



The Inner Self

by the Grand Master, Mir Hadian

In the Name of the Beloved, the Compassionate and the Merciful.

I am He whom I love,
and He whom I love is I.
We are two spirits
dwelling in one body.

- Hallaj

In the East, one does not say that we practice Sufism – there is no *ism*. In the West, we tend to put everything into pigeonholes in order that we may understand intellectually. But Sufism is not a philosophy, cult or religion; it is a way of life. People who embark upon the Sufi path choose it with their open heart because they are searching for inner truth. They have enthusiasm and a belief in something beyond themselves.

But when you're asked what you believe in, what religion you practice, do not say 'I believe in Sufism' because this limits the true nature of Sufism. Sufism is much more than an *ism* or philosophy. Intellectually you may talk about it or write about it, but it is a way of practice – a way of living. It cannot be coloured in the way that you might claim to be Christian, Muslim or Buddhist because Sufism is all of them and yet belongs to none of them.

What you actually gain in the Sufi way is your self-realisation and more; it's simple to say but hard to do. You are concentrating to become aware of your inner self. You cannot focus on your inner side without first developing your concentration. For example, until you experience yoga or T'ai-Chi you won't know that certain parts of your body exist. Though you live in your body you are not living with it, so busy with daily life in the outside world.

Once you start looking at your inner self, you realise that you have ignored and neglected your inner side; but it has always been there. This inner self is in need of attention because it exists so that you as a person may fully experience your life.

Finding your inner self is important, so we hope this explanation helps you to understand. By concentrating on your inner self, what are you going to achieve?

You will hear many spiritual paths, perhaps even religions, speaking of the importance of knowing your inner self. Only by concentrating on your inner self will you begin to know and get acquainted with yourself – the truth of your self. This is not the same as who you think you are – what you think you know of yourself is something else. This is the truth.

We all have likes and dislikes about ourselves, but when you concentrate on your

inner self you come to realise that these are no more than illusions. You realise that all along, the impression that you have had of yourself is nothing more than an illusion and that you have not known yourself at all.

For some people, that can be frightening because it is difficult for them to accept who they really are. The Sufi approach of contemplation, meditation, reflection, dream-work and working with shadows brings you face-to-face with your inner self and helps you to come to terms with what you see.

You may also ask what you're going to achieve by knowing yourself? Some people may say that they dislike themselves so much that they don't want to know themselves anyway. But this is a misunderstanding. By knowing your inner self you become connected and begin to reach toward your higher self.

Your higher self is a gateway to the divine – to the Creator. People go through the hard work of coming to terms with their inner self so that they may understand and connect to their higher self. Your higher self is the gateway to opening up and looking at life beyond our life.

Learning about your inner self has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that you feel happier, stable and balanced. The disadvantage is that students can become absorbed in self-observation for many years.

Ultimately, when you experience the higher self, your attitude towards your inner self changes. You come to realise that your inner self has no meaning. But you cannot know your higher self until you have first understood your inner self.

A simple analogy might liken this to obtaining a degree. You begin with GCSEs then you move on to A-levels. When you pass your A-levels, your GCSEs have little meaning. Similarly, when you get your degree your A-levels have little meaning (though you could not have got your degree without first getting them).

So until you know your inner self, you cannot reach to your higher self. And when you do reach your higher self, your inner self has little meaning. And because you are now united with something that you have always been a part of, you come to realise that you yourself have no meaning. All that you have gone through in understanding your body and psychology has been relevant (at the time), but now it is not.

You might be worried that you will lose your personality as you come through this. You will not – the personality is not lost. Though you will have no need of your inner self, your personality and the experiences that you have had are important to your understanding.

Another analogy ... if you put a drop of vinegar into a jar of honey and taste it, you will only taste honey – the taste of the vinegar has no meaning in comparison to that of the honey. But that single drop of vinegar hasn't lost its uniqueness and individuality. Though it may be in union with the honey, there's still a drop of vinegar there. It is difficult to intellectualise spiritual matters without them becoming much more complicated.

The key point is that from a Sufi point of view (as with many other spiritual paths) working on the inner self is the first step towards ascending. It's a hard and sometimes lengthy process – it could take five, ten or twenty years and some might never achieve self-realisation. It depends upon the individual. Others might come to realise who they are in an instant, raising their conscious and becoming balanced; happy with their shadows, their good side and their bad side.

When you reach this stage, you know your good side and bad side. You're comfortable with both of them and resenting neither. After all, good and bad are attributes of the Universe that have been given to you by the very same Creator. That said, it does not mean that you may consistently act by your bad side 'since that's how the Creator made me!' It means recognising and understanding your bad side: being happy with it. Do not waste energy worrying or resenting your shadows, perhaps trying extra hard to be good. Accept your shadows – yes, they are weaknesses and they belong to you – be happy with them.

The experience of recognising and acknowledging your shadows is itself a good experience. Your intention is to experience both sides but to be detached from them. This detachment is the key to your happiness.

For some students working with their inner self, the ego may again come in. You could become so busy with your work on your inner side that you forget to ascend. Absorbed in meditation, dream-work and the activities that help you to realise your inner side, you might lose sight of the objective of working towards your higher self.

You may think that you're working on it and making progress but you could become saturated with those things, forgetting the ultimate aim and deluding yourself about your progress. The teachers' role is important; reminding you not to lose sight of the objective. Many people embarking upon the spiritual path work genuinely hard, but there comes a stage when one has to ascend from being so busy. Keeping busy can prevent you making progress.

In their working life, some people complain about how busy they are – working so hard and such long hours – but sometimes this is done deliberately by the subconscious to keep us distracted. But in reality they are too frightened to come out and face being alone with their inner self.

The same thing can happen on the spiritual path when working with your inner self. You may find that you become so preoccupied that you don't really want to go further because you're happy where you are. But the teacher will recognise that.

Hopefully, by talking about this today, you will be reminded to continue to focus on your objectives when you reach this stage.

Ya Hu.