

## BEING PRESENT

December 2006

A publication of the Fellowship of Friends, Inc.

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### Valuing Presence

Presence is not a point of view. It is not a thought or an emotion. It is not a palpable energy or an 'I'. It is an invisible, independent, and wordless state of pure consciousness.

This state is so simple and unobtrusive that we may at first fail to see its significance. We may even fail to see it at all because presence usually emerges for just a second or two before it disappears again—before it is swept away by imagination.

We are so accustomed to and comfortable with imagination—with the steady stream of 'I's from our four lower centers—that wordless presence is a foreign experience. We have to be taught how to recognize this state, how to allow it, and most importantly, how to sustain it.

In comparison to the many 'I's, presence appears intangible. It seems to be nothing, to not exist. And yet the reverse is true. Wordless presence is the most real thing of all and can become permanent, whereas the many 'I's are superficial and fleeting. As the 'I's keep displacing each other in a repetitive cycle of imagination, presence can remain poised in a state of divided attention. With conscious awareness, it observes our 'I's and our surroundings without analysis, comment, or conclusion.

The weakness of presence is that it can at any moment be mesmerized by and lured into the stream of imagination. Unless we know about this, and unless we are prepared in advance with work 'I's, presence can stay immersed in imagination for hours, days, weeks, and even months at a time—to the point that we spend virtually all our life in the second state of consciousness.

The appeal and pull of imagination are incredibly convincing and strong. To repeatedly break away from imagination and establish ourselves in wordless presence, we need great sincerity and determination. Above all, we need to understand that this simple state is the hidden meaning and purpose of life on earth—as objective schools have always taught.

The most personal of all experiences is the state of divine, prolonged presence.  
Robert Earl Burton

There is nothing in existence except the divine presence.  
Ibn Arabi

It does not matter whether you are early in your life or late; draw close to presence and you will become better.  
Bahauddin

Presence transcends all imagination.  
Ruzbihan Baqli

I divided my mind, preserving my presence. I found the beloved in the bridal chamber of my seclusion.  
Al-Farid

Presence is the work of the alchemist.  
Hafiz

Meditate on how seldom Shiva appears.  
Lalla The body is a shadow of presence.  
Rumi

Take your place in the presence of the wordless.  
Sanai