

VARIATIONS ON A THEME:

Volume I

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

EXCERPTS FROM THE TEACHINGS

of

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

## Introduction

Each volume in this series consists of a compilation of sayings that are related to a particular theme in the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan. While all volumes include sayings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, some will include sayings of other Sufis. With regards to this first volume, all sayings come from Hazrat Inayat Khan.

This series is not a scholarly compendium intended for analysis, it is intended as a aid to contemplation for committed practitioners. Indeed, some of these sayings may make no sense except to one who is engaged in Sufi practice. A saying was included in this series because it found a home in my own personal practice.

Some sayings may seem unrelated to the central theme; nonetheless, each saying plays its part. Moreover, although each volume can be read through at one time, its intended use is for you, the Sufi practitioner, to contemplate a particular saying, whichever one seems to have the most pull at the moment, and to feel the reality to which the saying points.

This series is designed for easy reading during times of contemplation. Reading an entire volume might take less than five minutes; realizing the depth of one saying may be the work of many years of practice.

Habibullah Rogers  
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What is the soul? If there is any explanation that can be given of the soul, it is the feeling of "I am." The feeling of one's existence, this is the soul; that part of one's being which feels that one exists.

That part which exists in one, or which makes one existent, that part which sees, conceives, perceives, and is conscious of all things and yet above all things is the soul.

The soul is the real life. We say of one who moves and sees and hears and acts that he is a living being, but what is living in him is the soul.

The soul is alive; it is the spirit of the eternal Being, and it has no death. It is everlasting.

The soul has no birth, no death, no beginning, no end. Sin cannot touch it, nor can virtue exalt it. Wisdom cannot open it, nor can ignorance darken it. It has always been and always will be. This is one's very being and all else is a cover, like a globe over the light.

The soul in itself alone is no other than consciousness, which is all pervading. But when the same consciousness is caught in a limitation through being surrounded by elements, in that state of captivity it is called soul.

The soul is free by nature, and looks for freedom during its captivity.

Every experience on the physical or astral plane is just a dream before the soul.

What is consciousness? Consciousness is the wakeful state of the knowing faculty.

What is knowledge? Knowledge is the impression of something which consciousness holds before its vision.

What is intelligence? Intelligence is the grasping faculty of consciousness, which through every means recognizes, distinguishes, perceives and conceives all that is around and about it.

The soul sees but is not seen.

What we are conscious of is something that is before us. We are not that. We are the being who is conscious, not that which we are conscious of.

The soul may be considered to be a condition of God, a condition which makes the Only Being limited for a time.

Whatever the soul experiences, that it believes itself to be. If the soul sees the external self as a baby it believes: I am a baby. If it sees the external self as old it believes: I am old. If it sees the external self in a palace it believes: I am rich. If it sees that self in a hut it believes: I am poor. But in reality it is only: I am.

I realized that that in me which believed and that in me which wondered, that which persevered in me, and that which was found at last, was no other than my soul.

The soul itself is Truth.

The soul is intelligence itself.

The soul itself is God.

It has been asked of the sages and thinkers of all times by the seekers of truth that they should explain the meaning of the word 'soul'. Some have tried to explain it and some have given answers which are difficult for everyone to understand. About the meaning of the word soul many statements of thinkers differ, though all mystics arrive at the same understanding of the idea of the soul. As the air, by being caught in water, becomes a bubble for the moment, and as the waves of the air, being caught in a hollow vessel, become a sound, so Intelligence, being caught by the mind and body, becomes the soul. Therefore, intelligence and the soul are not two things. It is only a condition of the intelligence which is the soul. The intelligence in its original aspect is the essence of life, the spirit, or God. But when this intelligence is caught in an accommodation such as body and mind, its original nature of knowing then knows, and that knowing intelligence becomes consciousness.

There is another word 'sole' in the English language, which means one or single; although different in spelling, yet it is expressive of the same idea, namely, that the soul is that part of our being in which we realize ourselves to be one single being. When one thinks of the body, it has many organs; when one thinks of the mind, it has various thoughts; when one thinks of the heart, it has many feelings; but when one thinks of soul in the right sense of the word, it is one single being; it is above division, and therefore it is the soul which really can be called the individual.