

## **Inner Call Podcast 164 How much is enough? April 27 2022**

The sayings of Jesus Christ and the Prophet Mohammed posted in the Inner Call on April 25<sup>th</sup> might make a thoughtful person uneasy. Both of these great souls, from whom millions of followers take – or claim to take – spiritual guidance, say that poverty is preferable to abundance. We might also remember the story from the gospel, of the rich man who asked the advice of Jesus, and was told to sell all he had and give it to the poor so that he would have treasure in heaven (rather than on the earth, presumably). Does it mean that we must renounce our material wealth if we want to follow a spiritual path? And if that is the message, why should this be so? Must we seek an uncomfortable life? We might ask, what would be the point of creation if we were forbidden to enjoy it?

Of course, it is false reasoning to equate the appreciation of creation with the possession of riches. No admission is charged for the jewelled night sky, nor for the dawn chorus of birds celebrating the gift of another day. Both the rising of the sun and the sunrise of a child's smile are free. But as every parent will know, raising a child is not; food, clothes, shoes, school, medicine, a comfortable home – all come at a cost, and there never seems to be enough money. So why should we be concerned about abundance?

Hazrat Inayat Khan knew both abundance and material hardship in his own life – in India, he knew the highly variable fortunes of a musician, sometimes with nothing in his pocket for a train ticket, and sometimes a welcome guest in the marbled halls of royalty. When he came to the west, he became a wandering and penniless dervish, with a wife and ultimately four children to care for. Therefore, his teachings on the subject of wealth are correspondingly nuanced. In Gayan Boudha, we find, "*Many evils are born of riches, but still more are bred in poverty.*" On the other hand, in Vadan Tanas, when the mystic asks earthly riches to explain its character, the response concludes, "*The one who does not possess me is poor indeed, but the one who possesses me is poorer still.*"

Perhaps we can find here a clue to the matter. To be 'spiritual' does not mean to become unnatural; on the contrary, it is most natural, for in reality our true nature is spirit. To be spiritual, then, only means to turn our attention from the temporary dream of the material to the enduring reality of the unseen. Whether we are poor or rich, until we make that change in outlook, we are still caught in the illusion, and getting free will be difficult. If we are engrossed in a dream about our treasures, in which we have unwittingly become the servant of our bank account, then redirecting our attention will be as hard as it is to change the course of any dream we see in our sleep. And on the other hand, if we are suffering from a poverty we have not chosen, we will dream of finding wealth, and that will also make it hard to lift our gaze from the earth.

While we live in this world, then, perhaps the wisest course would be to ask for enough, and no more than enough. As it says in Gayan Chalas: *Means sufficient for the simple needs of everyday life are a greater boon than the riches that add to life's struggle.*