

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Way of the Wizard

Deepak Chopra

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ABOUT THE BOOK

In *The Way of the Wizard*, Deepak Chopra sheds light on 20 life-enhancing principles for rediscovering the magic that we have lost, but that remains within our grasp. The result, in effect, is a practical and accessible guide to one of life's shortest but most rewarding journeys: the one into the realm of boundless possibilities that exist within and all around us.

The Way of the Wizard is a natural outgrowth of Dr Chopra's work on the themes and metaphysics of the medieval Merlin myth and a development of his work on the philosophy and application of magic. *The Way of the Wizard* is for the seeker in all of us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deepak Chopra is the author of fifteen books and more than thirty audio- and videotape series, including the critically acclaimed public television show *Body, Mind and Soul: The Magic and the Mystery* and the forthcoming public television special based on this book. His works have been translated into twenty-five languages.

Also by Deepak Chopra

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Return of the Rishi
Quantum Healing
Perfect Health

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Ageless Body, Timeless Mind
Journey into Healing
Creating Affluence
Perfect Weight
Restful Sleep

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success
The Return of Merlin
Boundless Energy
Perfect Digestion
Overcoming Addictions
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The Seven Spiritual Laws for Parents
The Love Poems of Rumi

(edited by Deepak Chopra: translated by Deepak Chopra and Fereydoun Kia)

Healing the Heart
Everyday Immortality
The Lords of the Light
On the Shores of Eternity
How to Know God

The Way of the Wizard

Twenty Spiritual Lessons for Creating the
Life You Want

Deepak Chopra



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Part One

ENTERING THE WIZARD'S WORLD

PEOPLE WANT TO know why I, who come from India, am so interested in wizards. My answer is this: in India we still believe that wizards exist. What is a wizard? Not someone who can simply perform magic but someone who can cause transformation.

A wizard can turn fear to joy, frustration to fulfillment.

A wizard can turn the time-bound into the timeless.

A wizard can carry you beyond limitations into the boundless.

When I was growing up in India, I knew that all this was true. Sometimes old men in white robes and sandals came to our house, and even to a wide-eyed boy, they appeared to be very special creatures. They were completely at peace; they emanated joy and love; the wild ups and downs of everyday life seemed not to touch them at all. We called them gurus or spiritual counselors. But it took me a long time to realize that gurus and wizards are the same thing. Every society has had its teachers, seers, and healers; *guru* was just our word for those who had spiritual wisdom.

In the West a wizard is primarily thought to be a magician who practices alchemy, turning base metal into gold. Alchemy also exists in India (in fact it was invented there), but the word *alchemy* is really a code word. It stands for turning human beings into gold, turning our base qualities of fear, ignorance, hatred, and shame into the most precious stuff there is: love and fulfillment. So a teacher who can teach you how to turn yourself into a free, loving person is by definition an alchemist—and has always been one.

When I got to high school in New Delhi, I already knew a lot about the most famous wizard in the Western tradition, Merlin. Like everyone, I loved him immediately. Soon the whole of his world opened up. In my head I still hold dozens

of stanzas of Tennyson's epic poem *Idylls of the King*, which we were made to memorize on long, hot schooldays back then. I devoured every other source of Arthurian lore I could lay my hands on. It didn't seem unusual to me that I knew all about mild, green Camelot even though I lived under a fierce tropical sun, that I wanted to ride like Lancelot, even though I would have suffocated in armor, or that Merlin's crystal cave really existed, despite every author assuring me that wizards were mythical.

I knew differently, because I was an Indian boy, and I had met them.

WHY WE NEED WIZARDS

For thirty years I've thought about the wizard's knowledge. I've trekked to Glastonbury and the West Country, climbed the Tor, and seen the hill where Arthur and his knights are supposed to be sleeping. But something more mystical, the need for transformation, keeps pulling me back to wizardry. Each year I've felt that our times need this knowledge more than ever. Now that I've grown up, I spend my professional time talking and writing about how to achieve complete freedom and fulfillment. Only recently did I realize that what I'm talking about is alchemy.

Finally I decided that an exciting way to approach this topic would be through one of the most wondrous relationships ever recorded, that between Merlin and the boy Arthur in the crystal cave. As this book presents it, the crystal cave is a privileged place inside the human heart. It is the refuge of safety where a wise voice knows no fear, where the turmoil of the outside world cannot enter. In the crystal cave there has always been a wizard and always will be—you only have to enter and listen.

Modern people live in the wizard's world as much as past generations did. Joseph Campbell, the great teacher of mythology, said that anyone standing on a street corner

waiting for the light to turn green is waiting to step into the world of heroic deeds and mythic action. We just don't see our chance. We cross the street not noticing the sword in the stone standing by the curb.

The journey into the miraculous begins here. Now is the best time to start. The way of the wizard doesn't exist in time—it is everywhere and nowhere. It belongs to everyone and no one. So this is just a book about reclaiming what is already yours. As the first sentence of the first lesson says,

*A wizard exists in all of us.
This wizard sees and knows everything.*

This is the only sentence of the book you will have to take on trust. Once you find the wizard within, the teaching goes by itself. For many years this kind of spontaneous learning has been the center of my own daily life, watching and waiting for what the inner guide has to say. No other way of learning is so fascinating. I've heard Merlin speak from laughter overheard at the airport, from whispering trees on a walk down to the beach, even from my television. A bus station can turn into the crystal cave if you are open to it.

Why do we need the wizard's way? We need it to lift us from the ordinary and the humdrum to the kind of significance that we tend to relegate to myth but is actually right at hand, here and now. Being alive means winning the right to say anything you want, to be who you want to be, and to do what you want to do. Camelot was a symbol for this sort of freedom. That is why we look back upon Camelot with such wistfulness and admiration. Life has been difficult ever since.

A disciple once went to a great master and said, "Why do I feel so bottled up inside, as if I want to scream?" The master looked at him and replied, "Because everyone feels that way."

All of us want to expand in love and creativity, to explore our spiritual nature, yet often we fall short. We lock ourselves in our own prisons. Some people, however, have broken out of the confines that make life so constricted. Listen to the Persian poet Rumi, who says, “You are the unconditioned spirit trapped in conditions, like the sun in eclipse.”

This is the voice of a wizard, who will not accept that humans are limited in time and space. We are just temporarily in eclipse. The purpose of learning from a wizard is finding the wizard within. Having found the inner guide, you’ve found yourself. The self is the ever-shining sun that may be in eclipse, but once the shadows pass, the sun is simply there in all its glory.

HOW TO LEARN FROM THE WIZARD

There are twenty lessons in this book, each told from the wizard’s point of view. At the beginning of each lesson are some aphorisms, pithy bits of the wizard’s wisdom to help you transcend ordinary reality. Read each one and let it sink in. Don’t wait for a result, just allow yourself the experience. You don’t have to work or apply effort. Effort is like struggling to get out of quicksand—it only pulls you in deeper.

The inner wizard wants to speak, and this is true for all of us. But the wizard needs a chance, an opening. Like Zen koans, aphorisms provide that opening by causing a shift in perception, which can trigger a shift in personal reality.

The wizard’s voice needs to be brought back into daily life. I’ve quoted the first sentence of the first lesson: *A wizard exists in all of us. This wizard sees and knows everything.* The rest of the lesson goes as follows:

The wizard is beyond opposites of light and dark, good and evil, pleasure and pain.

Everything the wizard sees has its roots in the unseen world.

Nature reflects the moods of the wizard.

The body and the mind may sleep, but the wizard is always awake.

The wizard possesses the secret of immortality.

If these words give you a faint tingle, a thrill of recognition, they have done their work. It is indeed thrilling to discover that you are not a constricted being but a child of the miraculous. That is the truth, the one deep fact about each of us that has been in eclipse far too long.

I've gathered together about a hundred such sayings, which are illustrated by stories from the world of Merlin and Arthur. These are not fragments from the old legends but parables I have set in that time. Sometimes the illustrative story doesn't seem to fit the aphorisms exactly or with perfect logic. That is deliberate, because the linear mind, with its need to create order, isn't the only part of yourself that is going to walk the wizard's way. You are going to walk it in imagination, in hope, in creativity, in love.

In short, the wizard's way is the way of spirit. But spirituality isn't opposed to rationality; it is the larger framework that reason fits into, one piece among many. To speak to the linear mind, I've provided a section called "Understanding the Lesson," which supports the aphorisms and the stories. Lastly comes "Living with the Lesson," in which I help you allow the wizard's wisdom to sink into your own experience.

"Living with the Lesson" is the active part of the wizard's way. My suggestions are simply a beginning, ways to spark your own participation. Ultimately it is your understanding that is going to change your reality. "Living with the Lesson"

includes some exercises that may seem passive, because most of them are thought experiments.

What is a thought experiment? It's a way of leading your mind into new places, making it see things differently. The wizards knew something deep and important—if you want to change the world, change your attitude toward it. Einstein once lay on a couch, closed his eyes, and saw a man traveling at the speed of light. Following up on this intriguing image, he began to conduct various thought experiments, seemingly mere musings. Within a few years, however, the attitudes of the whole scientific world would be transformed as nature itself confirmed Einstein's transcendent visions.

If a fantasy on a couch can alter the world, then there must be tremendous power in thought experiments. Nothing is truly learned until it is lived. Reason, experience, spirit—once these come together, the wizard's way is open, the stage is set for alchemy. The wisdom inside you is like a spark that once lit can never be extinguished.

To put it all together, I suggest the following approach:

1. Sit quietly for a moment before you read any particular lesson.
2. Read the aphorisms and then sit for a few minutes to absorb them. Reread them as often as you like. Allow yourself an opportunity for your own reactions and insights—these are often the most valuable things you can receive.
3. Go on and read the rest of the material for that lesson: the Merlin and Arthur story, the section called “Understanding the Lesson,” and the section called “Living with the Lesson.”
4. If “Living with the Lesson” contains a practical exercise—most do—give yourself a few minutes to do the exercise. It is helpful to repeat it throughout the day if you want to get the full experience.

Reread each lesson as often as you want, one or more times; take a day or a week to live with it. There is no timetable for this process. I'd only caution that you should live with each lesson for at least one day rather than rush to absorb too many at a time.

THE SEVEN STEPS OF ALCHEMY

Part III of this book deals with the stages of transformation that the wizard takes his disciple through. I call these the seven steps of alchemy, which begin at birth and lead, eventually, to total transformation. Alchemy is about turning things to gold, that perfect, incorruptible substance. In human terms gold is a symbol for pure spirit. If a person gets beyond all limitation, throws off all fear, and realizes the pure spirit inside, then the seven steps of alchemy have been taken.

No journey is more wondrous. In Arthurian times they would have called it a quest, and the supreme object of such questing was always the Holy Grail, itself the most powerful symbol we have for pure spirit. So to me, alchemy and the Grail are the same thing. In both cases there is a deep search for the timeless aspect of life that brings what everyone dreams of—pure love, pure joy, pure fulfillment in spirit.

It doesn't matter whether you read Part II or Part III first. Each part has its own style and approach, but both come from the wizard's world. Merlin lives in both, and his purpose is always the same—to teach each of us how to attain the perfection that flesh should be heir to.

Finally, this book outlines a quest that will take you from a life dominated by the ego and all its struggle to a new life dominated by miracles. No two people learn at the same pace, but the hunger for miracles is so strong in everyone that I wish I could be with you the day that this wizard's knowledge really begins to dawn, and with it your new life.

Nothing less than the full blossoming of your spiritual potential awaits you.

Note: Being a seer, the wizard has no gender, and it is only the clumsiness of English that turns Merlin into a “he” (as our language does with *God, prophet, seer*, and many other words that are far beyond male and female). *Wizardess* is a clumsy word, so please know that *wizard* applies to women as well as men. If anything, the return of the magical has been greeted more quickly by women in our society than by anyone else.

Part Two

THE WIZARD'S WAY

“THERE IS A teaching,” Merlin said, “called the way of the wizard. Have you heard of it?”

The boy Arthur looked up from building the fire, which wasn't going well. Building a fire rarely went well on the damp mornings of early spring in the West Country.

“No, I've never heard of that,” Arthur said, after a moment's consideration. “Wizards? Do you mean they do things a different way?”

“No, just the way we do,” Merlin replied. With a flick of his finger he lit the soggy heap of kindling that Arthur had gathered, having grown impatient with the boy's clumsy attempts at fire building. A blaze leapt up on the instant. Merlin then opened his hands and produced some food out of thin air—two russet potatoes and a clutch of wild mushrooms. “Put these on skewers and roast them, if you will,” he said.

Arthur nodded matter-of-factly. He was about ten. The only person he had ever known was Merlin. They had been together for as long as he could remember. He must have had a mother, but her face didn't register in his memory, not even dimly.

The old man with the flowing white beard had claimed his right to the royal baby only hours after it was born.

“I am the last keeper of the wizard's way,” Merlin said. “And perhaps you will be the last to learn it.” Setting the skewers on the fire, Arthur looked over his shoulder. He was intrigued now. Merlin a wizard? It had never occurred to him. The two lived alone in the forest and the crystal cave. The glow of the cave gave them their light. Arthur had learned to swim by turning into a fish. When he wanted food it appeared, or Merlin handed him some. Wasn't that how it was for everyone?

“You see, you will be leaving here soon,” Merlin continued. “Mind you don't drop that potato in the ashes.” Of course the boy already had. Because Merlin lived backward in time,