

What is wanted in life?

If this question were asked of several people each would perhaps make out a list of not less than one thousand things that one wants in life. And after writing one thousand things that one wants in life, one rarely knows what one really wants. What one apparently wants in life is not what one really wants in life because the nature of the outer life is illusion. As soon as one feels, "I want this in life," then the world of illusion answers, "Yes, you want me in life; this is the particular thing you want in life." When a person finds a lack in life, they only find the outer lack; they do not find the lack which is within themselves.

Coming to the central theme I would say that if there is anything that we can all be in accord with, it is that what we lack in life is to be tuned with the Infinite and to be in rhythm with the finite. In simple words, to be in rhythm with the conditions of life and to be in tune with the source of our existence.

I should like to explain more plainly what I mean by being in rhythm with the conditions of life. Our perpetual complaint against all things in life comes from our not being in rhythm with the diverse conditions of life that we have to face. We think that if these conditions change into something that we wish, it would make life easier. But that is an inexperienced expectation. If we were placed in the same condition that we just now desired as best, we would not say we are quite satisfied; we would then find lacks in that condition also.

With all errors and mistakes and lacks which we find in our external life, we see a perfect hand working behind it all. And if we looked at life a little further than we look at it generally, we would certainly find that all the lacks and errors and mistakes and faults sum up into something, making life as complete as the wise hands which are working behind it wish it to be.

There is a Persian saying: "The gardener of this garden of the world knows best which plant to rear and which to remove." One might say that involves too much of what they call fatalism. No, I do not wish to take you further into fatalism. Now I want to bring you into the sphere of action. In this place what I wanted to do was touch the bounds of fatalism and now come to the sphere of action. There is a great deal in the hand of each person to improve his or her life's condition, if only one does not lose one's patience before a desirable condition is brought about and if one's courage and hope have not been exhausted.

Now the question is, how can one come into at-one-ment with the rhythm of life, in other words, with the conditions of life? A condition of life and one's own desire are two conflicting things;



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if not always conflicting, mostly they are conflicting. If desire gives in to the condition, then condition gets the upper hand, and if the condition is master then no doubt desire has the upper hand. But the condition is not always mastered by a conflict or by a struggle. There is always caution needed in fighting a condition in life.

If by peace a harmony can be established, it is better to avoid battling. If one can harmonize with a condition in life without struggling, it is better than to harmonize by struggling with it. Be not surprised if I say that those who complain most about life and those are very disappointed and very much troubled with life are the ones who struggle most with the conditions of life.

Therefore in coming into at-one-ment with the conditions of life one need not always use a weapon; one must first try to harmonize with a particular condition of life. The great heroes who have really fought through life and gained life's victory in the real sense of the word, have not been those who fought with conditions, but those who made peace with the conditions of life. The secret in the lives of great Sufis in whichever part of the world they have been has been that they met conditions-favorable or unfavorable with a view toward coming into at-one-ment with the rhythm of life.

The desire is sometimes our friend and sometimes our enemy. In unfavorable conditions desire becomes agitated and loses its patience, and desire wishes to break the condition. Instead of breaking conditions, it breaks itself. The great souls have given their hands first to their worst enemy, because the ones who make their enemy their friend will make their friend their own self. A condition as bitter as poison will be turned into nectar if you will get into rhythm with that condition, understand that condition, and sustain that condition with patience, courage, and hope.

When conditions are favorable, a person is very often afraid that this might pass, but when conditions are adverse, one does not generally say that it will pass: one thinks that it will last forever. What does it come from? It comes from fear of the condition; it comes from agitation and the desire to get out of it, so that one even loses hope, the only source that keeps us alive.

We see the nature of life: morning till evening everything in life changes. Why, therefore, should we not hope that an unfavorable

condition will change and a favorable condition will come? A person gets into a habit of expecting the worst. A person who has some bad experiences through life always thinks that whatever comes cannot be good; "Nothing good will come to me because I have gone through bad circumstances." One thinks, "Anyone else can have a better time than me because I was born with that unfavorable star, and I have that unfortunate condition to go through in my life."

There are many imaginative and intelligent people who, day after day, read the newspapers and draw the conclusion that there must be a war. Every little struggle they read about gives them the idea that the world is going to pieces. Other people interested in astrology, who have gone further than ordinary astrology, expect the end of the world year after year, month after month. It gives people a topic to speak about at the dinner table, and at the same time it gives a shock to those who wish to live a little longer than the world's end. Many such dangers of world destruction have passed, but the prophecy and expectation still remain and it will continue. What I mean to say is that the best thing is to go through every condition that life presents with patience, understanding, open eyes, and to try to rise above it with every little effort one can make.

Now coming to the other side of the subject, how can one be in tune with the infinite? The nature of being in tune with the infinite can be seen by comparing one's soul to the string of an instrument. It is tied at both sides: one is the infinite and the other is the finite. When a person is conscious all the time of the finite then he or she is tuned with the finite, and the one who is conscious of the infinite is tuned with the infinite. Being in tune with one makes us limited, weak, hopeless, and powerless: by being in tune with the other we obtain the power and strength to pull through life under all adverse conditions.

The work that a Sufi considers his or her sacred work has nothing to do with any particular creed nor with any particular religion; it is only this simple thing which I have just said: to be in rhythm with life's conditions and to be in tune with the infinite.

How can you act in accord with life? Instead of being frightened by life's condition, meet it and observe it keenly and then try to harmonize for that time with that condition. The next effort is to rise above it, if it is adverse. For instance, a young Arab was sleeping in the field and a serpent happened to walk over his palm and he in his sleep unknowingly held the serpent with all his might. Therefore the serpent was helpless and could not bite. As soon as he awoke from his sleep he was frightened at the sight of the snake in his hand, and he at once let it go. As soon as the serpent was out of his hand, the first thing it did was sting.

One can manage a condition better when it is in one's hand than when the condition has been lost; then the situation is out of one's hand. For instance, if a person is cross or has lost his or her temper, the natural tendency is to give the person back the same as they gave. The outcome is a struggle; it culminates in disappointment. But when the person is cross and has lost his or her temper, he or she is the weak one at that time, and that is the time that you can manage the person. That is the time that the situation is in your hand. That person is weak, you are strong.

If one wishes to improve one's position in life, and everything depends upon others, does one not run the risk of creating by this same action a worse situation for those near one, particularly those for whom one has affection? For example, someone wishes to become very rich, and if he or she becomes extremely rich, everyone is in a sort of slavery towards him or her. This slavery will weigh very heavily upon one. Our life in this world is dependent upon one another, and wealth, however powerful it seems to be, in the end is not so powerful as it appears to be. Its power is limited and it does not always take away that dependence that a person has upon another.

The whole thing is to meet one's condition with understanding and with complete resignation that one shall not improve one's condition. No, the first thing is to meet the condition as it is, and the second thing is to better the condition. The less conflict one can use in it the better; the more one can avoid the conflict, the better it is. For instance, you are traveling through the wilderness and you meet a robber who says, "I am going to take your life unless you give me your purse." I say that in order to meet this situation the first thing you can do is reason with the person and get out of the danger without having to kill him or her. We cannot always avoid conflict and we must not turn our backs if it comes to conflict. After all, life is a struggle, and we must be ready to struggle, only struggle must not make us drunk so that we lose the way of peace which is the first consideration. We must not be like a boxer who is always looking for another person with whom to box. What is the other way? The way of tuning oneself to the infinite. That way is by the way of silence and meditation. It is by thinking something which is beyond and above all things of this mortal world and giving some moments of our life to that which is the source and goal of all of us, in the thought of getting in tune

with that source. In that source alone is the secret of our happiness and peace.

Special Notice

- Classes in Toronto have been cancelled for December 26th and January 2nd.
- Classes in Brampton will be held as usual.

Coming Events

December 8-9, in Rochester, NY: A weekend with Shahabuddin Less. This will be an intensive weekend focusing on World Healing. For information, visit the Toronto Sufi Order website or contact Zaynab by phone at 716-248-0427 or via email at zaynab@frontiernet.net

December 31: News Year's Eve — We apologize but, this year, we will not be holding an event on New Year's Eve.

March 22-24 in Niagara Falls, ON: A residential retreat with Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz and Kamae A. Miller. **This event is full!** To have your name added to the waitlist, please contact Fred Habib Maycock by phone at (416) 778-5318 or via email at fredhabib@compuserve.com.

June 22-23 in Toronto: A weekend of Sufi teachings and practices with Aziza Scott. Details to be announced.

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 Sirdar at (905) 452-6358.

Universal Worship Service: Universal Worship Services are held at 1:30 pm on the second Sunday of the month, except July and August, at the Gallery Arcturus, 80 Gerrard Street East. For more information, please contact Leslie Gabriel Mezei at (416) 226-2869.

Dances of Universal Peace: Dancing is held on the *first and third Friday of each month*. The location is **Bloor Street United Church, 300 Bloor Street West** (at the corner of Bloor & Huron Streets, just West of the St. George subway station). We begin at 7:30 pm.

We use your donations to cover our costs so that we can continue dancing. We suggest a donation of \$6 - \$10.

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