

The Inner Life

These quotations have been selected from the works of Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, the founder of the Sufi Order International.



The inner life is a birth of the soul; as Christ said, that unless the soul is born again it cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore the realization of the inner life is entering the kingdom of heaven; and this consciousness when it comes to the human being shows itself as a new birth, and with this new birth there comes the assurance of everlasting life.

The inner life is lived by living with the primal cause, by being in unity with the primal cause. Therefore the one who lives the inner life, in other words, who lives the life of God, God is in him and he is in God.

There are five aspects which give one the tendency towards the accomplishment of the inner purpose: desire to live, desire to know, desire for power, desire for happiness and desire for peace. These five things work consciously or unconsciously in the profound depth of every soul. Working within one, they prompt one either to do right or to do wrong, and yet these five aspects belong to the one

purpose in the accomplishment of which the purpose of the whole creation is fulfilled. When the desire to live brings one in touch with one's real life, a life which is not subject to death, then the purpose of that desire is accomplished; when one has been able to perceive fully the knowledge of one's own being, in which is to be found divine knowledge and the mystery of the whole manifestation, then the purpose of knowledge is attained; when one is able to get in touch with the Almighty Power, then the desire for power is achieved; when one has been able to find one's happiness in one's own heart, independent of all things outside, the purpose of the desire for happiness is fulfilled; when one is able to rise above all conditions and influences which disturb the peace of the soul and has found one's peace in the midst of the crowd and away from the world, in him the desire for peace is satisfied. It is not in one or the other of these five desires that there is the accomplishment of the purpose; it is in the fulfillment of these five desires that one purpose is accomplished, the purpose for which every soul was born on earth. Those who live the inner life have to adopt a certain outer form of living in the world amidst people of all kindsVery often these souls are found in such forms of life that one could never imagine for one moment that they were having the inner life. It is for this reason that the wise of all ages have taught respect for every human being, whatever be his outward character, and have advised man to think who is beneath that garb, and what it is.

There is no end to the variety of the outward appearance of spiritual souls in life; but, at the same time, there is no better way of living in this world and yet living the inner life than being oneself, outwardly and inwardly. Whatever be one's profession, work, or part in the outer life, to perform it sincerely and truthfully, to fulfil one's mission in the outer life thoroughly; at the same time keeping the inner realization that the outer life, whatever be one's occupation, should reflect the inner realization of truth.

One might ask, 'Would the outer purpose lead to the inner purpose of life?' Certainly it would. Everything a person does, spiritual or material, is only a stepping-stone for him to arrive at the inner purpose, if he can only take it to be so. If he is mistaken, the mistake is in himself; he is working towards the inner purpose just the same. For all is created to work as one scheme, and therefore each

individual is acting towards the accomplishment of the divine purpose. If there is a difference, the difference is of that particular individual.

The bees, who have the gift of making honey, are taught how to make honey. So nature has taught every soul to seek its purpose. It has made every soul for that purpose, and it is continually calling that soul to see that purpose. If the soul does not hear the call and sleeps, it is not the fault of nature, which is continually calling. Therefore, if I were to say in a few words how to find one's purpose, I would say: by waking from sleep.

The ultimate purpose for which the soul is seeking every moment of our life, is our spiritual purpose. And you may ask how to attain to that purpose. The answer is that what you are seeking for is within yourself. Instead of looking outside, you must look within. The way to proceed to accomplish this is for some moments to suspend all your senses such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, in order to put a screen before the outside life; and by concentration and by developing that meditative quality you will sooner or later get in touch with the inner self which is more communicative, which speaks more loudly than all the noises of this world; and this gives joy, creates peace, and produces in you a self-sufficient spirit, a spirit of independence, of true liberty. The moment you get in touch with your self you are in communion with God. It is in this way, if God-communication is sought rightly, that spirituality is attained.

Refrain from doing that which hinders you from accomplishing the purpose in your inner and your external life. Do not act against your ideal, for it will never be satisfactory to you; you will not be pleased with yourself and this inharmony in your inner and your external self will prevent peace, which is your life's craving, without which life becomes unhappy. 'Right' is the straight path which the soul is inclined to take in life, but when one walks astray, leaving the straight path in life owing either to negligence or ignorance, or by reason of weakness, or by the attraction of some temptation on the way, one can say that is wrong.

In our inner being we are both source and goal itself. It is only our ignorance of this which keeps us ignorant of our own being.

Man experiences a kingliness of soul when he gets into touch with his inner being, and he experiences slavery, in spite of all that he may possess in life, if he has not come into touch with his inner self.

Inner life must not be considered, as many have thought it to be, a life which is spent in the forest or in a cave of the mountain or in retirement. Naturally certain people need to seek solitude--those who prefer to be away from the turmoil of the world, whose inspiration is stimulated and who find themselves by being alone; but it is not a necessity for attaining happiness. One can be in the midst of the world and yet stand above the world. Life has many woes, and the only way to get rid of them is to stand above them all; and this can be attained by one thing and one thing only--by the discovery of the inner life.

How insignificant a human being appears to be, just like a drop in the sea, yet what effects does he create by every thought, by every feeling, by every act! And what influence they spread, what influence they have on the lives of others! If one only realized this one would find that the results of all one thinks, says, or does in the outer life are incomparably smaller than the results produced by what one thinks, says, or does in the inner life. Thus the consciousness of the inner life makes man more responsible than that of the outer life. The responsibilities of the outer life, compared

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with the responsibilities of the inner life, are much smaller. For the moment they might appear to be heavy burdens, but they are nothing compared with the responsibilities one has in one's inner life.

It is the development of trust in the heart, the development of faith, that first gives a man a friendly attitude to himself; and he becomes his own friend by bringing his external being into harmony with his inner being. For it is when the inner being seeks one thing, and the external being does something else, that there is disharmony in the self. When the higher self desires to go one way, and the lower self another way, then there is disharmony, the result of which is like a volcanic eruption. The two parts of his own being which should unite together in love, clash together and the result is fire. What causes people to commit suicide? What brings illness and depression and despair? Very often the conflict which exists within oneself, and therefore the attitude towards oneself must first be friendly, kindly, and harmonious. Even in spiritual matters one should not go against oneself. I remember that when beginning to get interested in spiritual matters I once asked my teacher, 'Murshid, do you approve of my staying up most of the night for my vigils?' 'Whom do you torture?' said my murshid, 'Yourself? Is God pleased with it?' I had not another word to say.

People are often anxious to do a certain thing, and wait for years and years, unhappy, in despair, for the right moment to come. The soul knows subconsciously that there is a note to be struck, and at the moment when it strikes that note, this soul will be satisfied; and yet the soul does not know what note it is nor when it will be struck. What is life, and what keeps us living in this world of limitation, this world of continual changes, full of falsehood and full of suffering and trouble? If there is anything in this world that keeps us alive it is hope, the honey of life. There is not one soul in this world who will say, 'Now I am satisfied, I have no further desire.' In everyone, whatever be his position in life, very rich or very poor, full of health or ailing, in all conditions man is continually yearning and waiting for something to come; he does not know what, but he is waiting for something to come. The real explanation of life is waiting; waiting for something. And what is it that man awaits? It is the fulfillment of the purpose of life, which

comes when the soul strikes that note, the note which is meant to be that soul's note; this it seeks, whether on the outer plane or the inner plane. Man has not fulfilled his life's purpose until he has struck that note which is his note, and the greatest tragedy in life is obscurity of purpose. When the purpose is not clear man suffers; he cannot breathe. He does not know what to do. This life will present him with things that will interest him for the moment, but as soon as he possesses them he will say, 'No, this is not it; it is something else.' So man goes on in illusion, constantly seeking, and yet not knowing what he seeks. Blessed is he who knows his life's purpose, for that is the first step to fulfillment.

The soul's true happiness lies in experiencing the inner joy, and it will never be fully satisfied with outer seeming pleasures. Its connection is with God, and nothing short of perfection will ever satisfy it. The purpose of life is to become aware of our imperfections, and to mourn for them. The whole universe in miniature is within man, and as the earth is composed of land and water, so the mind of man is like land and water, the water under the land, and the land above the water. The land represents the thoughts and imaginations, while the water represents the feelings; and just as the water rises and falls, so it is with the emotions and feelings of man. The people who only know the lighter side of life, and who are afraid to have their feelings touched, represent the land through which the water has never pierced. If one wishes to see a foreign country, the water has to be crossed, and so it is with those who wish to fare forth to the world unseen; they have to cross the water of feeling, and the land needs to be pierced in order that the waters may rise.

The one who tunes himself not only to the external but also to the inner being and to the essence of all things, gets an insight into the essence of the Whole Being, and therefore he can find and enjoy that fragrance and flower which he sees in the rose, to the same extent even in the seed.

What is needed is not to know; what is needed, is to be.