

Published by ISHA. All rights reserved. This English transcript of a YouTube talk by Ishwar C. Puri is published under a CC BY-NC-SA license, which means that you can copy, redistribute, remix, and freely distribute sections of the transcript, provided that any derivative works or new resulting creations are not used for any commercial purpose and as long as you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. License details: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/ Copyright 2019. Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike (CC BY-NC-SA).

Nothing is Real — It's a Play of Consciousness

Rice Lake, Wisconsin — March 30, 2014

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB6qQHmL5Xo>

Welcome, friends to the second day of our program for the Bhandara of Great Master Hazur Maharaj Baba Sawan Singh Ji, my Master who initiated me way back 1936. I look back, I can't imagine most of you are younger than the time I have been initiated. Initiation is a good thing, but it is good if you follow the instructions given at initiation, if you make use of initiation. If you just take initiation and lock it up in your cupboard, it doesn't work. It's like a prescription of a doctor. A doctor prescribes, and you keep the prescription in your cupboard, it won't work. You have to go and get it filled up and then it'll work. The same thing is true about initiation. So, you realize the implications of initiation as time goes on. You don't sometimes know the very first day what's happened. Sometimes you can. There's a feeling that something has happened. But what has actually happened inside you, you discover slowly as you make progress on the spiritual path.

The spiritual path is not only a path of meditation. It's a path which alters your life so that your attention, which has been used only for going outside in the local experience of a physical world, does invite/invert to your true home from where we all came, and where you would like to go and have an everlasting peace and bliss and joy and happiness, which we don't find here in our experiences here. We would appreciate that experience much more because we have had this experience.

Appreciation is a very important thing. There was a friend of mine, and he said he had gone to the Master and said a simple thing to him. "Master, we are all expecting so much from you. But nobody has ever asked what are you expecting from us?" He said one word, "Appreciation." What does God expect from us? Appreciation for what he's given us. When we say, "Thank you, we appreciate it," that's, that's a spiritual truth of appreciation.

We do not even appreciate what we have unless we have seen something less. Then we get back to our own thing. We say, "Exactly. Now we know what we have." A rich man always living in riches doesn't know he's rich. When he goes a little time in poverty, comes back, he appreciates his riches. We who have unlimited bliss and joy and happiness in our true home don't even appreciate fully. But when we come here and see an experience of duality, pain and pleasure and suffering, then we go back, we appreciate it. So, a short answer to the question *why are we here?* would be to be able to appreciate our true state, to be able to appreciate what Sach Khand is, what the true home is. And that's why we are here. And this world of duality is a wonderful place because everything is experienced here in pairs of opposites. And we belong to a home where there is no duality and no pairs of opposites. How can we appreciate something if there is no opposite? So, what has been done is that we have constructed a whole universe, or several universes of pairs of opposites, so that these all together become an opposite of our true state and we are able to appreciate it more.

It's a remarkable way it's set up. It is so perfect. When you go back home, you will see perfection in every little thing that you ever observed. You will see perfection in the way this universe has been created. You will see perfection in the ups and downs of life. You will see perfection in the suffering and the joys that you get here. Because you will see how they're balanced in order for us to appreciate our true home. So that's why it's a clear, good-enough reason that we are experiencing this.

The other thing is, if it was as real an experience as our true home, we would still say, "Well, it was not necessary, maybe, to have that bad experience to here." But when we find that the experience we are having, in order to appreciate our true home, is merely dream-like, not real, illusion, we feel very happy. "Thank God it was just a dream. Thank God all these levels were just a dream and the reality is something else, which is so beautiful, so wonderful."

It is difficult to describe Sach Khand because all description, no matter what language, what idiom we use, is confined to the three dimensions—time, space, and cause and effect. We cannot get out of it. The mind cannot function outside of it. No explanation can be made outside of it. Therefore, if somebody tries to explain what is in Sach Khand, he has to make a story. It cannot be described. How can you describe something where there is no time, no space, no cause and effect, no karma, nothing at all, and yet we are there in a true home with happiness? How can you describe that? Therefore, you have to make a story.

Soami Ji from Agra use to describe the story like this. "Sach Khand, oh, it's beautiful place. There are tall trees several miles high, laden with rubies and diamonds." Most of his audience was women after that. But this is just a description to just tell us there's something valuable there. There's no other way to describe it. All description ends at the causal level. All description ends at the level of the mind.

All meditation that we do ends at the mind. No meditation can ever take us beyond the mind. I'm making it clear lest people think meditation is the key to everything. It's not. Meditation is the key to take you to the top of the mind. It can take you to the causal plane, no more. Because meditation is a practice. Meditation is a mechanical thing. Meditation requires us to do things. When we have to do things, and practice things, it cannot go beyond the mind. Then what pulls us beyond the mind? There is something that pulls us beyond the mind, otherwise you would never go home. What pulls us beyond the mind belongs to something that is beyond the mind. It's love, intuition, the appreciation of beauty. These things do not belong to the mind. They do not come from the mind. They are not functions of the mind, yet our soul, which is made up of total consciousness, has these abilities right now without any need for having a mind or a body. They function beyond the mind. So, the true path, the true spiritual path, is the path of love and devotion. The rest is only a preparation for it.

My Master, Great Master, used to say, "My path begins from Par Brahm, beyond the mind, and ends in Sach Khand." Par Brahm is where we realize who we are. We are a soul and not the coverings upon the soul. And Sach Khand is where we find we are total and one, and soul was also a cover.

I have been talking to you from this side of the game, how we look at it from this side, how we meditate, how we try to pull our attention in. This is a local situation here from where I'm starting. Let me give you a little brief idea from the other side, how would it be. Let me start from the top and come down and see how it looks like. At the top there is nothing but totality of consciousness, ultimate creative power. It's a power that because [by] virtue of its power can be conscious of anything it wants to be. It's consciousness, per se. When consciousness exists, it can be conscious of anything. And that's the creative power of consciousness.

So, the consciousness creates different experiences around itself. It creates and experiences at the same time. And this process of creating and experiencing at the same time goes down all the way right up to the physical plane. Don't forget, this is the real nature of consciousness. When you have consciousness, it's not conscious of anything. It's conscious of anything it wants to. Therefore, the creative power and the power that picks up what it's creating is the same. Therefore, it creates and experiences at the same time.

So, this great power, only without division, without qualification, without numbers, without saying it is one...it can't be one if you have no concept of two or three or five. It's not even one. It is beyond description. It's consciousness. The only description we have is that it's the same quality of awareness that makes us aware right now, that makes us aware we are here, that makes us aware we are alive, that makes us have experience of life. Same consciousness is there. It devolves into different experiences.

First major experience it devolves it, that like an ocean, it devolves into a drop. What is a drop? A drop is the same ocean in a small scale as an individual. When an ocean thinks I am drops it becomes millions of drops, trillions of drops, unlimited drops. If the ocean is infinite, the number of drops becomes infinite also. The drops never leave the ocean. They're part of the ocean. There nothing happened. There's no division. Experience has made them drops. And the totality of consciousness, the ultimate creator, now makes itself into drops within the ocean. And those drops are called souls. We are those souls. Our life, our awareness, our experiences, are all arising from that experience of a drop within the ocean.

But when the drop is given an identity of being a drop, it forgets the ocean. It thinks there are other drops around. It says there are so many drops around me. Here, the one has become the many by simple act of consciousness. The consciousness has suddenly devolved into the many, unlimited many. And they're all drops of the same consciousness, connected to the same consciousness, never left the same consciousness, and yet feeling that they are drops. Souls are in the same state with the ultimate creator, that we are individuated creators. We have individuated ourselves into that first level of grand devolution, and first level of basic creation of universes, of many universes after that.

Then the drop wants to expand its experience. Notice: *expand* its experience. Now the expansion of experience can't take place where it's already infinite. So, we add another instrument, a cover upon that drop which makes it capable of expanding its experience. And that is called the causal body of the mind. The mind is the creative power. In order to give this costume to the drop, another power is created, not a being, not a drop, a power is created. The power, the very strong power, the strongest power created by consciousness called time. Time is translated as *Kal*. Kal is the most important negative power that has been ever created. There is nothing that traps us more than Kal or Time.

Time is a power. It doesn't mean time is flowing. It's just a power. Time then creates and is given the devolved work of creating the mind and putting its own essence into the mind. Like the total ocean of totality put its own essence into the soul, the time puts its own essence into the mind, and mind begins to work according to the time that's picked up and begins to create past, present and future—and spreads out time in a linear way so that you can travel on time and get caught up in the travel. Immediately after that comes the law of cause and effect, and all events are then packed on that by the mind.

Time has done its job by creating the mind. Mind is in the same relationship with the time as the soul is in relationship to the creator. And this timeless time then creates different kinds of time. It creates a time where it sets up the causes and it sets up events. Once it gets hold of a time that is flowing or a time that has got a past, present or future, it begins to load them with events. Infinite number of events. Loads all permutations, combinations possible of events that

can be placed on, and packs them nicely into little DVDs, little CDs, packs them into libraries and stores them. It is a very basic part of time. In the basement of time exists all these.

Of course, the basement is very low on time, but when we look at it from here, it looks like at the top. It's the top because we call it the highest *Akash*. Akash means the sky. From our point of view sitting here looking up at this devolution that's going on, it looks like we are looking up at the Akash, at the sky. There are many skies, several skies. Sky is a great phenomenon. To create a sky creates space, creates a world. A universe is created by a sky. Therefore, it's called Akash. *Akash Bani* means the sound that comes from the Akash. Akashic records, that means all the DVDs and CDs containing destinies placed in the Akash, placed there. So that Akash, which is the top of the causal plane of creation, where these are stored, these become very good instruments for time to place us into events over time. That's the now joy of creating a very great situation where souls can pick up experience from those DVDs, from those little consolidated events, packages of events.

What do the events show? The events shows birth and death in a different form and all events in between. The first part of the DVD shows a birth at a certain point in time which has now been created to work linear, then death. How far apart? In terms of our physical time, about two to three million years. That is the life when it's first created. That's the life of the causal body. That's the life of our Self, covered with the mind. The soul which had no birth and no death, which was completely immortal and eternal, is now covered by a costume called the mind, which has a life so it can be born. It will die after millions of years. And so now we make billions of years, we have millions of years, and the souls are put into that packet so that they can have events. Events start happening according to the DVD. Those events happen and those events say, "We want more devolution." And we have expanded experience in different ways. There the experience is all at once. We can see, touch, taste, smell, all in one grasp. There's no sense perception. It's an experience of grasp, totality of grasp. It's a copy of the experience of devolution from totality to the soul. It's a copy again. Time is making a copy of it and says, "You can experience everything at once." And then you spread it over time.

Then we need little more devolution for greater variety of experiences. So, put another cover upon ourselves, which we call the astral self, the astral body. It's not a body. It is the embedding of sense perceptions onto the same, same causal body. You embed them with sense perceptions that...sense perceptions cover it like an astral body. And now the experience get divided. The experience of now seeing is separate, hearing is separate, touching is separate. Everything becomes separate. And you have a variety of experiences. So, we change the nature of experience of consciousness by adding on this. Then it's a great experience.

We have several experiences during one lifetime of the causal body. And we keep on changing depending upon what the...what the original DVD said. "You will have five hundred or one thousand of these kinds of lives before you go back to your own self, before you remove this costume." Each life is several million years old in the causal body. Now, within one life, you're going to bring a number of astral lives, average age thousand to three thousand of physical years. We wear that body for that much time. And therefore, the whole body of sensory perceptions, nothing to tie us down, pure sensory perceptions, sensory perceptions as we know them working at hundred percent efficiency—that's our astral body. We fly, we live, we have all the work and then we want to put it down into another form of experience.

So, we are born for short periods. In one astral life we have several short periods in which we are born as human beings, as physical beings. And, as physical beings, though we confine ourselves, we have the experience of matter and physicality, as we're having now. We love it! We love this whole process. We're enjoying every level of devolution of consciousness right up to this point. Then time starts playing its little negative role. And the negative role that time plays through the mind, and through the senses operating in time and our physical bodies acting in time, we begin to follow the law of cause and effect, and begin to see everything that's happening must have a cause, and if there's a cause, must have an effect. Law of Karma is born.

It's already stored in the causal plane. When we picked up the DVD, this whole program was already there. And that's why just being playing out. All these levels are just being playing out the original DVD, the original Akashic record that we had there. We are playing it out. But when we play it out here, then the mind, through sense perceptions, begins to enjoy life and we forget that we came here for a temporary experience.

Why do we forget? Because our initial desire was that we should have real experiences. Now there is no real experience. How do we make an experience real when it's not real? Nothing is real. It's a play of consciousness. If consciousness can create anything, how do you make it real? First part is to cut off its origin. Not to know how it came about. It's independent, stand-alone. Reality requires a stand-alone. If you find out it's happening because of that, it's no longer real, when you know the real is the cause, which is causing this experience. We cut off experiences of one level from another of this grand devolution into five levels which I just described. So, when we cut off ourselves from that, this looks real. We cut off from each other also. So, we cannot know one from the other, except at one time we can have only one reality. We can have only one delusion or illusion, and one reality at one time, and they are both the same for us, because there is no way to find out what is what.

In this state we've done a great job to create reality. We did not create illusions. The experience was not to create illusions, but to create realities. We created several levels of realities. And

they were all several levels of illusions. But we made them perfect as realities, and we are experiencing them now as realities.

Now, since we took it as real, experience itself, being our only reality, drew us to its attractive parts. And we desired more and more of those attractive parts. The more we desired, the more we got attached to them. And these two functions of the mind, desire and attachment, tied us down here forever. And the very principle of karma, the very principle that everything must follow cause and effect in a linear time, made it a permanent experience for us. We can't get out of it. We can go around it. We can go again and again, circles around it, but the cause and effect says, "You do good or bad." Where did good and bad come from? Good and bad came as a category of the mind in order to preserve the law of karma, in order to have cause and effect. Cause and effect means that you can choose this, it'll have this implication. If you choose something else, it'll have another.

Now I said "choose." How can we choose if the whole program has already been made? If the whole thing has been set up in a DVD we are playing out, how can you choose? So, we cut off our knowledge of the DVD, and have given a very beautiful gift. The most wonderful gift any human being could have got—the experience of free will, the experience of choosing, the experience that there are options, alternatives available, and you have to decide which option to follow. A genuine experience, totally unknown to us that there is a DVD which records that experience in advance, totally unknowing that when we say, "should I or should I not," the words "should I" and "should I not" are in the DVD, that when we make a choice, the choice is already in the DVD. We're totally cut off from that, so free will becomes real like everything else becomes real. It's not that free will alone becomes real—the whole world becomes real, and free will becomes a part of it and becomes one of the most essential parts for a recovery of our true home.

So free will is a very double-edged sword. Free will makes us do things which tie us up, tie us up here forever, through the law of karma, and free will is the one that makes us seek and get out of it also. It's a great experience, no matter if it's real or unreal. No matter we can say the DVD already has it. Some people tell me, "If it is already recorded, why should I do this?" I said, "Do you know the word 'why should I do it' is already recorded." Everything is recorded in such perfection that even your thoughts, even your choice-making ability, even your decision how to choose—prerecorded.

But till you know that, till you see that, you feel it's all here, you're making your decisions. Beautiful! To create this kind of an illusion where free will becomes real, even though it is not, is the most beautiful gift we got because that very free will, the experience of free will...I don't call it free will because it's only an experience. If it were really true, if it was really true that free

will is real, I would very much like to say I can decide something that not even God knows. If God knows, it can't be free.

There was a friend of mine at Harvard University when I was studying there, and we used to discuss the subject—especially subject of free will came up again and again. Because they said, “How can it be? I make my choices every day. How do you say free will is predetermined?” When I would try to explain that the choices you make are also predetermined, he would say, “But I don't feel like it.” And that's exactly the beauty of it, that you don't feel like it.

One day this friend of mine called me early morning, and he said, “Ishwar, I found out that we have no free will because of my religious belief. My religious belief says that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. Omnipotent means he has all the power. Omnipresent means he's everywhere. And omniscient means he knows everything. If he knows everything, how can we have free will? If we have free will which God doesn't even know, then we are higher than God, and I can't believe that. My religious background doesn't permit me to think that I am higher than God. So, God knows everything. He must know what I am going to decide. Therefore, I have no free will.”

I said, “Will you come over to my apartment and we'll discuss it little more?” So, while he was coming to my apartment, I prepared a tray in which I placed a cup of coffee, and a cup of tea, and an empty cup. I said I'm going to give him a surprise. When he came in, I said, “Will you have tea or coffee or nothing? I've got all three on the tray. And don't use your free will—you don't have any.” He said, “What, all my great 'eureka' knowledge I got this morning you are demolishing with a cup of tea and coffee only.” I said, I am going to prove to you that not only you have free will, you cannot avoid free will. Free will is the greatest trap you have. When I offer you tea and coffee, what can you do except exercise your free will? You said tea or coffee or nothing, you are using your free will to decide. You can't escape from it. You think you have no free will. I am going to prove that you're always free will.”

He said, “This is terrible for me. I thought I got great knowledge, and now you're demolishing with cup of tea and coffee only.” I said, “The experience of choosing is so vital to us that every day we make choices hundreds of times, and they are all free-will choices which we make. The fact that we experience them as free will is a fact of life. It's built into the system that you will experience it as free will.”

I said, “Okay, let's forget about this. Let me now take your side, 'there is no free will.' Let me prove it to you scientifically, not metaphysically, scientifically I'm going to tell you. Psychologically I'm going to tell you that you have no free will.”

“When you make a choice, what are the factors that determine your choice? When your mind says, 'should I take tea or coffee,' how does your mind decide tea or coffee? How does free will

operate? After all, you're making a choice, and the choice is coming from your head, and your head, your brain, is thinking which one to take. When the mind is operating on making a choice, what are the factors that determine which choice you're to make?" And I said, "There can be two sets of factors. One, hereditary factors, genetics—your father liked coffee, your grandfather liked coffee, your lineage liked coffee, going into your genes, and you like coffee. That could be one factor. The second factor could be environmental—the company you have kept. You've been sitting with coffee drinkers. They made you have a cultivation for taste for coffee. Therefore, you're having coffee."

I said, "Do you know there is no third factor to make a choice? Did you know the mind is confined to only these two factors that make all choices, either what you inherited, or what you're exposed to? And when you make a choice, both these factors are completely fixed already. You cannot change your parents and your grandparents, and nor can you change where you have been so far. So, although you think you're making a free choice, the system of making free choice, the very mechanics of making a free choice, leaves you no choice but to make the choice these two factors are dictating, and they are fixed. Therefore, you can only make one choice. But you don't know what your genetics is. You don't know all your history. You can't even remember what happened two days ago. How can you remember all your life? And there may be more than one life that accounts for this. But they are fixed. At every time you are making fixed choices based on the background you already have. Therefore, scientifically also, it looks like free will. It's not free will."

Of course, if you have got spiritual experiences and gone to the causal plane, you can see all things are predetermined and written up in a complete detail exactly how it will happen, because the story has been written somewhere else. We are acting. We are the puppets. But just because the soul, the unit of consciousness, still linked with the ocean of consciousness, still linked with the totality, is sitting in us, therefore, the experience is real and becomes real for us.

This business of a drop of ocean bothered me as a child, bothered me when I got initiated. Because this...my fellow satsangis, fellow followers of the Master, kept on telling me that we are a drop from that big ocean, and we have been separated from the ocean for so long, and the spiritual path is to go back and merge in the ocean. That's the story I was told this spiritual path. That bothered me a lot. I said I am a drop. It's good. I feel good like a drop. What will happen to me if I merge in the ocean? I lose myself. And what will ocean gain by one more drop in it? Nothing. This is not a win-win game. It's a lose-lose game. Is this the spiritual path? The spiritual path is going to just merge in something that's already so big and has no value for me? And I have some value as a drop. I shine in the sun. I can make a rainbow. I do nothing in the big ocean. Terrible situation. I didn't want to follow this path.

But I was wrong. I did not realize the truth was it was a drop, but the drop never left the ocean. The drop was part of the ocean. When the drop's consciousness expanded, it became the ocean. It neither went anywhere, nor separated. The only game was the game of the contraction and expansion of consciousness, the enlargement of awareness. The whole game was how much awareness you have. If you're full awareness, you are the ocean. And if you are this restricted awareness, you are the drop. A drop...how big is the drop? You can make the drop any size in an ocean, very small droplets, big droplets, very big droplets, and the ocean. How big is the drop? The drop size is determined by your own awareness. The more awareness you have, the bigger the drop, ultimately becomes the ocean.

We have never left Sach Khand. We have never left our true home. We have lost the awareness of our true home. And all the spiritual path is to regain that awareness of your true home. All these levels of creation I have been presenting to you as if there's level one here, and there's a sky, there's a road. Up and down, I am placing them. That's the best way the mind understands. There are no levels like that at all. In truth, there's no levels. In truth, the whole thing is one place. In truth, the whole thing is here and now. Sach Khand included. Everything is here and now. It's just a question of awareness.

The mind does not understand that all levels can be at one place. So we, just to explain to the mind, to make it an understandable thing in this physical universe, I'm putting them like a hierarchy of five. Mind likes numbers, I must tell you. Mind likes classification. Mind likes to put things in different stacks. In fact, I was in college...I tell you a personal story about numbers. I was in college, and there was a election for the union president of the college, students' union president. So, I stood for the election. And there were a lot of other candidates telling that they have got the high marks in the college. They were this...they were... One was a short guy. He says, "Gandhi was short. Napoleon was short." So, you know, they were all giving their qualifications. Fortunately, I was the last speaker, and I said to them, "You don't elect a president on this basis. You elect on the number of points he has to do for you. I have ten points." Then I began to think what the ten points are. I was elected! (Laughter)

The mind is like that. I give a classification: physical, astral, causal, spiritual, total. Good. It makes sense. Very good path. It's not like that at all. It's all built into the same place. If these are covers, invisible covers, the physical body is the only really physical cover that we can see. The inner cover, which is right here in the body, the astral body, overlaps this body. When we look with these eyes, (pointing to the physical eyes) the astral eyes are behind these eyes, and we are looking because the astral eyes are open. We wouldn't be able to look from these eyes if the astral eyes were not open inside. The mind that thinks here in the body is the same mind that's creating everything, and it's right sitting in the head behind these eyes. The soul, that drop of consciousness, which is operating the whole system and empowering them—because

there's no power, there's no power in the shell of a body, flesh and bones. It has no value if there's no life in it. There's no power in the astral body if there's no life in it. There's no power in the mind if there's no life in it. What is giving it life? That drop of consciousness, which is the only empowering thing that we have. It empowers and makes the mind alive and makes it think. It empowers the sensory system, the astral body, and makes them alive. It empowers this physical body, makes it alive. The same consciousness is the reality of all power and life. Without that there will be no life, and there will be no power, no activity and no experience. They'll all shut down.

So, they're all within each other. It's not outside. It's not in a stack. They're all operating together at the same time, at all times. It does not mind that now my astral body's somewhere else and I am sitting here. If the astral body were somewhere else, you will be dead. And now, my mind has gone somewhere else. Mind can't go anywhere except inside. Attention can go outside, but not the mind. Now my soul is having soul travel. Where does it travel? There's no place to travel. Where the soul exists, there is no place nor time to travel.

So how can we talk like this? We're talking, making stories, and these stories are the only way to help us in the physical body to take the chance of going on the spiritual path. He says, "Meditate, meditate." Why do we emphasize meditation? Because the mind likes activity. Do something! If I were to reveal a secret like this, the secret that no effort ever gets you anything. People would say, "What is this? Every day he says do meditation, and now he says no effort does anything. How can these both be true? A big contradiction." The contradiction only arises because the mind functioning as its unit empowered by the soul has taken over control of our life.

The mind has a face. It's called the ego, the *I-ness*: "I can do this. I have done this." This ego, which is the front part of the mind, and we face it, others face it too...this ego, which is the front part of the mind, that always want to do something. If it doesn't do, it'll get bored. There's some strange phenomenon that the "I" cannot be at peace just by itself. Therefore, when the "I" is constantly active and you want to do something away from the mind, you must make the mind busy with something. You can make it busy with enjoying this world, going around looking for things there, or you can make it busy in meditation. Both have the same purpose, to keep the mind busy. You will notice when we do a little practice of meditation that the mind can never be stilled. People say, "Still your mind." I have never seen anybody still their mind. Mind can be stilled only when we ignore the mind and step aside. It's stilled. We don't experience it. If I don't want to face the glare of light, I can shut my eyes. Light is still there. I'm not facing it. I'm avoiding the glare.

To avoid the mind is what is needed in spiritual progress, not that we have to still it. You can't stop thinking. Somebody says you can stop thinking and that's stilling the mind. If you could

stop thinking, you will be dead because then the mind would be left...the thinking is the heartbeat of the mind. This body's heart stops, we die and the...unless a machine is put on us, and there's no machine to put in place of the thinking, so the mind thinks. If the mind stops thinking it dies, along with it the astral and the physical bodies die. So, mind can never stop thinking. It's just...its very basis of living. Therefore, thinking is a continuous process, day and night, 24/7, throughout our life. Heart pumps energy through the blood all our life. It doesn't say, "Once in a while I'll use my heart." It doesn't happen like that. Same thing with the mind. It's not that I think sometimes. No, you're thinking all the time, day and night. While sleeping you're thinking, while awake you're thinking. So, the thinking is a function of the mind you can't stop.

Again, I remember another friend of mine, also the university days, who said he has learned through a yogic practice, from a yogi, the art of how to stop the mind from thinking. I was very fascinated by the news, so I called him again, like the other guy. I said, "This is interesting that you learned how to stop thinking. I believe nobody can stop thinking. So, will you come and demonstrate to me?" He came again to my apartment. He said, "I have to take on a particular asana, particular posture of the body, and then I will meditate, and then I will be ready to stop thinking. I said, "How long can you stop thinking?" He said, "About half an hour, forty-five minutes at a time." I said, "If you can stop thinking for one minute, I'll be convinced you have found something that I don't know, totally new." I said, "Let's try the experiment here. You do your meditation and all that and be ready." When he was ready, I said, "I will keep my eye on my watch. I'll clap once and then you stop thinking. After sixty seconds, I will clap again, you start thinking again. Then we will analyze what happens to consciousness, what happens to awareness, what happens to our self when the mind is not thinking. There must be some very unusual experience happening that thinking has stopped and you're still there. I would like to study that, and we'll discuss it what happens."

So, he got onto his readiness position through his yogic asana, and then when he was ready, I clapped and looked at my watch. And kept on looking for 60 seconds, clapped again. I said, "Did you stop thinking for these 60 seconds?" He said, "Yes." I said, "May I ask you a few questions now? When I made the first clap, how did you know that you can now stop thinking? How did you know?" He said... I said, "Don't make up an answer. Recall. Recall what happened in those 60 seconds. We are examining those 60 seconds. After I clapped, after I clapped, how did you know it is time to stop thinking?" He remembered, "Oh, yes, after I heard the clap, I did say, 'Now it is time to stop thinking.'" I said, "That looks like a thought to me." He said, "But that's just a few seconds." "All right, let's cut the three seconds out. Now the experiment is only for 57 seconds. How did you know after the...after saying this in your head, that when I clap again you can start thinking again. Recall what happened." He said, "Oh, I remember. I said, 'And when he claps again, I can start thinking again.'" I said, "After that, when this happened, then

how did you know I will clap again when you stopped thinking?” And he remembered again and again. At the end of a ten-minute review of what happened, he said, “Oh, my God! I thought more in the 60 seconds than ever before.”

So, this idea that we can stop thinking is just not possible. It's not made like that. It's not constructed that way. Therefore, in meditation when we say stillness of the mind, or we say do not be influenced by the mind, it's only an art of ignoring the mind functioning independently, and we put our attention somewhere else. So, we can shift the attention from the thought into something else, and that is why all the different devices like *simran* and repetition and *mantra* and all that is used. But the real secret of meditation is not really these things. It's not really what your body's like, not what asana you adopt, what posture you adopt. Those are very minor matters. They're all for the mind, all to train the mind to start going home. Because the mind with its fear and doubt doesn't want to do those things. It is just to provide a rational basis, a logical basis, for the mind. It loves that rationality and logic. It loves nothing more than logical things. “I made sense. Yes, this makes sense.” When the mind says this, it is willing to do things. “If this doesn't make sense to me,” it won't go ahead. So, we are presenting a spiritual path in a form that the mind will accept to start off. After that, of course, you begin to discover yourself. “Oh, this is not the real path. The real path is love and devotion,” which is being pulled by the soul. It's a pull.

Meditation has two parts. It's got like a car. I find American cars have some front-wheel drive and rear-wheel drive. When a car has a rear-wheel drive, the engine pushes the car from the rear wheels. Where the car is a front-wheel drive, it pulls the car from front. All the same car, but the wheels are divided to do these things. Meditation is like that car. You can either push yourself, or you can be pulled. The starting point of meditation is push. Effort, try your best, do what you can, meditate regularly, more meditation, more effort, more work, and you're pushing your attention inside. Then comes a stage when the pull comes from inside. You don't push, and you are being pulled in.

Now, what can pull us inside? With our mind in this physical body, we know that we can push. We're used to pushing things in life. All our life has been pushing things. So, we know how to push our attention, but how do we get pulled inside? The pull comes from the very source where we're trying to head. The pull does not come from any external thing. The pull comes from destination. The pull comes from our true home. The pull comes all the way down right up to this level of the physical body, right through these five levels. The pull is coming from there.

What form will the pull take like this? Something is pulling us so strongly. Do we have any simple, crude example of that pull? The only crude example I can think is the love that we experience with people. As you love somebody, you're pulled. Love is pulling. You can't wait to go and see. What is pulling you? Love. It's the same love that pulls from inside. But who is

calling us? Who is loving us? There must be somebody loving us so strongly that can pull us through all these levels of devolution that I talked about, who can pull us through the astral, causal, spiritual stage to totality. It must be arising from totality, that pull. Yes, the pull is of consciousness, itself, to its source. But how do we know it is consciousness? The whole experience around us is consciousness. How can we differentiate? Now, to help us be pulled, the consciousness has set up a rope down right to the bottom, going through all the stages without break. If we catch hold of that rope, we can climb that rope, and be pulled, not that we have to climb the rope. That rope is there for us to hold onto, and we are pulled up.

This pull...how do we recognize the rope? What kind of rope is this? That rope has been called by different names. It's been called the Word. It's been called *Shabd*. It's been called *Nad*. It's been called *Kalma*. It's been called by so many...Holy Ghost. That rope that connects all levels at all times is that rope that we hold on and it pulls. How does it manifest? It manifests in a way in which we can appreciate it and catch it. It manifests in the physical world, in the physical head, in physical body, as a Sound. It's a Sound that does not come from outside, a Sound that does not come from anywhere where sounds are made. It's a Sound of consciousness, itself. And, it appears like a sound. And so, because it appears like a sound and our attention, spiritual attention, is capable of listening...mind is speaking, mind can't listen. Mind speaks, our spiritual soul listens. Since the soul has the capacity of listening, it can turn around and listen to the Sound. And if the Sound can be caught at the tenth door, behind the eyes, at the third eye center of consciousness, if you can hold on, latch on to the Sound, the Sound pulls you all the way back.

Nothing could be simpler than this. Nothing could be a better arrangement that we made to go back home than this, to carry a rope with us and go back on it. To carry a Sound...Sound is merely a manifestation. Its looks like sound to start with. It doesn't remain. It keeps on changing. Change into power, until it ultimately becomes the very source of consciousness. That we are aware, we are aware because of that Sound. That the whole creation is around us, that the mind can function, is because of that Sound. It's no ordinary sound. It's the essence of creativity. It's the essence of Creator. The Sound is the manifest form of the Creator, of Totality of Consciousness, operating all the way down, right up to here.

So therefore, all the meditation we do for the sake of the mind, to prepare ourselves, is really going to lead us to that source, which if we hold onto it, we latch ourselves, the attention, we will be pulled and takes us back home. Simplest way, the most wonderful way, out of all the yogas, and I studied a lot of them, and I practiced lot of them, and in my defiant, skeptic days, I was very keen to practice everything. And especially after initiation, the Great Master told me, "What I have given you worked for me. You go and look for anything better and take it." I really started looking for everything, to get something better. So, I did practice a lot of these things.

Out of all the yogas that I have gone through, the best yoga is the yoga of the attention latched on to the Sound Current called *Surat Shabd Yoga*. Surat is attention. Shabd is the Sound. Yoga means union with your own true self.

This is the Surat Shabd Yoga that I practiced and found it useful, and I recommend it. If I find something better than Surat Shabd Yoga, I'll take it, even today. I haven't found yet. And, I've lived quite a number of years. You can see that. In November I'll be eighty-eight. Another lucky number for me, eight and eight. But all I could find was that this is the best and highest yoga I could discover, the Surat Shabd Yoga of finding and attaching yourself to the Sound within. The sound that is not made by your heart, sound not made by your ears, sound not coming from the right ear or the left ear, which are all for practices, sound not buzzing like anything else outside, but the most melodious sound. The melody of the Sound is such even at the lowest level where it rings like a bell. It's a bell sound. Looks like a bell sound, except it doesn't have the jarring effect of the strike of a bell. When you strike a bell ("*Doong*"), then the echo goes on. It doesn't have that strike. It has all the rest of it. That bell Sound, when it pulls you, it pulls you off your feet. It pulls you faster than anything else. In fact, it can pull you so fast, you'll feel you're dying, and then you don't want to go so fast.

Great Master used to recommend go stage by stage, gradually. Because our experience is that this is real world, this is real body, living in real world. You're suddenly pulled. You feel, "Oh, I'm dying, I'm losing something," especially when you haven't had the companionship of the radiant form of a Master, which comes at the tenth door. So, at that level, take it easy. Every day do a little bit more and be pulled a little more. Hear the Sound a little better. Hear it more.

The same Sound, which sounds like a bell, Big Bell, not *tin, tin, tin, tin, tin*—not that kind of bell. *Dooooooooonnnng*—that kind of big bell. The echo of that bell keeps on increasing, what they call the peal of a bell. The peal of the bell keeps on increasing, and ultimately, the peal alone remains and not the, not the vibration of the bell. And that's when you have reached the astral stage of consciousness. That's when you will find...and they try to liken these sounds with musical instruments. And, it's very difficult to do that, because shortly after that it doesn't look like any musical instrument. It's just a power. It's a power that's pulling. And it has a resonance. It continues to have a resonance up to the causal stage till we can feel resonance.

But it is not, it's not exactly like the sound we hear from outside, where it is jarring compared to that. Some people say, "Oh, I hear the sound, very uncomfortable sound in my ear." That's called tinnitus or tinnitus. That's a problem with the ear. That's not that sound. And some people say, "Oh, we were told only listen to right sound, not the left sound, otherwise you go to *Kal* and this side *Dayal*. These are all very elementary things, because the right side of the brain works intuitively, the left works rationally. So, it's just a matter of putting you on the intuitive

side, which intuition comes from higher than the mind. These are just preparatory steps. They only prepare you for the real thing.

So, if somebody keeps on hearing from the right ear, you know what he'll be conscious of throughout his meditation? Right ear. He'll never go beyond it. If somebody says, "I'm avoiding the left ear, you know when one wants to avoid left ear, he'll never go anywhere. He's avoiding the left ear. These are very temporary, temporary things to move you on to the real sound. The real Sound comes from the center, comes right from within you, and looks like, apparently looks like it's right behind the eyes, and maybe if you're standing there behind the eyes, it's near your head inside, inner head. That's the position it is. Because inside, you can stand up, you can sit down, you can walk in your head. So, when you take that position, that's where the inner Sound comes and pulls you. So, remember, our spiritual journey, real journey to the higher levels of consciousness starts when you catch the Sound. The rest is all preparation for it.

Some people can do it very quickly. Some people take time. Why? Because in this spiritual progress, we do not take one life at a time, as a unit. It's several lives. We have worked on this project of going back home for many lifetimes. We prepared slowly and slowly. The work we have done in the past comes into play when we start here. Some people from childhood are feeling such an urge to find the spiritual truth. Some people take their life in old age to find out, "Oh, this was too bad. I want to find where's God. I want to find solace somewhere else." So, it all depends.

We have had training through religion, through understanding of other things, through books and so on for long period. And then when the time is right, that's the time when we really begin to move forward. The right time is when we are ready. When are we ready? We are ready when we say, "This is not our place." If we are still attracted to this place, we say, "No, I want to live a little longer." Consciousness says go ahead. Give you long rope. Every time you wish for something, you get a long rope to go ahead with it. It's only when you say, "This is not for me, I want something more, I want something in"—you're ready.

When you are ready, a spiritual Perfect Living Master comes into your life. And when he finds you are ready, even after his teaching, he initiates you. Initiation, as I mentioned yesterday, is the most important event in all human lives put together. When you're initiated, your account with this karma is over. Not it'll be over one day. It's over. The accountability to the angel of death, the accountability to the very system that determines what your next life will be, is over. The accountability is now in the hands of your Perfect Living Master. The Master determines if you will have another life or not. The Master determines what that life will consist of. The Master makes sure the next life will be better for you for meditational and spiritual progress.

Therefore, it's a very big change in our spiritual self, the change that takes place by initiation. Master takes 100 percent guaranteed responsibility to take you back home to Sach Khand in as short a period as possible, depending upon how you resist going home. Some people, you know, even after initiation, they say, "No, Master, little more." "Okay, okay, so a little more time." And this is not only happening at the physical plane. Some people start saying, "Master, I have to, you know, finish my duty there. Master, I have to take care of that building, that house I was building, and I have to do that before I die and before I go away. Give me chance." "Go, build two buildings. It doesn't matter. Go and do all this." He gives you a long rope, but then he pulls the rope. He pulls the rope because guaranteed.

They say that once initiated by a Perfect Living Master, you cannot have more than four lives, four human lives. And each life will be better, more conducive to the spiritual growth than the previous one. It does not mean we all have to four lives. In fact, the...some people, some satsangis, in Chicago area, they came to me and asked this question. They say, "Is it necessary to have four lives? Can't we just go home in one life after initiation? Why should we wait that long?" And I said, "No, you don't have to." Then they quoted a scripture, book by Soami Ji, which said, "*Ek janam gurbhakti...*[One life is meant for love and devotion for the Master.]...*janam doosray naam...*[you get initiation second time]...*janam teesray turiya pad* [third life you go into the causal stage]...*chauthay mein nij dham* [in the fourth you go to Sach Khand]."

They said, "Here is a description by a Master that this is the timetable he has laid down. That first you meet a Master. You develop love and affection for the Master, devotion. And then next life you are initiated. And third life you go halfway. And then fourth life you go to the top." I said, "That is a standard pattern. That's a very standard pattern which number of people go through but is not mandatory for everybody." So, I recalled an experience my father had. My father was initiated by the Great Master—Lekh Raj Puri. And he, when he was initiated, he had a very terrible experience one day. At his...he was pulled so fast he thought he was dying, and he said he'd never meditate again. Then he went to the Great Master, said, "This is not for me. It's too frightening, this path." Great Master said, "What would you...who do you expect to meet when you die?" "I'd expect to see you." "Then why are you afraid?" He said, "The other thing is, you haven't seen me inside so I can understand your fear. But do you know statistically that nobody has ever died during meditation? Not even a natural death. How...what a coincidence this is that during meditation nobody has died. Even a natural death, they haven't died. So, how can you say that you're going to die just by meditation?" So that gave him some security. He said, "But take it easy, slow, slow, *darja 'b darja,*" he used these words. Go stage by stage and not all at once. Don't jump.

One day, he heard from a fellow satsangi that Great Master said in his Satsang that you will definitely go home in four lifetimes, not more. So, he went to Great Master in the evening. He missed the Satsang, so he went to Great Master. He said, "Master, is it true that you said in the Satsang today that we can't have more than four lives?" Great Master said, "Lekh Raj, why are bothered? You're not having even another life. This is your last life." He said, "Well, Master, I am asking question from another point of view. Why can't I have a fifth life? Why can't I have more? Why are you putting a restriction on it? I understand Masters come again and again. If you happen to come again, you think I would like to stay up there?" Then Great Master explained. He said, "If a person gets initiated by a Perfect Living Master and follows his instructions, this is his last life. If a disciple follows instructions given at the time of initiation, does meditation regularly with love and devotion, this is his last life. Only if one cannot follow instructions, is amiss in meditation, does not, has not developed enough love and devotion because of other pre-occupations with the world, only then he'll have a second life. Only if a person leaves the path and runs away, not believing in it anymore, will he ever get a third life. Only one who will criticize the Master, even kill the Master, he'll have a fourth life." It doesn't mean everybody is going to have a fourth life or four lives."

So, he explained it very clearly. So, let us not imagine that this is a standard formula. That it depends on what priority we give to the spiritual path. Give it first high priority, number one priority, everything is after the spiritual path, go after this life. You'll never come again. But you may go from the physical plane, but you may like to stay on the intervening plane.

There was a beautiful British follower of the Great Master. I was very young. She was also a young girl, eighteen-year-old girl. And she came and she was so pretty. When I was sitting in Satsang, I was looking at her rather than at the Master. Young people, you know, young age. These things happen. I was surprised that she never looked at me. Normally my experience has been that even if the other person doesn't know you are looking at them, they have a feeling somebody's looking, and they turn around. This girl never turned around. She was looking constantly at the Master. English speaking girl. Master was giving a discourse in Punjabi. But she was listening as if she understood everything.

She was initiated after that Satsang and went back and wrote a letter to Great Master. And, Great Master's mail was being attended to, especially English mail, by four-five people—one of them was my grandfather. He used to write the letters/replies as dictated by Great Master into English language. When he saw that letter, he made a copy of it and gave it to me. He said, "This is an important letter. You will need it one day." I didn't understand why I would need it. But the letter said, "Master, after initiation I made rapid progress, and you know I was at the astral stage for a while. I didn't want to leave. It was so attractive for me. My artistic tendencies in the physical world still operated there in a bigger way in the astral plane. And I wanted to

spend so much time there. And then, I, with your help, but for you I wouldn't have gone ahead. And with your help, I went ahead, and now I am near the great void. I know without your help I cannot cross."

A young girl writing like this was one of the greatest inspirations for me, that if she can have that experience so rapidly, so fast, and unknowing the language in which the Master is speaking, there's something else, the connection, that at a young age she must have had a great background, which she has done already to make this rapid progress. But the significant part was that *you can be distracted even in the middle of this journey*. It's not a one-step journey, that you will find more temptations and more distractions in the astral plane than you find in the physical plane. So, lot of people are tarrying there, disciples of Perfect Living Masters. You go and you'll see them there. You'll meet them there. They have been there, for some of them for thousand years. But the Master who initiated them finally, after which they were never born as human beings, is the Master still with them. Same Master continues when it's your last life.

Then the Master...if your initiated by a Perfect Living Master, and you die and the Master dies, then what happens? You're born again, and that Master is gone. So then, new Master appears in your life and you're initiated. Are you disciple of this Master or the one who initiated you last life? No, the last life is over. He put you on track. He has given you guarantee. The next life has come. That Master has come up. Supposing you come one more life. A third Master comes up. The Master who is the final one after which you are never going to be born again in the physical plane is the one who will stay with you forever, right up to Sach Khand, forever. No matter how long you stay, how many distractions you have, how slow your pace may be in the inner regions, he will be with you forever.

These are very significant facts and give us an assurance that the Master, physical form of a Master that we meet, when we are willing to do what he's telling us on meditation, on Satsang, on these other parts of the spiritual program, that he's going to be the Master forever. He's a companion forever, a friend forever. It's a great feeling to have a friend like that. Unconditional love of a friend like that changes one's life completely, here and hereafter. So that's why it's a, it's important to put it high priority and make the Master you love the last Master. If the Master who initiated you, you feel a little, "Oh, it's nice, it's good but a..." You know, if there's a "but" in it, you're coming another...next time and have a Master where you won't have any "buts" to say, that you are so attracted to the Master, say, "I love him. I can't...I miss him. I can't come again to find something else." So that's how the Perfect Living Master remains with you all the time.

This journey is not a solitary journey. The only solitary part is a very limited part up to the third eye center, the tenth door. There the Master that works is invisible to us, and the Master who's

visible is outside in the physical form. Up to that point, you should take advantage of the Master in the physical form. That's why they say in the spiritual path, Satsang is very important. What is Satsang? I came to United States and they said, "We are going to sat sang." I thought we sit and sing there. I didn't know that they meant "Satsang." They just said, "sat sang." So, what is Satsang? "Sat" means the truth. "Sang" means company. Company of the truth. Satsang is company of the truth. And, what greater truth do you have? What greater evidence and manifestation of perfect, ultimate truth do you have, than the same truth manifest in a visible form in the physical body of a Master? There's no greater thing.

I've tried to say that we want to believe in God. Have you seen God? Has anybody ever seen God? Nobody has ever seen God, because when you are in a position to see God you are God yourself—you can't see him. If somebody says, "I want to see what is totality," you are totality. You are not even qualified to see God if you are not God yourself. Therefore, the only way to see God is in a manifest form. And the manifest form is when the very power of totality of consciousness becomes manifest in a human being like us. It's the consciousness of that being that makes it the same as the consciousness of God. So therefore, the company of the truth, Satsang, means the company of a human being with that kind of awareness. The more time you spend with that, the bigger your progress, the faster your progress on the spiritual path.

An old mystic, a poetic mystic Kabir, in India says, "If you spend one *ghadi* (means an hour and a half), he says, "If you spend an hour and a half, or half of that, say forty-five minutes, or half of that, in the company of a Perfect Living Master, it's worth more than thousand years of meditation." I know it's an exaggeration. But imagine the value he's giving to being in the company of a Perfect Living Master, what happens to us in the company of a Perfect Living Master. Therefore, never underestimate the value of Satsang. It brings our mind in line on the track again and again. We are away from Satsang, mind travels outside, goes to other things again. We come back, puts us back on track, gives us renewed vows, "No, this time I'm going to high priority." Then you go away, you lose that priority. Other things become important. The more frequent you can have Satsang, the better.

Great Master had many disciples from other countries, including United States and England, and Africa, South Africa. So, somebody asked him, "Master, how important it is to meet the physical form of the Master? And how much useful it is?" Great Master said, "It's best if you can see him every day. But if you cannot see him every day, once a week would be okay." He said, "Master, what about people living far away? They can't come to you." "Well, all right, once a month should be all right (okay?) for those people." He said, "What about people living overseas, far off? They can't afford to come." "Okay, once a year is okay." He says, "What about those you can't come once a year?" "Then, they have to wait. They wait for next life."

So, he made it clear the importance of Satsang, importance of meeting the Master, being in his company, spending time, and it churns our mind around. It brings us back on track. If we miss that, there's so many worldly distractions that occupy us. We forget about it. "Okay, oh, I missed meditation today. I'll do it tomorrow, maybe little more tomorrow. Maybe, I'm very busy with my work, with my job. When I retire I'll do meditation more." And sometimes we never get the time in our whole life what we have been postponing. And we procrastinate so much, on meditation more than everything else. "Oh, we can do it later. Today was no time." That means our priorities are not oriented to spiritual path. If we were oriented to spiritual path, put it as priority number one. This has to be done, first thing. Then I'll take care of other things. If there is a delay, I'll delay other things and not this. So that kind of priority puts you back on track. And Satsang is a valuable tool for putting you in high priority on the spiritual path, that you put it priority where it is required.

I will share more information with you when we meditate today. And we'll do some other exercises and move forward from what we did yesterday. Okay, we'll have a lunch break now, and I'll see you again about three o'clock.