

A PERSON'S VALUE CORRESPONDS TO THE VALUE HE ASSIGNS TO HIS TIME

TIME IS the "Hand of God": it moves everything along its course towards its ordained destination. Some are able to comprehend the purport of the passage of time, and observe it with the eye of wisdom. Such people deal with time by grasping the reins of each passing day, utilizing their God-given vision to move their lives in the right direction.

Others perceive time in a distorted manner, like a person looking at a convex or a concave mirror. This malady of perception occurs because they are not reconciled to the "Hand of God", haven't understood the reason why God has confined us to the realm of time and space. He intends thereby only to give us a chance to perfect ourselves, to acquire Divine Attributes through our own efforts in a difficult situation, and thus prepare ourselves for the day of our reunion with our Lord.

In a Holy Tradition the Lord said:

"The Children of Adam curse time, and I am time.

In My Hand is the passage of day and night".

For those who have not yet understood this truth time seems to behave in an erratic and disturbing

way. The effect of this is to draw our attention to the need to change ourselves to feel in harmony with the passage of time, since time itself, obviously, will neither speed up nor slow down to accommodate our wishes. Our perceiving our own problem with time is a mercy from God, for as a stomachache indicates the need for a change in eating habits, so does this malady awaken us to the need for adjustment of our lifestyle.

For some people time seems to fly, carrying them along like helpless riders on the backs of stampeding horses, in a herd headed over a cliff. For others time seems to stand still as if it were bogged down in the mire.

First of all we must understand the value of time; how, once spent, it is irretrievable. If all the nations were to pool their resources to try and redeem even one second of the past (in order to change a catastrophic decision, for example) would they succeed? No, a mountain of treasure cannot bring back even a second of your life. So, time is precious beyond reckoning, but yet do people idly fritter away the hours, and seek means for gaining even more leisure time.

So many people (not only those who would be considered clinically manic-depressive) suffer from an in-

ability to adapt to the passage of time in a way that accords them peace of mind.

The egos of very young people want to devour the whole world immediately. The feverish heat of the fulfillment of passions and the pursuit of pleasure makes time appear to fly by. So often, at this critical time in people's lives no prudence is exercised, and heeding the urges of the ego they expend all of their energy. Such unrestrained indulgence is the sure way to deplete one's energy quickly — and foolishly — for life is like a marathon run: it requires pacing: if you just sprint from the start you will collapse after a few hundred yards. Keeping back a reserve of energy calls for self-control and willpower — attributes rare among the young.

For the most part very young people steer clear of spiritual paths: only when they suffer a "breakdown" do they come limping in here for 'servicing'. Hundreds of people come to me saying: "Oh Sheikh Efen-di can you help me?" It is such a difficult task to help people who have expended all their energy uselessly and whose physical and mental powers are at a pitifully low level. Sometimes I am amazed at what I see, for these people are still, for the most part, quite young. Raising the dead is a miracle given only to Prophets,

but as long as there are signs of life we hope to be able to arouse people from their coma-like states.

As a result of the excesses brought about by the manic state, its opposite, depression, manifests itself in these young people. Now time no longer flies, but drags along at a snail's pace. A depressed person wishes that time would again fly, but, on the contrary, minutes seem like hours, hours like days and days like weeks. Usually, people who lack useful outlets for their energies and feel unfulfilled are subject to these feelings. How foolish it is for people to wish that their time would pass quickly, when, as we pointed out, time is like a priceless jewel.

In the Most Distinguished Naqshbandi Sufi Order we have a rule of thumb: A person's value corresponds to the value he assigns to his time. If you perceive your time to be a worthless burden that you hope will pass away quickly, then you are a burden on the face of the earth, and it would be better to be under it than on it. Why? Because you want only squandered one priceless treasure — your vital energy — now that other priceless treasure — time — is not like wealth in your hands but like an immense pile of treasure underneath which you are buried. Be judicious with your vital energy so that the value of

time may become manifest to you. When you keep your time like a diamond you will be exalted in the eyes of people and in the Divine Presence, here and hereafter.

There is a sufi aphorism: "The Sufi is the son of his time". This means that he treats his time with the same veneration and respect due to his parents. Filial piety is a paramount duty in religion, and in the Sufi Way we are exhorted to honour our time as if we were honouring our mother and father. A true dervish will never waste a moment, but will catch it as a skilled jockey grabs the reins of his horse, applying his skill so that it runs in the right direction and at the right speed. Look in on a true dervish and you should find him occupied with something useful, never with detrimental or useless activities.

If a person can guide himself in such a manner he is on the road to perfection, because he knows what he must do. His heart's eyes will never be blind; he is keenly aware of the significance of all he encounters.

Our Grandsheikh used to say: "Oh people, how are you filling your days? Don't waste time, but strive to weave time and space with skill so that you will leave an enduring legacy behind you in this world and be honoured thereby here and hereafter.

OCEAN OF UNITY

For followers of a Sufi Way wasting time either idly or in useless activity is the greatest sin. Guard your vital energy and your valuable time — make every moment live.

