



THE WAY OF ILLUMINATION

The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan

Some Aspects of Sufism

Nur-Zahur [Hazrat Inayat Khan]

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. Also in the Qur'an, one finds the idea that 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, Ashfar al-Makhlukat, 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. God has made man in His image, as is said in the Bible.

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. To the knower's eye, this Nur, this light, is the real Mohammed. 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 journeys 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.

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, fulfills the purpose of manifestation in the evolution of man.

The Qur'an tells that man was destined to be the Khalif of all beings, which 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 God, and God 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.

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