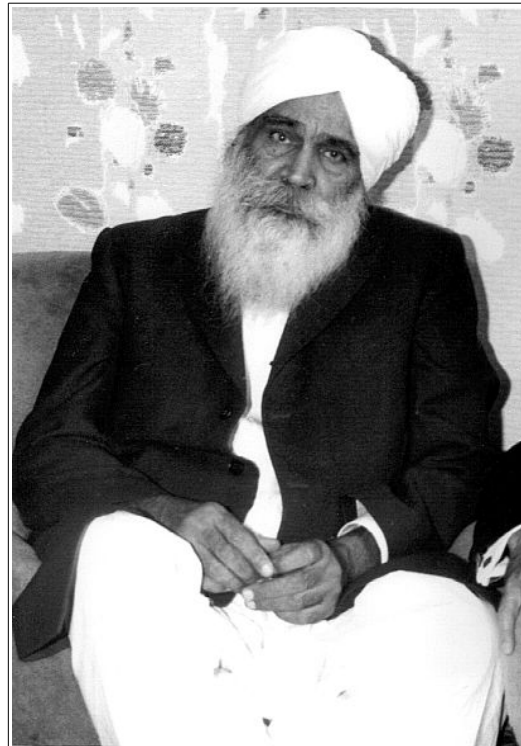


Love, Concentration and Self-Surrender: The Psychology of Mysticism (Circular 17)

This extraordinary circular letter, first issued in August 1961, is Master's clearest explanation of the psychology of mysticism, including the importance of self-surrender as a means of transcending the limitations of the ego, and the identity of love and concentration. This was added as an appendix to the 2009 edition of Seven Paths to Perfection.

When one undertakes to reach a certain goal in any field of human activity, it is necessary to take stock of one's progress from time to time. It is only through such stock-taking that one can become conscious of one's shortcomings and errors, eradicate and uproot them, and plan out future progress. Having put our shoulders to the wheel of the Great Master's Cause, it is necessary that we should, in like manner, review our activity and achievement, from time to time. Without such self-analysis and self-criticism, no real advancement is possible; and it



was to encourage this practice and make it a daily habit that, in the case of individual initiates, I insisted (and continue to insist) that they maintain a daily record of their thoughts, words and deeds, and of the period of meditation. What is necessary for us as individual initiates is even more necessary for us as members of a large movement.

Reviewing the work done in the past few years, there is much, I find, for which we may be grateful. Many have shown remarkable capacity for selfless service, and others have made commendable progress on the inner path. Nevertheless, while noting this with pleasure, I cannot help observing the growth of tendencies which must be a matter of concern for all of us. In spite of repeated exhortations and

persuasions, I find growing and springing up amidst us the weeds of discord and disharmony. Competition seems to have taken the place of cooperation, rivalry that of love, and distrust that of trust and good faith.

The emergence of such fissiparous tendencies has marked the beginning of the decline of any great movement. Unless checked, they multiply and lead ultimately to serious rifts and divisions. The original goal is completely forgotten in the heat of controversy and debate, and the purpose we set out to achieve lies wholly neglected. If we are to escape this fate we must zealously watch ourselves, and rid ourselves of any undesirable traits that may be imperceptibly developing in us.

Why such disharmony should keep up is not difficult to tell. The Master cannot be present in his physical person everywhere and at all times. His mission must be carried on with the assistance of his disciples. These disciples are individuals inspired by spiritual longings, who have been put on the road, but who have not necessarily reached the goal. The ultimate end is not easy to attain, and very few indeed reach it within this lifetime. The Master's Cause must, therefore, be carried on with the aid of men and women who, in most cases, are yet on the path and have not attained perfection. Their vision is individual, not universal, and the viewpoint from which they see and judge is limited by the degree of spiritual development attained by them. When they are entrusted with any responsibility it is inevitable that they should discharge it within the terms of their own vision and insight. And when in discharging this responsibility they have to collaborate with others like themselves, others whose viewpoint is equally individual and distinct, the roots of discord begin.

So long as they work directly under the guidance of the Master, all is well, but the moment they have also to work in collaborating and cooperation, controversy begins. They should understand that they are all laborers in the field of the Master, working for promoting the Holy Cause of leading the seekers to the Goal of Life. The man who could see, could resolve at a touch the contradictory statements regarding the elephant made by the proverbial six blind men, but left to themselves, they could only wrangle and debate; each considered

that he was right and the others wrong, and each distrusted what the others had to say.

If six men lacking full vision could not agree about the nature of so limited and well-defined an object as an elephant, it is not surprising that those with limited vision should be unable to harmonize completely on so vast and unlimited a subject as spirituality. And yet, while it is natural for those who lack full vision not to agree fully on such matters, we must not allow this limitation to create division and dissension; for if we fail to find a remedy, we will ultimately have to sacrifice the "Cause" which brought us together, and what a great loss that would be.

There is only one remedy for all such discord and that is Love. He, who has not mastered its secret, can never hope to be received in the Court of the Lord. It is the beginning and the end of spirituality. He who understands Love in its true nature and who lives and moves by its light shall, surely as two added to two makes four, attain the Lord.

Love and all things shall be added unto thee. – CHRIST

*Listen! for I give you the very essence of truth:
Those who have loved have reached the Lord.*

– GURU GOBIND SINGH

Love knows selfless service, sacrifice, and self-surrender. Let no one interested in spiritual advancement perform service for the sake of appreciation. Selfless service is great reward in itself. It even sacrifices one's personal interests for the cause one has sincerely taken up.

What is this love, of which all mystics, Eastern and Western, have spoken so insistently? Is it like the love of the earth that we know? If you study the bonds of earthly love, you will find that at some point or another, a trace of self-assertion is present in every case. Parent and child, friend and friend, man and wife; each is involved in a more or less strong drive for possession. It is a love that can often rise to great heights of self-sacrifice, and yet it is a love that is not wholly selfless.

But the Love of which the mystics speak is a love that must be completely purified of the self. If one has not attained complete purification in this respect, one's love is still not perfect and not truly acceptable in the eyes of the Lord. And so the love of mystics is one in which one completely and unreservedly surrenders one's self to one's love. The seeker who, having found a true Master, has developed such absolute love for him, steadily purifies himself of all imperfections and makes himself a fit recipient of Divine Grace.

You may well ask why there is this insistent stress on complete self-surrender on the mystic path. The answer is simple: without this absolute surrender of the last vestiges of ego and selfhood, and without such complete absorption in the object of one's love, one cannot attain that unwavering concentration of all one's faculties which is the prerequisite of all inner progress. Absolute love and self-surrender are only other aspects of complete and flawless concentration. The moment the "self" enters into the picture and the question of "I-ness" arises, the single-pointedness of concentration is dissipated and inner advancement is made impossible. Besides, the goal of the spiritual aspirant lies far beyond the limits of individuality. His goal is union with the Absolute and such union must necessarily be a denial of the limits that separate us from each other. He who cannot rise above the ego, the faculty which creates these very limits, cannot hope to attain to that station which is the denial of all individuality and a realization of the oneness of all life.

Hence it is that mystics of all traditions have been untiring in their stress of the need for absolute self-surrender. It was this cross of sacrifice of the self, the ego, of which Jesus spoke when he exhorted his disciples to bear their cross daily. For in every little act, word or thought, the ego is seeking to dominate us, and if the seeker is to triumph over it, he must be prepared to crucify it every moment. To achieve this degree of self-surrender, one must not look up to the Deity in Its Abstract form but in Its human form as the Master. For how else is one to know God's Will directly, in order to surrender one's self to it? What one may take as an intuition inspired by the Divine may be really one's own self speaking in disguise, and surrender to such seeming intentions may be really surrender to the self, the ego.

However, if one has found a true Master, who is attuned to the Lord and is His mouthpiece, and obeys Him in all things completely and absolutely, he will surely destroy the hydra-headed serpent of the ego, and reach his heavenly home one day. There will be moments in the course of such love when one, judging from one's own limited understanding, doubts the validity of the Master's instructions, but such moments are only tests to make our self-surrender more complete and more secure, and he who passes through these tests successfully, will one day radiate with the glory of God.

Such love and self-surrender to the Will of the Lord embodied in the Master, has been the keystone of the teachings of all mystics and especially so of Sant Mat. Your main task as disciples, as initiates, is to cultivate these qualities to the very utmost and leave the rest to the Master. There will, of course, be moments of doubt and of questioning, but if you can pass through them with your love and your faith unscathed, you will find the spiritual road within steadily unfolding itself before you and all things being added unto you. The path is certainly not easy, but for one who has made such love the cornerstone of his life, nothing could be easier or more certain. Jesus never promised the peace and comfort with which the world is familiar. It was the cross he offered. We have to suffer; to reshape ourselves, to destroy the old and forge the new.

We have to face the ridicule of our fellows and the organized opposition of orthodox institutions. But if we have anchored ourselves in such a love of complete self-surrender, nothing can disturb the peace of our minds or distract the spiritual harmony that is ours. Initially, perhaps, it is easier in the East to take to the mystic path than it is in the West. There is in India, for example, a long standing tradition of seeking and following a Living Master; a tradition that is foreign to those to whom religion has been taught in terms of a closed revelation. Nevertheless, this initial advantage is not as great as it might at first appear. For the essential advantage in the field of spirituality is to be found not without but within. It lies not in the absence of outer opposition but in one's inner capacity for complete self-surrender and love; and outward obstacles may in fact act as tests and stimuli for the development of this capacity. This ability to conquer the ego and to submit oneself to the Higher Will is as rare in

the East as in the West, and wherever it can be found there you shall observe the true grandmark of spirituality.

It is this capacity that you must cultivate and develop if you really wish to make substantial progress in the spiritual field. I repeat that the path is not easy. You must crucify your ego and lay your selfhood at the altar of love for your Master. Rome was not built in a day and the True Abode of the Lord is not to be attained with a few weeks labor. Most seekers want quick results. They want miracles and sudden transformations. But the seed generates rapidly only in thin soil and then withers away. The seed that must grow into the life-giving tree must grow more slowly. The science of spirituality, as it has been taught by all Masters, and as it has been given to you, is a perfect science. Its truth has been demonstrated by some initial experience. The rest depends on your effort. The Divine Grace is ever ready to pour itself into the vessel, but the vessel must first be ready. The power to perform miracles is not very difficult to acquire, but it is not to be confused with true spirituality, which must be paid for with complete self-transformation and self-surrender.

This then is the task before you. If you aspire for spiritual salvation, then do not lose a moment in seeking to reform yourselves. Man making is the most difficult part of spirituality, and if you have perfected yourself in that field, then God realization is not difficult. Let your love for the Master be absolute and your obedience to his wishes uncompromising. Work for His Cause to the best of your abilities, but do not let the individuality of your limited vision inculcate feelings of opposition and resentment for your fellows. So long as one has not attained universal consciousness, differences of opinion are bound to exist. But if one has understood their cause, one will not allow them to disturb one's peace of mind. Whatever the outer opposition, whatever the opinions of others, if one has surrendered oneself completely to one's love, then nothing can ever disturb one's equanimity or obstruct one's spiritual course. He who is upset by what others have to say is, without question, one who is still controlled by the ego and has yet to conquer his self. He has yet to learn the rudiments of spirituality.

Let me therefore, command you as a Father, exhort you as a Teacher, persuade you as a Friend, to turn to the reformation and conquest of

the self if you seek to progress on the inner path. Try to help others and do the best for them, but be not concerned with the fruits of what you do. That is something that you must leave to the Master. Make your love for Him so complete that, beholding His Hand in everything, you rise above all feelings of enmity, rivalry and resentment. See Him present in all and remember that He is always with you, ready to assist whenever you turn your thoughts to Him. And above all do not forget that He is to be won not by words but by deeds: "If you love me follow my commandments."

If you can do this; if you can conquer the self and surrender it at the Feet of the Master; if you can learn to see Him working through all things; if you can accept the fact of your own limited vision; if you can undertake a ceaseless and zealous watch over your thoughts and deeds, weeding out all evils and imperfections – then you shall not only win salvation yourselves but enable others to do likewise. Your example shall shine like a torch in the darkness, and men, even those who may first oppose you, will turn to you for guidance and help. You will find a new sense of peace surging through you, a peace that does not depend on the absence of outer disturbances, but is an inner state of mind that stands unshaken even in the most tempestuous situations. And this same quality shall enter not only your individual lives, but the larger life of the Great Spiritual movement of which you are a part. Instead of being disrupted and divided, it shall proceed single and purposeful toward its goal.

No true Master has ever been interested in attracting large numbers to himself; and quantity has never been my aim. It is quality that counts and I would rather have a handful of disciples, nay even one, who can sacrifice their ego on the spiritual altar and learn to live by love, than millions who understand not the value and meaning of these virtues. I have suggested this before, and I emphasize this again that a seeker should be studied more carefully and his/her background learned more before being recommended for initiation. If, after understanding the basic principles of the science, he is willing to undertake this complete remolding of himself that its practice requires, then and then alone, can he become a fit recipient of initiation. And how much more is this need for self-transformation to be stressed in the case of group leaders and representatives. They are the foundations of the movement, and if the foundations are

weak, how shall the superstructure stand firmly? Their responsibility is much greater and their effort must be much greater than that of the ordinary initiate. If they really loved me more than their little selves; if they only knew how deeply I suffer when I see them divided and wrangling, they would never have permitted matters to come to such a pass. I am not happy to say this, but I am left no choice.

The chief element that results in disharmony between the representatives, group leaders and other initiates can also be traced to the word "distrust" or some sort of fear that some of them have acquired certain powers; viz., mind-reading or seeing or listening in on others at a distance, or psychic dominance over others, etc., which they misuse. If anyone misuses such powers, those are taken away by the Master immediately. Moreover, they are armed with the repetition of five names by which they have no cause to fear anyone.

Take it as an exhortation, take it as a command, but from this day, this very moment, make love and self-surrender (and the two, as I have already said, are really one) the cornerstones of your life. Do this and you will find your life becoming daily a blessing. I am always with you, waiting for you to turn away from yourselves and towards me. Let not the light that has been planted in you become darkness, but let it flame forth into a blaze that shall illumine the world. The path is strait and narrow and difficult, very difficult and exacting, but for one who is truly willing, every help is promised, and he can attain the goal in this very life; a goal that sets all other goals to shame; for beside it there are no goals at all, but empty baubles and toys, at best halfway houses.

I know the initiates abroad are anxious to see me in person, and I also long to be amidst them. You can well imagine how happy and jolly a father would feel amidst his sons and daughters who are all loving and amicable. I would, therefore, suggest that by the time I make a trip to America, all initiates, including leaders and representatives, make a special effort to live a pure, Christly and Master-like life as is possible, so that all initiates will stand out amongst other men and women shining with love in full bloom, and drenched in the sweet remembrance of the Lord.