



M.T.O. Sufi Association Newsletter

*One Picks a pearl from
The depths of the sea,
For self pleasure,
And self wealth.
One goes to the depths of the sea
In the bosom of the mother shell,
To be the pearl.*

-Nader Angha¹

What about you?

By Nader Angha²

In Iran, long ago they used to train pigeons. Many houses have flat roofs, and the trainer would keep the pigeons in cages on these roofs. Everyday, he would let them out of their cages and encourage them to fly. He would use a variety of sounds, gestures, and signals to train the pigeons. Some would only make little jumps and flutter around, some stayed busy interacting with other pigeons, fluttering here and there, and many just kept busy pecking at yesterday's seeds. Only a few really wanted to fly; only a few followed the guidance of the trainer. Pigeons do not automatically

recognize their home; they must be trained to find it. The trainer would put oil on some of the seeds so that they glistened in the sun. Then, those that were flying would see the shinning spot and could always find their way back home. After they were trained, they could fly for a day, or even several days, but they could always find their way home. But most of the pigeons didn't bother to fly; they did not want to be away from their cages. They asked, 'what for?'

Even though pigeons live on earth, they have the capability of flight. What about you? Those pigeons who learn to fly, fly from dawn to dusk

with their earthly wings. When they fly, they meet other pigeons who are also flying, and they bring them home. Pigeons stay with those who are similar to themselves. There are those who flutter and cluster around the cages, and those who fly.

What about you? How can you fly with the limitations of your cage? You can only move within it. If your standard is your cage, how can you fly? How can you make your life's voyage if you let the problems and squabbles and pleasures of cage life be more important than your flight, your voyage?

BELIEVE IT...OR NOT?

Belief is a powerful thing. It has the power to heal, provide security, create hope and unify people. The darker side of belief is exemplified by war. Holy war against infidels has been fought in the name of Christianity during the Crusades of the 11th–13th century, and more recently in the name of Islam. Belief is not classified as an emotion, but instead it seems to transcend human passions and is a power unto itself. Does the power behind belief stem from the object of the believer, or is it simply due to the act of belief itself?

We know that belief does not always have to coincide with reality. For example, in those individuals suffering from anorexia, they will usually believe that they are unattractively large and therefore must lose weight. The view of the sufferer could not be further from reality, and yet this belief still drives the anorexic to lose weight. If the reality and the

belief do not have to match up in order to gain results, then perhaps the object of belief is unimportant.

The basis of most religion is belief in some higher power. Is there only one ‘right’ religion? If the others are ‘wrong’, then why are there still so many followers? Religion had divided the world into many planes, but religions do not have to be mutually exclusive. Each rests on the power of belief, and all religions can be unified with belief as the common denominator. Belief creates love, kindness and tranquility, when applied with a pure heart. When twisted with greed, hatred and selfish desire, belief creates unrest and hostility.

The correct application of belief



If we could learn how to believe with love and knowledge instead of with ignorance and greed, then we would truly understand the reality of religion instead of seeing only the conflict between religions.

requires instruction from a teacher. This teacher could be Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed or Moses, for example. Prophets have discovered the correct way to apply belief in order for human beings to live at their highest potential. If we could learn how to believe with love and knowledge instead of with ignorance and greed, then we would truly understand the reality of religion instead of seeing only the conflict between religions.

A Practical Exercise

In Sufism we believe it is easier to complete a task as soon as you know it must be done rather than do it later.

To demonstrate this to yourself think of something you have been putting off, something that you know has to be done. Think of all the times you’ve wondered whether or not you should do it now or later, think of the guilty feeling every time you have avoided it. Now just

get up and go and make a start on it or if it is a small task complete it. Realize the amount of energy you put into “putting it off” and then the amount of energy you put into actually completing the task. Which is greater and which is easier in the end? You be the judge.

“The torment in this world is easier on you than the torment at the end.”³

References:

1. Angha, N., Revelation (Elhām), 1999, Riverside, CA: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications.
2. An extract by Nader Angha from Larsen, B., The Perfect Moment *Therapeutic Lessons from a Sufi Master*, 2000, Riverside, CA: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications.
3. Chapter 8, Sacred Sayings “Hadith Ghodsi” of Imam Ali and Prophet Mohammad, 2000, Mönchengladbach, Germany: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications.

Illustrations:

Mid-top and mid-below Pg 1: Angha, N., Revelation (Elhām), 1999, Riverside, CA: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications.

Mid-top Pg 2: Angha, N., Whispering Moments: Inspirations, 1996, Washington, DC: MTO Shahmaghsoudi Publications.