

## **Inner Call Podcast #158 O Peace-maker! March 1 2022**

In the last week the world has fallen into a very serious war. It is alarming, and we certainly feel compassion for all those who suffer in this conflict, for the lives and families pointlessly torn apart. We offer our heartfelt thoughts and prayers for their relief.

As students of the inner life we might also want to remember the story about Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed. It is said that Ali was once in a battle, wielding his sword against an opponent. The enemy had fallen, and Ali had his sword raised to end his life, when the man defiantly spat at him. Thereupon Ali stepped back and sheathed his sword. The man on the ground, astonished, said, "What are you doing? You were going to kill me!" "Yes," Ali replied, "I was. But I will not kill you in anger."

Holding this story up to the sunlight of understanding we find many gleams of wisdom in it. It might make us think, for example, of the Sufi counsel to live in the world but not be of the world. There are some who withdraw – or want to do so – into the forest or the remote wilderness of the mountains in search of spiritual truth, but it is not necessary to separate oneself from everyday life in order to be spiritual. The divine truth is all-pervading, and therefore is present in the marketplace just as it in the open-air temple of nature. Indeed, it is a greater accomplishment to be aware of the One while we cope with the noise and chaos of urban life, and it can be a greater service to our fellow humans if we can maintain our peace as we walk among them. The society in which the Prophet gave his message was war-like, and in order to survive it was sometimes necessary to fight. Many have been critical of this, believing that our present-day world is different, more 'civilized,' but it is not so. The only difference is in the scale of battle.

But Ali's refusal to kill in anger shows us where the first battle must be fought. Life will always present us with conflict, but if we become swept up in outer struggles and neglect our inner condition, then even an outer victory will be a loss; the first fight must be with ourselves. Ali refused to let his spirit be clouded by anger. As we go about our daily affairs, hopefully without an unsheathed sword in our hand, do we have the strength and conviction to guard our spirit? It is not easy! In Vadan Boulas, we find, "Peace-making is much more difficult than war-making."

There is only One Being, and the pain of one person is the suffering of all. This also means that an inner victory for one person is a gift to the whole world. In moments of crisis, it is natural to pray for peace, but mechanical repetitions will accomplish little. When our prayers for peace touch our own soul, when they merge with the infinite sea of peace within, then they must be felt everywhere. Perhaps that is the inner sense of the saying in Gayan Alapas, "O peace-maker, before trying to make peace throughout the world, first make peace within thyself!"