

## Inner Call Podcast #103 – March 16, 2021

### Nourishing the plant of feeling

One of the memorable lessons of childhood may come when there is some pet to look after, a small, squirming being that depends upon the child's care, and that responds to their attention. Or perhaps a kindly grandparent encourages little fingers to thrust a bean seed into damp earth, and in just a few days, tiny pleated leaves unfold before their eyes – a life needing water, light and air. In either case it is a fundamental lesson – that, if we only provide the necessary conditions, we can help things grow.

The same wisdom applies to our relationships. When we form a friendship with someone, a seed is planted in the other person's heart, and if we care for it, it will respond. Hazrat Inayat Khan refers to this in his lecture about mastery [*posted on March 12th, 2021*], when he says, *If we return anger or jealousy or hatred or prejudice or any other bitterness, we only keep the flame of that emotion lighted. It is just the same when one keeps love in another heart by adding a little affection and love all the time.*

There are some people who seem to have a gift for raising plants; in English we say they have a 'green thumb.' But the secret of their ability isn't in their thumbs – it's really no more than this, that they take a sincere interest in their plants. Through that interest, or we could say, that appreciation, they learn what will bring out the best in the plant. And in the same way, there are people who take a sincere interest in the hearts of their friends, and in that way they learn how to nourish the affection that is there.

Of course, people have their ups and downs, and it could be that our friend sometimes says or does something unfriendly or even hurtful, but to respond in the same way will bring consequences. The bougainvillea is a vine with beautiful, bright cascades of flowers, but if the gardener cuts the vines, the plant responds by becoming ever more thorny, and the long hard spines leave a painful rash on the skin that may take weeks to heal.

Nourishing the plant of feeling does not mean imposing our will on the relationship, for that would suggest we have some agenda, and real friendship is free from expectations. It is simply a case of allowing the plant to express itself – and if, in its own time, it flowers and bears fruit, we can smile and let the credit go to the Creator of the plant.