest in music. They call it *Ghiza-iruh*, the food of the soul, and they listen to the Qawwali, the special songs sung at their Suma, the contemplative musical assembly. It seems as if some potent life were there which is rarely

met with elsewhere. The atmosphere is charged with magnetism, harmony, and peace, which are emitted by the illuminated souls present. The Shaikh, the teacher, sits in the midst, and the other Sufis sit around him, and invoke one after the other the sacred names of God, and repeat suras of the Qur'an turn by turn. This is an introduction which tunes the heart of each one present to its proper pitch, the hearts that are already prepared by *Zikr*, the esoteric contemplation.

Their way of contemplation sets the heart in rhythm, which makes even the circulation of the blood regular, and the pulsation and the whole mechanism of the body become rhythmic. When the mind is also set in rhythm by its awakened response to tone, the Sufi's whole being becomes musical. This is why the Sufi can harmonize with each and all. Music makes all things in the world living to him and makes him alive to all things, and he begins to

realize how life is dead to many in the world, and how many are dead to life.

There are different grades of progress, and the verses that are sung by the Qawwals are also of different kinds. Some verses are in praise of the beauty of the ideal which Sufis in the grade of *Fanà-fī-Shaikh* enjoy. In this grade are those who see the divine immanence as the ideal, walking on earth.

There are verses which speak about the high merits of the 'ideal-in-name-and-not-in-form,' which appeals to those who are in the grade of *Fanà-fī-Rasul*. These have not seen the ideal, neither have they heard its voice, but they have known and loved that ideal which alone exists as far as they know.

Then there are verses which speak of the ideal beyond name and form. To these verses those respond who are in the grade of *Fanà-fī-Allah*; these are conscious of their ideal as beyond name and form, qualities and merits, which cannot even be confined in knowledge,

being beyond all limitations. Sometimes the coming of the ideal is pictured in verses which describe the sweetness of voice, the beauty of countenance, the grace of movement, the praise, the merits, the qualities, and the winning ways of the ideal. There are verses also in which are pictured the lover in love, his agony in separation, his caution in the presence of the beloved, his humility, his envy and rivalry, and all the natural vicissitudes of a lover. It is poetry, music, and art combined. It is not a simple song; it creates the whole vision in the realm of music before the mind of the Sufi who is capable of visualizing it against positive environments. In other words the Sufi produces his ideal vision in his imagination, by the help of music.

In the Qawwali the nature of love, lover, and beloved is expressed. In this the poetry of the Sufi excels the love poems known to the world, for in it is revealed the secret of love, lover and beloved, the three in one. Apart from the philosophy of the whole being, one can see the

delicacy and complexity of their poems, rich with conventions and adorned with metaphor. Hafiz, Rumi, Jami, and many others among the Sufi poets, have expressed the secret of the inner and outer being in the terminology of love.

The Qawwals, the singers, sing these verses distinctly; so that every word may become clear to the hearers, that the music may not hide the poetry; and the *tabla*³ players who accompany the singers emphasize the accents and keep the rhythm even, so that the being of the Sufi, already set to music, joins with the rhythm and harmony of the music. On these occasions the condition of the Sufi becomes different. His emotional nature at this time has its full play; his joy and feeling cannot be explained and language is inadequate to express them. This state is termed *Hal* or *Wajad*, the sacred ecstasy, and is regarded with respect by all present

3 A kind of Indian drums.

in the assembly. Wajad means 'presence,' Hal means 'condition.'

This state of ecstasy is not different from the natural condition of man when touched on hearing a kind word spoken, or moved to tears either on separation from the one he loves, or on the departure of his object of love, or when overjoyed on the arrival of his long-expected beloved.

In the case of a Sufi the same feeling becomes sacred, his ideal being higher.

A pilgrimage is the same as an ordinary journey, the only difference being in the aim; in a journey the aim is earthly, whereas the pilgrimage is made for a sacred purpose. Sometimes on hearing music, the Sufi is seen to be deeply touched, sometimes his feeling finds vent in tears, sometimes his whole being, filled with music and joy, expresses itself in motion, which in Sufi terms is called *Rakhs*.

When man analyses the objective world and realizes the inner being, what he learns first

and last is that this whole vision of life is created of love; love itself being life, all will in time be absorbed in it.

It is the lover of God whose heart is filled with devotion, who can commune with God; not the one who makes an effort with his intellect to analyse God. In other words, it is the lover of God who can commune with Him, not the student of His nature. It is the 'I' and 'you' which divide, and yet it is 'I' and 'you' which are the necessary conditions of love. Although 'I' and 'you' divide the one life into two, it is love that connects them by the current which is established between them; and it is this current which is called communion, which runs between man and God. To the question, 'What is God?' and 'What is man?' the answer is that the soul, conscious of its limited existence, is 'man', and the soul reflected by the vision of the unlimited, is 'God'. In plain words man's self-consciousness is man, and man's consciousness of his highest ideal is God. By communion

between these two, in time both become one, as in reality they are already one. And yet the joy of communion is even greater than the joy of at-one-ment, for all joy of life lies in the thought of 'I' and 'you.'

All that man considers beautiful, precious and good, is not necessarily in the thing or the being; it is in his ideal; the thing or being causes him to create the beauty, value and goodness in his own mind. Man believes in God by making Him an ideal of his worship, so that he can commune with someone whom he can look up to; in whom he can lay his absolute trust, believing Him to be above the unreliable world; on whose mercy he can depend, seeing selfishness all round him. It is this ideal when made of a stone, and placed in a shrine, which is called an idol of God; and when the same ideal is raised to the higher plane and placed in the shrine of the heart, it becomes the ideal of God with whom the believer communes and in whose vision he lives most happily; as happily

as could be, in the company of the sovereign of the whole universe.

When this ideal is raised still higher it breaks into the real, and the real light manifests to the godly; the one who was once a believer now becomes the realizer of God.

Part III: The Sufi

45

WHAT is a Sufi? Strictly speaking, every seeker after the ultimate truth is really a Sufi, whether he calls himself that or not. But as he seeks truth according to his own particular point of view, he often finds it difficult to believe that others, from their different points of view, are yet seeking the same truth, and always with success, though to a varying degree. That is in fact the point of view of the Sufi and it differs from others only in its constant endeavour to comprehend all others as within itself. It seeks to realize that every person following his own particular line in life, nevertheless fits into the scheme of the Whole and finally attains not only his own goal, but the one final Goal of all.

Hence every person can be called a Sufi either as long as he is seeking to understand life, or as soon as he is willing to believe that every other human being will also find and touch the same ideal. When a person opposes or hinders the expression of a great ideal, and is unwilling to believe that he will meet his fellow-men as soon as he has penetrated deeply enough into very soul, he is preventing himself from realizing the unlimited. All beliefs are simply degrees of clearness of vision. All are part of one ocean of truth. The more this is realized, the easier is it to see the true relationship between all beliefs, and the wider does the vision of the one great ocean become.

Limitations and boundaries are inevitable in human life; forms and conventions are natural and necessary; but they none the less separate humanity. It is the wise who can meet one another beyond these boundaries.

What is the Sufi's belief regarding the coming of a World Teacher, or, as some speak of it,

the 'second coming of Christ'? The Sufi is free from beliefs and disbeliefs, and yet gives every liberty to people to have their own opinion. There is no doubt that if an individual or a multitude believe that a teacher or a reformer will come, he will surely come to them. Similarly, in the case of those who do not believe that any teacher or reformer will come, to them he will not come. To those who expect the Teacher to be a man, a man will bring the message; to those who expect the Teacher to be a woman, a woman must deliver it. To those who call on God, God comes. To those who knock at the door of Satan, Satan answers. There is an answer to every call. To a Sufi the Teacher is never absent, whether he comes in one form or in a thousand forms. He is always one to him, and the same One he recognizes to be in all, and all Teachers he sees in his one Teacher alone. For a Sufi, the self within, the self without, the kingdom of the earth, the kingdom of heaven, the whole being is his teacher, and his every

moment is engaged in acquiring knowledge. For some, the Teacher has already come and gone, for others the Teacher may still come, but for a Sufi the Teacher has always been and will remain with him for ever.

What is the position of the Sufi with regard to Christ? The question asked by Jesus Himself, 'What think ye of Christ?' itself provides the answer. The emphasis is on the 'ye'. There are as many thoughts of Him as there are people who express them. The Sufi does not limit himself by expressing them. Christ is the name of his ideal, or *Rasul* as it is called in Persian. All that centres in Rasul centres in Christ; the two conceptions are one. All the names and functions which have helped to form the conception of Christ, Prophet, Priest, King, Saviour, Bridegroom, Beloved, all these are understood by the Sufi. By constant meditation he realizes all these aspects of the One, and beyond that Allah or God.

II

In considering the question of being initiated into the Sufi Order, there is in the first place the inclination to know something different from what is taught in the world. One feels the desire to seek for something though one knows not what. One feels that the opposites, good and evil, right and wrong, friend and foe, are not so far apart as one used to think.

At the same time the heart is felt to be more sympathetic than ever before, and the sense of justice makes one wish to judge oneself before judging others.

47

This all shows that one may look for a guide through these unknown paths.

Then there is the feeling, especially after reading or hearing something about Sufism, that one is already really a Sufi, that one is at one with the circle of Sufis. One may now feel drawn to the spirit of the Teacher from whose hand initiation may be taken.

And thirdly there is the feeling, after studying the books published by the movement, or after speaking with the Pir-o-Murshid, that the message is genuine.

Then the question arises, What is meant by initiation? Initiation, or in Sufi terms *Bayat*, first of all has to do with the relationship between the pupil and the Murshid. The Murshid is understood to be the counsellor on the spiritual path. He does not give anything to or teach the pupil, the mureed, for he cannot give what the latter already has; he cannot teach what his soul has always known. What he does in the life of the mureed is to show him how he can clear his path towards the light within by his own self. This is the only purpose of man's life on earth. One may attain the purpose of life without a personal guide, but to try to do so is to be like a ship traversing the ocean without a compass. To take initiation, then, means entrusting oneself in regard to spiritual matters to a spiritual guide.

The next thing to be decided is: 'If I must have a personal guide, whom shall I take as guide?' There is no stamp of spirituality, or seal of perfection marked upon any man's forehead, which enables one to say, 'This is the man from whose hand to take the Bayat.' Neither his appearance nor his words can be relied on as evidence of his worth. The only thing that can be relied upon is the appeal of his soul in one's heart. Even so, one must satisfy oneself whether it is evil appealing to the devil in one or God appealing to the good in one.

There are three ways in which people trust. One is not to trust a person until he proves in time to be trustworthy. To those who trust in this way there will be no satisfactory gain in this path, for they will go on, like a spy, trying and testing the Murshid with their eyes focused downward. Hence they can only see the imperfect self of the teacher, and will never be able to see the beauty of the perfect self, above and beyond the limits of their view.

The second way of trusting is to trust and to continue to do so until the person is proved unworthy of trust. Those who trust in this way are better suited than the first, for if their trust makes their sight keen they will have every prospect of development, provided that intelligence guides them all the way.

But the third way of trusting a person is to have an absolute trust, and to continue until it be proved true. This is the trust of devotees. It is these mureeds who make the Murshid. It is such worshippers who make God. 'By faith, a tongue is produced from the rock, and it speaks to us as God, but when faith is lacking, even God, the Eternal Being, is as dead as a rock.' The word of the Murshid is as useless to the doubting mind as a remedy to the unbelieving patient.

To become an initiate in the Sufi Order therefore implies a willingness to agree with its teachings and objects; a willingness to cease to attach importance to the differences of the world's various faiths, and to see in all the

Masters only one embodiment of the divine Spirit, and thirdly it implies that one is not already following another course of spiritual training. In such a case, why go to another kind of teacher as well? It would be like travelling in two boats, one foot in each. When each boat goes its own way, although they meet in the end at the same goal, yet the traveller will sink in the sea. No one could seek guidance under two teachers except out of lack of patience with the one or lack of confidence in the other, making him still cling to the first.

The objects one should have in taking initiation under the Murshid are: to realize the self within and without; to know and communicate with God, whom alone the world worships; to kindle the fire of divine love, which alone has any value; to be able to read nature's manuscript and to be able to see into the world unseen; to learn how to control oneself; to light the torch of the soul and to kindle the fire of the heart; and to journey through this

positive existence and arrive in this life at the goal at which every soul is bound in the end to arrive. It is better to arrive in the light than to be only transported through the dark. 'Who is blind here will be blind in the hereafter.'

Therefore, one does not take initiation for the sake of curiosity to see what is going on in a 'secret' Order. Such a one will certainly not be able to see what he wishes to, for only the eye of sincerity can see. The eye of curiosity has the cataract of doubt, and is blind already. Neither does one take initiation for the sake of gaining some material advantage in one's occupation. Initiation is not a scientist's process, or an engineer's invention, or a business enterprise; it is not something that can be stolen, nor anything to be bought. It is revelation, which has new offspring at every moment, which can never be stolen by a thief. The only process for gaining it is righteousness, and when its light is covered under a bushel, even the *Jám*

of mystery stolen from *Jamsheyd*⁴ will serve no better than an earthen bowl.

One does not take initiation for the sake of attaining happiness. It is true that one cannot attain wisdom without deriving a certain advantage from it, as it is more advantageous to be wise than ignorant. But it is not for this that the journey is entered upon. However, as he progresses on the spiritual path the Sufi becomes aware of a wonderful peace, which inevitably comes from the constant presence of God.

Many people of various beliefs and faiths have written about the practice of the presence of God, and all speak of the happiness they receive from being in His presence. So it is no wonder that the Sufi also, should he wish to speak of it, should testify to similar happiness. He does not claim to a greater happiness than his fellow-men because he is a human being and subject to all the shortcomings of mankind.

4 *Jám*=drinking glass.

But at the same time others can decide about his happiness better even than his words can tell it. The happiness which is experienced in God has no equal in anything in the world, however precious it may be, and everyone who experiences it will realize the same.

One should not seek initiation if one has set before oneself certain principles one does not wish to abandon. One might find that the foundation one has built does not correspond with the building now to be erected upon it. Such is the person who goes from one teacher to another, from one method to another, and is never able to gain that which is only to be obtained through steadfastness. Those who have a desire to teach while coming to learn should not pose as disciples; they must come as teachers.

Are there any conditions imposed on a would-be initiate? No one need fear taking initiation from the idea that he undertakes something he may not be able to fulfil. If he does

not wish to progress beyond a certain point, that is only for himself to say. The only thing that happens when a person is initiated, is that from the hour of initiation one is the brother of all in the Sufi Movement, of all other Sufis outside the Sufi Movement, of all knowers of truth, whether they call themselves Sufi or not, and of every human being, without distinction of caste, creed, race, nation, or religion; one is the companion of the illuminated souls of the Sufis living on earth and of those who have passed to the other side of life. Thus one is linked with the chain of Murshids and Prophets, and so enabled to receive the light running through this current, through the chain of the Masters. And one is the confidant of the Murshid and of the Order. Therefore the initiate takes a vow in his heart to make use to the best of his ability of all he receives from the Sufi teaching and practices, not using any parts for selfish purposes. These teachings have been kept secret for thousand of years, so why

should they go out of the Order without the Pir-o-Murshid's authorization?

One may ask why there is any secrecy about the teaching. If true, why should it not be scattered broadcast? This implies that secrecy is objectionable. The answer however is quite easy. A certain secrecy is necessary in that some of the Sufi conceptions might easily be misunderstood and misused, were they exposed to the general public. The earnest pupil will not speak of them without due consideration of his audience. A further point is that when a teacher is not absolutely dependent on his pupils, he will prefer to select his pupils. If a person wished to go to the very best master of the violin, he would seek out a virtuoso of fame. But the latter might not care to spend time upon him; he would if he were sure the pupil would faithfully do all he was asked to do, and attain to something like the standard of the virtuoso himself. Whatever instruction he gives this pupil is naturally 'secret'; it is a personal

matter; the pupil may hand it on to his own pupils later, but he does not have it printed and circulated indiscriminately. The secrecy is no more than this. It may also be said that every school which gives the initiate special personal instruction trusts that respect shall be paid to that which it teaches. All teaching can be misconstrued and perverted and made to appear ridiculous. To do this with Sufi teachings, consciously or inadvertently, will not help the pupil. A certain medicine may be good for a sick person at a certain time, but this does not mean it should be used by every sick person in the world. Nor would it be any advantage to anyone, if the exact medicine were to be published indiscriminately. If there should arise need to say what it was, the doctor would not withhold the information.

Where there is a need to explain the Sufi teachings, the Murshid will explain them. The books published by the Sufi Movement set forth many of the teachings, so that it cannot

be said that they are kept rigidly secret. But the very intimate thoughts to which the Sufi is accustomed, are naturally not uttered indiscriminately, any more than an ordinary person will speak of his private affairs to a stranger.

The fruit must be of a certain degree of ripeness before its taste becomes sweet. So the soul must be of a certain development before it will handle wisdom with wisdom. The developed soul shows his fragrance in his atmosphere, colour, the expression of his countenance, and sweetness of his personality, as a flower spreads its fragrance around, and as a fruit when ripe changes its colour and becomes sweet.

One may ask why the awakened ones do not awaken people in the world from the sleep of confusion. The answer is, that it is not to be advised that little children, whose only happiness is slumber, should be awakened. Their growth depends on their sleep. If they

are kept up late they become ill, and are not so useful in the affairs of life as are grown-up people. Childhood needs more sleep, and the children must sleep. Such is the nature of immature souls. They are children, however old their bodies may appear. Their fancies, their joys, their delights are for unimportant things in life, as the life of children is absorbed in sweets and toys. Therefore those who are awakened walk slowly and gently, lest their footsteps may disturb the slumber of the sleeping ones. They only awaken on their way those whom they find tossing in their beds. They are the ones to whom the travellers on the spiritual path give their hand quietly. It is for this reason that the spiritual path is called the mystical way. It is not unkind to awaken a few and to let many sleep, but on the other hand it is great kindness to let those slumber who require sleep.

During his mureedship the initiate should avoid wonder-working; claiming to know or possess something unfamiliar to one's fellow-

men; casting out devils; communicating with spirits; character-reading; fortune-telling; appearing overwise in conversation with others about spiritual things, and looking to others for approbation. Also sanctimoniousness, over-righteousness, and teaching and advising others before having learnt one's own self, which is as dangerous as giving the same medicine to another that the doctor has prescribed for oneself.

During discipleship, the habit of discipline should be adopted which makes the ideal mureed. Self-denial is the chief religion, and this can only be learnt by discipline. It is as necessary in the path of discipleship as for a soldier on the battlefield; in the absence of it the mureed holds fast the very thing which he wishes to crush by taking the initiation. 'Mastery is in service, and it is the servant who alone can be master.'

One should also have a respectful attitude to the Murshid. This is not to raise the honour

of the teacher in his own eyes, or in the eyes of others. It is to learn a respectful attitude by first having it towards one who deserves it. The mureed may then be able to develop in his nature the same respect for all, as a little girl by playing with a doll learns the lesson of motherhood. To respect another means to deduct that much vanity from ourselves, the vanity which is only the veil between man and God.

During the period of mureedship sobriety, an equable mind, a serious habit, regularity in all things, diligence, a desire for solitude, a reserved demeanour, an unassuming manner, a pure life, and uninterrupted daily spiritual meditations, are desirable.

The Sufi is the student of two worlds, the world within and the world without. The world within is equivalent to what is popularly named 'the next world,' because of the widespread belief that time is the all-important factor; that we have a life now, and another life at another

time. The Sufi knows otherwise, The world without has two aspects, the social world in which we are placed, and the greater world which is the topic of history, past, present, or prophetic. The world within can be entered only by the student himself, though he may learn about it as 'esotericism', a subject which also has two aspects, that of the forces in the mind and that of the divine light. The latter is the real goal of the Sufi's enquiry, it is his Shekinah, it is his Holy of Holies.

III

Is Sufism a religion? It should be clear from the above explanation that the religion of the Sufi is not separate from the religions of the world. People have fought in vain about the names and lives of their saviours, and have named their religions after the name of their saviour, instead of uniting with each other in the truth that is taught. This truth can be traced in all religions, whether one community

call another pagan or infidel or heathen. Such persons claim that theirs is the only scripture, and their place of worship the only abode of God. Sufism is a name applied to a certain philosophy by those who do not accept the philosophy; hence it cannot really be described as a religion; it contains a religion but is not itself a religion. Sufism is a religion if one wishes to learn religion from it. But it is beyond religion, for it is the light, the sustenance of every soul, raising the mortal being to immortality.

As matters stand today, each one claims his own religion to be the best, and he has his own religion. The Sufi tolerates all, and considers them all his; therefore he does not belong to a religion but all religions belong to him. He can see all the religions like so many forms in a school: some are in one, others are in higher forms, that is, some study life more deeply. And in each class in the school there are pupils who like to play.

To say, 'You are not of my religion; my religion alone is true,' is as reasonable as to say, 'You are not a lawyer, a merchant, a scholar; your way of carrying on life is false; you must become as I.'

To say, 'All who are in my religion are saved' is as reasonable as to say, 'Every lawyer, merchant, scholar (as the case may be) is earnest, and performs his work perfectly.' Some speak of 'nominal' Christians, and 'true' Christians; this is only another way of saying that some persons are earnest about their work and others play.

Is Sufism a belief? What do we mean by the word 'belief'? It is the nature of mind to believe, and disbelief comes after. No unbeliever was born an unbeliever; for if a soul disbelieved from childhood he would never learn to speak. All the knowledge that man possesses he has acquired by belief. When he strengthens his belief by knowledge, then comes disbelief in things that his knowledge cannot cope with, and in things that his reason cannot justify. He then disbelieves things that he once believed

in. An unbeliever is one who has changed his belief to disbelief; disbelief often darkens the soul, but sometimes it illuminates it. There is a Persian saying, 'Until belief has changed to disbelief, and, again, the disbelief into a belief, a man does not become a real Muslim.' But when disbelief becomes a wall and stands against the further penetration of mind into life, then it darkens the soul, for there is no chance of further progress, and man's pride and satisfaction in what he knows limit the scope of his vision.

A constant 'why' arises in the minds of the intelligent, and when this 'why' is answered by life to man's satisfaction, he goes on further and further, penetrating through all different planes of life; but when this 'why' does not get a satisfactory answer from life, then doubt, dismay, and dissatisfaction arise and result in confusion, bewilderment, and despair. Sometimes belief proves to be worse than disbelief. This is when a person, set in his belief,

hinders his own progress, not allowing his mind to go further into the research of life, refusing guidance and advice from another, in order that he may preserve his own belief. Thus a belief, which is preserved as a virtue, becomes the greatest sin. Both belief and disbelief, by practice, in time become natural tendencies; the person who is inclined to believe gets into a habit of believing all things and everything, and an unbeliever in time comes to disbelieve everything whether right or wrong. The optimistic temperament is the temperament of the believer, and pessimism is as a rule the nature of the unbeliever. The prophets have always promised a reward for the believer, and have threatened the unbeliever with punishment, because the chance for spiritual enlightenment is only in the life of the believer, while the unbeliever covers his soul by his own disbelief.

55

Sufis are inclined to recognize four stages of belief:

Iman-e Muhmil, when someone believes in a thing which others believe in, but no matter how strong his belief may be, when those in his surroundings change their belief, he will likewise change his.

Iman-e Kamil, the next stage of belief, is the belief of the idealist who has faith in his scripture and saviour. He believes because it is written in the scripture, or taught by the saviour. His belief, of course, will not change with the weather, but still it may waver, if by any means reason were awakened in his soul. At least it would be dimmed just as the light of a candle would become dimmed by the rising sun. When the sun of the intelligence rises, it would break through and scatter the clouds of emotion and devotion made by this belief

Haq al-Iman, the third stage of belief, when man believes because his reason allows him to believe; such a man is journeying through life with a torch in his hand. His belief is based on reason, and cannot be broken except by a still

greater reason, for it is the diamond that alone can cut the diamond, and reason alone can break reason.

'*Ain al-Iman*, the fourth stage of belief, is a belief of conviction; not only reason, but every part of one's being is convinced and assured of the truth of things, and nothing on earth can change it. If a person were to say to him, 'Do not cross over this place, there is water here,' he will say, 'No, it is land, I can see for myself' It is just like seeing with the eyes all that one believes. This belief is the belief of the seer whose knowledge is his eyewitness, and therefore his belief will last for ever and ever. Of course, as a soul evolves from stage to stage, it must break the former belief in order to establish the later, and this breaking of the belief is called by Sufis *Tark*, which means abandonment; the abandoning of the worldly ideal, the abandoning of the heavenly ideal, the abandoning of the divine ideal, and even

the abandoning of abandonment. This brings the seer to the shores of the ultimate truth.

‘Truth is that which cannot be fully spoken, and that which can be spoken is not necessarily the truth.’

Is Sufism Muslim? Is a Sufi a Mohammedan? In joining a Sufi community, is one associating with Muslims? Is a Sufi a follower of Islam? The word *Islam* means ‘peace’; this is the Arabic word. The Hebrew word is *Salem* (Jeru-salem). Peace and its attainment in all directions is the goal of the world.

But if the following of Islam is understood to mean the obligatory adherence to a certain rite; if being a Mohammedan means conforming to certain restrictions, how can the Sufi be placed in that category, seeing that the Sufi is beyond all limitations of this kind? So far from not accepting the Qur’an, the Sufi recognizes scriptures which others disregard. But the Sufi does not follow any special book. The shining ones, such as ‘Attar, Shams-e Tabr ez, Rumi, Sa’di,

and Hafiz, have expressed their free thought with a complete liberty of language. To a Sufi, revelation is the inherent property of every soul. There is an unceasing flow of the divine stream, which has neither beginning nor end.

What is the position of Sufism with regard to Christianity? There is a place in the Sufi understanding for all the teachings contained in that Faith, and there can be no antagonism in the mind of him who understands. The writings of the Christian mystics evidence the intensity of their pursuit and devotion to the Beloved—and there is only one Beloved. The devotion to the Sacred Heart will be found to be a link with the Sufi philosophy, which recognizes and practises it in the truest sense.

Is Sufism mysticism? As green is considered to be the colour of Ireland, yet it cannot be said to belong exclusively to the Irish people, for anybody can wear green, and green is found all over the world, so mystics in Islam have been called Sufis; but Sufism, divine wisdom, is for

all, and is not limited to a certain people. It has existed from the first day of creation, and will continue to spread and to exist until the end of the world. Sufism is a mysticism if one wishes to be guided by it in the unfoldment of the soul. Yet it is beyond mysticism.

57

Is Sufism theosophy? Sufis have no set belief or disbelief. Divine light is the only sustenance of their soul, and through this light they see their path clear, and what they see in this light they believe, and what they do not see they do not blindly believe. Yet they do not interfere with another person's belief or disbelief, thinking that perhaps a greater portion of light has kindled his heart, and so he sees and believes that the Sufi cannot see or believe. Or, perhaps a lesser portion of light has kept his sight dim and he cannot see and believe as the Sufi believes. Therefore Sufis leave belief and disbelief to the grade of evolution of every individual soul. The Murshid's work is to kindle the fire of the heart, and to light the torch of

the soul of his mureed, and to let the mureed believe and disbelieve as he chooses, while journeying through the path of evolution. But in the end all culminates in one belief, *Huma man am*, that is, 'I am all that exists'; and all other beliefs are preparatory for this final conviction, which is called Haq al-Iman in the Sufi terminology.

As soon as the word 'theosophy' is taken to mean certain fixed beliefs or disbeliefs, there is a difference from Sufism. Beliefs and disbeliefs are the cause of sects, each of these being blinded from the vision of the singleness of the whole of existence. As soon as thought is restricted, it ceases to be Sufism.

Is Sufism a school of thought? Wisdom is not restricted to one geographical spot such as a country, a city, a building or meeting-place. Sufism cannot be correctly described as a school of thought, if by that is meant the instruction of a certain doctrine; but it might be correct to speak of it as a school of thought

in the sense that through Sufism one learns wisdom, just as in a school one learns wisdom of a certain kind. Sufism is beyond philosophy.

IV

In regard to the Sufi's attitude towards right and wrong—that these are man-made—one may ask how then it can matter what a person does.

The answer is, it matters to those to whom it matters, and it does not matter to those to whom it does not matter. In this respect, if the Sufi has to say anything to his follower, it is this: refrain from doing that which hinders you from accomplishing the purpose in your inner and your external life. Do not act against your ideal, for it will never be satisfactory to you; you will not be pleased with yourself and this inharmony in your inner and your external self will prevent peace, which is your life's craving, without which life becomes unhappy. 'Right' is the straight path which the soul is inclined to take

in life, but when one walks astray, leaving the straight path in life owing either to negligence or ignorance, or by reason of weakness, or by the attraction of some temptation on the way, one can say that is wrong.

What is good and what is evil? There are two answers to this question. First it may be said: good is that which you consider to be good, and the effect of which is agreeable to you both in its beginning and end. Evil is that which you consider to be evil and the effect of which is disagreeable in the beginning as well as in the end. If good and evil have no agreeable or disagreeable effect at first, or have a contrary effect at the beginning, whether they are really agreeable or disagreeable will appear in the end. The second answer is that all things that seem good and evil are the opposite ends of one line, and it is difficult to say where evil ends and good begins, for these are comparative terms; a lesser good would seem evil when compared with a greater good, and the lesser

evil in comparison with the greater evil would appear good. If there were no evil, good would not have been valued. Without injustice, justice would not have been appreciated. Therefore the whole of life's joy is expressed in duality.

Why is there so much suffering in life, when God is described as merciful? If God were a separate being from man, and if He rejoiced in the suffering of man, then He could be blamed. But He, as the Sufi realizes, is the sufferer and the suffering; yet He is beyond all suffering. This fact can be understood, not merely by believing in God, but in knowing Him. Suppose your hands dropped a heavy weight upon your feet and hurt them, are your hands to be blamed? No, for they share the pain with the feet, and although the feet seem to have been hurt, yet the one that feels hurt is your absolute being. In reality that being feels hurt, and therefore the hand shares the hurt of the foot. So it is with God. Our very life is His, and He is not void of the feeling of joy or

of pain which we feel. In reality, He feels what we imagine we feel, yet at the same time His perfect Being keeps Him above all earthly joys and pains; and our imperfection limits us, so that we become subject to all joys and pains, however small they may be.

According to the Sufi the difference between sin and virtue is like the difference between good and evil. They are comparative terms. Lesser virtue compared with greater virtue appears to be sin, and lesser sin compared with greater sin is considered virtue. The inclination of the soul is towards good; it is only when the soul is helpless in the hands of the lower self that it is inclined towards evil.

Again, it may be said: sin and virtue are the standards of good and evil made by the teachers of religion; it is the standards of morals that keep the world in order, and it is the breaking of this order that causes the decline of religion, with the effect of wars, famines, and disaster. In order to uphold this order, messengers are

sent from time to time, and spiritual controllers are appointed in every part of the earth. One might ask, 'Why tread the path of righteousness and piety; why spend your life in teaching and preaching to humanity?' It is natural. Every loving and illuminated heart has a desire to see others partake in its vision of glory. On the other hand, it seems that some persons are quite happy in committing sin. Is there then no restriction to be imposed on sin? The answer is: sin can never make one happy. Even were there pleasure in it for the time being, it would re-echo, and the re-echo of a false note is never pleasing to the musical ear. If a person were really happy in his 'sin', one might be satisfied that it was really his virtue, and that it is only to us, from our point of view, that his action is sinful. Therefore the Sufi attends to his own journey, and does not judge others.

If there is only a comparative difference between good and evil, sin and virtue, why should there be punishment for evil and

reward for good? The effect of good itself is a reward for good, and the effect of evil is itself a punishment. From our limited view, perhaps, we attribute these effects to a third person, to a divine ideal. But what then of the belief of the orthodox, that if anybody asks forgiveness before his death, his sins would be forgiven by God? It seems hard to believe that a person who has sinned all through life could be forgiven at a simple request made at the hour of death. The answer is, that it is absolutely true that the whole of life's sins may be forgiven by divine mercy in one moment, just as a chemical solution may wash away the stains of years from the surface of a rock in a moment. The real question is, is the request earnest enough? It is not so easy as it seems, for this is a matter of divine mercy; and if a person has continued to commit sins, at every sin he has lost his belief in the judgment of the divine Being and in His power. Therefore he has sown the seed of disbelief in his heart and has reared

this plant by his sins. That being so, how can he in the end develop sufficient faith in a moment to believe in divine mercy? The simplest thing becomes the most difficult for him.

For this reason, the teachers of humanity have taught man faith as the first lesson in religion. Those are forgiven the sins of their whole life, who have always believed that any moment death might come and have safeguarded themselves against doing anything that does not meet with the pleasure of their Lord, and whenever, owing to human imperfection, they have failed in doing right, they most earnestly have asked forgiveness.

The Inner Life

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