



Religious Gatheka – Hazrat Inayat Khan

### 30 The God-Ideal

God and the God-ideal may be explained as the sun and the light. And as there come times when the sun becomes covered by clouds, so there come times when the God-ideal becomes covered by materialism.

But if the cloud for a moment covers the sun, that does not mean that the sun is lost to you, and so if in the reign of materialism the God-ideal seems to have disappeared yet God is there all the same.

The condition of the world is just like the ever-rising and falling waves. Sometimes it seems to rise and sometimes to fall, but with every rising and falling wave the sea is the same, and so with all its changes life is the same.

We find that during the past few years all over the world there has come a phase, when the God-ideal seems entirely forgotten. It does not mean that churches have disappeared, it does not mean that God does not exist, but that a light that once was there has been covered, has ceased to light us. But at the same time, as there is night after the day so these changes of condition come in life, light and darkness.

In the age of science on the one side and materialism on the other and commercialism on the top man seems to have blinded himself in acquiring wealth and power and sees nothing else. It is not the search for light - it is the nature of every soul to search for light - but the great question is, how can the light come when nation is against nation, race against race, the followers of one religion against the followers of another? How can there be Peace and how can there come Light? The sign of the day is that all things are clear, and the sign of the night is that nothing can be found or seen, there are clouds. The most dreadful nightmare the world has ever seen has just passed away; and although that nightmare seems to have gone, its effect is still here, and the effect that is left is worse than the cause, for prejudice is worse than bloodshed.

And when man thirsts for the blood of his fellowman how can we say that there is light? If a man eats joyfully at his table when his neighbor is dying of hunger, where is the light?

That is the condition of humanity today. And what is the cause? It is because the Light, the God-ideal is not there.

I was once amused by a very simple answer from a maid, when somebody came to the door and knocked. The maid was not free to go at once but took her time and when at last she came the

man was very cross and said: “ Why did you not open the door quickly?” And then I asked the maid: “What do you think was the reason for the person being cross?” and she said with her innocent expression: “Because there is no God with him.”(story)

Friends, the word of Christ is that God is Love and if God is Love then we, every one of us, can prove God in us by expressing God in our life. Yes, according to the external customs of different religions, one goes to church, one goes to the mosque, one to the synagogue, one to the temple of Buddha, but the inner church is neither in the mosque nor in the synagogue, but in the heart of man, where God abides and which is the habitation of Christ. With this divine element lighted in man’s heart he will go to the house of prayer and then his prayer will be heard. There is a well known story in India, that a girl was crossing a place where a Moslem was performing his prayer and the law is that no one should cross where a person is praying. When the girl returned, the man said to her: “How insolent! Do you know what sin you have done?” “What did I do?” said the girl. And the man said that no one was allowed to cross. “I did not mean any harm,” said the girl, “But tell me, what do you mean by praying?” “For me prayer is thinking of God”, said the man. “Oh!” she said, “But I was going to see my young man and I was thinking of him and I did not see you; and if you were thinking of God, how did you see me?”

The idea, therefore, my friends, is that prayer becomes living if it is offered from a living heart; from a dead heart prayer has no meaning and is dead. There is a story of an Arab that he was running to the mosque where the prayer of God was being offered, but before he could arrive the prayers were finished. On his way he met a man coming from the mosque and asked him: “Are the prayers finished?” The man replied that they were finished and the other sighed deeply and said “Alas!” Then the man asked: “ Will you give the virtue of your sigh in exchange for the virtues of my prayers?” And the other agreed. Next day the simple man saw the Prophet in a dream, who told him he had made a bad bargain, for that one sigh was worth all the prayers of a lifetime, for it was from the heart.

There are different human beings in different stages of evolution and it is natural that every human being according to his particular stage of evolution imagines God before he prays. And it is a question for anyone else to judge the one who prays and to say: “God is not this or that?” Persons who force their beliefs on others often put them against that belief even if that were the true belief. It requires a great deal of tact, thought and consideration to explain the belief or to correct the belief of another. In the first place it is insolent on the part of man to want to explain God, although man today would like not only to explain but also even examine whether the spirit of God exists! The other day I was so much amused to hear that there are people who not only want to take photographs of the spirits, but also even to weigh the soul! It was a good thing in the ancient times when the state had respect for the God-ideal and religion and taught that respect to humanity. To-day man wishes to use what he calls ‘freedom’ in religion, even in the foundation of all religions, the God-ideal!

But then it must be remembered that it is not the path of freedom that leads to the goal of freedom, but the path of the God-ideal that leads to the goal of Truth.

The great personalities who have descended on earth, from time to time, to awaken in man that Love which is his divine inheritance, found echo in innocent souls rather than in great intellects. Man often confuses wisdom with cleverness and cleverness with wisdom. But these two are

different; man can be wise and can be clever and man can be clever and not wise, and by cleverness a person will strive and strive and will not reach there. It is a stream, the stream of love which leads towards God.

There is a story that a king was traveling and hunting in the woods, and the king was hungry and stopped at the house of a peasant who treated him very kindly. When the king was leaving this peasant he was so touched with his kindness that without telling him he was a king, he said to him: "Take this ring and if ever you are in trouble, come to me in the city and I will see what I can do for you." After a time there was a famine and the peasant was in great trouble and his wife and child were dying, so he set out to come and see this man. Of course, when he showed the ring, he was brought to the king and when he entered the room, he saw the king busy in prayer.

When the king came near to him, he said: "What were you doing?" "Praying for peace and love and happiness among my subjects" "So there is a greater one than you, to whom you must go for what you seek? Then I will go to him, who is greater and on whom even your destiny depends," said the peasant. He would accept no help, and at last the king had to send what was needed quietly to his home, first saying that no one must tell him that it came from the king. The idea is that it is not only belief but faith which is necessary. Belief is a thing, but faith is a living being. And the warners and teachers of humanity and the great preachers who have come from time to time when darkness prevailed, what message did they bring? Did they bring new religions or new theories to the world? No, when Jesus Christ said: "I have not brought a new law but I have come to fulfill the law", then who else at any time could bring a new theory? The scientist perhaps but not the spiritual messenger. Then what did the spiritual message bring? It brought to the world a living God, a light hidden beyond words. With the spiritual message God has sent His life and Light upon the world. What the work of the Sufi Movement is destined to do in the present epoch, is to bring about a better understanding among the followers of the different religions. The Sufi message is not a new message, although it strikes the note of the day. It is the re-echo of the same voice, the voice that we heard in all ages. At the present time when races and nations and the followers of different religions are all one against the other, this is a time when the word of unity and peace alone can unite all together in God. The Sufi Order is not a community and not a religion, it is a nucleus of the human brotherhood which is the inner call of every soul. The Sufi Message is given to all nations, it is a call to all races, to the followers of all religions. It teaches people to follow whatever religion they may profess, but to follow it truly and understanding it better; not only to believe in God and the words of Christ, but to have faith in Him and His Divine word.

We must think of the tolerance of the Master and of His forgiveness and what the world would be today if we had it too. If we follow the natural religion, that divine impulse that is in every heart, then we shall be living the true religion.