

Githekas on:

Self-Protection

Series III

by

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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Githeka Series III: Number 1

Impression

The true Sufi is the Sahib-i-dil, the gentleman of the heart. It is in his heart where the shrine of God is found. In Salat it is said: "Let the star of The Divine Light shining in Thy heart be reflected in the hearts of Thy devotees."

All religions teach love, that love alone points the way to salvation. In man, the blood stream rising from the heart purifies not only the body, but the mind also. The body is purified by the healing power which comes with the blood, and the mind is also purified. Mind, however, is not located in the brain alone, but is associated with every part of the body, wherever there are nerves.

In Chapter VI of the third portion of *The Soul, Whence and Whither*, there is a picture which has not always been understood. This shows that body is really within the mind and the mind within the heart. That is to say, the mind has control over the body and is larger than the body, and the heart has control over both mind and body, and is much larger than either of them. Yet one has to turn within the body to reach mind and turn within mind to reach heart.

When one considers the value of Zikr, of meditation and other practices, one can see that they are for nothing more than to bring the full life of the soul to the surface, yet this action is for the very purpose of life. God created man so He could experience life on the surface. And these practices not only awaken the heart itself, but also develop the heart qualities of love and compassion.

But the heart is more than the seat of morals. In the shrine of God comes all-knowledge, it comes every minute of our lives and there is nothing in life without which it does not have some reflection or correspondence within. So no matter what the problem or the circumstance, if one listens very carefully one will find the solution in the heart.

Impression is nothing but the call of the heart to the mind, which is constant. Instinct may be called the voice of the soul acting directly upon the physical body without intervention of mind, but with impression there is always a mental awakening also and a communication to the nerves in a form of "feeling." These impressions can never be wrong, and if heeded become a source for the greatest protection.

Impression is very different from impulse which is a blind desire to act suddenly, and the impression resembles impulse only in its suddenness. All impression can be felt as coming from the heart and it can never be wrong.

Of course instinct and impression can work together. Instinct is a means by which the Spirit of Guidance protects and preserves those who have not reached self-consciousness. Impression is more definitely a human faculty. If one heeds closely the words of Salat, and greets Allah in all humility every moment of life, depending upon Allah in all things, then the Star of the Divine Light will be reflected in the heart of His devotees and these reflections are nothing else than what are called impressions.

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Githeka Series III: Number 2

Intuition

The average impression may be likened to a comet, a light which shines for a time in the heavens, but cannot be depended upon continually. But the trained impression is like a planet which has its regular course and which obeys the laws of the heavenly bodies. Yet this same light, this same faculty, if developed, becomes more like a fixed star which can always be depended upon as a beacon light, and like the Star symbol is a sure means of both guidance and protection.

What is called intuition is not peculiarly the property of man alone. While he shares with the animals the faculties of instinct, impression and intuition, he really possesses more of the latter than do the animals. The proof is that wherever there is heart and blood, there are heart-faculties and blood-faculties. That man has more of the heart-faculties can be seen through his moral evolution and especially in his possessing the qualities of mercy and compassion which belong to Allah. Other moral qualities are found among the animals, but mercy and compassion are especially reserved by God for man among all His creatures.

Now the heart cannot develop just moral qualities. As physical growth brings muscular strength, endurance, ability to assimilate food, virility and other powers all at the same time, so the development of the heart, whether through mystical practices or by other means, brings not only the heart's moral qualities, but also the heart's metaphysical qualities. So meditation is the method which purifies the heart in all its aspects and makes one sensitive to a very great degree. This sensitivity toward others in outer behavior enlivens the moral qualities, but the same sensitivity within develops the intuition. And both may come at the same time in the same way through the same spiritual practices.

Intuition differs from impression in that one is or may be conscious of the process. The sleeper has

awakened, so to speak. Although when practicing Nimaz one places all dependence upon God, at a higher stage this dependence blossoms into life in the intuitive faculty which brings the answer to every question, not as man would have it, but as the Wisdom of God would answer it. Intuition is a steady stream or fountain, whereas impressions come like scattered drops of rain.

The intuition is not to be confused with reason, which is a mental faculty, although intuition is always rational. It is direct, spontaneous and immediate. It may be called super-rational, and is directed toward action, rather than being subject to analysis. The beauty of intuition is that it always tells the correct mode of activity, either for the sake of protection or for the sake of advancement, and is never to be doubted, for it can never be wrong. It is the music of God singing in the human heart.

The intuition is not the conscience although there need be no difference in their practical application. Conscience depends upon past experience and its judgment prevents one from repeating past mistakes. On the other hand, intuition is independent of both time and experience and may be said, rather, to point to the future. Its light becomes more dependable the more it is relied upon. Conscience will say: "The other roads are wrong," while intuition will tell you: "This is the right path."

Intuitions may appear as being independent one from the other, but that is due to the personality directing the consciousness, sometimes to the heart, sometimes to the surface. When one perceives omniscient unity in all things, this difference automatically disappears. Of course in times of danger or warning, the impression from the heart is always stronger, and especially in time of pain and suffering one turns within, knowing that from within solace will come.

The sage differs from the ordinary man in that he always turns within for all answers and by his implicit obedience to the Voice of God in the heart avoids the mistakes and troubles that others meet with so much in their daily lives.

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Githeka Series III: Number 3

Insight

One who has developed his intuitive faculty is like a sleeper who has awakened, a baby who has learned to walk. But the Sufi must not only be awake, he must rise and act; he must not only know

how to walk, he must have a place to go, a purpose for his motions. Therefore the talib is given many instructions about the awakening of the insight, Kashf.

Spiritual exercises develop all heart qualities, and thus intuition becomes more and more a potent reality in life. The supreme purpose in the inner training is to bring to action and livingness the qualities, faculties and functions of the heart. Of course the mind is also benefited in the process and the spiritual development of the heart may not only awaken the mind but also attune the heart and mind which is most important.

Insight may therefore be called a combination of intuition and mind, yet it is even more than that. Intuition is higher than impression in that one is conscious of intuition, but when insight becomes a faculty, one is not only conscious of it, but there is understanding also. For the insight is a continuous process, which does not come and go. It is the everlasting light shining in the heart, and is not like the star which appears only at night, nor like the moon which comes at special times. However insight is like the moon in that it resembles the light of the sun, the one in the heart, the other in the skies.

Insight is both passive and active. It receives from beyond; it obtains from God and communicates to man. All that is beyond the ordinary sphere of human limitation may be open to the insight. Therefore insight is the understanding of man who has been blessed by the Grace of God.

Insight stands above both time and reason; it comes immediately and directly, yet in addition to acting through the heart, it also impresses the mind, so that the mind acts knowingly upon the body. If insight is submissive to reason, and attempt is made to analyze it, it results in loss of strength and inspiration, besides destroying whatever beauty that there was present in it.

Many powers grow out of insight, such as telepathic processes. They are not confined to any one world but touch every plane. It is through love and insight that man gains the master of both heaven and earth and then that knowledge becomes his which all the world is seeking.

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Githeka Series III: Number 4

Inspiration

There may be said to be one heart faculty, yet from another point of view intuition, insight, love,

compassion and understanding all arise from the heart. There is much more in light than what one can see or discern and there is much more in heart than those elements which can be distinguished by name. Love and wisdom are the two aspects of Truth, yet Truth itself cannot be bound by these or any other terms or attributes.

Insight enables man to protect himself in all conditions, against all forces and difficulties. The greatest obstacle is his own ego. What happens when this ego does not stand in the way? When there is resignation, when there is no more selfhood, then there is Islam, self-surrender and peace. Peace is attained through self-surrender and then no more protection is needed; with the passing of "I-ness," is the coming of "Thou-ness" and in this stage one touches inspiration.

The moon has its phases, yet under one condition it gives full reflection. So the inspired soul is one who receives the light of the spiritual sun and transmits it to earth. The same process is seen in harnessing physical energy which comes from the sun. There is the station where this energy is first harnessed, and there is the place where it is utilized. In the inspired person both processes go on at the same time, in the same place.

To the average person, there is another condition sometimes called inspiration, wherein one takes on much energy and may even do artistic work, yet lacks insight. This is not the true spiritual inspiration and results in emotional reaction and temperamental behavior. Concentration and meditation purify and cleanse and prepare the way for a finer inspiration. The realized soul, who is no longer troubled by the nafs may enter this state freely and drink from the Divine Cup.

It is then that the Heavens descend to earth in a rain of light, in a down pouring of wisdom. By this means great poets have been able to work, great artists to draw their masterpieces. This condition is indescribable; it is so wonderful it can be called miraculous.

Yet to the spiritual person this state may become as much a part of life as anything else, it may be realized with every breath. It is the awakening of the Soul, the real Inner Life. Then man is the servant of Allah, the true traveler on the Path. The question then arises, "how can inspiration be attained?" It comes through attunement to the Divine, either in name or form or idea or ideal. In the Sufi system, the teacher becomes the gate for the disciple, who having formed part of the ladder to God, and perhaps realized the Being of God, is able to bear the torch so that others may tread the path. He may not tread it for them, but he may hold out the light, so that they can walk more easily.

In the inspired state, there is no need for protection, because when selfhood passes away, then there is neither friend nor foe, neither danger nor safety, but peace, and that which in us is accomplishing all this work, doing all these creative activities is not so much man inspired by God but God Himself performing deeds through the instrumentality of man.

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Githeka Series III: Number 5

Revelation

The greatest of the inner faculties which comes through the awakening of the heart, which is so rare that some doubt its existence, is that which is called revelation. And what is revelation? It is the same heart-faculty which is considered everywhere in the Sufi science, blossoming into the flower of Reality where there are no longer secrets of the self, but where and when all is understood.

Inspiration may be a conscious process, and in it there is a relation between doer and deed and God. But there is not then a complete realization. Even though one feels the Presence of God, it does not mean God-consciousness. There have been many poets and musicians and artists who have been greatly inspired yet they were not fully conscious of their powers or of their condition.

Insight, moral training, discipline of Nufs and understanding are themselves only means. All of man's efforts can carry him just so far. Beyond that, if there is not the Grace of God, further progress of any kind is impossible. For that reason those who have believed that they could attain to great spiritual or occult powers have failed, especially when they have refused to accept a teacher. Not recognizing God in name and form, they have never been able to find Him above name and form.

Tarikat, the spiritual path of Sufism, leads to Marifat, the supreme inner knowledge, which is the same as Prajna or Gnosis. This knowledge comes through the awakened heart faculties of whatever degree one has. In reality one learns only and always from God. Then insight becomes sight, becomes hearing, becomes knowing, becomes all faculties in one.

The supreme One-ness is not only a supreme state of consciousness where one is conscious of the All, but it is a One-ness of unities. It includes all attributes, qualities, conditions, names and forms, beyond every possibility of distinction. Then there is light and love, sound and life, harmony and beauty, and every degree and aspect of perfection, yet all unified.

Revelation is granted to a man only for divine purposes, so can never be discussed. Revelation is given never for personal protection but thus God, through man, can protect others, can guide others, can assist others. Therefore the Sufi shows the greatest respect to all who have reached this condition, whatever be their race, creed or belief. Revelation is the door by which God enters the physical world and shows His face to human forms.

(This paper to be followed by Saum, Salat, meditation and Khatum.)

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Githeka Series III: Number 6

Fana

The selfless person needs no protection for the selfless one has destroyed the seed of enmity, and so to him there can be no opposition. The process of self-effacement is called fana by the Sufis and it is not so different from the Hindu and Buddhist conception of Nirvana. This idea is presented in the tenth Sufi thought which reads, "There is one path, the annihilation of the false ego in the Real, which raises the mortal to immortality, and in which resides all perfection."

In inspiration the self is absorbed in the work, in its ideal. This is true of the artist, the scientist, the laborer, the merchant, the talib. This is what is meant by Dharma, which is more than duty; it is making a reality of every activity and making every activity arise out of one's dependence upon the Supreme.

It is this teaching and this process which make it possible for the people in the Orient to erect great temples, to carve marvelous statuary, to display the greatest skill and technique in many arts and crafts. Sometimes a person might spend many years in a single achievement. Yet it did not matter, nor did it matter if his name never became known to the world; all that mattered was that his work be performed in the best manner, exhibiting that beauty which was sure to inspire the onlookers.

Therefore meditation was considered most important. When one spends much of one's time in meditation, dhyana, the inner and outer life merge into each other. In Hindu music it is very necessary to attune the instrument to the keynote of the soul, and this makes spiritual music possible. But the same is very true of all arts and whether they depend upon sound, color, or form the basic principles are the same.

In India this form of meditation brings one to what is called "outer Samadhi." It gives one something of the realization of the Oneness of life, that there is spirit in all things, in every aspect of manifestation. Therefore the subject and the object and the work are all part of one process. When the West understands this—and even now it is beginning to be understood—there will also arise from the Occidental peoples great poets and artists who may even surpass the masters of the Orient.

The ideal in life should be achievement. Sufism is not passivism and it is not enough to learn all about protection to keep safe from enemies within and without. It is man's duty to accomplish

some goal, and he must progress. Every action, especially Dharma performed which is harmonious to the Will of God as expressed in the universe, builds about one a stronger atmosphere. Therefore action may become the best defense, and selfless duty the best protector. As Jesus Christ has said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." This does not mean the inane, the negative, the lifeless, but the selfless achievers.

All practices in concentration and meditation bring one nearer to this goal. As selflessness does not mean negativity, so absorption or fana does not mean death. On the contrary, it means a fuller life and in its higher stages it becomes fana-fi-baqa, or "subsistence in absorption." This may be paraphrased, "The real, true immortal life is found in the absorption in the ideal." This is the idea presented in the tenth Sufi thought.

The Sufi thoughts are not to be considered apart from the spiritual exercises, and their meaning depends not upon the repetition of words, or knowing them in the mind. They become realities when they are made realities. Every talib will discover in the performance of Dharma the living evidence of Truth. These may be the natural result of his fidelity. In other words, every practice, every prayer, every effort is both a protection to oneself on the negative side of life, and a step forward from the positive point of view.

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Githeka Series III: Number 7

Fana-fi-Sheikh

Fana cannot be taught in words or philosophy. It depends upon effort and attainment. In the science of the Sufis there is a method presented whereby one gradually grows in the understanding of it. The first step is called fana-fi-Sheikh.

By the word Sheikh is understood not only those who are called Sheikh or Sheikha, but the spiritual guide who has become the ideal who is to be followed in daily life. The method is very varied yet not so complex as it may appear. As the Sufi instructions have been given in the West, they offer a suitable means for the people of the West to understand Sufism. But understanding is not attainment and without trust and confidence in the living person, there can be no trust and confidence in one no longer in the body, and still less trust and confidence in God Who appears hidden from view.

The Khalifs and Sheikhs who assist the Murshids and the Pir-o-Murshid are reflections of the Spirit of Guidance. Respect for the Murshid is not only expressed by one's behavior toward his personality but more by the relationship and respect one holds towards those appointed to assist in the Sufi instruction. Then the talib will benefit not so much from reading and studying the Gathas, although this will help very much, but from the breath, the personality and the wisdom of the teacher. This is the first union which is necessary which inculcates a brotherly feeling and unites mureed to mureed and all together to the Sheikh.

Of course there is another stage which has been called fana-fi-Murshid in which one has for his ideal the highest expression of humanity one finds on earth. This form of concentration is not always assigned. Through it one develops in one's personality those attributes which are found in the ideal. It is not so different from the processes found in music. There through attunement, through imitation, through practice, one learns all one can from a teacher but must use one's efforts to accomplish anything.

Similarly the talib, while following the manner of the teacher, has to use his own efforts to develop in his being those attributes which are necessary to the successful attainment of the purpose of life. In the presence of the Murshid one learns not only from the words which come from his mouth, but from the power and magnetism in his breath, from the inspiration of his presence, from the love, compassion, and wisdom of his being.

Among the people of India especially, the Murshid or Guru was respected as the representative of divinity, the vice-regent of Allah. This is not wrong, for the lesser cannot judge the greater, cannot understand those who do understand. They may learn from them, they may imitate them, they may strive to harmonize with them.

True Sufism is nothing written in books or on paper; it is not even to be found in speech although much more of it can be conveyed in speech than in writing. It is in the living spirituality of the great Murshids that Sufism is found, and nothing in the world can help a mureed more than to receive such a baptism of the spirit, which is the greatest of blessings.

However great care must be taken first to learn how to surrender, how to put one's trust in one's teacher. Then one is protected by one's teacher. At the same time one is also protected by God and by all those Who form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance, and even though one be as an innocent child, yet Allah will protect and guide him.

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Githeka Series III: Number 8

Fana-fi-Rassoul

The selflessness displayed in the presence of a Murshid is a step towards that true selflessness displayed before God. As the epistle of James teaches, how can one love God Whom one has not seen, if one does not love man whom he has seen. Love is much more than an emotion, it is the surrender of self, so that the lover is not one who cries: "I love thee," but whose heart says: "In thy presence I am as naught."

Many think of mysticism as a science which teaches one how to have great visions. There are marvelous experiences recorded in the Scriptures and biographies of saints, but the greatest of these states cannot be recorded, which come through the effacement of the self. Only a selfless being can touch such conditions and this selflessness cannot be forced upon every person.

No doubt there is a time when each one will realize within their being who is a Messenger of God. This may not mean a particular personality, although it does not preclude one who has been upon earth and who is very dear to one's heart, who is mentioned in one's prayers. Often one has a vision of Rassoul before Bayat, and it may come at other times. Sometimes one also has a vision of a Pir, or great Sufi teacher.

What has been called fana-fi-Pir is conscious absorption into the being of a great teacher, whether that one has been upon earth during one's lifetime or whether he walked here in the distant past. Such a vision comes by the grace of Allah, and such a Pir or holy saint may walk by one's side often, protecting and guiding them at every step of the way.

The real knowledge from the Murshid may come from the breath and being of the Murshid. If a question arises, "is it to one's advantage to be under the personal instruction of a Murshid or to have contact with a Pir upon a higher plane," the answer is that that question shows a person to be wandering in darkness. The Invocation teaches that all illuminated souls are as the embodiment of one Master, of one Spirit of Guidance. It is so easy for the mind to conjecture differences and analyze the different personalities, but in the heart this is impossible.

At the same time, it is also true that when one has advanced on the path, and realized this oneness more and more, by the beneficent Grace of God some Murshid, or Pir-o-Murshid or even Rassoul, the embodiment of the Divine Spirit, may contact one in vision or in consciousness and bring the highest blessing.

Sometimes through the sight of the eyes, sometimes through the ears in hearing, sometimes even by touch, by outer feeling or inner feeling, by thought, by breath, by impression, by intuition, in inspiration, through insight, through union in Samadhi, in many ways one becomes absorbed into the ideal in or out of form. This is the true spiritual development which brings spiritual knowledge.

It is impossible to relate the many ways; it depends upon the development of the mureed and the grace of Allah and the need of the world. If one knew it, God is always striving to reach humanity through His Messengers, whose work is not confined to any one plane or any particular age. But as light does not function in darkness, so the Holy Ones appear to those who have made accommodation for light.

Fana-fi-Rassoul, absorption in the Messenger of God, in the anointed of God, is the ideal state for man, who serves and seeks Allah both at the same time.

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Githeka Series III: Number 9

Fana-fi-Rassoul, continued

What is the purpose of the Universal Worship? It is much more than to teach tolerance and respect. It is to raise one to the degree of understanding when one will perceive that all Messengers of God were assigned similar tasks, each suited for some particular age, for certain duties at certain occasions. Yet together they unite in a Divine Symphony, a celestial harmony which includes all humanity.

It is not necessary to consider the personalities of the prophets. In the deepest sense the prophets had no personalities but were human beings who laid aside their welfare, their selfhood, to serve God. One does not try to see a prophet; there are no spiritual instructions except through concentration by which one can be brought to see a particular personality. Even if one in his heart desired to see Christ and concentrated day and night upon Christ and if he did not know the true being of Christ, if God desired, he might have a vision of Mohammed or Buddha.

This is especially true of one who is considering himself and not God. If in our love of God we have Divine Grace and wish to see Christ and there is a spiritual reason, God Who is mercy and beneficence, may grant our heart's desire. But if we consider Christ as separate, as unique, as different, Allah Who is also All-knowing and All-wise, may send us a vision of Buddha because that is necessary for our growth and our awakening.

The highest form of protection of self is removal of the limited nufs and absorption in the being of Allah. At the same time, God having created the world only appears in the worlds of creation (Tashbi) in some name and form. This is called Mohammed or Rassoul, which means Allah

appearing in a limited personality. Until he is perceived in personality, He cannot be reached in Essence.

The Sufi instruction is to help talibs realize this Unity of Allah, that all forms are really Allah, that He is in all forms, and yet there is a form, which may be called the highest form, which is capable of realizing Allah, and reflecting the Light of Allah. This was the true personality of Mohammed, and this is what is meant by Mohammed. At the same time it is not different in essence from all the others who form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

It is not different if one should consider Jesus Christ in this aspect, and consider him as the special representative or agent of Allah, as His Mediator and as our mediator. Only the purpose of mysticism is to bring this to realization. When this state has been realized through an inner awakening, all these names and forms will be found to be one name and form, and call it Rama, Krishna, Siva, Buddha, Abraham, Solomon, Zarathustra, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, it does not matter.

In what may be called fana-fi-Adam, which is a form of fana-fi-Rassoul, it will be found that all these names, all these forms, all these personalities are the reflections of that One Divine Light which is found in Humanity, of which the Qur'an teaches as being the source of the Light of Creation—that God created Adam and from Adam created the heavens and the earth.

This is a profound mystery, a knowledge of the deepest recesses of the heart, yet not hidden, for when the heart opens all these mysteries, all this occult teaching becomes an open book before the seer.

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Githeka Series III: Number 10

Fana-fi-Lillah

There is no form of direct concentration on Allah for in concentration the mind is used, while when realization comes Allah uses the mind. There is in ordinary concentration a tacit assumption that man is, but in Fikr the motive is that God is and it is by uniting Fikr with concentration that one escapes the dangers to which the ordinary man is subject with his accepted forms of concentration which are not spiritual. In fact all forms of concentration and meditation which have any other purpose than the service and search of Allah are subject to dangers from which one cannot be

protected.

At the same time Allah is love and mercy and those who call upon Him are always protected, when they call in loving surrender. In fana-fi-Rassoul one experiences communion and atonement with all that has name and form. But when one rises above this condition one loses his being in God, and this is called fana-fi-Lillah.

Many speak of cosmic consciousness, but the one who has experienced cosmic consciousness has neither friend nor foe, and feels within his being all the feelings, all the thoughts of creation. Then he needs no protection, for from what can he be protected, since God is all in all?

Every practice from the beginning of Nimaz and Zikr helps to bring this realization and the more the spiritual exercises are performed, the nearer one approaches this Divine Realization. So the ideal is raised to a higher and higher degree, the soul moves out into expansive vistas of consciousness, and touches that Bliss or Islam which is the desire of every heart, finding the true being in God, Who is the Only Being, the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty.

Then one passes from the stage of needing protection to being protector. That is why the animals had no fear for Orpheus and Rama and Daniel and at the same time caused them no fear. Being protectors of all creatures, they had no cause to fear anything. In them was no longer this limited personality but the being and light of Allah shown through them.

It is this highest condition which is reached by a few very devout souls, who may be called Nabi, who no longer seek protection but give it and giving it, must have it. So the higher kind of protection comes in the highest surrender when there is no more fear, no more danger because there is no separation in consciousness between the limited mortal and the Divine Universal Consciousness, the Father and Mother and Essence of all that is.