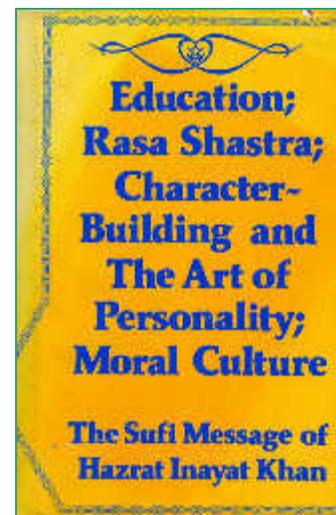


A READER'S TREASURY:

**The Art of Personality
by
Hazrat Inayat Khan
Education, Rasa Shastra, Character-Building, The
Art of Personality and Moral Culture
Volume VI of The Sufi Message Series
Spiritual Science**

Published by Servire Pub, LTD/UK in 1982

A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2003



This volume is devoted to Education, Rasa Shastra (science of life's creative forces), Character-Building,

the Art of Personality, and Moral Culture according to the book jacket's cover. What Hazrat Inayat Khan devoted his life to and with which he filled this twelve volume series of books was this ideal [from page 9 of Preface] : "A person's main task and purpose in life is to become human, in the fullest sense of the world." He adds, "Only after achieving that will it be possible for him to return with full consciousness to the source whence he had come."

How do humans begin their development? As infants, babies, children, and youths and these stages are covered in the first four chapters of this book. Many of our children are now adults raising children of their own, and I wish to offer them the advice that Hazrat Inayat Khan gives on raising children. The passages I have selected from his work are those in which he says something that I would wish to say to my offspring and others raising children and he has already said it.

[page 13] In the Orient there is a superstition that an undesirable person must not be allowed to come near an infant. If the parents or relatives see that a certain person should not be in the presence of an infant, that person is avoided, for the very reason that the infant is like a photographic plate. The soul is negative, fully responsive, and susceptible to every influence; and the first impression that falls on a soul takes root in it.

In the science of doyletics, which I helped to found, we understand that every event that occurs to a child before it reaches the age of five years old will be stored as an internal state, a physical body state that we call a *doyle*. These doyles form the substrate of every feeling and emotion the child will experience for the rest of its life. These doyles are triggered by some event as an adult and the person experiences an uncomfortable or comfortable feeling. They say, "That makes me feel good" or "That makes me feel bad" but what they are really saying is "That event has triggered a doyle in me of an event that happened to me before five". Doyles are like the "first impression" Khan refers to above, and it takes root. It returns thereafter dependably every time unless one does an unconscious or [conscious doyle trace](#) to extirpate it. The process of rooting up the doyle transplant the event from doylic memory (the realm of feelings) into cognitive memory (the visual, auditory realm of what we normally call simply *memory*).

Allow an undesirable person to come near an infant, and you allow the possibility for negative doyles to affect the infant for the rest of its life. Khan's advice makes very good sense in light of the 21st Century science of doyletics.

[page 14] In educating the child the first rule that must be remembered is that one

person must educate it, not everybody in the family. It is a great mistake when everyone in the family tries to train the infant or to take care of it, because that keeps an infant from forming a character. Each one has his own influence and each influence is different from the other. But most often what happens is that the parents never think of education at all in infancy. They think that is the age when the child is a doll, a toy; that everyone can handle it and play with it. They do not think that it is the most important moment in the soul's life; that never again will that opportunity come for a soul to develop.

Not only is this advice not followed in most families today, but in the school family, it is abused most severely. Children, beginning in early grades, are shuttled from teacher to teacher every hour of the day instead of having one teacher who stays with the same child all day long. One could do no better than to emulate the Steiner Schools or Waldorf Schools in which one teacher teaches one set of students from the first grade to the eighth grade, growing with them each year as they grow in wisdom and knowledge.

[page 15] There are two ways of controlling. One is the way of mastering, and the other is by becoming friends. By mastering you will diminish the will of the person you master; by being friends you will sustain his will-power, and at the same time help. In the one case you make of the person a slave: in other case you make out of that person a king. In training an infant one must remember that his mind-power, which means will-power, must not be diminished, and yet an infant must be controlled.

One way to control is to always use words that create images of *what you want to happen*. I see horrible examples of the opposite behavior in caregivers all the time -- a mother walking down the steps with a three-year-old son tells him, "Don't trip on these stairs or you'll hurt yourself." What images did she conjure up? Tripping and hurting. Try these words instead and notice what images they conjure up in you, "Watch each step you take and we'll get down to bottom in plenty of time to meet Daddy." Creating images such as "tripping" and "getting hurt" agitates the child needlessly and creates the exact opposite of the goal that the parent desires.

[page 16] The best way of teaching the infant discipline is without agitation, without showing any temper or annoyance, only repeating the action before it. For instance, the infant wants something which it should not have, while the guardian wishes that it should play with a particular toy. This toy must be given continually into its hand; and when the child throws it away, or when it cries, give it again; and when the child does not look at it, give it again. By repeating the same action you will bring the infant automatically to respond to you and to obey. It is a wrong method when the guardian wishes to control an infant and wishes to teach it discipline by forcing a certain action upon it. It is repetition which will bring about discipline. It only requires patience. For instance, if the infant is crying for its food or for something else when it is not the time for it, one should attract its attention towards something else, even against its wishes. The best thing is repetition.

Helping a crying baby or infant is one of the highest skills of parenthood. Allowing a child to cry while providing it with a rhythm that will eventually cause the crying to cease is good advice.

[page 17] Should one stop an infant from crying? It is better to distract the mind of a child that is crying than to let it cry, but at the same time it is very natural for a child to cry sometimes. If the child does not cry, it means that there is something lacking in it, that the child is not normal. One must use discretion in how much one allows the child to cry and when to stop it. One can allow it to go as far as a certain rhythm; when it has reached that rhythm, then it must not cry any longer; that is the time to stop it. But when a mother, annoyed with the infant, stops its crying the moment it begins, it has a bad effect on its nervous system. And very often a guardian will put the child into the cradle or somewhere else to cry by itself. But that means leaving it in the same rhythm,

and that does not help. In that way the child will become worse and worse, and more and more nervous every day.

It amazes me how little breast-feeding is done in our modern age. I know a woman who, when she had her first child, tried to nurse the child in the hospital -- as she had told the nursing staff she planned to do. When no milk flowed, she asked the nurses why, only to find out that they had been giving her medication to stop her milk from flowing. A few years later when she was pregnant with twins (1960s), she was given amphetamine-based diet pills to keep her weight down by her well-meaning doctor who didn't know she was having identical twins. What he helped create was two hyperactive twin boys. A few years ago in an elementary school near here, a 13-year-old girl gave birth to a boy in the Girl's Rest Room. The boy was healthy and went home directly. The girl was then taken to the hospital moments later for bleeding and they discovered a new son, a twin, was being born. The boy born in the hospital contracted some serious infection and stayed in the hospital for a week to recover. These are some of the examples of the horrors that modern medicine foists on unsuspecting mothers by treating normal human pregnancies and births as illnesses requiring hospitalization, up until now.

One longs for a time when home deliveries and wet nurses are commonplace occurrences once more.

[page 20] While the infant is being nursed by its own mother the heart quality is being formed in it; and it is upon that quality that the feeling of the infant depends for its whole life. Not understanding this, people today have other methods of feeding an infant; and by these that spirit of heritage and many merits and qualities that the child has to develop, become blunted. Mechanical food is prepared, and the child's heart becomes mechanical when it grows up. . . . Just as the flesh of different animals is affected by each particular animal's character, so with everything one eats one partakes of its spirit. An infant is destined to receive qualities from its mother in the form of food; and it is these qualities which become a fertilizer for the development of its heart. Food, made from the juice of fruits or meat and stored in bottles or tins, when given to an infant at an early age, forms undesirable atoms, and causes the infant to grow denser every day. If the mother is unable to nurse the infant herself, the best way is to find a nurse. And that nurse must be considered not only from the health point of view, as many do, but also from the character point of view. She must be looked at from every angle.

It is easy to be distracted by the side-effects of the child's cutting its first teeth and to skip noticing that the child's mind is coming into being.

[page 20] When the infant is cutting its teeth the mind develops; that is the time of the development of the mind. By keenly watching an infant grow, one will find that the day when it begins to cut its teeth the expression of its eyes changes; a mind is born, a thought is created. It is from that time that it begins to take notice of things and begins to think. The coming of the teeth is only an outward manifestation; the inner process is that the mind is forming. It is therefore a most important time in the life of an infant. For what is mind? Mind is the world. The infant at that time is forming the world in which it will live.

Likewise for observing the time when the child stands up for itself and learns to develop its sense of balance and to walk. This is the onset of individuality for the child, the blooming of its "I am," the unfolding of its "whole spirit," is intimately connected with the time of its learning to walk.

[page 20, 21] The moment when an infant begins to stand up and walk is the moment when power is beginning to become manifest in it. Enthusiasm, courage, the power of enduring, the power of patience, the power of perseverance, all these come at that time; it is the time when power is bestowed upon an infant. And the moment when the infant begins to speak is the time that its spirit has formed, that the mind is connected with the

soul and connected with the body; the whole spirit is made at that moment.

[page 21] From that moment the child should be considered as an individual. It is a little individual which then begins to have in itself the essence of everything and all things in the world; for in every soul there is a spark of every object and quality that exists in the whole universe. And so, at the time when the spirit is completed, the essence of all the different qualities and merits and objects that exist in the world has formed as a spark in the infant.

What Khan means by "educate herself" in the next passage is not that a new mother ought to read a lot of books or go to classes or ask a doctor's advice. What he means is for a woman to draw out of herself, the calmness, etc, and to give that as a gift to her new baby. When one reads a book or listens to advice, one draws out only the brain qualities; Khan suggests that heart qualities are the essential qualities to successful mothering and raising of children.

[page 21]The best way, therefore, for a mother to educate an infant is to educate herself. The calmness, the quietness, the tenderness, the gentleness, everything the mother cultivates in her nature at that particular time when the infant is nursed, the infant will receive as a lesson in its cradle. The heart qualities are the most profound qualities man has; brain qualities come afterwards; and it is the heart qualities which make the basis of the whole life. At that particular time such qualities as kindness, sympathy, affection, tenderness, gentleness, mildness develop, and it is at that time also that regularity is taught to the child, when the child learns its first lesson in being punctual. Unconsciously, it learns a rhythm. It knows the time when it should be fed. It does not need a watch to look at; it knows its time of resting, it knows its, time of feeding. And by introducing rhythm into the mind of the child you put it on the road to perfection.

[page 21] Mothers who get annoyed with an infant, who put it aside and say, "Well, let him cry for a time", considering other work more important, do not know what they are missing. Handling the child is the greatest opportunity. And even if they do it at the greatest sacrifice it is worth while; because once an infant is impressed with being neglected by the mother, there remains all its life an impression, in the deepest depth of its being, of a soreness; and when a person grows up he feels it unconsciously, and then he is displeased and dissatisfied with everybody he meets. When one lets an infant be fed at any time and be put to sleep at any time, that keeps it from a proper, even rhythm, and hinders its progress in life. For infancy is the first step on the path of progress.

This next passage reminds me of a famous Sufi dictum that it is only because real gold exists that we can recognize counterfeit gold. Babies are the real kings of the world, compared to which the lot of the kings of the world pales.

[page 34] In the first five years of a child's life, the first two years are considered as infancy, the next three years as babyhood. Very often there is a desire on the part of the guardians to educate the child of four or five years either in a kindergarten or at home. That time in the life of a child is a time of kingship, and the eagerness on the part of the guardians for the child's education to begin is only pressing it with our competitive life. For our life and it is getting worse and worse every day; and the same spirit unconsciously exerts pressure on the life of the child, urging it on to become one among the many competitors of the world, in order to guard its interest when it is grown-up. But what about the most blessed years that destiny has granted to the baby, when there is no worry, no anxiety, no malice, and no ambition? That is the real kingship. If you compare a baby with a king, you will see that the baby is the king and the king is the imitation.

One can read the famous answer the Editor of the Sun gave to little Virginia when she asked, "Is there a Santa Claus?" and see that he applied some of the wisdom Khan suggests below.

[page 40] A child one day came to its guardian very perplexed because a boy had said to it, "Do you believe in Santa Claus? If you do then it is not right, because there never was such a being as Santa Claus." This child was very disappointed, because it had just written a letter to Santa Claus before Christmas. And in its great despair it came to the guardian to ask, "Is it true that Santa Claus exists, or is it not true?" Now suppose the guardian had said, "It is true", then in four or five years" time the child would have come and said, "No, it is not true"; and if he had said, "No, it is not true", then all the child's belief would have been totally destroyed. It would have been completely changed if the guardian had said, "It is not true". That would have rooted out, just by saying no, all the innocent religious belief from the heart of that child. But the guardian said to it, "Remember, all that the mind can conceive exists. If it does not exist on the physical plane, it exists in the sphere of mind. So never say it does not exist. To the one who says that it does not exist, say that it exists in the sphere of the mind"; and the child was very impressed by this answer.

One should also remember the answer the guardian gives in the passage below:

[page 65] Once a wise guardian was asked by a child, "But is it a real story?" and he said, "As a story it is real."

Children of all ages, but particularly after two or three years old, seem to become obstinate and resist all attempts to get them to do something. This is one of the big challenges of parents and caregivers.

[page 42] If the obstinacy of a baby can be directed to its own advantage, then it can be benefited by the obstinacy.

Milton Erickson was a master at directing obstinacy in the direction of benefit for his patients. He liked to tell stories and this story he told about himself can illustrate how one directs obstinacy in the direction of benefit. He grew up in a farm in Wisconsin. During those very cold winters, a cow that was not brought into the barn would die over night. He watched as his brothers worked very hard pulling this one obstinate cow into the barn -- they would pull on her rope while she dug her hooves into the snow and drag her into the barn. This cow was the epitome of obstinacy. When it was Milton's turn he knew that the cow needed to be obstinate and would pull back from whichever direction he tried to drag her, so he pulled in the direction away from the open barn door, and allowed the cow to obstinately drag herself backwards into the barn.

[page 44] Virtues are virtues because they give joy once they are practiced. If a virtue does not give joy, it is not a virtue.

It this sounds fresh or strange to one's ears, it may be because virtues have mistakenly been equated with painful restraint in this society, up until now. This tendency is one that can be checked only by a loving parent, one child at a time.

[page 45] What a terrible thing it would be if as a child a person did not play with bow and arrows and sword or anything that is soldier-like, and then when he was twenty-one years of age, the country called him to defend it and he knew nothing about warfare, for he never received any preparation for it.

This aspect is forgotten by those otherwise well-meaning parents and educators who try to keep such toys away from their children, afraid that it will lead to aggressive tendencies and a love of guns when they grow up. My favorite toys were a new set of pearl-handled six-shooter cap guns as a boy. Or my Red Ryder BB gun. Instead of becoming a gun nut as an adult, on the contrary, I found, as an adult, that I had

no reason to want to use guns or keep them around. I suspect that many adults who, having been kept away from guns as children, grew up to acquire guns as a way of learning things they missed as a child. Or they enlist in the military and volunteer to go to war as way of achieving this.

[page 50] The greatest drawback today [RJM: 1923] is that home education is lacking, and only school education is given. And therefore in many personalities there is something missing that ought to have come from home. If there were thousands of schools most wisely and wonderfully organized, they still could not take the place of home education; and that opportunity of being educated at home must not be denied to a child, because it is a great blessing.

[page 62, 63] There are three things that a child may be taught at this particular time: perseverance, patience, and endurance. The child may be taught perseverance in anything that it is engaged in doing. Perhaps it is mending a toy, or doing some other work; one should help the child, encourage it to continue and not to leave it before it is finished. For however small this may appear, when this habit is formed, it will show later on in big things. A soul who has learned perseverance in childhood will show a tendency all his life to finish everything that he undertakes.

This lesson is one that I learned. At the beginning of the summer we had our grandchildren stay with us. The 12-year-old girl had a brand new traveling bag and while opening it, she pulled the zipper catch completely off the end of the zipper. Her grandma told her to take it to me to be fixed. She gave it to me with these words, "It is okay if it can't be fixed." She was sure it couldn't be fixed. I didn't know if it could. I spent an hour using finally needle-nose pliers and a tiny screwdrivers to push the zipper catch back onto the soft material of the bag and zipper body. Only *after* that hour of concentrated effort, I was beginning to see that a complete repair of the zipper was possible. If I had not been willing to spend that hour in concentrated effort, I would have had to say, "Throw away the bag." as she was apparently reconciled to doing.

As I worked on this zipper, it occurred to me that when I was her age, about twelve, I had on several occasions spent a lot of time learning about how zippers functioned and how to maneuver a broken zipper into operation again. In another half-hour, I had moved the zipper catch back on the zipper and it moved the length of the bag, opening and closing it perfectly. The remaining problem was that the zipper catch will fly off as soon as one pulled it completely open. The original design had a cheap and faulty stop at the end of the zipper which created the problem in the first place. I got out my awl and heavy waxed cord and sewed a sturdy stop for the zipper, much stronger than the original stop. The repair was complete.

But it was not just the zipper bag I was working on and with, it was the zipper bag's owner who didn't think its repair was possible. I wanted her to experience first hand the results of perseverance so that she could carry this example of what perseverance can do with her into adulthood. There will come many times when she will be tempted not to undertake some task that seems unlikely of success when she will recall to herself, "Grandpa stayed with that zipper till it was working." and persevere. I gave her a demonstration of the power of perseverance.

[page 63] Accomplishment is more valuable than what is accomplished. For instance, if a person has loosened a knot in a string, apparently he has not gained anything, the time has been spent on a very small thing; and yet the action of completing it is useful, he has built something in his spirit that will be useful to him when he wants to accomplish great works.

I also spent a lot of time as a child loosening knots in strings. String was expensive and not something that I could replace if I didn't remove the knot from it. Each time I did that as a child, I learned something about perseverance.

In Chapter IV, pages 82, 83, talking about the education of youth, Khan tells of a father who noticed his

son like drinking and gambling. His advice was spurned by his son, and on his deathbed he told his son this, "Now I will never tell you any more not to do things that you have always liked to do. But will you remember the words of your father, that whenever you want to gamble you must gamble with the greatest gamblers, and whenever you feel like drinking you must drink with the greatest drunkards." So the son set out and asked where he could find the greatest gamblers. He went to those named and found them playing with pebbles, having lost all their money. Then he set out to find the greatest drinkers and when he located them, they said they could no longer drink, having spent all their money on drink. They resorted to having a snake bite them for intoxication purposes and offered him a snakebite. He ran off and never drank or gambled again.

In the Rasa Shastra or science of life's creative forces, Khan talks about people who treat marriage as ownership and the troubles that can lead to.

[page 129] There is a tendency in husband or wife to own his or her mate; and the stronger of the two will often attempt to do this by the right of marriage itself, having forgotten the reason for which he or she contracted marriage. This tendency to ownership makes many a marriage a captivity.

[page 154] And once they are bound together, the laws of the Church keep a couple bound together whether the attachment proves to be real and sincere or not, making them captives for life; so that often the promise taken in the Church service is the only tie that remains, and it becomes a lock that secures the imprisonment of two lives. Having no joy in their union a couple, mutually willing to part, may be thus debarred from experiencing the joy of a real marriage within their Church. And the social law stands ready to enforce captivity and to inflict punishment should they break their imprisonment; and thus prevents them from following that sacred path of real attachment which leads to perfection of contract, though the attitude of the Church makes it appear as the one, and the State as the other.

When Del and I had lived together for a year and decided it was time to be married, it was our earnest desire not to ruin a great friendship by getting married, as so many people had done. They seemed to define a semantic box with the vows that they took, climb inside the box, and then wondered why they felt trapped. We wanted our relationship to be one that each of us felt free at every point. It was this thought that led me to create the [21st Century Marriage Contract](#) back in 1978 -- we wanted a contract which gave neither one of us control over the other, regardless of what the legalities of the State might seem to say to the contrary. We talked over our reactions and agreed to each of the points of this contract. Twenty-five years after our subsequent marriage, our relationship is still going strong. The goal of our contract can be described by this next passage by Khan:

[page 147] Freedom of the self and freedom of the loved one, true affection can never lose sight of either.

In Chapter VI, The Character of the Beloved, Khan tells us of four types of women according to the Hindu ideas. This first one struck a resonant note in my heart as it describes Del so well:

[page 135] *Padmani*, the ideal of the poet, fine and delicate and graceful in bearing, is made to be loved and is herself full of love. Her voice is low and soft, her words are gracious, her expression is sweet and gentle; she is admired by women and her friendship and presence I bring heaven on earth to men. When she makes a friend of a man, it is something of a venture or a step, taken as it were out of her own circle; for women are her natural friends, and to them she turns, both out of interest and for protection. In her heart is kept the beloved alone, whom nothing can remove. Her smile for him is as the unveiling of heaven, her kind glance is a lasting impression, her sweet words ring for ever in his heart. And it is clear to all that she looks upon him as her

king.

In the Chapter on Character-Building, Khan says:

[page 198] Self-pity is the worst poverty. When a person says, "I am . . ." with pity, before he has said anything more he has diminished himself to half of what he is; and what is said further, diminishes him totally; nothing more of him is left afterwards.

His point is that when we indulge in self-pity, the real pity that we could take upon others is not available. When we leave our self behind, neither exalting it or pitying it, we have left our false self behind and only then can we discover our true self. With our false self we are like steep rocks jutting above the surface of a river -- they can reflect nothing. When we discover our true self we become like the calm river which reflects the steep rocks in its surface. Rocks can reflect nothing, whereas a calm river can reflect everything. (Page 203)

[page 210] To want to know about another is very often a lack of trust. One who trusts does not need to unveil, does not need to discover what is covered. He who wishes to unveil something, wishes to discover it. If there is anything that, should be discovered first, it is the self. The time that one spends in discovering others, their lives, their faults, their weaknesses, one could just as well spend in discovering one's soul. The desire to know is born in the soul. But man should discern what must be known, what is worth knowing. There are many things not worth troubling about. When one devotes one's time and thought to trying to know what one need not know, one loses that opportunity which life offers to discover the nature and secret of the soul, in which lies the fulfilment of the purpose of life.

This is another truth whose application is remarkable by its absence in so many people we meet. I have often had friends remark about my lack of curiosity when they ask me for some detail about a mutual friend and I respond, "I have no idea." If they recognized that their zeal to know about others revealed a lack of zeal of knowing about themselves, they might reappraise the basis for their curiosity.

In the Art of Personality Khan gives us two powerful passages which sum up what he calls the art of personality.

[pag 214] When Jesus Christ said to the fishermen, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men", what did it mean? It meant, "I will teach you the art of personality, which will become as a net in this life's sea." For every heart, whatever be its grade of evolution, will be attracted by the beauty of the art of personality.

[page 226] The art of personality is like the art of music: it needs ear-training and voice culture. To a person who knows life's music the art of personality comes naturally; and it is not only inartistic but also unmusical when a soul shows lack of this art in the personality. When a man looks at every soul as a note of music and learns to recognize what note it is, flat or sharp, high or low, and to what pitch it belongs, then he becomes the knower of souls, and he knows how to deal with everybody. In his own actions, in his speech, he shows the art; he harmonizes with the rhythm of the atmosphere, with the tone of the person he meets, with the theme of the moment. To become refined is to become musical; it is the musical soul who is artistic in his personality. Spoken in different tones, the same word changes its meaning. A word spoken at the proper moment and withheld at the moment when it should not be expressed, completes the music of life.

One cannot write about the art of personality, one can only demonstrate one's own personality, and the personality that Hazrat Inayat Khan demonstrates is one of a very wise soul. He lifts the veil for us that keeps us from understanding all the things of the world and we see that they are like the King's New

Clothes, they are nothing. We are led to see that when we abandon that which we value most, we lose nothing, but gain final victory in the battle for our soul. As the famous poet *Omar Khayyám* wrote:

*Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under dust to lie
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and — sans End!*

