

# **BROTHER, LET ME TEACH YOU!**

*Adapted from "TALES OF DERVISHES" of Idries Shah by P.Ribes, s.j.*

## **Thrust of the Parable**

- ✓ *The all-important factor in prayer is the right attitude the praying person.*
- ✓ *Simplicity of heart is wanted, not knowledge and cleverness. for prayer and union with God*
- ✓ *There are many paths open to anyone wish to pray. All are good not single path is superior o others to take us closer to God*
- ✓ *Be aware of the "spiritual pride" lurking in the heart of a many praying person.*
- ✓ *When we pray and in all other dealings with God, we should not entertain "selfish and ulterior motives"*
- ✓ *When we enslave ourselves to prayer methods, techniques and formularies, prayer becomes a mechanical thing*
- ✓ *God exalts the humble ) and confounds the proud*
- ✓ *No one has the right to impose his own ideas or God experience on others.*

## **The Parable.**

**Narrator:** According to an ancient Sufi tradition, there is a "dervish call" (same as "mantra" or "sacred prayer"), which if repeated over and over again, with full attention and concentration, would lead a devotee to the summits of contemplation. The "dervish call" is "YA HU", "YA HU". It was a common belief, too, that after attaining the heights of contemplation by means of this dervish call, any dervish would be able to perform astonishing feats and great miracles, even such things as walking on water!

There lived a very simple-minded and devout young dervish whose only wish in life was to reach the pinnacle of contemplation. In pursuit of his goal, he left his home and all his possessions and retired, all by himself, to a small rocky island in the middle of a lake where he could live, alone with God. Night and day, with great fervor and concentration, the young dervish kept repeating the dervish call. Only, tat being very simple and illiterate, he was mispronouncing it. Instead of saying "YA HU", "YA HU" he was chanting "U YA HU" ... "U YA HU" ... "U YA HU"...

At that time, on the banks of the lake there lived a very learned and conscientious old dervish. He was greatly upset on hearing night and day, the dervish call mispronounced by that simple, illiterate young devotee. The old dervish said to himself:

**Old dervish:** “Charity obliges me to teach that errant brother of mine the correct chanting of our dervish call, other wise, the poor fellow, in spite his efforts and good intentions will never reach the heights of contemplation nor, of course, be able to perform anything extraordinary in his life!”

**Narrator:** A thing, he himself, in his heart of hearts always devoutly hoped for. It was no sooner thought than done! The old dervish got into a little boat, and he rowed to the island... On arrival there, he met his simple and unlettered brother dervish. He said to him:

**Old dervish:** “Brother, let me tell you something. Night and day I hear you mispronouncing our sacred call, a call that, if correctly pronounced, will take you to the height of contemplation and invest you with the power to work all sorts of miracles, even walking on water! Brother, let me teach you! Don't say "U YA HU", that isn't correct. Say simply "YA HU"

**Narrator:** Having listened to this advice attentively, the young devotee gratefully, said

**Young dervish:** Thank you, brother, for your advice. I'll do as you say.

**Narrator:** The old dervish, got back into his boat and began rowing towards the shore of the lake... He was full of joy and very pleased with himself for the solicitude and concern he had shown to his simple brother dervish.

He had hardly left the island when to his utter dismay, he heard his simple brother mispronouncing again the sacred mantra. "U YA HU" ... "U YA HU" ... "U YA HU" ... He stopped rowing and full of annoyance, began contemplating his next move. How could he again correct that obstinate and unrepentant brother of his! He said to himself:

**Old dervish:** “Why should people be so stubborn and cling to their evil ways?”

**Narrator:** As he was entertaining these thoughts in his mind, he was suddenly confronted with a wonderful sight. The young dervish was coming towards him, walking with swift steps on the surface of the lake... He soon came up beside the boat and humbly said

**Young dervish:** “Brother, sorry to bother you, but please, tell me : What exactly is the correct pronunciation of our dervish call?. I have just forgotten. Is it "U YA HU" or "HU YA HU"?”

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

- Methods and techniques of prayer are good, but secondary. They are means to prayer, not prayer itself
- It’s good and recommendable to use suitable means and techniques to improve our prayer life, but we should never be slaves to them. Nothing works automatically in our dealings with God
- If we are slaves to methods, techniques and formularies, prayer becomes a mechanical thing instead of what it was meant to be: a rising of our minds and hearts to God.
- We tend to "absolutize” prayer-rituals, methods, techniques and formulae. They are like crutches to help our weak and faltering steps in our God-wards journey. Sooner or later, we should discard them.
- Let’s be aware of making our methods and prayer techniques a fetish. God has to be encountered in utter nakedness of spirit.
- It is vain to wrest from man-made methods, rules and techniques a breakthrough to a God of grace and freedom.
- God gives his grace to whomever he wishes and by whatever means he likes.
- God exalts the humble (young dervish) and confounds the proud (old dervish).
- In the end it was the ignorant young dervish who taught a lesson to the learned old one.
- As we grow more mature in the ways of God, we should free ourselves from the slavish dependence on methods and techniques.
- Experience will teach us the best means to reach God.
- No one has the right to impose his own ideas or God experience on others.
- We have to respect the religious experiences of others. Each one's God experience is unique.

**APPENDIX ONE**  
**Wrong Attitudes to in Prayer**  
**Old Dervish**

- To think oneself superior to others. **Pride**
- Entertaining ulterior motives. . Power to work miracles,  
**Selfishness**
- Condemning others. **Misjudging others. Un-charitableness.**
- He felt satisfied with his prayer and his good works..  
**Complacency. .**
- He thought he could manage to reach God on his own.  
**Self-sufficiency.**

**Right Attitudes in Prayer -**  
**Young Dervish**

- Approaching God with his heart. **Love.**
- Simplicity and childlikeness. **Humility**
- Willingness to listen and to be taught. **Dependence on God and others.**
- Praying without ulterior motives. **Detachment. Unselfishness.**

**APPENDIX TWO**

**Comments and Reflections on Mathew's**  
**Quotations in keeping n mind the ideas**  
**touched in the Parable of the Dervishes.**

Mt. 6/5-6 **When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that everyone will see them.**

Remember this! They have already been paid in full. But when you pray, go to your room and close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen, and your Father who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

Mt. 7/1-5 **Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you – ...Why then, you look at the spec in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye?**

How do you dare to say to your brother, "Please, let me take the spec out of your eye' when you have a log in your own

eye? You hypocrites! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will be able to see and take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Mt 11/25-26 At that time Jesus said: "Father, Lord of heaven and earth! **I thank you because you have you have shown to the unlearned what you has hidden from the wise and learned.** "Yes, Father, this was done by your own choice and pleasure"

Mt 18/2-5 Jesus called child had him stand in front of them, and said:" Remember this! Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. **The Greatest in the kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and ad becomes like this child"**

## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **Prayer Petitions**

After each petition, say: Hear us o Lord!

- i. That in prayer we may always approach God with the simplicity and humility of a child
- ii. That we may not pray for ulterior or selfish motives but only to praise, thank and worship God.
- iii. That we may never think ourselves superior to any one even to sinners and people of ill repute.
- iv. That we may be open and prepared to learn from the simple, illiterate and pious folks.
- v. That we respect the prayer habits of others, even if they are not to our liking.
- vi. That we may not impose our ideas about prayer and religious practices on others but let them free to follow the promptings of the spirit.