

## Inner Call Podcast #174 Searching for the Heart August 5, 2022

What is the heart? In the ninth century, a Persian scholar and physician named Ali ibn Sahl al Tabari, apparently a thoughtful man who among other accomplishments produced the first known medical encyclopedia, wrote, "From the time of Adam to the resurrection people cry, 'The heart, the heart,' and I wish that I might find someone to describe what the heart is or how it is, but I find none. What then is this heart, of which I hear only the name? ... All the evidences of Truth exist in the heart, yet only the name of it is to be found."

We might ask the same question. In the journey toward the One, Sufism lays great emphasis on the heart, and Hazrat Inayat Khan said that if anyone – seeking perhaps to pigeon-hole us as followers of some specific faith or group – asks what religion Sufism is, we could reply, 'The religion of the heart.' It is an answer that says we are, or strive to be, universal, since everyone is born with a heart. But some hearts are warm and others are cold; some hearts are welcoming, and others are shut tight, like a closed fist. The heart may be universal but not everyone's heart fulfils its purpose. Why?

It is a mystery we should try to solve. In the lecture 'The Tuning of the Heart,' from volume XIV, The Smiling Forehead, our master tells us : *There is nothing one will not sacrifice, accomplish, or face when the heart quality is awakened. All cowardice and weakness, misery and wretchedness come when the heart quality is covered and man begins to live in his brain.*

To dwell in our mind is miserable, then, a sort of exile within our own being, but to experience the heart quality can transform one's life. Most of us are at least dimly aware of this – but often we go on from day to day, enduring and perpetuating a self-created hardship. What can we do to discover the heart quality?

Begin with beauty, for it is beauty that makes us aware of our heart. Many respond first to external beauty, the beauty of creation : the joy of an innocent child, for example, or the sublime canopy of a star-filled sky. Then perhaps we begin to recognize the beauty of the inner realms, where we find the invisible, undeniable grace of love, and such qualities as kindness, generosity and compassion. And as we contemplate these qualities, we also begin to shed, whether consciously or unconsciously, the burden of negative feelings – antagonism, resentment, envy and all the rest of it – that we have kept stored up inside.

If we persevere in our search for the heart quality, there will come, some day, a recognition that the heart has no limits. It will hold whatever is placed in it. If our horizon is small, our heart will be constricted, no more than a shriveled pea; if it is wide, we can hold the whole universe in our heart. It is, we could say, a mirror, but a living one, a divine mirror, and as such, deserves in itself our admiration, for if we ever wish to experience the divine presence, it is only to be found in the human heart.

Humbly contemplating this mirror, our little self fades away, and we may remember these words of Hazrat Inayat Khan : *My heart is no longer mine, since Thou hast made it Thy dwelling place, my Lord.*