

Susana: During your summer workshop, your work is very Tantric in that it offers many types of practices that are included in classical Tantra including chanting and meditation. What does Tantra mean to you?

Adnan: Tantra is the art of living and how to make life spontaneous through a balance of all the centers to bring about an evolved human being, one that feels in unity in the self and in the environment and is able to understand the relationship with the depth that comes from the heart.

Susana: The food served is typically very light (though occasionally Mid-eastern feasts are prepared). You also recommend fasting to many people. What is the relationship between food and the Work?

Adnan: Food is a conditioning that develops attachment. If you eat light, healthy food, you become light and healthy. If you eat heavy, unhealthy food, you become heavy, sluggish and easy to get sick. When you do spiritual work and do breathing exercises and breathe pure air, you will be able to get the same nutrition from the air as you get from food. The nutrition you get from the air brings higher development in the intelligence of the heart and it brings awareness to the intellect and the perceptions and brings sensitivity to the being, and improves your health by leaps and bounds.

If you do spiritual work and you eat like a fiend, you will regress by leaps and bounds as far as the development is concerned. Fasting is recommended in the Middle East by all the spiritual masters and by all the prophets like Jesus, Moses, and Mohammed. As far as the Mid-Eastern feasts you mention, they consist of healthy and light food, too, like tabouli which is a mixture of different raw vegetables and bulgur (crushed wheat) with lemon and olive oil; hoummus, grape leaves and the like, We do not use oil in cooking the food except for preparing salads and that contributes to the well-being of the people in combination with the other activities of the work.

Susana: There are certain physical practices including push-ups, sit-ups, cobra, shoulder stand, headstand, rolling, etc. How do these fit into your program?

Adnan: Whatever fits is the best whether sit-ups, rolling, jumping, bouncing, shaking or diving from a bridge. Whatever exists in the universe could be used as a tool or instrument for higher development and in my work there is no separation between spirit and the ordinary life. The life is spirit and the spirit is life. If you separate them, you will be stuck on the side you are in and separation is diversion and gathering is unification and life is beautiful with spirit. A person without spirit is no more different than a goat.

Susana: Many times your workshops start with movement in which participants carefully follow your slow movements and breathing techniques. How does this help individuals move into meditative states?

Adnan: The slow movement and the breathing help the mind to slow down and to bring the mind closer and closer to the moment. It is only when you are in the moment and, that is the present, that you become alive, alert and pure from the negative, polluted thought. When you are pure, you are clean. The spirit is clean and the spirit does not like unpure mind. Clean mind will change all your being. Life and clean mind attract positive forces. Life is beautiful when you are positive. And life assumes a completely different prospect of existence when you are in the moment. God lives in the moment. If you get in the moment you will be in the house of God. And God will entertain you by showing you the dance of eternity that no one will know unless to be in the moment.

Susana: Chanting is one of the most powerful practices in Tantric traditions. You teach Islamic chants that are continued for up to forty-five minutes in a group or individually. Please comment on some of the important facets of chanting.

Adnan: Chanting represents vibration. Everything in the existence comes from vibration or goes to vibration. The meaning of a chant will attract and gather vibration that corresponds to that meaning. If a meaning of a chanting, for instance, is to be calm, relaxed and serene, then by repeating that chanting will be manifested as calmness, relaxation and serenity. All the positive aspects will lead to a higher inner development.

Susana: Your center is very beautiful, quiet, close to nature. Sometimes during the summer retreat, you send people out to find a place to chant, meditate, or sleep in the woods. What is our relationship to nature? How may we best communicate with the intelligence of nature?

Adnan: Our relationship to nature is that we are part of it and nature is like food for the souls. If you are isolated from nature, you lose the connection to that food and you become malnourished to the beauty, the charm, the serenity and the sheer joy in nature and you lose connection with the reality. Instead of being a natural human being, you become an artificial human being. Instead of having a beautiful, creative mind, you will have an ugly, mechanical mind. Nature makes you sensitive and when you lose connection with the nature, you lose your sensitivity. Nature gives you depth of love in the heart and when you are not in the nature, you will have a computer-giving love. The universe, space and nature are the sources of intelligence and if you do not communicate with them, you cut yourself from the source of intelligence. You will be like a bird who goes to someone with a scissors and asks him, "Please, cut my wings with your scissors." And the cat comes and eats him. So all the people who stay away from nature are birds without wings. All the work that they do and don't like is the cat. The work that they do and don't like is a different cat than the real cat. The real cat will eat the bird quickly, on the spot. But the work that they don't like is a cat that eats them slowly, slowly and will not eat them quickly to keep them as miserable, tortured and slaving to no purpose in life.

When I send people to sleep in the woods that is because they are saturated with the power of the inner work. By going in the woods to relax, to sit, to sleep and to breathe pure air, it helps them to assimilate the energy and to come out with a higher development and more evolved as a human being. Spiritual work is like a cycle: when it comes to the end of it, you cannot push it. You have to relax the situation until a new cycle initiates itself. The functioning by then is much more effective and complete. The timing is the determining factor

in the calculation of the negative and positive forces. The right timing lifts you to heaven; the wrong timing sinks you to darkness.

Susana: Many newcomers are surprised when participants lay down and sleep during the meditation periods. You let them “sleep” and call it the “sleep of a baby rabbit.” What happens during this sleep period while you continue to meditate?

Adnan: When you achieve the purpose of meditation in any short length of time, to sleep, if they have to, seems to me an excellent thing to do. It is just like if you have a gourmet dinner and you had your fill and you cannot eat anymore, so it makes no sense to keep eating — unless you are a member of the aristocratic hierarchy of the Roman ruling class. Then you could vomit and eat again. Then that is a valid thing to according to the rule they set. The only reason they sleep is because I take them to a height of spiritual development and consciousness raising that is unknown in the ordinary way of life. They are forced to sleep to recover from the overwhelming experience that has no limitation. It doesn't matter whether they sleep like a baby rabbit or a baby elephant. There is an expression that says “everything comes out in the wash” and the baby rabbit and the baby elephant come out clean and they dance together hand in hand.

Susana: To most Westerner, Belly Dancing is just an erotic dance form. You teach to both men and women in your workshops. Please elaborate on Belly Dancing as a purposeful spiritual practice.

Adnan: The belly dance is the wrong name for that dance. In the Middle East, we call that dance middle eastern dance or Arabian dance or oriental dance. The real reason behind it is the development of the spirit because this dance starts from the centering within you unlike ballroom dance, ballet dance or modern dance. All the being participates in that dance. It is the yearning of the spirit to freedom and so you are dancing from the spirit, for the spirit and with the spirit you become one. For all the people who do this dance and concentrate inwardly, immediate change and transformation takes place in their movements, and the face transforms to a new radiance and beauty that is inspired from the depth of spirit. Also, this dance is the most effective dance to bring poise, balance and coordination and beauty to the mind and body. You relate to the space as your partner in the dance and when you feel the depth of space, you will be in connection with the moment. The moment and the space are inseparable partners. When you get between them, the heaven will send to you a blessing. The heaven witnesses the dance of existence and existence is created from a dance. As long as there is existence, there will be dance in the creation, whether in the stars, the sun, the moon, there breeze, the clouds, the trees, the birds and all the creation. Even the little atom is in a state of dance. Without the dance, the world would fall in ruin. If you sit and never move, you will dissipate; and God creates you to move with all the joints in your body to facilitate that movement. If you don't breathe, you will die. To breathe, makes you alive and you will know life. There are limitless techniques of breathing that are equivalent to dancing. Breathing by itself is an elementary dance. People love to dance because it makes them feel better. When you learn to dance from within, then that dance becomes a higher development of spirit.

Susana: In the workroom, you play Mid-Eastern music with its scales and rhythms unfamiliar to the Western ear. How does Middle Eastern music help the listener into the experience of “the Moment?”

Adnan: Middle Eastern music is the oldest music in the world. It has developed over thousands of years. It is always associated with rhythm and the rhythm is essential to the dance. You could dance with a music that has no rhythm but it doesn't have the same effect. The rhythm in the Middle Eastern music puts you in the moment because rhythm and life corresponds to each other. A life without rhythm becomes a mechanical and artificial life. That is the nature of material life. It has no depth, no feeling, no love, no imagination. It is natural in the heart of a human being to connect with rhythm because the whole body of a human being is made of rhythm and rhythm has an affinity to rhythm. And life is beautiful with rhythm. Arabic music is the top in rhythm.

Susana: Many times you have participants dance for hours. How does dancing lead to higher spiritual states? What is the purpose of dancing blindfolded? Please clarify the difference between ecstatic dance and structured dance forms.

Adnan: There are many levels in the development of dance. While it is being done, you unfold inwardly to deeper and deeper states. The more this process takes place, automatically it reflects on the space around you in finding different levels in the reality. Dancing blindfolded is to bring about more power in the concentration to discover the secret hidden power within you through elaborated movement. The structured dance is no more than calisthenics or exercise in a gym, where you work with exercises as a chore without the inner development.

Susana: So much of your work concerns the body, including the physical practices, moving meditations, the dancing, etc. Why is it important to be “fully” in the body? Why is this preferable to the denial of the body common to some spiritual traditions?

Adnan: The soul can only experience the world when it is in the body. So the body is very essential for the soul, and a soul without the body would be stranded somewhere out there. The body is the vehicle of the soul. To have a good body is better than a weak body. To have a strong, healthy, slim, trim, perfect, toned muscle, and to be balanced, agile, quick, sharp and alert is better than to have a body weak, sick and infested with a host of diseases. If I am a soul, I will choose a body that is perfect rather than choose to be in a body that is falling apart. It is just a matter of common sense. If you have a choice between a Honda and a Model-T made in 1921, that runs slower than a turtle and requires an hour to start it with a crank, naturally you would choose the Honda, made in 1992 that is comfortable, cool and elaborately pleasant with a cassette tape player and a radio in stereo. In my work, there is no denial of the body but there is discipline and respect and to make the body beautiful. God is beautiful and God loves beautiful things and Mohammed said that God blesses the strong believer. The body comes from the earth and belongs to the earth. The spirit comes from heaven and belongs to heaven. But they are a companion and a partner as long as they are together so they might as well come to a good understanding between the two and make the best out of it. The body and the spirit, when they work together, accomplish a lot and create the complete or perfect human being. When you separate them, there will be conflict. Each one runs in a different

direction. They will be fighting against each other like a husband and wife in a divorce case: fighting in the courts about the furniture and the china dishes and Teflon pots and so on. The body could be disciplined and could learn to be educated and cultured to do the right thing. To control the mind you control the spirit. The mind comes to perfection when the mind controls the body, the whims, the desires, the ego, the negative self. The body will be under your command instead of you being under the command of the body. The mind will be happy and the body will be happy and the spirit will rejoice. The body will dance to entertain the spirit. The life will become beautiful and the life will become delight. To exist is a miracle and to live is an opportunity.

Susana: The work with the veils is both beautiful and subtle, like dancing with the etheric. What is spiritually achieved in through dance form experience?

Adnan: To dance with the veil and to make the dance and the veil look beautiful and romantic requires concentration and imagination, poise and balance, awareness and sensitivity. You have to work with the veil tenderly and to be gentle with it and to put yourself in the veil as if you are the veil and as if the veil is you. You blend into each other and you create a limitless movement and the veil becomes like a wind playing with the waves of the sea, when the waves rise and fall tenderly impressing the wind and they feel the coolness on their cheeks when the wind kisses them on the cheeks and they fall down to the sea with joy and delight and they rise a gain for another tempting kiss. Dancing with the veil will create vision after vision of imagination and flight to the depth of the reality where you are in an action meditation that knows nothing but the lushness and the living force of the moment. When you do justice to the veil, the veil will transcend to perfection. The veil symbolizes the many thousands of veils in the lives of the people of the world. The veil is a mystery and when you master the mystery of the veil you will be able to understand the secret of the phenomena of veils that are the bondages that keep people hidden behind the invisible veils.

Susana: When students participate in a drumming session, the same beat is repeated over and over sometimes up to three hours non-stop. What is happening to the individual during this drumming?

Adnan: What is happening to the individual during this drumming when it is unified in the rhythm, they will fall in an active concentration that brings them to unity as one person and it keeps the mind focused and attuned with the group. A person will give up his own individuality in regard to the group and will not stray away from the group as a whole. In doing so, the person will have a better connection and relationship to the group as a result of the active sound vibration that brings oneness to the group. Also, to be in the moment takes you deeper to the spirit. Will power, balance and determination are some of the effects of drumming.

Susana: After listening to your drumming, people have been known to be cured of their addictions, including drinking, smoking, over-eating, and other diseases. How does this work?

Adnan: The drumming represents the heartbeat of the universe and the drumming is the rhythm of the universe. All the creation follows many patterns of rhythm and rhythm brings life

wherever there is life and life is the love of creation when the rhythm is in its heart and any creature who has a heart will have a rhythm in its heart. The waves in the sea have a rhythm. When the wind dabs them gently, and tenderly the waves dance with each other. And the sparks of light from the sun make them shine like pearls in the darkness of night. When flocks of birds sway over the waves, in their eyes is reflected the sparks of light that are dancing on the faces of the waves. And the hearts of the birds are filled with the happiness of the sun and the light of the waves and the sparking cheeks of the waves and of the breeze when the breeze becomes amorous with the space. And the birds flap their wings to applaud the magical existence in the light of heaven. This is an episode of rhythm in the existence. When you see it, your heart dances with the rhythm. This is a phenomena that is created from phenomena and it will create phenomena. It is forever in flux wherever you go in the world and the rhythm is the power behind it. There is no end and no limit to it. So, when the drumming is perfected and played with excellence, it will bring excellence to the mind and the heart, the senses, the emotions, the feelings, the desires, the hope and the aspirations. It will unify them and take them to the realm of the higher faculties in the human being. When the higher faculties become awake and alive, they will shun the lower faculties and the lower faculties in a human being make a human being a low creature. The lower faculties pave the way of ruin, disaster and corruption with artificial flowers and tell the human being that this is the road that takes you to happiness, to paradise, to contentment, to joy and to pleasure. Walk in it and you will go to a bigger garden of artificial flowers. Take a bottle of Channel No. 5 with you and sprinkle it over the artificial flowers in the big garden and proclaim with all your voice, "Oh, my God, I smell perfumed roses!" So, the perfected drumming, when it is done with mastery and perfection, will destroy all the illusion, the whims and the desires and will slap the negative self on the left and right cheeks and the positive self becomes awake. The positive self will say to the negative self, "now, listen to me and don't do anything that I don't do." And the negative self will say, "Okay, sister, I will do anything you want me to do." And because the rhythm of the drum is a reflection of the rhythm of creation of the higher, positive aspect that is the cause of the creation. So when the drum rhythm becomes excellent, it will communicate with the excellence of the heart. When contentment comes to the heart because of the rhythm, and the higher faculties within the person open, then effortlessly and without knowing it, the person drops all the addictive habits and becomes free like a bird swaying in the breeze over the sparkling waves of the sea. When a person feels the real freedom, the freedom of the heart from the bondage of the habits, and when you become content, then there is no return to slavery, When you are awake, you are not asleep.

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