

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WONDERS OF INNER SPACE

EVER SINCE SPUTNIK went into orbit and human beings later set foot on the moon, outer space has caught our imagination. Each year brings new achievements in this field and opens up new vistas of space exploration. The American astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts are truly the heroes and heroines of our time.

Though we have made remarkable progress and have reached the distant planets, sadly we are no nearer the heart of our neighbor. Indeed, we find ourselves today on the edge of a precipice; one false step, and this beautiful planet of ours, with its myriad forms of life, will be destroyed. There is only one way to achieve peace and lasting happiness - we have to take up the challenge of what I term "inner space."

To travel into inner space, we have to learn how to rise above body-consciousness. This human body of ours is the launching pad; Naam or Shabd or Word is the space vehicle; the Satguru or Master is the pilot and guidance system; and love is the special fuel which we need for this inner journey. Given these four essentials, there is no reason why we can not, within this very lifetime, return to our Source, the Creator. This is the timeless message of the mystics.

Saints and prophets since time immemorial have been telling us that just as we have worlds and universes outside, we have worlds and universes within. They have spoken of travel into these inner realms, and the scriptures of the great religions contain references to such mystic journeys, the ultimate end of which is the communion of the soul with its Creator. For a few hundred years, humanity, in the name of science, especially in the West, has ignored this inner reality. But science itself is rediscovering this ancient wisdom. Beginning with Dr. Raymond Moody's book, *Life After Life*, medical researchers have recorded the "after-death" experiences of many people who had been declared clinically dead but were revived. Through such evidence, doctors are beginning to awaken to the existence of a life after death, or of a life before this life. They are becoming aware of an individual consciousness which does not die with the death of the body, and which, while it is in the body and may identify itself with the body, is not of it. It is a consciousness which, in an unexpected crisis, is capable of standing apart from the body and of seeing and hearing without the use of bodily organs.

This truth is, in fact, the core of the esoteric and religious traditions coming down to us from the most remote times. Such traditions not only affirm that a human being is a spiritual entity, an entity which survives physical death, but they go on to assert that it is possible for this entity or soul to rise above the body while it is still living and to enter at will the realms which lie beyond the physical world. Travel into outer space may be a new concept for science, but travel into inner space has been an integral part of mysticism since the dawn of history.

If we wish to explore the wonders of inner space, we must experience it ourselves. Our human body is the launching pad for going into inner space. Saints, seers, and scriptures have been telling us that human birth is the only form of life in which we can attain God-realization. The human body is the temple which the Lord has made with His own hands. God does not reside in temples made by human hands. He resides in the temple which He has made Himself. All saints and scriptures say that human birth is the roof and crown of creation, because out of

the 8.4 million species of life, it is only in the human form that we have the golden opportunity of bringing about the union of our soul with the Creator. The Muslims refer to human birth as *Ashraf-ul-makhlukat*, and the Hindus call it *nar-naraini-deh*. The Christian scriptures say that God made human beings in His own image. It is said that when humans were created, even the angels were asked to bow before them, for if angels themselves wish to merge in the Creator, they have to first assume the human form.

The human body then is the launching pad for soaring into inner space. For that, we have to invert our attention from the world outside and enter within. Attention or *surat* is the attribute of the soul. At present, our attention is going outwards through our various senses. We have nine apertures: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and two openings below. Our attention is caught up in sensuous pleasures. Ideally, our soul should be in control of our mind, and our mind should be in control of our senses. But the situation is quite the reverse. We are embodied souls; and both soul and mind are living together in this human frame. Our senses are dragging our mind, and because our mind and soul are bound together, our soul is also dragged down by sensuous pleasures. Thus, we are helpless in extricating ourselves from the allurements of the world outside, and are unable to invert our attention to the worlds within. Is it not strange that on the one hand God has ordered that we lead an ethical and spiritual life, but on the other hand He has lined every step of our path with temptations? Our condition has been aptly described by the great Persian Sufi, Khwaja Hafiz. He says, "Man has been tied to a raft and left in the midst of the high seas with the warning, 'Beware, lest your clothes get wet.'" It is in such a plight that man realizes his helplessness. Then a cry comes from the core of his heart and soul, and he prays to God to come to his rescue. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, has said that God listens to the cry which comes out of the heart of an ant sooner than He hears the trumpeting of an elephant. One of my Urdu verses says:

*Sunne ga rooh ko parwaaz  
dey ke dekh zaraa,  
Qareeb hai usey aawaz dey ke  
dekh zaraa.*

*He is bound to hear you  
Would you but lift your spirit.  
He is so close to you,  
Call Him, He will surely respond.*

God does listen to the cries coming out of the hearts and souls of sincere seekers. He sends down, from the highest heaven, saints or Masters to rescue us from the clutches of worldly desires and entanglements. He enables us to invert our attention from the world outside to the world within and takes us back Home through a direct, firsthand contact with the Word or Holy Naam.

As we have the vehicle of a spaceship to go into outer space, we use the vehicle of the holy Word or Naam, as it is called, to travel through inner space. Guru Nanak says:

*Naam brought into being all the worlds  
and universes;*

*Naam sustains all life and creation.*

The Light of God and the Music of the Spheres are the primal manifestations of the Creative Power which brought into existence the inner regions, all the universes, humanity, and all other species of life. Since the beginning of time it has been God's law that whosoever has attained communion of the soul with the Creator has done so by coming in direct contact with the Light of God and the Music of the Spheres.

Since we need the vehicle of Naam or Word for journeying into inner space, the question arises, "How can we board this vehicle?" According to Surat Shabd Yoga, the most natural method for doing so is to link our surat or attention with the Power of Naam or Word. It is by yoking the surat to the Shabd that we can reunite it with its Source. The process of meditation begins when we concentrate at the highest seat of the soul in the body, which is known as the single eye or the third eye. As one's attention is absorbed at the eye-center, the darkness which we initially see is dispelled, and we directly perceive the Light of God.

In addition to inner seeing, one begins to hear the Word of God, the Unstruck Shabd or Celestial Music. This practice is known as bhajan, or listening to the Sound Current. As our consciousness concentrates at the eye-focus we can feel our body going numb. The motor currents which sustain the various bodily functions are left untouched, but the sensory currents begin to withdraw upwards. This process of withdrawal is similar to that experienced at the time of death. However, mastered under the guidance of an Adept, it is free of pain and is quite blissful. The process commences with simran or inner seeing and is greatly speeded up during bhajan or inner hearing when we are concentrating on the inner Music.

When full bodily transcension is achieved, we behold the inner radiant form of our Master. Now one perceives that, unlike any other teacher or friend, the Master is always with us and, in a sense, is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Realizing that he is constantly protecting and guiding us, we now consciously place ourselves under his direction, and he directly guides us, stage by stage, through the remainder of our journey and does not rest until we are one with the Creator.

Besides requiring a launching pad and a vehicle for journeying into space, we need a pilot and a guidance system. In the case of outer space, thousands upon thousands of technicians and scientists have to collect and feed data into a computer in order to enable those who are in a spaceship to journey safely. But for travel into inner space we need no other help besides that of the spiritual Adept. It is the living Master who gives us the necessary guidance and takes us in the vehicle of the holy Word or Naam to our final destination. He teaches us how to rise above body-consciousness and grants us a firsthand experience of the Light of God and the Music of the Spheres.

I am often asked about the necessity of having a living teacher or a guru if we wish to follow the spiritual path. People say, "We have had such great teachers like the Buddha, Mahavira, Christ, the Prophet Mohammed, Guru Nanak, and others. Why then do we need a living teacher now?" Why this question should worry us in the realm of spirituality alone is rather surprising. In almost every other field of human endeavor, we clearly accept the need for a living teacher.

In the field of academic studies, we know that there is no substitute for a living teacher, for learning either the sciences or the humanities. Accordingly, we send our children to school, and when they have grown up we send them to colleges and universities. If I wish to perform an experiment in the field of physics, I would surely go to a competent professor of physics. It would not concern me whether he or she comes from a particular nation or a particular religious tradition. What matters is his or her competence in the given discipline. The same is true of any of the arts. If we wish to learn an art, we have to study at the feet of a master artist. I am a poet myself, and I had to go to one of the leading Urdu poets of the day, Janab Shamim Karhani, who taught me all about prosody and the various refinements of poetry.

If there is no substitute for a living teacher in secular fields, why should we not accept the same principle in the field of spirituality? Indeed, in the case of the mystical path, there are two special additional reasons why we must have a living teacher or a guide. Christ said that when he spoke to the multitudes he spoke in parables, but when he spoke to his disciples, he did so in direct terms. Our scriptures describe the inner experiences and revelations given to us by the saints, seers, and prophets. They often refer to regions which are beyond the sphere of our intellect, and resort to parable, to allegory, and to symbol. Unless we have the guidance of a Godman who has himself traversed the inner planes, who travels within every day, in fact several times a day, we may take as figurative what is meant to be literal, and as literal what is meant to be figurative.

The scriptures are invaluable as records of past revelations, but if we are to understand their true import, we need the help of a living Adept. They are like Sleeping Beauty, who came back to life only upon receiving the kiss of a living prince. Indeed, the Master, the Godman, the living teacher, by his magic touch, brings the holy books of the past to life and makes them talk with a directness that at first can almost take us by surprise.

Knowledge, however, is only part of the domain of spirituality, and that, too, the lesser part. Mysticism ultimately rests on direct firsthand experience. It is not a path of dogma or of blind belief. Indeed, one saint has said, "Unless I have seen with my own eyes, I will not believe even what my Master says." We need to experience the reality within for ourselves; we need to voyage into inner space. The help of a living Master is crucial if we are to gain right understanding of our scriptures. The Master's help is even more indispensable when we come to the actual task of going within. We need someone who has himself traversed inner space, who has traveled through the many regions that lie within and has himself merged in God. Indeed, if we are to succeed, so crucial is the role of the living Adept that his importance can hardly be overemphasized. It is he who first draws us to his feet, for as a Sufi saying puts it, "Love first emanates from the heart of the Beloved." We are all lost sheep. We can not find our own way without the help of a shepherd. We are not even able to know who our shepherd is. It is the Godman who, out of his compassion, takes mercy on us and draws us through his radiation. He brings with him the untold treasures of divinity from the Lord Himself, and he concerns himself only with their distribution. He does not look to our failings, our limitations, our sins. If he were to do so, who could prove worthy of his divine boon? The great gift which he grants to us is that of initiation or contact with the power of the holy Word or Naam.

The Master is no ordinary mortal, subject to the limitations that go with individual existence. Having merged with the Lord, the Master shares in the Lord's attributes. Though he is the one who guides us at every step, at every turn, we may be largely unaware of his pervasive

care. However, once we rise above, we see him taking us under his wing and helping us, stage by stage, to traverse the inner spiritual planes.

The phenomenal complexity and the potential dangers of outer space travel have led to the need for special guidance systems run by scientists in mission control centers on the ground. A similar function is performed by the living Master. Though he may be thousands of miles away, he provides guidance and assistance at all times to the disciples through the power of thought transference. Then again, travel in inner space contains even greater risks than travel in outer space. The path is beset by distractions and temptations. It is no easy task to go beyond the reach of the mind, which is a most subtle adversary and finds a million different ways of keeping the soul within its ambit. If we succeed in completing the voyage to our final destination, it is on account of the all-encompassing love and grace of the Master. We are not able to propel ourselves forward. Without his constant guidance, direction, and protection, we would be lost a thousand times over before we even passed through the preliminary stages of our journey.

My own Master, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji, used to say, "Take me as you would your elder brother or your father. Take me as you would your old friend or your teacher. Listen to what I say, and practice what I teach. Once you go within, you are welcome to call me by whatever name you like."

When we travel into space, we need special fuel for our spacecraft. Ordinary kinds of fuel can not serve us if we are to traverse the journey which lies before us. For the voyage into inner space, we need a very special fuel - the fuel of divine love. If we are to achieve the ultimate aim of becoming one with God, we can do so only by developing love for Him and for all His creation. The word "love" comes readily to our lips, and we talk a great deal of the brotherhood of man and the need for understanding and compassion, but we do so only from an intellectual level. It is no more than lip profession. We do not believe in love from the very depth of our heart, the depth of our soul.

The saints speak of a love which permeates every atom, every cell of one's being. It is a love which looks towards God and towards all human beings; it is a love which does not neglect this life or this world for the life beyond or the world beyond. It beholds all creation as God's creation. It makes us realize that if we fail to love God's creatures, whether human or beast or bird, we fail to love the great Creator. It is a love which inspires us, as it inspired St. Francis of Assisi, who regarded even the donkey as his brother.

The spiritual science invites us to become wholistic or integrated human beings. We are constituted of three parts: body, mind, and soul. We have a physical body, and it is only right that we develop ourselves physically and ensure the health of the body. Similarly, we have an intellect, and we are making every possible progress in the intellectual sphere. Indeed, our achievements in recent years in the fields of science and technology have been so spectacular that they have already bridged us with the surrounding universe. But along with our body and intellect, we have a soul which enlivens the other two, and we have neglected it so far. What saints and seers tell us is that we must develop spiritually also. It is only by doing this that we can hope to be fully integrated beings and realize the untapped potential within us.

On one of my tours, when I met an astronaut who had set foot on the moon, we spoke of travel through inner and outer space. There are parallels between the two, I explained, and they are related to one another. He said that when his spaceship took off from the earth, he was no

more than a scientist whose mind was entirely centered on the difficult mission on which he had been sent. However, when he had completed this mission on the moon and was on his way home, his mind began to open up to the planets and the heavenly bodies before him. This mother planet of ours, surrounded with its halo of blue, looked so exquisitely beautiful that he was filled with love for all that it encompassed, for all the forms of life that it sustained. If he had left this earth as a scientist, he returned to it almost a mystic.

The day we stepped off from our planet, our personality acquired an interplanetary dimension. If travel into outer space can thus transform our modes of perception, imagine what more could be realized by travel into inner space. It is significant that the greatest exponents of universal love which the world has known have been the saints and mystics, the Masters of inner space. It is they who have made us recognize the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Love, according to them, is not something in the abstract, but is a living reality. They themselves are embodiments of service and sacrifice. The annals of mysticism and spirituality are full of martyrs who gave their lives willingly out of their love for humankind. For us in the world outside, the unity of all life is a mental supposition or an intellectual concept, but when we have learned to go within, our vision grows ever more subtle. As we progress on the inner path, we increasingly perceive the Light of God radiating from every object around us. It is only when we see all creation sharing in the one life, the one Light, that we can finally love our neighbor as we love ourselves. It is then that we acquire the infinite humility of the saints, for in the eyes of one who can go at will into inner space, the meanest creatures, as well as the highest, are blessed with divinity.

If we love every creature, there can be no enemy, no alien, no room for hatred and suspicion, no room for violence and war. We would live in perfect harmony and peace as children of the one Father. This is the goal towards which the saints and mystics have forever been directing our footsteps. They come to us, saying, "We are not the body, but are spirit. Why take our word for it?. Learn to rise above body-consciousness and explore the wonders of inner space. Discover for yourself your own divinity, and that of all creation."