

Faith and Belief

To a mystic, faith is the unique power that works through the whole of creation. He does not mean by faith a belief in a certain religion or dogma or ceremony or book or teacher; he means trust, a trust even in the absence of reason.

Faith is a word that has been so little understood, and often it is considered to be a religious term. Really speaking faith is not only something which is required in religion, but in all aspects of life it is the one thing that is required most. It is the misinterpretation of faith that has taken away the value that could be attached to the word. Otherwise, if I am to say one word, the sense of which is most valuable in the world, it is faith. In the Orient they call faith *yaqin* and another Arabic word used for it is *iman*.

True faith is self-confidence. If there is anything that can be called the grace of God, it is faith and self-confidence. It is something one can neither teach nor develop; it must be in one, and one can only strengthen it by loving it, by enjoying it. It must develop by itself.

There are many things sacred in the world, but faith is the most sacred; not faith in something, but faith in itself. Faith comes from above, doubt rises from below, from the earth. Therefore one is heavenly, the other earthly. When a person is more worldly he is more doubting; the less worldly he is the more faith he has. You may find a person who once had a great faith and then lost it, and you will observe that at the same time his life went from a less worldly condition to a more worldly one. Being more absorbed in the life of this world makes one void of faith. This shows that faith is innate in human nature; doubt is something of which man partakes.

When a person has no faith, it does not mean that in the depth of his being there is no faith. There is faith, but that sun is covered by clouds. When the heart is exposed to the things of the world, there are always doubts rising from the earth, and they will cover the heart.

No doubt, patience is the first lesson to learn in the path of faith, because it is patience which gives one strength to hope.

I remember the blessing my spiritual teacher, my murshid, used to give me every time I parted from him. And that blessing was, 'May your *Iman* be strengthened'. At that time I had not thought about the word *Iman*; on the contrary I thought as a young man, is my faith so weak that my teacher



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requires it to be stronger? I would have preferred it if he had said, may you become illuminated, or may your powers be great, or may your influence spread, or may you rise higher and higher, or become perfect. But this simple thing, may your faith be strengthened, what did it mean? I did not criticize but I pondered and pondered upon the subject. And in the end I came to realize that no blessing is more valuable and important than this. For every blessing is attached to a conviction. Where there is no conviction there is nothing. The secret of healing, the mystery of evolving, the power of all attainments, and the way to spiritual realization, all come from the strengthening of that belief which is a conviction, so that nothing can ever change it.

Faith, therefore, is not something which may be called a thought; faith is the ground itself: it is a ground from which thoughts spring up as plants. If the land is not fertile the plants cannot come up.

No one in the world has been able to accomplish a great thing without the power of faith, whether he was a general, a business-man, an inventor, or a religious man. The power that faith gives is beyond words. The weakness and the poverty that exist in the absence of faith are most deplorable. A person may have everything in life, youth, wealth, comfort, position and power — if faith lacks he is poverty-stricken.

If asked how one should proceed, I would advise the study of every object, whether false or true, which holds and attracts us either outwardly or inwardly; we should not be doubting and suspicious. What Christ taught from morning until night was faith, but the interpretation generally given to this word does not make it clear. People have said it means faith in a priest, in a church, or in a sect, but that is not the meaning. The true meaning of faith is trust in oneself.

How can one find faith in oneself, how can one develop it? One can find faith by practicing self-confidence as the first thing, by having self-confidence even in the smallest things....After self-confidence is developed, the second step is to trust another with closed eyes....The third step towards the development of faith is trust in the unseen, to trust in something which one does not see.

Confidence is assured, not by blind belief but by careful insight into the life which surrounds us. The higher self is then able to be like the rider on a horse, and direct all the affairs and actions of the lower self. Faith defends the innate desire of the higher self, and the more faith develops, the greater is its influence, through us, upon our whole environment. Faith breeds faith. Also, faith must dominate the reason and direct the reason; and it will do this the more surely when we realize that every thought, desire, and impulse that comes to our heart is from God, to be accomplished for some great purpose of His own.

When there is faith there is no thought about whether there are any means of accomplishing the desire that has entered one's mind, or whether there are no means. This does not matter when faith is there, to care for and to defend the thought, to rain upon the thought and make the plant grow and bear fruit, so that some day one may see its realization.

Purity of mind is necessary. The mind must be pure from all fear, worry and anxiety, and from every kind of falsehood, for all this covers the mind from the vision of God. When the mind, full of faith, love, purity and strength, is focussed upon the ideal of God, man will receive teaching, inspiration and advice directly and for every case he meets with in life.

Belief can be explained as being in four different grades. One belief is that which comes by the strength of collectivity: "If my neighbor is of the same belief, of course it is true; I must believe it also."...The second kind of belief does not depend upon collectivity, but upon man's reason. He reasons out his belief, and he fortifies his belief by the strength of his reason....The third sort of belief is conviction. In this stage one believes not only from reasoning but by examples, not only in theory but by the experience gained by practice. One believes what one's soul apprehends and what one's own soul tells one. It is beyond the power of the generality to arrive at this belief....The ultimate belief is no longer a belief; it is reality. If it is sufficient for our life to believe what others believe and if

we are content with that, then that is sufficient for our purpose. But if there is the desire in our soul to arrive at such a belief where doubt does not exist, where all is seen as clearly as in the daylight, then we must seek for a way to advance in our belief. Therefore what Sufism teaches and what the Sufi strives after is to arrive from the state of belief of the collectivity to that state where everything is clear as daylight.

Belief in God has two aspects. One belief in God is that a person thinks: 'Perhaps there is a God', or: 'As others believe, I believe too'. He does not know God by reason, nor does he see God before him. God for him is perhaps in heaven. Whether He exists or does not exist, he does not know. From one who has this kind of belief a little confusion or disappointment or injustice takes away his belief in God, and it is for this reason that thousands and thousands of men who worshipped God gave up their belief in God.

There is another aspect of belief, and that belief is the realization of God's presence, not only in the heavens, but in one's own surroundings. When a person arrives at this point his belief becomes a living entity.

Faith is so sacred that it cannot be imparted, it must be discovered within oneself; but there is no one in the world who is without faith, it is only covered up. And what covers it? A kind of pessimistic outlook on life. There are people who are pessimistic outwardly, there are others who are pessimistic unconsciously, they themselves do not know that they are pessimistic. Man can fight with the whole world, but he cannot fight with his own self, he cannot break his own doubts; and the one who can disperse these clouds has accomplished a great thing in the world.

Special Notices

- Universal Worship Services will not be held during July and August. They will resume in September.
- Sufi Order Classes, in both Brampton and Toronto, will not be held during the month of August.
- Sufi Order classes in Brampton will resume on Thursday, September 5.
- A decision has yet to be made about the resumption of Sufi Order classes in Toronto. To find out whether classes will resume and, if so, where, please phone Bassam at (416) 537-0236.

Coming Events

May 31–June 2, near Ottawa: A residential retreat with **Junayd al Wajid**. For details visit our website or contact Qutb'Ud-din (613-828-2703), cioc@magma.ca

June 22-23 in Toronto: The Unfoldment of the Soul: a retreat with **Aziza Scott**. Aziza will use Sufi teachings and practices in this journey. For details, see the enclosed flyer, visit our website or call Khusrau at (416) 653-6787.

June 28-30 in Rochester, NY: with **Shahabuddin Less**. For information, please contact Zaynab, by phone at (585) 248-0427 or email: Zaynab@frontiernet.net

August 18 in Toronto: Brunch with **Sharif Graham**. Please contact Leslie Mezei: mezeis@cs.com or (416) 226-2869.

September 7-8 in Buffalo, NY: with **Shahabuddin Less**. For information, please contact Zaynab, by phone at (585) 248-0427 or email: Zaynab@frontiernet.net

October 25-27 in Niagara Falls, ON: A residential retreat with Shahabuddin Less, Radha Buko and Akbar Manolson. For details, visit the Toronto Sufi Order or Dance websites or contact Samia Bloch (603-532-6548), samia777@aol.com.

May 9-11, 2003: Niagara Falls, ON: A residential retreat with Tasnim Fernandez, Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz and Kamae A. Miller. For details, please visit our website or contact Habib: (416) 778-5318 or FredHabib@compuserve.com.

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 Sirdar at (905) 452-6358.

Universal Worship Service: Universal Worship Services are held at 1:30 pm on the second Sunday of the month, except July and August, at the Gallery Arcturus, 80 Gerrard Street East. For more information, please contact Leslie Gabriel Mezei at (416) 226-2869.

Dances of Universal Peace: Dancing is held on the *first and third Friday of each month*. The location is **Bloor Street United Church, 300 Bloor Street West** (at the corner of Bloor & Huron Streets, just West of the St. George subway station). We begin at 7:30 pm.

Your donations are used to cover our costs so that we can continue dancing. We suggest a donation of \$6 - \$10.

Contact Information

Sufi Order of Toronto

% R. K. Carell
1603 Bathurst St. - Apt. 605
Toronto, Ontario M5P 3J2
Phone: Khusrau (Bob) 416-653-6787
Email: khusrau@compuserve.com
Website: SufiOrder.Toronto.on.ca

Sufi Order of Brampton

% Terry Wedge
37 Chapel Street
Brampton, Ontario L6W 2H5
Phone: Sirdar (Terry) 905-452-6358

Universal Worship

Leslie Gabriel Mezei
Phone: 416-226-2869
Email: mezeis@compuserve.com

Dances of Universal Peace

Bob: 416-653-6787
Email: khusrau@compuserve.com
Web: DancesOfUniversalPeace.Toronto.on.ca