

What The Qadiria of Sheikh Hamza Means To Me

America is full of spiritual groups, paths and teachers, each representing or claiming that they hold one of or even “the” key to spiritual development. Some of these groups have “Sufi” associations or roots. My journey towards the One has included a sincere exploration of many of these different paths. It started with self help/self development groups, moved thru three different Gurdjieff schools, Buddhist meditation, Christian esoteric teachings, two lines of Sikhs and three Sufi orders until finally, after more than twenty years of embracing and turning away, my heart came to rest with the Qadiria. *“Then the seeker says “ If I had known the real way it was I would have stopped all that looking around”. But that knowing depends on the time spent looking.”*

Along this way I learned many things about my self, my illusions and my individual and often transitory “realities”. Skills were learned, especially those of self-observation without judgment and a working knowledge of human psychology as to how it relates to the various delusions, programmings and conditionings which help us to maintain our “sleep”. I have been blessed to be in the company of many beautiful souls, each on their unique journey. I was witness, often intimately, to the many forms of sufferings they underwent, both necessary and unnecessary, voluntary and involuntary, as they tried to make sense of their yearning for something beyond this mechanical life, as they tried to understand, penetrate and deconstruct their illusions and their imaginary pictures of themselves so that they could answer their calls in the cleanest and most reverent way possible.

One of the clearest lessons I learned while traveling these many paths was the essential need for the development of spiritual discrimination. Each time I began a new path, I had new hope in the group or in the “Teacher”; hope that they really knew the way. I found that many knew pieces of the way, but inevitably, as my knowledge of the forms and the details of their teachings and behaviors were revealed, these groups and teachers, fell to the whisperings of their nafs (egos), as of course have I so very many times. The “Teachers” most often fell victims to the nafs of power, money or sexual temptations. Some had felt that they were chosen by someone who had a real permission to select them to guide others and some were self-selected. All were of good

intention at their beginnings but fell into the trap of believing their whims, or worse, believing their whims came from Divine guidance. Some tried to remain humble and lost that battle to the corrosive effect of the long term admiration or deference of others. (What I have heard referred to as the “Leadership Disease”). *“Ignorant men are the soul’s enemy. Shatter the jar of smug words. Cling for life to those who know”.*

Within the groups, this decline or dead-end-ness, usually manifested as some degree of enslavement to their forms, either as they were currently constructed or by adherence to a non-evolving, non-living codification of their understanding of the teaching of their founders. Although many of these teaching may originally have sprung from some degree of conscious knowledge, (as opposed to being created completely from the human mind), without living guidance they had become mechanical in their manifestations, captured by Dunya (Samsara, Maya) and filtered and limited through the incomplete or erroneous understandings of their successors and followers. *“When the Ocean’s searching for you, don’t walk to the language river. Listen to the Ocean, and bring your talky business to an end.”*

As for many of the followers, it seemed that they , and I, were fed by certain of the group’s nafs or illusions. In the US and I’m sure elsewhere, the serious and consistent efforts needed to attain real spiritual knowledge or to attain real spiritual development are often diluted with other ideas or concepts that reduce or eliminate the spiritual standards and safeguards of the original discipline, path or teaching. This is almost guaranteed when those of lower understanding undertake to transmit higher knowledge. This dilution is often justified on the part of those committing the dilution or adulteration as trying to make it “easier” for the followers to stay and benefit, or more ominously, to keep those followers there so that the group does not lose their financial or energetic support. These methods of keeping people attached to the group often include providing them with titles and positions that help to create and maintain the illusion of spiritual progress. *“A calf thinks that God is a cow. A donkey’s theology changes when someone new pets it and gives it what it wants.”* Another technique of appealing to the nafs is by claiming that the members are special or chosen from “ordinary” society and are on some divinely inspired mission such as “healing”, etc. Still yet another manifestation in certain groups is the fostering in the mentation of each member an uncritical and indiscriminate spiritual

imagination (also called woo-woo). This is the inner illusion that gives us self-permission to dream up all kinds of undisciplined, self-calming, and nebulous spiritual standards, ideas or permissions that in the end can provide nothing except more sleep. *“No matter how subtle the sleeper’s thoughts becomes, his dreams will not guide him Home. The sleeper’s thought is only the twofold or threefold multiplying of error.”*

The great tragedy and sadness here is that many people in these groups who possess a sincere yearning but a weak or undeveloped discrimination or a trusting naiveté are led permanently astray. Some would argue that this is their lawful fate and perhaps it is, but I believe that an especially stern karmic displeasure awaits those “teachers” and title seekers who actively and intentionally lead their brothers and sisters into the spiritual wilderness by whatever means or with whatever justifications, who cast the precious coins of their follower’s Yearning into the abyss of self love, personal power, gain and deception. *“When you stand before the Judge, the delicacy of the excuse is not taken into account”.*

What do many of the limited and incomplete thoughts and experiences shared above have to do with my relationship to the Qadiriya? For me it is as much about what I did not find here as about what I have found. I did not find a self-selected teacher (Sheikh) here but a man who is performing conscious labor only for the sake of God and the serving of the future. I did not find a man selling more illusions or seeking votes, but a man who is dedicated to working for, and through a permitted means, only for what he has Divine permission to work for. I did not find brothers and sisters who were interested in feeding my nafs but those who would make any sacrifice to be the true servants of my soul’s flowering. *“Look carefully around you and recognize the luminosity of souls. Sit beside those who draw you to that”.* I did not find titles and positions, but a running away from titles and positions. I did not find a structure and culture that enabled me to sustain my illusions and my separation from the face and knowledge of the Divine in exchange for a false, self-satisfied peace. *“Pray for a tough instructor to hear and act and stay within you. We have been busy accumulating solace. Make us afraid of how we were.”* I found a structure and culture that ceaselessly and relentlessly, with love, fire, and compassion for the pain of my separation and confusion, seeks to encourage me, to guide me and to help me

remove the illusions that veil me from my Beloved. *“When you are with you, He veils you from Him and when you are with Him, he veils you from you.”*

With the Qadiria, under the guidance, guardianship and unconditional love of Sidi Hamza, I have finally found a crucible of companionship with kindred souls who want to Work. *“Desperation, let me always know how to welcome you, and put in your hands the torch to burn down the house”*. I found souls who want the Divine more than they want themselves or this world. *“I would love to kiss you. The price of kissing you is my life. Now my loving is running toward my life shouting, what a bargain, let’s buy it”!*

Alhamdulillah, with His Grace, my journey has truly begun.