

Paper VIII 3/19/25 10:00 AM

Reincarnation

Does Sufism teach "Reincarnation?" How often is this question asked! Sometimes the answer seems to be one thing and sometimes another. If a person wanted to know where the City Hall was, you would not take him on a sight seeing trip. Nor if he wanted to go to the Cliff House would you first take him down town. John the Baptist said "Prepare ye the way of the lord, make straight His paths." And this the Sufi must always do. He wants to know the straight path to God and having found it, show it to others.

The answer to the question "Does Sufism teach 'Reincarnation'" is really contained in the question. The question one really asks is "Does Sufism teach the rebirth of consciousness as I (the questioner) conceive it, over and over again in a body. Now this is a very complex question, and to answer it, one has to know not only what the questioner means by "reincarnation," but what he means by "soul," "mind," "rebirth," "death," "karma," "salvation," etc. And as no two people may have the same conception of all these terms, it is impossible to give a straight answer. Very often the questioner has no real concept of many of the terms, using words without any thought behind him, expecting the Sufi to make an interpretation of his idea, explain it, and answer it.

Now if a person would ask a question, he must first make his idea clear. If he has only a hazy idea, how can he expect someone else to clear away the clouds from his mind? On the other hand, if he can clear his own concept and is capable of explaining it to another, he will be capable of answering, and the answer will come, "If that is your point of view, you are right." It all depends on the point of view of the individual.

Sufism would teach to each the road the soul must take to salvation. But no one is traveling along that road until he comes to it. All roads reach it like streams flowing into a river. Every person has his own concepts, his own ideas and ideals, and so his own religion, and as he evolves, these change.

"From God we all came and to Him we all return." This is the lesson to teach. Sufism is the religion of Love, Harmony and Beauty. It does not interfere with concepts and ideas. These belong to the mind and not to the soul. Great as the mind may be, it is not capable of grasping the infinite. The mind cannot conceive the soul of God. "My thoughts are not thy thoughts." But by attunement and spiritual growth the mind can express the reflections it receives from higher sources. The mind is as a mirror and the brighter the mirror, the more light it will reflect.

So if a person believes he has lived on earth and will again, maybe so. Maybe he has. But the souls itself was never born and never dies. What need to pass over and over again through childhood and youth to learn lessons, lessons that might be taught elsewhere: The soul is where it can best be taught what it has to learn and when it learns that lesson: what it is, where it is from, whither it goes; it will have learned all lessons.

The answer to our questions lies in ourselves. If our ideas make us happy, cling to them. If not, throw them away. The soul is like a balloonist going upward. The more ballast he throws over, the higher the balloon will go and when he learns to throw away body and emotions, mind and thought, even the idea of self, he will reach his goal and find that happiness and peace which he has longed for.

(Under inspiration from Murshid)