

Friendship



Friendship is the first lesson of spirituality that one can learn.

Friendship is a word which we all use in our everyday language, and yet it could take one's whole life only to realize its meaning. However learned a person may be, however pious, spiritual, or experienced, if he has not learned the nature and character of friendship he has not learned anything. This is the first and the last thing we have to learn. We so often use this word lightly, calling every acquaintance a friend, or professing to be somebody's friend; but the more we realize the meaning of it, the less we are able to claim friendship. For everything in life we are tested, examined, and tried, but to pass this examination of friendship is the most difficult thing in the world.

Today when nations are against nations and races against races, when communities are against communities, and one religion against another, it is now that friendship is so much needed....One may think that friendship, a personal friendship, means nothing; that one does not become spiritual through

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*These quotations were selected from the works of
Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan*

a personal friendship. But one does. A person begins his spiritual accomplishment by learning how to be a friend. For one who is really treading the path of friendship need not go anywhere to learn morals. Friendship itself teaches him sincerity, gratitude, sympathy, tenderness, appreciation; all these things that we must learn in this world, friendship teaches us. And once a man begins to learn these things through friendship with one person, he will naturally show to others the same virtues which he has acquired by going along this path; just as someone who has learned how to sing beautifully will naturally sing every song that is given to him beautifully. The one who has cultivated his heart through friendship will naturally be inclined to be friends with others.

It is not belief in God which leads us to the goal, nor is it the analysis and the knowledge of God that bring us there. It is the friendship of God. For someone who learns the lesson of friendship in this world, this lesson develops in the end into friendship with God. But when a person expects in return from his friend all that he does for him, then it is not friendship, it is business. It only means: I give you a shilling and you give me twelve pence. When a person judges his friend, then the spirit of friendship is not awakened in his heart, for a friend never judges. When a person talks to another about his friend, when he blames him, when he criticizes him, he does not know what friendship is. The meaning of friendship is too sacred to realize. All other relationships and connections in this life are empty if friendship is not at the back of them to strengthen them. The relationship between mother and daughter, father and son, brother and sister, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, all these connections need a spirit behind them; and this spirit is the spirit of friendship.

If one has made a friend it is not something that one has made to order, that must just fit in according to one's expectations and wishes. Every individual has his own characteristics, and as long as the spirit of forgiveness is not developed, friendship cannot last. It is a continual forgiveness that helps friendship to endure. Much can be learned by study, but not unselfishness. Unselfishness can be learned by one thing only and that is by treading the path of friendship. And it brings beauty into one's life; a friendly person, whether in business or in a profession, in whatever capacity he stands, gives one a feeling of warmth; in other words an atmosphere of life. One is always glad to meet a friendly person in a shop, in a factory, in an office. When this spirit is awakened one can feel in his words, in his voice, in his expression, in his atmosphere, that he is a friendly person, that there is something that goes out to meet others, a continual tendency to harmonize with others.

Once this spirit is developed the ever-complaining tendency vanishes. If it is not developed then this world is full of thorns

that prick. Then one will have no peace, no happiness, whatever one's position in life. If a person wants to make his life easy, if he wishes to create happiness in his life, he must try to crush that ego, that Nafs, that thought of self which keeps one continually absorbed in one's own thoughts and in one's own affairs. By rising above it he will learn the spirit of friendship. And then for him the same path which was full of thorns will become full of roses. For some souls that same world which can be hell to many others, is heaven. For friendship changes man's point of view. An unfriendly man, as soon as he sees another person, sees him from his own critical point of view. He has his preconceived ideas, and therefore he is not allowed by Providence to see the good side of the other. But the one in whom the friendly spirit is awakened always overlooks little errors, faults, mistakes; his sympathy and his love naturally help him to rise above the faults of man. That is the story of Jesus Christ, the friend of humanity, before whom the greatest sinners were brought; but the attitude of the Master was always forgiving. Those who brought them were unfriendly; the Master was friendly.

Life is as we look at it. If we wish to find faults we can find faults in the best person in the world, and if we wish to find good points we can find good points in the worst person in the world. It is as we see life. Someone went to Jami, the great seer of Persia, and asked him if he would accept him as his disciple on the spiritual path. Jami asked him, 'Have you loved, have you learned the manner of friendship?' He said, 'No, not yet.' Jami said, 'Go into the world again, and learn it.' The first lesson on the spiritual path that one has to learn is the manner of friendship. Once that is learned then all other parts of the spiritual journey will become easy. Where do all the disturbances, such as wars, revolutions, disagreeable experiences among nations, fights among parties, come from? They all come from lack of friendship. And the most extraordinary thing is that one party may perhaps have been fighting another party for years, but if we investigate their particular ideas we find that they are not even friends among themselves, for fighting against the other party produces and develops this unfriendly spirit in them. It is a kind of intoxication. In education, in religion, or in anything else, the best thing one can do is to introduce the spirit of friendliness. And how can we introduce it? This is something which cannot arise only by reading some books about it. There exist innumerable societies and institutions of brotherhood everywhere, but they prove to be anything but brotherhood. Therefore that is not the way. The way is for an individual to be brought to understand fully that the essence of morals and of religion and of education is one, and that one essence is the manner of friendship. Sufis of all

ages have named it Suluk, which means divine manner, beneficence. That is why the best education is beneficence: how to bring pleasure and happiness to another; and one can begin to learn this by understanding fully what friendliness is and by practicing it at the same time.

Relationship is nourished by contact, kingship is maintained by reciprocity, but friendship is developed with love. There is no relationship that can be compared with friendship, for it is in learning the law of friendship that one understands ethics and morals, and also the relation between man and God.

No man in the world is faultless, no soul in the world is perfect. If on our part there is no desire to overlook our friends' shortcomings, there can be no more friendship. Friendship is maintained by recognizing that a human being is imperfect, that he has his faults and shortcomings. There is always something in him to overlook, and if we go on doing so, there is always the possibility that he may develop those very qualities which are lacking, for we may add to our friend qualities that are wanting in him.

It is by the attitude of friendship that man expands and breaks down those walls which keep him in prison; and by breaking down these walls he experiences the at-one-ment with the Absolute.

He who realizes the relation of friendship between one soul and another — the tenderness, delicacy, and sacredness of this relationship — he is living, and in this way he will one day communicate with God.

Contact Information

Special Notices

Sufi Order Classes in Toronto

- Classes will not be held during the month of August.
- Please check with Khusrau to see whether they will resume in September.

Sufi Order classes in Brampton

- Classes will not be held during the month of August.
- They will resume on Thursday, September 2.

I have always heard my Murshid say that a friendship in the path of God and Truth cannot be compared with any other friendship, because every other friendship has some or other reason for it, but this friendship is higher than any other friendship because it leads to perfection.

The one who has never learnt the manner of friendship will never know the way to God. He may be God's worshipper, but he cannot be the friend of God.

Grace...is the friendship of God. God's grace does not come specially to the pious, it does not come necessarily to the people who are very good, nor does it come readily to the people who are very occult or mystical. It comes as love comes from friend to friend.

The perfection of friendship, in which lies all spiritual perfection, comes when the soul is so developed that there is no one whom it cannot bear. When it has reached this state, it has certainly passed into the ranks of those initiates whose names are written in the spiritual records.

Coming Events

June 2-6, near Ottawa, ON: The Dervishes Banquet, with Pir Zia Inayat Khan, Aziza Scott and Wajid Gallien. For details, please visit the Toronto Sufi Order website or contact the Ottawa Sufi Order centre at [redacted].

June 18-20, in Buffalo, NY: A three day intensive with Shahabuddin Less. For more information, please contact [redacted]

July 30-Aug 3, in North Hatley, QC: 3rd Annual Wee Sufi Camp with Shahabuddin Less, Kothrenada Less, Aziza Scptt and Eric Akbar Manolson. For more info please contact either [redacted] or visit the Toronto Sufi Order website.

Sept 18-19, in Rochester, NY: A weekend with Shahabuddin Less. For more information, please contact [redacted]

October 22-24, in Niagara Falls, ON: 18th annual Niagara Falls dance retreat with Radha Bukho, Alima Jeanne Ross and friends. For more information, please [redacted] or visit the Toronto Sufi Order website.

Activities

The Message Class: provides an opportunity to experience the teachings and practices of the Sufi Order on an ongoing basis. These classes, based on teachings given by Hazrat Inayat Khan and Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, are deepened through the use of complementary meditation practices which may use the breath, light, Dhikr (remembrance of God) and Wazifa (mantra).

Classes in the Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan are held, in *Toronto*, each *Wednesday at 8:30 pm* and, in *Brampton*, every *Thursday at 8:00 pm*. The last meeting of each month is dedicated to the practice of Dhikr. For this evening only, no instruction is offered.

Dhikr: means remembrance of God. Participants unite in intensive exploration and experience of this central practice of the Sufis. *If you have never been to Dhikr, please call in advance.*

Healing Circle: Open to members of the Sufi Healing Order. The Healing Circle is held in Brampton, at 9:30 am, on Saturdays. If you wish to attend, please phone [redacted]

Universal Worship Service: Universal Worship Services are held at 1:30 pm on the [redacted]