

Inner Call Podcast #159 Do You Have Two Points of View? March 8 2022

Sometimes a Sufi thought falls into our mind, and like a seed crystal dropping into a saturated chemical solution, it triggers the formation of a branching tracery of wisdom through the length and breadth of our consciousness. One such thought is, “A Sufi has two points of view, his or her own, and that of the other person.”

Yes, we might think when we first hear this, what a relief! It need not be ‘your way or my way,’ I can find room for others without giving up my own way of seeing – we can go forward together. And as we explore the new crystal garden formed by this thought, we discover that having two points of view doesn’t make us less – quite the contrary, it makes us larger. A small person has no space for what others think or feel, but the one who sees with two points of view has doubled their field of vision – and expanded their heart.

But how do we put this wisdom into practice? The world is suffering a great upheaval now; there is war in Europe, and hundreds of thousands of people have suddenly had to flee their homes. Many more are sheltering wherever they can, cold, anxious and without many of the necessities of life. Homes have been destroyed; loved ones have been separated; lives have been lost. So, leaving aside the origin and the resolution of the conflict, matters which are generally outside of our personal reach, we could ask ourselves, how can we apply the wisdom of ‘two points of view’ to this situation?

There is a very simple exercise we could employ. Whatever we do, whatever we experience, we might pause for a moment to think of those who do not have the same opportunity. If we go to the market for food, we can think of those whose shops have been emptied by want or shattered by explosions. If we sit on a sunny park bench, we can think of those who are hiding underground. If we take a shower, we can think of the one who has no running water. If we meet a loved one, we can think of those whose friends and family have vanished, perhaps forever.

This exercise may sound like it will drain all the colour out of our life and make us miserable, but if we do it with the right understanding, it will have the opposite effect. It can help us to be more present, to see more vividly all the blessings that we commonly take for granted, and to be more grateful. What is more, it brings us closer to the One. Anyone who has enjoyed seeing an unknown child laughing with glee in a playground has felt the truth that the happiness of one is the happiness of all. In the same way, the pain of one is the pain of all, although we often try not to see. By thinking of others as we experience the blessings that our own life offers, we come closer to the reality of oneness, to one single family – and perhaps we also begin to think of what we might do in practical terms to help ease the suffering of our unseen brothers and sisters – not just in Europe but around the world.

Feeling a connection is only the first step, but it is a necessary beginning in the thousand-mile journey toward the One.