

## **My first experience of awakening**

I was around 16 years old and had been given a class of approximately 10 children. Each Sunday morning was identical: first read a cleaned up Bible story then put out the plastacine for them to exercise their creativity. I should add that at this time I was a zealot, determined to "save" the children in my charge.

One of these lucky souls was a little boy named Johnny who looked like one of Botticelli's angels; soft blond hair hanging over his brows, eyes like forget-me-nots. I realize now that he had a learning disability. At that time I thought he was shy and I was determined to bring him out. Johnny would listen to the story but never touch the plastacine. Week after week he sat silently, hands in his lap, gazing into the void. Week after week I tried every trick up my young sleeve - I cajoled, ignored, smothered him with love, pretended he wasn't there. Nothing worked.

Then one magical morning Johnny put forth a pale, freckled hand and picked up a piece of plastercine. My heart leapt. All the energy I had invested in this child was about to be rewarded!

He took the greyish ball in his hands and rolled it around on the table. After a few moments his creative energy ebbed and he sat back, hands folded in his lap. I was ecstatic, convinced that he was now safe in the arms of Jesus.

"That is beautiful, Johnny," I said. "What is it?"

"Dog poop." he replied.

Well I don't remember dismissing the class or walking home. Johnny's response had been the perfect Judo chop to my mind and I was absolutely without thought. I "came to" just as I was entering the gate into our garden. And suddenly I was part of everything. I was the clouds, I was the sky, and I was the trees. I knew everything. I loved everything. The sense of bliss was indescribable - awesome yet familiar. I was boundless, deathless awareness.

I have learned so much from God that I can no longer call myself a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew. The Truth has shared so much of Itself with me that I can no longer call myself a man, a woman, an angel, or even a pure soul. Love has befriended Hafiz. It has turned to ash, and freed me from, every concept and image my mind has ever known.

Hafiz

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