

The Exultant Heart

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Summary:

The power of love resides in every human heart; its activation has enormous potential to heal a suffering world.

What is a Mystic?

Mystics are rare, but their message radiates the truth of Love as oneness. Having surrendered what they *thought* they were, they became what they *truly* were (and are). Sufi mystic Al-Hallaj was executed in Baghdad (d. 922) for declaring his oneness with the Beloved: “*Al-Haqq* - I am the Real.” His love for the Real / God was so intense that it burned away all barriers: “Between me and You, there is only me. Take away the me, so only You remain.” Christian mystic Marguerite Porete was burned at the stake as a “heretic” in 1310. She went to the pyre rather than deny this inner truth: “I am dissolved in Him.” Dr. David R. Hawkins, a mystic in our own time, lay deathly ill at age 38, in agonizing “existential terror and aloneness.” Although an agnostic scientist and physician, he surrendered at great depth: “If there is a God, I ask Him for help now.” It took him thirty years to recount to others the incomprehensible mystery of what happened afterwards. The “personal self no longer existed.” It had been replaced by an “Infinite Presence.” “The world was illuminated by the clarity of an Infinite Oneness.”

Love suffused all things, dissolved all boundaries. “Where the world saw ugliness, there was only timeless beauty.”

Mystics throughout history have described this timeless state of ego dissolution, when all sense of a personal self dissolves into a oneness that is Universal and Eternal—somewhat like sugar melting into warm water, or a rain drop falling into the ocean. What remains is a stunning inner silence, empty of all thoughts or mental talk, and a rock-solid awareness that one is not separate from anything or anyone else.

Now, many of us may have personal knowledge of a *temporary* timeless “flow” or “being in the zone,” moments in which the constant self-monitoring of the ego-mind is muted, and the ordinary orientation in time and space is lost. This happens when we are engaged in creative work, love-making, athletic or stage performance, the birth of a child, religious and patriotic ritual, meditation, dying, or other peak experiences.

Very few people, however, ever speak of such a state as a *baseline*, and we typically refer to the rare individuals who do as “mystics, sages, and saints.” Because of the rarity of this type of inner condition, there is a tendency among those who have never experienced it at all to dismiss it as hallucination or fakery. While spiritual charlatans and delusional religionists certainly exist, such a dismissive, skeptical position is hard to hold at a universal level. Take Mother Teresa and Gandhi, for example. In such cases, their indefatigable stamina for universal love and selfless service emerged from the experiential realization of the oneness of existence.

The Power of the Heart

Mystics give us a clear message: our studies, thoughts, reasoning, philosophies, ethics, principles, beliefs, concepts, and even “spiritual” ideas will get us only so far.

What really matters is an experiential realization of Love within the heart. Love is the source of creation, beauty, joy, and healing, but it cannot be discovered or tapped into via our intellect. Only the “intelligence of the heart,” which is the realm of the mystic, has the capacity to transmit a powerful and inspirational impact.

Whereas the intellect offers well-reasoned knowledge based on cognitive mastery of doctrine, the mystic offers another kind of knowledge based on an inner “realization.” Experiential truth, in contrast to intellectually acquired information, carries with it a high-frequency radiance that activates a deep transformation in oneself and others. We see it, for example, in the arena of physical or emotional recovery. The person with twenty years of sobriety from alcohol has a lived testimony that transmits an invisible but deeply felt inspiration to the active alcoholic who cries out, “How will I ever get through the day without a drink?!” A spouse or doctor might use similar words as the sober friend, but their statement will lack the transmission of inspiration and hope because, without lived experience, it is the mere admonishment of “You should quit drinking!” -- not the authority of an authentic testimony such as: “You can do it. I *know* it’s possible because I’ve been sober for twenty years.”

The radiance of the mystic, saint, or sage is often pictured as a “halo” and described classically as a “silent transmission.” Such a transmission has long been intuitively known in the history of religions, noted in the arduous trips undertaken by pilgrims to visit saints and sages, either in person or as relics. In modern times, countless seekers have waited in line to be in an auditorium with, be touched by, or sit in the silent presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi,

David R. Hawkins, Padre Pio, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, and others. Often the trips are made from across the world, and with great sacrifice.

The effect seems also to be transmitted through the aura of a mystic's close disciples. Recently, I had the opportunity to be with a nun who had done her novice training with Mother Teresa in Calcutta. As she spoke of Mother Teresa, that energy field of joy and unconditional love was felt by all of us in the room.

Moreover, the effect of a mystic's universal love is felt even after the body has expired. Hundreds of thousands of devotees, for example, kiss the tombs of Sufi saints around the world. When visiting the tomb of Mother Teresa in Calcutta, the energy field of love is so palpable that people often weep for a long time, unloading deep psychic burdens into a space that – finally – can hold it. They didn't know of their inner (unconscious) pain until a safe space allowed it to pour forth. Love heals in this nonverbal, spontaneous, down-to-the-core way.

Science and Spirit

Devotees of the mystics describe a “transmission” of peace and authority when in their presence and relics. Scientists are finding ways to measure the “physics of silent transmission.” According to this emerging science, the true mystic, saint, or sage emanates an extraordinary “field” of “energy coherence” so that seekers who enter the mystic's “field” (often called “aura”) benefit from the healing capacities intrinsic to that energy coherence.

The “Map of Consciousness” developed by modern mystic and clinical scientist David R. Hawkins breaks new ground in explaining the transmission effect and inspirational power so often noted of saints, sages, and mystics. Based on an application

of “attractor fields” from nonlinear dynamics and chaos theory, the “Map of Consciousness” posits that the higher “energy fields” or “attractor fields” of Love, Peace, and Self-Realization radiate an uplifting effect on the world at the energetic level.

The “Map of Consciousness” is a great advance in the interface of science and spirit. The single-page chart lays out the progression from the lower “levels of consciousness” such as “Shame,” “Guilt,” “Fear,” “Desire,” “Anger,” “Pride,” (i.e., levels dominated by ego drives), to the median levels of “Courage,” “Willingness,” “Acceptance,” “Reason” (i.e., levels dominated by personal integrity), to the higher levels of “Love,” “Unconditional Love/Joy/Healing,” “Ecstasy,” “Peace,” and “Enlightenment.” These higher levels are increasingly free of personal goals and are the domain of saints, mystics, arhats, and avatars.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the “Map of Consciousness,” which distinguishes it from the array of similar spiritual roadmaps presented by mystics throughout history, is the idea that, with each progressive level of consciousness, the “frequency” or “vibration” of spiritual energy or radiance increases. In other words, the more loving a person becomes, the greater is the healing impact.

The healing power of love is similar to a step-down transformer in electrical equipment. Divinity or Buddha-nature can be likened to a limitless electromagnetic field of infinitely loving power. However, this loving power can only be transmitted in amounts suitable to the voltage that each instrument, or level of consciousness, can handle. Too much electricity can “break” a circumscribed circuit, but a circuit with wide voltage capacity can handle more electric power.

The Dalai Lama, for example, has an energy field or level of consciousness that is expansive and loving enough to handle immense amounts of healing energy, and so he radiates out high levels of “healing voltage” we might say. His inner state of joy and love bubbles over with humor, laughter, kindness, and compassion. Most people, however, do not have the same capacity to channel healing energy to others because their inner attention is routinely focused on their own needs, thoughts, feelings, and agendas. Their inner “circuitry” is constricted and not capacious of fully unconditional and impersonal love. Some people, in fact, are almost solely self-absorbed.

In the energy field of Love, according to Hawkins, the focus moves from the task of understanding spiritual information to *being* all that is known: “Make a gift of your life and lift all mankind by being kind, considerate, forgiving, and compassionate at all times, in all places, and under all conditions, with everyone as well as yourself.”

Hawkins writes that the state of Unconditional Love is rare and occurs in only 0.4% of the population. Only “by continual surrender” is it ever experienced. He describes the energy as: “miraculous, inclusive, nonselective, transformative, unlimited, effortless, radiant, devotional, saintly, diffuse, merciful, and selfless. It is characterized by inner joy, faith, ecstasy, patience, compassion, persistence, essence, beauty, synchronicity, perfection, surrender, rapture, vision, and openness.” Personal agency has been surrendered so that “everything happens effortlessly by synchronicity.”

The pressing question for us now is: What are we willing to surrender so that we may become carriers of this love?

Transforming Our Consciousness

In science and theology, conceptual knowledge is highly valued, and it should be. It is the highest level that humans can reach “by nature.” But the mystics press us further inward to the knowledge that is based on inner experience. They certify that first-person knowledge is more powerful than third-person knowledge. This is obvious in everyday experience. It is one thing to read a book about the Taj Mahal and quite another to go see it, sit in it, walk its grounds, and breathe its air. Will we put our books aside and make the journey within?

For the mystics, reason is viewed as a goal for the spiritual aspirant, yet a hindrance for advanced contemplatives if they stop there. Teresa of Avila of sixteenth-century Spain writes of an “Interior Castle” in which the soul progresses through seven “mansions” of ever-deepening communion with God. Reason governs the soul as it dwells in the first three mansions, but then moral reasoning, discursive study, spiritual practice, and virtuous effort give way, through humility, to Love and Grace in the Fourth Mansion.

The limitation of people in the level of reason and moral attainment is to presume that their particular vantage point is the whole panorama; it is the presumption of “I know” rather than “I don’t know.”

When the soul realizes that the answer is not “more information” or “spiritual work,” but rather the shedding of them, then it arrives at the necessary ripeness. Al-Ghazali quotes the Prophet Mohammed on the importance of acting diligently within one’s level and more will be given: “Whoever acts according to what he knows, God will make him heir to what he does not know.”

Many spiritual aspirants shore up their spiritual ego with all the spiritual information, teachings, quotes, and studies they have come across and assimilated. Because they studied or memorized a high teaching, they think they have “realized” it, but they have not. They believe themselves to be further along than they are, when really they have barely begun. Spiritual ego is the great barrier for the spiritual aspirant. All presumed attainments are to be surrendered.

When Irina Tweedie told her teacher, the Sufi master Bhai Sahib, that she knew her spiritual training was going well because she had become clairvoyant, he told her that she was speaking rubbish and that her spiritual training hadn't even begun! In the Naqshbandi path of Sufism that Irina Tweedie brought to the West from India, it is understood that true spiritual work doesn't begin until a person does deep inner work on the shadow (repressed energies in the unconscious), which can take years. Many spiritual aspirants have unconsciously done a “spiritual bypass” over this necessary psychological inner work, setting themselves up as advanced in spiritual knowledge when they actually know little, even, of what is in their own psyche.

Here is the paradox of the mystic: if we acknowledge that we know nothing, humility opens the door to know everything. By giving up the limited viewpoints of the self, we are given the limitless awareness of the Self. Therefore: Are we willing to become the beginner? To have humility and say “I don't know”? Can we let go of what we think we know? Are we willing to relinquish all that we think we are? If yes, then the energy of Love within the heart will be revealed as an inner experience.

Shams, the enlightened dervish who awakened Rumi's heart, told him: “Intellect takes you to the threshold, but it doesn't take you into the house.” “This is the work of

the heart, not the forehead.” We cannot walk through the door into the house of Love, clutching onto our ideas, concepts, and identities. They are like clothes we need to shed and leave on the doorstep. We do not go to our lover and say, “Let’s make logic!” We go to our lover and say, “Let’s make love.” And we shed our clothes. Shedding the clothes of separateness makes possible the sharing of our oneness. Few people are willing to shed their ideas and identities.

Sufi mystic Al-Ghazali is of particular interest to us because he was a supremely accomplished scholar, known as “The Proof of Islam.” At a crucial point in his academic career, he saw himself as a hypocrite. He was speaking of sublime, enlightened truths that were merely the truths of others, not his own. He left his academic post, all of his possessions, and his entire life as knew it, to become a wandering dervish for many years. Eventually his heart was transformed, transmuted into “gold” as the alchemists say. He returned to the world as a teacher, but he was changed. He had become that state of enlightened consciousness.

Conclusion: The Radiance of Love Uplifts the World

This has profound humanitarian significance. In the final analysis, mystic consciousness of love and oneness is not only an interesting subject for intellectual inquiry. Throughout history and across cultures, it has been posited to heal, inspire, and offer ultimate liberation from suffering. One split second of illumination is remembered for a lifetime and may have a worldwide impact. Mother Teresa and Mohandas K. Gandhi each had a life-changing illumination during a train ride, and the effect on the world was staggering.

The barrier for those reading this article is the attachment to ideas and identities, including “spiritual” ones. The parallel is to the alcoholic or addict who relies on a substance to feel better. Dependency on an outer substance blocks the internal awakening of an authentic experience of happiness, love, joy, and oneness. In a similar way, most people are addicted to their ideas and identities. They are “mentaholics.” They rely heavily, moment to moment, on the mental concepts, frameworks, and teachings of what they “know.” Like the functional alcoholic who skates by to get the job done, “functional mentaholics” are happy enough with their limited life. But they don’t know what they are missing. The mystics tell us plainly what we are missing: “Everything happens effortlessly by synchronicity,” to quote Hawkins again. The experience of life liberated from mental reliance is “miraculous” and “characterized by inner joy, faith, ecstasy, patience, compassion, persistence, essence, beauty, synchronicity, perfection, surrender, rapture, vision, and openness.”

We live in a time of great suffering. Out of compassion, we can surrender who we think we are and become what we are created to be: carriers of healing love, embodying all of the qualities of love mentioned just above. Unless the energy of the heart comes alive in us, our best efforts will build up nothing but the ego satisfaction of “I did something. I know a lot.” As St. Paul wrote two thousand years ago: “If I speak in the tongues of men or angels, but have not love, I am nothing but a clanging cymbal.”

The mystics point us to our untapped inner resources. Is it really possible that our own consciousness holds the power to uplift not only ourselves but also the world? The mystics say, “Yes.”

Hawkins affirms that the presence of even a small group of people whose inner reality is Unconditional Love outweighs the negativity of hatred, fear, apathy, greed, and pride operating in the world at large. Everything is connected to everything else, and so the way to alleviate global suffering is to devote oneself to persistent inner work, as Hawkins says: “We change the world not by what we say or do but as a consequence of what we have become.”

Thus, the path of the mystic serves all of humanity by the dedication to transcend every illusion of separateness and to become one with Infinite Love.

About the Author

Fran Grace, Ph.D., serves as Professor of Religious Studies and Steward of the Meditation Room at the University of Redlands, CA., where she has pioneered a contemplative-based approach to education. The author of several books and articles on spiritual life, her research has received national attention (C-SPAN, NPR). Her area of specialty is mystics. In 2004, following a major life event and meeting her spiritual teacher, a profound shift occurred, with a consequent dedication to the “inner pathway”: the power of love, surrender, self-knowledge, compassion, inner peace, joy, humor, and beauty. She is founding director of the 501c3 non-profit, Inner Pathway, which seeks to share these timeless values with the public. www.innerpathway.com