



MOTH & THE FLAME

FOREWORD

BY ARTHUR STEIN

*E*ach human life can be seen or experienced in many ways as an ongoing journey. And what an exciting journey of discovery Arran Stephens has been on.

Beginning in his teens he struggled to find meaning and purpose in his life. As told in his autobiographical *Moth & the Flame*, his early odyssey took him from a pristine area of his native British Columbia to Los Angeles and New York City, where he explored the venues of the artist and the zeitgeist of the times. We relive with him the turbulence of the sixties and learn of auspicious encounters with Allen Ginsberg, Edén Abbez, and others on the leading edge of the counterculture.

Arran also goes through a period of inner despair, and emerges determined ‘to begin anew.’ Then, fueled by an intense yearning, he embarks on a painstaking search to find a genuine spiritual mentor. After some promising leads and false starts, he learned of, and in 1967, first met the great Indian sage and mystic adept, Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj. That first contact awakened a deep inner recognition and triggered several profound mystical experiences which over time transformed his life. Now over forty years later, Arran remains deeply involved in the study and practice of an age-old, yet contemporary spiritual path—not as a monastic recluse—but as a civic-minded family man and highly successful pioneer in several natural foods enterprises.

*Moth & the Flame* is very much in the tradition of earlier books written by seekers who have turned inwards and eastward to discover their spiritual roots, such as Paul Brunton’s *Search in Secret India*, Julian Johnson’s *The Path of the Masters*, Irene Tweedy’s *Chasm of Fire*, and Andrew Harvey’s *Journey to Ladakh*.

In *Moth & the Flame*, the reader is introduced to the teachings of the Masters of *Sant Mat* which go back more than five hundred years to Kabir and Guru Nanak. The twentieth century witnessed several great Masters in this tradition, beginning with Hazur Baba Sawan Singh (1858-1948). It was Hazur’s spiritual successor, Sant Kirpal Singh (1894-1974) who provided guidance and directed Arran to keep a journal(s) detailing that which he saw, heard and experienced within Sawan Ashram in Delhi and during his travels with the Master.

Arran weaves his varied experiences and the teachings of his spiritual mentors into the tapestry of his own struggles and growth. The pages overflow with picturesque descriptions of life in India, including details of trips to the pristine Himalayas, to the dusty byways of rural villages and hubbub of crowded cities, and to shrines and pilgrimage centers. One gets a feeling for the rhythms and oasis-like serenity of ashram life, where one can develop his/her meditation practices individually and/or by sitting in the company of thousands at large public satsangs. And one gets an eye-witness account of several significant international and interfaith gatherings, including the historic Unity of Man conference convened by Sant Kirpal Singh.

Some of Arran's accounts reveal things which defy explanation by ordinary standards of understanding. There are miraculous healings and the sudden appearance of the 'radiant form' of the Masters to individuals many thousands of miles away in their times of need. And there are many examples of the 'extraordinary within the ordinary,' which reveal the wisdom and very practical side of these spiritual teachers in daily life.

You will learn of the daily activities of great spiritual teachers and their interactions with people of all walks of life—from presidents and princesses to simple rural dwellers. You will sense the humility and compassion of these selfless servants of humanity, as well as accounts of their access to inner spiritual dimensions. You will meet Raghuvacharya, renowned among the yogis of Haridwar, who, late in his lifespan of one hundred thirteen years, became an advanced practitioner of the inner path. And you will hear the stories of three former hardened criminals whose lives had become remarkably transformed through their contact with Sant Kirpal.

Bereft at the physical passing of Sant Kirpal Singh in 1974, Arran over time is drawn to his successor, the mystic poet Sant Darshan Singh. Over the following decade Arran spent significant periods of time receiving spiritual guidance in Sant Darshan's presence. In *Moth & the Flame* the author regales the reader with stories of Master Darshan's spiritual acumen and wit, recounting sessions that often began in the hours well past midnight. Arran's recollections bring back warm memories for me. As a fellow student in the Sant Mat tradition, I also had the good fortune to be present at some of those sublime occasions with Sant Darshan, whose twinkling eyes glowed with palpable beams of light.

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In 1989, Sant Rajinder Singh succeeded Sant Darshan Singh as the spiritual guide of the Sant Mat lineage, now known in the West as Science of Spirituality. From that time to the present, Sant Rajinder travels throughout the world bringing a message of love, peace and human unity to millions of people of many different backgrounds. In the book's final chapters, Arran speaks movingly of his times with Sant Rajinder, especially in the Pacific Northwest and in India. Like his predecessors Sant Rajinder teaches surat shabd yoga, a form of meditation which enables practitioners to connect with the Inner Light and Celestial Sound current, latently present within each person.

Entering the 21st century, Arran witnesses the positive response from many people throughout the world to the Sant Mat teachings. Besides the blessings of meeting and being with three remarkable spiritual mentors in one lifetime, the author acknowledges others from whom he has learned. He writes for example, of his friendship with Dr. Edmond Bordeaux-Szekely, translator of the Aramaic *Essene Gospel of Peace* and of his meetings with Ram Dass, author of *Be Here Now*.

In *Moth & the Flame*, we read of an individual's struggle with the apparent paradoxes of the spiritual life: effort and grace, separation and union, pain and ecstasy. One glimpses the deeply transformative personal relationship which lies at the heart of mysticism—that of the competent adept/teacher and the committed student.

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