

important. So, the standard is this, whatever name it is that feels comfortable, that heightens your sense of connection is the name for you. It may not work for anyone else, certainly not for everyone else, but it is your link. One of the many mistakes of conventional religion is the narrow insistence on a group think, lock step approach to this type of spiritual relationship. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, as an incarnation of God, makes the statement, “By whatever path men approach me, by that same path do I meet them”.

Jallaludin Rumi, the 15th century Persian mystic penned a beautiful expression of the closeness of the Friend. It begins with the inner Friend speaking to Rumi:

Friend, our closeness is this
Anywhere you place your foot
Feel me in the firmness beneath you

Then Rumi's response

How is it with this love?
I see your world, but not you.

Much of Rumi's poetry refers to his spiritual mentor, Shams el-Tabriz, as the Friend. Reading it can sometimes be confusing because in his work the distinction between the Friend and the deepest experience of the real is quite fluid. In the realm of mystical experience, the one is the gateway to the other.

Sometimes people balk at the idea of cultivating this inner friendship. It seems like a difficult, complex, or mysterious process. As much as we speak of the need to simplify, I often feel that we are suspicious of simplicity. Particularly within Theosophical circles, we have been reared on a complex system of thought describing the nature of the universe and the individual. Rounds, races, manvantara, planes of consciousness, dhyana chohans, hierarchies of nature, etc. are just some of the features of that description. The breadth and richness of this conceptual framework is inexhaustible, but genuine understanding requires something more than the facts. The missing ingredient can be something quite simple – this quality of relationship that we are calling friendship.

Just to be clear, we are not only talking about our relationships with other people. However, because for most of us that particular type of relationship is