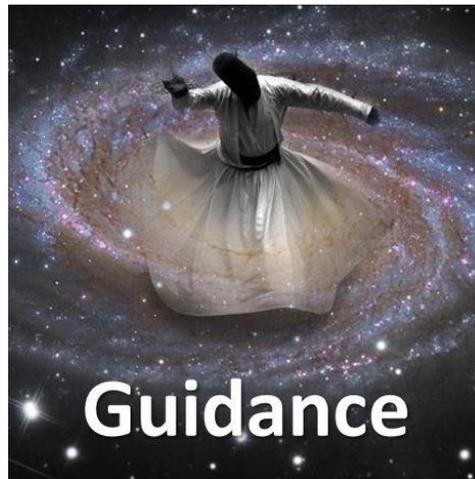


# The Traveler Within



## Following Our Inner Sacred Guide

*“Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.”*

*– Rumi*

The Sufi Poet and Whirling Dervish, Rumi knew the value of guidance from within, the practice of leading ourselves into our inner terrain in order to better navigate our outer world. While self-guidance is something most wise life travelers have cultivated through trusting their own instincts and using common sense, Rumi eludes to a deeper, more sacred guidance called the “pull of love” which we will explore in this week’s post.

Let’s begin by clarifying the difference between what we “love” and what we “prefer.” Preferences are based on our personal wants, desires and comforts. But this is not love, for acts of love often require stretching beyond our comfort zone and engaging in choices we may not prefer, yet are vitally needed for us or others. Those who succumb to their preferences without exercising wise discernment eventually lead themselves down the dark alley of entitlement, excess and addiction.

Next let’s explore the nature of “love” itself. Because love flourishes in many ways, following a pull that is consistently trustworthy can be challenging. Fortunately one of Rumi’s greatest influences, the philosophers of ancient Greece identified four specific kinds of love we can evaluate. They are “Eros,” “Storge,” “Phileo,” and “Agape.”

There’s no question the first form of love, “Eros,” or romantic love is not the most reliable. While wonderful, romance is all-consuming and can blind us from seeing reality clearly. It’s also conditional in the sense that when the romance period is over what the lover’s loved about one another they begin to disagree about and argue over.

The second form of love is “Storge,” or family love. This is the love parents feel for their children and siblings and relatives feel for one another. This form of love can also lead us astray because it carries within it the dynamic of obligation, doing for others at the expense of ourselves, or its antithesis of feeling entitled or privileged “because we’re family.”

The third form of love is “Phileo,” or platonic love. This is a committed love developed over time for a chosen person or persons. While more consist it still cannot be fully trusted because its nature is exclusive in that the freedom we need to act upon “what we truly love” gets trumped by our desire to sustain our chosen love or loves. An example is the dilemma one experiences when facing the decision to move far away or abroad and leave lifelong friends behind, or remaining close to them and denying the pull to explore new life adventures and horizons.

The last form of love is “Agape,” or unconditional love. It’s a spiritual love many strive to feel for themselves and share with their fellow human beings. Agape love is a sacred pull arising from the heart of acceptance, surrender, devotion and gratitude. It’s a “selfless” kind of love that gives freely and expects nothing in return. This is the pull of love I believe Rumi whirls around and is pointing to.

Allow me to share an example of Agape love. Years ago while we were traveling through India, one of my colleagues, Michaela happened to meet Mother Theresa on the streets of Calcutta. Mother had a way of enlisting volunteers and Michaela soon found herself in a makeshift hospital caring for infants, adults and seniors who were in various stages of death and dying. Before leaving Michaela to the service work, Mother Theresa gave her a bucket of soapy water, a pair of rubber gloves and pointed to all the bodies lying on the concrete floor and said these exact words. **“Now Michaela, your job is to not just to tend to the dying, it’s to make sure that the last face they ever see is the face of love.”** Michaela did exactly that for three days as person after person died in her arms. The pull of Agape love she honored and followed in those three days changed her life forever.

Upon relieving Michaela and parting Mother Theresa told her to go back to America and ask everyone she met and knew to show the face of love everyday of their lives. So from Mother Theresa, to Michaela, to me, and now to you . . . you have the blessing and the request of a Saint to guide you to your own pull of Agape love, a sacred guide within you that will never lead you astray.



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