

# Brunch Update

Issue 63 – Oct 2014

**House of Sufism Charity Initiative**

*Addressing the most pressing needs of our community*



*“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.”*

– Rabindranath Tagore

# SUNDAY SUMMARIES



**August 31st:** The day was muggy and humid outside but quickly became a warm and comfortable one inside one of the area's youth shelters. The shelter dining hall had a great view of the surrounding neighborhood and was filled with books and computers. We were serving brunch here for the first time after House of Sufism Charity Initiative reached out to the organization expressing our availability and interest. The burgers were meticulously prepared by Mohammad and taste-tested to perfection on numerous occasions before the big day. Additionally, Mohammad had prepared a tasty and spicy bean salad made up of chickpeas, string beans, and peppers. It was easily the most underrated dish on the table. Peter prepared a filling baked ziti dish covered with slow-cooked Italian gravy. Yes, yummy indeed. Everyone was understandably shy, but as people started eating, warm conversations developed all around. A post-meal treat of watermelon completed the introductory brunch to the satisfaction of all.



**September 7th:** The Brunch Service team visited a couple of old friends. We met on Sunday as we do routinely. We then brought the pastries and bread that's normally distributed to various shelters and instead brought these to the North End where our beloved Mary and Yasin live. With a carafe of tea and fresh pastries we welcomed the couple's newborn daughter, Mina. Mary and Yasin have cooked many delicious meals for our volunteer service at 1740. Celebrating a new life in this world was the perfect opportunity to replenish our friendship and share our love with them. Yasin in turn had cooked another batch of lamb stew with a tasty Moroccan flair that we enjoyed greatly. The day reminded us that service to others need not only be designated to the poor and needy but to anyone we meet; a kind word, a smile, a delicious meal...the examples are endless.



**September 21st:** The House of Sufism crew seized the day by initiating a cleaning and scrubbing of the youth shelter's kitchen. Bill, Peter, Mohammad, and Sherif scrubbed everything in sight, including the walls, stove, microwave, floor, coffeemaker, drawers, cabinets, and a couple of cats (just kidding). It was a necessary activity we anticipate the residents will greatly appreciate.



## Love and Service (continued)

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What is love and where does it come from? Well, first let's establish that we all feel love at times throughout our lives. Everyone falls in love with a significant other or will sometimes feel intense love for their parents, friends, or even their pets. Some people even occasionally encounter the highest form of love, the selfless variety. The majority of people end up fearing this total love, however, because of its threat to the self; they draw back and prefer to live the life of the average person, searching for personal pleasure and withdrawing from pain. Because people choose to stay away from the abyss of selfless love, they will often feel resentment, distrust, anger, hate, and other negative emotions.

The specific goal of the Sufi, and particularly of those in the Nimatullahi order, is to act as a conduit for selfless love. We desire to channel it inside our souls and to share it with others. It is this force and this force alone that allows volunteers and darvishes to conduct service *throughout* their lives. If a person volunteers without allowing for this current to run through them, then their service will last minutes, months, or even years but it certainly won't last forever. Service will only be permanent if it encounters love.

The members of Boston's House of Sufism seek to cultivate the power of love through two activities: service and meditation. First, by serving others, without thinking of any advantage to ourselves, we grow closer to the Loving force that guides the universe. This activity is a horizontal worship; Sufis understand that God needs nothing of us, so we help that of his Creation that is needy. By doing this sacred act, we are acting like Him - giving freely just as he gives us sustenance freely every moment. Perhaps by doing this we can take on some divine attributes.

The second prong of our path is also essential. In order to share love we must first receive it. Meditation or zekr is where we receive this love. By focusing on one's meditation, one quiets the brain, particularly the ego. The ego becomes an object to be observed instead of an entity that we identify with without a second thought. When the darvish quiets the egoic mind in this state, he or she allows Love to find openings. After one begins receiving this love, he or she can begin to share it. Zekr is a reminder that the inner must be well for the outer to be sincere. Through this meditation, sufis allow for the inner wells to be replenished.

These two activities, service and meditation, are absolutely

necessary. If one is just meditating, all they are doing is some deep breathing, which may be of some benefit to the self but certainly we are being no good to anyone else. Serving alone isn't enough because one's egoic nature quickly tires of it. If either of these two activities is neglected, one won't encounter Love. We need both.

As we walk the Sufi path, service is like the left foot and meditation is like the right: the two must work in tandem to travel toward Love. Use just one and you end up off-balance, hopping in tiresome circles.

Through this process one can love to serve others, not for any reason but to express the love inside. For the blessed few, this seed of love can perhaps grow into a plant and if we are really blessed the plant can grow into a tree firmly rooted in Love. The Sufi approach to truth therefore involves letting go of the egoic coverings that prevent the truth from revealing itself.

(continued next month)



# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

1. **Volunteer!** Sunday Brunch is a time commitment of only a few hours. Help us cook and clean or just spend time with our friends in need! Also, we need volunteers throughout the week to pick up donations from bakeries and deliver them to food pantries the next day.

2. **Monetary donations:** If you would like to make a contribution to House of Sufism Charity Initiative, you can write a check (payable to KN), use any credit card, or wire money through PayPal.

3. **In-kind donations:** We are always in need for milk, eggs, fruit, plastic bags, etc. for our Sunday Brunch. We also accept donations of items like household goods and furniture. All donations are tax-deductible.

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