

Considered by many, a great master and example of kindness and detachment, Adnan Sarhan is President and founder of the Sufi Foundation of America. In his workshops he employs a series of techniques that make his method somewhat unique in the world, where participants directly experience present moment awareness and the unity of consciousness.

Adnan answered the following questions for Spanish journalist Gloria Garrido, in January 2009.

Q1: In your workshop, you guide your participants so they connect with the spirit and experience moments of bliss and ecstasy. How did your method develop? Is it inspired from some other source, or from your own experiences, beyond the Sufi tradition where it originated?

A1: I inherited the method and technique of the Sufis. Since I was very little I was inclined toward spirit and inner knowledge. And I lead children in different activities and play. In grammar school, teachers put me in charge of leadership and to lead different activities. I was doing the same in high school and I was active in sports, so I was always in a position of teaching. And that has continued until now. I taught all kinds of ages. The youngest: 5 months old. And the oldest: 95. And now I teach all over the United States, Europe, the Middle East and South America.

Spirit, according to the Sufis, is the inner development of the being that has to do with the intelligence of the heart. The intelligence of the heart is different from the intellect in the head. The intellect in the head is connected with anxiety, tension, conflict, problems, violence, destruction and wars. The intelligence of the heart deals with the positive aspect, the positive force that will not recognize anything negative. The intelligence of the heart originates the power of love.

Q2: Do we truly go through life sleeping, as if in a dream, conditioned by our culture, parents, thoughts, emotions, desires and habits? Is there a way to wake up, to escape this collective hypnotic state? How were you able to wake up?

A2: You have to want to be awake. You have to have the desire. In general, people are not much different than fish in a sea of darkness. The sun may be bright, but by not knowing themselves, people's being and heart become dark. Many people love it – being in darkness. And that is why they love to go to dingy bars and contemplate the light of the candle and drift in their romantic thoughts. If they wake up, they will never like to sleep again.

There are two kinds of heart. One is the physical heart that everyone knows and the second is the spiritual heart. So also there are two souls. One is the animal soul and the other is the spiritual soul. The spiritual heart and spiritual soul are made of a different entity. They do not belong to this world or this body. The animal soul is responsible for giving power to the senses and desires. People who are involved in the senses, desires and lust degenerate into an inferior state of humanity. If they awake, they are able to transmute their lower faculties to a higher place where they can make life a pleasure and joy where one is constantly in a state of expansion and joy.

Q3: It is said that the Sufi path may not be undertaken without the guidance of a master. Why is the master so important? Can't you achieve the end result by yourself?

A3: There has to be a master. To have masterful carpentry, you need a master carpenter. Jesus was a master carpenter who made good furniture because of his spirit and creative power. A person could achieve what they want spiritually without a master if they have discipline, persistence and devotion to go straight on the path. You cannot get lost on a straight path. Practicality and action are the inner dimension of achievement. There is no knowledge without action, since knowledge is the product of action and action brings knowledge forward and makes it useable. This has to be done through the blessing of action, so action and knowledge are inseparable, like the light of the sun and the sun itself. Knowledge without practice is like a body without spirit.

Q4: There are many people who, after attending just one of your workshops, experience a radical change in their lives, leaving behind negative habits and thoughts. To what do you attribute these transformations?

A4: Intense concentration in the being. Through the power of concentration, the power of the spirit awakens through purification. People have habits because they want to be content and happy. So they go the wrong way, seeking contentment by artificial means. They might get a little contentment, but they become miserable afterwards. People rejoice in their own destruction. There is something in people that makes them destroy themselves, and that is when the ego is in command, and they become a slave to the ego. This is the worst kind of slavery that ever existed. And people think they are free in what they want to do, and that they are "happy" without realizing the control the ego has on them. You are not free until you recognize your bondages. When the spirit awakens people, spirit is contentment – contentment, peace and satisfaction. So they are seeking contentment when it is within themselves. When this happens, all their habits, conditioning and addictions completely

fall apart and never come back. When the self becomes the true self, it rises in the world of time and space and is no more controlled by the demand of the ego. And that is the highest of peace and contentment.

Q5: Your drumming sessions are renowned because your audiences enter into a kind of dreamlike state or trance, which you call a healing state. Could you tell us what happens at the physical and mental levels when people are in this state?

A5: The drumming effects the mind and body like an inner massage for the brain and mind, leading to a state of peace and tranquility. The mind influences the body, the body influences the mind. Together they enter into a state of ecstasy unknown before. Each time the audience listens to the drumming, when the drumming is highly developed, even on a CD, they go into multi-layered ecstasies. This happens because when I drum, through the power of concentration on the sound, I can break a single sound into two sounds, and two sounds into four, and keep multiplying. This creates a range of sound, vibration and rhythm that operate together as a wavelength. The mind stands no chance of evading the rhythm, and falls into intricate waves of dreamlike joy so that all the negative thoughts, problems and tension leave the mind and the body. The intensity of concentration and the depth of the rhythm bring about another dimension of existence coming from the world of spirit.

Q6: You regularly define Sufism as a way to purify the body and soul. Do you think anyone can follow this path, or are the purification requirements too demanding for some people?

A6: The Qurhan says, “Nothing for a man except what he strives for.” If you desire the spirit, you will get it. If you desire to do ice-skating, you will get it. Life is all desires but you have to pick the real ones. People are imprisoned in a body of clay and water. They are entangled in the senses, which constitute a veil that hides the vision of God. If they want to know God, they have to lift up the veil. The veil could be easy to lift, or as difficult as an iron wall. Purity of the heart, mind, body and thought manifests because it is waiting just beyond the body with which we identify so much. Purity will come to you and fill you. Some of the practices that make this easier are abstinence and austerity. Without them, you will never know what purity is. You will remain in a polluted body and in ignorance when it comes to spirit and the spirit will be far away as if on another planet.

Q7: In your workshops, you teach the recitation of the names of God in Arabic, as well as verses from the Qurhan. However, the Sufi Foundation of America isn't

formally Islamic. Is it possible to be a Sufi without being a Muslim? What do you think of religions in general?

A7: Religions are laws from God to people. All religions are good when they help people and their neighbors and teach them not to infringe on the rights of others, to seek peace and to be happy and bring happiness to others. Then humanity lives in an excellent way, without strife and toil. God wishes your comfort, not your discomfort. The tradition of the Sufis and the Sufi masters is to work with all kinds of people, without distinction of religion, nationality, color, etc. Sufis seek to bring perfection to all human beings, so they can awake and experience the spirit. Then brotherhood and sisterhood are their states of existence, and that is much better than strife and opposition to one another. People become real human beings then, and peace will fill them and fill their surroundings. This is the ideal way, what human beings should be like.

Q8: At the end of your workshops, you usually say that in the state reached, it's impossible to have negative thoughts. How long does this effect last? What's the formula for prolonging this state?

A8: It lasts as long as you want. When people are in the moment, they fall in a state wakefulness. When people are in the moment they experience the spirit. The moment and the spirit do not recognize anything negative, so it's possible to maintain that state by practice. And the practice that you do brings harmony to your life every day, and you will not fall into darkness, negative thought, debilitating states, states of complaining, hatefulness, and misery. These all can be eradicated, and you could live as God intends you to. Taking action is very important. It is more fun to dance, do sports or any activity rather than being lazy and not active. Dance is generated from the heart. When this occurs, dance brings spirit and peace. Dance is the yearning of the soul for freedom.

Q9: Is there still time for humanity to learn to live fully, in harmony and beauty, or is that battle already lost? What's really necessary or unnecessary for such an existence?

A9: To live in peace is much better than to live in misery. In a way, people used to live better in Europe before the industrial revolution. Then they thought utopia would come with the industrial revolution. Technology and industry are excellent if the spirit is the foundation, but when there is no spiritual root, then what we call Western civilization is a phony civilization: violent, aggressive, destroying and killing innocent people. This will not change until the spirit becomes part of civilization. Otherwise, greed, hate,

jealousy, aggression, and so on play havoc with people. Fear and fright become the everyday occupation of our minds and we are strangers to ourselves and everyone else. Do you call that civilization? People are numbing themselves with drugs, alcohol and consuming material things so much that they are consumed themselves. I hope the new generations will be able to turn this situation around and bring real humanity back where life is worth living.

It is possible to know God through inner knowledge and God is not accessible through any form of religion. Islam is the final religion of 124,000 religions and Islam has the extract of all these religions. Sufism is the inner knowledge of Islam. Sufism is a developing entity and not a system for reproducing forms. If you control your body, and don't let your body control you, you will be a superior human being. Follow your lower desires, and you will be an inferior human being. Superior human beings are in a wakeful state. Inferior human beings are in a darkened state. God does not change people until they change themselves. A human being is not a sinful creature but a forgetful creature. If you forget, you have to remember not to forget. If you think you are sinful, you will feel guilty, and if you feel guilty you cannot progress, neither in life nor in spirit. If you don't guard your intellect with your intellect from your intellect, you will be destroyed by your intellect. If you do anything that will not take you to God, it can only take you to destruction. If you are too serious about doing spiritual work, you will get sick. It is important to put some play in between.