

Closing the Circle
Sedona Satsang: April 28, 2001
by **Brian Hines**

Confusion: Baba Ji says, “My job is to confuse you.” At the Dera a woman recently said, “I feel like socking you.” Why? Because, she said, he had destroyed all the illusions she had created for herself while with Hazur.

So we shouldn’t be afraid of a little confusion—or even a lot of confusion. Which gives me confidence to go ahead with this satsang.

What is the truest thing we can say about God?
That there is nothing true we can say about God.

Whoa! Isn’t this satsang?
And doesn’t “satsang” mean “association with truth”?
Like the old Wendy’s commercial:
“Where’s the beef, where’s the beef?”
“Where’s the truth, where’s the truth?”

What is true? Greek conception of Plotinus: “There is nothing truer than the truth.” Real truth entails a union of the knower and the known.

Of course, we could say: “Only a true Master, a Saint, is able to speak the truth about God in satsang.”

There is, I have to say, some truth to this. But only in degree.

I will stand by this statement:

No one has ever said anything true about God, in or out of satsang.

Hazur says: *How can the power that has brought the creation into existence possibly be written down, spoken, or read? Who can trace its history, who can establish its period, or place it in time?*

And Great Master says: *By saying that He is one, we are limiting Him. This is simply done to help the understanding, because that Being is indescribable and incomprehensible...We cannot imagine God, since He is beyond the reach of the human mind and intellect.*

So instead of socking Master, we should hug him. Dissolving of imagination is the revealing of reality. God is known by direct experience. God is seen by the eye of the soul, not the eye of body or of mind.

Deepak Chopra has written a new book, “How to Know God.” I haven’t finished it, but when I do, and if I then find that I know God, I’ll be sure to recommend it highly to you. Somehow, though, I think there is more to God-realization than that.

In an introductory chapter, Chopra says, *One bald fact stands at the beginning of any search for God. He leaves no footprints in the material world.*

How true. If we can sense it with our physical organs of perception, or think it with our physical neurons of conception, then we can be sure that this is not God.

Now, this might seem to be sort of a depressing state of affairs, since it appears to imply a vast distance between our everyday experience and divinity. But let's consider this for a moment:

What footprints of *ourselves* are left in the material world? By "ourselves" I don't mean our body, or what our body produces—sounds, smells, other impressions—but our innermost secret "me-ness," the "I" that resides at the core of our consciousness, which really *is* our consciousness.

What proof of you can you present to the world? Really, none.

We know that we exist, as Descartes observed, by virtue of an immediate and intuitive awareness. To think, "I do not exist," is a contradiction in terms. The question is not *whether* we exist, but *how* we exist.

Bhagavan Ramana, an Indian sage, says:

"Who am I?" is not a mantra. It means that you must find out where in you arises the "I" thought which is the source of all thoughts. You have to ask yourself the question, "Who am I?" This investigation will lead in the end to the discovery of something within you which is behind the mind. Solve that great problem and you will solve all other problems.

He continues:

I am is the reality. The one unalterable reality is being. Until you realize that state of pure being, you should pursue the inquiry. If once you are established in it, there will be no further worry... What is called the heart is no other than the absolute. In the interior cavity of the heart of every one the supreme Self alone shines as "I am." It is verily the Self. Enter into the heart with one-pointed attention.

Simran! Follow one thought back to its source.

So, spirituality is wonderfully simple and direct. It is a turning within, a circling back upon ourselves. Plotinus, a Greek mystic philosopher, spoke of two great currents in the cosmos: emanation and return. Our path is one of return. We've done enough emanating, or we wouldn't have the inclination to be sitting in this room today.

However, a turn can be long and gradual, or short and abrupt. The great mystic adepts, such as Hazur and the present master, Baba Ji, urge us to avoid detours and embrace the most direct path back to God—which turns out to also be the path back to our own self.

Increasingly, I'm coming to view Baba Ji as a spiritual Bruce Lee, a master of the mystical martial art. As many of you may know, Bruce Lee was known as a synthesizer and simplifier of techniques and approaches from many martial art traditions. What counted to him was one thing only: does it work?

In a recent compilation of Lee's notes and scribbles, *The Tao of Kung Fu*, we find an interesting observation about progress which seems to apply as well to spirituality, as to kung fu:

There are three stages in the cultivation of kung fu. Namely, the Primitive Stage, the Stage of Art, and the Stage of Artlessness.

The primitive stage is when a person knows nothing, and simply acts instinctively. This was us before we came on this path, and it probably still is us in many respects. But hopefully we're beginning to enter the stage of "Art", in which our training has caused us to learn a few things. Lee says of the person in this stage:

Unquestionably he has gained a scientific knowledge of combat [physical or spiritual], but his original "self" and sense of freedom are lost. His mind "stops" at various movements for intellectual analysis and calculations. His action no longer flows by itself.

This is an awkward stage, neither here nor there. But there is hope, for Lee says:

The third stage, the Stage of Artlessness, arrives when his training reaches maturity. His techniques are performed on an almost unconscious level without any interference from the mind. Instead of "I hit," it becomes, "it hits!" This is the stage of cultivated ignorance. In other words, before I learned martial art, a punch was just like a punch, a kick just like a kick. After I learned martial art, a punch was no longer a punch, a kick no longer a kick. Finally, after I understood martial art, a punch is just like a punch, a kick just like a kick.

Similarly, we begin by not giving any attention to spirituality, or, at least, not much. We just act naturally in the world. Then, we start to become aware of ourselves as spiritual beings. This creates a sort of self-consciousness in us, a feeling that we are both separate from the person we were before, and other people who aren't drawn to the same spiritual path as we.

This is normal. But we don't want to get stuck in this stage. As quickly and smoothly as possible, we want to stop the intellectual analyzing and calculating Bruce Lee spoke about, and just *walk the walk, fight the fight, live life*.

At first, there is just life. Then there is the contrast of a spiritual life, and life. Finally, there is just life again. Life is experienced. It isn't thought about, and it isn't lived by a person other than us.

This is why Baba Ji, is unrelenting in his efforts to wean us from our attachment to concepts of God, or another person whom we believe to be an incarnation of God, rather than our own direct experience of God.

Randy Smith, Ashland secretary, recently spent two weeks at the Dera. He told me that if someone stands up at the evening meeting and says to Master, “You are God; you are refulgent; you are... whatever,” Baba Ji will immediately challenge that person to prove it, asking “How do you know?”

A woman got up one evening and said, “Baba Ji, you are shabd incarnate...” and that’s as far as she got because Baba Ji interrupted her and asked, “How do you know?” She didn’t have an answer, Randy said. It was a concept, something she had read in the books. She didn’t have the meditation experience to prove the claim.

Baba Ji wants us to know God, not to know a concept of God, which will be far off the mark.

Yes, we can’t say anything about God. But we can say something about how it is possible to have a direct experience of God. So, more and more, I’ve come to view satsang not as a presentation of truth, with a capital “T”, but as a description of the experiment, so to speak, by which mystics say we should test the hypothesis: “God exists.”

Here is how Hazur summarized this hypothesis, which sometimes is called the Perennial Philosophy:

Our real self is the soul, and the soul is Shabd [or spirit]. ...Self-realization is essential before God-realization. So long as we do not know ourselves, we cannot know Him....As Socrates said, “Know thyself.” What is that self that we have to know? That is the soul, which is our real self. This concept is very, very old with the East. It was so also with the West and with the Greek philosophers, but it has been forgotten absolutely.

This is the wonderfully simple equation for God-realization, an identity: Self is the soul is spirit is God, or, the One.

In some marvelous manner, the microcosm, us, is the macrocosm, cosmos.

Along these lines, there is a wonderful series of questions and answers in *The Master Answers*, or at least my ancient edition of this book, which I only recently came to appreciate.

Here Hazur plays the role of a spiritual aikido master, very much like Baba Ji. That is, he turns the questioner back upon himself, and the question back upon itself. And, the reader back upon him or herself. Really, it’s great. One moment your intellect is standing tall; the next its been thrown on its back—where, I presume, we will be able to gaze up at the heavens.

This is Hazur's response to a questioner who said, "Could you give us some concept of the Lord?"

He is a Power. Give it any name. We cannot even say it is power. We cannot say He is a person. It is difficult to describe Him. I think it is for us to know Him rather than to describe him. We all try to think with our own limited intellect what He would be like.

OK, true enough. Now Hazur turns the question about God back onto our own self, the questioner.

What are we? Have we ever thought about ourselves?...there is something in the body that keeps it going, and that is the soul...When the soul is in the body, we are alive, moving about, doing everything that you see. What is the concept of the soul?...Have we seen or have we any witness who has ever seen anything going out of a body at the time of death? We have no concept of the soul, and that means we have no concept of ourselves. Then how can we have a concept of the Lord?

Great stuff. And now we get to a few wonderful lines, where Hazur sums up the entire spiritual enterprise.

The concept that we have of ourselves should be the same as our concept of the Lord. The Lord himself gives His devotion within us. He gives His own concept. He Himself is within us. I do not think we can, by words, explain that, but intuitively we know it is the Lord. It cannot be explained logically that He is One. He exists. He is in everyone of us and we are part and parcel of Him.

Ah, "he exists."

If anything can be said about God that is close to being true, perhaps this is it. "He exists." This is an echo of Bhagavan Ramana's "I am."

In Exodus, Moses says to God, when I return to my people and say that the God of your fathers has sent me to you, they will ask me, "What is his name?" What should I say to them?

We read: *And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

Well, do you think this answer satisfied them? Probably not. But it is right in tune with the answer Hazur gave the questioner in the quotations above. God is. You are. When you know the essence of your own existence, then you will know the essence of all existence—God.

We want a different answer, because the answer mystics give us requires us to search within, rather than without.

They turn us toward the stillness of meditation, rather than the busyness of outward activity.

They even turn us away from the physical form of the guru, the master, so that this will not distract us from knowing the true form of the guru, which is identical with our own true form—the formlessness of the soul.

Sabina satsang at Dera. Randy Smith: “It was a great satsang...I can only remember one thing she said.” Which is: “We are all looking for the physical form of the master on the inside and the astral form of the master on the outside.” Actually, Baba Ji said this himself.

Hazur says: *The Lord has no form. The soul has no form. We are so used to the idea of forms because of the fact that everything here is made up of elements, physical elements. But the physical elements do not go beyond form.*

This is the same with us. As we observed before, what can you say about yourself, the self that you are when you are not saying anything—either with spoken words to the world or with unspoken words to your mind? We are reduced to wordlessness when someone says, “Tell me what you are like in your innermost being, the single self that is the root of the root of all your multiple selves.”

Spiritual practice—meditation, which is the only true spiritual practice—is all about uniting with existence, which we often call “shabd.” Hence, this science of the soul is also termed *surat shabd yoga*, union of the soul with spirit, the fabric of existence.

Here is how Great Master explains the nature of shabd in *Philosophy of the Masters* (vol. 4, p. 119):

Before the creation, the Shabd was unmanifested and nameless. It then existed in itself. In that state it was called indescribable, nameless, invisible, unfathomable, unutterable and inexpressible. When it became manifest it became known as Nam (Name of God) or Shabd.

From words to the Word. Names to the Name to the Nameless.

Prior to its becoming manifest, there was no sun or moon or sky. The Shabd was formless. The Shabd, however, is consciousness. All are under its control. Nothing can manifest without its help. The Shabd is the life, the essence, the root and the quintessence of every created thing... Whatever exists in this creation is Shabd... The beginning and end of all things is Shabd... Whatever exists is Shabd.

We’re reminded of these words in the Bible, the revelation of St. John the divine: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. (22:13)*

So we’ve got to get down to the essence, the root, the quintessence of ourselves, for this is shabd, God-in-action. And how do we do this?

By stripping away all that is unessential and branch-like, the add-on accessories to the simple purity of our soul-consciousness.

A crude way to put it is, “when in doubt, throw it out.”

Tulsi Sahib phrases his advice considerably more eloquently:

*Cleanse the chamber of your heart
For the coming of your Beloved.
From your attention discard all that is other
So He may be seated there.*

Hazur, in one of his last satsangs, comments on Tulsi’s words:

*Until you rid yourself of your love and attachment for everything other than Him,
your heart will never be fit for the Supreme Being*

What is this “other” that we don’t want? Physical perceptions, obviously, for matter is not God. But if God-realization could be attained by simply entering a sensory deprivation chamber, everyone could be a saint. The real otherness is within, not without. Tulsi Sahib says:

*One heart, a thousand desires, and still the cravings increase.
Where then is the space, tell me, to establish him there?*

Hazur says: *What does he mean by ‘other’? Everything around us, whatever we experience in this material world, is ‘other’: children, relatives, friends, houses, money, assets and property. Everything that we think of as ours, apart from the Lord, Tulsi Sahib describes as ‘other.’*

But Hazur goes on to say that mystics don’t encourage a physical withdrawal from all this otherness, but a mental detachment:

No saint ever says that to free ourselves from our attachments we have to hide ourselves away. We must live among them, remembering what is real...Saints do not tell us to renounce the world. Rather they say: Extricate your mind from all these things. Apply your mind to worshipping the Lord so that you may acquire that which is yours. You spend your entire life trying to possess those things that can never be yours—and that is why you are always restless and without purpose.

Truly, each of us has a longing that never lessens. The means by which we try to satisfy that longing are as individualistic as every individual.

What our longing directs us toward is largely determined by our karmas, our previous attempts to satisfy a primal longing for God. But desire is common to all, a fact that formed the basis of the Buddha’s teachings. And Meister Eckhart reminds us, as do our own masters, that longing for God is entirely natural, and, indeed, unavoidable.

Eckhart based a entire sermon, or treatise, on these words: “They that eat me, shall yet hunger.”

He noted that with every physical hunger or thirst, after you eat or drink, you are no longer hungry or thirsty. Also, it is the first bite or the first sip that is the most enjoyable. After that, enjoyment lessens, until eventually more food or more drink can even become painful.

This is, he says, because when a being thirsts and desires such and such, it does not receive Existence, with a capital “E”, but some particular bit of existence. Since the soul longs for Existence itself—God, shabd, the true form of the master—it never finds it in any of these lesser objects of desire, even when they are attained.

Then Eckhart gets truly mystical, in a fashion that I don’t claim to really understand, but which is wonderful all the same. He says that because God is both the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the first sip of spirit is as delightful as the last, and the last is as delightful as the first.

One never becomes satiated, because what is being filled is the same as what is filling. God is existence; soul exists. The drop is filled with the ocean, and never stops being filled with the ocean.

Eckhart says: Desire is the soul’s hunger. The soul that truly loves God is not satiated by love. Because the God he loves is love, he loves love, and to love love is to make a circle so that there is no end to love... Take the example of someone who is said to run for the sake of running. He always eats up the road as he runs; nonetheless he always hungers for it, because he runs for running and loves the road for itself. Thus he loves what he loves for itself—love for love’s sake.

So we keep returning to this: close the circle. Make the U-turn.

Love for love’s sake.

Similarly, Baba Ji urges us to meditate without thought for the results of our mediation. We love meditation because we love to meditate. We throw ourselves into our meditative practice because there is no place else to go.

Can we ever escape from ourselves? Would we ever want to, even if we could? God is existence. What would it mean to obliterate something that exists, really, truly, completely send it to non-existence? Why, we then would be greater than God.

Such cannot happen. And this is why we should never be afraid of meditation, even though it seems to lead to our extinction—extinction of our separate existence, at least. Hazur says:

One should never feel frightened. There is nothing to fear, nothing to lose.

By losing our false self, we gain our true self. We do not know ourselves as an object, but as our innermost consciousness. Tulsi Sahib says:

*Why wander everywhere in search of your Friend?
The road to your beloved is through the royal vein.
With patience and love, meet a perfect Master.
He will give you the wisdom to find the royal vein.*

Our wandering is not physical, but mental.

We realize the One only after becoming one ourselves. Unity is known by a unified consciousness, single and simple.

Eckhart: The eye with which I see God is exactly the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowledge and one love. That person who is thus rooted in God's love must be dead to themselves and to all created things so that they are no more concerned with themselves than they are with someone who is over a thousand miles away. ... This person must have abandoned themselves and the whole world.

As Tulsi Sahib said, we have to discard from the chamber of our heart, our consciousness, all that is other than God so He can be seated there.

The is the purpose of simran.

We empty ourselves so that we may be filled—with spirit, shabd, the voice of the Lord.

Hazur says:

Until you rid yourself of your love and attachment for everything other than Him, your heart will never be fit for the Supreme Being.... You can only go back to the Father if your heart is filled with his love and contains nothing of this world.... When the heart is empty of all thoughts and desires, good or bad, then the Grace of the Lord descends upon us.

This grace is, of course, shabd or Nam. It takes on the form of sound and light in creation, so it can be heard and seen by the subtle faculties of the soul. Tulsi Sahib says:

*Practice for some time and the inner ear will open
To take you to Allah-hu-Akbar, the One without another.
This is Tulsi's call: heed it, o practitioner, and act on it!
The Kun of the Qur'an, it is written, will take you to Allah-hu-Abkar.*

Kun means “be.”

The Koran says:

Creator of the heavens and the earth from nothingness, He has only to say when He wills a thing: “Be,” and it is.

So being, pure and simple being, is next to God. This is how the Greeks conceived of the cosmos: matter, basically, is non-being; this physical universe is barely being; the spiritual world is being; God is beyond being.

To be or not to be is not the question, because what is, is eternal, God. Existence always exists or it would not be existence. But there are gradations of being in the created cosmos. Our job is to be more.

Some people have more being than others. This is why realized mystics are so attractive. They possess a solidity that we lack, as they are grounded in existence itself.

But this is our heritage, our goal, the state from which we came and to which we will return. All we need do is discard this non-being and barely being—matter and mind, things and thoughts—from our consciousness.

Simran, simran, simran.

This is how we detach ourselves from illusion and attach ourselves to truth.

Meister Eckhart praises detachment highly, as do all mystics. He goes so far as to say this:

I have read many writings both by the pagan teachers and by the prophets and in the Old and the New Law, and I have inquired, carefully and most industriously, to find which is the greatest and best virtue with which man can most completely and closely conform himself to God...I find no other virtue better than a pure detachment from all things; because all other virtues have some regard for created things, but detachment is free from all created things. That is why our Lord said to Martha: "One thing is necessary" (Luke 10:42), which is as much as to say, "Martha, whoever wants to be free of care and to be pure must have one thing, and that is detachment."

He goes on to explain:

And if the heart is to be willing for that higher place, it must repose in a naked nothingness; and in this there is the greatest potentiality that can be. And when the heart that has detachment attains to the highest place, that must be nothingness, for in this is the greatest receptivity.

I'm reminded of Hazur's words about nothingness. Someone asked him, "In *Spiritual Gems*, in the letters, one Master tells his disciple to say, 'I am nothing.' How can this be interjected into meditation? Is it a process of thinking? Is it to be used consciously? What is the idea behind that?"

And the reply:

You will get the feeling that you are nothing when you merge in the love of the Master.

Shabd, spirit, this is the love of the Master.

You are not mentally nor symbolically to feel that you are nothing, or “I am nothing,” nor to feel that you are everything. You will just forget what you are. When you absolutely blend yourself into the love of another person, then you forget what you are.

You forget *what* you are, but not *that* you are. This is the learned ignorance Bruce Lee spoke of, the same wisdom of not-knowing so beautifully expressed by the fifth or sixth century writer known as the pseudo-Dionysius. Here he speaks about how God is to be grasped:

...the good cause of all is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless. It has neither word nor act of understanding, since it is on a plane above all this, and it is made manifest only to those who travel through foul and fair, who pass beyond the summit of every holy ascent, who leave behind them every divine light, every voice, every word from heaven, and who plunge into the darkness where, as scripture proclaims, there dwells the One who is beyond all things.

Speaking of Moses, he says that after perceiving all that can be seen with the eye of the body or the mind,

...he plunges into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing. Here, renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing.

Rumi says:

*The Absolute Being works in nonexistence—
what but nonexistence is the workshop of the Maker of existence?
Does anyone write upon a written page?
Does anyone plant a sapling in a place already planted?
No, he searches for a paper free of writing,
he sows a seed in a place unsown.
Be, oh brother, a place unsown,
a white paper untouched by the pen!*

Simran, simran, simran.

End with Kabir poem: *Attachment to the Name*

*As long as I talked unceasingly about the Lord,
The Lord remained away, kept at a distance.
But when I silenced my mouth, and then sat very still,
And fixed my mind at the Doorway to the Lord,
I soon was linked to the music of the Word,
And all my talking then came to an end.*

A good place to close satsang. Thank you for helping me to learn.