

## THE SPIRITUAL HIERARCHY

The idea of a spiritual hierarchy has always been discussed in all ages, and especially at this time when people have many more divergent conceptions regarding spiritual problems. The spiritual hierarchy is not a product of man's imagination. It is not only a poetic idea; but it is as real as one's own being. Among hills and mountains there are small mountains and there are big mountains. Among rivers there are smaller and larger rivers; and all through nature one finds the evidence of nature's hierarchy.

What gives us the best picture of life is the sky with the planets, and the sun apart as a giver of light and life. When we consider all the planets, including the moon, we shall find they are all receptacles of light, reflecting the light of the sun according to their capacity. The moon functions to the greatest degree as a receptacle of this same light.

According to the mystical point of view, if it were not for the moon the whole cosmos would go to pieces, for the reason that the central currents of the sun are functioning in the moon, which reflects the light of the sun in fullness. The difference is that as it is only the reflection of the sun, though a full reflection, it has finer currents of light. These are soft, cooling, attractive, and beautiful. Therefore, the light of the sun is called *Jelal* by the Sufi's, and the light of the moon *Jemal*. The former expresses power, the latter beauty. The former is creative, the latter responsive. It is the sun, which has the light. The moon possesses the light of the sun, not its own. God is the Knower, and the All wise, and the one who gives His message gives God's knowledge, not his own. What the moon may seem to give as light, is not its own. It is the light of the sun; and so it has been with the messengers at all times. People have heard them speak, and therefore they call it the message of Buddha or of Christ or of Mohammad; but in reality the message was always God's.

All beings in the world are the receptacle of God's message; not only human beings, but also even the lower creation. All objects and all conditions convey to us the message of the one and only Being. But the difference is that although they convey the message of God, they do not know it. They are not conscious of it. Not only objects but also, even human beings are unconscious of it. If they only knew that there is nothing in this world which is not the instrument of God.

As there are more useful and less useful objects, so there are more important and less important human beings. If they were all equal, there would not have been the diversity of different ranks and positions in a state. There would not have been generals and colonels in the army, but only soldiers. There would not have been high and low notes on the piano but only one key, one note, one sound. There would not have been different rooms in the house but every room would have been a drawing room. This shows that it is a necessity of life that there should be a hierarchy, either by election or by appointment, for the world cannot exist without it. Aristocracy and democracy are not two things, but essentially one; and in both cases there is only one chief thing, and that is hierarchy. When it is right, it is called aristocracy; when it goes wrong and a new spirit comes to rebuild it, this process is a state of democracy. It is natural that man should be agitated over one thing when he wants to build something else. He revolts against everything that existed before, and so, in rebuilding, this revolutionary spirit often acts to his disadvantage.

Just as there is a system of government externally, so there is also a system of inward government. One can see this government in every family too. There is a king in every family; there are ministers, counselors, partakers of his responsibility, and servants who are paid for their work. Taking the universe as one whole, it also has a system of government. There is a system of government in the sky. There is the sun, then there is the moon, which is directly focused on the sun, there are the principal planets, which surround it, and there are the stars. And on the model of the heavens the inner and outer governments of the earth are planned.

Man's body is arranged in the same way. There is one principal factor, then there are working factors like servants, then the principal ministers, and when one takes the being of a man, from his soul to his body it is one complete kingdom, constituted of all the necessary officials and servants, making one's being like a kingdom. Thus in all circumstances there will always be a king. No democratic ideal, however much it may be against the aristocratic form, will ever succeed in life without forming a kingdom; the only difference is that if the head or leader is not called King he will be named President.

In the spiritual hierarchy, there are seven grades of spiritual souls, and each grade is divided into two classes, *Jelal* and *Jemal*. And descending from the combination of these two spirits there comes a third line as a central line. This is the spirit of prophecy, which is called the Spirit of Guidance. It has never been necessary for any of the members of the hierarchy to make claims for themselves. In this world of falsehood there are many false claims, and in the worldly life even the real claims are no more true than false. Also, there is no reason why these claims should be made, since the holders of these offices can serve their purpose better by being silent than by announcing themselves.

Every office in the world is accompanied by a certain amount of vanity, and vanity is the greatest enemy of spiritual people. Then there is always the jealousy of human nature at work, and also the competition and rivalry that give stimulus to life in the world. That is why the office has always been concealed by the spiritual office-holders, except by the teachers who had to give the message of God to the people. And how many in the world would not believe the teacher unless they knew he was the office-bearer from God!

The lives of the teachers were the example and proof of their office. They had no other evidence but that. Miracles only became known afterwards. Legends were formed afterwards. Poems were made afterwards. Temples were built afterwards. Their following increased afterwards, and their words were valued afterwards. But during their lifetime they met with nothing but opposition and the inconstancy of their followers, who agreed one day and disagreed the next. They suffered all sorts of ordeals, even crucifixion.

The teacher's position is more delicate than that of the master, because he must make claims and be among the people. And being among people is like being a bird coming from a distant forest and arriving in a strange land. All the other birds, finding it different from themselves, wish to fight it and torture it, and even kill it. That has been the lot of the prophet at all times, and it will always be the same. The last one left a warning for the one who came after him, which was that the prophecy was sealed. He did not mean by this that the work of the Spirit of Guidance was sealed. In the future the message should be given without a claim, and it would be the work that was done that would prove its genuineness, instead of a claim.

According to the Sufi conception there are seven degrees in the spiritual hierarchy, which can be distinguished as different stages of responsiveness, in other words of higher initiation. They are: *Pir*, *Buzurg*, *Wali*, *Ghauth*, *Qutb*, *Nabi*, *Rasul*. These are the degrees belonging to the inner initiation to which a disciple becomes entitled after receiving the necessary outer initiations. It is beyond words to express what inner initiation means and in what from it is given. Those to whom the inner initiation is unknown may explain it as a dream or as a vision, but in reality it is something higher and greater than that. I can only explain it by saying that the definite changes which take place during one's journey on the spiritual path are initiations, and it is these initiations which include man in the spiritual hierarchy.

People call them masters, but in reality they are pupils; for in point of fact no one in the world as a master save God. Man's privilege is to become a greater pupil. Therefore none of the great ones have called themselves masters, nor have they considered themselves to be so. What they have known in their lives is the privilege of opening their hearts wider and wider to reflect the light of the Master who is God Himself. The progress of these high initiates is according to their responsiveness, for they have never connected

themselves with what they have expressed.

Very often parents say something to their child in which there is the voice of God. Very often a kind friend suggests something to his friends, out of his love and sympathy, which happens to be a message of God. Sometimes a teacher says an inspiring word, which is like a word coming direct from God. Even from an innocent child a word may come as a warning from God; for all faces are His faces, and from all lips it is His word that comes, whenever it comes, but those who respond to Him become as His appointed servants. People call them Chosen Ones; but in reality God has chosen all, for all souls are near to the Creator. But the soul who is attached to the lips of God like a trumpet becomes the herald of His message, and what comes through his lips is not his own words, but the message of God.

In the life of a saint or master five degrees can be recognized, the progress of the saint and of the master being silent in the last two degrees; but in the life of a prophet all seven degrees are manifested to view. A saint or a master has one facility. He can do his work avoiding the notice of the world. But the life of the prophet compels him to go into the world, and thus, as he progresses from grade to grade through his life, he cannot hide himself, however much he may want to, from the gaze of the world. However, the sage of every category and degree, be he a saint, master or prophet, always prefers to remain unknown to the world; and as he progresses that desire increases. It is not only out of modesty or humbleness, but also for the protection of the spiritual ideal, which has developed in him, for it attracts dangers of all sorts when it is exposed to the common gaze. All beauty is veiled by nature and the higher the beauty, the more it is concealed. This makes it easy for a wise man to find out the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet, for one beats his drums and the other tries to keep in the background. If only his work in the world would let him remain there! But his efforts to accomplish something bring him to the notice of the world. However, his longing is to be unknown, for the only one who really deserves to be known is God.

The work of the *Pir* is helping individuals toward the unfoldment of their soul, and that of the *Buzurg* is to help by the power of his soul those who wish to advance spiritually.

*Wali* is the initiate whose will has come close to the divine will, and he shows it in the harmony which reigns in his own life, not only with his friends, but he will also be in harmony with an adversary. He shows harmony with the changing weather, and its different influences, and he is within harmony with all that he eats and drinks. He is in harmony with the place he lives and moves about in, and he harmonizes with all atmospheres. And so his will becomes the will of God; in other words, the will of God becomes his will. He may control a community, keeping it on the right track, but he mostly does the work for which he is appointed in an unobtrusive way. The greater a person is in spiritual advancement, the less assuming he becomes, and the more he avoids every show of piety or spirituality.

*Ghauth* is the next grade of the initiates. The influence of the *Ghauth* is wider. He gives up his personality wholly to the divine guidance, and wherever this *Ghauth* may be there will be an atmosphere of protection from all kinds of dangers such as floods, storms, plagues, or famines. He promotes the spiritual well being of a community.

*Qutb* is the third degree of a master, a still higher grade, when his mind becomes focused on the divine mind, and he has, to a lesser or greater extent, power over all elements, as well as influence upon life. Under him there is a dominion in which he is responsible for the order and peace of souls. He governs a country or nation spiritually.

*Nabi* is the apostle, called in Sanskrit *Bodhisatva*, whose spirit reflects the Spirit of Guidance. His work is mainly the giving of the message in the form of warning, awakening, preaching, teaching, and inspiring those to whom he may be sent. He comes into the lives of those who are meant to be guided along the spiritual

path. He is sent to nations when they are meant to change their conditions. He is sent to a community or race to give warnings. He is meant to be a reformer at the times when a reformer is needed. He elevates individuals and bears a divine message.

*Rasul* is the world-messenger, who comes for all people at the time of the world's need, and brings with him that inspiration, influence, and power which will harmonize humanity. He may be a king or a pauper; in whatever condition he comes, he will fulfil the purpose of his coming to earth. Answering the cry of humanity, he fulfils the purpose of his mission. The sign of *Rasul* is the crescent, which represents a responsive heart.

No man in the world has the power to give these higher initiations. They are given by God himself, and the initiates prove their initiations not in their claims, but in their works. The soul rises to that stage where manhood ends and godhead begins, enters the initiation of the spiritual hierarchy, and then he is neither man nor God. He is not God, because he is limited man; and he is not man, because he is God-conscious.

### **THE MASTER, THE SAINT, AND THE PROPHET**

There are three roads to spiritual attainment, which meet in the end at one junction. One road is that of the master. Another comes from quite a different point and is the road of the saint. The middle path between the two is that of the prophet. The path of the master is a path of war, war with those outer influences, which prevent one from making one's way through life. The path of the master requires self-discipline and willpower to make headway through life. He conquers himself. He battles with life. He is at war with destiny. He crusades against all that seems to him wrong. He finds the key to the secrets unknown to him. He turns all conditions, all things, all people, into the shape that he wishes, and molds as he likes the personalities that come in touch with him. He tunes personalities to the tone, which will suit his orchestration.

It is a path of accomplishment. All that the master takes up, he accomplishes. All that the master desires, he attains, sooner or later. Yet the master's one desire is spiritual attainment at its fullest. Therefore to him all other attainments, spiritual or material, are nothing but many steps on a staircase. The struggle on the path of the master is great. He has to struggle all the way. Every condition that he has to face on the way to accomplishment is harder to cope with than the one before. No doubt, as he advances on the path of attainment, he gains power through struggle. The greater the struggle through life, the greater his power. He has command over objects. He produces effects in objects, which are not naturally there. He can even rise to a state where he can command nature.

The spiritual hierarchy is made up of the masters. The world is ruled and governed, and although the spiritual hierarchy is different from outward governments, it is nevertheless an inner government. In the East such masters, whose thought, whose feeling, whose glance, whose impulse, can move the universe, are called *Wali*. The master may advance gradually through the five principal stages of attainment, and may even arrive at the stage of *Rasul* in the end.

The path of the saint is one of love, harmony, and beauty; ready to give, ready to sacrifice, ready to renounce, ready to give in and to yield. The saintly soul accepts all insults as a purifying process. He is resigned to every loss, for there is no loss without some gain and there is no gain, which is without any loss. There is always a hidden loss in the gain and a gain in the loss. Renunciation is not difficult for that soul, for in renunciation it finds its freedom. No sacrifice is too great for the saintly soul, for it gives it happiness. It need not learn generosity, for this is its nature, its character. Modesty, humility, tolerance, and forgiveness are part of the saint's being. He cannot do otherwise, for he knows no other way.

No doubt in the beginning the saintly soul finds difficulty on this path. The path of the saint is a constant battle with the self, for there is no end to the world's demands. In this world no one can be too good or too kind. The better one is the more good is asked of one. The kinder one is, the more kindness is expected from one; and so it goes on through life. The happiness a saintly soul finds, through life, lies in the fact that his will is gradually becoming harmonized with the will of God, so that God's will and his will in time become one. And no one can imagine that happiness except the souls who have experienced the feeling of resignation to all the crosses that one has to bear in life.

The spirit of a saint at last becomes tuned to the whole universe. He is in tune with all climates, with the weather, with nature, with the animals and birds. He becomes in tune with the trees and plants, in tune with all atmospheres, with all human beings of various natures, because he becomes the keynote of the whole universe. All harmonize with him. The virtuous souls, the wicked souls, angels and devils, all become in tune. He is in harmony with every object, with every element. He is in tune with those who have passed from this earth, with those in the other spheres as well as with those who live on earth. The moral of a saint is very difficult, but the spirit of the saint is a benediction to himself and a blessing to others.

The work of the master is to protect individuals and to safeguard the world, to keep away disasters that might be caused by the inharmony of the nature both of individuals and of the collectivity. It is to help those who are feeble but in the right, who are weak but just, when they are opposed by a powerful enemy. The work of the saint is to console the wretched, to take under the wings of mercy and compassion those left alone in life, to bless the souls that he meets on his path.

The way of the prophet is more balanced, for in the life of the prophet there is a balance of these two attributes: the power of attainment and the patience to be resigned to the will of God. So the prophet is at the same time both a warrior and a peacemaker. This way is *Kemal*, that is, perfect or balanced. The work of the prophet is not only in his own spiritual attainment, but he has a service of great importance to perform. As the prophet goes through the five stages on his way towards the fulfillment of his life's mission he acts as a warner, a healer, a reformer, a lawyer, a teacher, a priest, and as a preacher. Such service keeps the prophet away from what his soul always craves for, and that is the solitude of the wilderness. He longs for one place, and he is put in another place. The very soul who constantly yearns to flee from the crowd, because of his mission is put in the very midst of the crowd. Thus the work of the prophet in the world becomes as hard as if a person were asked to jump into the water and then come out dry. He must live in the world and not be of the world. However, it is very often the prophetic soul whose life's mission is to serve humanity in time of need, and it is the fulfillment of his service, which makes *Rasul*, the messenger.

The prophet is the message-bearer. The prophet is both master and servant. The prophet is a teacher and at the same time a pupil, for there is a great deal that he must learn from his experience in life; not in order to make it possible for him to receive the message, but in order to make himself capable of giving the message. For God speaks to the prophet in His divine tongue, and the prophet in his turn interprets it in the language of men, making it intelligible to them, trying to put the most subtle ideas in the gross terms of worldly language. Therefore not all that the prophet comes to give to the world is given in words, but that which cannot be given in words is given by his presence. It is given by the great love that gushes forth from his heart. It is given in his kind glance, and it is given in his benediction. And yet the most is given in silence that no earthly sense can perceive. The difference between human language and divine words is this, that a human word is a pebble. It exists, but there is nothing further. The divine word is a living word, just like a grain of corn. One grain of corn is not only one grain. In reality it is hundreds and thousands, for in the grain there is an essence which is always multiplying, and which will show perfection in itself.

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### Questions and Answers (July 18th 1923)

Q Is there, in relation to *Kaza* and *Kadr*, a difference in the path of the saint and the master?

A Certainly. The saint is resigned to *Kaza*, and the master has regard for *Kadr*. *Kaza* is the will of God, and *Kadr* free will of an individual.

Q What is free will? Can man in reality do a thing contrary to the will of God?

A The answer is expressed in the first part of my lecture. From the point of view of the absolute truth all is the will of God. There is no such thing as free will. But from the wisdom point of view there is a greater will, a mightier will, and a smaller will. That shows one side perfection - of God. The other side limitation - the fate of man.

### (July 19, 1923)

Q Will you please explain what you said yesterday about the two paths, the one, which leads to saintliness, and the one, which leads to mastership?

A There are two paths which lead to the goal, one of the saint and the other of the master. In one path the will is used in outward things, in the other path the will is mostly used to control oneself, in other words for the time being against oneself. This is the saintly path. It is wise, before one knows of the will of God, first to handle one's own will, and to use it knowing that it is given for some great purpose in life. The one is the path of renunciation, abnegation, resignation, and self-denial, from the beginning to the end. And by doing this one arrives to that meeting ground where one touches that divine perfection. And then there is the path of the master. The path of firmness and obstinacy, breaking and penetrating through every difficult situation that comes before him. And so fighting all along from the beginning to the end. In this he has to fight with himself and with the life outside. Therefore the struggle is both sides. And there is all the time the work of the will power, and all through there is a battle. In this battle all the conditions that one has to go through are of the same character and nature as of the warfare. To be wounded and to cause wounds, and to be hurt and to hurt another also. And in this way it is a constant struggle. But still for the higher air, and for the greater gain. In the end he strikes the same note which the saint has struck. Neither the path of the saint is easy, nor of the master. The place where they meet both become one. For the resignation brings the saint to the same realization of the harmony with the Infinite, as the struggle brings the master to the same conviction in the end.

There is a third temperament, and that is the middle temperament. In which temperament there is the saintly temperament and the temperament of the master. That is the prophetic temperament. Because the prophet begins his life with both, struggle and resignation. One moment struggle, and another moment resignation. Gain and resignation, continually going on. And therefore in the prophet one sees the saint and the master, both in one.

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### The Path of Initiation

Very much has been written and very much has been said about the path of initiation. People who have been in contact with various schools of occultism have understood it in different ways and thus have different ideas as to what initiation means. Actually, initiation only means a step forward, a step that should be taken with hope and courage. Without courage and hope, it would be most difficult to take any forward steps.

If I were asked to explain the meaning of initiation in plain words, I would say that it is like the experience of a person who has never learned how to swim. He steps into the river or into the sea for the first time without knowing whether he will be able to float or whether he will be swept away and drowned. Every person has had an initiation, in the worldly sense, in some form or another. When a businessman begins an entirely new enterprise and there is nothing to support him at that moment except the thought, "No matter whether I lose or gain, I will take a step forward, I will go into this enterprise though I do not know what will happen later," then he undergoes a worldly initiation. The first attempt of a man who wants to learn to ride, if he has never been on horseback before or driven a horse and does not know where the horse will take him 🐾 this also is an initiation.

But initiation, in the real sense of the word as it is used on the spiritual path, takes place when a person, despite having a religion and a belief, an opinion and ideas about spiritual things, feels that he should take a step in a direction which he does not know. When he takes the first step, that is an initiation.

Ghazali, a great Sufi writer of Persia, has said that entering the spiritual path is just like shooting an arrow at a point one cannot see so that one does not know what the arrow is going to hit. One only knows one's own actions, and one does not see the point aimed at. This is why the path of initiation is difficult for a worldly man. Human nature is such that a man born into this world who has become acquainted with the life of names and forms wants to know everything by name and form. He wants to touch something in order to be sure that it exists. It must make an appeal to his physical senses before he thinks that it exists. Without this, he does not believe that anything can exist. Therefore, it is difficult for him to undergo an initiation on a path that does not touch any of his senses. He does not know where he is going.

Besides, man has been taught from his childhood a certain faith or belief, and he feels himself so bound to that particular faith or religion that he trembles at every step he may have to take in a direction which, perhaps for a moment, seems different or even opposite to what he has been taught. Therefore, to take the first step on the path of initiation is difficult for a thoughtful person. No doubt a person who is driven by curiosity may jump into anything; but it is all the same to him whether he has initiation or not. However, for the one who takes initiation seriously, the first step is the most difficult.

Initiations, according to the mystics, are 12 in number, divided into 4 stages, just like the semitones in the octave or the 12 bones in the ear. The first three initiations are the first three steps, taken with the help of a guide whom one calls, in Sufi terms, a *murshid*, a teacher. In Vedantic terms, he is called *guru*. He will be someone who is walking this earth, a human being placed in the same conditions as everyone else, in the midst of active life and subject to all trials, troubles and difficulties. The help of such a friend is the first and most important step in these first three stages of the path.

In the East, one will rarely find people taking the spiritual path without the guidance of a teacher, for there it is an accepted fact that these first three steps, at least, must be taken with the help of someone living a human life on earth.

We can trace in the traditions that all the prophets, masters, saints and sages, however great, had an initiator. In the life of Jesus Christ one reads that he was baptized by John the Baptist. In the lives of all the other prophets and seers, there was always someone, however humble, modest or human, and very often not at all comparable in greatness to those prophets who took these first three steps with them.

But the mother is really the first initiator of all the prophets and teachers in the world. No prophet or teacher, no saint, however great, was ever born who first walked alone without the help of the mother. She had to show him how to walk.

Then there arises the question of how to find the real *guru*. Very often, people are in doubt, they do not know whether the *guru* they see is a true or a false *guru*. Frequently, a person comes into contact with a false *guru* in this world where there is so much falsehood. But at the same time, a real seeker, one who is not false to himself, will always meet with the truth, with the real, because it is his own real faith, his own sincerity in earnest seeking that will become his torch. The real teacher is within; that lover of reality is one's own sincere self. If one is really seeking truth, then sooner or later one will certainly find a true teacher. Supposing one came into contact with a false teacher, what then? Then the real one will turn the false teacher into a real teacher because reality is greater than falsehood.

There is a story told of a dervish, a simple man, who was initiated by a teacher. After that teacher had passed away, this man came into contact with some clairvoyant who asked him if he had guidance on his path. The man replied, "Yes, my master, who passed from this earth. When he was still alive I enjoyed his guidance for some time, so the only thing I would want now is just your blessing." But the clairvoyant said, "I see by my clairvoyant power that the teacher who passed away was not a true teacher." When the simple man heard this, he would not allow himself to be angry with the other, but said gently, "This teacher of mine may be false, but my faith is not false, and that is sufficient."

As there is water in the depths of the earth, so there is truth at the bottom of all things, false or true. In some places, one has to dig deep; in other places, only a short distance; that is the only difference. But there is no place where there is no water. One may have to dig very, very deep in order to get it; but in the depths of the earth, there is water, and in the depths of all this falsehood that is on the surface, there is truth. If we are really seeking for the truth, we shall always find it at some time or another.

The one who wants to protect himself from being misguided shows a certain tendency, a kind of weakness that comes from thinking deep within himself that there is no right guidance. If he realizes that right guidance is to be found in himself, then he will always be rightly guided and his power will become so great that if his guide is going wrong, the power of the pupil will help him to go right because the real teacher is in the heart of man. The outward teacher is only a sign.

A Persian poet has said that he who is a lost soul, even if he is in the presence of a Savior, will be lost just the same because his own clouds are surrounding him. It is not a question of a guide or teacher. The obscurity that his own mind creates surrounds him and keeps him blind. What then can a teacher do?

According to a story about the Prophet Mohammad, there lived next door to him a man who was very much opposed to the Prophet and spoke against him. This man saw that the people to whom he spoke had belief in the Prophet, while nobody believed in him. Then years passed, and many believed and many gave their lives for the message of the Prophet. It so happened that eventually, a great many people came from afar, thousands and thousands from different countries, to visit the Prophet. The same man still lived in the neighborhood, but he had never altered his opinion. One day someone asked the Prophet, "Why does this man, who has known the day when nobody listened, when nobody followed you, but who now sees that thousands of people who come here are benefited and filled with bliss and joy and blessing, still continue to criticize you and to oppose you?" And the Prophet said, "His heart has become a fountain of obscurity. He produces from his own self the clouds which surround him. He cannot see." And he was sorry for him. The perception of the light shows the thinning of the veil that covers the heart; and the thinner the veil becomes, the greater is the power of the light within.

The next step, the second step in initiation, is to go through the tests that the teacher gives. In this initiation there is a great deal that is amusing, if one thinks about it. It is like looping the loop; sometimes the teacher gives the pupil such tests that he does not know where he is, or whether a thing is true or false.



There was a great Sufi teacher in India who had a thousand adherents who were most devoted pupils. One day he said to them, "I have changed my mind." And the words "changed my mind" surprised them greatly. They asked him, "What is the matter, how can it be that you have changed your mind?" He said, "I have the feeling that I must go and bow before the Goddess Kali." And these people, among whom were doctors and professors, well-qualified people, could not understand this whim, that their great teacher in whom they had such faith wished to go into the temple of Kali and bow before the Goddess of the hideous face; he, a God-realized man in whom they had such confidence! The thousand disciples left him at once, thinking, "What is this? It is against the religion of the formless God, against the teaching of this great Sufi himself that he wants to worship the Goddess Kali!"

There remained only one pupil, a youth who was very devoted to his teacher, and he followed him when he went to the temple of Kali. The teacher was very glad to get rid of those thousand pupils who were full of knowledge, full of their learning, but who did not really know him. It was just as well that they should leave.

As they were going towards the temple, he spoke three times to this young man, saying, "Why do you not go away? Look at these thousand people who had such faith and such admiration, and now I have said just one word, and they have left me. Why do you not go with them? The majority is right." The pupil, however, would not go, but continued to follow him. And through all of this, the teacher received great inspiration and a revelation of how strange human nature is, how soon people are attracted and how soon they can fly away. It was such an interesting phenomenon for him to see the play of human nature that his heart was full of feeling.

When they arrived at the temple of Kali, he experienced such ecstasy that he fell down and bowed his head low, and the young man who had followed him did the same. When he got up, he asked this young man again, "Why do you not leave me when you have seen a thousand people go away? Why do you follow me?" The young man replied, "There is nothing in what you have done that is against my convictions because the first lesson you taught me was that nothing exists save God. If that is true, then that image is not Kali and it, too, is God. What does it matter whether you bow to the east or to the west or to the earth or to heaven? Since nothing exists except God, then there is nobody else except God before whom to bow, even in bowing before Kali. It was the first lesson you taught me." All these learned men were given the same lesson; they were students and very clever; but they could not conceive of that main thought that was the center of all the teaching.

It was this same young man who later became the greatest Sufi teacher in India, Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chishti. Every year thousands of people of all religions make pilgrimages to his tomb at Ajmer 🕌 Hindus, Mohammedans, Jews and Christians. To the Sufi, all religions are one.

There are tests of many kinds that the teacher may give to his pupils to test their faith, their sincerity and their patience. Before a ship puts out to sea the captain goes and makes sure that everything is in order for the voyage. Such is the duty of the teacher. Of course, it is a very interesting duty. Besides, the path of the mystic is a very complex path. What he says may, perhaps, have two meanings: the outer meaning is one, and the inner meaning is another. What he does may also have two meanings, an outer and an inner meaning. A person who only sees things outwardly cannot perceive their inner meaning. Since he only sees their outer aspect, he cannot understand his own teacher's actions, thoughts, speech or movements. It is in this way that the pupil is tested. Thus, to the pupil, the teacher may often appear to be very unreasonable, very odd, very meaningless, very unkind, cold or unjust. During these tests, if the faith and the trust of the pupil do not endure, he will step back from this second initiation; but if he endures through all of this, then comes the third step, the third initiation.

The third initiation consists of three stages: receiving the knowledge attentively, meditating upon all one has received patiently, assimilating all the outcome of it intelligently. Thereby, the mission of the teacher in this world is completed. Gratitude still remains, but the principal work is finished.

The fourth initiation the seeker gets from his ideal. Who is this ideal, who can give this initiation? No living creature on earth, however great, can prove to be the ideal of anyone else; he may for a certain time, but not forever. The great ones like Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ and Krishna, who have been the ideal of humanity for thousands of years ❀ when did they become the ideal? During their lifetime? During their lifetime they gave a sense of being the ideal; they left impressions which afterwards proved them to be the ideal; but during their lifetime, they could not prove it. Why is this? The reason is that even perfect man is limited in the imperfect garb of humanity. The human limitation covers perfection. However great, however deep, however spiritual a person is, with all his goodness, with all his inspiration and power, he remains limited. His thought, speech, word and action are all limited. A man cannot make himself as his pupil imagines him. Imagination goes farther than the progress of man. The imagination of every person is his own; and therefore, one can only make one's ideal oneself. No one has the power to make the ideal of another person; and therefore, it is the impression of the great saviors of humanity, it is their goodness, it is whatever little grain of an ideal they have left behind them that becomes just like a seed, and that seed put into the soil of the devotee's heart develops into a plant and bears fruit and flowers as it is reared.

So, in this fourth initiation, there is this ideal of man's imagination. He may call it, "Christ," or, "Buddha"; he may call it "Mohammad" or "Moses" or "Zoroaster." It is his ideal, it is he who has made it, it is his savior, and it certainly will save him if he considers it to be his savior. But he has to make it. If he does not make it, then the savior will not save him. When once he has made his savior, then he is face to face with the perfection that his heart has created. Then this impression of Christ or Buddha with which he has impressed himself flowers and grows into a tree and bears the flowers and fruit that he has desired. No doubt this initiation is a phenomenon in itself. Once this initiation is received, man begins to radiate, to radiate his initiator, who is within him as his ideal.

Then there is the second stage, which is the fifth initiation. In the fifth initiation, man does not imagine his ideal, but finds his ideal a living entity within himself, a friend who is always close to him, within him. He can just bow his head and see his friend ❀ he is there. To the real devotees of Christ, Christ is near, as near as they are to their own self. In times of trouble, in difficulties, he is always there.

The third stage, which is the sixth initiation, is the one where Christ speaks, where Christ acts. The acts of the initiate become the actions of Christ. His speech becomes the speech of Christ. And when one has arrived at that initiation, one need not declare before humanity how greatly one loves one's Lord or Savior or Master. The initiate himself becomes a proof, his life, his word, his action, his feeling, his attitude, his outlook.

Life is such that no falsehood, no pretense, can endure, nothing false can go far. It will only go a step, and then it will tumble down. It is only the real which will go on. The more real something is, the less it expresses itself. It is lack of reality that makes a person say he is so and so, he has such great love for God, or he is so spiritual or pious or clairvoyant, or he has such psychic powers. When one sees, one does not need to say that one sees, everybody will notice that one is not blind.

How different it is today, when so many people ask, "Are you clairvoyant, can you see?" And if they say they do, what do they see? They have perhaps seen some color or some light here and there, or something peculiar, which means nothing. Perhaps it is their imagination. And then there are others who encourage them and make them still more crazy, and people feed their pride by telling others how much they see. But when one begins to see, one cannot speak about it, it is something which cannot be told. How could one?

When one sees with the eyes of Christ, one can only see. When one hears with the ears of Christ, one can only hear. There is nothing to be said.

The further initiation, which is the seventh, is the initiation in God. There is an account in the story of Rabia, a great Sufi. Once in her vision she saw the Prophet, and the Prophet asked her, "Rabia, to whom have you given your devotion?" Rabia said, "To God." And the Prophet said, "Not to me?" Rabia said, "Yes, Prophet, you include God, but it is God I gave my devotion to."

There comes a stage where a person even rises above the ideal he has made. He rises to that perfect Ideal which is beyond the human personality, which is the perfect Being. In this initiation, one rises to the spheres where one sees no other than God.

In the second stage, which is the eighth initiation, one communicates with God so that God becomes to the initiate a living entity. God is then no longer an ideal or an imagination, no longer one whom he has made. The One whom he once made has now become alive, a living God. Before this there was a belief in God, there was worship of Him. Perhaps He was made in the imagination; but in this stage, God becomes living. What a phenomenon this is! This stage is a miracle in itself. The God-realized person need not speak of nor discuss the name of God. His presence will inspire the sense of God in every being and charge the atmosphere with it. Everyone who meets him, whether he is spiritual or moral or religious or without religion, will feel God in some form or other.

The prophets and the holy ones who have come from time to time to give the world a religion, an ideal, have not brought any new ideas; they have not brought a new belief in God because belief in God has always existed in some form or other. What they brought was a living God. When there remained no more than God's name in the scripture or in the people's imagination or on the lips of the followers of a certain religion; and when that name began to become a profane name, a vain repetition; then such souls were born on the earth who brought with them a living god. If they gave anything else to humanity, either law, ethics or morals, these were secondary. The principal thing that they gave to the world was a living God.

The ninth initiation is what is called, in Sufi terms, *akhlak-e Allah*, which means, "The Manner of God." The one who touches that plane or that realization expresses in his manner the manner of God. His outlook on life is God's outlook. His actions, his thoughts and his words are God's actions, thoughts and words. Therefore, what the prophets spoke was *kalam-ullah*, the "Word of God," as for instance the Bhagavat Gita, which means, "The Song Celestial." Why? Because at this stage, God himself speaks. Those holy ones became that perfect spirit and were moved by it. They became actors, for their actions were no longer their own actions, but the actions of God. Their words were no longer human words, but the words of God.

Very few arrive at the last three initiations in their lifetime; for after the first nine initiations begins what is called, "The Phase of Self-Realization." When those who have not arrived at this stage begin to utter affirmations such as, "I am God," they utter nothing but vain repetitions and this obscures the God-ideal. They do not know what they are saying. If people only knew to what an extent they should be authorized before speaking about such things, they would be very careful about what they say.

When, after having gone through all the other stages of consciousness, one arrives at this stage, one can speak very little, for it is beyond the stage of religion and even beyond the notion of God. It is, "The Stage of Self-Expression." This stage of self-expression is reached when a person has thoroughly dug his self out, so that nothing of the self is left except only that divine substance, and only then is he authorized to express himself. Thus, the tenth initiation is the awakening of the real self, the real ego; and this awakening is brought about by meditation, the meditation which makes one forget one's false or limited self. The more one is able to forget it, the more the real self awakens.

In the next stages, one experiences a sensation of splendor, which in Persian is called *hairat*. It is like when a child is born and begins to see everything new ☪ this old world is seen by the child as a new world. As soon as the point of view is changed by the help of meditation, one sees the whole world that is before everybody and that everybody is seeing, quite differently. One begins to see reason behind reason, cause behind cause, and one's point of view also changes in regard to religion. It changes because where the average man would want to accuse, punish or blame a person for a certain action, the one who has risen to this stage can neither judge nor blame, he only sees, but he sees the cause behind the cause. Whom, then, shall he accuse? Whom shall he blame? How can he refrain from forgiving, whatever be the fault, when he sees all that is behind the fault, when he sees the reason behind it, perhaps a more valid reason than even the one who committed the fault can see himself. Therefore, naturally, the manner of continually sacrificing, the manner of spontaneous love and sympathy, the manner of respect both for the wise and the foolish, for the deserving and the undeserving, arises and expresses itself as divine life. It is at this stage that the human soul touches perfection and becomes divine and fulfills its real purpose in life.

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**Divinity is that aspect of God, which emanates from God and forms itself into the Spirit of Guidance. The Spirit of Guidance may thus be called the heart of God, a heart which is the accumulator of all feelings, impressions, thoughts, memories, and of all knowledge and experience. It is like putting a man at the head of a factory who has been in that factory from the beginning. He has had experiences of all kinds, of the pioneer work and of how things have changed, of the new methods and of the right or wrong results, which have come out of them. All such impressions have thus been collected in that one person.**

**In this mechanism of the world, all that happens, all that is experienced in the way of thought and feeling, is accumulated. Where? In the heart of God. Divinity is that heart which contains all wisdom and to which all wisdom belongs. The heart of God is the intelligence and the current of guidance in the heart of every man, and therefore it is not disconnected from the heart of man. Indeed, the heart of man is one of the atoms, which form the heart of God.**

**If people have called Christ divine that is right too. The heart of the Master, which fully reflected the divine heart naturally, showed the sign of divinity. Not understanding this, people made this idea exclusive and incomprehensible, and by this they have taken away the ground from under the feet of the Master. And by this, too, further harm has been done, taking away the worthiness of who was made to be the representative of God. The Hebrew scriptures say that man was made in the image of God, and the Muslim scripture says that man was made the *Khalif* of God, which means His representative.**

**When one says that man was born in sin, that man is on earth and that God is in heaven, one separates man from God; and this takes away the possibility of human perfection of which Christ has said, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect." That possibility of human perfection is taken away by making the idea of divinity exclusive and remote, and thus depriving man of the bliss of God which was meant for him. That is why disputes have arisen among the followers of different religions, each of them thinking their teacher to be the only teacher. For that reason wars have taken place in all ages, and people have disagreed with one another. People from one community have called the others heathen, depriving themselves of the bliss, which constantly is, which was, and which always will be.**

In reality the Spirit of Guidance may be pictured as one thread; and all the great masters of humanity are like the beads on that thread: one spirit and many individualities; one soul and many personalities; one wisdom and many teachers who have expounded wisdom according to their own personality. But at the same time, wisdom always being one they cannot be compared with different scientists. For scientists when they have discovered something new say they have made a new discovery; but the prophets have never said that they had made a new discovery. They have always said, **ﷻ** What those who came before me perceived I perceive, and those who come after thousands of years will perceive the same. **ﷻ** Yet in spite of that it is always new, for every moment has its new joy. As *Hafiz* says, **ﷻ** Sing, my soul, a new song that every new moment inspires in you. **ﷻ**

Once the soul awakens, it begins to see that truth is always new and renews the soul, giving it perpetual youth. When one finds differences between the teachers of humanity, these are only in the lives they lived. But no matter what their life was, whether they were kings or *fairs*, whether they walked or rode on an elephant's back whether they were on a throne or in mountain caves or in deserts, they all had the same experience: realization. They might appear to be comfortable and rejoicing, but they heard the same note which others heard in tortures. Those who were kings such as Solomon and David, and those who were sages such as Krishna and Buddha, all these different souls had the same realization, the same philosophy. There could never be an argument if they were all to meet. But they are not meant to meet because they are all one. It was the Spirit of Guidance, which manifested through these different names and forms.

When one looks at this subject from a metaphysical point of view, one observes that light has three principal currents: one current that takes the central line and shoots out, one current that goes to the right, and a third one that goes to the left. It is these three currents which are the secret of what is called Trinity, and by this threefold aspect the mystery of manifestation can be interpreted.

The current of the Spirit of Guidance, which runs to the right, is significant of power; that is why those who came under that current were called masters. The characteristic of such a soul is power. He is one who conquers himself, who contends with circumstances, struggles with life, and rises above conflicts.

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is the picture of the master: of the magnetism, power, and peace that make lions tame. The same power spreads and in time makes all hard things soft. The master therefore is a living power. His power of mind, of feeling, of heart, of spirit has its influence on all living beings, things, and objects to what extent, the human mind cannot imagine.

The other current, which runs to the left, is the sign of the saintly inspiration; of that passive character which has the desire to serve, an overflowing sympathy, a tender heart, widespread compassion, continual forgiveness, a gentle manner, a constant self-sacrifice, and perpetual renunciation.

And the central current, which is prophetic, is both, the power of the master and the wisdom of the saint. Such a character has been directed to go into the world, to the crowd, to endure the coarse vibrations of men, to go through all the experiences of life and yet to retain that fineness, delicacy, and tenderness which keep the soul close to God and in communication with the Spirit of Guidance, which ever flows and manifests in the form of the message.