

CURRICULUM OF THE SUFI ORDER

*Teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan,
Parallels with earlier Sufis,
Comparative religion,
Comments,
Practices.*

LESSON THREE:

TURNING WITHIN

PART I

Note: if not otherwise stated, the quotes in italics and indented are of Hazrat Pir o Murshid Inayat Khan, the commentaries are by Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, the reference of quotes by ancient Sufis and other esoteric schools are appended to these. Instructions on practices corresponding to the sayings follow these.

We have seen in the previous lesson that our usual sense of personal identity has the effect of encapsulating ourselves in a limitation - with the consequence that we fail to fulfill the purpose of our lives which is to realize and unfurl the divine perfection invested in our being. The method advocated by Pir o Murshid Inayat Khan was to explore the wider dimension of our being in our participation with the totality by overcoming the habit of contrasting our sense of "me" from what we represent as the universe (or God) as "other." This we called "the cosmic dimension" of our being.

In the present lesson, we are working with an alternate dimension: "turning within." Very often meditation is considered as "turning within." Meditation consists not just in turning within but also, as we have seen, discovering our outreach and, further, as we will be exploring: our "transcendental dimension."

"Turning within" opens up an infinite perspective upon our being, one which Pir o Murshid emphasizes significantly in his esoteric teaching. Normally we are only aware of a sliver of the bounty that we are immersed in.

When a man looks at the ocean, he can only see that part of it which comes within his range of vision; so it is with the truth. Bowl of Saki.

We are in search of ourselves and our relationship with the universe, in all its dimensions (which we represent as God), in our longing to grasp the significance of our life.

Man, with the maturity of his soul, desires to probe the depths of life. He desires to discover the power latent within him, he longs to know the source and goal of his life, he yearns to understand the aim and meaning of life, he wishes to understand the inner significance of things, and he wants to uncover all that is covered by form and name: he seeks for insight into cause and effect, he wants to touch the mystery of Time and Space, and he wishes to find the missing link between God and man - where man ends, where God begins. Unity of Religious Ideals.

PRACTICE:

Let us at this stage make a start in our meditations and ask ourselves whether we feel that we are missing out on grasping the meaning of our lives, of our relationship with the situations in the outer world.

What man knows is generally the world that he sees around himself...What he knows is to express outwardly and to receive from this same sphere as much as he can receive by himself...but there is something around themselves beyond that which they realize. Mysticism of Sound.

Wzf: ya Alim – ya Khabir

As we ask ourselves these questions, we wonder whether it would not be easier to call a halt for a few moments from our commonplace life style - whether we are not missing out on grasping areas of ourselves not commonly experienced.

If we respond to the things of the earth so much that our whole life becomes absorbed in earthly things, then it is quite natural that we do not respond to those riches which are within us, and yet are far removed from them. Social Gatheka, Art.

We hope that if we follow a method based upon instructions devised by beings who have clinched a more meaningful sense of life in general and their own life, we will gradually gain more insight into our own lives.

Having explored wider areas as in the previous lesson, we have a hunch that there is a whole area to explore inside.

How one wanders all one's life in search of something which can only be found within oneself. Gatheka 11.

Instead of finding it within he always wants to find it without.

Social Gatheka, The Power of the Word.

Before we look deeper into this, can we be clear as to what we mean by turning within?

One commonly takes for granted that all that lies outside one's skin-bound body is the "world" whereas what lies within this skin is "myself." Turning within cannot be reduced to simply becoming aware of what is happening within one's own body. Moreover it is a misconception to think that the mind is "in the body" – in the brain.

To a material person 'within' means in the body, inside the body. In reality 'within' means not only inside, but also outside the body. This can be seen by the light inside a lamp: the light is inside the globe, and it is outside the globe too. So is the soul; it is inside and outside too. So is the mind; it is inside and outside, it is not confined inside the body. Mental Purification.

What Pir o Murshid means by "within" is not included in the three-dimensional space that evidences the limitation in our middle range mental faculties.

They might think 'within oneself' means inside one's body; but that is because man is ignorant of himself. Man has a very poor idea of himself, and this keeps him in

ignorance of his real self. If man only knew how large, how wide, how deep, how high is his being, he would think, act, and feel differently; but with all his width, depth, and height, if man is not conscious of them he is as small as he thinks himself to be. In an Eastern Rose Garden.

There is another space, within which this space is contained. Supplementary Papers. Metaphysics.

Within us there is space too; the space within extends in another direction. Smiling Forehead.

This could be illustrated by our dream world:

In the physical world, you are here and everything is without you, you are contained in space; in the dream, all you see is contained within you.

We have experience of this world of mind even while awake, but the contrast between the world within and without makes the world without concrete and the world within abstract. Metaphysics.

Furthermore, it includes:

- (i) Occurrences, events;
- (ii) What is enacted behind our problems, which is often masked by our assessments of our problems;
- (iii) Particularly, the virtualities of our psyche, whose outer face is our self-image – our identity.
- (iv) Intuitive hunches;
- (v) Creative imagination – inspiration.

Since we are so used to taking for granted that the objects in the world are “discrete entities,” it is difficult for us to imagine how everything could be intermeshed (like radio waves or, if this were possible: a piece of paper so crushed that every part was in contact with every other part).

That the world appears different according to one’s perspective is a theory in physics. Dr. David Bohm contrasts the way things look in our commonplace perspective which he describes where things are perceived as unfolded (like the piece of paper) or alternately enfolded (explicate versus implicate).

Each part of the holograph is an image of the whole object. The light from all parts of the room contains information about the whole room. Therefore every part contains information about the whole object....Information about the whole is enfolded in each part of the image. Information about the whole object is dynamically enfolded in each part of space while the information is then unfolded in the image. (David Bohm, *Unfolding Meaning*, p. 10)

The order of the world as a structure of things that are basically external to each other comes out as secondary and emerges from the deeper implicate order. The order of elements external to each other would then be called the unfolded order, or the explicate order. (ibid. p. 13)

So all the aspects of the mind show themselves and are enfolding each other, and transforming through each other through enfoldment and unfoldment. Mind and matter may consistently be related without adopting a reductionist position.

Perhaps they both arise from some greater common ground or perhaps they are not really different. (p. 19) The state of the whole is such that it organizes the parts. (p. 7)

It is heartening for the meditator to see the way that the views of Hazrat Inayat Khan, already foreseen by his Sufi predecessors, are corroborated in the findings of a modern physicist.

This space of three dimensions is reflected in the space that is in the inner dimension. What exists in the inner dimension is also reflected in three-dimensional space. In reality what the mystic sees in space is something that is within, but when he opens his eyes, he sees it before him.

For the mystic everything is connected. There is no condition that is detached from another condition. A mechanism is always running in relation to another mechanism, however different and disconnected they may seem. To gain insight, the mystic enters into the depth of the whole mechanism of the universe.

All things and beings on the surface seem separate from one another; beneath the surface, they approach nearer to each other, and in the innermost plane, they all become one... The closer one approaches reality, the nearer one arrives at unity. Smiling Forehead.

Those to whom unity is revealed see the absolute whole in the parts. (p. 7 & 8) Yet each is in despair at its particularization from the whole. (p. 17) Behold the world entirely comprised in yourself. The world is a man and man is a world. (p. 15) Shabistari: E.H.Whinfield, Mahmood Shabistari's Gulshan i Raz (1880)

Is it not then drunkenness on the part of man when he claims to be an individual standing separate from all others, thinking himself to be a single entity when he is already many within himself? Sangitha II

PRACTICE:

While exhaling, with eyes open, you can see the objects perceived as separate entities; for example the trees. Now closing your eyes represent to yourself a forest where all the trees, windswept in one direction, seem to be various expressions of a basic reality. Or again bees as the diverse expressions of the global reality of the bee swarm. Or again bubbles as ephemeral expressions of water.

When I open my eyes to the outer world I feel myself as a drop in the sea; but when I close my eyes and look within, I see the whole universe as a bubble raised in the ocean of my heart....as the bubble is small before an ocean, and yet it not of any other element than the ocean.

Another metaphor is the wave and the sea. This realization will help us, because to understand what we mean by God it is helpful to see ourselves as a wave in the sea.

Man is a condition of God as a wave is a condition of the sea.

Instead of emphasizing the contrast between these two perspectives, now try to grasp the correspondence between them. While perceiving the outer world, you still keep in mind that it is an expression of what you have now grasped as its deeper reality, so that you may feel a communion with all existential things instead of deeming them as "other" than yourself.

This process takes place in two directions: outwardly by being one with all we see, and inwardly by being in touch with that one Life which is everlasting, by dissolving into it, and by being conscious of that one Spirit being the existence,

the only existence.

The one who looks within finds when he looks without, that all that is within manifests without. Mental Purification.

The only way of wakening to the life within, which is most beautiful, is first to respond to the beauty outside.

Let us now try to correlate those two dimensions: cosmic and within. As you exhale with open eyes (*Wzf: Zahir*), imagine that all that one perceives in the environment or conceives in one's ordinary thinking is just what appears at the surface of a reality, grasped as you inhale with closed eyes (*Wzf: Batin*), that is so complex, so intermeshed, that one cannot with one's ordinary reason make sense of it.

As you inhale (*Wzf: Wahid*) represent to yourself radio waves that are so intricately interwoven and which we could never extrapolate. As you exhale (*Wzf: Mawjud*) now imagine that they are processed through our radio into sound that makes sense to our ordinary minds. To this purpose, they need to be reduced. So what we are listening to on the radio is a reduced expression of the bounty of the audiosphere.

Another example would be the way that an idea can configure itself as a form: As you exhale, imagine that you are swimming at the surface of a lake and enjoy the view of the water lilies. Now as you inhale think of the network of roots in the depth of which they are the expression. Better still the genetic code of the seed.

As the seed is sufficient and capable of producing another plant, so man is the product of all planes, spiritual and material and yet in him alone shines forth that primal intelligence that caused the whole. Sangathas p. 37.

Thus then, try to sound the depth below the threshold of your grasp. Here you may espy that "secret treasure" that we would like to decode and which according to the Hadith of Prophet Mohammed "loved to be known." However, while it is known, albeit inadequately, by inference thanks to the clues perceived or conceived, one may venture into that mystery on condition that one gives up one's middle-range logic and stretches one's mind beyond its usually limited outreach.

Sufis often call upon the metaphor of the mirror.

There is a quotation of a great Yogi, who says, "in order to see what is before you you must see within yourself." And that means that within yourself there is a mirror and it is that mirror which may be called the inner world. The Inner Life.

This illustration is not altogether exhaustive since the image in the mirror has a profile whereas the images in the depth of our psyche are like Kirlian photographs.

Forms seen in mirrors, just like imaginary forms are not imprinted materially either on the mirror or in the imagination. No, they are "bodies in suspension"... These non-spatial forms in the intermediary world have places where they appear (epiphanic places), but they are not contained in them. Suhrawardhi (Vide Corbin, 1977 p 127 & 1973, p.127)

The comparability however is valid in that it is represented as being "outside" one's

body.

This mirror is two-sided, its two sides facing opposite ways; one facing within, the other without; and the secret of working with it is to close it from one side in order to make it take the reflection from the other. Esoteric papers. It is in this mirror that all that is before you is reflected. But when the eyes are looking outside, then one has turned his back to the mirror which is inside, but when the eyes are turned inside, then one sees in this mirror all that is outside reflected. Social Gathekas.

Pir o Murshid adds a further metaphor: the photographic plate rather than the mirror, because the imprint of an impression, or a friend, can become adamant (like gold) rather than remain “in suspense.”

That reflection only depends upon the object being before it. No sooner the object is removed, the reflection is gone. But the reflection on a photographic plate is like the reflection, but becomes an impression, which then can be developed by a certain process in mind.

But, Murshid sees the value of not simply storing inside impressions that have accrued from outside albeit quintessentiated, but how this enrichment can spark creative thoughts and the unfurling of our personality emerging from within towards outside. The impression finds its fulfillment by growing and being productive, by acting as a catalyst for our creativity.

A reflection on a photographic plate remains, but does not live; the reflection upon the mind lives, and therefore it is creative. It does not always live, but it helps one to create within oneself the same thing. Mind World.

By the power of unconditioned love we can find our friend unfolding in one's own self and thus contributing to one's own unfoldment.

The real awakening of his sympathy is on that day when he sees his friend and says 'this is myself'. Then the sympathy is awakened, then there is the communication within one's self. Mysticism of Sound.

P.S. These studies on “turning within” will be continued in Lesson 4 (Part II of Turning Within: Discovering the Sacred Through Prayer) and Lesson 5 (part III of Turning Within: Dealing With Our Psyche, Ego, Sense of Identity, Assessments of Problems, etc.).