

A Stranger in a Strange World



Torment of a Soul Awaiting Birth (Hermes)

I have seen a vision of souls about to be shut up in bodies.

Some of them wailed and moaned.

Some struggled against their doom,
like noble beasts caught by crafty hunters and dragged away from their home.

One shrieked,
“How cruel it is that we are being torn away from our celestial splendor!

We are to be expelled from this holy atmosphere and from the blissful life we live here,
to be imprisoned in a mean and sorry place.

What hard necessities wait for us?

What hateful thing will we have to do to meet the needs of a body that will quickly perish?”



The world is a furnace in whose fires the soul is purified.
(Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj)

The Dawn of Light, 209



Llewellyn Vaughn-Lee

We all come from God, but when we are born into this world we forget. We forget from where we have come and that we are children of Light. We take on the clothing of this world, leaving behind the “clouds of glory” of our true home. The Sufi calls this the “Journey from God,” a journey of forgetfulness in which we leave Paradise behind.

But there are those who never quite forget, who keep a distant memory buried deep within them. As a result this world never seems like home; there is often a sense of not quite belonging, not fitting in. Mystics are strangers in this world, just because they remember their real home.

(from Love is a Fire: The Sufi's Mystical Journey Home)



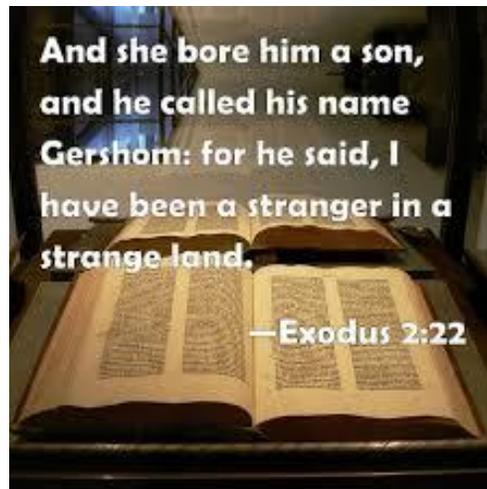
Our Birth is but a Sleep and a Forgetting

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come.
(William Wordsworth)



Seneca

The condition of life is the same as that of a bathing establishment, a crowd, or a journey: Sometimes things will be thrown at you, and sometimes they will strike you by accident. Life is not a dainty business. You have started on a long journey; you are bound to slip, collide, fall, become weary, and cry out: "O, for Death!" – or in other words, tell lies. At one stage you will leave a comrade behind you, at another you will bury someone, at another you will be apprehensive. It is amid troubles of this sort that this rugged journey must be made.



Rumi

Your Ancient Home

You may have lived many years in a city,
But as soon as you fall asleep,
Another city rears in your mind
Full of its own good and evil
And your own city – the one you lived in for years –
Vanishes completely from your memory.
You do not say, "I am a stranger here; this is not my city."
You think you have always lived there,
You think you were born and bred there.
Are you amazed, then, that your soul
Does not remember its ancient home?
How could she remember?
She is wrapped in the sleep of this world
Like a star shrouded by clouds,
And she has tramped through so many cities,
And the dust that darkens her vision
Has not yet been swept away.



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

This World Is Not Your Home

(Excerpts from a talk given during the 1972 tour at Sant Bani Ashram, N.H.)

So this body, the human body, is considered to be the highest in all creation, next to God. Mohammedan literature tells us that when the man-body was made, God ordered the angels to bow down to it. So great is man, you see. Only in the human form can we do something which we cannot do in any other form of life. Except for the man-body, all bodies are bound. They have got no free will. In the man-body we are bound to some extent and also free to some extent. When the railroad lines are laid down, the train will run over them. It is for you to lay down the lines whichever way you like.

So Masters found that there is a golden opportunity, if we just finish off the reactions from the past which we have done ourselves. And we have got some free will also - and that free will is: we can go to our home. This world is not our home. We are conscious entities, and our home can only be All-Consciousness.



So Masters say, “If this is not your home, why not go back to your home? You are conscious entities; your home can only be all-consciousness. You have been sent down here by God; why don’t you go back home?”

So God sends His Messengers to tell people, “Come on, make way, back home please.... Man-body is the highest rung in creation, which you have already got.... You are very fortunate - now this is the golden opportunity; you can come back” - and they demonstrate to you how to come back. This meditation is for that purpose: how to withdraw your attention from outside. So if you are convinced at heart, your whole life will change.



So Masters say if you are conscious entities, and your home is no other than all-consciousness, and in the man-body you have got the golden opportunity, what is your real work, most personal work? To find the way back home. All other work is only action or reaction: you have to pay off debts to those to whom you have been connected - brothers, sisters, wives, husbands, mothers, children. When that is paid off then? If we are again attached to the world, then naturally we will again go where we are attached, that’s all. If we are attached to our home, if we want to go to our home and love that home, and have some contact with it through the grace of some Master, then naturally we will go where we are attached - back home.

So two things come up. One: This world is not ours. If you take that as a daily lesson you will go back like an awakened man, and then you will have to be put on the Way. Second: If it is not ours, then what to do to know where our home is? How can we reach it? This body cannot help us; it will have to be left. So this is what comes next. So Masters say, “All right, go on; do your own work. Why are you entangled in the work of others?” Mind your own business. You see? If you become happy, all are happy; if you become conscious, have permanent peace, naturally the whole thing changes, you see? That’s the point.



Question: What did we do to have to come down and suffer as man?

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji: That is evolution. Man is developing, you see. Man feels unhappy; he is driven from all sides; naturally he turns to something higher which he has not seen...

Question: What is our original sin? What did we do then to deserve this?

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji: We are here, that much you know. Whether God is or not, never mind. You want to be happy or not? (Yes.) You want to be happy? Then permanent happiness will come when? As long as you are attached to this world, it is only a passing panorama - changing panorama of life. Once you are attached you feel happy; when you are withdrawn, you feel unhappy. Why don't you attach yourself to some power which remains permanent and that will never be withdrawn from you, and you cannot be withdrawn from that power? You will have permanent peace. (<https://ruhanisatsangusa.org/nothome.htm>)



In this world you seldom come across a happy soul. Under the burden of ailments and troubles, mental and physical, every soul feels oppressed. (<https://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/trials.htm>)

Your question about the necessity of suffering in the economy of creation is one of those problems which cannot be satisfactorily understood so long as the soul is on this low plane, but so much can be said that spirit entities are merely forced into this condition at the time of creation. The object of the creator was that they, too, should attain full consciousness and join the region of pure bliss. Therefore, in order to develop their consciousness and to create in them a longing to reach the region of pure spirit, it was necessary to subject them to a course of suffering, without that they would not have cared to make their condition better. The soul that is satisfied in this world does not feel the necessity of joining its creator. The truth of this explanation becomes established as the soul travels upwards. (<https://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/trials.htm>)

When Guru Nanak said that the whole world was unhappy, He was asked if there were not a single soul who enjoyed happiness; and He said, "They are happy who are sustained by Naam." Even the most miserable of people have transformed their lives into an expression of joy by being connected to the Naam. *Naam is the panacea for all ills.* It is the only real means to happiness. But I will repeat that very few people understand the subject of Naam. (<https://ruhanisatsangusa.org/ramayana.htm>)

The Masters' aim is for man to cease coming and going in creation, for the soul to be freed from matter and senses, ultimately and without any undue waste of time, reaching its true and permanent home. **The Masters tell us that this world is full of negativity and is a bad place in which to remain;** and while living out our obligations here, we should join up with positivity and then learn to transcend them both and realize the Sustainer of all. (<https://ruhanisatsangusa.org/ramayana.htm>)

Life is two-part: there is outer life and inner life. Those who live only in the outer aspect accept the world as being the truth, even while going through the daily experiences of its ups and downs, even though it is obvious that no person is really happy here. Kabir Sahib says, *I have not seen one indweller of this body who is happy; whosoever I saw was unhappy.* Those who think always at the body's level and become the very image of the body can never be happy. *O Nanak, the whole world is unhappy.* Can anyone then be happy in this world? Only He Who has solved the mystery of life, and those who through keeping His company gain right understanding. (<https://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/worldplay.htm>)



Sant Darshan Singh Ji Maharaj

This world may seem to us a veil of sorrow, a bog in which we are perpetually engulfed in physical and mental pain and anguish, a place where we are forever subjected to a strange melancholy of spirit. But the greatest mercy which God bestowed upon us when God sent us forth was to deny us, here in this life, the gift of true and lasting happiness. It is precisely because we are never really fully happy, that we are always possessed by yearning, which becomes God's means for taking us back to God. Let us embrace this means, and instead of complaining, thank God for the same. The head bows only to One, and having found that One, let us not bow to the toils and temptations of this world. Let us press on that we may see here and now in this very lifetime the inner, lasting peace and the ecstasy which are our birthright.

(Sat Sandesh, May 2020)

Buddhism

From *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*

(Published in 1987)

We don't have to look far to see how pervasive suffering is in the world. There is the suffering that people are experiencing right now due to poverty and injustice. The presence of starvation, disease, and oppression stringently defines many people's lives. As we pay attention to the world around us, we see how evident suffering is in so many arenas of life – in politics, economics, social structures, religious conflict, interpersonal relationships, in our own minds and bodies. It is vital that we remain connected and sensitive to this fact.

Even when we live on an island of relative peace and abundance, as many of us do, if we look closely at our own lives we can see the suffering that is always present, although sometimes disguised. There is the inevitable pain of the body: disease, decay, and death are an inherent part of the process of life. It is not a question of whether this happens to one person and not to another. If we have a body, it is going to get sick and older and die.

And when we pay careful attention to the mind, we also experience many different kinds of unease. Although we may find comfort and security in the habits and routines of our lives, beneath the comfortable surface there are often vague and disquieting feelings that there is something fundamentally incomplete or unclear or not quite right about our lives.

There may be an uncertainty or a feeling of hollowness that drives us to fill our time with an activity. We might feel fragmented or dissatisfied or imprisoned. At times there are overwhelming feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, anger, jealousy, lust, and so forth.

Seeing the suffering in the world around us and in our own bodies and minds, we begin to understand suffering not only as an individual problem, but as a universal experience. It is one of the aspects of being alive. (Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, 99,100)

If all our misfortunes were laid in one common heap,
whence everyone must take an equal portion,
most persons would be contented to take their own and depart.

(Socrates)

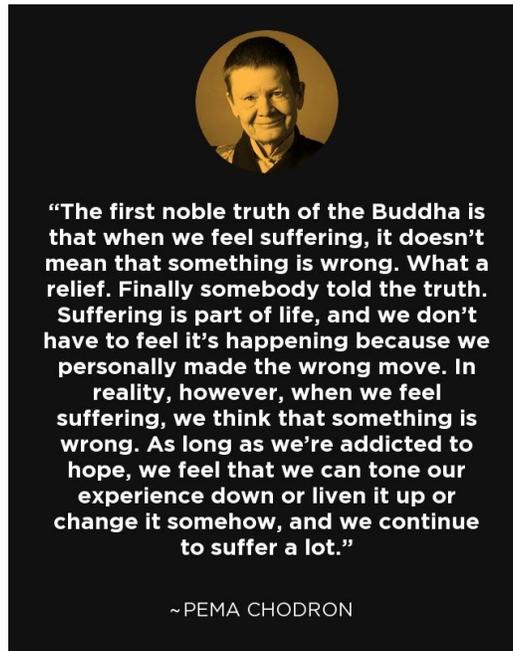


From: *Insight Meditation*

By Joseph Goldstein

The central jewel common to all schools of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha described the First Noble Truth as the truth of suffering. The word *dukkha* in Pali has a wide range of meanings, including suffering, insecurity, and unsatisfactoriness. The Buddha awakened, without fear or self-pity, to the reality of suffering in life. He recognized the problems of suffering very clearly: the pain of birth, old age, death, sorrow, pain, grief, despair, association with unpleasant persons, separation from the loved, not getting what we want – all this is *dukkha*. As we investigate the nature of conditioned phenomena on increasing deep and subtle levels, we begin to see their inherently unsatisfying nature.

We all know that painful feelings in our bodies or in our minds are suffering. But we can also understand this truth of *dukkha* when we become aware of the momentariness of experience. No experience, no matter how wonderful, will bring us a deep and lasting satisfaction, precisely because it is always changing.



In life we cannot avoid change, we cannot avoid loss.
Freedom and happiness are found in the flexibility and ease
with which we move through change.
(Buddha)

Most of the sorrows of the earth humans cause for themselves.
(Buddha)

Every life has a measure of sorrow.
Sometimes it is this that awakens us.
(Buddha)



We Can Never Get Enough of What We Don't Really Need

Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts can find no rest except in Thee.
(Saint Augustine)

You will learn the truth by experience: the things that people value highly and try hardest to get do them no good once they have them. Those who don't have them imagine that, once they do, everything good will be theirs; then they do get them, and the heat of their desires is the same, their agitation is the same, their disgust with what they possess is the same, and their wish for what they don't have is the same. (Epictetus, 50 – 135 AD, Greek Stoic philosopher)

Whatever falls into our possession and knowledge fails to bring satisfaction; we go panting after things unknown and things to come, because the things that are present are never enough. It is not, in my view, that they lack what it takes to satisfy us, but rather that we hold them in an unhealthy and immoderate grip. (Michel de Montaigne, 1533-1592, French philosopher)

The pleasure of expecting enjoyment is often greater than that of obtaining it, and the completion of almost every wish is found a disappointment. (Samuel Johnson, 1709 – 1784, English writer, moralist, poet, playwright, essayist, biographer, lexicographer)

You regard the objects you seek as lofty because you lie far away from them. To him who has reached them, they are small and mean. And I am very much mistaken if he does not desire to climb still higher; that which you regard as the top is merely a rung on the ladder. Now everyone suffers from ignorance of the truth; deceived by what they hear others say, they seek these ends as if they were good, and then, after having won their wish, and suffered much, they find them evil or empty, or less important than they had expected. (Seneca, 4 BC – 65 AD, Roman Stoic philosopher)

To obtain something we have desired is to find out that it is worthless; we are always living in expectation of better things, while, at the same time, we often repent and long for things that belong to the past. (Arthur Schopenhauer, 1788 – 1860, German philosopher)

I am bothered by a defect in my soul that I dislike both for its injustice and, even more, for the trouble it causes. I try to correct it but cannot get it out by the roots. It is that I value too lightly the things that I have, just because I have them, and overvalue things that are foreign, things that are absent, and things that don't belong to me... Possession breeds contempt for whatever we hold and control. (Michel de Montaigne, 1533-1592, French philosopher)



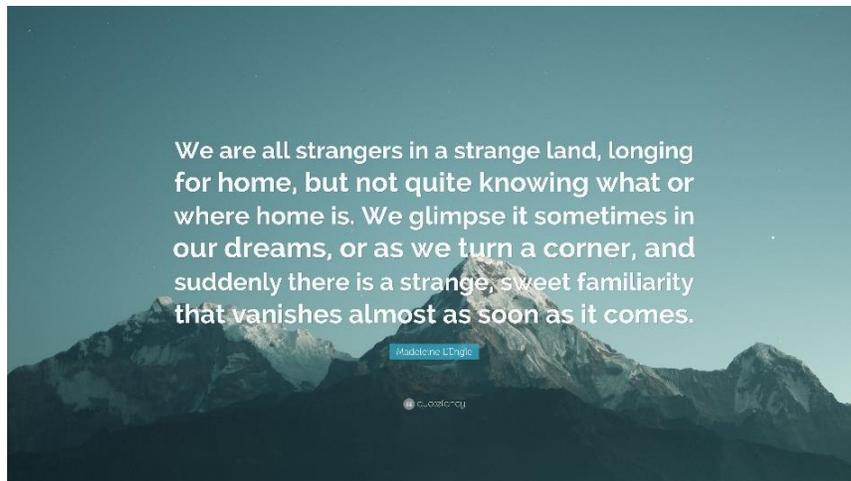
Romantic life on the physical plane appears charming. It has its attraction, but it is debasing. It leaves behind horrible bitterness and a dislike for life. Life on the higher planes is more romantic and gives eternal peace and joy – so why lose a higher and purer thing for lower and debasing transitory things? (Sant Kirpal Singh, *Spiritual Elixir*, 87, 88)

Ego lies at the root of our actions. The world could not exist without ego. The mind functions through ego. The soul is free when the mind ceases to function. It ceases to function when it tastes the sweet nectar of the Word, for this taste is the sweetest of all tastes. No other taste satisfies the mind for any length of time, because sooner or later it gets dissatisfied and begins to look for something else. Only when the Word has been tasted does the mind find complete satisfaction. (Baba Sawan Singh, *The Dawn of Light*, letter 73)

A part is always in search of the whole.
We are so constituted that we cannot rest until we rest in Him.
The flame of a lighted candle even if turned upside down would still rise upwards.
A clod of earth if thrown upward is sure to come down.
This is the Law of Gravitation. Everything tends to move towards its source.
A conscious entity cannot but seek the Ocean of All-Consciousness.
So the search for God is something natural in man.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/search4truth.htm)

The soul is made of love and must ever strive to return to love.
Therefore, it can never find rest nor happiness in other things.
It must lose itself in love.
By its very nature it must seek God,
who is love.
(Mechthild of Magdeburg)

In God alone is there primordial and true delight,
and in all our delights it is this delight that we are seeking.
(Saint Bonaventure)



Discontent with this world gives such a painful longing to quit it that,
if the heart finds comfort,
it is solely from the thought that God wishes it to remain here in banishment.
(Saint Teresa of Avila)

Masters have come in all ages to offer this Natural Science to man.
Only those who are discontented with this world rush to them. Others,
to whom worldly attractions, pleasures and luxuries are dear, turn their backs.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/indian/sant.../mastership_continues.htm)

The longing to go back to the Source is present in each being
from the very time that it is separated from the Source
by the veil of ignorance.
(Meher Baba)



We have all to return to the Source.
Every human being is seeking its Source and must one day come to it.
We must come from the within; we have gone outward;
now we must return inward.
(Ramana Maharshi)



Despite the materialism of our modern century and the infernal noise of its mechanical, industrial, nuclear, and military power, there still exist a few representatives of that superior type of humanity who in silence inquire, meditate, and pray. (Khaled Bentounes)

I feel at odds with myself, cut off from conventional life yet not really connected to the Absolute. The thing that keeps me going is the memory of my previous experiences and a desire to become one with that transcendent realm I know is real. I get glimpses of this from time to time, as if I'm seeing a friend in an alien world; these experiences give me a sense of stability, self-worth and connectedness. But there are times when I have none of that, and I just hang on in trust.
(from Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics)

No man who has lived through a temporary spiritual experience is ever likely to forget it. His days will be haunted until he sets out to seek ways and means of repeating it. (Paul Brunton)

One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art in conducting oneself in lower regions by memory of what one has seen higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know. (Rene Daumal)

There is within the all-comprehending ambit of animal instincts, some secret urge which drives the chosen few, called the elect, toward the transcending of animal impulses, leading to complete disinterestedness by total disregard of the animal-ego on the one hand and willing submission to a self-sought death on the other, in spite of the strong opposition of instincts, impulses and ego arrayed against an inspired soul. (Sant Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word, To the Honest Seeker*)



It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.
(J. Krishnamurti)

Such is the world, it is easily led away by nonsense;
but when it hears of the Path of Truth, it rejects it as false.
(Kabir)

The path of the Masters is diametrically opposed to the path
which the learned and the public follow.
(Baba Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 131)

On most journeys some recognizable road, and inquiries made of the locals, prevent you from going astray; but on this life's journey the paths most worn and used are also the most deceptive. So nothing needs to be emphasized more than that we should not, like sheep, follow the lead of the flock in front of us – heading not where we ought to go, but where it goes.
(Seneca)

Human affairs are not so happily ordered that the better things are pleasing to the many;
a proof of the worst choice is the crowd.
(Seneca)

Who is not aware that nothing thought to be good or bad looks the same to the sage as it does to everyone else? The sage pays no mind to what others consider shameful or wretched; he does not walk with the crowd; just as the planets make their way against the whirl of heaven, he proceeds contrary to the opinion of the world.
(Seneca)

I have never wished to satisfy the crowd; for what I know they do not approve,
and what they approve, I do not know.
(Epicurus)

If you want a vulgar form of comfort that touches the heart, reconcile yourself to death by observing, above all, the things from which you will be removed, and the morals of those with whom your soul will no longer have to associate. Do not take offense at them – it is your duty, rather, to care for them and to gently put up with them – but nevertheless remember that you will be departing from others who do not have the same opinions you do. That is the one consideration, if any, that would pull the other way and attach us to life – if we could live with those who share our opinions. But when you see how much trouble arises from the discord of all of them living together, it is enough to make you say,
“Come quickly, O Death, lest somehow I too forget myself.”
(Marcus Aurelius)

In the material world below, she always felt lonely and there was nobody to understand her true nature. She always knew that she didn't belong to the world of humans. She thought they were all possessive and has limited ways of thinking. She always kept longing for her true home and could never find it.
~ Author: Stevan V. Nikolic

Wining, dining and desiring I also seek spiritual closeness.

This world of flesh and narrow needs
and that world of freedom in limitless expanses
cannot tolerate each other. That's why I have neither.

(Shaikh Abu-Saeed Abil-Kheir)

967 – 1049, Persian Sufi, poet, contributed extensively to the evolution of Sufi tradition

Dear Friend, one moment, you are all I know.

Next moment, eat, drink and be merry!

O' Friend, how will this scatteredness that is me
find its way to You?

(Shaikh Abu-Saeed Abil-Kheir)

To be in this imperfect existence for a moment
and to dream of your eternal perfection,
to have this heart full of wretched limitations
and to harbor this infinite pain of separation and longing in it,
your favors, Beloved. All Your favors.

(Shaikh Abu-Saeed Abil-Kheir)

Discover your own discontent, and
be grateful, for without divine
discontent there would be no
creative force.

— Deepak Chopra —

From head to foot am I filled with fondness for perishable things,
yet I, more worthless than a bubble or a piece of straw,
hope to own the entire creation.

The mind, so oppressive, forever complains and remains discontented;
in the nightmare of this ocean I get not a moment's peace.

(Sarmad, 1590–1661, Armenian mystic)

Do you seek happiness on this earth?

Vain is your search; sincere love exists not here.

Nothing but the Goblet (Naam) and the Goblet-Bearer (Master) can relieve your distress.

Never, never and never release your grip upon the neck of the Goblet.

(Sarmad)



Kabir's Satsang

On obtaining this beautiful human body, worship the Supreme Lord before doing anything else. Why do you remain unconcerned with this fact? When will you again get such a lucky chance? Remember, you will not get such a body again for ages; incomparable is the human life. Whether you are a king or a beggar, wake up to this one duty. Remain not unconcerned, I warn you.

When you were in the hell-fire of the womb you promised to remember the Lord, and recite His Name day and night if only you were rescued from the agony of the womb. You promised to attach all your attention to His Feet, and fix your mind on His Name (Naam). You promised that whether happy or miserable, whether you lived or died, not for a moment would you forget Him.

After you made that vow the Master brought you out. But you forgot the promise and became a captive prisoner of Maya. You forgot the promise given in the womb the moment you became conscious of the world outside.

Twelve years thus passed away in childish playfulness and ignorance. Then came youth and hounded by ambition and intoxicated with vanity you walked the walk of the arrogant and talked the language of the proud. You applied scents and sandal-paste to your body and putting on bright-colored garments, you loafed in the by-lanes of ill-repute, casting glad eyes at cheap beauties and beckoning them with smiles.

Thus passed away the prime of youth, and then arrived doddering old age. For lack of strength your hand began trembling, and walking soon tried your feet. Your eyes became watery and your mouth gave out a foul smell. Your throat was choked with phlegm and bile and at last all hope of the world was gone.

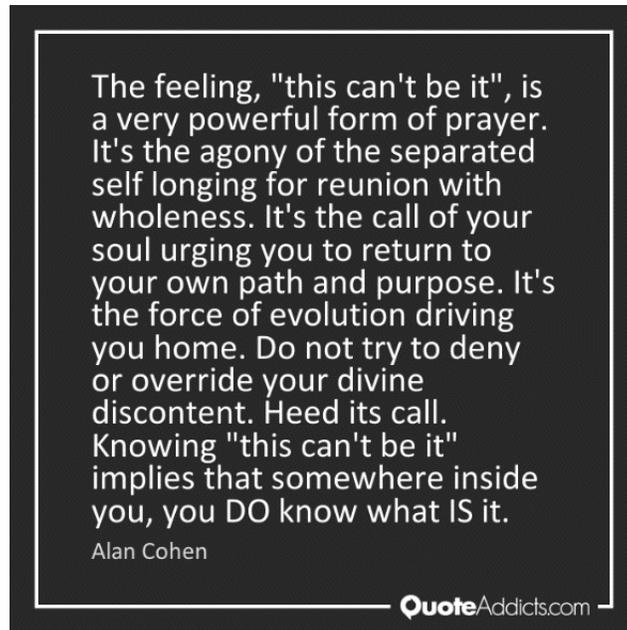
Beware my friend! Mother, father, son, or wife - none will accompany you on the journey beyond. You will have to abandon everything - this body, wealth, home, worldly hope, and in the end death will pounce on you, and then you will fall into the trap of the Eagle of Death.

O you dull-headed one, just know this, that without the help of the Master you will not be saved from this tragedy. If only you would make friends with the Master, learn from Him the path of salvation and attach your mind to the Master's Feet and catch hold of the Name of the Lord you would be fearless and would not undergo the least suffering.

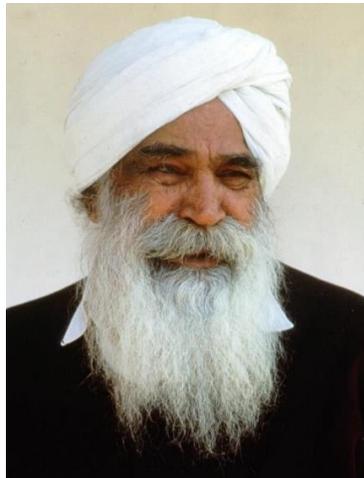
This is the game - go to the Master, get the Word, and worship the Lord. This leads to salvation, declares Kabir most emphatically.



When a soul comes in the world we say he is born. In reality the soul has been entombed in the grave of the physical frame, so it is more appropriate to say that it has died. When it comes in contact with the saints and gets initiation, it is attached to Naam and is getting out of the grave of the physical frame. So it is appropriate to say that it is born, or reborn. The day of initiation is the birthday. (Baba Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 24)



If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.
(C.S. Lewis.)



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

May your soul be happy;
journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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