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Foreword

An old Sufi definition of a spiritual teacher is “a mature person who has been ‘cooked’ (by the ups and downs of living in the world).” Through his rich and varied experiences, David Samuel has been cooked. He understands practical mysticism firsthand, as he has successfully applied in his own life the principles and practices he presents.

I was very fortunate to have been exposed at a young age to many of the ideas covered in *Practical Mysticism*. In my mid-twenties, I lived in Japan and studied with my first spiritual teacher. Master Tempu Nakamura had been spiritual tutor to the Imperial Family and was a spiritual teacher to many prominent Japanese intellectuals, scientists, politicians, and business leaders. He was a living illustration of the power of positive attitudes and effective goal setting. In his early nineties, Master Tempu looked like a youthful fifty year old and had the energy of someone in his twenties. He was an inspiring philosopher and psychologist, and also a gifted artist, calligrapher, lecturer, and writer. One great lesson I learned from him was that our only real limits are those we place on ourselves.

The principles of Practical Mysticism form a perennial psychology, a psychology that has been independently discovered by many successful men and women. For years I have taught seminars in these universal principles to hundreds of men and women ranging from college students to heads of large corporations, from blue-collar workers to doctors, lawyers, and judges. Based on my personal experience as well as the experience of my students, I know these basic practices and principles work; they are extremely effective if you use them.

One of the basic messages of this book is to take responsibility for your life. Too many people let themselves drift through life like a boat with no one at the helm. Then if they fail to build a fulfilling

life, they blame their childhood, society, genes, or bad luck. The following pages present many practical techniques we can use to *change* our lives. We can change old habits; we can learn effective ways to achieve our most important goals; we can also enjoy financial abundance. And we can learn to deeply nourish mind, body, and soul.

My own Sufi master, Safer Efendi, was also David Samuel's teacher. With the most beautiful humility, Safer Efendi once remarked, "What little I know of Sufism is what I have loved and practiced for over forty years." To learn anything deeply you have to love it and practice it. If you sincerely practice the techniques presented in this book, you will learn a great deal. They might even transform your life.

This book has been inspired in many ways by the Sufi mystical tradition. Sufism has flourished throughout the world, especially in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Throughout its 1,500-year-old history, it has provided great examples of deep spiritual attainment coupled with active engagement in the world. Sufism is not a retreatist or an elitist tradition; indeed, Sufi teachers have included laborers, fishermen, artisans, and merchants as well as scholars, poets, and philosophers. My own Sufi teachers have raised families and run businesses, or pursued professional careers. *All* their life experiences have been integral parts of their spiritual journeys.

Sufism teaches that to seek God you do not need to change your life or quit your job. You do not need to become a vegetarian or embrace celibacy. You do need to begin to open your heart and practice greater love, compassion, and awareness in your life as it is *right now*. Once these first changes are made, who knows where they will lead you?

The tools presented in *Practical Mysticism* are deceptively simple-seeming. However, in order to make a serious commitment to use them, you need to believe that you have the capacity to change and to develop the kind of life you want. I know you have this capacity, and so does David Samuel. (After all, that's why he wrote this book!) Now it is up to you.

Robert Frager, Ph.D.

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Preface

I was born to a lower-middle-class family, went to work at age twelve, and started my first business at age thirteen. Using the principles in this book, I became a self-made millionaire by twenty-five and was able to retire at twenty-eight. I lived in Montreal, Canada, until I retired, and then I left on an extended journey of spiritual discovery. Wandering around the world for several years, I visited over thirty countries, carrying nothing more than my backpack and with no agenda other than to learn from my experiences. I would simply wake up each day and decide on a destination, with no thought until that evening about where I would sleep—whether in a comfortable hotel or outside on the ground.

I left home heading west and returned from the east. In California, I saw giant redwood trees twenty stories high and wide as a house. In Hawaii, it was volcanoes and black sand—landscapes like the moon. In Japan, I saw Mount Fuji, a perfect pyramid; a medley of Kyoto's 2,000 temples; the largest wooden building in the world, surrounding an immense Buddha cast in bronze; and Hiroshima, recovered from atomic devastation yet with pain still in the air. I traveled by boat in the Sea of Japan as a typhoon approached, walked on a grumbling and steaming volcano, and lived the life of a Zen monk in peaceful isolation.

In Taipei, home of money and power on the little island of Taiwan, I found Taoist masters in hidden corners. In the northern hill villages of Thailand, I met people surviving only on the resources the jungle provided. In the bustling city of Bangkok, I laid eyes on the Emerald Buddha in its gold and jeweled palace. Farther south, the fine white powdered sand of beaches squeaked under my feet. There I swam in oceans still and clear, and visited temples, palaces, ancient holy places, each one a universe of its own.

In India, I saw the Taj Mahal; sunrise on the Ganges; New Delhi with its pillar made of a material none can date or define; a Rolls-Royce waiting alongside an elephant at a Bombay traffic light; the ten-story-high Elephanta and Ellora cave temples carved out of a mountain, with paintings hundreds of years old still vividly colored; the temples of Khajuraho, decorated from top to bottom with erotic stone carvings. I traveled by camel through the Rajasthan desert, sleeping under the stars and seeing nothing but sand for days on end, alone yet so close to God I did not feel lonely.

From the start I met innumerable types of people—some with nothing but an ever-present smile, others with millions of dollars and a frown. Shamans, Zen masters, gurus, the Dalai Lama, and a passenger on a train who saw right through me, offering wise words when I was down and lost. I encountered poverty and riches, death and health, portions of a corpse floating past my boat on the holy Ganges River while a local drank from the water. I watched people shot to death and, on the same street, others who honored the life of a fly.

In Turkey, I was robbed and left without enough change for so much as a phone call. That night, in the local police station, I saw how officers beat captured thieves, though they showered me with incomparable compassion, giving me food, money, and shelter. The next day, a complete rainbow over a mountain lake renewed my faith that all would be well.

In Egypt, I saw the Great Pyramids, King Tut in his tomb, the Valley of the Kings, temples cut hundreds of feet into rocky mountains. One, still in perfect condition after 7,000 years, was beginning to show telltale signs of pollution. Another, the temple of Abu Simbel, is now a feat of the ancient ones who built it as well as the modern men who moved it—along with the mountain encasing it—to save it from flooding by the Aswan High Dam.

Modern man reshapes the planet to suit himself, forming wonders of art, ingenuity, and pure inspiration. The Goddard tunnel, seventeen kilometers long, drilled through a mountain in the Swiss Alps. Walls going up in Cyprus, coming down in Berlin, and Stonehenge still standing. The man-made creations I pondered in amazement; the God-made ones took my breath away.

In the Middle East, I saw the Dead Sea with no life in it and, only hours away, the Red Sea teeming with occupants of various colors, shapes, and sizes. In the desert by Mount Sinai stand five tall, strong Cyprus trees, which have marked a source of fresh water for centuries. I climbed the mountain, as did Moses, and slept on the rock at its peak.

Gods of all sorts crossed my path. Nature spirits in Hawaii; a giant phallus in Japan; the elephant-headed Ganesh, one of India's 10,000 deities; and crocodiles in Egypt. Brighter than them all was the love and devotion of the people who honor them. That love is the true God.

In tiny Belize, I explored Mayan temples. On nearby beaches adventurous souls could live freely in lean-tos made of grass, eating fruit from the trees and fish from the ocean.

Animals were everywhere. Rhinos with armorlike skin in the jungles of Nepal; eagles soaring through the sky over the Himalayas; painted elephants; a lone baby seal on a deserted beach; tigers and varieties of monkeys; peacocks and parrots; tiny fluorescent blue-green insects; the amazing metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

I experienced the many moods of nature. Rugged mountains giving way to rolling hills and fields. Miles of flatlands ending abruptly in 10,000-foot peaks that stand guard to heaven. Scottish skies so full of shifting shapes I thought I was watching a film. A Himalayan thunderstorm rising from the valley below, then bombarding the mountain with huge hailstones. The sun, glowing orange from behind a cloud, sending out a bright golden aura in all directions—reminding me that although the sun can be hidden it can never be extinguished. A sunbeam touched me like a warm hand, enlightening me about nature's power within us all. Its power could be seen in flowers of royal purple, vibrant blues, firelike yellows, oranges, and reds, as well as pure white; and in tiny dots of open petals and long slender cups looking upward or hanging shyly down.

Nature's power also radiated from children everywhere, smiling with joy and warmth. When I was losing strength, the hug of a child filled me with sustenance—given, as it was, out of pure love, without question or reserve.

I have climbed the Alps and the Himalayas, so high up that airplanes flew below me; I've walked alone in isolated lands so peaceful that butterflies landed on my arms; I've ridden in a submarine beneath the sea. On the earth and in my soul, I've touched the greatest heights and depths. Years spent wandering the planet, looking deep within by seeing what was without, I have cried tears for myself and others, including those who may not know of suffering or appreciate their blessed lives.

Although I am growing older, I feel cleaner and lighter every day. For now I know that we are all a creation of the divine, that our personalities have been molded by the country we live in, and that our quest is to return to the divine beings we were created to be. From a seed, I grew and was then picked and woven into the man I am. The day will come when I shall be left somewhere, my body returning to the earth, my soul traveling freely like the wind. Knowing we are One, I am not afraid.

Aware that the power to find our destiny is within each of us, and is something we must see for ourselves, I continually await the next adventure. My quest begins anew each morning.

* * *

Exercise 2-2

Reporting Your Observations

Observe everything you do and report it to yourself. Out loud say, "I am picking up the glass, I am drinking water . . . walking . . . breathing in . . . breathing out." While driving, say, "I see the car in front of me, the house, the pedestrians." As you go about your daily activities, imagine having a blind companion with you who wants to know everything that is going on. As you describe the events of the day, you may realize that you do not normally see everything and that you are not as much in control of your thoughts as you could be. Keep noticing how asleep you are by trying to be awake.

The Four Centers

To have control over how we lead our lives, we must be awake. To awaken, we must see that we are asleep. Understanding how we function helps us recognize when we are asleep, and therefore helps us awaken.

Our functioning is governed by four centers: the instinctive, moving, emotional, and intellectual centers. Each center, other than the instincts, is divided into three sections: the moving, emotional, and intellectual sections. It is important to be able to distinguish between the centers, and between the sections within each one, so that the most appropriate part of us takes charge in each situation.

The *instinctive center* runs the basic functions that are needed to keep the body alive, such as breathing and maintaining the heart-beat. These functions occur automatically, and can be neither halted nor triggered by conscious thought.

The *moving center* operates the body's movements. This fast-acting center governs walking and other physical activities, including reflexive movements. It activates the body more quickly than the mind can. For example, if an animal darts in front of the car, your moving center would signal you to swerve immediately out of

its path; but by the time your intellect processed the event and told your body to react, it would be too late to avert a collision.

The *emotional center* governs our experiences of love, affection, fear, and distaste. Actually, it presents us with an entire spectrum of emotions that we cannot describe or explain intellectually but can relate to only through “gut” feelings. Its optimal use is in developing intuition and compassion, both of which are needed in order to communicate with higher levels of our being.

The *intellectual center* calculates and analyzes situations to determine a course of action that will protect us from harm and lead to a successful outcome. When it is not operating in harmony with the emotional center, it may overlook how its directives can hurt others. Its purpose is to help us interact in this world in the most effective way possible.

Generally, one center will attempt to dominate the others. The one that comes to the fore is usually the center most closely related to the person’s nature or talents. A poet, for example, will have a dominant emotional center; for a scientist, the intellectual center will reign supreme.

As a result of these domination factors, people will often rely on the wrong center to resolve problems, and thereby respond ineffectively, if not destructively. In the case of an emotional experience, the intellectual center may take charge and, using its emotional section, create an emotional reaction based on an intellectual decision. For instance, two people who are attracted to each other yet fearful of love turning sour may intellectualize to such an extent that they will undermine their chances for a true emotional experience. Calculating numerous possibilities for trouble in the relationship, they may never even get to know each other.

Calamity is also likely when the emotional center inappropriately takes charge of a business venture, due to an emotional attachment to the outcome. Using its intellectual section to arrive at a decision is apt to leave the person incapable of the detachment needed to conduct a wise transaction. For instance, an artist with a strong emotional attachment to her paintings may find that they never sell. In terms of a spiritual experience, a person in momentary

union with the divine may suddenly think, "It's happening!" and promptly lose their sense of connection. The intellectual center's emotional section is so wedded to logic that it cannot sustain the feeling of oneness or any other experience that is beyond rational explanation.

Such maladaptive functioning only arises while we are asleep. As we begin to observe which center we are functioning from, we start to wake up. When we are fully awake, the appropriate center automatically takes control of each situation, bringing about the best possible result with no energy wasted in conflict or confusion.

See how much more effective you can be by increasing your awareness of your four centers. You might begin by approaching every interaction with the following questions: "Am I acting from the appropriate center? Do I know what I am doing and why? Are my thoughts and actions aligned with this situation?"

I was once in business with two partners, Peter and John. Peter had little control over his emotions. While under the slightest stress, he would start pacing like a caged animal. Before long, he'd be yelling and cursing uncontrollably, blaming others for his troubles. John, the key person in the company, was sensitive, quiet, and unable to deal with conflict. One day, John called a meeting where he announced that he was tired of the bickering and wanted to quit. I explained that without him, the company would be lost—along with our sizable investment of time and money.

Immediately, Peter jumped up and began to yell profanities at me, just inches from my face. John sat there defeated, his head in his hands, and I calmly waited for the fire to burn down. After about an hour of watching Peter pace as he screamed about how the problems were all my fault, I came up with a plan and managed to get the two to agree to reconfigure the company's management and continue operating. To Peter, I quietly explained that the new formation would benefit him, since he would no longer have to endure the pressure of the working environment and would still maintain his share of ownership and profits. Right away he stopped pacing. "I guess you're right," he said, and settled down.

Functioning from my intellectual center, I had remained