



A Sufi Message

God's Hidden Hand

Selected Teachings by Hazrat Inayat Khan

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Put your trust in God for support and see God's hidden hand working through all sources.

– Hazrat Inayat Khan –

Permit me to begin with a question. Who here today has not been touch in their life by loss? This loss might have been a missed opportunity, a loss of relationship, or the death of a loved one. We all have been. **The further question really is, how do we handle loss? Does it define and drown us in sorrow, or propel us to greater understanding and insight into the nature of things?**

In the book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Sogyal Rinpoche writes, “Each time the losses of life teach us about impermanence, they bring us closer to the truth. When you fall from a great height, there is only one possible place to land: on the ground—the ground of truth. And if you have the understanding that comes from spiritual practice, **then falling is in no way a disaster, but the discovery of an inner refuge**”.

We have words of inspiration that are spoken around loss, but do we believe and trust in these words? For example, “It’s always darkest before the dawn”. “There’s a silver lining in every dark cloud”. “There’s a Light at the end of the tunnel”. “Your Faith will heal you”.

I’m wearing this beautiful mala made of pearls that my sister, Mudita Cecily Sabato, brought to me as a gift from India years ago. Today to wear it to remind myself that these pearls are cultivated when something foreign entered into an oyster shell. From that foreign element something beautiful was created. Can we let our pain of loss – our grief create something beautiful within us?

There is a practice that the Sufi Master Inayat Khan gave to us, that goes like this. While making the sign of the cross we first draw a horizontal line while contemplating the earthly realm of limitation (in Sufic terms, *fana*, meaning surrender or effacement). Then we draw a vertical descending line while contemplating the descent of Divine Consciousness piercing the plane of limitation (in Sufi terms, *baqa*/awakening/resurrection from limitation). This reminds us to live in this world while uniting everyday life on earth with everlasting life in heaven. A great female Sufi Saint by the name of Rabia said it this way. “I am eating the bread of this world, and doing the work of That World.”

PRACTICE: While drawing this line over our body was say these words from the Lord's Prayer

- Draw the horizontal line while saying, *"Thy Will be done on earth."*
- Draw the vertical line of the cross while saying, *"as it is in Heaven"*.

May this practice serve as a reminder to tune to a higher plane during good times in thankfulness, and during difficult times as a reminder to be thankful and to surrender to God's plan for us.

When troubles come, keep your Faith. Pain and loss may be a blessing in disguise, viewed as transitional points, bridges to new experiences, new places, new quests, new understanding. If we can discipline and turn our minds towards thinking in this way it will create within us the light in patience and resilience. Let us remember to fortify ourselves with prayer, and to live in the moment – neither clinging to the past or projecting ourselves into an unknown future. Let God's plan for us naturally unfold. See all hurts, disappointments, and losses as temporary. The writer, Sir Tom Stoppard once remarked, *"Look on every exit as being an entrance somewhere else."* Contemplate this: *"Look on every exit as being an entrance somewhere else."*

I would like to share with you a story of a woman by the name of Kisa Gotami (KE-Sa GU-ta-mE) who lived during the time of the Buddha. Kisa's only child, a very young son, had died. Unwilling to accept his death, she carried her dead son from neighbor to neighbor, begging for someone to give her medicine to bring her son back to life. One of her neighbors told her to go to Buddha, located nearby, and ask him if he had a way to bring her son back to life.

Kisa found Buddha and pleaded with him to help bring her son back to life. He instructed her to go back to her village and gather mustard seeds from the households of those who have never been touched by the death. From those mustard seeds, the Buddha promised he would create a medicine to bring her son back to life. Relieved, she went back to her village and began asking her neighbors for mustard seeds. All her neighbors were willing to give her mustard seeds, but they all told her that their households had indeed been touched by death. As the day turned to night she was still without any mustard seeds, and then she realized the universality of death. According to the Buddhist verse her story comes from, she said:

It's not just a truth for one village or town, nor is it a truth for a single family, but it is the truth that every place, everything and everyone has been touched by death. It is indeed true that everything holds within itself the Nature of Impermanence.

With this new understanding Kisa's grief was calmed. She buried her son in the forest and then returned to Buddha. She confessed to Buddha that she could not obtain any of the mustard seeds he had instructed her to collect because she could not find even one household untouched by death.

Here is a passionate, and loving teaching that Buddha imparted to Kisa Gotami:

"Dear One, the life of mortals in this world is troubled, brief and inseparable from suffering. There is not any means, nor will there ever be, by which those that have been born can avoid dying. All living beings are of such a nature that they must die whether they reach old age or not.

Just as the earthen vessels made by the potter's hand end in shards, so is the life of mortals. Both young and old, both those who are foolish and those who are wise – all fall into the power of death, all are subject to death.

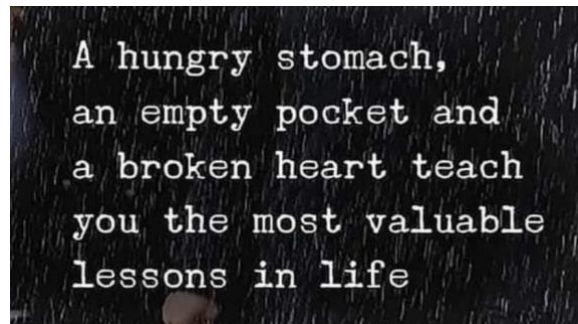
Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind. On the contrary, their pain will be all the greater, and will ruin one's health. Dead bodies cannot be restored by our grief.

The Buddha then instructs Kisa, to “Reject grief, do not allow it to enter your mind.”

The person who seeks peace should pull out the arrow sorrow, useless longings, and the self-made pangs of grief. The one who has removed this unwholesome arrow and has calmed oneself will obtain peace of mind. Verily, the person who has conquered grief will always be free – sane and immune – confident, happy, and close to Nirvana”.

Through this experience, Kisa was able to dispel all illusions and misapprehensions, she came to understand the true nature of reality leading to a state of inner liberation. By doing so Kisa reached the first stage of enlightenment.

A Sufi leader and friend in New Delhi, India sent me a quote yesterday, and it was so timely and relevant to this sermon, it's a koan to contemplate, for each one the meaning may be different. I want to share it all of you now. The quote reads:



So in the end, perhaps a missed opportunity is really the cosmic ‘pause’ button getting pushed until a better opportunity arises. Perhaps a broken relationship leads to an even more fruitful, loving relationship. The pain and despair of the death of a loved one may guide us to a greater understanding leading us, like Kisa Gotami, towards our own enlightenment. The bottom line is “nothing lasts forever” nor should it. Be patient, remain calm, look ahead, and “Put your trust in God for support and see God’s hidden hand working through all sources.”

CLOSING: Close with a meditation from a 13th Century Persian Sufi Mystic, Poet, and Scholar by the name of Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi

- The title of this poem is *When I Die*. Now it is important give context to this poem by saying that the Sufi practices *dying before death*. What does this mean? It means striving for greater understanding into the deeper meaning of life beyond this world of limitation. It means striving to lift oneself up from the denseness of the earth. It means striving to tame the ego that keeps us imprisoned in limitation by our attachments, passions, and desires. It means striving to glean a glimpse of God’s

perspective. If we can attempt to do this daily, then through the God's Grace and Blessings, we may – if even for a few golden, precious moments – we may begin to touch that Infinite and Ever-Living part of ourselves that God has gifted to our soul's, and this shall carry us into Eternal Life in the Now and in the Hereafter.

- May God Bless Us All with Mercy, Wisdom, and Insight.

We pray this teaching resonates and benefits YOU!

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