

Amir Ahmed Nasr Appreciation

Thank you! Thank you for hosting, and thank you for having us all be here enjoying your transmission, your Heart-transmission leading to evocation.

I will begin by confessing the following: I used to be a bookworm, a voracious reader. The son of a professor, very professorial, always emphasizing the importance of books and, generally, education.

As much of a gift and a blessing as that is, to limit education to reading, books, cognitive cerebral activity, kind of sets us up for failure, spiritually speaking, because there is so much more.

And I had the good fortune and also the challenge of growing up in different cultures. My parents moved from northern Sudan, Khartoum, emigrated to Wisconsin in the early 1970s. America was a different country back then. In their case, they were fortunate to go to the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In Wisconsin, that environment shaped them in a certain manner, made them more cosmopolitan. My oldest brother was born there.

Then they moved away from Wisconsin, Madison, left the campus. My dad had earned his PhD by then. I was born in northern Sudan, in Khartoum. My other brother was born there. Then we moved to Doha, Qatar, then we moved to Malaysia. Then my oldest brother went to Romania. Then another brother wanted to stay there in Malaysia as long as possible.

Growing up in those circumstances with parents who were spiritual and quite religious and acknowledged the different traditions — their neighbors were Christian in northern Sudan, my dad's best friend in university was Sudanese Jewish at that time when they were still there.

So cosmopolitanism was very much part of let's say the family DNA. I had a challenging time finding my way in terms of faith and religion because of the divisiveness that comes along with that. I really immersed myself in philosophy. I thought the more philosophy books that I read, the more 'enlightened' I'm going to become and the freer I would be.

And even though I deconstructed a lot of dogma (*tapping his left temple*), my heart was kind of empty. I was really sad, and I was in a crisis.

What set me up to be on the right path was a friend named Sam Rosen recommending the book *Marriage of Sense and Soul* by Ken Wilber. I happened to read it on my way to Istanbul for the first time. When I landed in Istanbul, the feeling of East and West within me began to reconcile, and I started to integrate. I had a very deep, powerful experience in the Blue Mosque, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque.

And yet I still had issues. So I joined a master's program in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on comparative religion and comparative faith traditions, comparative philosophy.

But there was still something missing.

At that point I had met someone through a friend. She came from California, moved all the way to Southeast Asia. She had been studying sexuality in Stanford University because she had gone through a trauma in her childhood, a sexual assault she had wanted to move beyond.

So she was immersed in studying sexuality, and then she realized, "Why am I reading about it in a book, when I can actually go and learn tantric teachings, energy work, in Thailand and Bali, with responsible, ethical, good spiritual teachers who understand the tantric path? Why should I read about it when I can actually experience it?"

Long story short, I dropped out of my master's program in philosophy and went to Bali. And then I meditated with Hindu priests at Hindu temples. I started going to church. Years later, I even went to synagogue.

And I had these "secret realizations" that I was really scared to share with anyone until a friend shared with me the following quote by the Sufi mystic Ibn 'Arabi:

Oh marvel! A garden amidst fires!
My heart has become capable and receptive of every form.
It is a pasture for gazelles,
A monastery for Christian monks,
A temple for deities,
The Kaaba of the pilgrim,
The tables of the Torah,
And the book of the Koran.

I follow the religion of Love;
Wherever its camel mounts turn,
That is my faith and my religion.

To find this from the Sufi tradition, from my own heritage, my own background, was so affirming, and healing, and a powerful realization that no amount of philosophy, books, with information going up here (*points to his head*), was going to do the trick. I had to learn to be more in my heart, to be more present.

So the fact that this existed, this realization was always there, really opened me up to the possibilities of the heart, the bigger possibilities of the Heart.

As I began to engage with that inquiry, especially with Covid, the pandemic, and that whole crisis existentially, I doubled down, and my mind somehow led me back to work that I had read years ago and "kinda sorta" understood intellectually but I wasn't really feeling it.

And I found myself reading Sanial's work. We connected this year [2022] earlier, around February. And I was excited but also nervous, just a little confused, because I was disoriented. And I felt that, "I think I'm now beginning to understand (*pointing to his torso*) through the heart what all this stuff was about that I didn't really get intellectually." Because it's not meant to be understood intellectually. And that's what Ibn 'Arabi understood too, centuries ago.

And so in engaging with you, Saniel — and Linda, we haven't really had the time to get to know each other. That said, you were a very important component in why I also felt more comfortable approaching Saniel. Because I was going through a difficult separation with my now ex-wife — not because she's a terrible person, not because I was a terrible person, not because we didn't like each other, but rather because we loved each other so much, still continue to love each other, still close friends, and yet somehow we just couldn't bring our life together in domestic partnership.

Having had my background as a digital marketer and strategist, as well as a storyteller and a writer and a journalist, I had come across many people in the, let's say broadly speaking, New Age spiritual community. Many teachers, thought leader figures. And I didn't see "the good, the bad, and the ugly," but I did see "the excellent, the good — and the problematic." And I never liked the optics of how certain things were occurring.

Whereas with you, Saniel and Linda, I could tell and I could sense that in your partnership, the realness, the commitment, the container, the wisdom, the teamwork — it was so appealing. And I knew I could find deeper answers in engaging with you, and really opening up about my vulnerabilities and what I had been going through.

And so, in being in your presence, not much is necessary to be said. It really is in the transmission. I was able to address some of my concerns internally whereby, "Ok, the Heart, the Sun, all right, that sounds lovely, but is it still relevant in difficult circumstances when I'm facing adversity?" Especially given the background that I came from as an activist and a journalist and the ugliness that I saw.

And so the Heart is really powerful. And the last thing I want to conclude with, because a picture is worth a thousand words: this image behind me from the Webb Telescope. It's so beautiful, it evokes sentiments of (*in a childlike singsong voice*) "twinkle twinkle little star" — kind of sweet, serene. And if you go closer, you zoom in (*a fiery red-hot sphere appears behind him*) this is what the star is. And when you wake, and embody, and accept that this is what we all have within us, this is the outcome (*the star begins whirling in fast rotation behind him — Linda and others happily exclaim.*)

This, and what you just saw, simultaneously! At the same time.

Thank you for helping me embody it in the real world...in all circumstances! It's been life-changing. Very grateful to have met you. Thank you.

(*Linda and Saniel thank Drima, and also share about Drima's professional appreciation of Linda's music, especially her song "I'm Here," from his perspective as a musician and producer.*)