

Our Attitude Toward the Work

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The topic today is “Our attitude toward the work.” I’ll be speaking on the work, the goal of the work, and our attitude toward the work.

Let’s consider first the goal; what do we wish to achieve? In farming, the goal is a successful harvest. The combination of seed, plants, soil, water, air, sunlight, and cultivation yields the harvest. In Ziraat, the symbols of farming are used for the goal of mental purification. A quote from Inayat Khan:

Souls on earth are born imperfect and show imperfection, and from this they develop naturally, coming to perfection. If all were perfect, there would have been no purpose in their creation. And manifestation has taken place so that every being here may rise from imperfection towards perfection. That is the object and joy of life and for that this world was created. And if we expected every person to be perfect and conditions to be perfect, then there would be no joy in living and no purpose in coming here.

From “Mental Purification” Vol. IV Healing and the Mind World

From the Ziraat Papers on [Purification of the Mind](#), Inayat Khan lets us know:

By cultivation of the mind, when the foreign element is rooted out, the mind becomes pure, and the person becomes one’s own self.

Through mental purification one becomes one’s own self. This is the goal.

What work, then, is done to reach this goal. In the [Ziraat Dialogue](#) we’re told, “farming consist primarily of three kinds of work: ploughing, sowing, and reaping”.

We know now that the kind of ploughing, field preparation, Inayat Khan outlines in Ziraat where the soil is thoroughly broken up and disrupted; the nexus of plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi shattered, doesn’t work best for horticulture and agriculture. But we’re approaching this work symbolically. With mind as field and with the goal of mental purification, in ploughing we want to bring up all the roots and rocks, symbolic of feelings, tendencies, habits, and impressions which are brought to the surface for self-analysis and removal. All is removed; what might be considered good as well as the bad. This has always seemed radical to me, yet Inayat Khan reassures us, again from the Ziraat Papers on Purification of the Mind:

It must be remembered that there is no loss if the good ones are rooted out with the bad for mind in its essence is incomparably superior to all good tendencies.

So first remove everything which is foreign, inauthentic, unneeded. The field is then ready for the next task of sowing. This is being open to the Divine Intention, the Beloved’s Inspiration. The pure mind can receive this seed and let it grow without the competition or barriers from the rocks and old roots. Inayat Khan calls this having scope for the new growth.

For the seeds to grow, there needs to be cultivation, which we should consider as the practices and spiritual disciplines we take on with concentration, contemplation, meditation, prayer, study of the holy scriptures and inspired teachings, and guidance from the Masters, Saints, and Prophets and from our living teachers. This cultivation brings about fruition which is harvested. Fruition is realization.

This isn't an endpoint, however. The work is a continual cycle of ploughing, sowing, and reaping. As the Ziraat Dialogue says, "What is the farmer's religion?" with the answer "The farmer's work." The work is an ongoing process in which we progress on the path. Let's return to that quote from Inayat Khan regarding this process:

Souls on earth are born imperfect and show imperfection, and from this they develop naturally, coming to perfection. If all were perfect, there would have been no purpose in their creation. And manifestation has taken place so that every being here may rise from imperfection towards perfection. That is the object and joy of life and for that this world was created. And if we expected every person to be perfect and conditions to be perfect, then there would be no joy in living and no purpose in coming here.

So, with what attitude do we approach the work, the toil, the task? [The Ziraat Papers](#) give us some direct, explicit answers to this question, but there are also some subtle, implicit attitudes given.

First, though, let's think about what we mean by attitude. I already used the word approach and that's part of attitude, how we approach things. Attitude is perception, how we feel about something, how we react; how we process information, communication, and impressions; it's the lens through which we view our world and our life. I'm sure you've heard "Attitude is everything." It's essential, isn't it, to the whole of our health and well-being. And it's actually something we have control over. I had a career in management, mostly in healthcare administration, and I often saw people who put up barriers to their own success by their attitude. For my staff, I'd coach them to make some shifts in behavior or word choices for interacting with patients or co-workers, always emphasizing how this change could benefit them. Sometimes all that was needed was to have the person start using "Please" and "Thank you" in interactions with others. We can shape and mold our attitudes.

As we do our work in Ziraat, we're directly told the attitudes to apply: The farmer "ploughs with toil, sows with hope, and reaps with joy."

How can toil be an attitude? There can be satisfaction in the labor of an activity, meeting a challenge, and completing what is required. In the initiation of a harrower in Ziraat, one is asked to affirm "I will make my duty pleasurable" and "I will persevere continually with growing interest." Toil as an attitude made me think, Can I make housework a dance? Rather than having something be a chore, a drudge, let me find the movement and rhythm in it as a benefit. I will plough with toil.

Next is sow with hope. For some, hope can be a fraught term as though one is setting up expectations or unrealistic goals which can't be met and will bring only frustration. But hope is

how we can live in the present and look forward to the future. The farmer knows not all the seeds sown will germinate and hopes enough will. Having a hopeful attitude keeps us going, let's us consider the potentialities of situations and of our efforts. Hope says yes to the future. Hope helps us move forward.

Then we reap with joy. Inayat Khan repeatedly uses joy in the prayers he gave. Joy is a divine quality we ask to be reflected in our life. I've always liked Sri Chinmoy's description of a human being as "soul-joy in body-fort." Those are two hyphenated terms. "Body-fort" is our physical part to be maintained that we may be healthy. "Soul-joy" reminds us that the divine spark is in each and everyone of us. We just need to remember that joy is our essential nature. We can invoke an attitude of joy in all aspects of the work, but especially bring it to the reaping when we should celebrate the culmination, the accomplishment of our efforts.

"Plough with toil, sow with hope, and reap with joy" we're told are the attitudes for the work. But there are others we can find.

There are levels of initiation in Ziraat and the first six have watchwords [See [Cycle of Work on the Farm](#)]. Three of those watchwords – toil, hope, and joy – we've already reviewed. Let's look at the other three as attitudes, also.

The harrower's watchword is courage. For courage, we meet our fears, we recognize our limitations, and do what needs to be done. This doesn't mean being reckless or foolhardy. It's having some grit to meet challenges and overcome them. Yes, for courage we have to leave our comfort zone and perhaps make a sacrifice, and that can yield growth. Yield growth: we're back at farming. The seed in the darkness of soil germinates and pushes upward against possible barriers and trials to sprout toward the sun. Courage.

The thresher has the watchword strength. Will we ever progress, will we ever move forward if we give power to thoughts of inadequacies, of limitations? Some of you have taken the vow to serve the Spiritual Hierarchy with a forceful "I will!" Pir Vilayat would lead us in this and he was certainly an exemplar of one who embodied this vow. Pir Zia also has led us in "I will!" To have an attitude of strength we would be affirming "I can!" Sometimes we need to be our own cheerleaders, give ourselves the pep talk, to encourage ourselves along. An attitude of strength helps with this.

Now I have a word of warning: With all these attitudes, we, of course, need to always keep in mind the shadow aspects of them, the double-edged sword. We don't want to go overboard with any one, to become unbalanced. We want to avoid any feelings of self-importance. For example, we don't want strength. "I can," to become my way is the right and only way.

The next level of initiation is garnerer and the watchword is thanksgiving. "Garnerer" is a word we don't hear or use often. You might hear garner used to mean gather together. Or when someone's wages are garnished part of their pay is collected to pay a debt. The garnerer gathers the harvest into the barn or storage. Thanksgiving is given for a successful harvest. This attitude is one of life's most important, an attitude of gratitude. This attitude helps us recognize all the support, all the gifts, all the blessings that continually come to us. Yes, each of us makes

individual efforts and each of us has unique talents, but we are given so much, much that we can see and experience and recognize, yet also there is much that comes unknown to us from sources we don't realize. Our continual prayer should be a simple, "Thank you." To cultivate this attitude, I highly recommend this book: "Giving Thanks – a native American morning message" by Chief Jake Swamp. It gives a beautiful form for an attitude of gratitude. Reading it would be a great way to start every day.

The next attitudes come from the [Salutations to the Elements](#). For each, there is an adverb indicating how we offer our homage: humbly for earth, willingly for water, wholeheartedly for fire, gladly for air, and passively for ether.

I'm going to link gladly with joy. Connect with the divine joy. I've been with Pir Shabda for several group retreats. Coming out of a 3- or 4-day retreat, with all that's been given which can be overwhelming, I'm happy if I have gleaned 1 or 2 takeaways. One takeaway from being with Shabda was, "God loves us and wants us to be happy." An attitude of joy, of gladness, helps us in our work.

I'm going to join together humility, willingness, wholeheartedness, and passivity to become an attitude of surrender. This is surrender to the will of God, the Owner of the Farm [** Sovereign of the Farm*]. This attitude helps us to do the work and reach the goal knowing the Divine Presence is always with us. The Ziraat Lodge ends with the leader's saying, "Now let us depart knowing ourselves the willing bondspeople of the Owner of the Farm, [** ...willing workers of the Sovereign of the Farm*] in whose service is perfect freedom." Surrendering to the will of the Beloved we lose little and gain much.

The last attitude I'd like for us to consider is implied in "[The Address of Great Farmer](#)." In the address we're told, the soul is working its way through creation from the lowest, most minute level, "from the smallest germs and insects," to become a human being. The attitude from this is openness, inclusion, and connection with the whole of creation. We are each unique and also completely connected to the web of creation. What affects one affects all. It's from this attitude that Ziraat has expanded in its concern for the environment and ecology. With this attitude we see ourselves not as separate beings, but, rather, connected to all of life and our planet. Knowing our actions have consequences which affect the whole biosphere, our work includes doing whatever we can to lessen any negative affects in our environment and to heal the harm which has occurred.

The work, then, is to purify the mind so one may become one's authentic self, to realize the divine spark within, and to feel connected to the whole of creation. We do the work with attitudes of toil, hope, joy, courage, strength, gratitude, surrender, and openness and inclusion.

Notes:

Links are to pdf documents on the Ziraat website: inayatiyyaziraat.org

* text in brackets is the new wording for Ziraat North America and Oceania