

# The Meaning of Ziraat

Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan

“The Message,” May, 1981

While freemasons have been celebrating the rituals of building “the temple,” the edifice which forms the cornerstone of present-day civilization with its emphasis on industry, Hazrat Inayat Khan foresaw that the day will come when humans will fall back on a still deeper juncture upon which all life is built: agriculture.

In so doing, he was giving the ancient mysteries (like Eleusis or the cult of Osiris) a new perspective. There would be no skyscrapers, no aircraft, no computers, and so on, if their builders, technologists and business executives could not rely on the farmers to provide the basic need of life’s sustenance: food.

In a crisis, we may discover how lucky we are to be able to rely upon a piece of land having its own water supply. These will, indeed, appear to be the greatest riches on the planet.

Going overboard in the industrial drive, humans lost their grip of the sensitivity of this live being, the earth. Raped, hard-driven, over-exploited, abused, Mother Earth yields denatured produce on the conveyor belt. The price we pay for artificial fertilizers, pesticides and pollutants has been widespread and alarming: endangered or even extinct species, and health problems culminating in cancer. As a result of the warning of the better-informed few, an age-old observance has now been raised into modern concept; in ecology, a new consciousness is arising. It is this consciousness that Ziraat embodies.

Rather than a mechanistic instrument that can be manipulated at our whim and for our gain, the earth exhibits all the characteristics of a sensitive, conscious being endowed with her own will and emotion and tendencies. As a fellow being, she exults in her interrelationship with humans. The magnetism of the human touch enhances the growth of plants from her soil (this is the meaning of “green fingers”). Her magnetism makes humans thrive, regenerates worn and rundown body tissue, and gives radiance to the mind. If our consciousness is high, we sanctify the earth as hierophants and shamans have done since the beginning of time. If we commune with her soul rather than extort her yield, she sanctifies us, making us whole, and therefore holy and healthy.

We have to know how to communicate with her, grasp what “transpires beneath that which appears” (as the Sufis say). Or, like the Zoroastrians, ask her soul whose body is the water of the river, for example, permission to bathe. Ask the soil, which is the body of the archangel of the earth, for permission to cultivate and prevail upon her produce. Make a tryst of mutual respect with her, as villagers do in Southern India with the cobras. Humans promise not to kill cobras, and the cobras refrain from killing humans; and it works!

The soil is glad to bestow upon us her produce providing we release some of it to her as compost or organic waste or even in the form of seaweed. The secret triggering off a communication with

the nature spirits is invocation, an age-old practice. It is plugging into the signature tune of each being or archetype and observing a sensitive respect for the laws and principles that they represent and an understanding concern of their wishes. Luther Burbank observed these wishes by encouraging plants to grow in accordance with their natural trend instead of forcing them to conform to the human will.

Truly enough man's intelligence and will represents a further step in evolution. As Hazrat Inayat Khan says, "Man's creativity is the extension of the Divine creativity," but one has to learn how to coordinate one's will with these natural forces. This is like the surfer who takes advantage of the forward thrust of the wave to launch himself upon the next wave just as the former one is about to recede. One can harness the bountiful gifts of nature so that she will abound in still greater profusion without denaturing her, just as a horse will run faster when it is ridden than on its own, providing that the rider does not kill its spirit.

If one only knew what intelligence, what emotion, what beauty lies beneath the spectacular display of life on the planet, one would realize what one misses by reducing nature, considering it just matter. So much is gained by discovering and contacting this world of the soul, which has its correspondence in us, and comes through the forms and behavior of nature as the unwritten law of life. The silent voice of the Divine Presence, of the Divine Message, is whispered by all beings as they announce their names respectively as their contribution to the symphony of the spheres.

This is the meaning of Ziraat, and consequently it is for those who have the necessary sensitivity and are moved by respect for nature as a being in whom the Divine Presence and the Divine Intention are discovered.