

Seattle/Tacoma Satsang

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By Brian Hines

“The Energetic Embrace of Emptiness”

Greetings...I want to talk today about the energetic embrace of emptiness. Maybe this sounds contradictory. How can we actively pursue nothing? Well, that’s why the root of the word “mysticism” means “hidden.” If ultimate reality, which we may call God, was lying about right in the open, there wouldn’t be any need for a spiritual path. But for some reason—and who can say what this is—reality has been veiled, and must be uncovered to be realized.

Our spiritual practice is how we go about this. We call it *Surat Shabd Yoga*, or union of the soul and spirit. Soul is us, our consciousness, our attention. Spirit is the essence of existence, the omnipresent creative power. Since it is everywhere and everything, it is also within us, and in fact *is* us. So if we can merge our seemingly separate consciousness with the universal consciousness, all of our problems are solved, all of our yearnings are satisfied.

There isn’t much to say about our practice. Hazur does it in a few words: Hazur, QFL, 297: *Sant Mat is so simple that there is nothing to explain. It expects the disciple to do his Simran and Bhajan with attention at the eye center. The mind has to be brought back every time it runs out. He has to stick to the diet rule and lead a good, clean moral life. All attempts have to be made to develop love and devotion for the Lord which will ultimately come from meditation.*

That’s it. Mostly it’s all about doing nothing. Not thinking. Not eating meat, fish or eggs. Not drinking alcohol or ingesting illegal drugs. Not having sex outside of marriage. Not...not...not.

Gosh, it all sounds so negative. How can we get energized and enthusiastic about so much nothingness? Because when we are nothing but soul, we are *everything*—the All.

Great Master, #4, 11: *The Lord is the great storehouse of consciousness...If we are a drop of consciousness, He is the ocean of consciousness. We are a ray of the essence of consciousness and He is the sun of the essence of consciousness.*

So what prevents the drop from becoming the ocean, the ray becoming the sun? Well, separateness. This sounds like a tautology, something self-evident, and it is. Two cannot be one so long as there are two. Hence, the barrier to union is Manyness. And it is mind, or ego, that makes us believe we are a separate entity.

Hazur, DD, 102: *Although God and the soul are living together in the same house, they have no communion, because there is a thin but strong wall of the ego in us. If we are able to remove this ego, the “I-ness,” and see only Him in ourselves, we attain Liberation forever.*

How do we do this?

Hazur, DL, 147: *The essence of meditation is one-pointedness directed toward merging in Shabd, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, even when they happen to be enticing.*

So it's pretty simple. Eliminate what is physical or personal, matter and me, and what is left must be something non-physical and universal—what we call Spirit, or Shabd. Now, we can't really eliminate the material world, but we can cease paying attention to it. And mystics say that we *can* eliminate the “me-ness” or ego within us.

Hazur, QFL, 80: *Why think so much about yourself? The very ego that we want to crush is the only barrier between us and the Lord. The moment you lose your identity and merge yourself into Him, He appears before you. Ego is our only enemy, which attaches us to this world, and the whole struggle is to eliminate it from within ourselves.*

This struggle is the “energetic” aspect of our practice. The losing of our identity is the “emptiness” aspect. And the merging of what remains of us—our purified consciousness, or soul—with Spirit is the “embrace.” Hence, we can say that the science of the soul truly is the *energetic embrace of emptiness*.

We come to satsang, I'd say, not so much to learn anything new, as to bolster our commitment to doing what we already know needs to be done. Vince Savarese likes to say, “we come to recharge our batteries,” kind of like a mystical Energizer Bunny.

When I need energizing, I know where to turn: Rumi. His words crackle with spiritual electricity. I'd like to share some quotations from his *Masnavi* that bear on our energetic embrace of emptiness. Certainly there are many other themes in his writings. But these are two central themes: courage, commitment, bravery, passion—and self-effacement, non-existence, egolessness, surrender.

It really is beautiful, this yin and yang, quietude and action, welcoming and pursuit, feminine and masculine sides to Rumi. For we all have these pairs of seeming opposites within ourselves. Part of what it means to become spiritually mature is finding a balance between them that is compatible with our karmically-determined personality.

My admittedly subjective opinion is that we don't honor our wild, crazy, passionate side enough. If we're bored with our spiritual practice, it probably is because we have lost touch with the energetic longing of our soul that, like a house-bound puppy, is always standing by the door panting and whining: “Let's go! Come on, let's go! Let's get going back Home. Open the door of your consciousness, and let's get moving!”

We don't realize what a wonder is within our grasp. Rumi tells the tale of “feeling the shoulder of the lion,” the title of one of Coleman Barks' books. By the way, all but one of these Rumi quotations are from Nicholson's translation of the *Masnavi*. Nothing against Coleman, but it's nice to hear Rumi close to his own way of speaking.

A peasant tied an ox in the stable: a lion ate the ox and sat in its place. The peasant went into the stable to (see) the ox: the man, groping into corners, was seeing the ox at night. He was rubbing his hand on the limbs of the lion, back and side, now above, now below. The lion said, "If the light were to become greater, his gallbladder would burst and his heart would turn to blood. He is stroking me like this because in this (dark) place he thinks I am the ox."

So Rumi warns of the danger of imitation, and of embracing spirituality thoughtlessly. He says, *If you become acquainted with Him without blind imitation, by (His) grace you will become immaterial, like a voice from Heaven.* (II, p. 248)

The Master, or the person Rumi refers to as "the true Moslem," is one who has consumed his ox-self and now is wholly a Lion-spirit. Rumi warns against getting too close to such a one. Be careful; be sure you know whom you really are touching in the darkness of your spiritual ignorance.

(He is) like a lion in the shape of a cow: behold him from afar but do not investigate him! And if you investigate, take leave of the cow (which is) the body; for that lion-natured one will tear the cow to pieces. He will expel the bovine nature from your head, he will up-root animality from the animal (soul). (If) you are a cow, you will become a lion (when) near him; (but) if you are glad to be a cow, do not seek to be a lion. (V, 57)

This feasting, unfortunately, isn't a passive affair. If it was, we wouldn't have to carry out our spiritual practice, all this meditating, all this abstention from animal delights: flesh-eating, intoxicant imbibing, sex with whatever other animal catches our eye. For we are told that the soul in us, and the soul in the Master, is exactly the same. Master doesn't make us into a Lion; he helps us realize the Lion we already are, but have covered up.

Plotinus puts it nicely:

But we... Who are "we"? Are "we" only the Spirit, or are we those who have added themselves on to the Spirit, and who came into being within time? We were other people before our birth, in that other world... As pure souls, we were Spirit... we were a part of the spiritual world, neither circumscribed nor cut off from it. Even now, we are still not cut off from it.

Now, however, another person, who wanted to exist and who has found us... has added himself on to the original person... He joined himself on to the person we were then... Then we became both: now we are no longer only the one we were, and at times, when the spiritual person is idle and in a certain sense stops being present, we are only the person we have added on to ourselves. [VI-4-14]

Our battle, then, is with ourselves. We have met the enemy, and they are us, as Pogo (I believe) used to say. It takes courage to fight an external foe, but the *most* courage is needed to vanquish our bodily nature. The Lion, you see, does not represent an animal to Rumi—Coleman Barks says that while Rumi uses the image of the lion in many different ways, "in most instances the lion is the point

of necessity that comes at a certain moment, the fierce intensity that destroys ego-imprisonment, and opens one out into light and another field of being... lion-energy and warrior-energy are close. In Sufi stories sometimes a great eccentric teacher will be riding a lion. Shams (Rumi's Master) was associated with this animal, and he was entirely his own man. Whenever students would begin to gather around him in a dependent relationship, he would excuse himself and vanish.... But the chief lion attribute is his authority. It is an authority over himself, and it is also an authority that comes from living close to a deep sense of self that he will not betray." (preface)

So when Rumi speaks of the weak "feminine" side of us, please understand that he isn't talking about women. Gender has nothing to do with our lion-ness, even though it must be admitted that—to politically sensitive modern ears—the words of this thirteenth century Sufi mystic may seem a bit sexist.

The charge of a woman in battle does not break the (hostile) ranks; nay, her plight becomes pitiable. Though you see her take the sword (and fight) like a lion amidst the ranks, (yet) her hand trembles. Alas for him whose reason is female, while his wicked fleshly soul is male and ready (to gratify its lust). Of necessity, his reason is vanquished: his movement is towards naught but perdition. Oh, blest is that one whose reason is male, while his wicked fleshly soul is female and helpless; Whose particular (individual) reason is male and dominant, (so that) his intellect deprives the female fleshly soul (of power to do mischief). (V, 148)

We see here that for Rumi "male" and "female" have nothing to do with our sex organs. They have to do with whether our body or our soul is in control. Our mind, say the Masters, can be our ally or our enemy in this battle for supremacy, depending upon which way it inclines. Reason, as Hazur often said, can be a great aid in our spiritual practice. He would observe that an intellectual person may take a long time to make their mind about what path to follow, but once they did, nothing could dissuade or distract them.

We've been given the weapons to subdue our foe: primarily, simran and bhajan, repetition of the holy names and listening to the divine Sound. But they are useless, these weapons, if we don't use them.

When there is no manliness, of what use are daggers? When there is no heart (courage), the helmet avails not. (V, 150)

Rumi can be rough on spiritual pretenders, imitators of True Warriors. He tells the tale of a Sufi who stayed behind tending to the camels and tents and invalids while the horsemen rode into the line of battle. When they came back, they brought the camp-bound Sufi a present—a prisoner—and said that he should go behind a tent and cut off his head, so he too could become a holy warrior. After some time had passed, they wondered what was taking so long. Checking, they found that the prisoner, though bound, had overcome the Sufi and was biting him on the neck, drawing blood without using a lance.

After they had killed the prisoner, they asked "What happened?" The Sufi replied that when he had drawn his sword, the prisoner had rolled his eyes, and that made him faint. Disgusted, the true warriors said:

“With such a stomach as thou hast, do not approach (the field) of battle and war. Since thou wert sunk and thy ship wrecked by the eye of that pinioned prisoner, how, then amidst the onset of the fierce lions (champions) to whose swords the head (of an enemy) is like a ball, canst thou swim in blood, when thou are not familiar with the warfare of (brave) men?... (There thou wilt see) many a headless body that is (still) quivering, many a bodiless head (floating) on blood, like bubbles... Fighting is not the business of any faint-hearted who runs away from a spectre (hallucination), like a (flitting) spectre. (V, 226)

Now, what Rumi is really referring to isn't the “lesser warfare”—physical battle—but what he calls the “Greater Warfare.” This is the struggle in which we strive to vanquish our lower nature, those bodily cravings and self-centered impulses, whether expressed in thought or action, that serve as a barrier between the soul and spirit.

Sufi Path of Love, 154: the prophets and saints do not avoid spiritual combat. The first spiritual combat they undertake in their quest is the killing of the ego and the abandonment of personal wishes and sensual desires. This is the Greater Holy War.

Rumi speaks of a great Moslem warrior who fought in many battles, and was tempted to return to the fray: *(One day) there reached my ear the sound of the drums of the holy warriors; for the hard-fighting army was on the march. He was tempted to come out of retirement, so to speak, and struggled with what to do. Then his higher self spoke truly: I vowed that I would never come out of seclusion, seeing that this body is alive. Because everything that this body does in seclusion it does with no regard to man or woman. During seclusion the intention of (all) its movement and rest is for God's sake only. This is the Greater Warfare, and that (other) is the Lesser Warfare... Truth consists in giving up the soul (to God)... All this dying is not the death of the (physical) form: this body is (only) an instrument for the spirit. (V, 228)*

We are reminded, of course, of the mystic adage: “Die to live” It sounds terribly ominous, but the death being sought is not that of the physical body, which will come soon enough anyway. No, it is the death of the ego, the emptying of self so that spirit may enter. Rumi says that if it was enough to die in battle, “infidels” would be holy martyrs.

Rather, there is many a trusty martyred soul that has died (to self) in this world, (though) it is going about like the living. (V, 229)

So it is the embrace of emptiness—no self—that is the hallmark of the spiritual warrior. We do this through our meditation, the simran that eliminates our personal thoughts, memories, perceptions, emotions. But how difficult it is to keep this enemy, though bound by our repetition, from jumping up and overcoming us.

Sudhakar Dikshit, an Indian scholar and spiritual seeker, wrote a delightful book called “Journey Towards Nothingness—a personal quest.” In it he tells about his struggles with meditation in a wonderfully frank and humble manner:

God being totally beyond my reach, and religion and philosophy, as know to me, having failed me, I took to meditation but soon discovered that I had resorted to something which is a sort of pretense. While meditating, whenever I tried to enter into what I call myself, I always stumbled upon certain old perceptions of love or hate, pain or pleasure. I could never catch myself alone, without those perceptions. I experienced only what I had always known. (64)

Hmmmm....Sounds like he has been in my own head, and probably the heads of quite a few in this room. Well, meditation is difficult, and this makes it valuable. If diamonds could be found on the top of the ground, no one would pay much for them. Rumi explains:

When there is no enemy, the Holy War is inconceivable; (if) thou hast no lust, there can be no obedience (to the Divine command). There can be no self-restraint when thou hast no desire; when there is no adversary, what need for thy strength... Without (the existence of) sensuality 'tis impossible to forbid sensuality: heroism cannot be displayed against the dead. (V, 37)

The divine design is difficult, if not impossible, for us to discern at our level of consciousness. But Rumi implies that we've been filled with ego—an illusory self—so we can energetically and enthusiastically empty ourselves of it. So let's turn to our goal, now that we've explored the engine, that warrior spirit, which keeps us moving towards it by means of our spiritual practice.

How, O brother, is existence (contained) in non-existence?.. "He brings forth the living from the dead:" know that the hope of (His) worshippers is non-existence... He (God) hath caused the non-existent to appear existent and magnificent; He hath caused the existent to appear in the form of non-existence. He hath concealed the Sea and made the foam visible; He hath concealed the Wind and displayed to thee the dust. (V, 63)

This world is like Plato's cave of illusion where people are chained in such a fashion that all they can know are the shadows on the cavern wall. *This* is that cave. It seems substantial, but that is the illusion. Matter is a mirage, or more accurately, a mirror in which spiritual realities are reflected.

The exit from this cave is, not surprisingly, an opening. If it could be felt, it would be part of the wall. It is *emptiness*, just like all doors are. The problem is that we get close to that emptiness and we pass it by, saying to ourselves, "There is nothing there, got to keep looking." Wrong! It you can't think it with our mind, or see it, hear it, feel it, or taste it with your senses—*that's it*.

Hazur, SDII, 284: *You will realize the Lord by listening to that Word which your physical eyes can never see, your ears can never hear, which the tongue cannot describe, hands cannot grasp, and feet cannot reach. This Word has no connection whatsoever with writing, reading, or speaking.*

Spirit, or the Word, indeed has no connection with anything whatever we know now. It supports the world precisely because it is not part of the world. Similarly,

it will support us—but only when we separate ourselves from the chains of mind and matter.

Hazur, SD1, 122: *...Nam alone matters. It is the only wealth that we should amass while living in this world...This Nam is quite distinct and apart from the world. Nam is distinct from all else. It has no stain and no impurity. When we merge in it, we also become transparent, pure, and refulgent.*

True existence is something very different from this seeming existence. So it turns out that a negation of a negation—cleansing ourselves of illusion—leads to something highly positive.

The Absolute Being is a worker in non-existence: what but non-existence is the workshop of the Maker of existence? Does one write anything on what is (already) written over, or plant a sapling in a place (already) planted? (No); he seeks a sheet of paper that has not been written on and sows the seed in a place that has not been sown. Be thou, O brother, a place unsown; be a white paper untouched by writing. (V, 117)

We're trying to clean the cup of our consciousness and turn it upright so it can be filled to the brim with Spirit. All of our practice is directed towards this end, *all* of it.

Hazur, SD1, 184: *Saints say with absolute fearlessness that all else save Nam is falsehood; all other pursuits carried on under the influence of the mind, whether these are intended to lead one to meet the Lord or have some other aim, are worthless and futile.*

The image of the Terminator comes to mind, as unspiritual as this may sound. If you saw the movie, you'll recall that he is virtually unstoppable. The Terminator has been programmed with a single goal, and he is indefatigable in pursuing that goal—which happens to be killing a woman. Still, we should be equally concentrated in our pursuit—death of our ego.

Rumi: *I have swept the house clean of good and evil: my house is filled with love of the One. When I see anything in it other than God, (I know that) it is not mine but is reflected from the beggar (who is with me at the moment). (V, 168)*

This beggar is the “other person” Plotinus spoke about, our illusory ego-self that has attached himself to us. He isn't really there. Our ego is a reflection of our true self that is a phantasm, a product, it seems, of consciousness turning back upon itself. Instead of being simply “I,” we say to ourselves, “I am...” such and such, this and that. Our thoughts and feelings are not us. For if they were, we wouldn't say, “I think...” and “I feel...” Our aim is to become one, not many, and thus form our consciousness into a mirror that can reflect Reality, not illusion.

Rumi: *The world of imagination and the phantom of hope and fear is a great obstacle to the traveler (on the mystic Way)... Understandings (strong) as mountains have been submerged in the seas of imagination and the whirlpools of fantasy... The man of sure faith is delivered from imagination and*

fantasy...(When) a mirror becomes devoid of images, it gains splendor because (then) it is the (reflector) of all images. (V, 160)

When our consciousness is empty of all those images that are either physical or personal, what is left is what is most real: spiritual and universal.

J.R. Puri writes (YY, 61): *...union with God normally occurs when all the empirical contents of mind have been eliminated and the empty ground of the self in pure consciousness has been reached.*

The empty ground of the self...that is what we seek to energetically embrace. There is no better description of this than in the marvelous medieval writing, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. And it somehow seems fitting, given the historical enmity between Christians and Muslims, to share these thoughts of an anonymous 14th century English country parson that are so much in tune with the words of the Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi who lived about the same time.

He says:

...the vigorous working of your imagination, which is always so active when you set yourself to this blind contemplation, must as often be suppressed. Unless you suppress it, it will suppress you! Often enough when you are thinking that you are abiding in this darkness [the Cloud of Unknowing] and there is only God in your mind, if you look carefully you will find your mind not occupied with this darkness at all, but definitely engaged with something less than God. And if this is so, then that thing can be said to be temporarily on top of you, and between you and God. (73)

There we are again, on the bottom—being held down by what should be in our control. What's the problem? We're not using the weapon at our disposal. We have a sword, the sword of simran, and we wield it half-heartedly, if at all. What kind of spiritual warriors are we? The *Cloud of Unknowing* tells us how to fight this battle with our lower self (69-70)

Should any thought arise and obtrude itself between you and the darkness, asking what you are seeking, and what you are wanting, answer that it is God you want: "Him I covet, him I seek, and nothing but him." ...If you want this intention summed up in a word, to retain it more easily, take a short word, preferably of one syllable to do so.

Well, here we part company a bit with the anonymous author. But it doesn't matter. Hazur says (DTL, 169), *A Mystic may give you any name to repeat. It is immaterial. It will have the same effect for you.* So back to the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

And fix this word fast to your heart, so that it is always there come what may. It will be your shield and spear in peace and war alike. With this word you will hammer the cloud and darkness above you. With this word you will suppress all thought under the cloud of forgetting. So much so that if ever you are tempted to think what it is that you are seeking, this one word [or five words] would be sufficient answer.

You see, what we are really trying to forget isn't so much the world, as our ego-self. For the world only exists for us so long as our attention is directed towards it. And so, it seems, does our ego.

(110) *You must loathe and tire of all that goes on in your mind and its will unless it is God. For otherwise surely it is between you and God. No wonder you loathe and hate thinking about yourself when you always feel your sin to be a filthy and nauseating lump—you do not particularize—between you and God, and that that lump is yourself... So crush all knowledge and experience of all forms of created things, and of yourself above all... For if you will take the trouble to test it, you will find that when all other things and activities have been forgotten (even your own) there still remains between you and God the stark awareness of your own existence. And this awareness too, must go, before you experience contemplation in its perfection.*

What we need is energy, and *more energy*, to embrace the emptiness that is the doorway to Spirit—to God—to Master.

Rumi: *Passion makes the old medicine new; passion lops every bough of weariness. Passion is the elixir that makes (things) new: how (can there be) weariness where passion has arisen? Oh, do not sigh heavily from weariness: seek passion, seek passion, passion, passion!*

Rumi advises us to be more reckless. Gamble everything away—including our Self—for the chance to unite with God. Pascal produced convincing evidence that this is an excellent bet. For what may be lost is worth nothing, or very little, while what may be gained is of infinite value.

Rumi: *Love is reckless... (The lover) is fierce in onset and body-consuming and unabashed... he has killed in himself the seeking of self-interest. He gambles (everything) clean away, he seeks no reward, even as he receives (everything) clean (as a free gift) from Him (God). God gives him his existence without any cause: the devoted (lover) yields it up again without cause. For devotion consists in giving without cause: gambling (one's self) clean away, (pure self-sacrifice) is outside of every religion. For as much as religion seeks (Divine) grace or salvation, those who gamble (everything) clean away are (God's) chosen favorites. Neither do they put God to any test, nor do they knock at the door of any profit or loss. (V, 368)*

Radha Soami. May we energetically embrace emptiness, with no thought of gaining or losing—but simply because it is what we must do. This is the emptiness of emptiness, not only being empty—not even knowing that we are empty.

EXTRA:

It's a strange thing, this spiritual combat. Those who try to protect themselves are crushed. Those who kill their self preserve their Self. Rumi, Daylight, 178: *If you put on the armor of a warrior, yet are unable to defend yourself, you'll die. Make*

your soul a shield, bear what God sends you, put down the sword. Whoever is headless saves his head; the selfless cannot be struck. Those weapons are your selfish strategy, a defense that wounds your own soul.

There's a wonderful story in the introduction to Richard Heckler's book about teaching "awareness training" to the Green Beret's. Heckler, an Akido master, got his black belt back in 1976. George Leonard writes about what led up to his black belt exam: *During the three months' period of intensified training that led up to the exam, our teacher had subjected Richard to the kind of reduction of ego that you normally read about only in the legends of Eastern masters. For the final three weeks, he had never looked Richard in the eyes and had referred to him only as "what's-his-name."* And then came the exam, which reached its climax in the final *randori*, a simultaneous all-out attack by three black belt akidoists:

...on this day spectators and experts alike saw Richard's randori as harmony, the promise of reconciliation. No matter how hard or swift the blow, he was not there to receive it, but always at the moving center that holds all opposites in perfect tension. As for Richard, he experienced no effort or strain whatever: only a voice in his head, repeating, "This isn't Richard." There, in the eye of the storm, stripped of the certainty he had always deemed necessary for survival, denied the support of his teacher, divested even of his name, Richard found the deliverance he had not known he was searching for. He had no question that he would be hit or trapped. If need be, he could go on forever, realizing all the while that "he" was not doing it. The voice in his head was clear: "This isn't Richard. This isn't Richard."

This stuff works, all this business of emptiness, loss of ego, remaining centered in stillness while a crazy world attacks with all its fury. But the warrior spirit, our Lion-self, isn't ours just for the asking. It takes training, and our *dojo*, the place in which we practice our spiritual martial art is mediation. As an aside, the same introduction contains an interesting anecdote about another of Richard's experiences:

Once during a meditation retreat, Richard opened his eyes and noticed that the man next to him seemed to be in a deep meditative state. He was sitting very straight. His breath was moving rhythmically from the very center of his body. "My eye is caught," Richard writes, "by something on the black T-shirt that hugs his huge biceps and barrel chest. Printed in bone white on the front is a large skull and crossbones. The words over the skull read "82nd AIRBORNE DIVISION:" and the broad letters below the skull scream, "DEATH FROM ABOVE." Richard was momentarily disoriented. People don't wear T-shirts like that at meditation retreats, yet the person inside the T-shirt looked exactly like someone at a meditation retreat.

Well, go figure...

There are some wonderful stories in our literature of energetic, devoted thieves and nee'r do wells who became equally energetic and devoted Sant Mat disciples. The lesson perhaps, is that a Lion-spirit can be destructive when channeled outward and downward, yet is a great aid to spiritual advancement when channeled inward and upward. It is said that (Heckler, 10) *When the samurai Kikushi put down his sword and was initiated into Zen, his Master said to him,*

“You must concentrate and consecrate yourself wholly to each day, as though a fire were raging in your hair.”

Hazur, *Quest for Light*, 238: *Instead of blaming the Path or the Master, see within yourself where the weakness lies. Have you given regular time to meditation every day? Have you been able to keep the attention at the eye center all the time during meditation? Have you vacated the body of all consciousness and brought it to the eye center? Have you tried to live the Sant Mat way of life, detaching yourself gradually from the world and attaching your thoughts to the Lord within? Have you kept the Names with you most of the time? In other words, have you followed the instructions given to you at the time of Initiation?*

Vacate the body...detach from the world. Have we done this? Are we justified in complaining that we haven't seen the light when we haven't taken one step out of the cave, or even gotten close to the opening that leads outside—or in this case, *within*.

Mysticism is all about opposites. It's doing what comes unnaturally: nothing at all.

Plotinus: *To be sure, you were already previously the All, but since something other came to be added on to you besides the “All,” you were lessened by this addition. For this addition did not come from the All—what could you add to the All?—but from Not-Being...Thus you increase yourself when you get rid of everything else, and once you have gotten rid of it, the All is present to you. [VI.5.12]*