

The Intoxication of Life



There are many things in life which are intoxicating, but if we considered the nature of life we would realize that there is nothing more intoxicating than our life itself. We can see the truth of this idea when we think of what we were yesterday and compare it with our condition today. Our unhappiness or happiness, our riches or poverty of yesterday are like a dream to us; it is only today's condition that counts.

Man in his life in the activity of the world is just like a piece of wood, lifted by the waves of the sea when they rise up, and cast down when they subside. That is why the Hindus have called the life of the world Bhavasagara, an ocean, an ever rising ocean. And man is floating on this ocean of worldly activity, not knowing what he is doing, not knowing where he is going. What seems to him of importance is only the moment which he calls the present; the past is a dream, the future is in a mist, and the only thing clear to him is the present.

The Winged Heart

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*These quotations were selected from the works of
Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan*

The more one thinks of man's life in the world the more one comes to the understanding that it is not very different from the life of a child. The child takes a fancy to a doll and then it gets tired of that doll and wants another toy. But at the moment when it takes a fancy to the doll or the toy it thinks it the most valuable thing in the world; and then there comes a time when it throws away the doll and destroys the toy. And so it is with man; his scope is perhaps a little different, but his action is the same. All that man considers important in life, such as the collection of wealth, the possession of property, the attainment of fame, or the rising to a position he may think ideal, all these objects have only an intoxicating effect on him; and after attaining the object he is not satisfied. He thinks that there is perhaps something else he wants, that it was not this that he wanted. Whatever he wants he feels to be the most important of all, but after attaining it he no longer thinks it is important at all; he wants something else.

Every stimulus that one experiences through food and drink is really a small intoxication. But it is not only the food that one eats, the water that one drinks, and all that one sees and hears and touches that has an influence, an effect, on a man's being and intoxicates him; even the air that he breathes from morning till evening is continually giving him a stimulus and an intoxication. If this is true, is there then one moment when a man is not intoxicated? He is always intoxicated, only sometimes more so than others.

A man's absorption in the affairs of his life also keeps him intoxicated; and besides the intoxication of his work and affairs in which his mind is absorbed, there is a third intoxication, and that is the attachment that a man has to himself, the sympathy he has with himself. It is this intoxication which makes him selfish, greedy, and very often unjust towards his fellow-men. The effect of this intoxication is that a man is continually feeling, thinking, and acting with the idea in mind of what would be to his interest, what could bring him an advantage; and in this idea his whole life and all his time become fully involved. It is this intoxication that makes him say, 'This one is my friend and that one is my enemy; this one is my well-wisher, but that one is against me'; and it is this intoxication that builds the ego, the false ego of man.

In moments of soberness a man wonders, 'If this is intoxication, then what is reality? I would like to know what reality is.' But to know reality not only the eyes and ears are necessary, but soberness too is needed to hear and see better.

Soberness is very difficult to find. The intoxicating effect of life is overwhelming and keeps man from a clear understanding. Therefore, however far advanced a person may be in the spiritual life, he can never be too sure that he will not become intoxicated; for he experiences intoxication in everything he does. That is why one cannot be too conscientious, ever. There are many who are confused, who do not know what they are doing; but a conscientious person does not hesitate. He is always wide awake, and he always knows whether he has done right or not. He does what he believes is right, and when that happens to turn out wrong, he will see to it that it is right next time.

The higher intoxication cannot be compared with the lower intoxication of this world, but it is still intoxication. What is joy? What is fear? What is anger? What is passion? What is the feeling of attachment, and what is the feeling of detachment? All these have the effect of wine, all produce intoxication.

Understanding this mystery, the Sufis have founded their culture upon the principle of intoxication. They call this intoxication Hal, and Hal means, literally, condition or state. There is a saying of the Sufis, 'Man speaks and acts according to his condition.' One cannot speak or act differently from the wine one has drunk. With the one who has drunk the wine of anger, whatever he says or does is irritating; with the one who has drunk the wine of detachment, in his thought, speech and action you will find nothing but detachment; with the one who drinks the wine of attachment, you will find in his presence that all are drawn to him and that he is drawn to all. Everything a person does and says is according to the wine that he has taken. That is why the Sufi says, 'Heaven and hell are in the hand of man, if he only knew their mystery.' To a Sufi the world is like a wine-cellar, a store in which all sorts of wines are collected. He has only to choose what wine he will have and what wine will bring him the delight which is the longing of his soul.

The whole of life is interesting because it is all intoxicating; but what is really desired by the soul is one thing only, and that is a glimpse of soberness. What is this glimpse of soberness and how does one experience this glimpse of soberness which is the continual longing of the soul? One experiences it by means of meditation, by means of concentration. But if it is a natural thing, why has one to make an effort for it? The reason is that one enjoys this intoxication so much that afterwards one

becomes addicted to drink. And that is the condition of every soul in this world; every soul becomes addicted to the wine of life. At the same time there comes a moment, if not in the early part of life, then later, if not when a person is happy, then when he is unhappy, when he begins to look for that soberness which is the continual longing of his soul. The Sufi culture therefore is a culture designed in order to experience that soberness.

It is no doubt very difficult to explain how this soberness is attained; yet after having explained this subject of intoxication it is less difficult. For it is really as simple as saying that the way to give up drink is to keep the drink away and to remain without drink for a time. There are three principal wines, three principal intoxications: the intoxication of one's self, the intoxication of one's occupation, and the third intoxication which is what the senses feel every moment; and these three wines cannot all be taken away at once. It would be just like taking away his life's sustenance from a person who lives on wine. But one can set a person a certain time and see that during that time he keeps sober and only takes two wines, not three; and that he next tries to take only one, not two. And as a person advances in meditative life he may arrive at that stage where the three wines on which he lives may all be withheld and yet he still feels that he can live; and so he will become convinced that he can exist without these three intoxications. Verily, this conviction of existing independently of these three wines, which bring man the

Special Notice

Sufi Order Classes in Toronto

- Classes will not be held during the month of August.
- They will resume on Wednesday, September 7.

Sufi Order classes in Brampton

- Please contact [REDACTED]

realization of external life, is the essence of the divine message and of all religions.

When the time comes that the intoxication of life begins to diminish and man begins to look at life differently, what comes first is a kind of depression, a kind of disappointment in things and beings. He thinks that all he had considered valuable has lost its value and importance. He begins to see falsehood behind all he had thought was so real and a kind of depression, of disappointment and bitterness begins to come over him. Be not surprised if a thoughtful person shows disappointment and changes his point of view about things he once considered valuable and important. His looking at things from a different point of view is natural. No doubt those who surround him begin to say, "These are the dishes you enjoyed so much, these the things you valued so much a few months ago. What has happened? Some change has come over you!" It is so, a change has come and the person has taken a step forwards. This change, this sort of disappointment he may show more or less. The more thoughtful the person the less he shows it, and the less thoughtful the more he shows bitterness: it is according to his evolution. One person shows his disappointment in tears, another in smiles. The one who shows it in smiles is superior; it is the way one should take in life.

This life is a wine-press; from that wine-press each person takes that wine which is made for him. The one who looks at it all as a cafe where everyone is drinking, that person is called sober. He sees each person intoxicated, and he too chooses his wine—but he chooses it, he drinks the wine and at the same time knows that it is wine.

Impulse is intoxicating; action is absorbing; but it is the result of every deed that leads man to realization.

Coming Events

June 3-5, Rochester, NY: (10 am Friday through noon Sunday.) The metaphysics of dreams with **Shahabuddin David Less**. Learn to apply the mind and will to transform dreams and to use dreams and other states experienced during sleep to illuminate the soul. For more information, please contact [REDACTED]

June 10-12, Kingston, ON: A workshop with Rev. **Tasnim Hermila Fernandez**. Sufi practices and Dances of Universal Peace. For information, please contact **Munira Judith Avinger**, javinger@serti.com (450-263-[REDACTED])

Activities

The Message Class: provides an opportunity to experience the teachings and practices of the Sufi Order on an ongoing basis. These classes, based on teachings given by Hazrat Inayat Khan and Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, are deepened through the use of complementary meditation practices which may use the breath, light, Dhikr (remembrance of God) and Wazifa (mantra).

Classes in the Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan are held, in **Toronto**, each **Wednesday at 8:30 pm** and, in **Brampton**, every **Thursday at 8:00 pm**. The last meeting of each month is dedicated to the practice of Dhikr. For this evening only, no instruction is offered.

Dhikr: means remembrance of God. Participants unite in intensive exploration and experience of this central practice of the Sufis. *If you have never been to Dhikr, please call in advance.*

Healing Circle: Open to members of the Sufi Healing Order. The Healing Circle is held in Brampton, at 9:30 am, on Saturdays. If you wish to attend, please phone [REDACTED].

Universal Worship Service: [REDACTED]

Contact Information