

Seeking True Happiness

Not Drugs, Alcohol, Sex

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Happiness

The consumer culture

Materialism's gospel of human betterment produced today's consumer culture pursuing ephemeral goals.

For the small minority of people who can afford them, the benefits it offers are immediate, and the rationale unapologetic.

The breakdown of traditional morality has led to the triumph of animal impulse, as instinctive and blind as appetite.

The consumer culture

Selfishness becomes a prized commercial resource; falsehood reinvents itself as public information; greed, lust, indolence, pride - even violence - acquire not merely broad acceptance but social and economic value.

(based on Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, 2005)

Profit from Addiction

In our present materialistic society, making people dependent by cultivating an addiction is profitable. There are pleasure centres in the brain that evolved to reward good behaviours, but can be manipulated to trap people through a chemical, hormonal or psychological addiction.

Profit from Addiction

Criminals profit from narcotic drug dealing. Whole industries are based on addiction to alcohol and nicotine. The pleasures of sex are cultivated and magnified through the media, leading to compulsive behaviours, rape, gender violence and prostitution. Social media, gambling and many games create psychological dependence through content and actions triggering the same brain centres as cocaine.

Materialism without Spirituality

The consumer society cultivates a material image of happiness, based on the superficial pleasures of our animal nature.

The lack of spirituality, of an awareness of our spiritual potential and purpose, and of the means to cultivate this that come from religion, leaves a vacuum that people are desperate to fill.

Youth are particularly vulnerable, as adolescence is a time of experimentation and peer pressures to conform.

A difficult subject for discourse

It is not easy to talk about difficult and controversial subjects like alcohol, drugs and sex. Trying these is seen as part of growing up. Group pressure among young people is strong. The Bahá'í laws are strict and do not try to be popular. Out of their context, they may seem puritanical and unrealistic.

Dangers of Addiction

It may not seem harmful just to try things that everyone is doing, especially when they seem to give immediate pleasure. The danger is that all these things are addictive, or habit-forming. Once you start, it is very difficult to stop. By the time you realize this, it is too late.

Human Purpose

What really makes us happy? Superficial pleasures or something deeper? What is our true human purpose? 'Abdu'l-Bahá talks about felicity (being supremely happy).

True Felicity

The honour and exaltation of man cannot reside solely in material delights and earthly benefits. This material felicity is wholly secondary, while the exaltation of man resides primarily in such virtues and attainments as are the adornments of the human reality. These consist in divine blessings, heavenly bounties, heartfelt emotions, the love and knowledge of God, the education of the people, the perceptions of the mind, and the discoveries of science.

True Felicity

They consist in justice and equity, truthfulness and benevolence, inner courage and innate humanity, safeguarding the rights of others and preserving the sanctity of covenants and agreements.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [Some Answered Questions](#), §15)

True Felicity

They consist in rectitude of conduct under all circumstances, love of truth under all conditions, self-abnegation for the good of all people, kindness and compassion for all nations, obedience to the teachings of God, service to the heavenly Kingdom, guidance for all mankind, and education for all races and nations. This is the felicity of the human world!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, §15)

Human Happiness

All the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their vaunted civilisation, sink and drown in this terrifying sea of passion and desire, and this is why all the phenomena of their culture come to nothing. Let no one wonder at this statement or deplore it.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization, pp.60-61)

Human Happiness

The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilisation, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization, pp.60-61)

Human Happiness

A superficial culture, unsupported by a cultivated morality, is as “a confused medley of dreams,” and external lustre without inner perfection is “like a vapour in the desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water.” For results which would win the good pleasure of God and secure the peace and well-being of man, could never be fully achieved in a merely external civilisation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization, pp.60-61)

The role of religion

Sincerity is the foundation-stone of faith. That is, a religious individual must disregard his personal desires and seek in whatever way he can wholeheartedly to serve the public interest; and it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith.

For self-love is kneaded into the very clay of man, and it is not possible that, without any hope of a substantial reward, he should neglect his own present material good.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization)

The role of religion

That individual, however, who puts his faith in God and believes in the words of God—because he is promised and certain of a plentiful reward in the next life, and because worldly benefits as compared to the abiding joy and glory of future planes of existence are nothing to him—will for the sake of God abandon his own peace and profit and will freely consecrate his heart and soul to the common good.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization)

The Bahá'í Laws

Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, His book of laws, and other works, provides laws concerning drugs, alcohol, and sex outside marriage. These are often further explained in notes to those laws from the Universal House of Justice.

Drugs prohibited

Gambling and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those who transgress. Beware of using any substance that induceth sluggishness and torpor in the human temple and inflicteth harm upon the body. We, verily, desire for you naught save what shall profit you, and to this bear witness all created things, had ye but ears to hear.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.155)



Drugs prohibited

It hath been forbidden you to smoke opium. We, truly, have prohibited this practice through a most binding interdiction in the Book. Should anyone partake thereof, assuredly he is not of Me. Fear God, O ye endued with understanding!

(Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.190)

Drugs prohibited

This prohibition of the use of opium is reiterated by Bahá'u'lláh in the final paragraph of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. In this connection, Shoghi Effendi stated that one of the requirements for “a chaste and holy life” is “total abstinence ... from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs.” Heroin, hashish and other derivatives of cannabis such as marijuana, as well as hallucinogenic agents such as LSD, peyote and similar substances, are regarded as falling under this prohibition.

(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 170)

Drugs prohibited

As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)

Drugs prohibited

May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, [The Kitáb-i-Aqdas](#), note 170)

Drugs prohibited

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned. It is, however, mandatory that the use of opium be prevented by any means whatsoever, that perchance the human race may be delivered from this most powerful of plagues. And otherwise, woe and misery to whoso falleth short of his duty to his Lord.

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)*

Drugs prohibited

In one of His Tablets ‘Abdu’l–Bahá has stated concerning opium: *“the user, the buyer and the seller are all deprived of the bounty and grace of God.”*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)

Drugs prohibited

Regarding hashish you have pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek the fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful?

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)*

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but this opium, this foul fruit of the infernal tree, and this wicked hashish extinguish the mind, freeze the spirit, petrify the soul, waste the body and leave man frustrated and lost.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)

Medical prescription

It should be noted that the above prohibition against taking certain classes of drugs does not forbid their use when prescribed by qualified physicians as part of a medical treatment.

(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 170)

Intoxicants prohibited

It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away. Nay, rather it behooveth him to comport himself in a manner worthy of the human station, and not in accordance with the misdeeds of every heedless and wavering soul.

Alcohol Prohibited

Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not that which deadeneth your minds...

(Baha'u'llah, quoted in *Advent of Diving Justice*, p.27)

Alcoholic drinks

There are many references in the Bahá'í Writings which prohibit the use of wine and other intoxicating drinks and which describe the deleterious effect of such intoxicants on the individual. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states: *Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless, the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty.* [\(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 144\)](#)

Alcoholic drinks

‘Abdu’l–Bahá explains that the Aqdas prohibits “*both light and strong drinks,*” and He states that the reason for prohibiting the use of alcoholic drinks is because “*alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body.*”

(note in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 144)

Alcoholic drinks

Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, states that this prohibition includes not only the consumption of wine but of “everything that deranges the mind,” and he clarifies that the use of alcohol is permitted only when it constitutes part of a medical treatment which is implemented “under the advice of a competent and conscientious physician, who may have to prescribe it for the cure of some special ailment.”

(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 144)

Sex for pleasure

When animal lust expressed in sex is seen only as a source of pleasure, rather than to reinforce a marriage relationship, found a family, and raise children for the next generation, it leads to many deviations: sex outside of marriage, abortion to get rid of unwanted children, sex for domination or as an instrument of war, homosexuality LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and others)

Sex is permissible

The Bahá'í teachings on sexual morality center on marriage and the family as the bedrock of the whole structure of human society and are designed to protect and strengthen that divine institution. Bahá'í law thus restricts permissible sexual intercourse to that between a man and the woman to whom he is married.

(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 134)

Marriage

*God hath prescribed matrimony unto you....
Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may
bring forth one who will make mention of Me
amid My servants. This is My bidding unto
you; hold fast to it as an assistance to
yourselves.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, [The Kitab-i-Aqdas](#), para.63)

Sex

O people of the world! Follow not the promptings of the self, for it summoneth insistently to wickedness and lust; follow, rather, Him Who is the Possessor of all created things, Who biddeth you to show forth piety, and manifest the fear of God.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.64)

Sex

Commit not that which is forbidden you in Our Holy Tablet, and be not of those who rove distractedly in the wilderness of their desires.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.107)

Adultery

God hath imposed a fine on every adulterer and adulteress.... Such is the penalty which He Who is the Lord of Names hath assigned them in this world; and in the world to come He hath ordained for them a humiliating torment.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.49)

Sex outside marriage

The Arabic word... here translated as “*adultery*,” signifies both fornication and adultery. It applies not only to sexual relations between a married person and someone who is not his or her spouse, but also to extramarital sexual intercourse in general. One form... is rape.

Sex outside marriage

‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to some of the spiritual and social implications of the violation of the laws of morality.... He indicates that the aim of this law is to make clear to all that such an action is shameful in the eyes of God and that, in the event that the offense can be established..., the principal purpose is the exposure of the offenders—that they are shamed and disgraced in the eyes of society. He affirms that such exposure is in itself the greatest punishment.

(note in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 77)

Homosexuality

No matter how devoted and fine the love may be between people of the same sex, to let it find expression in sexual acts is wrong. To say that it is ideal is no excuse. Immorality of every sort is really forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh, and homosexual relationships He looks upon as such, besides being against nature.

(Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 134)

Homosexuality

To be afflicted this way is a great burden to a conscientious soul.

But through the advice and help of doctors, through a strong and determined effort, and through prayer, a soul can overcome this handicap.

(Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, note 134)

Forgiveness

Should anyone be afflicted by a sin, it behooveth him to repent thereof and return unto his Lord. He, verily, granteth forgiveness unto whomsoever He willeth, and none may question that which it pleaseth Him to ordain. He is, in truth, the Ever-Forgiving, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

Discourse on difficult subjects

Such superficial pleasures as alcohol, drugs and sex outside marriage are never really satisfying, leaving an endless desire for more that is exploited in our consumer society. They often become addictive.

Discourse on difficult subjects

We should not judge or reject others because they do not share our values. In the age of the half-light, it is hard not to be influenced by all around us, and to live by the very high Bahá'í standard intended for the emerging future society. That is part of our spiritual growth, to try to set an example.

True Liberty

True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments.... Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings p, 336; Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p.25)

True Liberty

The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings p, 336; Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p.25)