

The Liminal Being: Spiritual Metaphors and Human Experience

by

Tavleen Kaur Lall

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**THE LIMINAL BEING:
SPIRITUAL METAPHORS AND HUMAN
EXPERIENCE**

TAVLEEN KAUR LALL

2025-2026



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Abstract

This thesis investigates how metaphors drawn from spiritual contexts can illuminate embodied human experience and frame human existence as a liminal condition. Positioning interdisciplinary art practice as a site of inquiry and reflection, the research approaches spirituality not as set doctrine; rather it engages spiritual metaphors as phenomenological tools for potential self-introspection, perception, and inner awareness. Central to this investigation are recurring metaphoric frameworks, such as the body as vessel, light as an expression of inner consciousness (soul), sound as inner resonance, and the mind as reflective or projective reality through which the human condition is explored beyond purely physical or psychological definitions. Drawing from Sant Mat, spiritual literature, hymnic poetry, metaphorical texts, and phenomenological philosophy on perception, the thesis primarily situates metaphors as a bridge between ineffable inner experience and material form. These frameworks inform both the conceptual grounding and material strategies of the work, shaping how light, glass, projection-mapping, sound, and abstraction function as carriers of spiritual meaning within immersive creative environments. Gradually, emphasis is placed on witnessing and self-awareness as modes of engagement, aligning spiritual introspection with phenomenological accounts of lived experience. The accompanying thesis exhibition, *Vessels of Light: Introspective Architectures*, materializes these inquiries through abstract drawings, painting, and projection-mapped installations incorporating glass, plexiglass, stone, animation, and collaborative sound practices. These works operate as perceptual thresholds, inviting stillness, contemplation, and heightened spatial awareness. Ultimately, the thesis proposes spiritual metaphor as a vital material framework within contemporary art, foregrounding art's capacity to draw on intangible, liminal, and self-introspective spaces within the human experience.

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Thesis Exhibition and Thesis Support Paper Titles

Thesis Exhibition: **Vessels of Light: Introspective Architectures**

Thesis Writing Paper: **The Liminal Being: Spiritual Metaphors and Human Experience**

The exhibition and thesis titles are intentionally distinct to reflect their different modes of address. While **Vessels of Light: Introspective Architectures** emphasizes the experiential and spatial qualities of the artworks, **The Liminal Being: Spiritual Metaphors and Human Experience** articulate the conceptual and theoretical inquiry that grounds the practice. This separation allows the research to operate simultaneously as embodied experience and critical reflection.

Dedicated to

My Father who saw me,

My Mother who encourages me,

My Mentor who teaches me everyday

and most of all,

My North Star, Babaji.

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Introduction

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin ¹

A few years ago, I came across this reflective quotation that made me think about the way I intentionally perceived my life. Not as just a physical human experience but thinking more like an embodied human experience.² During my teenage years, amidst the routines of city life, a religious background, and my creative pursuits, I lived with a growing curiosity about the glimpse of Nature around me and about life’s existential questioning. Moreover, belonging to a middle-class family, where my parents worked hard to fulfil their only child’s dreams and taught me about our Sikhism, life’s morals, and the value of hard work, I felt a moral obligations to acknowledge those instilled teachings through my own lived-experiences and to pursue them wholeheartedly. In our small family, we relied deeply on one another for support. Alongside with this, our faith in the teachings of Sikh saints, preserved in the sacred scripture Guru Granth Sahib Ji, offered spiritual strength; its loving recitation nurtured our faith in God and filled us with

¹ Source of quotation often attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

² In this Thesis research the body is reframed from a Biological Entity into Experiential Vessel observing its own self.

happiness and courage. Now as I recall my childhood, it was filled with memories of the admiration/contemplation of nature and spiritual presence I felt in my life.

Over time, my inclination toward deeper understanding of Sikh scripture, alongside the guidance of my mentor and senior artist, Mohan Singh, gradually re-directed my creative inquiry. What began as curiosity about the universe and the nature of being human unfolded into sustained conversations about life's deeper structures and its underlying mysteries. Those early philosophical questions led me toward reflections on an energy said to be within the human being often described as the soul.

In retrospect, this was both a sudden revelation and a decisive shift in perception. A change in one's perspective remakes the entire framework through which one interprets experience; it alters the meaning of life. With that shift came a renewed orientation toward the path I was walking. I found myself questioning the nature of the mind in relation to the embodied body and listening more attentively to spiritual discourses describing the soul's journey.

Through various spiritual texts and the teachings of numerous saints, I encountered a vocabulary that articulated this expanded field of understanding in Sant Mat, a school of spiritual discipline. Introduced to me by my mentor, Sant Mat emerges from the broader Sant tradition in medieval India (13th–17th century), a movement of mystic poets and spiritual teachers who

emphasized direct inner experience of the divine over ritualistic or caste-based practices. Within Sant Mat teachings, for instance, the body, within which soul resides, is frequently framed as an expression or projection of the mind formed and conditioned by attention, desire, and habit.

Within these teaching is a practice of meditation called Surat Shabd Yoga.

Within my art practice, over the span of my Masters' at OCAD University I saw this as an opportunity to draw connections between my spiritual research and my artistic research through my interdisciplinary art practice. My art Mentor and eminent Artist, Mohan Singh, once advised me not to see abstraction and spirituality as separate realms. I used to understand these as distinct domains within my practice, rarely allowing them to intersect in either my making or my thinking; instead, they appeared to operate as parallel worlds. However, after his suggestion to consider them as interconnected, a new mode of perception emerged. Where my abstract practice was my inner contemplative space, the material processes assumed metaphorical significance within a spiritual context. In turn, my spiritual inquiry became a central framework informing and guiding my artistic decisions. Deeply curious about the inner forces of nature and ourselves, I wanted to ensure every material choice I made was in service of this trajectory. In these inner and outer searching grounds, I become an insider, observer, creator and as a seeker of spirituality within and processed through my art as a witnessing site for viewer's introspection.

Through my artistic journey and spiritual reflection, I began to recognize how abstraction functions metaphorically as a source domain that shapes and maps the target domain-aspects of

lived experience onto deeper existential inquiry.³ I am motivated to use my art practice as a way of expressing spiritual metaphorical text into creative forms, making my ongoing practice deeply personal yet with the hope that it would resonate with the oneness of being human, in the midst of our unique and eclectic lives.

In this research, I investigate these curiosities and modes of relational thinking by forming bridges through metaphor, phenomenology, and lived experience as embodied in the human form. I endeavour to channel the teachings of saints and philosophers from different parts of the world and across historical timelines into the exhibition, translating them into embodied mediums in dialogue with abstraction. My thesis practice carries intuitive abstraction within a conceptual framework to create a contained yet uncontained articulation of my lived-human experiences.

The human form is approached as a metaphorical vessel- as boats crossing world-sea, energy chakras, abstract mindscapes, and “sand sculpture” like glass or stone, each suggesting states of fragility, transition, and transformation. These works are best encountered through a phenomenological lens, inviting self-introspection⁴ and an inquiry into one’s beingness. Through a play of perception, viewers experience different mediums and the animated light as the morphing nature of one’s search for knowledge itself. Within this contemplative space shaped by

³ According to George Lakoff: Source domain: the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions (e.g., love is a journey). And Target domain: the conceptual domain that we try to understand (e.g., love is a journey). (Lakoff)

⁴ Kirpal Singh (1894–1974) was an Indian spiritual teacher in the Sant Mat tradition, suggest ‘self’-introspection (i.e. Introspection of the Self) is the conscious withdrawal and examination of one’s inner being, through which the individual transcends bodily identification and begins to experience the soul directly.

spiritual metaphors, the installations reframe the perception of being human, not merely as an embodied form, but as part of an eternal light.

The installations function as perceptual thresholds that encourage viewers to witness themselves not solely as embodied organisms, but as sites of layered consciousness, perception, and interior depth. Holistically, this research positions spirituality as a phenomenological process of self-transformation rather than an empirically verifiable system of collective truth. Here phenomenology, associated with thinkers such as, Dermot Morgan is brought into dialogue with spiritual introspection, not as doctrine, but as lived experience.

In a nutshell, the research-practice endeavours to overcome a challenging and complex notion of spirituality from a metaphorical and phenomenological place of intersections leading to my research inquiry through my practice: In what ways can abstract, interdisciplinary installations function as liminal, metaphorical spaces that enable phenomenological experience and theosophical reflection on the human condition and spiritual self-introspection?

1. The Liminal: Human Experience and Spiritual Narratives

1.1. The Human Condition and A Longstanding Question

The Human Condition

As Human we have always built immersive structures, systems, and pleasure-giving resources to live a life that is full and overwhelmed with ongoing pursuit for happiness, pleasures with complex webbed connections in relationships, careers, etc. Amid all this we have realized the state of human condition. As a literary term, "human condition" is typically used in the context of ambiguous subjects, such as the meaning of life or moral concerns.⁵

The concept of the Human Condition has long served as a framework in understanding what it means to live, act, and exist within the world. Broadly, it refers not only to biological life but the conditions under which human meaning, responsibility and action take shape. Among the thinkers who rigorously examined this curious theme is Hannah Arendt, whose work is still central to discussions of life and human action.

During my Fall term at OCAD, I came across *Hannah Arendt: Life Is A Narrative* by Julia Kristeva. The author talks about Arendt's intellectual trajectory, her concerns with *Life*, The Human Condition and of Arendt's last unfinished work on judgement. Kristeva says:

⁵ "Human condition." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 27 Jan. 2026, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human condition.

Arendt's doctoral research, *The Concept of Love in Saint Augustine*, marks an early and significant point of entry into what would become a lifelong philosophical engagement with the question of human existence for Hannah Arendt. Although she initially contemplated a path toward theology and later devoted herself to a rigorous critique of metaphysical systems, her intellectual trajectory ultimately returned to life as the core domain of philosophical inquiry. This return culminates in her sustained meditation on the *life of the mind*, where thinking is not detached from living but understood as fundamentally intertwined with it. Throughout her work, the theme of life functions as a guiding thread, shaping her analyses of both political history and metaphysical thought. This concern becomes especially pronounced in her reflections on totalitarianism, where she argues that Nazism and Stalinism, despite their differences, converge in a shared denial of human life, systems that effectively abolish the meaning and value of individual existence by reducing human beings to expendable instruments of ideology. (Kristeva 5-6)

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt is concerned that modern humanity is losing its grounding in the world, the shared space where human meaning, responsibility, and action take place. Central to this work Arendt constructs an intense defence of life in *The Human Condition*. She calls this natality⁶ “the miracle of life”:

⁶(Kristeva 5-6)

Natality—the condition of being born—grounds the human capacity to act. Because each person enters the world as someone new, they bring with them the potential to begin something unforeseen. Action, in this sense, is not merely behaviour or reaction, but the ability to initiate change, interrupt destructive patterns, and open new possibilities within shared human affairs.

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence ... It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings': 'A child has been born unto us. (Kristeva 5-6)

In this sense, birth becomes a metaphor not only for biological life but for political, ethical, and existential renewal. Even in the moments of historical destruction and moral collapse, the capacity to begin again remains embedded within the human condition. It serves as thresholds for new perspectives.

A review of *The Human Condition* by Robert Bierstedt describes the work as addressing nothing less than the entire human situation. Bierstedt highlights that Arendt is concerned about the human situation and wants to ask an "examining" question about humans "before most of us have been annihilated by an atomic bomb and before some of us have escaped into space." (Bierstedt 113) She goes on to ask a question about whether, in distancing ourselves from religious authority, we are also losing our connection to the Earth treating it not as a living home, but as something to abandon, exploit, or escape. Following it she underlines two enquires of humans moving from earth into the universe and another from world into the self. When

description *vita activa*,⁷ the Active Life, and in it 'Action' she "corresponds [it] to the human condition of plurality" (Bierstedt 113).

By plurality, Arendt refers to the fundamental condition that humans exist as distinct individuals among others, and that meaningful action arises only within this shared social space. This aspect seems to be a core idea to morally evolve as human beings when one may learn and de-learn from another in the face of action and social spaces.

Parallel to Arendt's thinking on Plurality, there is also the dynamics of what this "collective" social space is. From a religious framework, Émile Durkheim believed that religion, myth, and ritual function as expressions of collective consciousness rather than individual invention. This can be argued particularly from a standpoint of an individual's inner spiritual experiences, as lived experiences, that the Saints and Sufis have explored and documented in their scriptures. Arnold Van Gennep notices a crucial part of lived experience missing in Durkheim's notion of "collective". Whereas, in critique to Durkheim, Malinowski's ethnographic approach emphasizes the generative role of individuals, arguing that cultural institutions are continually produced and modified through lived practice rather than arising automatically from an abstract notion of society.

⁷ When Hannah Arendt talks about *vita activa*, or the active life, she explains that "action" is connected to the human condition of plurality. By plurality, she means that we are never alone—we always exist among others, and each person is different in their own way. Action, then, is not just doing something. It is something that happens between people. It is how we express ourselves, how we are seen and heard, and how we relate to others. Without others, action cannot exist in this sense. It is through action that we reveal who we are and become part of a shared human experience.

A parallel concern with the limits of institutionalized structures also appears within present spiritual discourse. According to Kirpal Singh, “Religions were made by man for his moral and spiritual uplift. These were made for man, and man was not made for them” (1961, np). This acts as a reminder that the human being may be the primary site of ethical and spiritual transformation, emphasizing lived experience and inner responsibility over adherence to external religious structures alone.

What is interesting to note is that Arendt does not dismiss individual experience, but she resists it as an elevation into universally binding truth, portrayed as a claim, insisting that the significance of singular insight emerges only in relation to a shared, plural world. In the chapter on Judgement of *Life as Narrative*, the author mentions that Arendt “never ceases to seek the foundations of the link between the general and the particular, between individual and plurality, in order to justify a liveable human condition”⁸

Jiddu Krishnamurti, in *Freedom from the Known*, notes that human questions remain unresolved within the confusion of life, marked by brutality, war, and persistent division. In response to this condition, he suggests that such frustration compels one to inquire into the nature of living itself and whether anything lies beyond it, an inquiry that remains pertinent to the present condition of human existence.

⁸ In *The Human Condition*, Arendt reclaims activity as the condition of being alive and human. She distinguishes three fundamental forms of activity: Labor – the biological processes necessary for survival (cyclical, repetitive, tied to necessity). Work – the fabrication of a durable, human-made world (objects, structures, institutions). Action – political interaction, speech, and collective engagement among equals.

In same context, Kristeva notes that Arendt's work consistently engages with the values of human life, from her dissertation on Saint Augustine to her unfinished reflections on judgment, revealing an inquiry that quietly structures her entire oeuvre. It is important to also note Arendt's framing of the human condition as relational, plural, and grounded in shared meaning raises an important question about *how* such a 'Dynamic' condition can be understood. If human action and experience emerge not merely from biological or technical processes but from lived, social, and interpretive contexts, then purely scientific or relational mode of explanation alone become insufficient to resolve the human condition. This limitation(s) points toward the necessity of merging another form of knowledge, one that attend to meaning, experience, and interpretation rather than empirical descriptions alone.

Moreover, Arendt argues that Western metaphysical tradition, from Plato onward, has privileged the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) over the active life (*vita activa*). This tradition treats thinking, contemplation, and withdrawal from the world as higher forms of human existence, while political action and worldly engagement are seen as secondary or even corrupting. Thinking must remain connected to the world of human affairs. A stance that seems true to this date. But In light of this, there can be connection built between the Contemplative life and the Active life, one that can balance being in both. It can be paralleled to the Inner and the outer life of human being which is discussed later.

In this context, a reorientation toward a more holistic observation of the human condition becomes necessary, one that acknowledges both individual experience and its relation to the shared world. While such individual insights may emerge at the level of an individual, it does not remain isolated; rather, individual transformation may operate as a ripple or domino effect, subtly influencing the wider human field, not as a social obligation but as a moral act. So, reorienting this worldly human condition requires an inward shift, moving from external observations toward inner observations which can then extend outward as ethical awareness and responsible engagement with the world. An act from micro to macro scale, as a form of working on the self to working within the world.

Drawing from my own lineage and understanding, I wonder what is this Inner Human Condition? This also brings to attention the “Inner” Human Condition or The Unawakened Human Condition⁹. A condition that is realized after the outer state of human condition draws a person in to ask the existential questions. “Who, what and why am I?” This inward turn often arises precisely at the moment when external pursuits reveal their insufficiency. As it is often observed, - “[M]ost people spend most of their lives pursuing happiness in one way or another? And they want their happiness to last. They search for it in many ways – in relationships, careers, making money, having sex, reading books, going to the movies, consuming alcohol, taking drugs, going out to eat, going shopping, buying clothes, and in seeking power, popularity or

⁹ Tolle, Eckhart. “The Unawakened Human Condition | Eckhart Tolle on Everyday Presence.” YouTube, uploaded by Eckhart Tolle, 17 Oct 2025, www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3qgaDx7P3k.

Eckhart Tolle is widely recognized as one of the most inspiring and visionary spiritual teachers in the world today. His teachings focus on the significance and power of Presence, the awakened state of consciousness, which transcends ego and discursive thinking. Eckhart sees this awakening as the essential next step in human evolution.

fame. Basically, all these things lie outside the person, which implies that happiness is thought to be found through the outside world”(Esponda).

Thinking about ways of seeing the world, Joao Ferreira in *Writing is seeing* says that "Each area of human knowledge is founded on a particular way to look at the world. We look to the natural sciences to reliably tell us how things are, what are the constituents of the reality in which we live, or how to describe natural phenomena. But science alone cannot explain the human condition, which is the reason why we must turn to the humanities to explain what things mean. The Humanities are concerned with what it means to be a person and how art, literature, and music provide clues into human nature and to a better understanding of us” (Ferreira). While Ferreira distinguishes different modes of understanding through various disciplines it also raises a broader question about what the nature and limits of the knowledge itself is, the way it is structured but also where it begins or whether it even applied at a point of completion.

Putting this into a conceptual proposition Imagine a moving circle, if one attempts to locate its beginning, how impossible to identify the beginning of a circle. In its cyclicity, there is no clear point of origin or conclusion; any starting point appears arbitrary within an ongoing motion. Metaphorically, in a similar way, I perceive knowledge as a flowing current, always advancing, suggesting forward movement toward resolution, yet all knowledge systems seem to continually merge or direct towards into something larger. What appears as progress often reveals itself as only a fragment of an even wider continuum, like a drop within an ocean. And perhaps beyond that ocean, there may be an ocean of oceans. As it is, each discovery does not conclude inquiry;

rather, it exposes a deeper and more expansive mystery. But I wondered what happens when the lens of knowledge search flips inwards and we question the source of our existence?

In Art, I believe my practice is not only a reminder for viewers to remember to always explore the deepest of our selves but also to reflect on the energy that shaped us into this human form and everything around it. Abstraction as a language of this enquiry hold that liminal space of introspection while the materials research of glass and amination cater to the more physically experience environment and embodying the metaphorical spiritual ideas.

There seems to be a lot of hurdles when faced with the world based on the empirical and quantifiable truth. In these, setting and research systems, Spiritual discourse has generally been seen as an ontological claim and not a lived experience. It is important to note here that this spiritual lineage may be seen throughout the text in form of Sikhism, Sant Mat, theosophy and more, it is present as an independent and introspective space, a lived experience present in every human being, within and without the religious architectures. I endeavour to focus on the narratives of spirituality through my visual art forms and rekindle some spiritual metaphors that I have come across to then initiate or relate to the human and spiritual connections in creative environment.

In a contemporary world shaped by speed and instant gratification, I sense a growing curiosity, quiet longing for what is constant and for what brings us closer to our inner selves.

A Long-Standing Question

“I shut my eyes in order to see.”

- Paul Gauguin

I was first drawn to a painting by Paul Gauguin because of this title, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* encountered in a book called *Art* by Andrew Graham Dixon. While seeing its beautiful perspective composition and distortion of space called to me, not only visually but to look closer as introspect it deeply. Beyond its scale as one of the largest paintings created by Gauguin. Gauguin, in a letter to Daniel de Monfreid,¹⁰ writes, before his death he wished “to paint one great, last testamentary picture,” summoning all his strength “in a single burst of energy” to complete what would become his largest canvas. (“Where Do We Come From?”).¹¹



Figure 1 *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* Paul Gauguin, 1897–98, Oil on canvas, 139.1 x 374.6 cm (54 3/4 x 147 1/2 in. (<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/32558/where-do-we-come-from-what-are-we-where-are-we-going>))

¹⁰ Daniel de Monfreid (Gauguin's close friend, fellow artist, and supporter in Paris) Date of letters: Around 1897–1898, shortly after completing the painting in Tahiti.

¹¹ “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” Gauguin.org, www.gauguin.org/where-do-we-come-from-what-are-we.jsp. Accessed 3 Feb. 2026.

It is a prevalent visual reminder of the constant desire and absence of knowing more about oneself and the ongoing concern for the human conditions discussed above. While the painting is often situated within Gauguin's biography, particularly in relation to his final years in Tahiti and has been critically examined within broader colonial and socio-political frameworks, it also opens onto a more expansive field of inquiry. As noted by Museum of Fine art, Boston that "the questions posed in the title and indeed in the painting itself are perennial concerns about the human condition that continue to resonate with viewers today: origins, identity, purpose, and destiny." (Museum of Fine Arts)

In this sense, the work may be approached not only as a historically situated object but in this thesis enquiry they are site for existential reflection. Gauguin writes in his last letters "I have finished a philosophical work on this theme, comparable to the Gospels. I think it is good." Indeed, Gauguin did more than describe the allegorical subject of this picture. He further continues "My dream is intangible, it implies no allegory; as Mailarme said, 'It is a musical poem and needs no libretto.'" continuing he says "Consequently, the essence of a work, unsubstantial and of a higher order, lies precisely in 'what is not expressed; it is the implicit result of the lines, without color or words; it has no material being.' . . . Awakening with my work finished, I say to myself, Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? A thought which no longer has anything to do with the canvas, expressed in words quite apart on the wall which surrounds it. Not a title, but a signature . . ." Where In painting, this articulation shifts the work beyond representation into a realm of experiential inquiry, where meaning is not fixed within the image but emerges through contemplation. It positions the artwork as a threshold, one that does

not resolve the questions it raises, but instead holds them for enquiry, inviting the viewer into a deeper, inward engagement with existence itself.

1.2. Liminality and Being Human

Liminality is a broad concept that has been employed within social and anthropological contexts since Arnold van Gennep. In *The Rites of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep grounds liminality as a temporary and necessary state followed within a three-part structure, which “consists of three stages, separation from the old role, a liminal period between roles, and then the assumption of the new role” (21). In other words: separation, the detachment from the previous state; the liminal phase, as a threshold and in-between state; and eventually reincorporation, where the individual enters a new state.

Building on this, Victor Turner expanded the idea by emphasizing liminality as a space of transformation, where individuals exist between established structures and identities. In this suspended state, the self is no longer fixed, but open to reconfiguration, making liminality a critical condition for both social and personal change. Victor Turner suggested that “the Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. Liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, [...] and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.” (359)

In my thesis, I reflect on this liminal state as an ongoing ontological quest within everyone, briefly reflecting on the human condition, both outer and inner, as something that is not fixed; it is transitional, neither purely biological nor purely spiritual. However, it reveals many social, psychological, and metaphysical dimensions within our lived experiences. In that sense, I think the human being is always in a liminal state, a liminal being.

In retrospective, I experience that this state is not easy to comprehend at all times, but inwardly it is a constant state. To understand it metaphysically and scientifically, if we reflect on the universe around us and ourselves, both are made of the same elemental material, atoms. Based on string theory, these are in constant motion, and as noted by Kirpal Singh, moving at the same speed, which makes the world appear still to us. It is because we are moving within the same temporal condition that this stillness is perceived. This understanding further situates human existence within a state of continuous movement and transition, even when it appears stable.

Within this condition, the mind becomes a crucial site of inquiry. Phenomenologically, this can be understood through Edith Stein's model of the ego, where the ego is not an object, not a body, and not a fixed concept, but a living flow. Consciousness is never static; rather, it unfolds as a continuous "in-between", between past and future, between constituting and constituted, between act and memory, and across shifting states of awareness. This dynamic structure suggests that subjectivity is not a stable entity but an ongoing process of becoming.

Stein further insists that being is inherently relational and grounded beyond itself. Finite being carries within it an openness, a structure of dependence that gestures toward Eternal Being, not merely as theological speculation, but as part of the ontological condition of existence itself (Stein xxiv). In this way, she establishes a bridge between phenomenology and metaphysics, moving from lived experience, perception, intuition, and interiority, toward deeper structures of reality.

This ontological condition of “in-betweenness” can be understood as structurally liminal (Moran 215). Liminality here operates at an ontological level: the human being exists as a temporal threshold, always becoming, never complete. It is a state of continuous transition, where one is situated between the known and the unknown, constantly reconfiguring meaning, identity, and understanding. This state of flux is not incidental, but constitutive of human existence itself.

In my thesis, the idea of the liminal being becomes central to how I approach my work. It is a way of thinking about the self through introspection, using a phenomenological lens. A site for introspection where concepts of mind, body and soul become a one. So, spiritual metaphors play an important role here, acting as bridges between what we sense and experience in the body and what we begin to understand within ourselves. By moving through different layers of perception and introspection, I see liminality not as something abstract but as something we live through constantly, especially in a time where meanings feel unstable and always shifting.

Through my understanding of spiritual metaphors and the lived experiences of saints, I notice a shared pattern in how their journeys unfold. They often begin in the ordinary, move toward a meditative state, and gradually arrive at a deeper sense of awareness. This is not a fixed path but a process of transformation where the self keeps changing and becoming. In this way, their experiences reflect a liminal state, one that exists between what we know and what we are still coming to understand.

At the same time, I feel that what brings a sense of calm to the human being is this ongoing search for the true self. The question, what are we? becomes very simple yet deeply important. It opens up a space to think beyond the physical body and everyday life, and to turn inward. Rather than finding a final answer, it keeps the search alive and allows us to experience ourselves as something constantly unfolding.

1.3. The Human Form but More than Biology

1.3.1. In Science

Science has examined the human body with extraordinary rigor, uncovering remarkable insights into its structure and physiological functioning. Its advances are unnumerable that have revealed the body at microscopic scales and enabled the replication or replacement of vital systems. Yet, despite this astonishing progress, science often encounters limitations when addressing the qualitative dimensions of embodied experience. Emotional responses, for

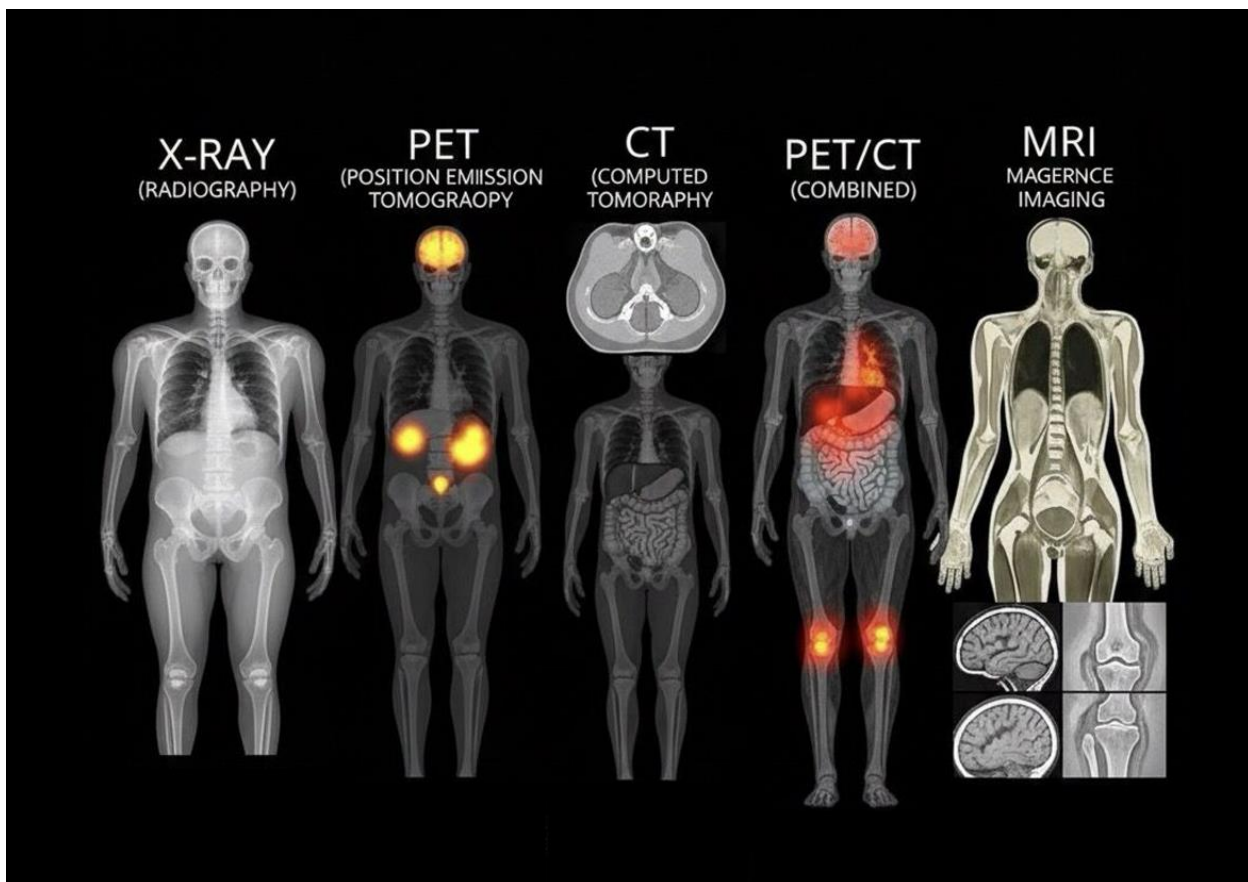


Figure 2 Medical Imaging Comparison Showing X-Ray, PET, CT, PET/CT, and MRI

instance, are frequently translated into biochemical processes and neural activity, which, while precise, can reduce complex lived feelings to chemical interactions. The achievements are

profound, but they do not fully encompass the subjective depth of human emotion and experience. X-rays, CT scans, MRI, Ultrasound, PET Scan and different body scan reveal a certain body system or body map, dedicated to their own methodology of researching the body.

Each of these reveals the same body, but through the lens of a particular system of knowledge and its tools. While each scan effectively serves its purpose by identifying specific conditions within the body, its understanding remains partial without a more holistic view. This fuller image cannot be formed through physical observation alone, as it is also shaped by the mind's impressions, which extend beyond the material form. Science has also shown that the mind interacts with the body, yet the depth of its impressions and inner experiences cannot be fully contained within the limits of the physical form.

1.3.2. In Architecture

India is filled with architectures related to human form. Especially in the city of Delhi, where I live, every sector, I used to see tall religious structures like Gurudwaras, Temples, Churches and Mosques that were directly and indirectly related to human form. In temple, Human as deities that are worshipped. While the church, mosque and gurdwara recite their holy scriptures that talk about the tales and way of life of spiritual human lives.

One of the most memorable temples I visited was the Khajuraho Group of Monuments. The outer walls are covered with intricate erotic sculptures, figures intertwined, bodies expressive,

desire made visible in stone. At first, I saw them simply as bold representations of human longing and sensuality.

Later, my mentor offered me a different way of understanding them. He suggested that these carvings were not meant to provoke attachment, but to exhaust it. By bringing desire fully into awareness by facing it rather than denying or suppressing it the yogi could eventually move beyond it. This principle is central to Tantric thought. In that sense, the sculptures were not indulgent but instructive, part of a larger spiritual process. Revealing layers of human experiences as stages that transforms us from one understanding into the new ones.

What stayed with me most, however, was the experience of entering the temple. After the richly detailed exterior, the interior spaces felt unexpectedly bare. Without these figures, the space was quiet, almost empty. At the centre of the room was a small, unoccupied area. My mentor explained that it represented the quietness of the human mind in a meditative state.

This experience felt deeply symbolic, as if the journey inward requires passing through the visible layers of worldly desire before arriving at a space of stillness. The exterior speaks of life in its fullness and complexity, while the interior gestures toward something more restrained and inward, an emptiness that is not a lack, but a state of calm.

During a college trip to the Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves, I experienced something that stayed with me. The caves are carved into rock, but what struck me was not just their scale, but

the feeling of being inside them. In some of the larger caves, there are seated figures of the Buddha placed within curved, almost enclosing spaces, as if the architecture itself is holding that stillness. At the same time, there are very small caves, just enough for one person to sit. These spaces felt quiet and direct, made for bhakti or meditation, where there is nothing extra, nothing to distract.

One of the most striking architectural and metaphorical elements was the entrance to one of the caves, shaped like a human head. At the centre, where the third eye would be, there was a window that allowed light to enter. This dome-shaped doorway led into the cave, where the ceiling was ribbed, extending from the entrance all the way to the end, where a seated sculpture of the Buddha was placed.

The light entering through the window fell directly onto the seated Buddha in a meditative state. I was deeply struck by the meaning of this space. My mentor explained that the ribbed, dome-like ceiling could be understood as representing the inner stages of meditation, leading toward a state of illumination. At the end of this progression sits the Buddha, not just as a figure to be worshipped, but as a presence that reflects the divine potential within oneself.

In that moment, the space no longer felt like a place of worship alone, but like a narrative of an inward journey. It spoke of a monk, or any individual, moving through deep meditation and gradually encountering the inner self, represented here in the form of the Buddha. Being inside these spaces made me aware of how the body is more than what we constant perceived it to be, it

is not a physical vessel but a beacon of spiritual essence. The outside world feels distant, and attention slowly shifts inward. It did not feel like something to observe from a distance, but something to experience physically, mentally, and spiritually at the same time. The movement from the larger carved spaces to these smaller, intimate ones felt like a movement inward, from form to stillness.

Going into the church I felt the similar energy of spirituality. Churches, with their tall, rising structures, and the presence of the cross, serve as reminders of Jesus Christ and his teachings, but they also create a strong relationship with the human body through scale. When entering these spaces, the height of the ceilings and the vertical lines of the architecture make the body feel small in comparison. This shift in scale is not accidental; it creates a sense of humility and awareness of one's own physical presence. The upward movement of columns and arches draws the gaze above, encouraging the body to look up, almost as if the architecture is guiding perception beyond itself.

At the same time, this verticality can be understood in relation to the human form. The upright structure of the church echoes the standing body, with a clear sense of base, rise, and extension. The cross itself can also be seen in bodily terms, with its horizontal and vertical axes reflecting the spread and alignment of the human figure. In this way, the space is not only something we enter, but something we relate to physically, where the scale and form of the architecture shape how we sense ourselves within it.

The dome or pyramid structure can be understood as symbolic of the human head. Within spiritual discourse of Sant Mat, Gurbaksh Singh 'Manager Sahib' describes these forms as resembling the human head, understood as the seat of both the mind and the soul (Gurbaksh Singh). In this way, architectural forms are not only structural, but metaphorical, reflecting the inner space where perception, awareness, and spiritual experience are situated.

“Manbody is a wonderful house we live in. It has got nine apertures: Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, and the genital organs, but we cannot run away out of it. It is a wonderful house we live in. Breathing goes out and it is again pushed back into the body, it cannot remain outside. There is some power controlling it back into the body. That very controlling power is called by different names: God, – and so many names.”

-Kirpal Singh (“The Inner and Outer Man”)

1.3.3. In Theosophy and Chakras

A documentary titled One Fire, published by the Theosophical Society, revisits the origins and key ideas of Theosophy.

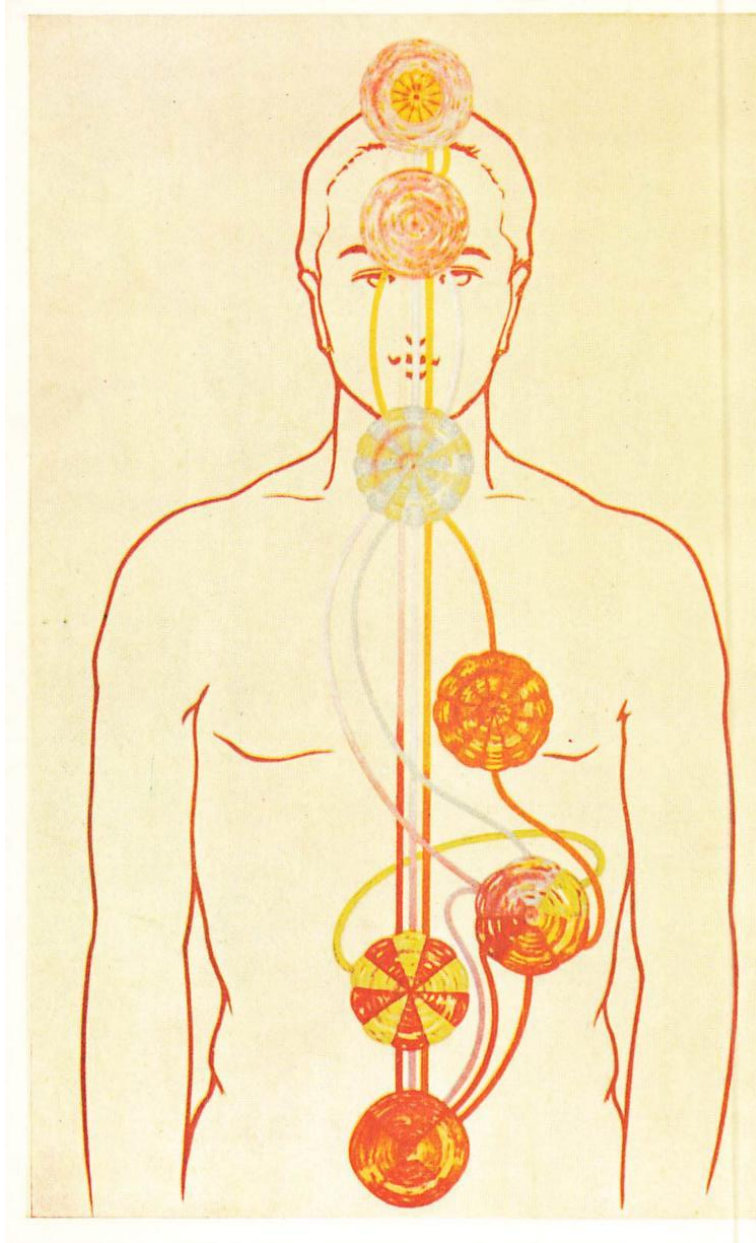


Figure 3 Chakras positions as seen by clairvoyant sight in a fairly evolved and intelligent person (The chakras; a monograph by C. W. Leadbeater)

In 1888, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky published *The Secret Doctrine*, an enigmatic text that attempts to articulate the origins of the cosmos, the hidden laws of nature, and the ongoing journey of the human soul. (Ahava) Blavatsky suggested that this knowledge was not authored by her alone but drawn from an ancient lineage of wisdom passed across generations. Central to this inquiry are questions that continue to persist: Who are we? Why are we here?

The documentary frames these concerns within the idea of a shared origin, describing creation as emerging from a primordial void, a state of darkness or the unknown, from which light arises as the first act of existence. From this perspective, all forms of life are understood as expressions of a single source, suggesting that human beings are not separate entities, but manifestations of the same underlying principle. The term Theosophy, derived from the Greek “Theos” (god) and “Sophia” (wisdom), points toward this notion of divine knowledge as a means of understanding both the cosmos and the self.

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 in New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky¹² and Henry Steel Olcott¹³, became a significant site for the development and dissemination of these ideas. Its influence extended across multiple fields, including philosophy, science, politics, literature, and art. Figures such as Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater contributed to expanding

¹² A traveller, truly a world traveller for her time. Madame Blavatsky remained a riddle to her closest colleagues and family members, as well as to every historian who has attempted to assemble the puzzle pieces of her life. She claimed that her secrecy stemmed from a solemn promise to protect the identity and whereabouts of her teachers, Adepts, or Masters, in a secret ashram deep in the Himalayas.

¹³ Colonel Olcott, who was an American, was a person who was interested in spiritualism. He was someone who, from his youth, had been exposed to it, and he pursued it. In his later life, when he was attorney in New York City, in the United States, it was a huge phenomenon.

its reach, particularly through concepts like “Thought-Forms,” which attempted to visualize inner states and subtle energies.

Theosophical ideas also intersected with broader intellectual and cultural movements. Jiddu Krishnamurti, initially associated with the Society, later redefined spiritual inquiry in more individual and experiential terms. He believed that Truth is a pathless land. It may seem like a paradoxical thought for a spiritual journey within that requires certain forms of discipline.

However, what I draw from Theosophy and many other spiritual movements is that spiritual knowledge eventually becomes enveloped within organizational structures whether religion, movements, or institutions. However, there always remains a source from which these pathways emerge. What is important, in my understanding, is to notice what is shared among all these structures: a direction toward the source of human experience. That realm of transformation, whether approached through a defined path or a pathless one, does not alter the eternal source itself.

In the visual arts, artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Hilma af Klint engaged deeply with Theosophical concepts, translating ideas of inner vibration, energy, and spiritual evolution into abstract forms. Their works were not merely aesthetic departures from representation but attempts to access and visualize realities that lie beyond the material surface. In this context, abstraction becomes a language for the unseen, an articulation of forces that are felt rather than directly observed. Kandinsky, in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, emphasizes that art

must move beyond external appearances and instead resonate with the inner necessity of the artist. He speaks of form and colour as carriers of spiritual vibration, capable of evoking inner states and awakening deeper consciousness. (Kandinsky 25) Theosophy, in this regard, becomes an integral inspiration through which abstraction begins to explore the unknown within, not as a detached idea but as something rooted in lived experience.

Similarly, Af Klint's work emerges from a direct engagement within her own spiritual practices and esoteric thought, where abstraction is used as a method to map invisible structures of existence, cosmic order, spiritual ascent, and inner transformation. Her paintings which to her were spiritual diagrams suggest that knowledge of the unseen can be accessed through intuitive processes, positioning the artist as both a receiver and translator of higher realities. (Voss 78)

In this sense, Theosophy plays a significant role in the early development of abstraction, not only as an intellectual influence but as a lived and experiential inquiry shared by both artists and philosophers. It opens a space where art becomes a medium for introspection, where the unknown is not represented but encountered, and where abstraction functions as a bridge between the visible world and the inner, spiritual dimensions of human experience.

A key development within this framework is the articulation of the chakra system in English-language discourse. *The Chakras* (1927)¹⁴ by C. W. Leadbeater presents an interpretation of chakras drawn from Hindu and Buddhist traditions, filtered through Theosophical perspectives

¹⁴ *The Chakras* is a 1927 esoteric book by British Theosophist C. W. Leadbeater that presents one of the earliest English-language accounts of the chakra system drawn from Hindu and Buddhist traditions, filtered through Theosophical clairvoyant observation.

and clairvoyant observation. In this context, chakras are understood as subtle centres within the human body, mediating between the physical and the non-physical, and functioning as points of energy, awareness, and transformation.

NAME OF CHAKRA	POSITION ON SURFACE	APPROXIMATE POSITION OF SPINAL CHAKRA	SYMPATHETIC PLEXUS	CHIEF SUBSIDIARY PLEXUSES
Root	Base of spine	4th Sacral	Coccygeal	...
Spleen	Over the spleen	1st Lumbar	Splenic	...
Navel	Over the navel	8th Thoracic	Coeliac or Solar	Hepatic, pyloric, gastric, mesenteric, etc.
Heart	Over the heart	8th Cervical	Cardiac	Pulmonary, coronary, etc.
Throat	At the throat	3rd Cervical	Pharyngeal	...
Brow	On the brow	1st Cervical	Carotid	Cavernous, and cephalic ganglia generally

Figure 4 The Chakras and the Plexuses

According to ancient Hindu philosophy and yoga teachings, there are subtle psychic sense organs in man's body which channel psychic energies and vital force and are related to the glandular and nervous systems. They are also said to serve as a link between physical, psychic, and superphysical states of consciousness. These centres are called chakras, a Sanskrit term meaning wheels or disks. These chakras¹⁵ have been seen and described by clairvoyant investigators. C.W. Leadbeater was considered a highly developed clairvoyant as well.

¹⁵ These specific drawings of chakras were drawn by Leadbeater's friend Rev. Edward Warner

In the book the theosophical interpretation of soul is that “[A] Man is a soul and owns a body—several bodies in fact; for besides the visible vehicle by means of which he transacts his business with his lower world, he has others which are not visible to ordinary sight, by means of which he deals with the emotional and mental worlds.” (Leadbeater 2)

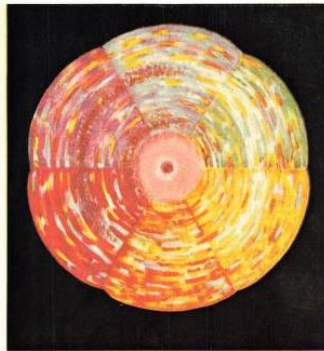
The book further goes into the depth of each chakras, but this is not the purpose of this thesis to uncover that, It is important to acknowledge the presence of these energy centres as human scan of the body, however, the subtle point is to reflect back onto the idea of the source energy that powers all these energy chakras, soul.



THE BROW CHAKRA



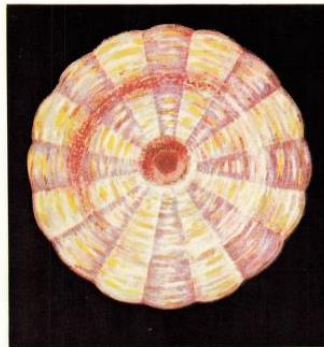
THE ROOT CHAKRA



THE SPLEEN CHAKRA



THE HEART CHAKRA



THE THROAT CHAKRA



THE NAVEL CHAKRA

Figure 5 Body Chakras

Crown chakras (Leadbeater) is said to be described in Indian books as thousand petalled Lotus, which is not very far from the truth in theosophy too.



Figure 6 Representations of the Crown Chakra

This Chakara is last to be awakened but initially it is in depression inwards, however when it meets the divine light, it is “no longer a depression but a prominence, standing out from the head as a dome, a veritable crown of glory. In Oriental pictures and statues of the deities or great men this prominence is often shown. In Fig. (6) it appears on the head of a statue of the Lord Buddha at Borobudur in Java. This is the conventional method of representing it, and in this form, it is to be found upon the heads of thousands of images of the Lord Buddha all over the Eastern world. In many cases it will be seen that the two tiers of the Sahasrara chakra are copied—the larger dome of 960 petals first, and then the smaller dome of 12 rising out of that in turn. The head on the right is that of Brahma from the Hokke-do of Todai-ji, at Nara in Japan (dating from a.d. 749); and it will be seen that the statue is wearing a head-dress fashioned to represent this chakra, though in a form somewhat different from the last, showing the coronet of flames shooting up from it. (Leadbeater 15-16)

This is a direct connects to the Architectural design of domes in the spiritual structures, directing to the Human head as the true inner architectures that is the house of the soul, a vessel that carries a drop of the Eternal flame.

Taken together, as experience through different domains Theosophy positions the human being as more than a material entity. It suggests a layered existence, where the physical body coexists with subtler dimensions of mind and spirit. Within this view, the human form becomes a vessel through which a larger journey unfolds, one that moves between the visible and the invisible, the finite and the eternal.

Theosophy, as explored through the lived experiences of certain esoteric and clairvoyant individuals, shares significant conceptual overlap with the spiritual framework of Sant Mat. Both systems engage with the journey of the soul through embodied human experience, emphasizing a process of inner progression that ultimately seeks the transcendence of the self toward union with the divine. According to the Sant Mat teaching that brings forward the spiritual discipline from many domains says that the seat of the soul is at the Third Eye Chakra (or the Brow Chakra) and within the discipline of Surat-Shabd-yoga it can travel through the crown chakra into the subtle realms beyond the physical body, journeying back to its source.

Drawing on these relations between the chakras system in the body to the spiritual journey of the soul, Sant Mat says:

“People imagine that gods are superior to human beings. The fact is that they are souls who performed virtuous deeds such as charities, penances, etc., in their human lives (but did not devote themselves to the practice of Nam or Sound Current), and are consequently in Paradise, Swarg, etc., enjoying the fruits of their good actions. At the end of the prescribed period of reward, these devtas, gods, or angels will again be sent back into this world. All the saints and scriptures support this view” further mentioning in The Science of the soul that “within the body too, He is to be sought above the eyes, and not below them. Those who concentrate at any one of the lower centres such as the *mul chakra* (rectal centre), the *indri chakra* (centre of procreation), *nabhi chakra* (navel centre), *hirday chakra* (heart centre), or *kanth chakra* (throat centre), merely see the shadow. This is similar to beholding the reflection against a wall of the sun's reflection in water, while the real sun itself shines above in the sky. Only one who has seen the real sun above can testify that the reflection is that of the sun, and that it is merely the image and not the sun itself. Thus, only those who have seen the Lord within can realize that it is the shadow or reflection that pervades the lower centres and, In fact, the entire cosmos.” (Jagat Singh)

In essence, in Sant Mat, spirituality is not confined to the lower energy centres (chakras); rather, through an awareness of the body's inner architecture and the positioning of these centres, a deeper level of spiritual understanding can be accessed, as explored in the following sections.

1.3.4. In Spiritual Scriptures and Hymnic Poems

This portion of the chapter elaborates and draws together spiritual metaphors of how the Human body is in spiritual scriptures and Hymnic poems:

Kabir:

Kabir (c. 1440–1518) was a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and social reformer whose verses bridged Hindu and Islamic traditions. Born in Varanasi to a Muslim weaver family, he became one of the most influential voices of the Bhakti movement, revered by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike for his universal message of divine unity and moral courage.¹⁶ Kabir has embodied the spiritual metaphor of the human form as a site of the divine, something not separated from it.

Body as temple / house:

ਮੇਕੇ ਕਹਾਂ ਢੂੰਢੇ ਰੇ ਬੰਦੇ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਤੇਰੇ ਪਾਸਿ ਵਿੱਚ ॥

“Moko kahan dhoonde re bande, main toh tere paas mein”

(Where do you search for me? I am within you.)

Body as clay pot (ghat) containing water (soul/divine):

¹⁶ “Kabir.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Accessed 23 February 2026, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kabir-Indian-mystic-and-poet?utm_source=chatgpt.com

ਜਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੁੰਭ, ਕੁੰਭ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਲ ਹੈ, ਬਾਹਰਿ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

ਫੂਟਾ ਕੁੰਭ ਜਲ ਜਲਹਿ ਸਮਾਨਾ, ਇਹੁ ਤਤੁ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜਾਣੀ ॥

“Jal mein kumbh, kumbh mein jal hai”

(Water is in the pot, and the pot is in the water; inside and outside is the same. When the pot breaks, water merges with water.)

Inner sound (Anhad Naad):

ਅਨਹਦ ਸਬਦ ਵਜੇ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤੀ ॥

“Anhad shabd vajeh din raat”

(The unstruck sound resounds within day and night)

Guru Nank Dev Ji

The First saint in Sikhism, he talked about One true god in all. Focused on Miral Life, Bhakti (meditation) and union with the divine within.

Body as vessel (ghar / deh / mandir):

ਘਰ ਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਭਰਪੂਰੁ ਹੈ, ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਵੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

“Ghar hi meh amrit bharpur”

(Within the body-house is the nectar)

Soul as bride, Divine as husband (soul–beloved union):

ਸੋਹਾਗਣਿ ਬਣਿ ਰਹੁ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ, ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਘਰਿ ਆਵਣੁ ॥

“Sohagan ban re man mere”

(O mind, become the bride of the Divine)

Light within light

ਜੋਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲਿ ਜਾਈ ॥

“Jot meh jot ral jae”

(The light merges into the Light)

Body as field of practice

ਇਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਖੇਤੁ ਹੈ ॥

“Ih sareer karam dharam da khet hai.”

(This body is the field of action and dharma)

Rumi

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207–1273) was a 13th-century Persian Sufi mystic, Islamic scholar, and poet whose writings on divine love and unity remain globally influential. Revered

across cultures, Rumi’s verse transcends boundaries of faith and language, making him one of the most widely read poets in the world.¹⁷

Body as reed flute (instrument)

Original (Persian transliteration):

Bishnav az ney chon hikāyat mīkonad

Az judā’ihā shikāyat mīkonad

“Listen to the reed¹⁸ and the tale it tells,
how it sings of separation.”

The human body is an instrument through which the divine breath speaks.

Soul as light trapped in form, Body as veil

“You are not a drop in the ocean, you are the entire ocean in a drop.”

Rumi is not mention in Gurbani but is talked about in Sant Mat, through his Hymnic poems his teaching is universal for mankind, uniting the depth of all religious forms. As noted, “One of Rumi’s great gifts is to communicate profound metaphysical truths in the language of simple metaphor from shared human experience. He will speak of a ruby and a stone, or a chickpea in

¹⁷ “A Tale of Two Rumis – of the East and of the West.” Al Jazeera, 17 Dec. 2023, Accessed 24 Mar. 2026.

¹⁸ The reed flute (ney) is cut from the reed bed symbolizing the soul separated from its source.

the pot, or a donkey that was stolen, or really anything at all – but the whole time he is speaking about the One.” (Saber , Al Jazeera)

His message is eternal and clear-

“Set fire to everything, except love.”

– Rumi (translated by Muhammad Ali Mojaradi)

Love is an abstract element in our lived world, constantly interpreted. But For me, one form of Love is clearly described in spiritual scripture, the Love that is capable of uniting a drop to the ocean. Thinking about that, in response, I wrote a poem, as a part of a grouped work “Love : A Divine Task”.

The work "In Pursuit of", Digital Print, 2025, 8' x 12.5' in dimensions, explores the theme of eternal love through strong visual metaphoric contrast of colours and form as well as emotional depth presented through darker palette. The poem section features an 8" x 5.2" vinyl titled "**A Love Poem**," which reflects on the connection between individuals, as a feeling shared across everyone, defining love by emphasizing themes of longing, fearlessness, and uniting with true self. The poem describes love as a profound force that transcends boundaries, verbal communicating soul-deep connections to reach The Beyond.

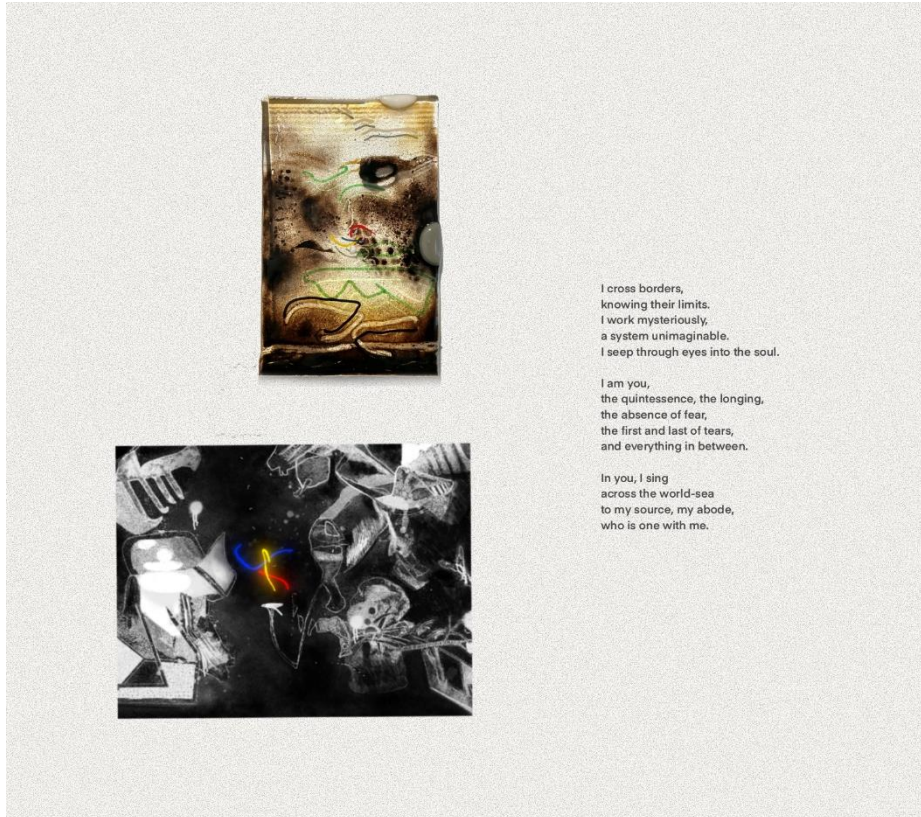


Figure 7 Work mockup for the exhibition wall

The work on top, "Lucent Path," presented in glass and measuring 8' x 5.2', symbolizes an inner journey illuminated by clarity and spiritual guidance. When combined with the glass-human body metaphor, it suggests that if we look inside ourselves the body acts as a transparent vessel for the soul (enveloped by mind), highlighting the idea of a radiant inner path at the centre. Overall, the work expresses the notion that the human experiencing Love is both a physical and spiritual journey, guided by soul's eternal source., god. As Guru Gobind Singh ji, the tenth guru in Sikhism said:

“Those who love, shall know god, without love, you have nothing.”

A Love Poem, 2025, By Tavleen Lall

I cross borders,

knowing their limits.

I work mysteriously,

A system unimaginable.

I seep through eyes into the soul.

I am you,

the quintessence, the longing,

the absence of fear,

the first and last of tears,

and everything in between.

In you, I sing

across the world-sea

to my source, my abode,

who is one with me.

1.4. Teaching of Saints: Sant Mat and Oneness

“Today there is a great awakening beginning. Some have got the answer, some have not, but the search to solve the mystery of life has been born all over the world. The day that question arises in the mind is the greatest day of one’s life, for once it is born, it does not succumb until it is satisfied. So, make your life an example of the teachings you follow — live up to them. If you have a strong desire to get it, then God Himself will make the arrangements for you.”

- (Kirpal Singh Ji, Excerpts from a talk published in the January 1971 issue of SAT
SANDESH) (Singh vi)

What is Sant Mat?

A lineage of the spiritual masters of India, have conveyed the Sant Mat¹⁹ teachings throughout India and the world for more than a century. However, the teaching itself have existence through the teachings of other saints as well who taught a universal path of devotion. As described in the preface of book *Essential Sant Mat-*

“Sant Mat teaches that the essence of every human being is the soul, and the privilege and purpose of human life are for the soul to become aware of its identity with its divine source. This

¹⁹ What does ‘Sant Mat’ mean?

Sant Mat is an Indian term meaning the teachings (mat) of a true one (a Sant). Sant is often conveniently translated into English as ‘saint,’ but the two words, though similar sounding, are unrelated. Sant is derived from the Sanskrit word sat (true, truth) while ‘saint’ is from the Latin Sanctus meaning ‘holy’ or ‘set apart.’ (<https://rspb.org/book-EN-266-0.html>)

realisation can be achieved through meditation on the emanation of divinity, which resounds inside every human being and is referred to as the Shabd, the ‘sound current’ or ‘Word.’”

(Bocking)

Sant Mat is not a religion in conversional sense rather in more accurate sense it is a spiritual path that is based on experiential discipline and inner experiences, hence is further away from the notion of general empiricism that is the philosophy of science emphasizing evidence, that can be proven again and again. However, as their lived spiritual experiences documented in scriptures, the saints spoke of those experiences.

Why Sant Mat is crucial here?

Sant Mat emphasizes direct inner experience over only belief, doctrine, or ritual. Its core principle says that universal spiritual truth can be realized through disciplined practice. The most crucial aspects of this path are practice-centred than Belief-centred. However, belief is a choice here influenced by individual's lived experiences. Salvation, liberation, or awakening is understood as something to be experienced, not accepted on faith. when reading through the teachings of Sant Mat i.e. the Teachings of Saints, Sant Mat presents itself as the inner, esoteric dimension underlying all religions, rather than a new religious system. If one starts to perceive and positions themselves looking through the walked path of saints and Sufis, a new unrealized potential of Human being can be realized.

Informed by personal spiritual traditions, I draw on the teachings of Baba Vakil Sahib Ji, Bahadur Chand, a revered figure, in the lineage of Sant Mat, at Dera Jagmalwali. His Satsang reflect on the significance of Human life, temporality of the material world and the eternal nature of the soul, these ideas that deeply resonate with the metaphysical thinking and are the undercurrents in my work. His teachings are guide in my personal life, however, they have become a conceptual and inspirational catalyst for the metaphorical interpretation of my material works.

2. The Metaphors: A need for Metaphorical understanding of the Self

2.1. What are metaphors and why are metaphors?

Metaphors have been used for a very long time, especially within literary contexts. In this thesis, I focus on visual and spiritual metaphors, as they are in alignment with my ongoing practice. For this reason, the contemporary theory of metaphor, associated with George Lakoff, provides an appropriate framework for understanding these metaphors.

Contemporary metaphor theory moves away from viewing metaphor as a fixed, algorithmic process and instead situates it within embodied experience. As George Lakoff argues, metaphors emerge from image-schemas rooted in bodily perception and often involve multiple, simultaneous mappings. This reinforces the idea that metaphors are not merely descriptive but are fundamental to how we experience and understand inner states. (Lakoff 43)

Metaphors, therefore, can be understood as structurally and experientially “true” within human cognition. Lakoff emphasizes that metaphors are not decorative; they are cognitive structures that shape how we understand reality. This understanding becomes particularly relevant when considering spiritual metaphors such as the body as a vessel or light as an inner presence of soul. These are not simply symbolic expressions but emerge from embodied ways of perceiving and making sense of lived experiences of spiritually inclined or saintly person. In this sense, spiritual metaphors do not function as elusive abstract ideas alone, but as lived and

ongoing structures within human experience through which inner realities are felt, interpreted, communicated, and embodied.

As a basic framework for deeper introspective observation, I draw strongly on the following multiple-mapped spiritual metaphors:

- Body as vessel
- Soul as light
- Mind as projected reflections through glass (body)

These can be understood as conceptual mappings:

Source Domain (Concrete)	Target Domain (Abstract)
Vessel / container	Human body
Light / illumination	Soul / consciousness
Shadows, reflections, and refractions	Mind

What is crucial to note here is that these metaphors are cognitively real and experientially valid, though not empirically measurable truths. When one contemplates the self within this space, beyond empirical logic, a different mode of perception may begin to emerge.

Corresponding closely with Lakoff’s framework: within Sant Mat discourse, similar metaphorical structures can be observed:

Body = ghar (home), pind (field), deh (vessel)

Soul = surat (attention or essence)

Divine = shabd (sound current), jyoti (light)

Source Domain	Target Domain
House / vessel	Body
Light	Divine presence / soul
Sound	Inner divine current

Drawing on these connections, it can be argued that, just as Lakoff situates metaphors within shared human experience, spiritual traditions such as Sant Mat and Sikh Gurbani are also grounded in lived inner experience shared among the human beings. These teachings are not presented as empirical truths within a worldly framework, but as insights that emerge through forms of understanding beyond conventional cognitive systems. They draw upon what may be described as spiritual knowledge or spiritual science.

However, drawing on my own understanding, these insights can begin to be accessed through introspection and engagement with metaphorical human experiences too. In this sense, metaphors, especially spiritual metaphors, are not arbitrary poetic devices, but structured mappings that emerge from repeated inner experiences, gradually becoming, and contemplative forms of understanding.

Metaphorical Bridges

While researching, I encountered the idea that interdisciplinary practice is akin to discovering bridges, and I realized that the works I was creating function as such bridges, with my positionality being to invite viewers onto these constructed pathways. This also resonates with the broader understanding of what a bridge is: these works operate as liminal, metaphorical bridges.

Bridges, as both material and symbolic structures, have historically functioned as Spiritual metaphors for transition, connection, and the human condition that is going into the unknown. As David Blockley notes,

"Throughout history bridges have been used as mystic symbols. Perhaps the ultimate unknowable mystic journey is the passing from this world to the next. [...] From very early times bridges have been at the heart of the way we think about the human condition, the enigmatic connection between heaven and earth and between the natural and the supernatural. Bridges are links between the known and the unknown, they are places between places, they are part of how we try to deal with what we don't understand. As a consequence bridges stimulate new ideas and new understandings—often with interesting and colourful traits as the myths, ancient and modern, reveal. (Blockley 84)

Blockley further emphasizes that “bridges are links between the known and the unknown... places between places,” reinforcing their ontological significance. Extending this metaphor, the notion of “people bridges” articulates relational connectivity, where “relationships connect people - as do bridges”. Within this framework, interdisciplinary art emerges as a mediating practice that can sustain such connections, functioning as a communicative and introspective bridges between inner lived experiences and external embodiment. Moreover, the maintenance of bridges mentioned further by Blockley parallels the cultivation of a spiritual bridge, particularly in negotiating the gap between knowledge and action. As Blockley observes, “our understanding is always incomplete,” suggesting further that both scientific and spiritual pursuits

operate within partial knowledge systems, requiring continuous engagement to ‘bridge’ spiritually experiential and conceptual gaps.

2.2. Human Metaphors: Body as vessel, Light as Soul and Mind As reflective Projections

When considering embodied experience, the body is understood as the primary site of perception. However, spiritual, and metaphorical frameworks invite us to see the body not merely as a physical entity, but as a vessel. Within scientific knowledge systems, the body is studied in terms of cognition and biological processes; within spiritual traditions, it is understood as containing the soul or consciousness that exceeds purely material explanation. Just as science investigates the body to understand what lies within it, spirituality emphasizes an equally important inquiry into its inner essence. As discussed earlier in relation to the human form in science, knowledge of the body alone remains partial, much like a disease cannot be fully understood or cured without a holistic perspective.

Across spiritual scriptures, the human body is consistently described through metaphors—as a house, a boat, or a vessel, each pointing toward its role as a container of something deeper, oriented toward the realization of the true self.

The metaphor of the human body as a boat (ਨਾਉ / नौका) appears multiple times in Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, especially in the context of crossing the worldly ocean

(bhavsagar). This imagery aligns closely with Sant traditions and broader Indian spiritual metaphors of life as a crossing. However, in Gurbani, the spiritual metaphors have many deeper meanings and also feels paradoxical in nature. For example, by Guru Nanak Dev ji, the boat is referred to as True Guru, something separate from human whereas in some places it is referred to as the human itself.

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਰੁ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਬੋਹਿਥੋ ਗੁਰੁ ਤੀਰਥੁ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

The Guru is the Boat to carry me across the world-ocean; the Guru is the Sacred Shrine of Pilgrimage; the Guru is the Holy River.

(Guru Nanak Dev, Page 17, Line 14)

ਆਪੇ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਬੋਹਿਥਾ ਆਪੇ ਪਾਰੁ ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥

You Yourself are the ocean and the boat. You Yourself are this shore, and the one beyond.

(Guru Nanak Dev, Page 54, Line 17)

ਨਾ ਬੋੜੀ ਨਾ ਤੁਲਹੜਾ ਨਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਵੰਝੁ ਮਲਾਰੁ ॥

There is no boat, no raft, no oars and no boatman.

(Guru Nanak Dev, Page 59, Line 11)

In the Sikh Scripture, Kabir Sahib, a saint, talks about human body as made of clay:

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਪੁਤਰੇ ਮਾਨਸੁ ਰਾਖਿਓ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਚਾਰਿ ਦਿਵਸ ਕੇ ਪਾਹੁਨੇ ਬੜਿ ਬੜਿ ਰੁੰਧਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥੬੪॥

Kabeer, we are puppets of clay, but we take the name of mankind

We are guests here for only a few days, but we take up so much space. ||64||

(Kabir, Ang 1367, Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

Here the body is metaphorically described to understand a deep truth about the embodies human-Divine experience. It direct toward the change in perception and uncovering of the hidden knowledge of the spiritual in us. Guru granth sahib, the spiritual scripture was a collection of teachings of saints of Bhakti movement.²⁰

The Sufis of the Punjab were close to the saints of the Bhakti Movement. Both denounced fundamentalisms. While the Sufis laid emphasis on love, the saints emphasized devotion. Some of the spiritual stages of the Sufis have parallels in the saints of the Bhakti Movement.²¹

²⁰ Bhakti movement in Medieval India is responsible for the many rites and rituals associated with the worship of God by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs of Indian subcontinent.; “Bhakti Movement and Sikhism.” *SikhiWiki*, [SikhiWiki](#). Accessed 24 Jan. 2026.

²¹ Ali, Nadir. “Articles on Bulleh Shah’s Poetry.” Academy of the Punjab in North America (APNA), . Accessed 24 Jan. 2026.

Bulleh Shah was a 17th-century Punjabi Sufi poet whose verses focus on divine love, the dismantling of the ego. His interprets body as a home, suggesting that the union of The One, ‘Paramatama’, or God is within this house, The human body.

ਬੁੱਲ੍ਹਿਆ! ਆਸਮਾਨਾਂ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਫੜ ਲਿਆ,

ਘਰ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠੇ ਯਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਨਾਹਿ ਲੱਭਿਆ।

"Bulheya, you made a grab for those in the sky,

Never for the One in your Home."

(Shāh)

This creates a depth within oneself when the perception of the body, though experienced through the senses, expands into a deeper understanding of the self as residing in a temporary home. Just as one keeps a house clean and well maintained, Bulleh Shah compares this to caring for the human body not only its physical form, but also its mental and spiritual dimensions.

As discussed earlier, Kirpal Singh, a part of Sant Mat lineage, describes the human body as a remarkable dwelling in which we reside. He speaks of it as a house with nine openings - two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and the generative organs - yet reminding us that we cannot simply step outside of it. ("Sant Kirpal Singh: The Inner and Outer Man") We dwell in

this body, yet mentally it is perceived as beyond the form through our minds, emotions, and feelings.

Sant Bahadur Chand (commonly known as Vakil Sahib Ji within the Sant Mat tradition) refers to the body as “माटी का पुतला”, meaning a sand sculpture. From an understanding of spiritual metaphors, my artistic practice of glass blowing seemed philosophical and metaphorically like the way a body is created from the elements of Nature, so to say puts life in this sand vessel is the “param” conscious being similarly the way my breath goes into blow the glass and create the form in my mind. This creative process felt very experiential to the emergence of life.

The Hindu Psychology that has long been considered a science because of its proper investigation and verification devised methods for the absolute control of the mind, leading to illumination. (Mind and its control 28) The book *Mind and its control* suggest the interpreted Hindu psychology by Swami Vivekananda Ji in his *Complete Works.*, discussed through short chapter in the book –

“Mind is a finer body within this Gross (physical) body. The Physical body is, as it were, only the outer crust of the mind. The Mind being the finer part of the body, the one affects the other.”
(Budhananda 28)

I distinctly, remember my mentor telling me about this with an example that helped me visualize this understanding. He said imagine there is a string stretched between two points, when one end of the string is set into motion, vibrations travel along its length to the other. Similarly, physical illness often affects the mind, while mental illness or tension affects the body. (Budhananda 28) As many people observe in lived experience, this reflects a phenomenologically significant insight into the mind–body relationship.

The author further talks about what is behind the mind, “[is] Atman, the real self of the man. Where Body and Mind are material; Atman is pure spirit. Mind is not Atman but distinct from the Atman.” (Budhananda 28). My work resonates with this certainly complex interpretation: Where the source of the Atman, positioned as the projector, produces a beam of light, the “soul”, which falls upon the glass as the “vesselled” body and mind. What appears as reflective projections are the secondary effects of this originating light, refracted and cast outward as the mind’s constructed projections. This secondary effect of light is subtle concept in viewers perception, hence, hinting to my installation’s metaphorical framework of Body as vessel, Light as Soul and Mind as reflective projections.

My mentor, Mohan Singh, as a spiritually inclined person talks about this metaphor in Sant Mat and Plato’s world of idea and world of matter interpretation. He said, “In Sant Mat, ‘Sachkhand,’ or ‘Par-Brahm’ (an eternal realm), has its ‘aksh’ (reflections) falling upon ‘Brahmand.’ Similarly, as in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, the fire’s reflection falls on an object, and the object’s reflection then appears on the wall, which is observed by the man in the cave.

This man in the cave represents the third level of perception. In a similar way, 'Par-Brahm' is a field of pure energy, an energy complete. What we do not realize is that this complete energy field is stable and still, something we do not perceive within the surrounding energy field.” Similarly, On the micro level, and even in relation to string theory, everything is in constant motion and therefore unstable.

He continues “That pure energy does not have any ‘vikrit’ (distortion) or destruction within it. It is timeless, without movement, and complete. This is ‘Par-Brahm,’ whose shadow is cast upon the realm of ‘Bhram,’ (that is this visible universe) creating the illusion of what exists in ‘Par-Brahm.’”

So, the metaphor Light of the light has numerous interpretations because of the nature of the light we know itself is omnipresent and comes from a source, this can be observed as a phenomenological metaphor for spiritual introspection. Further in Gurbani, Light is consciousness.

ਜੇਤੀ ਜੇਤਿ ਮਿਲਾਈਐ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸੰਜੇਗੁ ॥

When one’s light merges into the Light, and one’s intuitive consciousness is joined with the

Intuitive Consciousness (Page 21, Line 17)

2.3. Spiritual Tales of Metaphors

In an attempt to understand concepts introduced in a spiritual context that move beyond the experience of physical perception, metaphors act as bridges that translate embodied experiences of one person into a close to perceivable forms for other, while also creating a liminal space through which further knowledge can enter the visible domain of understanding. It is through metaphors, images, and lived narratives that these ideas begin to take form and become accessible. Stories, in particular, allow these abstract and often invisible experiences to be introduced, shared, understood, and felt, not as fixed definitions, but as unfolding meanings emerging from narratives. In this way, storytelling becomes a way of bridging what is seen and unseen, known and unknown. William Morris, a glass artist, notes on this that “Stories are the vehicle that moves metaphor and image into experience. Like metaphors and images, stories communicate what is generally invisible and ultimately inexpressible. In seeking to understand these realities through time, stories provide a perspective that touches on the divine, allowing us to see reality in full context, as part of its larger whole. Stories invite a kind of vision that gives shape and form even to the invisible, making the images move, clothing the metaphors, throwing colour into the shadows. Of all the devices available to us, stories are the surest way of touching the human spirit.”²²

²² <https://www.wmorris.com/artist/quotes-statement/#:~:text=Quotes%20from%20the%20Artist:,and%20beliefs%20of%20tribal%20man.>

To understand this concept of metaphors from my own experience of hearing and being present in Spiritual discourse, I realized that the impact of storytelling, either real or fantasy, are deeply impactful as it feels relates to the mundane experiences one has. These stories structures are universal in a way that they direct towards shared patterns of human cognition and shared structures of lived inner experience directing towards common forms of inner consciousness.

These stories are usually simple, almost folk-like, but structurally precise, they map the movement from outer illusion towards a beginning of inner realization. Some of the stories I have heard myself through Bahadur Chand Ji (Known as Vakil Sahib Ji) or through the recordings of by Gurbaksh Singh Ji in Satsang (Known as Manager Sahib ji in Sant Mat) I have described below:

1. **The One Behind Many Doors**

In a darkened room, where no light enters and no form can be seen, people begin to arrive, each through a different door.

One enters from the east and reaches out into the void. His hands meet something wide and flat, gently moving. “Ah,” he says with certainty, “this is a great fan, soft yet strong.” He holds onto it, convinced of what he has found.

Another enters from the west. She walks forward cautiously until her fingers touch something long, smooth, and curved. It shifts slightly in her grasp. “No,” she says, almost amused, “this is a serpent, alive, breathing.”

From the north, a third arrives. He stumbles upon something firm and unmoving, thick like a pillar. He wraps his arms around it and declares, “You are both mistaken. This is a tree—rooted, solid, unyielding.”

A fourth, from the south, encounters a vast, curved surface—warm and breathing. Pressing his ear against it, he hears a deep rhythm. “It is a wall,” he insists, “a living wall, perhaps—but a wall nonetheless.”

Each speaks with conviction. Each has touched, felt, experienced. Each believes they know.

Soon, voices rise. Disagreement turns to argument. Not one of them is lying—but none of them can see.

And then, slowly, a light begins to emerge—not from outside, but as if the room itself exhales illumination. Shadows loosen. Forms gather.

The fan becomes an ear. The serpent, a trunk. The pillar, a leg. The wall, a body.

What they held as separate truths folds into one presence—an elephant, vast and whole, quietly standing in the centre all along.

Silence follows. Not because one was right and the others wrong, but because each was only touching a fragment, mistaking part for whole. Their certainty dissolves—not into ignorance, but into a different kind of knowing. They look at one another now, not as opponents, but as witnesses of different encounters with the same reality.²³

²³ Translated spoken words into text with ChatGPT

2. The Musk Deer (Kasturi Mrig)

A deer smells a beautiful fragrance and searches everywhere—mountains, forests—never realizing the scent comes from within its own navel.

Meaning in Sant Mat: Search outside vs. source within, Naam/Shabd/ Divine is within, not outside.

3. The Mirror Covered in Dust

A mirror cannot reflect clearly because it is covered in dust; once cleaned, it reveals everything as it is.

Meaning in Sant Mat: Mind = dust; Meditation = cleaning. The soul does not need to be created, only revealed.

4. The King on the Seventh Floor

There was once a king who built a vast palace of seven floors. Each level was filled with treasures so magnificent that no visitor could pass through without being captivated. On the first floor, there were markets overflowing with food, fragrance, music, and movement, everything that delighted the senses. People entered and forgot why they had come.

On the second floor, there were chambers of gold and jewels. Wealth shimmered in every direction. Many stayed here, counting, collecting, claiming.

On the third floor, there were halls of power, thrones, titles, and authority. Those who reached here began to rule, believing they had arrived at the highest place.

On the fourth floor, there were libraries of knowledge. Scholars debated, wrote, and read endlessly, convinced that understanding was the final treasure.

On the fifth floor, there were gardens of peace and subtle joy. Those who reached here felt a quiet contentment and chose to remain in stillness.

On the sixth floor, there was light that radiant, immersive, beyond form. Those who entered felt they had reached something divine. Many stopped here, overwhelmed by its beauty.

But above all these floors, unseen by most, was the seventh floor, where the king himself sat, silent, complete, waiting.

Few reached there. Some never knew there was more beyond what they had found. Others were so enchanted by each floor that they chose not to continue. Only those who remembered why they had entered and did not cling to any treasure along the way, kept ascending.

When one finally reached the seventh floor, there were no objects, no distractions, only presence. And there, the king did not give them anything new but gives them his throne, making them all kings. He simply revealed that everything they had passed through was his, but he himself was beyond them all.

Sant Mat describes that truth is singular, but human perception is partial, filtered through mind, senses, and individual experience. What one might need is a understanding rooted in bridging all knowledge as a singular thing however, more on the focus of entering on self in this human form and to witness it unfold within, with the practice of Surat Shabad Yoga²⁴, i.e. meditation.

These spiritual metaphorical narratives are not intended for comparison; rather, they function as contemplative elements, experiential metaphors to be engaged with and reflected upon.

²⁴ Surat Shabd Yoga is a meditative spiritual practice within Sant Mat that focuses on the union of the Surat (attention or soul-consciousness) with the shabd (inner divine sound current), considered the fundamental creative force of existence.

3. The Self: Phenomenology of Perception and Witnessing Self

3.1. Phenomenology, perception and Lived experiences

*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.”*

-Marcel Proust

What is important to know after the discussion and interpretation of Spiritual and Experiential metaphors is that there is a connection to the idea of perception here. Perception is not an external act, but a dynamic process through which experience is received, interpreted, and given meaning, shaped by prior experience, inner states, and levels of awareness, it keeps on growing, and therefore capable of transformations through practices of stillness, attention, inward reflection and witnessing.

Dominantly, in the field of knowledge, empiricism defines knowledge as arising from sensory experience; however, this position invites a critical tension. If knowledge depends on the senses, how reliable are those senses when each individual perceives differently? Sensory perception is not neutral, it is shaped by prior experiences, memory, and conditioning. In this sense, experience informs the way we perceive, while perception simultaneously interprets and constructs experience, creating a circular relationship. Knowledge, then, does not emerge from a

purely objective encounter with the world, but from an ongoing feedback loop in which the senses both receive and are shaped by experience. This suggests a structure where, metaphorically, the head meets the tail.

When talking about experiences, it is highly important to consider the deeper intentions of discovering any kind of knowledge that is being searched or researched. What phenomenology reveals to us is that it is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. (Moran 4-6)

3.2. Witnessing the Self

"Silence is the language of God, All else is poor translation".

- Rumi, 1207-1273

Witnessing begins with the stillness of the self. As Baba Vakil Sahib Ji expresses, unless the water becomes still, the reflection cannot appear clearly; only when its movement ceases does the self-reveal itself. However, before diving into the stillness, it cannot be forgotten what needs to be 'stilled'; This in Sant Mat it is the Mind itself, the most significant thing to be witnessed first and foremost.

The 'unstill' nature of the mind can be understood through this allegory in the book *The Mind and Its Control*-

“To control the mind we must check its proverbial restlessness. In Raja-Yoga Swami Vivekananda describes the restlessness of the mind:

How hard it is to control the mind! Well has it been compared to the maddened monkey. There was a monkey, restless by his own nature, as all monkeys are. As if that were not enough some one made him drink freely of wine, so that he became still more restless. Then a scorpion stung him. When a man is stung by a scorpion he jumps about for a whole day; so the poor monkey found his condition worse than ever. To complete his misery a demon entered into him. What language can describe the uncontrollable restlessness of that monkey? The human mind is like that monkey, incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire, thus increasing its turbulence. After desire takes possession comes the sting of the scorpion of jealousy of the success of others, and last of all the demon of pride enters the mind, making it think itself of all importance. How hard to control such a mind!”

(Budhananda 36)

Vivekananda elaborates through this example that the purer the mind is it will get easier to control and make it still.

So, stillness in this sense, extends beyond physical quiet into a subtler condition of perception, one that may be understood through the interchangeable metaphors of silence, nullness, and a

form of blandness. For understanding this stillness I approach the topic through the intercultural approach where this stillness is seen as bland or what François Jullien, a French philosopher, and sinologist, describes as blandness. Blandness here is not emptiness as lack, but a state of awareness, where perception is no longer driven by events or distractions, but constant stillness.

In this quietness, experience does not disappear but becomes more receptive, allowing what is already present or hidden to emerge as a strong force. Thus, stillness is not an endpoint but a condition of opening, where the self, like a clear reflection, becomes perceptible within the undisturbed field of awareness.

François Jullien gives his response in his book *In Praise of Blandness*. With its possibility of infinite variation, blandness renews and varies throughout Chinese cultural history and has never been limited. Jullien also writes about The Silent Transformation (*Les Transformations Silencieuses*), in which silencing is not a Western-style dramatization of events with various revolutions, but a process of slow, ordinary, natural, repose, silence, relaxation, and opening, with no lack of inherent tension (Jullien 2011, 126)

Additionally, the combination of silence and blandness forms the aesthetic judgment and cultivation model of Chinese literati, as well as the concept of creation. So, blandness in the literal sense comes from a taste. It is a light taste, and almost tasteless, or a taste without taste.

‘Without’, here also has the meaning of ‘outside’. But what is a taste without the five tastes? A strange logical paradox emerges. (Jullien 2004, 50)

Also seen, Blandness at first glance appears to be the most banal, too ordinary, and too dull to be remarkable, yet this characteristic offers the richest and most varied variations. This makes it capable of the most far-reaching development: its meaning never ends and is closed; it stays open and available. A relevant verse is from Su Shi [蘇軾] (1037–1101)’s Song Canliao Shi

‘To make the poetic language wonderful, one must not be tired of emptiness and stillness. Quietness is the reason for the movement of the group, emptiness is the reason for the acceptance of all realms. To read the world and walk on earth, to see the body lying in the clouds. The salty and sour mixed with all the good, there is the best taste forever.’

This poem of Su Shi pinpoints that the highest state of life is the supreme taste, which requires such an effort: ‘Quiet so as to get rid of the mass movement, empty so as to take in the ten thousand realms’. Only in silence is it possible to understand movement, and in emptiness to accept the infinite world.

In this sense, the condition Su Shi describes, of quietness that clarifies movement and emptiness that receives the ten thousand realms, finds a resonant parallel in Sant Mat. Stillness is not merely an aesthetic or poetic state, but a disciplined inward turning of attention, where the

fluctuations of mind are gradually stilled through meditation. This stilling produces a quality akin to what Jullien calls blandness: a de-intensified, non-reactive field of awareness in which perception is no longer grasping, judging, or fragmenting experience. Within Sant Mat, this shift is cultivated through the practice of directing the Surat (awareness) inward, allowing the practitioner to move from identification with thoughts and sensations toward a position of witnessing. In this state, one does not seek extraordinary visions, but rather arrives at a subtle clarity where the self becomes perceptible without distortion, like a reflection in undisturbed water. Thus, stillness, blandness, and silence converge as conditions that transform perception, enabling the practitioner to become not the participant entangled in movement, but the witness in whom all movement is seen. Inner stillness in meditation can be understood through this paradox: “it is not bland, but the extremity of luminous splendour.” What looks simple or quiet from outside carries an inner brightness.

In Art, when talking about meditative spaces like the one created in the exhibition, one prominent aspect on this route in my observation is the presence of Silence, darkness and unknown within the works. This is an intentional environment where element work together to draw the spectator into a state of contemplation, slight revelation, and a moment of complete stillness. In this stillness the mind can become suspended from the world it creates to observing itself and witness itself in stillness.

4. From Material Research to Introspective Spaces (Thesis Exhibition)

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

ਤਿਸ ਦੇ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

Amongst all is the Light, You are that Light.

By this Illumination, that Light is radiant within all.

-Guru Nanak Dev ji, Page 13, Line 5, Guru Granth Sahib



Figure 8 Artist note, Poem and Quote from Gurbani (Sikh Spiritual Scripture) on the wall for thesis exhibition

4.1. Abstraction as Language and Intuition as guide

Since my Bachelor's in Fine Arts (Painting), my expressive artistic language has been abstraction, it has been a medium of me to discover the Unknow I believe I have within myself and the world. It is driven by the growing and constantly evolving Nature of Intuition within. My mentor, Mohan Singh, guided me in the direction where abstraction and spirituality are considered like a singular force. However, it is a lifetime of journey to explore this terrain, but in my own experiences, I am clear about the fact that one affects the other and help each other grow and nurture within me. Abstraction is not just an expressive language but my own contemplative meditative field of inquire and answers.

According to Jennifer Fisher, in her book *Technologies of Intuition*, the term, "Intuition", while commonly used by artists, has been marginalized within art history and criticism. Whether sensed as a gut feeling or a flash of insight, intuition is central to processes of "coming to know" in aesthetic practice and experience. She continues saying that intuition is always contradictory and paradoxical, entailing the simultaneity of faith and suspicion, openness, and scepticism. Intuition adopted from *tuition*, "tuition", meaning "protection", "guardian" and "tutor", as one who guides another. Also derived from *intueri*, meaning "to look within," intuition in my art functions as an inner guidance. It moves with a kind of faith toward the unknown parts of myself, allowing them to surface as mindscapes.²⁵ These forms are then offered to the viewer as phenomenological spaces.

²⁵ Experientially turning inwards before conceptualizing outward impact.

This way Phenomenological *intuition* opens viewers to inner-lived-experience. Intuition becomes the originating impulse, but phenomenological seeing unfolds in an encounter, when the viewer can experience the artwork as a lived, perceptual event.



Figure 9 Drawings: Black Obscures and Deep Awakenings



Figure 10 *Black Obscures*, Charcoal on board, 32" x 40" Inches, 2026



Figure 11 *Deep Awakenings*, Charcoal on board, 32" x 40" Inches (triptych), 2026



Figure 12 Tavleen Lall, Artist with her Painting from thesis exhibition

Untitled (Centric Black-II) -DI & DII

Acrylic On Canvas

6.7' x 12.2' Feet (Diptych)

2026

This work articulates an introspective architecture of inner mindscapes, reconstructing darkness not as absence but as a field of layered ambiguity and revelation. Through a deliberately restrained colour palette, the work engages darkness as a space that simultaneously conceals and discloses, holding within it a quiet tension between opacity and emergence. The shift toward darker tonalities and black reflects an ongoing inquiry within my practice, an inward turn where

darkness is no longer positioned as a site of fear, but rather as an exploratory terrain of the unknown, inviting sustained contemplation and discovery.

The painting is scaled in relation to the human body, a Liminal Being, as a central element, a columnar form that bridges the two canvases. This form, scaled to my body, draws from the



Figure 13 Lisa Palying her sound bowls and instruments in the Thesis Exhibition Opening (Photo Credit: Yifan Wang)

perceptual strategies found in Josef Albers' *Impossibles* (1931)²⁶ particularly in its engagement with visual perception and spatial ambiguity. By invoking such formal logic, the work situates itself within a lineage of perceptual abstraction while extending it into a more contemplative, experiential register. The viewer is invited to navigate an abstract field that resists immediate resolution, encouraging a slower, embodied engagement within the exhibition space.

The emergent light forms within the painting enter into a dialogue with the projection-mapped elements situated elsewhere in the gallery. This interplay establishes a spatial and conceptual continuity, where light operates as both a material and metaphorical presence, extending the work beyond the surface of the canvas into an expanded field of perception.

²⁶ Albers, Josef. *Impossibles*. 1931. *WikiArt*, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/josef-albers/impossibles-1931>



Figure 14 Tavleen Lall, *Untitled (Centric Black-II) -DI, DII*, Acrylic On Canvas, 6.7" x12.2" Inches (Diptych), 2026

4.2. Glass, Stone, Copper and Plexi-glass

The world is a looking glass and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face.

-William Makepeace Thackeray

Doing glassblowing was a dance I did not expect – a medium that captured my physical presence whilst I make efforts to shape it with my mind. Metaphorically, it reminds me of life lived, the immediacy of my every movement imprinted on moving glass on the end of the blowpipe, likewise mind imprints on the reality and vice versa. The journey of origin of glass to the art piece in hand is very interesting and satisfying event. Glass is produced by mixing silica sand, soda ash, and limestone at high temperature of 1650 degrees Celsius. Discovered, by mistake, in Egypt in 300 BC glass is one of the most functional materials in the world and has abundant uses.

Koen Vanderstukken, Artist, and studio head of Glass at Sheridan college, writes about the artistic and philosophical values of glass in the contemporary art world. In an interview with Kathy Kranias, Vanderstukken talks about the complexities of glass and how it is one medium that suddenly became popular after the 1960s, believing that it was inaccessible to artist amongst other mediums-

I think in most other craft disciplines there is a much longer tradition of craftspeople working together with artists, where artists used craft media, if you can even say it like that - I think it's foolish to make that distinction that way, but there were plenty of artists

that worked with clay, for instance. Whether they baked it or not, or whether it was just a starting point to cast bronze, I think is not relevant. They were working with the medium, as such. And I'm sure that several others worked with skilled craftspeople that would make the sculptures for them. The same goes for stone carving, which has been done for hundreds of years, where artists worked together with craftspeople. I think glass was one of the last media where this happened. The reason, which I mentioned in the beginning of the book, was because glass was much more complex than most other media. Especially the aspects of hot glass. Also, it was very inaccessible because it was done in production-type, industrial situations. Except for engraving and other decoration techniques, which could be done at home in studios. (Vanderstukken)

Marcel Duchamp was the one of first artists to use glass in a totally new way, conceptually not just materially, for its intrinsic qualities. Phenomenologically, glass can be perceived as more than a physical form. When light passes through it, it extends beyond its boundaries, refracting and reflecting in multiple directions. It activates the surrounding space, expanding its presence beyond its material edges. Metaphorically, this quality suggests the mind and its projections, sourced by the soul's light, reflecting, and refracting its energy to generate the expansive world we experience. It is for this reason that I moved my installation materials from Plexi-glass to glass, but really because I could be present for the birth of these glass pieces.

This way, Glass, within my creative inquiry, emerged as a key material for embodying the spiritual metaphor of the human form. The intensive process of forming glass from molten sand

at temperatures exceeding 1000 degrees (molten silica and other components) resonated with spiritual discourses describing the formation of the human body within the womb shaped under conditions of intensity and influenced by the imprints of karma and past actions.

Through this process, I began to recognize that, much like my paintings, the making of glass involves a parallel yet more materially embedded form of imprinting, where physical gestures and transformations become integral to the work itself.

These works ahead in glass are embodying my presence as a human in motion, making, breath and form, but more importantly they are vessels of metaphorical introspection and when illuminated with light turns in to the metaphorical vessel of human form, as Chakras, as boats, or as immaterial elements within.



Figure 17 Viewer in the exhibiton space

Inner Odyssey

Material: Installation with 11 hanging glass blown pieces, copper wire, Projection-mapped animation (looped)

Dimension: site specific

Duration: 00:05:57

Year: 2025-2026

Description and Conceptual Note: 7 physical body chakras ascending towards spiritual regions/realms, directing towards the journey of soul through human form towards god realization, according to Sant Mat.



Figure 18 shot from the exhibition installation 'Inner Odessey'

Drawing from the Sant Mat, The Indian yogi Huzur Swamiji Maharaj (Seth Shiv Dayal Singh) (1818-1878) drew from Tantric, Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi traditions and has talked about Spiritual Path through this body towards Higher spiritual realms from where our soul belongs.

Based on their teachings that echoes in many Indian traditions, I created these glass works, the hanging installation and the projected animations to show the human body as a 'Liminal bridge' that is between the Physical and the Divine.

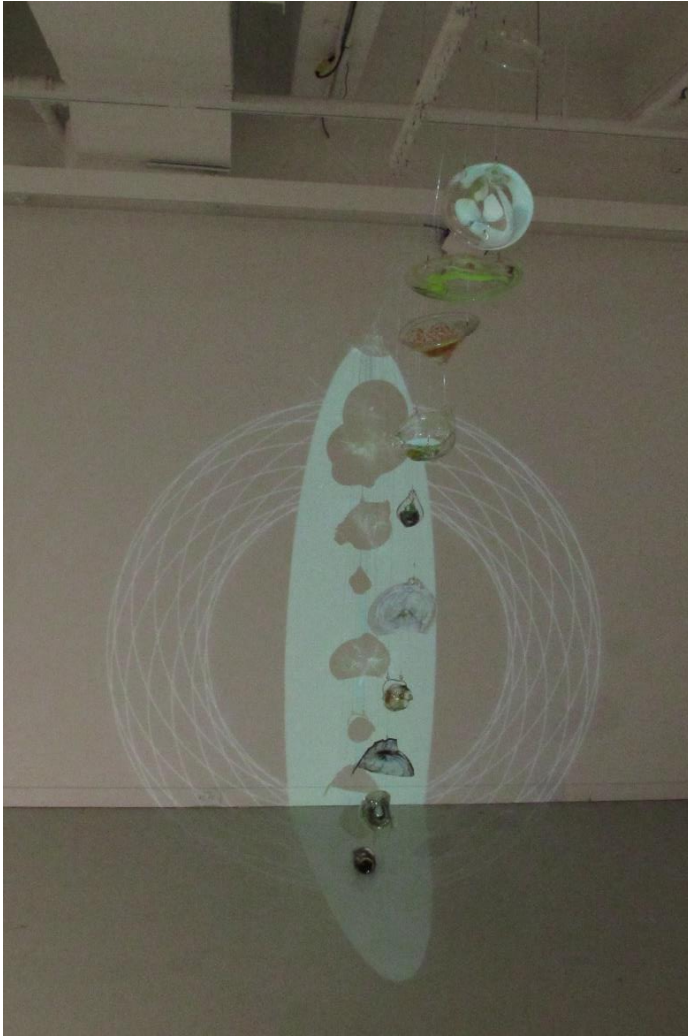


Figure 19 Clip of the animation Projected on 'Inner Odyssey'-1

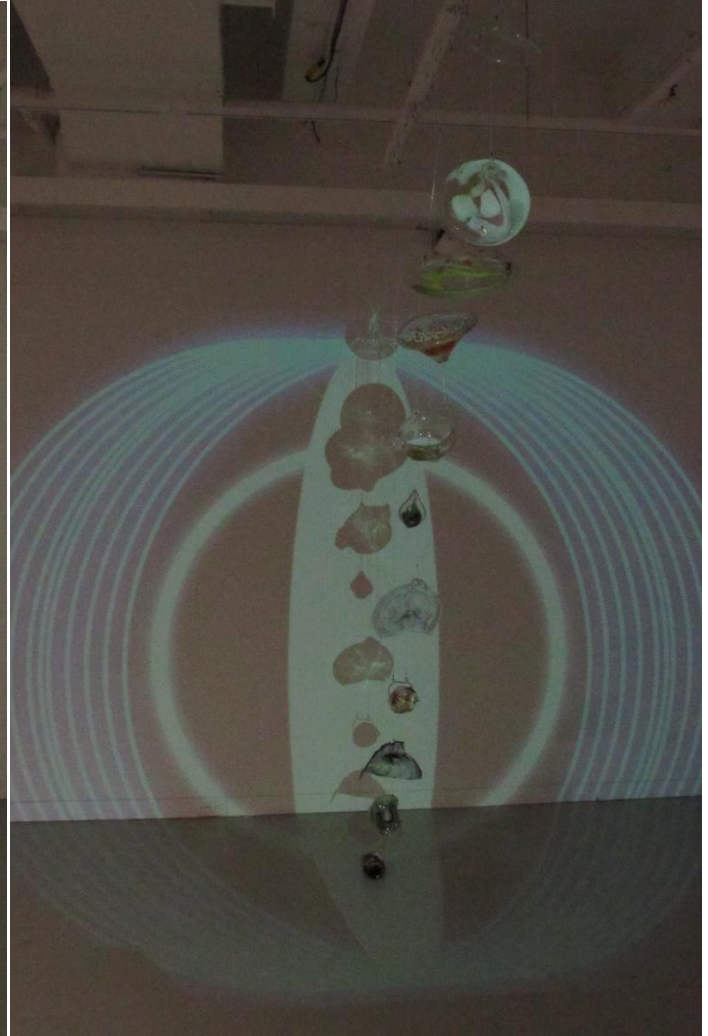


Figure 20 Clip of the animation Projected on 'Inner Odyssey'-2

Huzur Swamiji taught that there were six lower worlds, associated with the six lower chakras, and six higher, the lowest of which was associated with the crown chakra, the material and lower spiritual universe, called Pinda, "body"; the higher ones, each associated with a divine melody or



Figure 21 Sant Mat description of Chakras and spiritual realms through my installation

vibration (shabda or nada [or inner current]), were the higher spiritual worlds, the worlds of Universal Mind (Brahmandi). Each world is a heavenly region, ruled over by a particular god. And each world appears to be the highest, until one goes beyond it to the next world. By attuning oneself to the vibrations of the higher or "heavenly" worlds, one can ascend through the various planes, until one reaches the level of God, beyond all the worlds.

This installation carries the essence of the spiritual metaphors explored throughout this thesis, where the glass works represent the body chakras. They reveal the inner architecture of these energy centres, wherein the soul, the eternal light (projected light), travels through these pieces (chakras) and falls onto the wall.²⁷

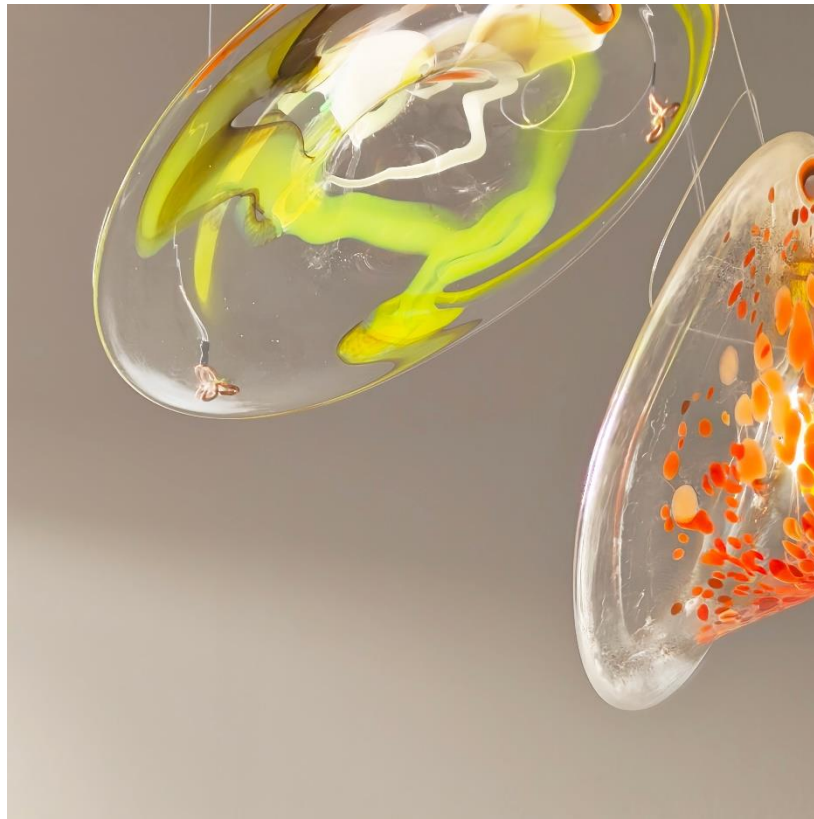


Figure 22 Close-up of Glass works

²⁷ While in the process of making it, it reminded me of the Allegory of the Caves by Plato

A subtle but crucial element is the reflection and refraction of light passing through these glass pieces. Some are distinctly visible, while others are scattered through the glass due to its reflective nature. These act as metaphors for the mind, which uses the source light to distort and scatter energy across the human body and beyond.

In contrast to this nature of the mind, I created a metaphor for the spiritual realm that ascends upward from the crown chakra towards the spiritual realms or regions as described in Sant Mat.

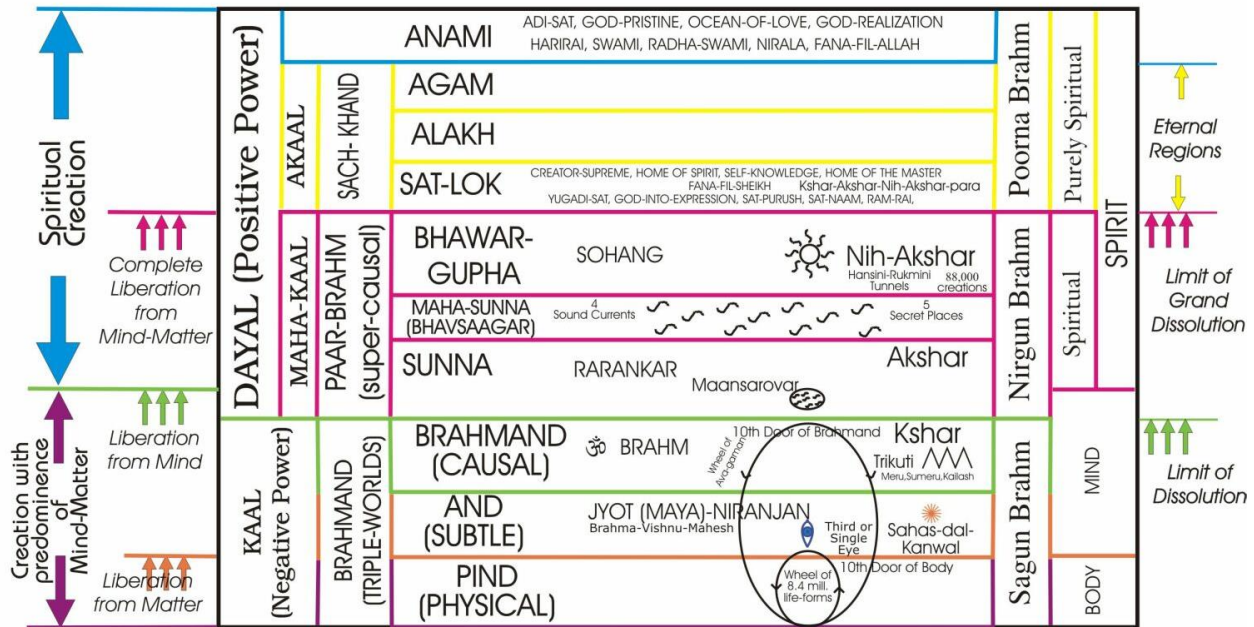


Figure 23 The creation according to Sant Mat



Figure 24 जड़-चेतन , (“Jad–Chetan”) Stone sculpture and glass Installation

जड़-चेतन , (“Jad–Chetan”)

Medium: Italian Alabaster Stone, Glass, Dual-Projection-Mapped Animations (Looped)

Dimension: Height 15” x Width 11.5” x Depth 8” inches.

Year: 2025-26

This work is a metaphor for a subtle knot at the seat of the third eye, between the material body and the immaterial soul-consciousness, as described in Sant Mat. The projected light at the interaction of the glass and stone is red to show the heat of that bond. The animated light follows the colours of the seven chakras and eventually turns white, after which the animation loops back to the beginning.



Figure 25 close-up to stone carving-1



Figure 27 close-up to stone carving-2

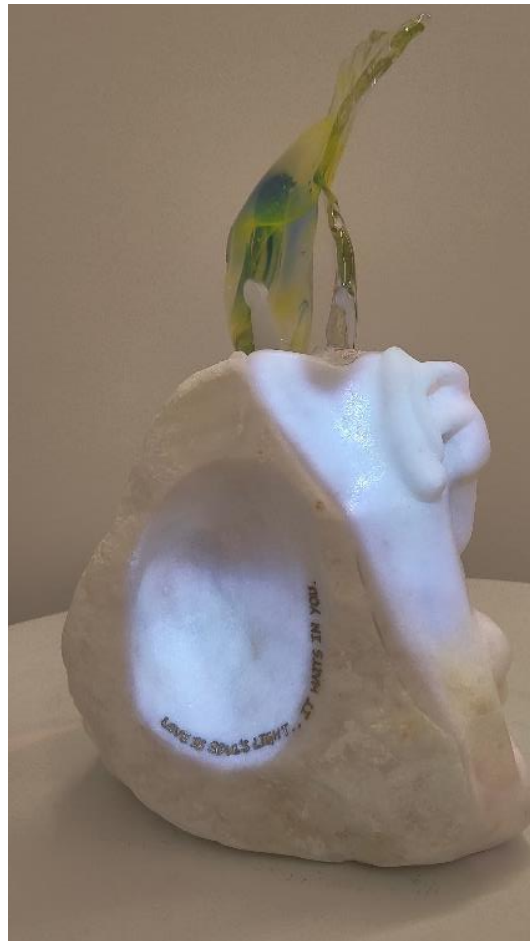


Figure 26 close-up to stone carving: 'Love is soul's light, It waits within you.'

It represents light as a metaphorical element of the soul entering the immaterial realm (glass here) into the material form of stone. The stone, Italian alabaster, is considered a good carrier of light. The back of the stone is carved out into a hole from two adjacent sides, leaving only a small amount of stone in between. The light projects from the left projector, illuminating that hole, and can be seen on the other side. A subtle element of this piece is that it resonates with the idea of the mind as a veil, through which light seeps, suggesting a hope of light on the other side.

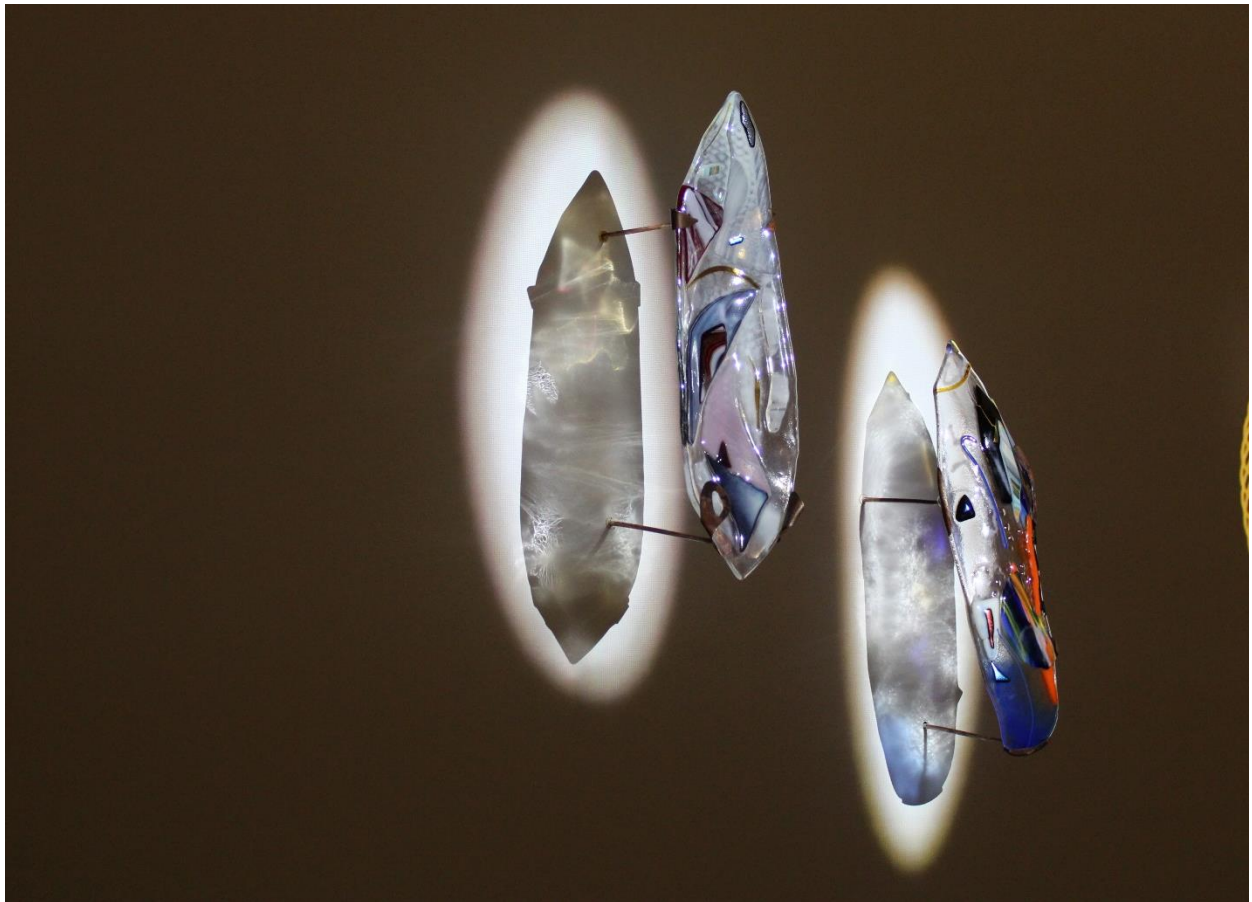


Figure 28 Still from the installation 'Companion Seekers'

Companion Seekers

Medium: Glass with Projection-Mapped Animations (looped)

Dimensions: 17" x 14" Inches

Year: 2025-26

This work embodies the parallel journeys of two companions, moving in sync with each other's auras and energies. It reflects a shared growth between two closely connected beings, mentor and student, mother and daughter, partners, or husband and wife. Spiritually, it speaks to following a guide, trusting both oneself and the other, and finding a sense of union through that connection. The animations respond to this idea of alignment distinct in form yet sharing the same light and originating from the same source.

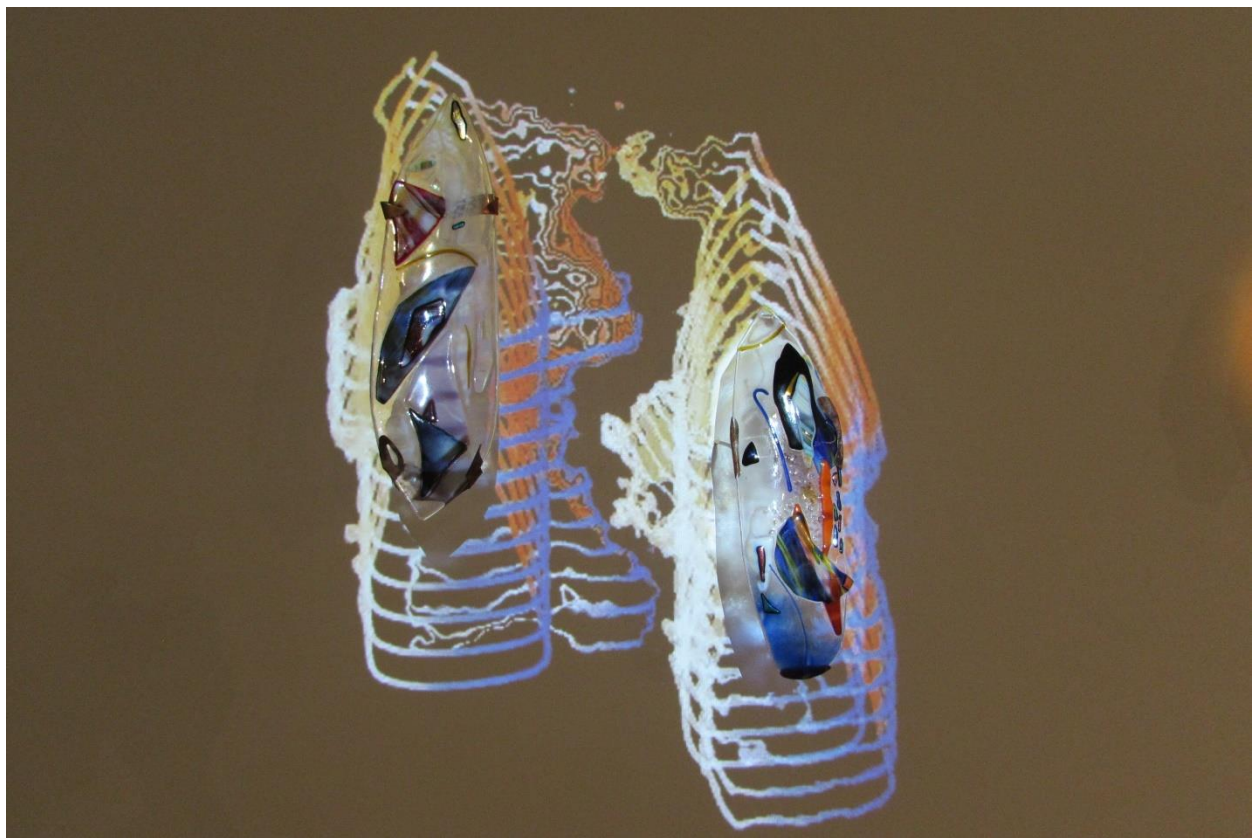


Figure 29 Still animation projected on the glassworks

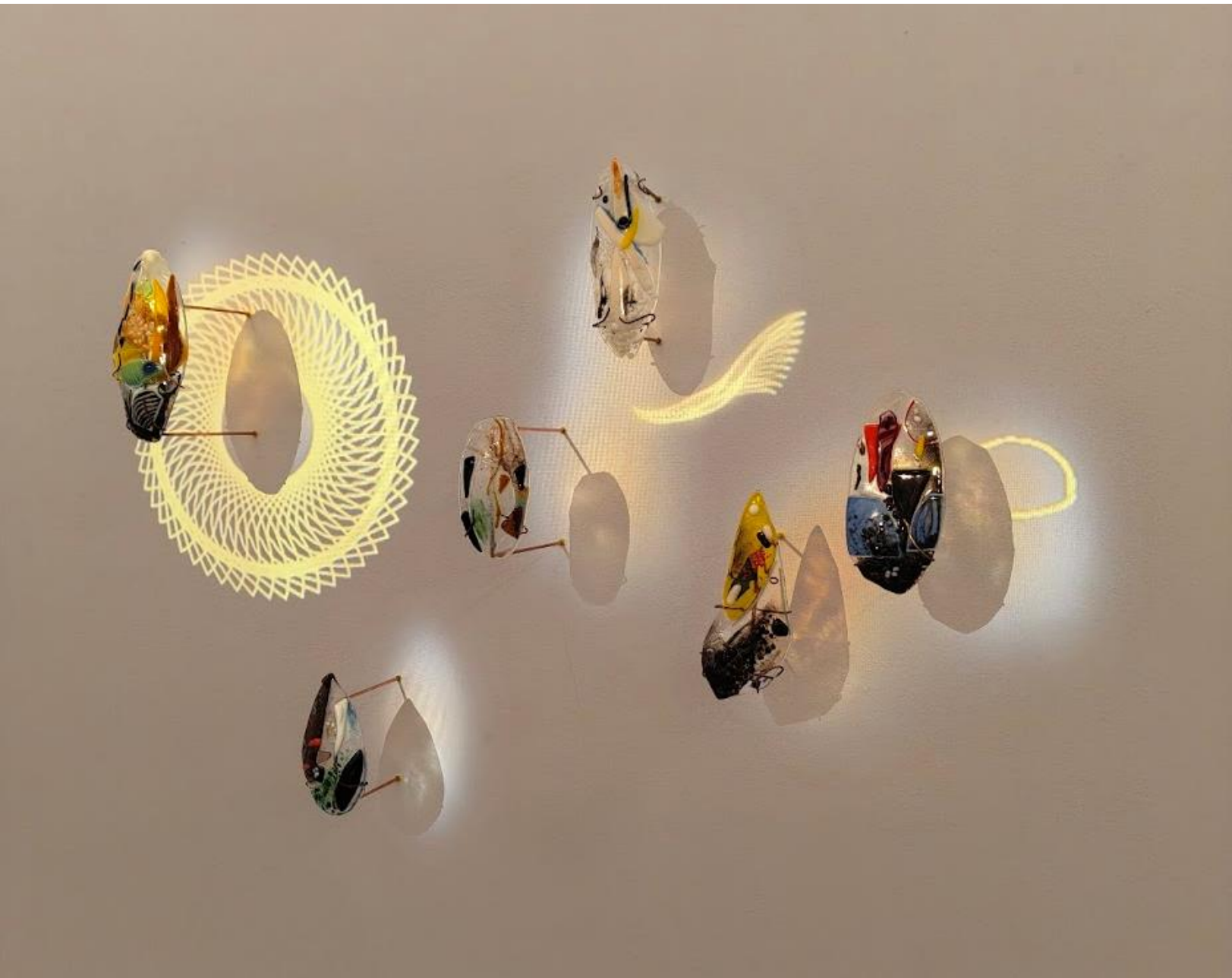


Figure 30 Still from Eternal Passengers (I-IV)

Eternal Passengers (I-IV)

Medium: Glass with Projection-Mapped Animations (looped)

Dimensions: 33" x 23" Inches

Year: 2025-26



Figure 32 Beginning animation for the glassworks installtion 'Companion Seekers'



Figure 31 Close of Glass-fusion Pieces in copper frame

This work presents six fused glass forms, each suggesting distinct entities or human figures with varied expressions, internal colours, and material compositions. Despite these differences, each form carries the same inner light. Through subtle animation, the piece reveals a spiritual narrative of unity, suggesting that all beings remain fundamentally alike in the presence of the divine.



Figure 33 Plexi-glass Installation 'Resonance of the Unstruck'

Resonance of the Unstruck

Medium: Plexi-glass with Projection-Mapped Animations (looped), Sound by Lisa boon

(Mississauga Sound Therapy)

Dimensions: 48” x 17” Inches

Year: 2026

This work is compositionally and conceptually shaped to resonate with the human form—grounded and dense at the base with a sense of gravity, while the upper portion gradually dissolves and ascends, suggesting a movement toward union with the divine light. The sound element, a one-minute recording of Lisa Boon’s crystal bowl, is integrated into the piece, with the animation responding to the sound and projection-mapped onto the forms. The end is the awake where the light travels down, turning from morning warmth into bright white.

Extending this embodied spirituality, the work traces a journey through the human body and beyond.

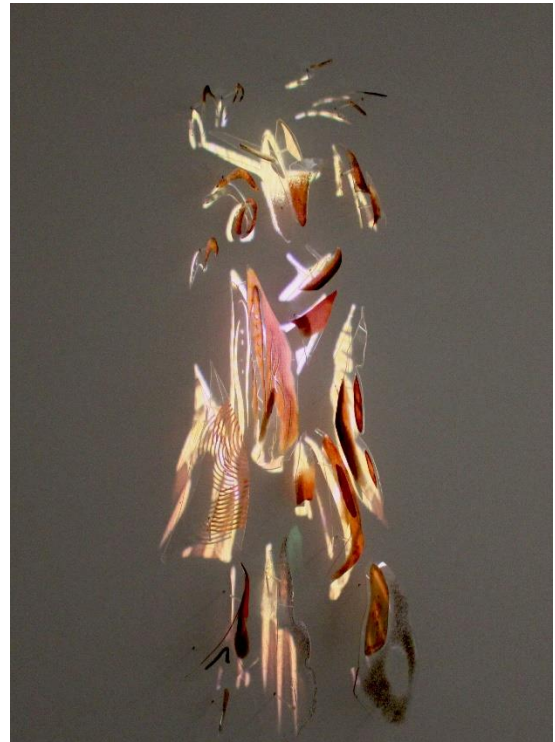


Figure 34. Still from Animation on the installation



Figure 35 Close-up from Animation on the installation



*Figure 36 Still from the projection-mapped animation work 'Resonance of the Unstruck', Thesis Exhibition:
Vessels of Light: Introspective Architectures*

4.3. Light and Projection-Mapped Animations

The use of light in my practice began with an observation of how sunlight enters a space and gradually illuminates its surroundings. Within contemporary art discourse, this engagement with light can be situated in relation to earlier and later developments in light-based practices. The work of **Thomas Wilfred**, particularly his concept of “Lumia,”²⁸ marks an important early moment in which light was treated as a medium in itself rather than as a means of illumination. Working in the early twentieth century, Wilfred developed projected, time-based compositions that foregrounded light, color, and motion as autonomous elements.

This trajectory of light material medium continues in contemporary practices such as those of **Olafur Eliasson** and **James Turrell**, where light operates as a perceptual and spatial phenomenon. Eliasson’s environments heighten the viewer’s bodily awareness within constructed atmospheres, while Turrell’s installations focus on the act of seeing itself, often dissolving the boundary between light and space.

In a similar yet distinct way, my practice engages light as an active, temporal material as something that moves, shifts, and unfolds through projection-mapped environments.

However, where Wilfred’s work emphasizes light as a perceptual phenomenon, Eliasson foregrounds embodied experience, and Turrell isolates the conditions of vision, my approach

²⁸ “Lumia: Thomas Wilfred and the Art of Light.” Smithsonian American Art Museum, <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/lumia>.

moves toward an inward, contemplative reading of light, positioning it as a metaphorical and experiential conduit for spiritual introspection. In my work, light becomes a metaphor for the soul, and as it travels through glass and other materials, it carries both a sensory and symbolic presence. The Light the passes through these transparent glass forms metaphorically “re-embodies” by mind, shaping, re-shaping and scattering the source light. This light projection mapping is an integral part of my making for the glass and plexiglass forms. It comes from the idea of embodiment, i.e., the soul embodying a human form. It also acts as a second layer of light in a narrative role, showing the journey of the soul and the presence it has within the body. It reveals, through its animations, the colours of chakras, and the metaphors of the human body as a boat/a vessel travelling upwards. Its scale changes for the experiential and immersive effect of light on the viewers (especially in Inner Odyssey). The mapping traces this projected light onto the form, either the glass or stone of plexiglass, illuminating it, giving it life just like we as humans are living, breathing architectures of divine power.



Figure 38 Everything we know about knowing and a rough estimate of what we still don't know that we don't know, 2025, 2025



Figure 38 Figure 13 Everything we know about knowing and a rough estimate of what we still don't know that we don't know, 2025, 2025

The light for this thesis is one of the most crucial narrators of these spiritual tales. In my making, I realized the whole process of painting and visualizing was transferred into the making of these 2-D animations. They are intuitive and fall into a responsive state of what will happen next, one frame after another, in doing so everything I created for the thesis exhibition is driven by same source of inspiration. Though they have different forms, language, and visual perceptions but with the hope that all unite as one single body.

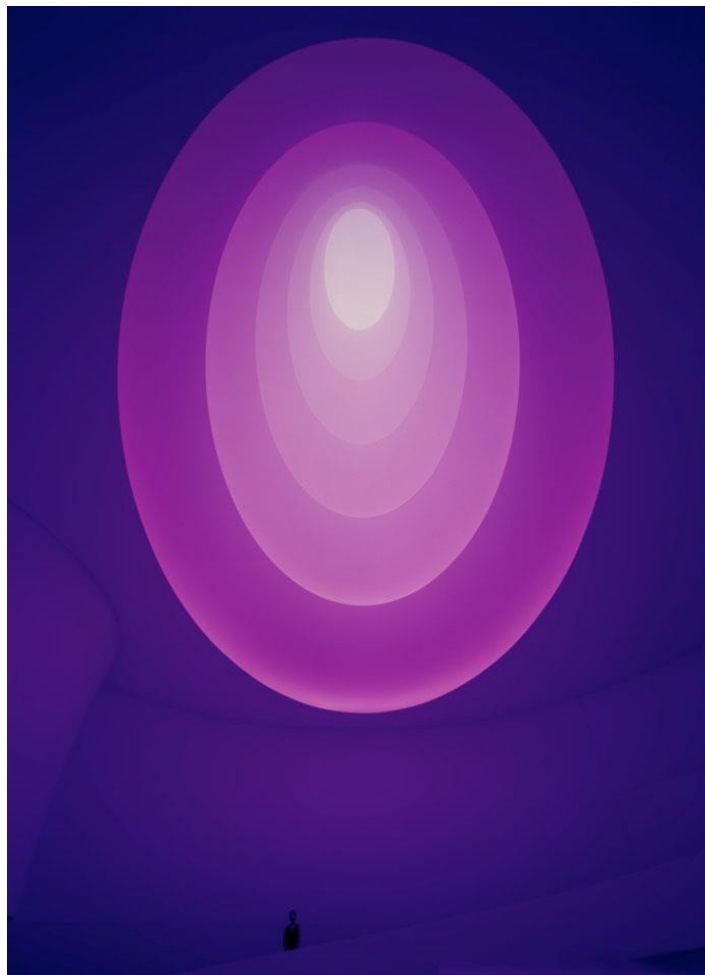


Figure 39 Guggenheim Museum. James Turrell, Aten Reign 2013

4.4. Sound Bath Experience - Unstruck inner Sound

Sound here is an eternal call within us, the Anhaad Naad, as describe in Gurbani, is the celestial cosmic sound coming from beyond Brahmamand (the world of illusion) just like the ray of light within human form.



Figure 40 Lisa Boon, from Mississauga Sound Therapy, Playing for the opening reception in dialogue with the installations. (Photo Credit: Yifan Wang)

As I understood the value of sound in spirituality and as described in deep meditation by saints, I wanted to enact that environment to elevate the senses of experiencing the exhibition space. So, with the support of **Lisa Boon**, from **Mississauga Sound Therapy**²⁹, I was able to bring it within dialogue with the animations. The Sound produced here is has an hymnic frequency, that relates to the slow animations and the stillness I wanted to spread through the

²⁹ “Lisa Boon – Mississauga Sound Therapy.” Sound Journey Store



Figure 41 Set-up by Lisa Boon for her performance at the thesis opening

space. Attending Lisa's sound and Forest bath in Mississauga Forest, stayed with me and drew me to unite these forms of expression, directing towards similar inner-journey, if not the same.



Figure 42 Lisa Responding to the slow animations on the Glassworks

This creates a bridge that became a metaphor for those spiritual messages. So, it is not an ambient element at all, it is a catalyst and aural space that calls you within while the experience of animation on the works and immersion in the abstract paintings all unite at the intersection of Liminality, where known is dissolved and unknown spiritual is witnessed phenomenologically.

In retrospect after my exhibition, the exhibition is an invitation to witness the self within. A paradoxical element in the exhibition is the Poem, 'Witness, Within' that invited viewers to enter the spaces with no borders created in the outside world, no names of any conceptual structures and no skin that holds us in the human form. The Poem:

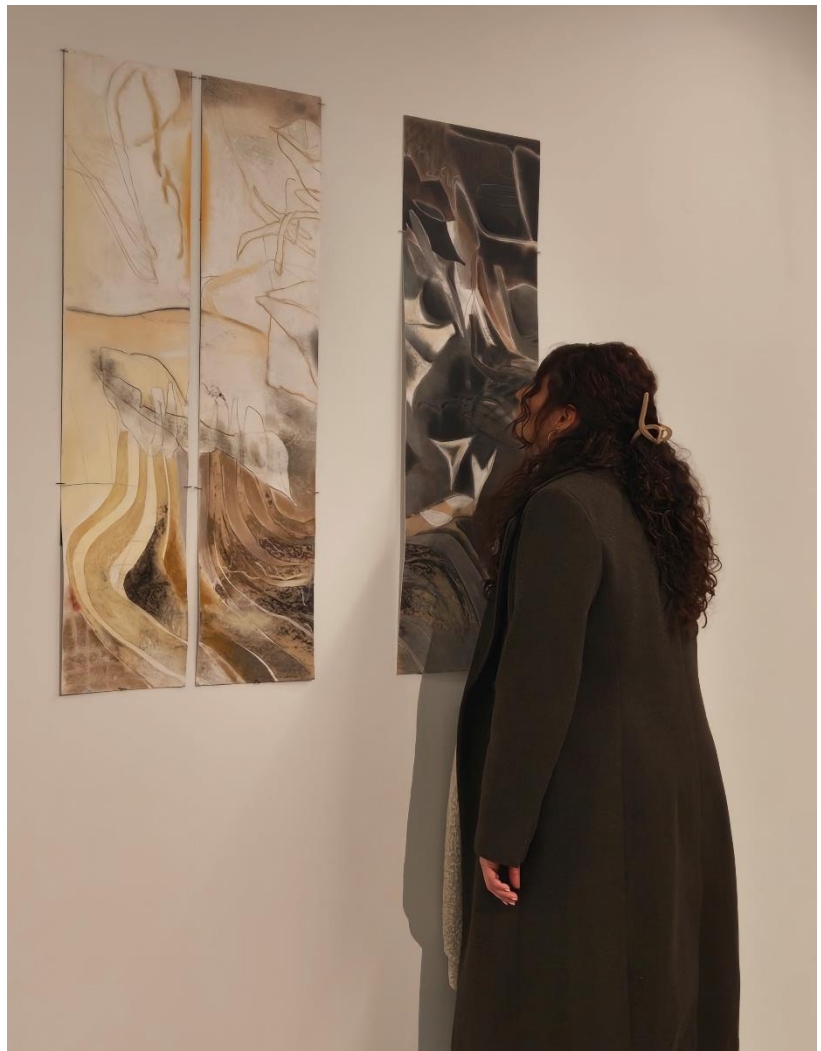


Figure 43 A viewer looking at the drawings

WITNESS. WITHIN.

Stay still.

This experience offers

a way to enter

without your skin.

In a moment of stillness.

Step into your own worlds.

And stay.

When you see past the chaos,

really see.

you may witness

what you share

with the being beside you.

No borders.

No names.

No skin.

we are inside

a vessel of sand

carved out by our beingness,

playing roles.

Roles

as metaphorical reminders,

each one ending

in a question,

who am I?

Keeping the search

alive,

we face this darkness

haunting us

in absence

of bright light.

so, let us

step in,

without feet.

Listen.

without ears.

Witness it all

without borders,

without names,

without skin.

Witness.

Within.



Figure 44 Exhibition Display-1



Figure 45 Viewers looking at the glassworks (Photo Credit: Yifan Wang)



Figure 46 Viewers in introspection



Figure 47 Lisa's Crystal Sound bowls with the Animation and glassworks in the background

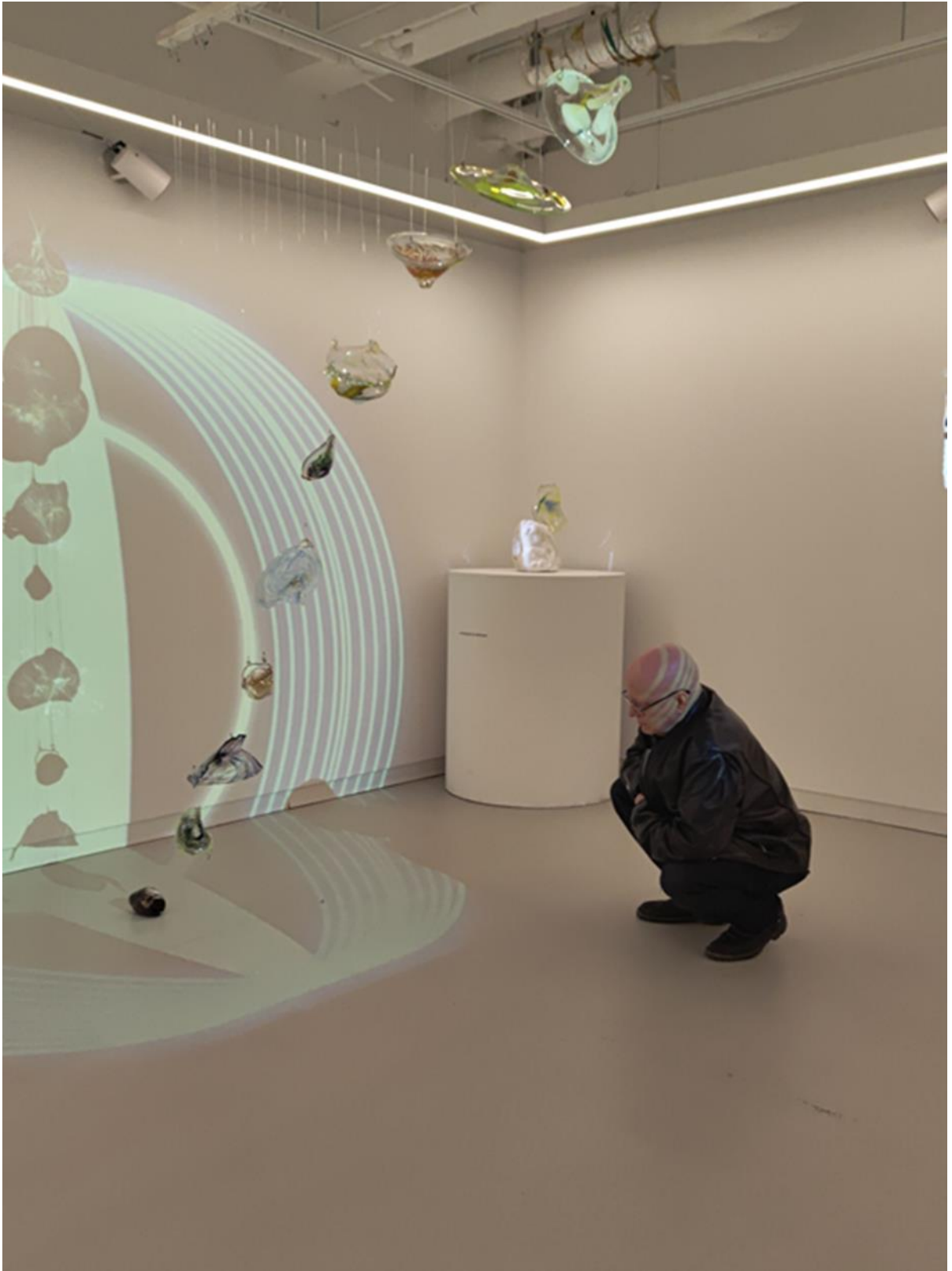


Figure 48 Viewers observing the installation 'inner odyssey'

Project Documentation Archival

Digital catalogue - <https://tavleenlall.craft.me/VesselsOfLight>

Projection-mapped animation installations (Links)

- Inner Odessey -
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FPx44bjMyxhCDkyDKptVs7Z35QfzFG-D/view?usp=drive_link
- “Jad–Chetan” (जड़–चेतन) -
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WtxdoMTgXy4L2ApJ5raebs-MySnGd9Zv/view?usp=drive_link
- Companion Seekers -
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nm0NBjgFR1is1qYbEsYWQmOl_AljwStx/view?usp=drive_link
- Eternal Passengers (I-IV) - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EzEkcjYe-r_N6NOcIhy85e50rtRjL0p1/view?usp=drive_link
- Resonance of the Unstruck -
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MUH_BD5jLTbbB13t6g3JiDcf_kgqYa5D/view?usp=drive_link
- Sound Performance by Lisa Boon, Mississauga Sound Therapy -
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12LmWPOaoQhbwy1XB63_00XA59FfV4Xxb/view?usp=drive_link

Conclusion

In reflecting through this interdisciplinary research and practice, what remains most present to me is not a fixed conclusion but an ongoing unfolding of inner inquiry, explored through abstraction, spiritual introspection, and embodied experience as a liminal being. Throughout this process, which was and continues to be deeply layered, I have come to understand that the ‘human condition’ cannot be held within a single system of knowledge, whether scientific, philosophical, or even spiritual, unless the scope of exploration widens to embody a phenomenologically driven inner-lived experience and a reforming of perception that allows us to see what this life is beyond the physical lived experience. Rather, it exists in the in-between, in a liminal state that is constantly shifting, asking, and becoming. It recalls that human life is limited and fragile but immensely precious vessel with the whole existence with this being as discussed in the chapters of this thesis. Questions like *Who Am I? Where do I come from? What Am I doing here?* are presented. My practice, in this sense, does attempt to explore these questions through spiritual metaphoric artworks, but more so endeavor to hold space for them in a spiritually directed contemplative space.

In this context, the works produced through this research do not function as experiential environments that foreground perception of self as a site of inquiry. Through the integration of abstraction, light, glass, and sound, the practice operates as a mode of translating spiritual metaphors into phenomenological encounters.

The body, conceptualized as a vessel, is simultaneously the subject and locus of investigation, while light is employed as a material-metaphorical agent suggestive of inner consciousness that both inhabits and exceeds physical form. This relationship is materially

and spatially articulated in works such as *Inner Odyssey*, where suspended glass forms and projection-mapped light trace an ascending movement through the body's inner architecture, positioning the human form as a transitional bridge between physical and spiritual realms. Similarly, in *Companion Seekers* and *Eternal Passengers*, the interaction of light through layered materials evokes the mind as a permeable veil, allowing glimpses of illumination to emerge through density and obstruction. Across these works, especially in *जड़-चेतन (Jad-Chetan)*, the dynamic interplay between material density and immaterial luminosity reflects the dual condition of human existence, situated between embodiment and transcendence.

These installations, in this regard, may be seen as operating as liminal thresholds, where habitual modes of empirical perception are subtly altered, allowing for a more introspective engagement. In *Inner Odyssey*, the vertical sequencing of glass elements and light progression constructs a phenomenological pathway that mirrors the inward spiritual ascent described within Sant Mat teachings, while *Eternal Passengers* introduces a relational dimension, where dual forms exist in parallel yet remain connected through shared illumination. While, on the similar plane, *Abstraction through drawings (Black Obscures and Deep Awakenings)* and the diptych painting (*Untitled (Centric Black II)-DI&II*) reveals what these liminal states of beingness can be, inviting for stepping into these immaterial thresholds. Sound, as an inner calling is infused into the work, *Resonance of the Unstruck* carries the deep connection of Eternal Light and Eternal Inner Sound, *Anhaad Naad*, within. Rather than directing interpretation toward fixed meaning, these environments cultivate a space of attentiveness in which the viewer becomes aware of their own perceptual and existential positioning. Such an approach resonates with phenomenological frameworks that prioritize inner lived experience and self-awareness, while also corresponding with spiritual

discourses that situate knowledge within disciplined inner practice, emphasizing inward realization over external validation.

What emerges as significant through this interdisciplinary inquiry is not the resolution of existential questioning, but the sustained capacity to inhabit such questions as an ongoing condition of being that can reform your perception of self-alongside others. The inquiries themselves, concerning origin, purpose, and existence are not treated as problems to be solved, but as generative structures that sustain reflective consciousness. In this sense, the practice resists definitive conclusions and instead proposes a contemplative framework in which meaning remains open, fluid, and continuously negotiated.

Ultimately, this research positions abstraction, when situated within spiritual metaphor and phenomenological inquiry, as a critical bridge between the material and immaterial, the visible and the invisible, and the embodied and the transcendent. It is within this intersectional space that the human being may be understood as fundamentally liminal, continuously within a negotiating state of becoming, perception, and inner awareness for their True Self. The works thus operate not as representations of spiritual knowledge, but as conditions through which such knowledge may be experientially approached, sensed, and momentarily witnessed.

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