

Inner Call Podcast #139 About Broken Hearts August 21 2021

Sufism, as everyone knows, is all about the heart. Numerous times in lectures that became the Religious Gathekas, Hazrat Inayat Khan described Sufism as ‘the religion of the heart’, and amongst the followers of Sufism there is indeed a religious regard for the image of the flying heart. Hearts with wings, some complete with the star and crescent moon that are part of the Sufi symbol, are all around us, on jewelry, books, candle-holders and social media stickers, not to mention t-shirts and shawls, note-pads, greeting cards and coffee mugs. If the heart is so central to our path, then, we might be perplexed to read this phrase from Nirtan Boulas : *Reality unfolds with the breaking of the heart*. The thought appears to suggest that the heart stands in our way as we try to reach the goal of Truth. If reality only appears when the heart is broken, why should we place so much importance on what seems to be an obstacle?

The question is central to the whole spiritual search, and it deserves attention. To understand this well, we must keep in mind that the spiritual path is not a simple line drawn from one point to another. We speak of a spiritual path not because we travel through more and more spiritual territory, but because we endeavor to walk the path of life – wherever that may take us – in a spiritual way. As we journey, the transformation is not in our surroundings, but in our way of looking, meaning that it is in ourselves.

To embark upon this way of walking, we must first find within ourselves an ideal. In the beginning, probably it is indistinct, but then it grows clearer, helping us to orient ourselves, focusing our aspiration. And if it is to truly serve as an ideal, it must be firmly seated in the heart, for a mental concept won’t get us through the difficulties that will meet us on the way. Perhaps this is what Jesus was referring to when he spoke of seed falling on stony ground – the seed springs up, but if it is not rooted in soft earth, in other words if the heart is hard, like rock, then when the harsh sun comes, the plant will wither, and its green promise will quickly be forgotten.

Therefore, the seeker works diligently to improve the condition of the heart, to soften it, to purify it, to make it more responsive to the fine vibrations of love, harmony and beauty – in other words to fill the heart with the ideal. Imagine a heart so devoted that it contains only the ideal, and nothing else.

Our ideal, though, can never be the equal of Reality, for the Truth is beyond all names and forms – much bigger than any individual can encompass. To glimpse the Truth, we must go beyond our ideal, the ideal in which we have invested ourselves, and that is the unlooked-for blessing in the breaking of the heart. That is why in Gayan Boulas it says, *The ideal is the means, but its breaking is the goal*.

The path of life rains difficulties down like hailstones on everyone; no one is immune to this. Some blows merely bounce off without doing much damage, but some are direct hits, and we suffer. And it is in the moment of heartbreak that we can catch sight of the treasure that was concealed by our ideal. Perhaps that is what is meant by this phrase from Nirtan Gamakas: When the shell of my heart breaks, pearls are scattered around.