

From Heart Dweller

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Truth

Devotion is the way of the Heart. It starts with ordinary human yearning and love and consummates in the total extinction of the personality into the fire of divine love, where lover and Beloved are ecstatically united. The lover (Majthub) is pulled towards the Supreme Reality through devotion and intense longing till union takes place, when everything is melted away by love. In this experience of ego death both lover and Beloved merge and are extinguished. There is not even a Beloved left, only love, supreme and omnipresent. Love is the nature of reality, the substance of everything that is. It is the prime mover, the prime substance, the very essence of energy. Furthermore, when love is the only Reality it is none other than radiant light. Pure love is pure light. It is not that they are two different qualities of the same reality; they are one and the same quality, the same reality. They are indivisible. Distinction between love and light happens only at the lower levels when the one Reality is still not experienced in its nakedness.

Here, in this truth of the identity of love and light, I see the union of the path of devotion and the path of awareness; the path of love and the path of light. The experience itself is ineffable. It does not fall under any conceptual framework. Even calling it love and light is really not totally accurate. It is only an approximation in concepts we understand. Still our understanding is not enough; for what I call love and light have to be experienced in their purity for us to know what real love and real light are.

Light is the source of awareness. Light is awareness. Light gives awareness. Light produces awareness. It is our light nature that makes us aware. In fact our nature, our very being is awareness, or what Vajrayana Buddhists call *jnana* (ye-she). The more light, the more awareness. The more awareness, the more light. The first stages of the path of awareness don't seem to have much to do with light. Awareness seems to be something mysterious and invisible. However, the more awareness we develop the lighter we become, both in terms of feeling light (in the sense of weight) and in terms of seeing more light inside and outside. Awareness is light, and in its most intense peaks is seen as pure radiant light which dissipates all darkness. And this is our intrinsic nature.

The unity of the path of awareness and the path of love cannot be arrived at intellectually. It is an experiential truth. And being this Truth, this love-light, is the only way to see this unity, this merging of the paths. Any reasoning or intellectual deductions to make these two paths meet are rationalizations and fall short of the Truth, the actual Reality. In my particular case I followed both the theistic approach (Judeo-Christian-Moslem) and the non-theistic one (Buddhism.) The first one emphasizes the way of love, the latter the way of awareness. I say "emphasize" because they both have both approaches, and the two paths cannot be totally separated, for in reality they are indivisible. I read and heard many accounts of how all paths are the same because they lead to the same Truth. But I was never totally convinced by those arguments, although I liked many of them. In my own experience, the two paths seemed to be very different. They have different qualities and emphasize different values. I experience myself differently in each of them. I could see that they were both true, that my experience in each of them smelled and tasted of truth. I could see that they were complementary, like fullness and emptiness, the green earth and the blue sky. My intellect could not figure out the unity. Only the experience of total transcendence showed me this unity, in the identity of love and light.

At the time of the experience I had no conceptual idea of what I am saying now. There was only God. Now, reflecting back upon it, I see that I experienced truth simultaneously as love and light.

In Buddhism, supreme Reality is referred to as Dharmakaya. And Dharmakaya, or Being-as-such, is seen as the unity of emptiness and bliss, sunyata and Mahasukha. Sunyata is an ultimate experience that crowns the path of awareness. It is the experiencing of reality directly, without the filtering of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality. It is arrived at by cutting through all concepts concerning reality. Yet, sunyata is not the ultimate experience of the Buddhist path. In fact, sunyata has to die and luminosity has to be born. In other words, intuitive awareness (prajna) has to lead to intrinsic awareness (jnana.) Prajna is the awareness that is sharp and intuitive enough to cut through all concepts and beliefs. However, it is still not being awareness. While jnana is being awareness, is being one and the same with light. That is why it is called intrinsic awareness. It is not other than Buddha-nature. So, sunyata is the gate to Buddha nature. It leads to the experience of Dharmakaya, which is the indivisibility of bliss and light, love and pristine awareness. For love is bliss, and awareness is light, and the two are the indivisible nature of Being.

The Truth, Dharmakaya, Absolute, or whatever name we give it, is the origin of all paths, and is the home where all paths lead. Spiritual devotion leads to this consuming truth; so does awareness. Usually the path of devotion and

love is theistic, for it is easier to devote oneself to a Bigger Reality. The lover and the Beloved are separated so that the longing of devotion will unite them again. At the beginning of the path the individual is not aware of the absolute truth, and that it is All. The Truth is apprehended only at later stages, or in peak experiences. The path of awareness, on the other hand, leads to the same Truth, but it is of the nature of awareness that it does not need a bigger reality to be aware of. It starts by awareness of our present experience and environment. So the path of awareness is usually non-theistic, as in Buddhism.

I am not saying here that Christ invented God because He wanted somebody to direct His love to, or that Buddha reasoned that awareness didn't need a concept of God. I am saying it is of the nature of the path of love that it helps to have a deity, and it is of the nature of the path of awareness that there is no need to conceptualize a deity. Both of these pictures are really conceptual. For in the experience of Truth, theism and nontheism meet, for then it makes sense to say there is God or there is only reality. More accurately, it makes more sense not to say either, for truth is non-conceptual. Both formalizations of the nature of reality are valid, although not totally accurate, and they both describe the experience well. For there is no inside or outside, and there is no me and other. There is total unity, and all duality and conceptual discriminations just melt away.

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The experience of Truth in its transcendental aspect is beautiful, awesome, and annihilating. It is being totally consumed in the fire of truth, till there is only Truth left, the High King in absolute reign. Yet, this truth has to be seen in the creation itself for it to be of realistic value to us humans. If I see God only as transcendent then I am seeing half of the truth, and I am missing the experience of being human. I am missing compassion and love for fellow humans. My life will still stay impoverished. I will be separating the spiritual life from the world and from everyday life. This separation by itself is not spiritual and is a ground for further duality and separation. Spiritual always means unifying. Any time I find myself going towards more separation, I know that I am going away from truth, from true spirituality.

The Koran name for God, Allah, stands for both the transcendent and immanent aspects of the supreme Truth. Immanency is God in His creation, in the manifest reality. And it can be experienced in thousands upon thousands of levels. God is everywhere, He is omnipresent. The Truth is in everything, from the smallest to the greatest. It all reflects and expresses the supreme Truth, the lord of Reality. Without this absolute Truth there is no manifest reality, for it is the ground and the heart of the manifest world.

And seeing God everywhere, in everything is the basis for love and compassion for all that is. Being at the level of Dharmakaya, absolute Truth, is the experience of Buddhahood. But the Buddha must come down into the world to bring the Truth to his fellow creatures. And for that he comes down from the place of Dharmakaya to the place of Nirmanakaya. Nirmanakaya is the experience of Being in the world, God in His creation. It is the level of the Buddha when he is in the world, showing and teaching the truth he has realized. It is an act of compassion and love. But it is a natural and spontaneous act, not a premeditated one. Still, the absolute truth of love-light is there. Dharmakaya is in Nirmanakaya. The Buddha is still in touch with his Buddha nature, and sees it in everybody and in everything. God is immanent, but the immanence has transcendence at its heart. For the truth that is transcendent is experienced and apprehended here in all the myriad things. And this place of Nirmanakaya, of the truth in all, is not a belief or a conceptual idea. It is an actual truth that is apprehended intuitively; but very accurately and concretely. It is no mere imagination or belief. In truth only the truth stands. And the being who drove this fact home to me very convincingly and surprisingly is the Sufi poet Rumi, in a peak experience in which he was my guide.

Rumi is the greatest mystical poet who ever lived, and his poetry contains his teaching, which came directly from his Heart, directly from Source. When I first read Rumi I found it difficult to understand him or even to connect to his language. I squeezed my brain to understand what he was saying. It was beautiful, but did not have much of an impact on me. I kept feeling I was missing something, that somehow I was not seeing what he was communicating. Next I started to connect emotionally to him. My heart started to respond. I felt the immensity of his love for God, for the depth and beauty of his devotion. My heart will melt whenever I remember his sublime love for truth, his unwavering repose in the Heart. Still, I felt there was something missing. He was still evading me. Many poems I didn't seem to understand or respond to emotionally. I heard that Rumi's poems contain his teachings. So I started looking for this teaching. I tried to understand, and read between the lines, or within them. I tried to feel the images and understand the analogies and similes. It did not work. Rumi was still far away from me, and whatever teaching there was in his poems, I was still not seeing.

One day I am in great agitation. I feel restless, uncomfortable. I don't know what to do with myself. I try to meditate, but I can't sit still. I try to pray, but then I question whether God is inside or outside. So I go back and forth between meditation and prayer, hoping to connect to myself, but I can't stay in either one of them. My agitation is very intense. Here, I take a book of Rumi's poems and start reading it from someplace in the middle. A poem on love. I

like it, but somehow I feel I am not appreciating what he says. I read it about a hundred times, loudly and in silence. A certain line seems to stand out and affect me. He says, talking of how much he loves Truth, "The first moment, I renounce life." Little by little I start feeling the immensity and the depth of his love for the Beloved. He will renounce life, at the moment he is born, even before he experiences it, for the Beloved. What sublime love! What superhuman devotion! What a purity of heart! The more I repeat the line the more I am impressed and pierced by the greatness and the depth of his love. I feel this tremendous energy pushing against my chest from the inside. My heart starts to open, like a heavy door opening slowly under a great pressure. At some point the door is flung open, and the pure love evoked by Rumi's devotion streams forth. This sweet nectar melts my intellectual and emotional personality and I find myself in the presence of Rumi. He is not here in the flesh but he certainly is here for all practical purposes. Here, I understand how his teaching is in his poetry.

I let go of trying to understand. I let go of trying to feel. I let go of trying to do anything. I just read Rumi without intention and with an open heart. I surrender to him. I trust in him. Whatever he says or does is the truth, and I don't have to understand or know what it is. Here, the teaching appears, and it is none other than Rumi himself, a beautiful, humorous and skillful guide. He takes me by the heart and leads me. I don't know where I am going, neither do I care to know. I trust him fully. He leads, I follow. He says, I listen. And he is such a genius of a guide. Extremely dexterous, wonderfully humorous, beautiful beyond bounds. He guides me, taking me from exactly where I am, weaving a path between my thoughts and feelings, using his images, until I find myself in a totally different place from where I started. He is completely synchronous with my experience. What I read is an exact response to what I am thinking or feeling at the moment. He gets through all my bullshit, all my doubts and fears. Sometimes I feel washed with humility by his greatness. Sometimes I experience the whole of existence as a totally pure presence, so gentle, delicate, fine. At other times I explode laughing when I see how he skillfully tricked me out of a certain pattern or space and into another unexpected one.

I find the key to connect to Rumi. It is very different from what I usually would expect. It is total trust that he can guide me, and that I can just let go to him and let him lead the way. And he is so funny and humorous sometimes. At other times he is serious and chastising. At still other times he is humble and devotional. He takes the color, the shape, or the quality of everything in reality and uses it to guide me from one place to the next. I am totally absorbed in him, totally melted in his palm. He uses usual feelings and images, in a certain succession that is not apparent to the eye, but leads the heart from one place to the next, without the head knowing about it. He uses the colors and shades of emotions to point to the path, to mark the road. And I follow, following my heart, who is following Rumi. Rumi skillfully takes my questions, conflicts, doubts, etc., and weaves them into beautiful images and transforms them into the truth. The experience does not have the quality of either pleasure or pain, although these happen. It is beyond such qualities.

He takes me, starting from present experience, to beyond myself. I become totally identified with whatever image or feeling he mentions. This way I experience myself as the poetry, and this takes me beyond my ordinary experience of myself. It takes me, in a surprising and humorous way, beyond the limitations of my personality. I am no longer me. I am whatever Rumi says. He molds me into what he deems best. And slowly he takes me from being a beggar to being a mighty king, and from a mighty king to a mote on the road. He takes me from being a cup to being the wine in the cup, to being the spirit of the wine, to being the sun itself. With me as the thread, he weaves a tapestry of the whole world, from the smallest thing in it to the greatest that can be. All this, I experience with the full intellectual, emotional and tactile senses.

I hear the murmur
Of the brook
In my empty heart,
Yet I glide in the water
As the fish.
I am the river bed
The ocean
Where the river ends.
I fly with the wind as the clouds,
Yet I am the cloudless sky.
I orbit the glorious one
As the earth around the sun
Yet behold,
For the sun and the stars,
Their light I bestow upon them
All glory to my bounteousness
Vast and open as the space,

The endless silence
Of the universe.
So remember me,
And bow with the cosmos
That prostrates itself
At my feet.
Beg with me,
Me, the dust under His foot,
For a glance from Him,
The Truth sublime,
The king of all that is,
In his shining Endlessness.

And the experience is no longer “me” being all these myriad things, but God, the truth being in His creation. I see with an inner eye, and feel with an inner heart how the Lord of Truth is really the most abject thing, as well as the most lofty. He is in all. All is a manifestation of Him. Rumi unveils the veils, not just by meaning, but by a thousand shades. I see that even the slightest touch of the end of the foot is part of Him. Rumi opens levels of Reality that I usually won't even admit to in reality as I know it. He goes beyond what I could even imagine or conceive. He is a genius, and he is at play, creating the universe, unfolding the seamless web of what seems and what does not.

Rumi's message is in everything he touched or said or was or is, for Rumi is truth. Rumi is glory. There is no difference between God, Rumi, and glory. His message defies anything I can think or conceptualize or feel. He opens new levels, even new meanings of levels. He is just too much. Even the nature of truth he plays with. It is all so beautiful. Rumi is beautiful.

The truth changes. It takes all shapes and forms. One time it is the cup bearer, another it is the wind, another the light reflections from it, another the drunken lover, still another the Lord of Truth, and so on. One time a fragment of reality, another time the Absolute itself. Yet it is the nature of truth that it stays the truth, although it changes. For it is all the same really from the standpoint of the truth. I see, with the certainty of the inner eye that the darkest darkness and the whitest sun are really the same. The most positive and the most negative are one and they are one in the truth. Also the truth, the one, is always in full glory, regardless of what the parts see or think or feel or experience; for He is the very life and existence of them all. Furthermore, every little thing is the whole thing. Even the little doubtful, skeptical voices are also part of Him. And it is all good.

I experience the truth as the brilliance that is the source of everything. It is the origin. It is beyond manifestation, and is the essence of manifestation. It is the absolute, here, immanent in manifestation. I keep calling it the “IT” for lack of a proper name for it. This happens slowly as I am being threaded into the tapestry of creation. Me as the thread assumes luminosity gradually, until it is brilliance. This brilliance, this light that is also love, is the thread that goes through all creation, all appearance. Everything has this brilliance at its heart as its essence. Every object, everything. Even feelings and thoughts have their essence as this brilliance. This “IT,” this brilliant truth, threads all of reality. I see it with my inner eye, yet it is almost visual. In fact, it is both visual and non-visual at the same time. This inner experience is physical, emotional, mental and intuitive. Heart and head united. I see that the real Heart that Rumi talks about is much more than the seat of feelings. It is a whole brain, with its own mode of direct knowledge, but all with the sweet flavor of love. It is both the heart and the head. It is the inner sense, the organ that perceives truth directly. It sees through infinite levels of reality at the same time. The depth is staggering.

Rumi teaches me what it is “to be in the world but not of it.” This is usually taken as a description of the sufi. So it is taken that the sufi, as the human individual, lives among people but is totally non-attached to their world. Rumi teaches me the meaning from the high point, from the point of the truth. The Truth, this brilliant love, is in the creation, yet is not of the creation itself. So the sufi here is the truth. It is the darling prince of Reality walking in His creation. Yet, without Him all the creation will be naught. This is the truth of Nirmanakaya, of Buddha nature being the essence of the manifest reality of the Buddha in the world. Rumi teaches me that the truth that is absolute, that consumes the individual in its transcendent aspect, is really immanent in everything. And he does it in such a genius way, in such a humorous way, in such a skillful way, in such a wise way. I see and appreciate him for the first time. And I feel awed and humbled by the depth and immensity of his wisdom, that he let me have a glimpse of it.

“I am greatly indebted to you. I am deeply and humbly grateful to you Maulana Rumi. I love you, O poet of the Heart.”