

Inner Call Podcast #114 We are not our mistakes April 19 2021

Suppose that someone offered you a choice – between a life of purity, and the opportunity to be more yourself. Probably the majority would choose to be more themselves, thinking that, based on their life so far, they have little hope of achieving any purity, and that being themselves would be much more comfortable and satisfying.

In the Sufi understanding, though, there is really no difference between the two, for it is the life of purity that allows the real Self to be seen, while the veiling of that Self keeps us restless and uncomfortable all our life. As Hazrat Inayat Khan explains in the Inner Call post of April 17th 2021, all of creation is looking for an unfoldment, a certain freedom, and it is the lack of purity that chokes up the system and obstructs this opening.

If we take this wisdom to heart and wish to make it a reality in our lives, it requires some work, of course. We must look honestly at our life, at what might need to be changed, since purity is letting go of what does not belong to us, dropping both behaviours and unhelpful impressions on the heart and mind. Inevitably, this also means looking at the gloomy catalogue of our mistakes. Everyone likes to do well, to turn in a flawless performance and earn a gold star, and even small errors can sometimes trouble us, like a pebble in the shoe, for a long time. As for big mistakes – they can be devastating, submerging us in a swamp of despair and self-accusation for years. Living in a swamp, though, is nobody's idea of purity. As Hazrat Inayat Khan makes clear in the same post, our mistakes are not our nature; it is precisely because they are not our nature that they are called mistakes.

We need to acknowledge our errors so that we can learn from them, but the next step is to let them go – to free ourselves from the impressions of failure – and move on. Washing away unwanted impressions comes by attuning ourselves to the divine ideal. It is the conception, the recognition and the acceptance of love, harmony and beauty which can ease the burden of memory and restore us to purity.

Everyone makes mistakes in this life of illusion, but the great souls are those who have learned the lessons of their mistakes – and the mistakes of others, too – and risen above them. That is the way to know the “divine light which is hidden in our souls,” and the only way to happiness, which is our true nature.