

Journey through the Spheres of Consciousness

Retreat with Nigel Wali Hamilton, Camp 2004

2 – 7 August 2004 (second week)

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Monday, 2 August 2004

The Four Principles of Retreat

We begin our retreat together, welcome to those of you who have arrived on Sunday. This retreat is going to be based on several principles, the first of which is **silence**. That means I ask you to remain silent this week. When the time is right, then we will come off silence. It's important that you can keep to this pledge because it not only creates an atmosphere that is conducive to meditation, but it also helps you to turn within. You can go on retreat and get into a wonderful attunement, and the moment you come off, within 10 minutes of talking you have lost the attunement. We give out a lot of energy through the voice. So it's important to keep quiet.

The first few days, a lot of feelings come up on retreat, especially when we keep quiet. There is an opportunity to deal with these feelings in the support groups in the evening. Otherwise try to observe silence as much as possible. You will also notice, when you keep quiet, you are much more aware of your own feelings and thoughts, because conversation distracts us from our own world. But don't take your thoughts and feelings seriously. People think, "I have reserved this holiday time for retreat, and I'm here on retreat, and now I have these terrible thoughts." One of the good signs of retreat is when you start to feel something, even if it is negative. It's the sign that something is happening. That's why we keep quiet.

The second principle of retreat is **fasting**. We are not going to actually fast, but try to eat sparingly. It's very interesting to watch yourself and your relationship to food when you are on retreat, because as we turn within we often experience an emptiness. And so we try to fill that emptiness with food. So just be mindful of that.

The third principle is **prayer**. All the practices that we do, *wasaiif* or the *dhikr*, are all different forms of prayer. We also do purifications, like breath practices, and we also give you times where you need to be quiet by yourself and work with some of the practices. So if you want to get the most out of this retreat, then don't use the breaks to lie down and fall asleep in the grass. Find a shady spot and work with your practices.

The fourth principle is **awareness**; watchfulness is the traditional word. Traditionally Sufis didn't sleep on retreat, they spent the whole night praying. That's perhaps a bit much for us to contemplate. Just sit up straight during the day, for if you lie down you fall asleep. Awareness means being aware of yourself, being aware of what you are experiencing and just witnessing it. As we go through the retreat, I will be describing different states of consciousness, and one of these states is a subjective state where you identify with your own inner reality. And that's how we get stuck. So you need to be detached and just watch your feelings and your thoughts; don't identify with them. Regard your experience as a journey. Whatever comes up on the journey is part of your experience, and we don't identify with it.

So those are the four principles, prayer, fasting, silence and watchfulness.

Now let's begin with our first attunement. What we want to do over the next five days is set different attunements for you. Pir Zia will work more with the *lataif* that correspond to those attunements, and what I am going to describe is a kind of journey in consciousness. It starts with this reality, this world. The first question is: when you look at this world, do you look at it and see it as it is? When you first arrive and you see the Sufi camp, especially if you are here for the first time, I very much doubt you see it as it is. What you see actually is yourself, all your anxieties, your projections and fears. It takes some time before one begins to see things more objectively. And then there comes a time when one becomes attached to the camp, the friends, the wonderful experiences, and so once again you don't see it as it really is. The people who are most likely to see it as it is are the people who have to build it up and take it down.

Nasut

So our first step is to clear our eyes and ears in such a way that we see this world as it is. The Sufis call this plane *Nasut*. It's a certain stage of light, the physical, objective light. The whole scientific revolution of the last 800 years has been about that, to see things as they are, which means to see the material world as the material world and not to project your own beliefs or thoughts or superstitions onto the world.

The Sufis talk about the stages of *fanâ*, and *fanâ* means annihilation. Annihilation is meant to eventually lead to resurrection. In this first stage even, in *Nasut*, we experience a stage of *fanâ*. What does it look like? You lose yourself in the world, your psyche is absorbed in the objective world. In other words, you are not so conscious of yourself as you are of the world. It's a kind of *fanâ*, the *fanâ* of the psyche. The Sufis say *the subject is absorbed in the object*. That means you, your sense of your self, is lost in the world; lying down in the bed, you feel comfortable, walking on the ground you are aware of nature around you, so your sense of self is absorbed by your surroundings.

This is a practice done with open eyes, not closed eyes. I am going to ask you to go outside in the break, find a place to sit down, look at everything around you and be aware of the kinds of thoughts and feelings that you have as you look around you. The most obvious feelings and thoughts might be: I don't like this place, it's strange; or: this is wonderful, a wonderful place. But neither state allows you to see things as they are.

We have a saying from the Qur'an that helps us to see God in the world: *We shall show them the signs in the horizon of themselves*. So one thinks of people looking up to the stars, far away distant objects, the sun, the moon, and seeing those as signs of God. You and I know that they are simply the sun and the moon and the stars, but they are the physical manifestations of light. One sees them as a physical light, not a mystical light.

Practice: focus on the body

First we will focus on the body, because we are talking about body consciousness. It's your sense of self that is absorbed in the body. Let's take a few minutes in silence to be fully conscious of your body. Try to clear away thoughts and feelings about yourself or about the retreat, just to focus on the body. – Don't let your consciousness drift away from the body, but use it to focus on the body. You witness body consciousness. In this stage of

consciousness, we are the spectator of the universe. – This is a kind of state of unconscious sleep, when the body is seen like a machine, we can focus on the world and just do things. But there is no sense of spirit in the body. This is what we mean when we talk about matter as opposed to spirit. It's almost looking at matter as though there was no spirit in it. It's a very flat state on consciousness. But it is very still. So we can practice the stillness, being like a rock, or being like the deer in the forest that uses stillness as a defense, so you can't see it. – Try to keep absolutely still. – If your body has a pain or discomfort, just to focus on that, be aware of it, that's the physical world. – There is something very pure about this state, very simple. – Whilst your body is still, or asleep, your consciousness is not, your consciousness is aware of the body. – If any thoughts or feelings come up, you set them aside and don't let them interfere with your awareness of the body. – What we are doing is, we are learning to focus on consciousness at a particular level and to distinguish it from other levels too, so all the levels don't get mixed up. – What this practice does, it clears away our projections onto the world. We are clearing our outer space, so nothing of the inner world is in the outer world. – We set aside our memories, not only thoughts and feelings, but memories as well. – In some ways, apart from physicality, it's a very empty state. –

Now what we want to do is to start to move the body by just being aware of the body only. The way we move the body is in the movement of the *dhikr*, so just turn the head around in a circular way. We don't even say the words of the *dhikr*, just move the head around, so you are aware simply of the effect of the circular movement on the body. – You may be aware that it is much harder to just be aware of the body when you do that. The moment we move our body, we are beginning to generate the electromagnetic field around us. We also feel a sense of expansion as we do that; it's not the contraction of the body, which is due to gravity, heavy, one begins to experience a lightness and openness.

The Sufis have described this in two *wasaf*, two of the 99 divine names or qualities. The first one is *Qabid*, and we say *ya Qabid*, *ya* is a word of invocation. *Qabid* is the restrictor. In this case it could be, consciousness is restricted by the limitations of the physical world. When you are a rock, you can't move, you are stuck. But then the counterpart to *Qabid* is *Basit*, it means the expander. So by contrast, through movement we begin to suddenly experience a freedom that we didn't have when we were still and aware of the body. Even though the movement was a physical movement, it still begins to open us up to another kind of consciousness, the consciousness of the electromagnetic field, the inner light. One gets a cosmic consciousness.

Practice: *ya Qabid* – *ya Basit*

So we sit absolutely still and say *ya Qabid*, and then you move your head around in a circle a couple of times, and then you say *ya Basit*. Let's try that together now. –

Now we come back to being still, and this time we will do *Qabid* – *Basit* without moving, so now the challenge is for your consciousness to be able to focus and then expand. So in *Qabid* you focus on the body, in *Basit* you allow the consciousness to expand, like letting the body expand into its electromagnetic field around it. –

Amen. Now do it silently on the breath, on the out-breath you say *Qabid*, on the in-breath experience expanding and say *Basit*. On the out-breath you come down into your body, on the in-breath you turn within and find yourself expanding. –

Now we are going to do the opposite, so you experience what the difference is. We are going to breathe in on *Qabid* and then breathe out on *Basit*. So feel what the difference is in your feeling. –

What this is, it is an *inversion of consciousness*, consciousness turns upside down when you do it one way as opposed to the other way. The first way of doing it, you breathe out and you experience the body, *Qabid*, then you breathe in and you expand, that's more from the physical point of view of the world. We breathe in to take off, to expand, and when we breathe out, we contract. That's *Nasut*. But when we do it the other way around, on *Qabid* we breathe in and on *Basit* we breathe out, then in fact we have turned within. Our consciousness has turned away from the physical world, and it's a way of experiencing the inner world. When you breathe in, everything is focused on a point, *Qabid*, and when you breathe out, *Basit*, and you have turned within, you expand in the inner world, not the outer world. It is a simple practice for learning to distinguish between focusing our consciousness on the outer world and focusing on the inner world.

We can do it simply as a meditation, your consciousness then focuses on *Qabid*, you are more aware of the body. –

Then you switch to *Basit* and you find your consciousness expanding. You don't have to repeat the word, just tune in to the *wasifa* and watch the consciousness expand. –

And we focus back on *Qabid*, on the body. –

Let yourself expand more and more on *Basit*. –

Then you bring it back to the body, to *Qabid*. – And *Basit*. – And then you can do this in your own time. –

We'll take a break now, and I would like you to continue working with these practices, *Qabid* and *Basit*, and working with the two opposite ways of breathing. And then just quietly doing *Qabid – Basit* on the breath; and then finally just meditating on focusing on the body and then expanding beyond the body.

Afternoon

When our consciousness awakens, we realize who we are, and that has an effect: it causes transformation. Your energy changes. Also vice-versa you can say: you can work on the energy, and that will have an effect on your realization. Once upon a time Pir Vilayat used to design retreats called R1, T1, R2, T2, **realization 1, transformation 1**, realization 2 and so on, because he realized the link between those two. That's what we are doing now. This morning we talked about *Nasut*, the objective consciousness, and we said that you, your psyche, is annihilated or absorbed in the world. You get lost in the world. Murshid talks about this in the volume *Alchemy of Happiness*, when he says: there are various stages of intoxication that we go through. At first one is intoxicated by the world; you see a beautiful house, you'd like to have that house; you see a beautiful car, you'd like to have that car, and so on. Like you show a child a new toy, and it suddenly wants that toy, the toy is the only thing that exists. That's the first level, *Nasut*.

Khayal

The second level we are going to work with is *Khayal*. *Khayal* means imagination and it also means thought. There are various kinds of imagination. We will discover that in a few stages' time we will come across *alam al Mithal*, which is a different kind of imagination. *Khayal* is what we call **personal imagination, and it relates to personal thought**. We are familiar with this, we are constantly preoccupied with our own thoughts about the world and our life. So the next stage of *fanâ* is a stage in which the world, or the object, is annihilated in the subject, in you. For instance you have the experience of looking for your pen and it's in your hand; in your mind it's somewhere else. Or you are anxious because you are going to be late for something, so all your thoughts are around being late and you don't notice the journey at all.

Or of course as soon as you want to meditate, then your personal thoughts come up which you weren't aware of before, but just then they come up. It's not because your mind is perverse, it's because that's the state of consciousness you are actually in. The moment you take away something to focus on outside, you become aware of what's going on inside. The Sufi Shabistari said, *the world is in the human being and the human being is in the world*. In other words, you only exist in my imagination, and of course vice-versa. It's a very subjective state, a state of illusion. What you perceive is dependent on what you believe, which means **your thoughts determine your experience**. This is where we discover the habits of our mind, your personal beliefs, what in psychology they call the life scripts, simple statements of what you believe about life. Some people believe that they will always be lucky, and so of course they always are lucky. Some people always believe that things will go wrong, and so of course things always go wrong. It's a tremendous power that's sitting in us. You determine your reality. This is *Khayal*.

Practice: ya Shahid

We will now spend a few minutes in meditation, and we are going to take the position of the witness, which the Sufis call *Shahid*. We are simply watching our thoughts, but not participating in them. – Of course also watching your feelings, it's all to do with awareness, being aware of the kinds of thoughts that are sitting there and the feelings that come out of those thoughts. – The important thing is to detach yourself from these thoughts and feelings, then they pass. But when we identify with them, then they grow, become magnified and occupy our whole horizon. – Of course this includes thoughts about other people as well, not just thoughts about yourself. – These kinds of thoughts and feelings also come up every night in our dreams, so the dream becomes a mirror, a reflection of what's going on inside of you. –

Now the question is, how do we go beyond this? This first step is extending what we did this morning, which is to be still, but now not just still in the body, it's **still in the mind**. Either you just stand back and witness your thoughts and imagine them becoming less and less frequent, or you empty your mind, so your mind becomes still. Let's try that for a few minutes.

In this situation we normally fall asleep. If your mind is not engaged with your sense perception, seeing and hearing things, or if your mind is not engaged in self-reflection, in thoughts, then it is as though there is a blank. That's the point you fall asleep. In Buddhism, this is the precise point where they say one has the chance of enlightenment. Just imagine that every time you fall asleep you miss that chance. In fact it also happens as you are coming to wake up, it's an in-between state. In our Western terminology, this stage of personal thought is the lower astral. So ***Khayal* could be seen as the lower astral**

consciousness. It's the plane of thought forms, no beings exist, only thoughts. It's not a real world, although in our dreams it seems real.

The dream is just a continuation of that state of thought. There is no objectivity any more, you go from personal thought till you lose awareness of your body, and so it becomes totally subjective; that's the dream state. But there is a moment or a brief interval between personal thought and sleeping. If you can remain conscious as you pass from one to the other state, that's when one experiences the light of intelligence. In Buddhism it's called the Void. They also have another word, *Bardo*, a particular kind of interval. The Sufis have a similar word for it, they call it the *Bazarkh*. It's an interval, and that's the point where you fall asleep. The trick is not to fall asleep. This is what you have to practice in meditation; in order to meditate, like in learning to ride a bicycle, you have to learn balance, in meditation you have to learn not to fall asleep at a certain point.

If you can do that, then you move to the next stage, which is *Arwah*. We won't talk about *Arwah* yet, but just to know that's when you move beyond your personal world. The experience of it is like a big empty space, and you mustn't be afraid of that space. It's perfectly safe, and although it seems dead, it's not really dead, it appears to be dead. In saying that, we are confronting our feelings of death. When a person dies and they are not aware of any other state than this world, they enter that empty space, and to them it's death. It first feels very dark, very quiet, empty, but when you sit in it, it starts to come alive. That's the moment that meditation starts. You can't stay in that interval, you just have to stay awake during the transit through the interval, and then you go to the next state of consciousness, and that's when you can start meditating. But in this state in between the two, that's the possibility of illumination. The experience of the absolute consciousness.

Our reality has cracks in it, but mostly we are not aware of cracks. If we do become aware of them, we cover them up quickly. Like when we feel afraid when we are alone, we quickly find something to do. What comes through the cracks is this absolute consciousness. As a beginner it's not possible to be fully conscious of it, because if you were, not only would you be enlightened, but you would go into a stupor; like somebody who just had a big shock, you look in their eyes and they are not there. If you were to become conscious of that interval, it would blow the circuits of your mind, you would go into a stupor, like a coma. You would not be conscious of yourself any more. So going from one plane to another, in between there is an interval, like a crack. That's where reality comes in.

So the first step in meditating is to keep the mind quiet and not fall asleep. It's helpful just to keep the vibration of *Shahid* in the background.

We can work with a *wasifa* that helps us. The *wasifa* we can use is very helpful at this stage, because it makes us conscious of our psychic capacity. You will be able to see behind your thoughts and hear behind the noise of your thoughts, the noise of your mind. Like when you are afraid, your mind is shouting at you: run away, run away! But your intuition might say quietly: no, stand still. The two *wasafif* that are helpful to get into this consciousness are *ya Sami*, the all-hearing and *ya Basir*, the all-seeing. The psychic terms are clairvoyance, *Basir*, clairaudience, *Sami*. You develop a kind of intuitive quality that's like an inner radar through the maze of your mind. Quite a good image would be, if you have seen the film *Star Wars*, when they are traveling in the mother ship, you see all sorts of meteorites coming towards you. So you have to sort of dodge in between the meteorites. That's what *Sami* and *Basir* help us to do, it's like a guidance system that guides us through the thoughts of the mind. You just start to meditate and a thought comes up, it's like a big meteorite coming at you, so you go out of the way. The more you practice that, eventually it becomes automatic. Then you can travel through the realm of the mind without colliding with thoughts and getting caught up. That's the value of *Sami* and *Basir*.

Practice: *ya Sami – ya Basir*

Now to do it silently, *Sami* on the in-breath, *Basir* on the out-breath.

We now start the movement of the *dhikr*, because *dhikr* is another method for gradually silencing the mind. Initially what happens when you do the *dhikr*, the thoughts come up and multiply, but eventually one begins to get into a meditative state through the *dhikr*. This is the second of two practices I like you to work with in our break. The first one is *Sami – Basir*, and now we do the *dhikr*.

Practice: *dhikr: La ilaha illa 'Ilah Hu*

We will take a break now for half an hour. You go off on your own to find a shady spot, continue and deepen these practices; that will help you enormously. God bless.

Tuesday, 3 August 2004

Now this morning, we move on in our attunements. Yesterday we tuned in to the level of consciousness which we called *Nasut*. We said our consciousness affects our feeling, our thinking, the thinking is logical or analytical. Then there is *Khayal*, which is more personal thought, more subjective, and therefore cut off from reality.

Arwah

Now we move on to the next stage, which is *Arwah*. *Arwah* translated means spirit. This is the level in which we begin for the first time in our process to contact spirit. But it's not the spirit in you, that will come later. This is the spirit in all the things around you, it starts from your aura. You become aware of your electromagnetic field around you, that's why we often start a retreat by tuning in to the electromagnetic field, because for the first time one is tuning in into something more objective, something in your being that's not so personal. For example if you saw your electromagnetic field and you saw it interacting with the nature around you, it is partly a subjective experience, but partly objective. It's not dependent on personal thought.

At this level of attunement you can get into the consciousness of other spirits; we have reached a new plane, totally different to the earth plane. It's the plane where souls go after this life, also you may have contact to all the other beings, like the fairies and the goblins and spirits of nature. People who grew up in the countryside and are in harmony with nature are much more aware of this level, they feel the change in the seasons quite objectively, but they feel it in themselves. Whereas most of us have not grown up in nature and so we are not used to sensing things on that level. Except when there has been a death of somebody close to you and they come to visit you, then you sense it through the solar plexus chakra.

From Personal Thinking to Cosmic Thinking

This level of consciousness gives a very different kind of thinking, which is called **implicit thinking**. You realize that your thoughts coexist with thoughts of others, and your consciousness coexists with the consciousness of the universe. You can see there is a change in your thoughts, a change in yourself, it's like a ripple that goes around you far and wide. In the pattern of thoughts that come through you, you can see the pattern of thinking itself. The Buddhists have a meditation where they say: *I'm not my body, because my body belongs to the earth; I'm not my mind, because my mind belongs to the mind world*. I realize that when I see the way the mind works; other thoughts also come through my mind, I see that my mind is connected to the greater mind. The mind is part of the universe, you can't say, it's my mind. The scientists have another word for this, they call it **holistic thinking**. In the theory of holism, you recognize in the part of the world that you look at the pattern of the universe, and you recognize the universe in the small part.

The same with your thoughts: you realize that thinking operates in a certain way. Your thoughts cease to be personal, one becomes more impersonal. This is what the shift really is all about, going from the personal, which was in *Nasut* and *Khayal*, to the transpersonal, in *Arwah*. And then from the transpersonal in *Arwah* eventually we go through all the planes of consciousness and we come to a point when it becomes beyond the transpersonal, the transcendental. This is the stage in which we are really turning within.

Being stuck in personal thoughts is not turning within. We want to get beyond personal thoughts. You get into a kind of thinking or attunement in which you feel more connected with everything around you. You feel the atmosphere of nature and people around you; it all comes through the solar plexus. It's a subjective experience, you experience the feeling, but it is true, and in that sense it's objective. Like you can sit with somebody and you can feel their tension, and then they go away and you can put a blindfold over your eyes, and then they come sit in front of you again and you feel the tension. In that sense it's objective, it's the truth.

In turning within, our consciousness has also opened out from within. From being attached to the body and this world, we let go of that and let go of our personal thoughts, and then one begins to feel the aura and the electromagnetic field around it. In order to make this transition, turning within, it takes several days to work at it; you can't just turn within instantly. It's a real struggle. We can symbolize it with the image of a bridge. Very often on retreat people have dreams of a bridge or crossing water. That's the transition from *Khayal* to *Arwah*. *Khayal* is very close to this world, *Nasut*, it's just your personal thoughts; it is quite a leap and you have to cross a bridge in order to turn within. It is a major achievement to be able to turn within.

The Sufis refer to the solar plexus as *Qalb*, but in Sufism *Qalb* also means the heart. It's a little complex. There are three stages of opening up *Qalb*. *Arwah* is the first stage, you feel it in the solar plexus area; when you turn within, it's always as though there is a tension in the solar plexus, it's tight when you start to sink inwards. It's possible on retreat, when you do a lot of *dhikr* practice, that the whole solar plexus region becomes a hollow and it's like a vortex; you see the lines physically on the body, going inward. This is where we turn within. This is also connected to the left side of the heart, which is regarded as another stage of *Qalb*. From there it goes to the right side of the heart, which is still to do with the *Qalb*. So those are three stages of opening, the first is solar plexus, then you feel it on the left side at the physical heart, that's when all your feelings come up, and then the right side of the heart opens up, and that's more to do with spirit. You begin to become conscious of that which comes through you.

So first we focus on the solar plexus. When we do the *dhikr*, the body first has to settle down, then your mind has to settle down, and then you start moving into *Arwah*. You will start to notice a strange phenomenon: it's as though a big wheel is turning you. That is the solar plexus chakra, you are beginning to become conscious of it as it's turning. This happens as you move your head round and round, you notice this chakra starts to turn more and more. The magnetism of your psyche is seated here. Remember we said you become conscious of your electromagnetic field: the center of this field is in the solar plexus. As you turn round and round in the *dhikr*, this center starts to open and the turning wheel gets bigger and bigger and bigger. This is when we start to experience cosmic consciousness. **The transition then is being made between personal consciousness and the impersonal, which is cosmic consciousness.** That's precisely what happens.

Of course, it's still connected with the lower world, this is not the angelic worlds, and so this kind of consciousness is still subject to change. We haven't reached the stage of the sense of the eternal yet. But you have a sense of vastness of your consciousness and of the universe. This is experienced particularly in the first two movements of the *dhikr*, as you are moving your head around and also in bowing. The bowing helps you to turn within and the turning of the head begins to turn the magnetic field. Even at this stage, though you are not conscious of your spirit, there is enormous power of spirit in that magnetic field; it just doesn't become conscious yet, but it's there. As you do the practice, this connects all the way up through the chakras right to the crown.

There are two practices we can do now, which help us to tune in to *Arwah*. There are three, actually, but we don't have the option of the third. You know, Sufis used to sit and meditate and do retreats in graveyards. You might have read some story books about Sufis, and you find them starting off their journey in the graveyard, that's where they tune into *Arwah*. They tune in to the spirits of the dead. But that's just the beginning of the journey. So instead of that, we use a *wasifa* practice and a *dhikr* practice.

We will start with the *wasifa* practice. We have talked a lot about thinking, and here it's very helpful, because the practice we are going to do, *Alim*, means insight. You gain insight when you get beyond your personal thoughts. You see what's happening in your thinking, or another person's thinking, but in the context of the whole. You see the connection between their problems and the events in their life: this is holistic thinking, implicit thinking. That's what insight is, it gives you the ability to see that. The person talks to you about themselves and you can see the way they talk is reflected in the way they walk, and it's also reflected in the way they relate to others, and you see the same pattern in their life. Developing the quality of *Alim* is very important because it helps you to break beyond the personal prison of your mind, so you see much deeper into people's lives.

The first practice is *ya Alim*, it starts from the solar plexus but it connects with the third eye, these two centers work together in *Alim*. When you are anxious, the solar plexus closes up and the third eye center gets confused, but when you are relaxed and open and you feel things, then you see them. You see into things.

The second practice we work with is *ya Wahabo*. *Wahabo* is to do with flow, you get into the flow of the universe. That's the meaning of the practice *Alim – Wahabo*. Your thinking gets into the thinking of the universe. You just watch any thoughts coming by; you might notice there is a whole lot of thoughts that are dissatisfied and you suddenly realize that you are actually quite angry, that's the pattern. Then you have a chance to detach from that, and then your thoughts change and become less personal. The possibility of a greater kind of thinking opens up, like ideas can come through to your mind. That's when the great ideas and inventions start coming through.

Practice: *ya Alim – ya Wahabo*

Now we do the *fikr* of *Alim – Wahabo*, which means you do it silently on the breath. You breathe in and you concentrate on the third eye, *Alim*, and then you breathe out as you silently repeat *Wahabo* to yourself. You experience the flow of your consciousness. –

Now we move to the practice of the *fikr as-Sirr*, which means the meditation on the *wasifa* practice. It's not even on the breath, it's just your consciousness that's tuned to *Alim* through the third eye, and then tuned to the flow of spirit and energy through your being, *Wahabo*. That's particularly through the heart and the solar plexus. –

Now we can work with the *dhikr*. It is most important, should always be a part of retreat. It doesn't always give you the immediate attunement, like a *wasifa* does, but nothing ultimately will really transform you unless you work with the *dhikr*. As we say *La ilaha*, we experience the turning of the solar plexus center, you feel the consciousness going out. Then you go the opposite direction, you turn within, *illa* into the center of the solar plexus. And then one experiences the freedom of the heart, *'Ilah*. At this stage, we can only say *Hu*, we haven't experienced *Hu* yet, that's the transcendental stage, but we say *Hu* through the heart. Again we do the *dhikr* very slowly.

Practice: *dhikr*

Now we just quietly sit still and tune in to the feeling of the heart. –

We'll take a break now, and I suggest you work with these practices on your own.

Afternoon

Mithal

This afternoon we will tune in to the plane of *alam al Mithal*. We think of the words myth and mythology, they come from *Mithal*.

First a digression about the way we assess our problems. We've spoken of the state of *Khayal*, a personal way of assessing our problems; we get stuck that way. In *Mithal*, there is a way of contacting something much deeper in ourselves, we call it the **level of archetypes**. These are like creative solutions to your problems. It is the level in which all the great thinkers, artists, writers produced great work, because they went beyond themselves, their own personal ideas, and got in touch with more universal themes. This is the **level of creativity**, we discover that there are many possible solutions to our problems. Actually we find that what the problem was, was the way we were assessing the problem. Problems are there for us to look a little deeper in ourselves.

So the first spiritual lesson here is the way you are looking at a problem. From a personal point of view it is impossible to know the answer. But if we shift our sense of identity and our thinking to *alam al Mithal*, we get in touch with our creativity and we find there is another way of seeing the whole problem.

There is a true story of two sisters who were mathematicians. They were rivals, in competition with each other. There was one particular problem that neither of them could solve. One night they happened to be sharing a room, and the one fell asleep and had a

dream. In the dream she experienced the solution to the problem, and she was talking in her sleep. So when she woke up, she couldn't remember the dream. But the other sister didn't sleep that night; she was very alert and wrote down the solution to the problem. This is a documented story in the field of creativity in mathematics, a famous story. It's a way of saying that somewhere inside of us there is a solution, but you have to go beyond your way of thinking and of seeing things. Like Einstein, when he was troubled with the problem of the speed of light and how our sense of time and space changes as we go faster and faster, he posed the right question, which was: What would it be like if I were to ride a beam of light? What would happen to my sense of space and time? That was the clue. He asked the right question. The other example was when he was stepping off a bus, the whole theory of relativity came to him in an instant.

I remember in my own life a couple of instances. One example was, when I was working as a scientist and I was offered an extremely good job, right near where I was living. At the same time, I was offered another job, equally good, but my family would have to move. In my mind it was not possible to see which was better. I remember walking around the garden, thinking about this, round and round in circles, because I was afraid of making the wrong decision. It didn't occur to me that I could make the right decision, I was worried about making the wrong decision. I talked to people, and everyone had a different opinion. Then I asked for guidance, and there was silence. Nothing came. So what occurred to me is: I'm going to have to just follow my impulse. And the job that I took, it was a fantastic job, but later I discovered that was not the reason why I went there.

For the job that I took, my family moved to Boston, and my wife had an interest in theater and she got in touch with a place called "Theater Workshop Boston". She used to come back telling me about this wonderful way of looking at theater, which was very spiritual, and I asked: "Do they belong to any spiritual group?" And she said, "Ya, I think they are Sufis." So my ears pricked up, because when I was a young boy of twelve, my father took a business trip to Geneva and he met Pir Vilayat in a seminar. When he came back, he said: "If there is one person you want to follow in life, that's somebody you should follow." That was in 1961. The news about the theater workshop in Boston came to me in 1976. So I said, "Well who is the head of these Sufis?" And she said, "I think it's somebody called Pir, Pir Vilayat I think." Then I suddenly realized why I had chosen that job. It had nothing to do with the prestige of the job or the salary or the lovely house they provided, nothing to do with that. It was to connect with my life's path.

In fact, that story carries on, because one day in the laboratory, we were discussing something theoretical and writing things on the board, equations and so on, and the man I worked with, Jerry is his name, made a little doodle on the board and it shocked me, because he drew the Sufi heart and wings. And I said: "Why did you do that?" - "Oh, just playing around." So I said: "Do you know what that means?" He said no. And I knew in that moment, that was the time to leave that profession. So you see, the problem is not the problem itself, the problem is the way we see things, the way we assess things. Somewhere in our being there is an answer and there is a direction for us to go, we just have to be alert to it.

The Spiritual Lessons

So this is the level of creativity. Each plane of consciousness has a spiritual lesson. In that way it is active in our lives. The lesson of this plane is one of **creativity and resourcefulness**. I know of a young lady whose child was autistic. She did some research on autism and she found there was some training program in America that she realized could

help her child a lot, but she didn't have any money to go there. So the therapist, who was very wise, said to her: "Look, why don't you just keep in your mind's eye that you can go there. In the meantime, what we can do is begin to tune in to ways in which we can raise money." And so the next few sessions they had brainstorming sessions, and gradually ideas came up which she could try out. What the therapist did was give her enough confidence, and in fact she raised enough money for her child to go to America and be helped. So you see, the mother was stuck with the problem: "I know what I want, but I don't know how to go about it. If I had the money, then I could go." That's the wrong way to assess the problem. The answer was to put out a call from the heart to the universe. Then there was a response, and that was the solution. That's the lesson of creativity.

Now just to be complete, we looked at *Nasut*, the spiritual lesson to do with *Nasut*, which hopefully you have all discovered by now, is **limitation and patience**. This world is a world of limitation. It's very rich and very diverse, but the spiritual lesson we have to accept is that of limitation. In fact, it's the limitation of the world which enables us to progress.

In *Khayal*, the spiritual lesson is listening to your **intuition**. Let your intuition guide you through the maze of your confusing thoughts and ideas.

There is no spiritual lesson for *Arwah*, it's more a kind of a bridge that connects us between the personal and the transpersonal.

Now in *Mithal* we are connecting to a different kind of thinking, it's not analytical thinking, which is the logical way to assess a problem, nor is it perceptual thinking, which we talked about in *Arwah*, having insight. But the thinking coexists with the universal mind; it's a thinking that connects with the archetypes which contain the possibilities of all things. These archetypes are beings, real beings, mental beings, and they are responsible for the directing of the flow of spirit into the world through the mind. When we experience them, our imagination is no longer personal imagination, it becomes **creative imagination**. Our imagination configures this experience into a form. Particularly in our dreams, we begin to see or have experiences of figures that are totally impersonal, like a guiding figure, or a figure in your dreams that's trying to show you something, reveal something to you.

To come back to the first statement, it's the way we are assessing our lives. The answer is to look deeper into ourselves, our creativity, that's when we begin to find that there is a whole lot of other ways of seeing things.

In terms of the *lataif*, we are moving from the solar plexus to the next stage of the *Qalb*, which is the physical heart. When you first open it up, you often experience a lot of personal emotions. What's happening is a kind of purification of your personal emotions. In the same way, when you went into the state of *Khayal*, you experienced your personal thoughts. Then from *Khayal* to *Arwah* there was a kind of purification of the mind, so you got free of your personal thoughts and your consciousness could expand. In the same way, at this stage of the *Qalb*, the left side of the heart, you go through a kind of emotional crisis. You find a lot of your personal feelings that have been held in, like your guilt, your resentment, your fear, anger, all these kinds of things come out. If you are sitting opposite a person experiencing this, you feel the pain in the left side of the heart. Those of you who are retreat guides will know of this. As the retreatant turns within, you feel the tension in the solar plexus, then after that, there is a pain in the left breast, and that's the *Qalb*. That's when the retreatant says: "I'm going through a lot of personal stuff." The emotions are being churned up.

From Personal Emotion to Cosmic Emotion

The secret here is to realize, and the Buddhists have a clue here for us: *I am not my emotions*. What I experience is in myself, based on my personal opinion, my personal experience. But this is not who I am. I am greater than this. That's the break-through point, when your personal emotion becomes part of a bigger wave of emotion. It's as if you look at the sea and you see a lot of little waves running over each other, and there suddenly is a big wave that lifts the whole lot up. That's the experience, you suddenly experience that your personal emotion is part of a much greater emotion, cosmic emotion.

Just as from *Khayal* to *Arwah*, we went from personal thinking to the possibility of cosmic thinking, now we can go from our personal feelings in *alam al Mithal* to the experience of a cosmic emotion. That's the break-through point, suddenly you break free of the grip of your personal emotions and you find that the heart on the left side starts to open. It's a major step forward in spiritual awakening, it's the beginning of the awakening of the heart. I have seen people going from being sad in their lives, sadness about problems or tragedies, to experiencing cosmic sadness. I remember a lady who broke down, she cried and cried, for hours on end, and I was concerned and asked: "Are you alright?" And she said, "I'm fine, it's just a whole universe of sadness is coming through me." It's nothing personal.

Sometimes we experience this when we carry the feelings of not only our family, but the generation before that and the generation before that and so on, and you happen to be the one who picks it all up and experiences it going through you. It's a tremendous purging of the self. What you are doing is healing several generations, in the present, not in the past. Just because other generations have died and moved on, doesn't mean they don't exist. They do exist and very often they are still caught up in their emotions. So you become the channel through which that whole line of generations can be healed. That's because we are all interconnected, you have a resonance to this line of people and you feel that coming through you. And if you are healed in yourself, then you heal them too.

One can also tune in, as Buddha did, he said: If you have a personal sadness, tune in to the sadness of the planet, and you discover that there is a whole cosmos of sadness there. And there is not just sadness, there is joy and peace and love. That's what we can experience at this stage through the opening of that level of the *Qalb*, the opening of the heart.

Now let's start tuning in. See if you can be aware of your own personal feelings. They may not be very present here at the camp, but it's not hard to remember them and to tune in. Feelings about your job or your family, your loved ones, friends. There is always something that we have lots of feeling about. For a few moments, just to remember that feeling. –

Now we want to see if we can find what is behind that; that feeling is not just your personal feeling. That feeling that you have is part of a huge ocean of that kind of feeling, and you can open yourself up to experience it by realizing that it's not just your feeling. A lot of people are experiencing this, and a lot of beings, like animals and plants, are experiencing the same feeling. This way your heart opens up to something more cosmic. This is one of the conditions of the universe. There are many conditions, this is just one of them. – Whether it is loneliness, or sadness, or anger, or resentment, you are not the only one. You just happen to be part of this wave of feeling, and in fact you could choose to tune in to another wave, a different kind of feeling. Or maybe it's better for you to experience the whole ocean to pour through your heart, to purify it of that personal emotion. – So let the feeling expand, like fill your whole being and then go beyond your being, like it's a huge wave of emotion. – It is important we get in touch with our feelings because that's how we experience the water nature in our psyche. But we don't want to get stuck in our personal feelings only. – Just to

see your own personal feeling as part of a wave of the same kind of feeling. – And then to see that all these waves are all part of the ocean of emotion. –

Our consciousness can benefit from opening up at this point, so we can use a *wasifa* that signifies that opening up, and that is *Wasi*. What's happening to your consciousness, you'll gradually be able to develop an overview, a very broad perspective, not limited by personal thoughts or personal feelings.

Practice: ya Wasi

Now silently on the breath. –

Now in meditation, the *fikr as-Sirr*. Simply allow your consciousness to expand, to have an overview of the world and your life. This is what leads to the possibility of creativity. You have to open your consciousness first. Forget about the personal way of looking at things. –

We can combine *Wasi* with two other *wasaf* which relate to creativity, that's *ya Khaliq* and *ya Bari*. We work with all three together, in the form of the *dhikr*.

Practice: ya Wasi – ya Khaliq – ya Bari, as dhikr

We work with *Wasi* when the head is turning around, you bring your head down on *Khaliq*, and then you have *Bari* in the heart. –

Now we will have a break, you continue the practice on your own.

Wednesday, 4 August 2004

Malakut

Today it's raining, so to find inspiration we have to look a little deeper into the heavens, past the clouds. A Sufi retreat involves a lot of drama, the greater the drama, the greater the retreat. What we are talking about is the drama of the soul. We experience upheaval of emotion, we go flying high and then we come crashing down, it takes a long time until you start to even out. It all comes back to what we were saying yesterday: you can't rely on your assessment of the situation. So when things are difficult and you feel down, then you tend to be self-critical or you begin to doubt the practices or the retreat, and when the sun is shining and you are feeling beautiful, then you think it's fantastic and the practices are perfect. So remember, both assessments are not real. So what is real?

Hazrat Inayat Khan has a saying: *There comes a time when man is evolved and what he seeks for he no longer finds in the world. We cease to look down upon the earth and instead we look towards the heavens.* In other words, we have sought for reality in this world, and we have not found it, because the nature of this life is change. Everything is changing all the time. There seem to be cycles of things that repeat themselves again and again, everything is constantly changing and even evolving. And so the Sufis say it is pointless to try and discover reality in this world. One must look elsewhere for it. "Look towards the heavens" symbolizes our origins, where we came from.

It's a very important principle in alchemy that one has to go back to the source, the origin of everything. You have to go back to the beginnings of your being, and then maybe you might begin to find and answer or discover something of the unchangeable reality. The heavens are, by comparison, not unchanging, but they don't change as fast as the world does. The heavens are also in a constant state of creation, but there one is able to see things much more clearly than in this world. This world is a mixture of all kinds of realities. We have dark and light, good and evil, beautiful things and ugly things, we have all the different kinds of souls. Groups of souls have one kind of attunement and other groups have other kinds of attunement, and each considers their reality the only reality. Then we have the animals and the birds and the flowers, it's all mixed up together. It's a very rich world, but a world of constant change and everything is interwoven in this world.

To get to the essence of things, what is behind this world, we have to go to another realm, which the Sufis call the realm of *Malakut*. *Malakut* is the level of celestial light. By that I mean it's the light of your aura and your soul mixed together. It's not pure soul light, it's a mixture of one's thoughts or experiences and the light of the soul, a mixture of the human and the angelic. Sometimes *Malakut* is translated as the mind, which is confusing, particularly as the imagination of the mind; in fact what it is, it's **the sphere in which you see the impact of the mind on the soul.**

What we saw in the astral planes, in *Khayal*, we see the impact of the physical world on the mind, in *Arwah* we see the light of the mind world, the electromagnetic field and in *Mithal* we see the prototypes of the mind, the mental archetypes. But there is no sense of the soul being conscious of itself at that point. Now in *Malakut*, the difference is, the soul becomes conscious of itself, we are beginning to get closer to that question *who am I?* The first thing that you see in *Malakut* is the impact of your mind on your soul, for example you can see the impact of your angry mind, the impact of depression on the soul, the impact of dishonesty and so on, a whole lot of negative conditions. And you can also see what happens when the soul is freed of the mind. So *Malakut* is a bit of a mixture. There is the presence of the angelic and the celestial light, the level in which you begin to see your light, but you also see your flaws. And you see your flaws in their essence. We will go into that this afternoon.

In terms of the *lataif*, *Malakut* corresponds to the right side of the heart; it's opposite to what we considered yesterday, the left side of the heart. We are talking about the opening of the different psychic tubes that run all through the body, and when you experience an opening in a particular *latifa*, then all the tubes that are associated with that begin to open up, and when they open, it's painful. They connect with the nervous plexi that are activated and one feels that through the plexi, they start to hurt. That pain precedes the opening of that *latifa*.

What we are opening to on the right side of the heart, we are beginning to experience spirit, which the Sufis call *Ruh*. Remember the spirit we experienced was implicit before this stage, now we actually have a conscious experience of spirit. By that I mean we experience the Holy Spirit. It comes through you like lightning, or like a huge waterfall that's unleashed, like Niagara Falls that pours through you. This becomes a personal experience of spirit. Thomas Aquinas put it very well, he said *Spirit is not in the body, the body is in spirit*. What we call spirit is not confined to the body, but it's the body that is formed out of spirit. **Your body is a coagulation of spirit.** Then what is spirit? The Sufis can't really give a full explanation of that, but the attempt to explain it by saying *Spirit is an act of God*. It's an act of the divine Light. That's the most we can say.

So this opening on the right side is the experience of spirit, a totally impersonal experience. The opening on the left side of the breast was the opening up to the emotion of the universe, the personal emotion becomes transpersonal. The right side of the breast is the side through which the spiritual messages come, teachings, prophecies and so on come through the *Ruh*. Whereas our understanding of nature is revealed to us through the left side, **the whole left**

side of the body is nature, the whole right side is spirit. That relates to what Pir Zia was saying when he introduced the practice of *Kasab*. He said: “Think of the sun and the moon.” The sun is our spirit, the alchemists used to say the sun is the divine light; whereas the moon is to do with nature. Nature reflects the light of spirit. That’s the relationship between the two.

That’s an introduction to *Malakut*. When we explore this angelic realm, we find out that we are beginning to see the angels. One can also see human souls that are freed of the mind; it’s the highest sphere to which humans can evolve. What lies beyond, like *Jabarut* and *Lahut*, is purely angelic. But within *Malakut* we can experience some of the angelic beings, and these may resonate with you. You can discover something of yourself through the attunement to this sphere.

The Plane of Love, Harmony and Beauty

The first attunement is a very innocent attunement. To enter into *Malakut*, one has to empty one’s ego out. You become very innocent and begin to experience the light of your being. You discover this light is a very beautiful light, the beginning of the angelic lights. This light brings you not just the feeling of beauty, but of joy. – It is this aspect in us that enables us to appreciate beauty and to appreciate harmony. And what is more, Hazrat Inayat Khan says that *beauty is an expression of love*, and Ibn ‘Arabi said that *God first appears to us in beautiful forms*. By beauty I don’t mean just physical beauty, but the beauty of a smile or the beauty of one’s words or voice, beautiful actions, the beauty of the mind. Beauty is a kind of light, a light that is giving a particular expression to itself. God’s Being reveals to us something of His or Her nature through beautiful acts, beautiful forms, beautiful beings. One could ask, what is the origin of this beauty? where does it come from? The Sufis answer: it is an expression of love.

The beauty of a form is tested when one sees what’s behind that form; if what’s behind is loving, then that beauty is eternal. So we can sum up the three qualities, love, harmony and beauty, and we can say these three qualities really attune us to this angelic level. Some souls are so attuned to this that they find themselves lost in the world of commerce, politics and war, they have difficulty to relate to this world. Imagine a soul that has attuned to this very deeply will only find meaning in life through relationships in which they can express love, harmony and beauty. Just as the *Djinn* souls find their meaning and purpose in life through creativity. And the more earthly souls find their meaning and purpose in life through practical expression. So a soul that is deeply impressed with these qualities, they need to surround themselves with beauty, and they must be allowed to express a loving nature, and if you take that away, then they have no means to be themselves. It’s very important for such a soul, in order to be in the world and in life, to at least have this basis in life, **live in a place that has some beauty and that they can express their loving nature** in some way through relationships or helping people.

Now let’s try and pick up on this attunement through the *wasaiif*. This plane is to do with light, but it’s light that expresses itself as beauty. The first practice would be *ya Nur – ya Jamil*, the light of beauty. This is what inspires us when we see beauty, inspires us to write poetry or music.

Practice: ya Nur – ya Jamil.

Now let’s do the *fikr* of the breath, breathing in *Nur*, breathing out *Jamil*.

The access to this plane of consciousness is not via the mind, but it is through emotion: the emotion of innocence and the emotion that appreciates beauty and harmony and love.

The Spiritual Lesson: Unconditional Love

The spiritual lesson of this sphere is the lesson of **unconditional love**. One's longing in life might be to express beauty and be harmonious and loving, but not everyone believes that. Some people are aggressive, some people are practical or interested in the mind, they have different interests, so it's difficult for such a soul to find a companion to share this. Until your heart has been broken so much that it opens, and you experience that love is not something that comes from outside of you, love comes through you, you are an expression of love. That is the meaning of your life. It doesn't depend on whether people are nice to you, or faithful, or responding to you or not. Meaning is experienced through being loving, as opposed to longing to be loved. When the heart opens, you suddenly realize that you have always been loved and you always will be, because you were created out of an act of love. What I want to say is your soul was created out of an act of love. It's a great spiritual realization and it allows us then to accept people, the differences and that some people are not necessarily loving, they find meaning through other ways of being.

The main drive or impulse is what the Sufis call *Ishq*. It means the divine nostalgia. The Sufis have a wonderful way of describing what love is, and it's in this particular practice that I'd like us to share: there is not you and me, and I love you and you love me, but **there is love, and there is a lover and a beloved, and all three are one**. The first few words of the cosmic celebration which Pir Vilayat created are: I am the one I love. One discovers one's self in every lover, and that self is non other than God. *Ishq Allah*, God is love, *Mabud*, lover, and *Lillah*, beloved.

Let's share this practice together, as a way of really capturing the emotion of this plane. It's very innocent and beautiful.

Practice: *Ishq Allah – Mabud – Lillah*

Now we just quietly meditate on the light of the heart. This is the stage in which the soul at last begins to remember its light. Following the remembrance of its light it will begin to experience the power that it has and the ecstasy of its being. –

We take a break now, and I suggest that you work with these practices. You can sit in your tent or find a sheltered spot. This is the point in which we are changing gear in the retreat, we start to go much deeper.

Afternoon

I have made up a chart for you that lists the planes and the levels of consciousness, the beings of the planes and the *lataif* involved and the effect that each level of consciousness has on us, what we experience. I will see that the chart is made available for you in a flip chart form at the back of the tent tomorrow. I'm kind of a map-maker, that's my job. [You can find the chart below, p. 23].

The other thing I thought we could do, this evening, after your support groups, we'll hold a short session here in the tent as an opportunity for you to put questions to me, but in written form, not orally. Just write the questions on a piece of paper, Fravarti will translate them. Sometimes one person's question is really in the hearts of many people, but they didn't think to ask it. I'll do my best to answer them.

Now for our attunements. We are working with the state that Sufis call *Malakut*. *Malakut* is not easily translated, but it does seem to embrace a number of levels of consciousness, specifically the angelic levels, not all angelic levels. It definitely doesn't relate to the archangels at all, and *Malakut* doesn't refer to the Cherubim either. But it does refer to the angels. It also has a human component to it, because it allows for the human imagination.

The Plane of Truth

This morning we gave an attunement to the plane of love, harmony and beauty, and this could be considered as part of *Malakut*. This afternoon we give an attunement of a different level, which I call the plane of truth. These two planes are almost like opposites to each other. You could say the plane of love, harmony and beauty is more like a watery attunement, the plane of truth is more fiery.

When we speak of fire, we talk about fire and light. The fire side is more the human side, it incorporates all the distortions that occur to the soul in our lives. Distortions of sexuality, distortions of anger, hatred, distortions of truth, like being manipulative or dishonest, bigotry, all distortions are fire. Also distortions of one's ego, like your will becoming arrogant or showing the desire to dominate, distortions of power, when people become power-crazy. You will be surprised, these are all distortions of the divine qualities. Sexuality is like the battery for the universe, it brings about creation. The outrage of conscience then becomes the distortion of anger and hatred. The natural pride in one's being becomes one in which you look down upon others, and that becomes bigotry. Then there is power, some people naturally have more power than others, either physically or mentally or psychologically, and then they use that power for their own ends. The power, which is to do with spirit, is a divine quality, but when the divine qualities are used for egotistical purposes, they become distortions. Even the quality of truth; when human beings think they have the truth, then they become ruthless. They lose touch with their conscience.

So every quality has a possibility of distortion because of our ego. This has an effect on the soul nature. So let's say you have a lot of fire in your nature, and that fire is used for selfish purposes, like you could be very ambitious, or you could become masterful by using your will, and your fire is used to advance your position in life. So you become selfish. Whilst there is a wonderful quality sitting there, the fiery quality, it has become distorted. At this level of *Malakut* you see those distortions in yourself, in your soul and in the souls of others. Excess fire means you are beginning to burn up; hence the old Christian notion of hell, you are burning in hell. People get consumed by hatred, violence and so on. This is all part of the heavens, there are regions for each condition, and in that region you see the souls and how that condition has affected the souls. However, they don't have to remain there, there is always the possibility of transformation. Sufis speak of the breath of compassion, **the angels of compassion constantly work with souls who are stuck in these distortions**. The reason why we mention these is because these qualities and distortions come up in our retreat. They come up through your thoughts, in your dreams, in your feelings. Mostly these things are unconscious.

Also, when you work with yourself on a distortion, to transform yourself, then you bring the quality back to its original condition, which is very beautiful. So you learn to surrender your willfulness to God, and in your intoxication with power you learn to serve the divine power. Each quality becomes purified and balanced and as a result, one acquires **wisdom**. That is the outcome of this attunement. That's why we say it can't be a purely angelic plane, because the angels aren't wise. The angels are pure and innocent, but they don't know of wisdom. It's the human souls who have come to incarnate and struggle in life, they can overcome their deficiencies and flaws and develop wisdom.

You can think of the fourth plane as having two halves, one is the dark side and one is the light side. The dark side is to do with distortions of fire, and the light side is to do with light. When you do a retreat, you get to a point where you tune in to the angelic planes and everything is very beautiful and harmonious, and you think, ah, I got there! And then the next day, inexplicably, you're feeling low, angry, and your dreams are nightmares. Then the tendency is to think, what have I done wrong? You want to blame yourself. All that's happening is: you are going through a purification process.

In the astral planes, you have to go through a mind purification. That was going from *Khayal* to *Arwah* and then on to *Mithal*. Now you entered the angelic planes in our attunement this morning, the plane of love, harmony and beauty, but now you have to undergo a purification on the soul level. That's what takes place at this level, which we call the plane of truth. Your fire has to be sorted out. Then once you have undergone this purification by fire, then you are ready for the next stage, *Jabarut*, which we will do tomorrow.

The Spiritual Lesson: Test of Truth

To sum up the lesson of this plane, it is a test of truth. Through this spiritual lesson, it is the first time one can really ask the question, not from your mind, but from your heart, *who am I?* And so the Sufis say this test of truth is symbolized by what they call the desert experience. One wanders into the desert without a map and you have to find the water in the desert. There can be a parallel in life, like you can enter into an experience in life where, without realizing it, you don't have a map, you have no guidance, no equipment, and you become lost, you become tired, burned out, you begin to lose faith in yourself, you begin to doubt yourself. What's happening is you are being subjected to a test of truth. For example, you have an ideal and you decide, perhaps at great cost to yourself and to others, to pursue that ideal. In the pursuit of that ideal in your life, things start to go wrong. You lose support of friends and relatives, you begin to doubt yourself, you lose your resources and become burned out. That's the moment when one says, why? Have I done the right thing or was it all wrong? Pir Vilayat used to have a phrase, he said *Shatter your ideal on the rock of truth*. Your ideal shatters.

That's when one has to go very deeply into oneself, way past the mind, and ask the question of your conscience: Is this right? And then that still, small voice says: Yes, carry on. It's a struggle of faith, because for a while you believe and then things go wrong again and you lose your faith and so on. **One is also tested in one's faith as well as one's truth**. This test forces us to rely on our intuition and our conscience. And that's when you find your spirit; the Sufis say one finds the water in the desert. In this experience of discovering the spirit, a green flash comes across your visage, it's literally a green light. It's the appearance of the *Khidr* of your being. *Khidr* is simply your guiding spirit.

So the journey on this plane is a kind of epic, like the story of Moses taking the lost tribes of Israel through the desert. It is the epic story of your life, a phase in your life and a phase of your retreat where it seems to go on forever. What one's actually experiencing are the forces

of the sun in our nature. Remember Pir Zia spoke of the sun and the moon a couple of days ago. Up to this point we have been dealing with the moon forces, the more receptive side. Now we begin to experience the sun. *The sun is spirit*. This is what this search is for, searching for the spirit in our being, and the discovery of the spirit eventually is like a huge fire igniting in us. The spirit causes the *kundalini* to awaken very strongly.

Some of the themes that come up through this plane are archetypal, for example the theme of justice. Justice is connected with truth, a struggle between right and wrong. This is the plane in which we experience the struggle between light and dark in our being. This plane is the basis of a lot of our mythology, the struggle between good and bad, light and dark. A modern myth is the Star Wars series, the struggle between light and dark. At this particular stage of the retreat you really feel it. You can go backwards into the more unconscious side or you can struggle until you eventually go forward into the light. It's a struggle for your soul, you are fighting for your soul.

One struggles with all the forces, the *nafs* come up and you have to fight them. Remember Pir Zia spoke about the *nafs*, the desires and appetites; the *nafs* come through the mind, like the mind can gobble up your time, or your desire for food, there are lots of ways in which the fire is expressed through the *nafs*. You have to master the *nafs*. One quality you develop at this stage is **mastery**. And there is a sense of **justice**, as I said earlier; you develop a keen sense of what is right and what is wrong. You develop the quality of **power**, and of course the quality of **truth**.

There is one quality that we have not spoken of, the quality that balances all the distortions of fire that one can possibly experience, and that is compassion. That's the magic quality. And also mercy, **mercy and compassion**. Distortions of will, distortions of truth and of power are all balanced by compassion. Even the idealism, which becomes distorted as zealotry, people become zealous in their idealism. You also see this in fanaticism, and even in some sects or groups of fundamentalists one sees that kind of distortion, when people take an absolute view on things. No room for compromise. So the waters of compassion cool the fire and soften the heart, and that's what begins to balance the soul at this stage. For example the master who is a little egotistical becomes aware of his insensitivity towards the people around him, the one who is very powerful becomes more magnanimous and begins to use the power to serve people rather than to control people. The lawyer becomes transformed into someone who is wise, like Solomon.

That brings us now to the first practice we can do. It is a very good practice for working with the distortions of the fourth plane, and it also incorporates the notion of the surrender of your will. It's surprising how deep our pride goes; we can surrender up to a certain point. There is a certain point in which the ego says no, I will not do that, I will not bow to you. Then you realize you have a problem. Actually it's not a bad thing, it just has to be coaxed and eventually there is the surrender. Murshid said there is no impulse that is bad, even the impulse to kill. It's what you do with the impulse that counts. So if there's all kinds of eruptions going on in you, like you want to murder your retreat guide, because they said: "Do the *dhikr* all day", and they just left. Or they say: "I think you should go on the fast now."

Practice: ya Rahman – ya Rahim

All these impulses can be transformed into light. So let's start with this wonderful practice *ya Rahman – ya Rahim*, the divine mercy, the divine compassion. In this practice we are calling upon the angels of mercy and compassion, who exist, and if you call them from your heart, they will respond. In the situations that you cannot help or change yourself, you can offer yourself as a channel through which these angels can come through you and can help. There are situations in life where somebody comes to you and they tell you of their problems,

and you feel helpless. You don't know what to say or do; what you *can* do is pray. That's what *Rahman* and *Rahim* is about, praying so those angels of mercy and compassion can come through and help the person or help you, whoever it might be, to become free of their distress, their anguish.

We can do this practice as *dhikr*. On the circular head movement you say *ya Rahman*, and on the bowing movement, which involves surrender, you say *ya Rahim*.

Now we do it silently, in-breath *Rahman*, out-breath *Rahim*.

The light of this plane begins as a red-orange light, or even a very dark red and then red-orange; then it changes to a kind of yellow-green and eventually becomes a golden light. That's the light of wisdom. The souls that are attuned to this plane, what we call fourth-plane souls, are **idealists**. They express the ideal in terms of wanting to accomplish something great, whether it's a sporting accomplishment or something in politics or science, some kind of great accomplishment. Or their ideal is for humanity, they wish to transform society or to introduce a new kind of thinking; particularly one thinks of Gandhi, a great idealist. But of course these idealists are also very difficult to live with. People who are closest to them feel like it's living with the sun, it's always burning, always intense, always hot. That's why *Rahman* and *Rahim* is so important, because it cools that intensity and balances it. That's what enables the fire of idealism to become light.

To finish our attunement, there are spiritual schools of wisdom that exist in this plane, just as there are spiritual schools here in this world. You find many of the great souls, masters, saints and prophets of the past in this particular plane. We can tell the school by the color of the soul. Some are beautiful blues, their light is blue, some are beautiful golden-yellow light, some are very pure orange, some green. One doesn't have to wear clothes in this level to pretend who you are. It's all open, your light is there for all to see. In these spiritual schools, the souls of the spiritual seekers who have reached the heavens gather and experience the benefit of the greatest of their kind. So there are even teachings and learnings in the heavens.

We will take a break now, and I suggest you choose from a number of options to work with. You work with *Rahman – Rahim* as a *dhikr*, or you can work with the bowing *dhikr*, a very good practice at this stage, it's about surrendering, or the classical *dhikr*. Either one of those three.

We will meet at 8.15 pm for questions.

Thursday, 5 August 2004

I would like to mention to you, you may not have noticed, the charts that I spoke of yesterday are up at the back of the tent, in German and English. That chart is simply a guideline, it's not to be taken too literally. I wrote it up quickly yesterday at lunch time, I haven't given hours and hours of thought to it, so just take it as a guideline. It might be useful for you to get a sense of what we have been doing.

[The chart is on the next page.]

TABLE: The Levels of Consciousness

Sufi Name	Levels of consciousness	Types of thinking	Consequence of this consciousness	Lataif / chakras	Beings
Nasut	Physical world	Objective thought, reality is the physical world	Our psyche (self) is lost/absorbed in the world	Qalabiya / base chakra	Physical
Khayal	Lower astral	Subjective (personal) thought, personal beliefs	We project our personal perspective onto world, events	Nafsiya / sacrum center, solar plexus	Thought forms
Arwah	Middle astral. Contact spirit in all things	Implicit (holistic) thinking. Insightful thought	Turn within to electromagnetic field around body. See spirits of departed souls in astral world.	Qalbiya (left breast) / solar plexus	Spirits. Souls who have left this world
Alam al-Mithal	Upper astral. Mental archetypes, level of mythology	Creative imagination, creative thought, great ideas, music etc.	Our conscious configures ideas into images in our psyche. See basic pattern of universal forms.	Qalbiya (left breast) / solar plexus	Djinns
Malakut	Celestial light, level of angels	Thought becomes light, you see effects of thought upon the soul	Enter landscapes of soul, encounter angelic beings, experience energy of Holy Spirit	Ruhiya (right breast) / throat center	Angels. Schools of spiritual wisdom
Jabarut	Consciousness reabsorbed into its ground (Intelligence)	Divine knowledge is revealed to you	Enter realms of splendor. See light of splendor in landscapes of soul	Ruhiya (right breast), Sirr (middle) / heart center, throat center	Cherubim
Lahut	Spiritual archetypes. Level <i>wasaf</i> come from. See Divine Qualities as lights	End of dualistic thought	See lights of Divine Qualities in landscapes	Khafiya / third eye	Archangels
Hahut	Unity	No thought	Illumination. See unity in all planes, all things	Haqqiya / crown	
Tawhid	God awakens through you	God reveals His/Her intentions in cosmos	See God's intention in the creation	All	All

Jabarut

It's still raining, which means we have to turn within even deeper to find the heavens. That's what we are going to do this morning, we tune in to *Jabarut*. I'm just speculating here, don't take it too seriously. I am not sure, but I wonder if the *wasifa Jabbar* comes from *Jabarut*, because *Jabbar* is the compeller, it's a very strong *wasifa*. It's not a compeller like someone forcing you, it's more like your attention is drawn so powerfully that you are compelled to look, you can't look away. This sphere of *Jabarut* is also a station of revelation. What is revealed to you is called real knowledge, and it is revealed to you in the form of a light. It's a light that opens up like that (photism), and when it opens up right in front of you, it catches your attention to the extent that you can not be aware of anything else. In that sense it's a compelling vision.

***Jabarut* is the level of the light of splendor**, and the light is very intense, very much like the sun. The Zoroastrians used to call the sun prince *Huraqsh*, because the sun was so splendid, and prince *Huraqsh* was a splendid god. It's the light of splendor, but not just this intense light that's revealed to you, it's the start of true knowledge. What is revealed to you by God is the treasure that has been invested in your soul. We think of a treasure as being gold and jewelry and diamonds, and sometimes in the beginnings this is what is shown to you in the revelation, you are shown riches, but really they are symbolic of the richness of all the qualities that have been invested in you. And then begins a series of revelations that show you every aspect of your nature that has been given to you by God. The secrets of nature are revealed to us. It is the station of revelation.

Last week I gave a meditation on *light upon a light*. In this meditation I said, each fundamental light gives birth to a succession of many lights through all the spheres. And so it is through the light of our soul that the light of revelation descends and reveals something of its nature to us. The final description of this is to say that what happens to our consciousness in *Jabarut* is that it goes back to its ground, its origin. It goes back beyond its form.

In the physical body we have a consciousness of a body in human form, in the astral worlds we have a consciousness of our mental form, in the angelic realms we have consciousness of ourselves as a being of light, and now in *Jabarut* you go beyond form. So the sense of self is no longer as a form, it is in terms of this treasure, a rich, diverse collection of qualities or lights that make up our being. We are going back to the seed state, and the seeds are in the ground, so the ground is the light of splendor and the qualities are the seeds in the ground. What you experience is the ground or origin of intelligence, and that intelligence is light. That's the experience of *Jabarut*. It's the level where the soul is born, the beginnings of a sense of individuality. If you go back to *Jabarut*, you go back to the place or the ground where you were born. One gets a sense, in the state of *Jabarut*, of one's inner Garden of Eden, in Christian terms. It's a very innocent state, in which we see all the potentials of things.

That's one way of describing it. Now let's think of it in terms of an attunement. To attune to *Jabarut*, it's a deep longing in our soul for peace, very deep peace. A kind of peace that you find in the forests of the world, or you find it on retreat, sometimes you find it in sacred music, or you find it in a sacred service. There is a natural and fundamental longing in the human being to worship God. It has always been with us, way back in time, a sense of some kind of God has been present in us. It's perhaps even older than our language. We express this longing for God through prayer, through the lighting of candles, the burning of incense and the reading of sacred texts, and in our voice through chanting and singing. It's a fundamental feature of the human being, a kind of nostalgia that we have, that needs an outlet. Without it, it's like taking away the core of your being. The problem of today is that society feels empty

even though life is exciting, there are many interesting things in the world, but without a religious sense, that sacred sense, life becomes empty. This causes an existential crisis in people, because we don't know then who we are or where we came from. That's how strong the emotion is. And when we discover it, it's like the answer to our questions.

Let's spend a few moments now in silence, tuning in to the sense of peace and stillness and sacredness.

We now want to work with some *wasaiif* to help us attune even deeper. What I would suggest is *ya Azim*, the magnificent, glorious one; *ya Qahhar*, divine sovereignty, the victorious one; and *Salam*, peace. We can do these three *wasaiif* as a *dhikr*. On the circular head movement, we say *ya Azim*. You could translate it as *O how great is Thy glory*. You experience yourself as expanding outwards, like outstretched arms. Then we turn within, we go into the heart, in this case it is the *Qalb* and the *Sirr*, the *latifa qalbiya* and the *latifa sirriya*, that's on *Qahhar*. Then you lift your head and you stay in the heart, and you say *ya Salam*. Let's do that together.

Practice: *ya Azim – ya Qahhar – ya Salam*

Now we do the *fikr* of the practice, silently.

Perhaps we can take a break now and either do the practices here in the tent, silently, or if you wish to do them out aloud, you can go to your tent or find a dry spot. We will continue with the attunement to *Jabarut* this afternoon.

Afternoon

We continue our attunements to *Jabarut*. This is the state in which we are returning to God, returning to a very pure and high state of consciousness. It's the level of consciousness beyond the human being, beyond human attributes. The attributes are purely angelic; one can hear it in the music of choirs singing, trying to capture that emotion of this plane, a mixture of devotion and adoration, and also glorification, a sense of light, and great joy.

The light one becomes conscious of in *Jabarut* is not a light that is seen, but it is a light which sees. If you imagine what it would look like in the landscapes of light, it would look like seeing beautiful landscapes suddenly lit up with every tree and every bush, every flower and every seed would be radiating a very intense light. In *Malakut* we could imagine seeing the colors of the landscapes; there is the landscape of splendor which has a purple-green color to it. But when one actually accesses *Jabarut*, then one sees all the landscapes in terms of the splendor of light that is in each landscape.

Spiritual Lesson: Self-Image

This gives us a clue to the spiritual lesson of this plane. The spiritual lesson here is your self-image, how you see yourself. Think about that: *Jabarut* is the light which sees, and how do we see ourselves? When you are caught in your own world, then the image that you have cannot be one of splendor. What the light of splendor means is that light is in you, it is the basis of your soul, your being, it is the same light as the light of the One Being that has created all things. In other words, when God awakened, God became a Being. In the process

of wakening, as God's consciousness descended, it became more and more concentrated, and this concentration of consciousness revealed the light of splendor. And that's the same light that we are made of. It is the light in us that never dies, neither does it change, whereas the celestial light can change, the same as the light of the aura that changes, and of course the form of the body changes. But at this level of our being, we are talking about an eternal light. Even if you can't see it now, or imagine it, you can get a sense of it by tuning in to the sense of the eternal in you. That is the sense in meditation, when you feel at a certain point or a certain moment even, you suddenly feel "I have always been, I am now, and I always will be."

Now we come back to self-image: self-image makes no sense when we think of ourselves in a transient, temporary way. It only makes sense in terms of our eternal light. Then our image is one of splendor. The being of splendor is in you, it has always been there. Once you realize and experience that, there is no more issue or problem around self-image. From this point of view, you can watch yourself in life as you change, your body changes, you change your mind about things, you have changes of moods, but underneath and behind all that there is what the ancient Sufis called our *celestial counterpart*. It really is the true angel of our being, changeless.

It also helps us to remember this light when we experience beings of light. This is why we are so attracted when we look to the stars, which are really suns, because they remind us of this light in us. First we always see it in another before we realize that to be in ourselves. If you had to imagine what the subtle counterpart, the subtle light counterpart to a star would be: you imagine the sun, which is a star, as a being, and what would the subtle light of that being look like? Its physical counterpart is the sunlight, but its divine, angelic counterpart is the light of splendor. *As above, so below.*

Once one consciously accesses this light, then one will never know death, because it's the eternal light. In fact, once we go past this stage, the Sufis no longer refer to *fanâ*, they begin to speak of *baqa*. The self disappears in *Jabarut*, the notion of yourself disappears, and afterwards, when one moves to *Lahut*, it's the resurrection or the awakening of God in us. Until we reach this point, we are awakening to the presence of God in us, and this is fully realized in *Jabarut* by the light of splendor, but once we pass beyond this, it's no longer so much looking for God as beginning to discover God in you. It's a very different kind of spiritual awakening.

The sadness and often suicidal feelings people experience, it's when they become so cut off from this level of their being that they feel without any purpose or any meaning, they have lost all sense of the eternal. *Jabarut* is a very high state of being, but it's not the end of the journey. One can fall away from this state, you can lose it. That's one of the problems that the profoundness of this experience is a terrible loss if we lose it. Having gone so high, so far, and then suddenly to lose that attunement is devastating. That's when we can understand people who are suicidal and no longer have the will to live, that's when we know, this is not the end of the journey. So in this state we realize that until God awakens in us, we have not established a kind of a permanent spiritual station in us. Even though we had the experience of eternity in us, it's only when that eternity is constantly there that it's stable. We have to go further in the journey in order for that to happen.

For the moment, this sense of splendor in us resonates with the **cherubic intelligences**; they are lights, beings who, through their vibration, like their sound or their light, they constantly maintain the order of creation. When we hear sacred music, it brings us not to our senses, but it helps us to remember our eternalness. We remember where we came from, and in that way we come back from an unstable condition to a very stable condition. That's why sacred music and sacred ceremonies are so important. And it's very important in your every day life to incorporate some kind of spiritual practice or spiritual ceremony, because it

keeps a conscious connection with this level. It's more than just a nurturing of your being, it's a fundamental underpinning of your being.

And if your being is very attuned to this level, we say you are a cherubic type or a cherubic soul, then how do you bring this kind of pure consciousness into the world? There are two ways, one is with a **sense of excellence** and the other a **desire to do things splendidly**. So whatever it is that one does in the world, it has to have that kind of motivation. That is quite different to the more worldly motivations, which are practicality, profit, time, space, points of view and issues. If we carry this attitude into our involvement in life, then we find meaning and purpose. That's when we have learned this spiritual lesson: you wouldn't do something unless you did it splendidly. For to do anything less is to dishonor yourself. If one is this kind of soul, then it's very hard to be in the world, but this is the way in which one *can* be in the world. This soul of course tends towards retreat, because that's when it's much easier to experience one's soul light, whereas in the midst of life it's much harder. So this kind of soul is much more attracted to the peacefulness of nature and to the idea of retreat, and even solitude.

Let's have a few minutes to quietly attune ourselves, capturing those emotions of the desire for solitude, your soul's longing for eternal peace, the light that is so beautiful and so splendid, the whole world is light, one can hear the vibrations of the sounds of the angels singing. It's not surprising it's hard to leave it. Let's attune to this now.

We will do a practice to attune us to this plane, we modify the *dhikr of light* and it becomes the *dhikr of splendor*. *Ya Nur – ya Munawwir – Ikram*. *Ikram* is splendor. *Ya Nur*, remember, is the divine light, a non-existential light, the light that's in your soul, constantly sustaining your soul. It comes down through the crown center, through the third eye center and then imagine projecting it out into the light of your soul, as you say *ya Nur*, turning the head around. It's like a laser beam of light, it cleanses your light and replenishes it. Then you bring your head down with a bowing movement, and as you reach the base, each *latifa* or each chakra responds and radiates the reflection of this divine light, which the Sufis call *Munawwir*. Each *latifa* reflects this divine light in its own unique way, we have all the beautiful lights in us, all came from the one divine light. Lift your head up to the heart as you say *Munawwir*, pause briefly, then you lift your head so that you are conscious of the throat chakra, and then you say *Ikram*, imagining the light of the sun radiating out from your throat. You identify with the being of light. That's splendor.

Practice: Ya Nur – ya Munawwir – Ikram

Now the *fikr* of the practice.

Keep this attunement, that's the *fikr as-Sirr* of the practice.

Up to this point there has been a coming together of the forces of the sun and the moon. In alchemy this is sometimes referred to as the **androgynous figure: spirit and soul are in balance**. From this point on things change. As one moves towards *Lahut*, one becomes much more conscious of spirit. The sense of self rapidly disappears. In other words, the reflected light, which is in the soul, we lose touch of that. It's still there of course, but it's as though we have lost it. This is what St. John of the Cross called the *dark night of the soul*. It is necessary, because in order to become God-conscious, one has to not be aware of oneself. That's the next stage that we face as we move along. In order for the seed-state of God to be revealed to us, that's *Lahut*, we need to become more and more conscious of spirit and less and less conscious of self.

We can't see our own light any more, that's the true meaning of the dark night of the soul. Your consciousness of your own soul light is extinguished. The light is not extinguished, but the consciousness of that light. We are moving into the transcendental consciousness.

We'll take a break now. All that hard work you put in the last two days cleared the skies, so we have the light again. Now you can find a sunny spot and do your meditations. Work with this powerful light practice, *Nur – Munawwir – Ikram*. Tomorrow we will carry on with our attunements to *Lahut*.

Tonight, after the support groups, we can meet here and do the *dhikr* together, and Fravarti will lead us into a turning ceremony. And I will tell a few Sufi jokes, to lighten up the mood.

Friday, 6 August 2004

Lahut

So this morning we continue with our attunements to *Lahut*. *Lahut* is the level of consciousness that we access when we **experience the divine qualities**. You can think of it as the seed state. The Sufis say: What are the signs of God, the *ayat*? The qualities are the signs. In themselves they are simply the different lights of God.

We said, in *Jabarut* our consciousness was reabsorbed back to a very simple state, which we call the ground state. We said that is the state of intelligence, where knowledge is revealed to us. But that was the knowledge of our soul. Now in *Lahut* the revelation continues, but what is revealed to you are the qualities of God. It's a very pure state of consciousness, and very often the model that we draw on for this state is the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her soul is immaculate, pure, that really is the meaning of the Virgin Mary, virginity of soul. It's in that pure state that we experience the Holy Spirit very consciously. We said earlier that in *Malakut* one begins to experience the energy of the Holy Spirit, but in *Lahut* that experience becomes more and more conscious. It's a very fine, subtle state of consciousness, the Sufis call it *latif*, and its counterpart in the world would be the beautiful snow peaks like here in the Alps or the Himalayas, where the atmosphere is very thin, the air is thin, not so much oxygen, it's colder, more remote, but it's very beautiful, because one sees much more light than you could see down in the world. That's the kind of earthly counterpart of this heavenly experience. If you were to spend weeks and even months up in the high mountains in the snow, and imagine it was never cloudy, but sunny every day, you would develop a very unworldly perspective. One's being becomes very pure.

The emotion is of **purity**. We can first start tuning in to that emotion. It presumes **innocence**. It's the kind of purity where you revel and enjoy the purity of the whiteness around you. Everything else seems impure. That's a kind of mental image which has its usefulness, it helps us to tune in. The other kind of image we use is the image of a crystal, especially when light is passing through crystal and the crystal becomes awakened and begins to transmit the light, it radiates light. And then there is the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This can be a starting point for our attunement.

With this attunement we develop the qualities of purity and detachment. And of course indifference, which in Sanskrit is *vairagya*. It really is a state of *fanâ*. In Buddhism one has a

particular kind of Buddhist statue which we call the skeleton Buddha. The skeleton Buddha is sitting there in ecstasy and complete silence, meditating. It is a strong image, but it gives us a sense of what this stage is about. We can feel very free, free of your thoughts. Can you be free of your thoughts? This is where we are led into something much deeper in ourselves, which is the spiritual lesson of this plane. When one feels very pure, you are kind of naked and open, no more defenses of the mind, and that's when the deepest feelings come up. Sometimes feelings of resentment and guilt that we had thought were gone; the only reason why we become conscious of these kinds of feelings is because we are in such a pure state.

Spiritual Lesson: Forgiveness

One then begins to realize: "I need to purify myself of these feelings, resentment, guilt." This is the lesson of this plane of consciousness, the test of **forgiveness**. Can you forgive all things that you have held as a resentment against God or against other people, and can you be prepared in yourself to ask forgiveness for things you feel guilty about?

Let's stay with that for a few moments. You can be with those feelings and see whether you have the capacity to ask forgiveness or to forgive.

Now we can take our attunement deeper still, because this issue of forgiveness was modeled 2000 years ago by Jesus Christ in the image of the crucifixion. Sometimes Jesus is portrayed as the Lamb of God that is sacrificed. The idea of sacrifice is a very ancient one. It was quite traditional to sacrifice a young lamb as an offering to God. One wonders, is this really just about appeasing, asking for God to feel better about you, or is it really about forgiveness? This means for us to be conscious ourselves of those things that we have done to others and things that others have done to us. These experiences have been a kind of crucifixion, because if these are the things that you remember at this stage, they have gone very deep. There have been no defenses against them, so they act like a kind of crucifixion for us. They crucify us at our most vulnerable point.

The real issue is: Are we prepared to go through with it? *Are we prepared to go through with the act of being sacrificed? It's the final test of the ego.* What the sacrifice really symbolizes is being prepared to die. Out of love for God we are prepared to let go of our individual life, not out of guilt or resentment, but having experienced forgiveness and having forgiven, we can then go through with the act of sacrifice. This is when the conscious experience of *fanâ* begins.

The great Sufi Bastami said: *Oh Lord, let there be no Thou and I, let there only be Thou.* And God replied: *Oh I.* That moment was the moment of union for Bastami. He was shattered by the realization that he was speaking to the One that he is. It is a free choice, one doesn't *have* to go through sacrifice, but if one wishes to go further, then that is what's required.

Now to keep our attunement going, we can work with some *wasaiif*. The ones that are most appropriate at this point are *Nur – Alim*, light of intuition, and *ya Quddus*, the Holy Spirit. Let's remain in touch with this kind of emotion that we are experiencing whilst we are doing this practice. So it all becomes one experience. In repeating these *wasaiif*, one is also longing to be one with the light, so you are kind of sacrificing yourself and your sense of self as you are saying *ya Nur – ya Alim* and then saying *ya Quddus*. That brings the real attunement for these *wasaiif*.

Practice: ya Nur – ya Alim

Now do it silently on the breath.

Now we can do *ya Quddus*, the Holy Spirit. You tune into the crown chakra. *Nur – Alim* tunes to the *latifa khafiya*, the third eye, *Quddus* helps us to tune to the crown center, the *latifa haqqiya*.

Practice: *ya Quddus*. Put your tongue at the back of the palate of the mouth, the soft part of the palate, not the bone structure, it's behind the bone, almost by the throat. You press your tongue right back there as you say *ya Quddus*.

Now we do the *fikr* of the practice.

This is the level in which we invoke the **archangels**. When one tunes in to them, they are great lights, greater even than the cherubim. One thinks of the beings of Raphael, Michael, Uriel, Ophiel and Gabriel. We come right back to the beginning of our work last week, we were tuning in to the elements. We would see Raphael as the earth element, has to do with healing. Uriel presides and is strongly present in the water element. Michael is present in the fire element. Ophiel would be present in the air element, the archangel of light, and then Gabriel, the messenger, would be the ether element.

Let's finish with a *dhikr* that carries these four attunements. When we say *la ilaha*, we tune in to Raphael, healing of the body, the body of the universe. On *illa*, one goes deep into one's being, right down through the chakras and one tunes to Uriel. Then one tunes to the light through the heart as one says *Allah*, that's the light of Ophiel in the heart. Then one says *Hu* also through the heart and one tunes to the message and the messenger, Gabriel.

I'm not saying these are definite correlations with the *dhikr*, it's just a way of attuning to the *dhikr*. One could use other archangels as well.

Practice: *La ilaha illa 'llah Hu*

Now we do the *dhikr* silently. Just tune in to each archangel on each movement.

We take a break now. You have a chance to work with this practice on your own. We carry on with our attunements this afternoon.

Afternoon

Our retreat is coming to an end. This can be a great pity, but it also can be a time when you think, "I really want to put this in practice in my life." So let's turn our attention now to our retreat. We were tuning in to *Lahut*. One thing I didn't talk about was the kind of personality the *Lahut* soul has. It's not quite immaculate, but it's a **perfectionist**. These are rather difficult people to be with because there is nothing that's right in life. And so they find themselves constantly angry about all the things that are wrong. Since the universe is unlimited, there is an unlimited number of faults. So the first thing to learn is to start counting the things that are right and to appreciate that which *is* working and that which is beautiful in life. Secondly, and this is to do with alchemy, the *Lahut* type soul has had great difficulty in incarnating into life. They never have really **transformed their anger**. So they need to allow themselves to experience all the difficulties and things people do that are wrong and

insufficient, allow those things to be there and allow themselves to be with their anger and to transform their anger. It's the fourth stage in alchemy where the sun descends into the world.

The equivalent in our Sufi prayers that Murshid has given us is the prayer *Khatum*. All those beautiful words, like *raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide us*, all those words are to do with that, learning **tolerance, patience**, allowing things and people to be what and who they are. Instead of being addicted to perfection, one can begin to allow imperfection to be there. You discover that actually the perfection is not lost, even when there is imperfection.

There is no time now to go into greater detail about this type of soul.

Tomorrow morning I will give an introduction to the transcendental, *Hahut*, rather than an attunement.

Back into Life: Opening the Heart to Compassion

What we need to do now is to prepare ourselves to go back into life. The only way to do it is to open the heart. The trouble is, when you get attuned to these higher planes, it's not that the heart closes, but you lose awareness of the heart, at least you lose awareness of the human heart. In other words, you lose your ability to understand people who have got problems. One thinks that the answer to everything is to just tune in to light and be beautiful. What we are talking about is the ability to bring compassion through into life. In Sufism, the equivalent is the stage of the broken heart. Pir Vilayat coined these words from his father, he said *the divine perfection suffers from human limitation*. As you come into life, the danger is you lose touch with the divine perfection and one then identifies with suffering, whereas the Sufis say the purpose of suffering and limitation in life is to awaken us to the divine perfection. That's the meaning of the broken heart. It's a practice I'd like us to do today, the *dhikr* of the broken heart. The heart opens to that red energy which is the energy of the blood and of suffering of life, and it is with compassion. Com-*passion* means God accompanying our passion as we enter life.

The Stations of the Cross

I'd like to take you through an attunement of the Stations of the Cross, because I find this is always a wonderful way of opening the heart to compassion. You remember the Stations of the Cross are the stages that Christ went through in his final hours, and of course it leads to resurrection, that's the whole point. **It doesn't end with crucifixion, it ends with resurrection.** The Stations of the Cross that I am going to give you and how they apply to us in our lives are not in the order that is normally given. I have also condensed it a little bit so that not every single station is included. But we can work with the main ones.

We start with the image of Christ being arrested and accused, and then judged. What was he accused of? He was ultimately accused of being true to himself. When we say that, we mean being true to God. That was the real accusation. Christ's response was not to defend himself. Neither did he argue back, but neither did he give way. He didn't plead for mercy and he didn't say, oh yes, you're right, I'm sorry. He said nothing. He stood quietly in his own ground. The spiritual lesson for us is that, when we are put in a situation where we are trying to be true to ourselves, as a result people may criticize us, particularly those who are close to us, and we are told: "Oh, you are letting us down, why are you doing this? Why are you causing us so much pain and trouble?" And so of course we feel guilty. We can see the distress that

our decisions we have to stand by can cause, but what is stronger in you is your conviction that you have to be true to whatever you have decided or discovered in yourself. That's the time one is most vulnerable, you are very sensitive to criticism. And you are not really 100% sure. So you have to battle with your faith in yourself. It's a very lonely position to be in. There are no voices there in support, no advice from people. But what we can do is what Christ did, which is, we don't have to argue back. Neither do we have to justify ourselves. And yes, you will face the pain of the distress this is causing sometime, particularly if the decision is going against the trend or against the norm, that which is normal for the family or society or your friends. But remember, you have this one chance to be yourself. You have this one life here. So it's up to you to be true to yourself.

The next station I want to draw your attention to is the station in which Christ is stripped of his clothing. He is virtually naked. We can relate to that because very often when we are in a position like this, we are stripped of all the things that we can hold on to, like there is nothing that can justify what we are doing, people say things that hurt and we can't answer. There is no protection against what people are saying. And just as Christ was quiet and he simply went through this particular station with dignity, we can take a lesson from this and realize that other people have clothing, and they need that clothing for their own defences. Even if you can see through that, it's not for you to strip away another person's defences. It's not for you, even in the name of truth, to strip another person to the point that they are vulnerable. That's what helps us understand this station: Yes, we can be stripped, but we remember the many times in which we have done the same thing to others. For example, you can leave the camp and you can have a wonderful experience and then come back into life and people could make fun of your experience, and then you can't defend it, you feel unable to justify it. You don't have to justify it or defend it, and in your vulnerability you can know that those people themselves need their own points of view and their own defences, because without them they would feel very vulnerable. That's what can give us that patience and strength to be exposed.

There is a very similar station which goes with this, which is when Christ is sentenced first of all to 39 lashes by a whip. The way we can relate to this station, we are not living in a time where that happens any more, but people can lash us with their words and their sarcasm. In our nakedness and our vulnerability people strike us and attack us with their words. And we can react just as Christ did; he did not cry out, he did not retaliate, but quietly stood his ground. What can help us in this station is the knowledge that sometimes we have lashed out or struck out at other people with our own sarcasm and our own sharp words. So when others do it to you, you can be patient and remember, well, I've done that too to other people. So you can understand and you can contain the pain.

The next station is the one in which Christ takes up the cross. A huge cross to put on to his back, to drag along. For me this is the symbol that each one of us will have a cross at some point in our life to carry. There is no such thing as an easy life, particularly not when you take up the spiritual path. One takes on a lot of responsibility when you enter the spiritual path. It's not a kind of masochism that I'm advocating, but it's a reality that we are often asked or given crosses to carry. The cross might be an illness which has incapacitated you, might be a shortage of money, it might be that you have to look after someone for a period of time, it might be that you have to look after someone for many years, like a child or a partner or parent, it might be the experience of a great tragedy in your life, a tragic loss which you have to carry on your back. When we do carry such a burden, there is a very special spiritual quality which emerges into our personality, and that is the quality of dignity. It is very close to majesty. So whatever circumstances you are being burdened by, and you are bent over with it, you can carry this burden with dignity. Christ showed us the way in that image. Of course Christ could have said: I'm not carrying this cross, and thrown it down, but that was not what was needed. Christ knew that he had to carry his own cross.

And yet, Christ stumbles several times with the cross. In one of those stations where Christ stumbles, he is helped, I think it is Simon who comes forward to help him, to carry the cross with him or for him. Perhaps the lesson for us is that, yes, we all have our own cross to bear, but that doesn't mean to say that we must never give it up if someone offers to help. We mustn't become attached to the burden. That way you create a prison for yourself. When people offer to help you, and you say: "No, no, I must do it myself", you deprive other people of the opportunity of helping and of gaining some kind of meaning in helping you. On the one hand, we have our own cross to bear, but also, we must not be too proud to allow others to come to help.

The other time that Christ fell seems to give us the message that no matter who you are, you are not perfect. Even though you have been given a burden to carry, you are allowed to fall. Even if you are a leader or responsible for a family, you can make mistakes, you can fall down. If Christ fell down, we can fall down too. Accept our fallibility and not blame or criticize ourselves, it's part of the process. It can develop a very genuine humility in us.

And then there is the station where Christ is carrying the cross and he stops to rest and the crowds all gather around, and there he meets the face of his mother Mary. He can't really speak with her, and neither can she speak with him. So you can imagine the anguish of that moment, when the mother sees her son being crucified, and Christ can see his mother suffering too. One can imagine that what Christ was able to experience in that moment was refuge in his mother's eyes. One can imagine Mary not being so selfish that she was just in anguish, but her soul was able to provide a space in her glance, what we call the glance of compassion. And we can do that for others. Sometimes when there seems to be nothing practical that you can do to help someone who is suffering, there are no words that you can offer that would be adequate, but you can offer a space in your heart through your glance, and that provides a kind of a resting place for that soul. Sometimes it's not through words or actions, but it's just in that moment your heart can open, you can feel their suffering, and you can provide a space for their suffering in you. Sometimes that is all that is necessary, because after all, if the spiritual life is what is most important, then the material help is secondary. If you can provide that spiritual help through your glance, then sometimes that is what is most important. The way of looking at a person, the way of listening to them in which they feel heard and understood, and they feel they can rest their feelings with you.

Then there is another station where Christ also meets Veronica. She of course instead of being in the role of Mary comes rushing forward and wants to somehow help Christ, and she wipes Christ's face with a cloth. Christ looks down into the cloth and sees not just his face, but a mirror of the suffering that he is working through. Perhaps we can understand that, when one is tested to such a limit or even beyond one's limit, you lose yourself, you become confused, you lose sight of what is happening. That's when someone can show you, like a mirror, what it is that you are working through in your struggle, and the nobility of your struggle. How you are doing your very best to struggle with these problems. That's what you can do for others, you can't always solve their problems for them, but sometimes you can show them what their soul is working through, and that helps to give their soul a sense of clarity, a sense of what's happening and where they might move forward to.

The procession carried on after this, and you imagine the situation where thousands of people are there, it's hot, it's dusty, people are shouting, cursing at you, calling for you to be crucified, and you might even recognize some faces there who supposedly were your supporters, and now cursing you. One feels betrayed. But what Christ did was to say: *Oh Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This is a great teaching for us. When people do something to you that is hurtful or aggressive or distasteful, just remember those words. There were times perhaps in your lives when you lashed out at other people and you did not know or were not fully conscious of what you were doing. That way we avoid the path of conflict.

Then Christ was nailed to the cross. One thinks of this station as one where Christ is unable to move. Sometimes there are situations in our life in which we can't find any direction to move in. We can find no refuge, no matter where we look or where we go, and in this way we feel nailed to the cross or crucified. But one can imagine that what Christ did was to find a space inside, turn within. That seems to be the lesson of this station, that yes, there are times in which you can't find any rest or refuge anywhere, and the only space you have in the midst of all this chaos and torture is to turn within. It's a very important spiritual step, to learn to turn within, not just as a meditation exercise, but to be able to practice that in life. So you don't pay attention to what is happening around you, you simply take that resting place by turning within.

And then Christ was lifted up and left there on the cross to die. This station gives us a teaching that there is a time for things to pass, to be ended. And Christ accepted that. So can we in the same way accept the ending of things? Whether it's the end of this life, or the end of a relationship, the end of the life of someone whom you love. It might be the end your life or the ending of being active in your life. Can you let go of the old way? Experience that ending and mourn and grieve that ending, and also open your heart, like a door, to that which is to resurrect. Allow the new to come in. It's like a passage, going from one room through a doorway into another room, or from one world to another. Can you allow that? That's probably the greatest lesson in life, transition.

And then Christ was taken down from the cross and his body was lovingly wrapped and carried to the cave or tomb where he was to be buried, to be his resting place. But that was not the end of the story. It seemed a moment of great sadness, like an ending, a tragic ending, and yet the lesson for us is that you cannot judge things by what you see. Because, as you know, Mary Magdalene came back to the tomb and saw that the huge stone that had been used to cover up the cave was rolled back or moved away. And what's more, Christ then appears to her in a vision. That seems significant, that Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary, did not discover him in this way. It was Mary Magdalene, who we call the red Mary. The Virgin Mary is called the blue Mary. The red Mary could symbolize, in alchemical terms, the resurrection as descent of spirit into life. Having died to oneself, one resurrects in life. Mary Magdalene was the first one that Christ appeared to. Why not to his mother or to the disciples, why to Mary Magdalene? It's a very interesting question. I think it's because it had a great symbolic significance. The spirit that re-enters life is a kind of more feminine spirituality, it's to do with the form and the body.

That gives us the clue as to the meaning of suffering: it leads to resurrection. Suffering breaks our heart and it opens our heart. Once the heart opens, then we experience the spirit that lies within it.

The *dhikr* of the Broken Heart

Perhaps we can now work with a Sufi practice that embodies this, called the *dhikr* of the broken heart. This *dhikr* has the same words as the second *dhikr*, *illa 'llah Hu*, but the difference is, instead of bowing you turn your head to the physical heart, downwards and to the left breast, which is the *Qalb*, as you say *illa*. Then you turn your head to the center of the heart, the *Sirr*, saying 'llah, and then you say *Hu* through the heart. Let's do this for a few minutes together, it's a good practice for you to work with on your own. The way you do the practice is, you start with your own personal suffering, feelings that you feel in your life that are difficult, and then you progress to begin to incorporate the feelings of other people as well. For example sufferings of groups of people around the planet. The heart starts to feel

not just your personal suffering, but the suffering of humanity. This is the *dhikr* of the broken heart. It helps to open the heart so that the spirit can pour into life.

Practice: *illa 'Ilah Hu*

Now do it in your own time.

It is best if you could carry on with this on your own, either here in the tent or perhaps in a quiet spot by yourself. It's a very important practice. Otherwise if one remains in a high state and then suddenly comes off retreat, you come crashing down. You have no capacity to hold that spiritual attunement in life. The way to overcome that is to go through this experience of opening the heart through the feelings. At first it's difficult, but gradually, as the feelings become more universal and bigger and bigger, slowly you begin to experience that sense of resurrection. The spirit can then come into life and **be in life, but not be of life**. So take as much time as you need, because that can't be hurried, can't be done quickly. And when you feel ready, return to the tent here, Pir Zia will be here at 4.30pm.

Saturday, 7 August 2004

Hahut

In *Hahut*, we open up to the **transcendental consciousness**, the crown center opens up and we go through different experiences of light.

Hahut really begins in *Lahut*. In the sixth plane experience, when we go through the **white** mind, as the experience is called by the Buddhists, streams of light are coming down, it's like a hail. Not like snow, which comes down very gently. Then comes what the Buddhists call the void and what the Sufis call the ending of the sense of self, which is *fanâ*. It is an abrupt change, everything goes dark. The Sufis call it the **black** light; for the Buddhists it's the black mind. It's your first experience of the black light. Remember the black light is the light of *Nur*, divine light. You can't see that light, you are not ready yet, so it appears black. It will reappear again and again and again, until you reach a certain point.

From the black light then suddenly **all the colors** start to differentiate out. The light that appears becomes **red**, then **red-orange**, and then becomes **yellow**. The Buddhists call this yellow mind. At this stage then **clear blue** light comes through. It's the beginnings of what the Buddhists call the clear light. For the Sufis it's a state in which you really see all the landscapes very clearly and the beings of the landscapes, and experience *Jabarut*. I know this is confusing for you, but this is now the transcendental, *Hahut*. The moment you experience the black light, it's *Hahut*. In *Hahut* you can experience *Jabarut* and all the other states, because *Hahut* has everything. It's not a level of consciousness, it has all the levels in it.

So you get the black light and then the red, red-orange, yellow, then the blue light and you start to see the planes and you are going through from *Nasut* all the way through to *Hahut*. And then comes the **green** light (not the emerald green light); until you reach the green light, you can't be absolutely sure that your consciousness is stabilized in *Hahut*. However, this green light is not the ultimate green light. The ultimate green light is emerald green, which is in the heart.

So from green one goes to **magenta**, kind of a mixture between pink and red and white, a very beautiful light, and you can see it actually when you see a sunset, in the clouds. There are two forms of this, one is the beautiful magenta light, that's what the Sufis call the light of beauty. It's a feminine light, and when you experience that, you really understand the essence of the feminine, because the feeling and the consciousness of beauty and love are all there in their purest aspect. The other kind of light you see at this stage, which is related to magenta, is a **deep purple** light. This is quite an imposing light, like you are faced with Mount Everest, it's huge, very powerful. The Sufis talk of *Qadir* and *Qahhar* and so on. You can see where those qualities come from. This is called the light of majesty. It's a more masculine kind of light, that's why men think they have to be in charge. That's a kind of inflated state, because actually **we have both in us, majesty and beauty**. But you can see where men get that from, you see where authority comes from. In some ways it's almost a frightening light, it's so powerful. So that's the light of majesty.

And then comes **the ultimate light, which is emerald green**. The Zoroastrians called that light *smaragdina*, Avicenna spoke of the *visio smaragdina*. That is the dawning of the ultimate light of your being. It's what the alchemists speak of as the *tabula smaragdina*, the emerald green tablet of Hermes, from which we get the word hermetic wisdom. Once this emerald green light appears, you can breathe a sigh of relief, not just because you've reached the top of the mountain, which is a bit disappointing because there is nowhere to go, you have to go down again, the real reason why it's a relief is because there is no more black light. The experience of the black light is the experience of the void, it's like being lost, empty. One does not have this experience any more, the green light stays, it's permanent. You don't get any more lights. That is the green light of the heart that the Sufis speak about.

Sometimes they speak of the golden light in the heart, which is the light of the sun, and that comes in the fourth plane, in *Malakut*. It also comes again in *Hahut* where it's the yellow light, which sometimes becomes golden; it is very powerful, the light of the sun, the light of spirit. Yellow is the earthly manifestation of it, the earth level in *Hahut* (*Hahut* has all colors and all levels). Sometimes spiritual schools teach people to meditate on the green light, but in fact, from what I described to you, the heart could take on either one of those lights, in fact it really can take on any light. It depends on the condition that you are in. Remember you have to be quite flexible, you can't say: the heart chakra always has this light, the throat chakra always has that light, that's just a map.

So that's what I wanted to share with you this morning, in terms of *Hahut*.

Ending the Retreat

Yesterday, in order to complete the retreat, Pir Zia gave us *ya Fattah*; that's very important, a very good practice to finish retreat. It is also helpful to do the *dhikr* of self-acceptance and that's the first practice we do together for a few minutes.

The *dhikr* of Self-Acceptance

You can do this with the words of the *dhikr* or without the words. It comprises two aspects. One is the highest possible consciousness in you, which you long to experience, and then there is the lowest possible consciousness in you. From the crown center to the base chakra. The two must meet, they must not be separate. When they are separate, that's when we are split in ourselves. You flip from dark to light and back. It's most important, they need each

other, *the highest in you can transform the lowest, and the lowest in you can provide the material for the incarnation of the highest in you.* So let's spend a few minutes doing that. It's a very good practice when you come off retreat.

Practice: *La ilaha illa 'llah Hu*

Amen.

Remembering

Now the final practice you can do as a meditation or as a silent *dhikr*. You cast your memory back over the retreat, you ask yourself what is the most important experience that you wish to incorporate and take with you into life. And remember that experience. You can do the movement of the *dhikr* if you like, be present through all four parts of the *dhikr*.

Practice: remembering

Now of these two practices, the latter one is the more important. This is the one that you need to do every day. Remember and tune in to the experience of that which was most important to you. You don't conceptualize it, you don't just have it as a memory, but you re-experience it every day. That coagulates the experience and makes it real. It takes some time for that to be coagulated.

Invocation

So let's end with the invocation.

*Toward the One,
the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being,
United with all the Illuminated Souls,
Who form the Embodiment of the Master,
the Spirit of Guidance.*

I'd like to thank you all for your participation, your dedication and your presence. I'd like to thank Fravarti from the bottom of my heart for all the dedication and the translation.

[Four *ya Fattah* for Nigel.]

I just want to say, we have a wonderful new Pir, who will become a great Pir. So let us follow him. God bless you all.

Transcription and titles by Ursina Fried-Turnes