

Daily Meditation 07/06/2022

Rumi, Hafiz, Spark of the Soul & Service in Sufi Mysticism

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on the spark of the soul... the spark of the soul... which culminates, as the Jewish mystical tradition says, in service and good works, mitzvah, sacred work.

Today we have the gift and pleasure of spending time with Sufi mystics and the Muslim tradition, around this same archetype of the spark of our soul. And Rumi, who Robert Bly said is the greatest poet who ever lived, has this powerful poem that we share today. And let me walk you through a bit of it in a sort of exegesis.

Ah, one spark flew and burned the house of my heart.

What a powerful opening sentence. It just takes one spark to burn the house of the heart. Hildegard of Bingen and many mystics talk about wisdom being found in the house of the heart. Thomas Aquinas talks about that, too. That prayer as a contemplation is a return to the house of the heart. But Rumi sees this house catching fire from just one spark.

Smoke filled the sky. The flames grew fierce in the wind.

Now with understanding of climate change and drought in places like where I live in Northern California, we know all about sparks that fill the sky, and flames that go fierce in the wind. But of course, here we're not talking about a literal forest fire. We're talking about our hearts.

How big a thing is it when our hearts catch fire? Well, Rumi answers that very question in the next line of his poem:

The fire of the heart is not easily lit.

How important a statement that is: *the fire of the heart is not easily lit*. We often do not live at the depths of our heart. And so, the fire which is more than spark even, is not easily lit. If our hearts are embedded in a superficial level of operation, because the spark has to fall on an important place to catch fire...has to fall in the center, in the depths of ourselves.

Hildegard of Bingen said, "Oh human, why do you live without passion? Why do you live without blood?" So that call, too is a call to light the fire of our hearts. But in a deep place, where it makes a difference.

And Rumi goes on: because the fire of the heart is not easily lit, he says:

*So don't cry out, oh Lord, rescue me from the burning flames!
Spare me from the army of thoughts that is marching through my mind!"*

So he's saying that it's not an emergency; it's not something we should run from or escape from, that our hearts catch fire. We should stick around and ask what these flames have to teach us. What our thoughts marching through our mind need to undergo so that the house of our heart can catch fire.

And then he moves into the last stanza of his prayer...of his poem, and it is a prayer. It's addressed. to another party. He says:

O heart of pure consciousness --

Now notice, he's going from the human heart, catching fire, the heart, House of Wisdom in us, catching fire, to the heart of divinity:

*O heart of pure consciousness, You are the ruler of all hearts.
After countless ages, you brought my soul all I'd ever wished for.*

Countless ages...Is he intuiting, way back in the Middle Ages, that the universe is 13.8 billion years old? Countless ages have brought our hearts forward, our capacity for love and for pure consciousness, and to encounter and to pray to pure consciousness, who is ruler of our hearts? I think he's saying something like that:

You brought my soul all it ever wished for.

But as he says, it took countless ages for that to happen.

Oh heart of pure consciousness. You are the ruler of all hearts.

So here he's calling us to meet heart to heart.

After countless ages, you brought my soul all it ever wished for.

It is a powerful thing to pray with Rumi this morning.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.