

THE MESSAGE IN OUR TIME

Lecture given at the Mysticism of Sound Conference, 24 October 2007 by Pir-o-Murshid Hidayat Inayat-Khan

The world Messengers have come to humanity with the great ideal of liberating the various religious diversifications from the speculative theories about the abstract that have persisted through the centuries, maintaining thereby the specter of fanaticism even in this age, when science has successfully catapulted factual knowledge as far as the surface of the moon.

To the question, 'What is the Message?' the answer differs in accordance with the understanding, because each person represents a different point of view, yet all claim to drink from the same water of truth, whether it be called a stream, a river, a lake, a sea, an ocean or the Divine source itself.

A world Message could be understood as an abstract energy, which becomes intelligible to humanity through the inspiration of those who, all down the ages, have brought the one, same Message, and whose magnetism resonates in the hearts of the devotees, varying in accordance to the interpretation given to the original word.

The preservation of that resonance through the ages has always been dependant upon a continuous renewal of the original inspiration, and the characteristics of those renewals have always been related to the local living conditions, rules and cultures, in the areas

where they expanded. The mission of those renewals could be identified by the term "religion."

A religion, which is the materialization of the original Message, is continually reshaped over time, according to the understanding of various cultural reformers in words and forms adapted to the educational standards of the multitude, whereas the parallel development of science has always been focused on the search for definable facts, structured according to logical definitions.

Through the centuries, the moral and spiritual values of religious theories have been diversely interpreted by the "callers from the pulpit," and are still today variously understood by the followers of the followers without realizing that these interpretations have, in fact, little in common with the original word.

Religious structures, which originate from spiritual ideals, have always been destined to offer a helping hand toward the realization of Truth, but regrettably, these high ideals tend to be limited within different cultural forms and to be clad in artificial garments by those who do not see that the means to attain an object cannot be the goal; the goal is further still. The path is the means of reaching the goal, but if one argues over the authenticity of the path, one is misled by the differences and can never reach the goal.

Each religion strikes a characteristic tone, and when all blend harmoniously together as a divine symphony, one then encounters the reality of a perfect unity of all spiritual ideals. However, this does not mean indulging in a federative initiative; it only means discovering the golden thread running through all religious structures, which reveals a profound oneness at

the level of the original inspiration, interwoven within all religious expressions.

Spiritual ideals cannot be the property of one particular transmission because of their universal nature. Spirituality is a call for the human right of thought and feeling on the spiritual path. This call has been sounding ever since eternity but has not always been understood, which explains why various terminologies generally misinterpret the real meaning of that call. Besides this, what brings still more confusion regarding spirituality is that there is an endless number of self-proclaimed mystics, occultists, spiritualists, fortune-tellers and parapsychologists, whose missions seem to be to content those who are chasing after miracles.

Spirituality cannot be limited within doctrines nor defined in words, and it cannot be taught or learned; it can only be discovered by way of the heart. Spirituality really means rebirth, in the sense that one begins to discover that it has always been one's birthright. Spirituality could best be described as the perfume of true knowledge, although it has been illustrated in all ages in many folkloric fairy-tales, which have given spirituality the appearance of

being related to strange powers and eccentric behavior.

The Message in our time is not only meant for a certain culture nor is it just for one part of the world; it is destined for the whole of humanity. It is a universal message of "Spiritual Liberty", expressed in a Universal Worship inspired by the history of the great religions, known and unknown to the world at large.

Sufism is neither a new religion nor a cult, neither a doctrine nor a secret institution. Perhaps one could say that Sufism is the same religion of the heart that has always been, ever since wisdom was wisdom. Therefore, the term "Sufi," meaning wisdom, does not refer only to ancient schools, known or unknown, where spiritual ideas have blossomed within various orders through the ages, but the term Sufi also indicates wisdom as revealed in the purification of the mind from pre-conceived ideas and illogical thinking, especially with regard to abstract concepts.

The Sufi teachings are focused upon the Spirit of Guidance, the Teacher of all teachers; the source of inspiration to the world of science, of creativity to the world of art, and of liberty



The Message In Our Time Lecture, Hidayat Inayat-Khan, Nuria Sabato Photo

to the social world. To the religious world, this Message calls aloud for the unity of spiritual ideals, which is the necessary condition for raising human understanding to a level of spiritual awakening.

Sufism is not a religion; it is an attitude, a path. It is the path of love for mankind. It is not a speculative adventure; there is no searching after phenomena. Sufism does not mean being any better than anybody else. Sufism means to be a human being, so that others might perhaps benefit from the experience.

The mystic strives constantly to offer the fruits of experience, so that others might be inspired to discover that love really means rising in love and not falling in love; and that devotion means the fall of the false concept of self, followed by the rising of the consciousness of the true self. The light of the glowing sun cannot be limited to just one ray. That light shines in an infinite number of rays. In the same way, the light of Truth is not only reserved for the so-called spiritual people; it shines in the hearts of everyone, good or bad. Nevertheless, the brilliancy of that light varies in its intensity, dependent upon the transparency of the ego.

Numerous methods are offered in view of discovering the Light of Truth! There are also thousands of spiritual schools! But unless one tries to hold the ego under control, one is wasting one's time, and only facing disillusionment. Disillusion in spirituality is even more discouraging than disillusion in worldly affairs.

The ego is like an engine with tremendously powerful energy, but it can only be useful if it is wisely guided in all circumstances. In the same way, the most powerful locomotive would be helpless if there were no rails to roll on, and

what is the good of rails without an engine to roll on them? In this context the locomotive obviously pictures the power of the ego, which is kept under control by rolling along the rails of wisdom so that it can be useful for beneficial purposes. Let us stop asking 'What can others do for us?' Let us start by asking ourselves, 'What can we do for others?'

Before even venturing to tread on the spiritual path, the first step to take is to become a true brother or sister within the limits of one's own conception of good and bad. One then realizes that to be victorious over others does not mean having conquered them, which is in fact an inner defeat. To be defeated is not necessarily a defeat; it might be an inner victory, the victory over the ego.

Hazrat Inayat Khan has given us to understand that in reality everyone is spiritual, because life itself is spirit, and spirit is life-power, motivating the materialized garb of the self. But along life's path one tends to distance oneself from that inborn spirituality, identifying oneself with one's limited mental and physical status, without realizing that the all-pervading immanence of life is that indescribable power constantly manifesting behind all impulses.

There is a well-known theater play that mentions the famous words "To be or not to be", emphasizing the fact that striving in this difficult life requires one either to be or not to be. One might tend to assume that this method also applies to obtaining spirituality, whereas spirituality does not have any meaning unless one discovers that to be spiritual means exactly

the reverse of wanting to be something, or pretending to be something. We imagine that to become spiritual means becoming higher and higher, but have we ever stopped to discover that everything that we have wanted to obtain up there is already right here in our own hearts? Spirituality means losing the desire to impress others, whereby one unconsciously identifies one's self with the divine presence; otherwise spirituality mostly remains just a dream.

The expression of truth can only be true if it is a silent demonstration of an awakening to the solution of the everlasting riddle: whence and whither, and when communicating with each in each one's language while holding fast to the only secret there is in spirituality: inner peace and happiness. But in this electronic age, where the power of thought and feeling is first cast upon a sending device and then captured at the other end by an automatic receiver, it is obvious that the lack of individual contact and the absence of the language of the heart can lead to misunderstandings in dealing with others.

When envying others, it should well be remembered that, although one might have less happiness than those whom one envies, one would sooner or later have to pay an even higher price than one would have expected for that same happiness. And what is more, true happiness cannot be obtained at the cost of the suffering of others.

When wanting happiness for one's self, one is faced by quite a number of necessary conditions, such as sincerely appreciating

all that one has been granted, and having compassion for those who are not so privileged as oneself. There is a difference between being happy as the result of a particular circumstance, and being in an unconditional state of happiness, where one's consciousness is raised to a higher level than just the "I" concept.

Happiness is a privilege. It is also our birthright. Therefore, it certainly is our duty to be happy, but this is only possible when offering happiness to others without expecting anything in return. This golden key to happiness implies absolute absence of self-assertion and self-pretence and insight into one's own misjudgments, rather than blaming others for one's unhappiness. Therefore, one of the many methods for overcoming displeasure is to focus one's own thoughts elsewhere than just upon one's self.

There is also Destiny's grace, but for inexplicable reasons this favor is unconditionally bestowed upon the chosen ones, but it also has its price to pay at the level of responsibilities, and is mostly encountered unexpectedly on the path. But under the reign in our time of impersonal automatism, basic notions of behavior, self-discipline, concentration, communication and the attunement to sacredness all tend to be disregarded. Those who believe in great ideals should realize the need to develop an attunement to the feelings of Divinity at all levels of education, religion and culture.

The Sufi emblem is a flying heart, symbolically representing the great power of love as it reaches upwards, carried upon wings of "Spiritual Liberty" into the spheres of Divine Consciousness. In this symbol, the five-pointed star represents the light of the Spirit of Guidance, illuminating the way all along the journey toward inner awakening. The crescent



Hazrat Inayat-Khan, archives photo

moon represents the receptive and expressive qualities of the heart set free when the limited self is no more the spectator.

Upon the altar of the unity of religious ideals, the burning lights represent the great world religions, as well as all those who, whether known or unknown to the world, have held aloft the light of Truth through the darkness of human ignorance. A further aspect of the Universal Worship is the offering of passages from various holy scriptures placed side by side, with the object of discovering the similarity found in all, provided that the teachings are received at a spiritual level of understanding.

During this sacred ceremony, the blessings of all the great Masters are profoundly felt when one's heart is open to the pure essence of all religious inspirations, and when these are seen



Murshid's Blessing, archives photo

as so many rays of light coming from one and the same source, which is destined to shine for the welfare of all humanity.

What is really experienced in worship? What is really understood by prayer, contemplation and meditation?

Is it not, perhaps, the call of the heart which is then heard? The spiritual path is a process of tuning the heart to an inner pitch, which is only heard when the doors of the heart are open, and the absence of the self miraculously reveals the silent tone within..

What is the heart? Is it not the temple of God?

And if so, could we really venture to invite the Divine Presence into that temple if impurities such as the 'I am' concept are there, along with all our doubts and fears and wants?

But what does this all really mean? It means that as beloved ones of God, we are expected to remind ourselves of the noble responsibilities which are ours. It is then that one might eventually discover that God-consciousness, which one had been frantically pursuing, is in fact already there. But so long as this consciousness is not an expression of the heart, then whatever be the external appearance of spirituality, piety or morality, this all remains void of Godliness.

If God-consciousness could be explained at all, it is certainly an unconditional reality of love, human and Divine; and it is with the great power of this profound realization that all brothers and sisters of all convictions humbly unite in Love, Harmony and Beauty on the path of spirituality.

Hidayat Inayat-Khan



THE MYSTICISM OF SOUND

On this special day, we are all welcoming each other most heartily as fellow travelers on the path of spiritual liberty that leads to the divine temple of Peace.

As we proceed onwards hand in hand, together holding high the banner of the unity of spiritual ideals, we discover that the secret of cultivating peace in one's self resides in becoming a selfless example of love, harmony and beauty, so that perhaps others might be inspired.

– Hidayat Inayat-Khan

In a Sufi prayer it is said:

*Raise us above the distinctions and differences
which divide men!*

Send us the peace of Thy Divine Spirit!

Unite us all in Thy perfect Being!