

With Zahurmian on the Sea Shore

Perfect! You could not find a better description for the day. The ocean sparkled as if it were composed of fire not water. The breeze breathed a calming coolness, just enough to cause the hairs on the skin to respond. The party emerged from the winding descent from the cliff top on to the welcoming warm sand of the beach. A suitable spot was found and sheets laid down by the adults whilst the children, declining to wait, rushed to the water's edge. Refreshments were brought out in the midst of chatter and appreciative comments on the natural beauty of the spot with its distant views of the curving shore and a ragged headland.

Gradually a calm and natural silence descended on the party as each member made themselves comfortable, quietly consuming tasty snacks and sandwiches, accompanied by warm tea from various flasks and miscellaneous cool drinks. The natural anxiety of the mothers abated as the children's play seemed genuinely joyous and ripples of laughter reached their ears. There was then time to note other small parties around and to catch occasional comments carried by the breeze.

One might think that such circumstances would naturally induce a sense of happiness in anyone, but the circumstances were not the real cause of the sense of inner satisfaction and good feeling within the party. True inner joy or happiness does not depend on these things – it comes from within as gift.

The centre of the party, as even a casual glance would reveal, was an elderly man of distinguished appearance. The movements of his head reminded one of bird alert to every aspect of the environment, with a hawk like attentiveness. He was the master of a Sufi Order, and the party were mostly his disciples. A stranger would not have guessed any of this by any outward indication.

An attractive young woman in the briefest of bikinis ran past at a little distance, parallel to the shore, and beside her ran a large sleek dog. Embarrassment descended on some of the party who feared the moral rectitude of the guide might be distressed by this. A comment came, 'what a beautiful dog look, how it runs'. A gentle ripple of relieved laughter followed.

The Dream

Half dozing, half awake, in post prandial comfort, a dream came to one of the party. Walking with the guide by the sea shore he was asking, 'tell us something of the Love of God please sir'. No reply was forthcoming, but they came to a cave, the sea was strong and the waves surged into an inlet amongst the rocks. A small boy and girl were playing there and they had found a pool of

fresh water that had emerged from some hidden source. They had carefully dammed it up with sand pebbles and various sticks. The surging waves, turned into foam by contact with the rocks, were lapping at the lovingly constructed defences placed by the children. Each wave seemed to reach further than the last and rebounded from the cave walls with ever increasing ferocity. At last, amidst the delighted laughter of the children, a particularly strong surge broke the heart of the defence and the pool of fresh water began at first to leak and then as the battering continued finally to flow freely into the briny water of the sea. The children's delight intensified. They seemed not to have been aware of the two watching, but then suddenly turned, looked in such a knowing way and then, still laughing, departed.

The Guide was speaking and the dreamer came out of his reverie.

Paraphrasing one of the great Sufi Masters, Mevlana Rumi, he said, 'The lover speaks much about love, makes a great hullabaloo, many words and much protestation proceeds from him. The beloved remains silent on the topic of love, waiting for the reality of love'.

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Here is a short poem, not unrelated

A Casual Encounter between a Sufi and His Disciple

'The Weather is fine, sun shining,
Birds singing, flowers blooming,

And the kids how are they? Growing?
Your venerable mother, still sewing?

And your work, how is that going?
And what else have you been doing?'

'O Master! This is very ordinary chatting,
Speak please of God's Love and Loving!'

'What - are you so very hard of hearing?
Pray tell, what else *have* I been doing?'