

Inner Call Podcast #155 Scattering the Clouds February 9, 2022

There is an old story about a man who discovered a secret, a secret that he must never disclose to anyone, and the task of bottling it up inside himself became a great burden. He felt it constantly pressing inside his chest, so that closing his lips upon the secret became a torment. At last, he sought advice and someone suggested that he go into the forest, dig a hole, and shout the secret down into the earth. This he did, and immediately felt relief – but then to his horror, he discovered that the whole forest now echoed with the secret he had uttered. Perhaps it sounds like no more than an amusing children’s story, of no great significance, but it lays an important truth before us. Hazrat Inayat Khan taught that the world is like a dome, in which all that is spoken reverberates. What we say, whether called out openly in the marketplace, or muttered under our breath, continues to echo, so that we are surrounded by a sea of vibrations, a sea that may ripple harmoniously or be storm tossed, according to our character.

The same is true of our feelings, thoughts and actions, for these are also patterns of vibrations. We may doubt that there is now any trace of something we thought a dozen years ago, but many of those who have come to the border between the worlds in a near-death experience have reported seeing their whole life run before them in a flash. Matter is dense and physical vibrations die away quickly, but in the finer realms they may persist for a very long time. This can help us to understand the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan about life after death (which are currently being posted in the Inner Call). The soul, which has been likened to a ray of light from the Divine Sun, is truth itself, pure and unstainable in its essence, but by coming into the world of manifestation and experiencing individuality, it accumulates an enveloping cloud of vibrations, or impressions. It is a general rule that we become what we behold, and the soul, although of divine origin, feels limited by this cloud; its light is veiled from its own sight. If we have been cruel and selfish, therefore, that will form the world in which the soul will live once the physical body is discarded. It is a direct application of the golden rule, taught in virtually all cultures since time began : do as you would be done by. Why? Because whatever you do will be your environment in the hereafter. Religions commonly speak of punishment for our shortcomings or sins, but a better term would be consequences. If I am clumsy with a hammer and smack my thumb, my clumsiness will leave a throbbing consequence that may endure for days. That is what we find in this saying from the Vadan Alapas:

*One day I met the Lord face to face, and, bending my knees, I prayed,
"Tell me, O King of Compassion,
is it Thou who punishest the sinner
and givest rewards to the virtuous one?"
and said He, smiling,
"The sinner attracts his punishment;
the virtuous earns his reward."*

This might sound rather ominous for us – after all, who feels virtuous? The further we journey on the spiritual path, and the more we study ourselves, the more aware we are of our shortcomings, and our virtues look increasingly pale and insubstantial. Does it mean there is no hope for us in the next life?

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There is always hope: we are told 'God is merciful, and He loves to forgive' – so long as we turn to Him, and are sincerely sorry for our mistakes. But if we have not made God a reality to ourselves, if the One is only a concept to us, then a last minute appeal for absolution will not do much to scatter our self-made cloud of limitations.

This brings us to an important conclusion : since no one knows just how long we have here, perhaps it is time to get to work on making our Divine Ideal a reality.