



# BEAUTY

*"The soul is born in beauty and feeds on beauty, requires beauty for its life."*

James Hillman

This morning I was struck by the glistening of the night's dew on the new green grass. I stopped and noticed its shining in the sunlight. Here was beauty glistening at my feet and I was able to pause long enough to really see it, to breathe it through my eyes and into my lungs, and I felt beauty enter my heart, soften and transform me.

Beauty is a path you walk, it is the world that surrounds you, and it is the human capacity we each have to see, feel, hear and know beauty. Beauty is a choice we make to notice the world around us with gratitude, and with simplicity and with humbleness. To prepare for beauty we need to declutter our lives and our thoughts, so we can see what is right before us. How fortunate we are to walk this path of beauty. Warmly Rev. Debra Thorne

**"In turning away from beauty,  
we turn away from all that is wholesome and true,  
and deliver ourselves into an exile  
where the vulgar and the artificial  
dull and deaden the human spirit."**

John O'Donohue

## Questions for Reflection

- How can I live a life of beauty?
- Did my family teach me an appreciation of beauty? Or did I teach myself? Where is beauty in my home, and in my life today? Think of physical beauty and moral beauty, both you can see with your eyes and feel with your heart.
- What memories of beauty have inspired my life?
- Recall a time when a work of art revealed to you the intrinsic beauty in something you had considered ugly or disagreeable. What does this experience reveal about the nature of beauty?
- In German the word "beautiful" is related to shining. A beautiful person is one whose inner brilliance permeates his or her entire being. Tell someone about your most memorable encounter with a person who was shining.

## Spiritual Practices

- ✧ **Beautify your home.** Start by clearing out any clutter and things you are not using. Affirm your commitment to simplify your life by giving away or discarding at least one excess possession. Then choose one area of the house to give special attention to. Perhaps you will clean and polish the wood furnishings or scrub all the tiles. As you are working, admire the textures, colors, and structure of each item.
- ✧ **Have a good cry....** allow your tears to wash away the inner clutter and stress and then breathe in the beauty from all around you.
- ✧ **Absorb the beauty** of a sunset or a night time sky... and as you are filling up with the awe of it close your eyes and see the same with your inner eye. Realize there is no difference between the outer and the inner, both the outer and the inner longing and capacity for beauty. Take a breath and then open your eyes.
- ✧ **Beauty Diary:** each day write down or tell someone of the most surprisingly beautiful thing, person or moment of your day.

Beauty is before me, and  
 Beauty is behind me,  
 Above me and below me hovers the beautiful.  
 I am surrounded by it,  
 I am immersed in it.  
 In my youth, I am aware of it,  
 And in my old age,  
 I shall walk quietly the beautiful trail  
 In beauty it is begun  
 In beauty it is ended.  
 - Navajo of North America blessing

### Books to Inspire for Adults

*Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* by John O'Donohue

*Beauty and the Soul: The Extraordinary Power of Everyday Beauty to Heal Your Life* by Piero Ferrucci\*

*The Way of Beauty: Five Meditations For Spiritual Transformation* by Francois Cheng

*Heaven and Earth Are Flowers: Reflections on Ikebana and Buddhism* by Joan D. Stamm

### Books for Children and Young Adults

The Ugly Duckling, Beauty and the Beast, Miss Rumphius, *Wonder*, *Ish*, *Uglies*.

### Films on Beauty

*Girl with the Pearl Earring* is the story of the artist Jan Vermeer (2003)

*American Beauty* winner of 5 Academy Awards (1999)

*The Red Violin* Canadian film by Francois Gerard. (1998)

*Mr. Turner* is the story of the English painter (2014)

### Music

Air by J. S. Bach, Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven, Pachelbel's Canon,  
 You are so Beautiful by Joe Cocker,

### QUOTES:

A spontaneous act of generosity, performed with unselfish grace, is an example of moral beauty, as are certain acts of courage; genuine modesty is a possible example, as is selfless love. Some people appear to possess moral beauty as others possess physical beauty. Although moral beauty may be a natural gift, it is nevertheless more likely to emerge and flourish in societies that appreciate and encourage it. — Yi-Fu Tuan in *Passing Strange and Wonderful*

\*Ferrucci writes: "Beauty is a primary principle that touches all parts and functions of our being. It opens us to the world and brings harmony to our relations with others and with nature; it helps us reach out and touch the entire universe. The world is full of beauty, both hidden and manifest. It is enough to be open, look around, be like a child again. And if we will only give it a little attention, we will find it, we will enjoy it, we will be saved by beauty."

Beauty saves. Beauty heals. Beauty motivates. Beauty unites.  
 Beauty returns us to our origins, and here lies the ultimate act of saving, of healing, of overcoming dualism. Beauty allows us to forget the pain and dwell on the joy.

— Matthew Fox in *Original Blessing*

There is really no good English translation for *adab*.

It means behaving well or good etiquette.

It is acting with heedfulness, beauty, refinement, graciousness, and respect for others.

The Koran teaches us the importance of acting beautifully.

"Do what is beautiful. God loves those who do what is beautiful."

(KORAN 2:195) — Robert Frager in *Heart, Self, & Soul*



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