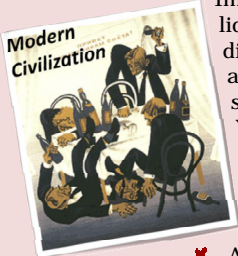


ALCO-HELL



Imagine a tribal who drinks a stinking toxic liquid, goes crazy, shouts insensibly, topples into dirt, falls unconscious, returns to consciousness after several hours with severe headache and stomach upset and vomits helplessly in agony.

Yes, this ad-glamorized modern ritual of self-torture is – alcoholism.

This self-destructive ritual has turned the lives of millions of people into a alco-hell, as seen through the following US statistics:

- ✘ Alcohol contributes to 100,000 deaths annually, making it the third leading cause of preventable mortality in the U.S., after tobacco and diet/activity patterns. (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
- ✘ Approximately once every week, someone in the U.S. dies a needless and fully preventable death due to alcohol poisoning caused by alcohol overdose (This happens even among non-addicted binge drinkers). (ibid.)
- ✘ During 2004, 16,694 deaths (one death every 31 minutes) occurred as a result of alcohol-related motor-vehicle crashes. This amount was approximately 39% of all traffic fatalities. (ibid.)
- ✘ Alcohol is typically found in the offender, victim or both in about half of all homicides and serious assaults, as well as in a high percentage of sex-related crimes, robberies, and incidents of domestic violence (NIAAA)
- ✘ Excessive drinking contributes to illness in each of the top three causes of death: strokes, cancer, and heart disease. (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University)

Adolph Hitler propagated, "If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed." Few things illustrate this truth the way the lie of the pleasure of intoxication does. People know drinking kills – themselves and others, yet, victimized by propaganda, they become blinded to the suffering and captivated by the hope of pleasure.

THE ULTIMATE INTOXICATION

Some of us may have been saved from victimization by intoxication. Still even sober people can identify with the desire to experience a higher state of excitement and enjoyment that intoxication falsely promises to fulfill. That desire to be intoxicated with happiness stems from our spiritual essence. In our original pure existence in the spiritual world, we as souls are intoxicated with love for God and live in eternal happiness, oblivious to everything except our beloved Lord. No wonder that the Srimad Bhagavatam (11.13.36) compares a pure devotee with an intoxicated person, “Just as a drunken man does not notice if he is wearing his coat or shirt, similarly, one who is perfect in self-realization and who has thus achieved his eternal identity does not notice whether the temporary body is sitting or standing. Indeed, if by God's will the body is finished or if by God's will he obtains a new body, a self-realized soul does not notice, just as a drunken man does not notice the situation of his outward dress.”

We can all experience that spiritual intoxication of divine love here and now by singing bhajans and kirtans, as many devout people can testify. Indeed the holy names of God like the Hare Krishna mahamantra bring so much joy that even addicted drunkards can quickly get rid of their addictions just by chanting regularly. No wonder Prof Stillson Judah, Berkeley University, USA, commended Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON and the greatest exponent of chanting: “I am simply amazed by your ability of turning drug-addicted hippies into devotees of Krishna (God), and servants of mankind.”

Let us free ourselves – and others – from the deceptive high that alcohol promises. Let us instead “stay high forever” by reclaiming our rightful spiritual joyfulness.

