

On the Level



- One of the symbolic tools of Freemasonry is the Level. It shows us the importance of a balanced life on our way to the Light. A seeker of Light should not seek the extremes; not in emotions, not in ambition, not in satisfying needs, but also not in good qualities such as humility, self-sacrifice or charity either. If something is "too" then that is never good.

"The balance must be maintained between what is physical and what is eternal, by being aware of both. One should not lose so deep in eternity that one no longer knows what time it is, nor are so submerged in the physical that one is unaware of immortality. As there is day and night, there is the change of consciousness from the physical to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to the physical. By maintaining a balance between these two extremes, a person leads a complete life. Balance is just as rarely found with mystics as with others. When we are interested in something, it is our nature to want more and more of it, whether it is spirituality or something material. If we are very spiritual and not material [enough], we lose the whole world. If we were not meant to live in this physical world, we would not have been sent here".

- Hazrat Inayat Khan

One of the most difficult balances to preserve is perhaps the balance that Hazrat Inayat Khan talks about. The balance between your material existence and your spiritual existence. There are times when we pay more attention to our spiritual life and others where we pay more attention to our material life.

To what extent do our daily responsibilities and activities affect this balance? Most seekers will agree that your spiritual life and your material life have different goals. Historically there has always been a soft conflict between these two lives. How can Freemasonry help us find the right balance? How can we best use the level?

- From the standpoint of a spiritual quest, what is a balanced life? And why is the balance important? For someone who is "balanced", this is not a question at all. We do not question about the air we breathe, the food we eat, the way we live our daily lives. Until something crosses our path where we have to take a moment to stop and reflect. A painful threshold on our path ensures that time will stand still for a moment. We become aware of our need; whether it's a jitter in the throat, the desire for something tasty we do not have, or something more serious.

There are moments in our lives that everything is right with the world. Many people experience a spiritual feeling - the closeness of the divine mystery. If only we could put feeling in a jar and keep it for a rainy day! For there are days when you get out of bed in the morning and immediately know that something is not right: a painful knee, a sore back, or an uncomfortable feeling that you cannot put your finger on. Most seekers will have a good intuition, a well-functioning level, in them. We feel when things are not going well with us or with the world around us. But we do not always make the right diagnosis. Especially when it directly relates to ourselves.

This is where the question of "balance" - the proper handling of the level - comes into play. First let's talk about what balance * is not *. Balance is not an irresponsible attitude in which someone cheerfully and whistles through life dances. Balance is not when everything goes well in your life. Balance is not about feeling good in itself. Balance is a form of spiritual resilience. It is an attitude that allows us to experience both great joy without being overwhelmed by this, and to deal with major setbacks because we know that "this too will pass".

- How do we find the balance?

The level is a kind of seesaw. Metaphorically, it is in balance when the seeker is perfectly in the middle. At the two ends of the spirit level we find the trials of life. How much weight should be placed on the ends to bring us out of balance?

If we have little spiritual weight and our feet are close to each other, then little is needed to tilt the level.

But if we are spiritually "heavy" and we put both feet apart, then much more is needed to bring us out of balance. There are three aspects that are important for balance:

First, we have to be aware of the state we are in.

If you do not know that you are out of balance, then you also do not know when you are in balance.

Our emotions are an easy indicator whether we are out of balance or not.

But when it comes to chasing after desires and needs, it is more difficult for us to estimate when we go too far and overshoot.

Second, there is what we can call our spiritual "weight".

This is the totality of our humanity. The more wisdom we gain, the more powerful we are in life, and the better we can appreciate the beauty of balance.

Third, knowledge is important. Knowledge about how we can come back into balance when we are out of balance.

We need to know how to respond when we experience adversity.

It is best to see the setback coming so you can put your feet down firmly to stay in balance.

But it is already impressive to retrieve your balance after a setback or ordeal.

The essence of all authentic spiritual traditions, including Freemasonry,

is to teach the seeker the above three aspects and to keep him or her alert in their application in the chaos of daily life.

With wisdom, strength and knowledge we can keep the balance in everything that throws material life at us to bring us out of balance. And we can both keep feet on the ground when we feel the attraction of the spiritual life.

WB OLAF WIERSMA

Master Pickaway Lodge No. 23