

December 2012

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 2 The Mercy of My True Guru
- 4 All by His Grace
- 10 The Supreme Lord
- 12 The Question Is a Simple One
- 15 The Simplicity of Truth
- 20 Another Life, Another Movie
- 25 In Search of the Self
- 31 How Do We Meditate?
- 33 The Special Ingredient
- 38 Discover Your Simran
- 43 The Meaning of Life
- 47 The Diamond
- 48 Book Review

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
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The Mercy of My True Guru

*It is the mercy of my true Guru
that has made me to know the unknown:
I have learnt from him how to walk without feet,
to see without eyes, to drink without mouth,
to fly without wings;
I have brought my love and my meditation
into the land where there is no sun and moon,
nor day and night.
Without eating I have tasted
of the sweetness of nectar;
and without water I have quenched my thirst.
Where there is the response of delight,
there is the fullness of joy.
Before whom can that joy be uttered?
Kabir says: 'The Guru is great beyond words,
and great is the good fortune of the disciple.'*

One Hundred Poems of Kabir

Translated by Rabindranath Tagore



All by His Grace

One of the most common questions put to the Master is: Why are we here? Why did the Creator separate our souls from him and send us into the creation? It's a question that's never answered. Invariably we're told that at this stage we would not be able to understand why the Creator did what he did.

There's a lot that we don't understand about the path and its teachings. Probably we don't understand *most* of it. And yet we keep asking questions. We seem to think that if only it were properly explained to us, we *would* be able to understand everything. How silly we are. This is not the reason why the Master drew us to him and put us on the path.

Maharaj Charan Singh once put it very nicely – this futility of our wanting to know and understand things, when what we really need to do, he said, is 'get out of the well.' Somebody had been asking the inevitable question about the creation – why did God send us down here in the first place? And he replied:

I don't think we can analyze these questions or solve these problems of creation. I don't think we can question or even have any right to question. ... Ultimately we have to get out of this well. Maharaj Ji [by whom he meant the Great Master] used to give a very beautiful example. Somebody falls into a well and somebody comes to pull him out and says, 'I am throwing a rope into the well. You get hold of it and come out.' The person in the well says, 'No, no. First tell me where you bought this rope and how this rope was made and where you earned the money to buy it.' He asks all sorts of questions. Let him come out first, and then he can ask questions.

Let us get out of this misery. ... There will be enough opportunity to question, but let us get out of it first. That is the main thing.

Spiritual Perspectives, Volume I

And that's what we have a Master for: to pull us out of the well. We don't need to know all the whys and wherefores. All we need to do is take hold of the rope he throws to us and climb out of the well. But first of all we need to become aware that we are down a well. And that we want to get out.

We're told that the Lord has singled out some souls to return to him, and he makes them restless to return to him by making them feel lonely. He gives them a sense that they're not happy down in the well – they want to find some place better. We may not know it at first, but this loneliness is the ache of the soul to go back to its own source.

To become smitten with loneliness, emptiness, a bleak hunger of the soul, is something to be profoundly grateful for. It marks a crucially important stage in the awakening of the soul.

But of course it's not a matter of just being marked to return home. Perhaps, over lifetimes, we may have done some good things to earn this tremendous grace. Perhaps. As if there's anything we could do that would be enough to earn this grace! But now we have to work our way back. The marking was just a beginning. Now we have to become clean enough to re-enter the presence of the divine Lord. This is no small thing. We still have a long way to go.

That's not to say we have to take on this great challenge all by ourselves. Truth to tell, we couldn't. Look at what we are! Can anybody really think we could make this quantum leap from human frailty to spiritual perfection without a great deal of help? That's what we have a Master for. It's his job to guide our baby steps, pick us up when we fall, teach us and guide us, until we can eventually cross the great divide

between flawed humanity and divinity. In fact, he tells us that for every one step we take towards him, he will take ten steps, perhaps even a hundred steps, towards us.

But let's not imagine for one second that the one step we take is going to be worth very much. Not even the meditation that we earnestly struggle every single day to do is going to lift us up. In fact, it often seems that all our meditation is doing is teaching us humility, crushing our ego and showing us how helpless we are.

He worships himself through us, as Hazur Maharaj Ji often said. This means that if we do worship him or love him, it is his pull that is making this happen – in order to shower his grace on us in return for that worship. I guess all we can do is accept that whatever devotion we give him, whatever service we try to give him is thanks to him making it all happen.

Maharaj Ji often used the image of the puppeteer, with the strings of his puppet in his hands. The puppet dances, but not through any skill or effort of his own. He moves only because the puppeteer is pulling the strings. This is what our meditation does: it helps us to realize that we are nothing but helpless puppets – that the Lord is doing everything.

We're told that without the grace of the Lord we would never be able to escape from here. In fact, nothing we have ever done was ever enough to qualify us for this grace. Maharaj Ji tells us quite frankly:

We have done nothing. A man can never do anything to deserve all this. We can never do anything to deserve his love. He just gives it and gives it. We are too small-fry to even invoke his grace, because we are so helpless as humans in this creation. If the Master won't come with his grace, who will? ... Actually, he worships himself through us. When he wants to pull us to his own level, he worships himself through us. We are just helpless.

Spiritual Perspectives, Volume II

If we accept and *know* that he is behind everything that happens, then there's this very big advantage: We know that everything in our lives is coming from our Master who loves us, and that there's nothing we can do to change anything. Therefore we can do our work and we can go through our karmas, accepting whatever he is giving us and not wanting anything else.

Of course, we tend to talk quite glibly about surrender to the Master. And the Master warns us that at our level real surrender is extremely difficult – we can do this only when we can control the mind. We have to work towards this. But by devoting time to meditation we are training ourselves to surrender. And in the process, surely we're becoming more receptive to his grace.

That doesn't mean of course that the road will become short or easy. We may still have to struggle for the rest of this lifetime. We don't know how long it'll still take – maybe long, maybe not long at all. Maybe some of us are a lot further along the way than we think we are, and perhaps our Master is just not showing us that.

You see, there's also our karma that has to be taken into account. If we still have debts that have to be settled, our Master will keep us here – in darkness if need be – until all those debts have been paid. He knows best. Only our Master knows what mountains of karma there might still be delaying our return.

But luckily we can absolutely rely on his grace – as long as we are sincerely and honestly trying our best, his grace is unfailing. There's absolutely nothing to question and nothing to doubt. We just have to settle the karmic account once and for all, and trust that no matter what happens in our lives, his help and support are there.

There's a marvellous letter in *Spiritual Letters* in which Baba Jaimal Singh replies to a letter in which his disciple, Babu Sawan Singh, must have expressed anxiety about his financial situation – that because he was laid up with a broken leg and somebody else had been appointed

in his place for a year, he would have no income and would not be able to support his family:

You should not lose faith. All will be well. One should not worry about it because the Lord has so much wealth that he will give not only to the person who has worked in your place for a year, but also to you. ... You should not worry as to who will bring up your family or how you will earn your livelihood. The Lord Himself will accomplish all this. ... What you are going through now was His command. ... Worry only – if at all you must worry – for bhajan and simran.

Baba Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*

Worry only, if you must worry, about bhajan and simran. If this is our priority, the Lord takes care of the rest.

Of course, this was a personal letter of loving reassurance written by Baba Ji to his beloved disciple when he was going through difficult times. But surely our own Master, who holds our strings in his hand, is just as concerned with every little detail of our own lives. He makes us go through our own karmas, but still he is looking after us. He has been looking after us from birth! And because of our initiation, he has linked us to him at that level of spirit where even now we are, so to say, part of him.

We have no conception of how intimate our relationship with the Master is. In Volume III of *Spiritual Perspectives* Maharaj Ji makes it clear that the relationship between Master and disciple goes far beyond the physical form of the Master and the physical form of the disciple. He asks:

What is there to talk about? Who is the disciple and who is the Master? Neither the body of the disciple is the disciple,

nor the body of the Master is the Master. The soul is the real disciple, and the Shabd or Word is the real Master. So the real relationship of the disciple with the Master is attaching the soul to the Shabd.

That attachment is already there. In essence, the Shabd and soul are already linked. As disciples we are already one with our Master. We just don't *know* it yet. The Radiant Form of our Master is already inside each one of us, in close contact with our very souls. We just have to work and to wait until we can eventually realize that, and see him inside for ourselves.



The One being, the Silent One, is beyond all names and concepts. He is nameless. “The name that can be named is not the real Name.” His big being is the essence of our little being. Did we but know it, there is no difference between the two. He is what we are, and we are what He is. That means that He is within us, for us, of us. Any hint of an idea that He is ‘out there’, ‘up there’ or even ‘in there’ – that He is anything but the essence of our own being – is fallacious. In fact, when we even conceptualize Him as our own ‘essence’, we have gone astray. He has got nothing whatsoever to do with any of our concepts. He’s not what we think.

One Being One

The Supreme Lord

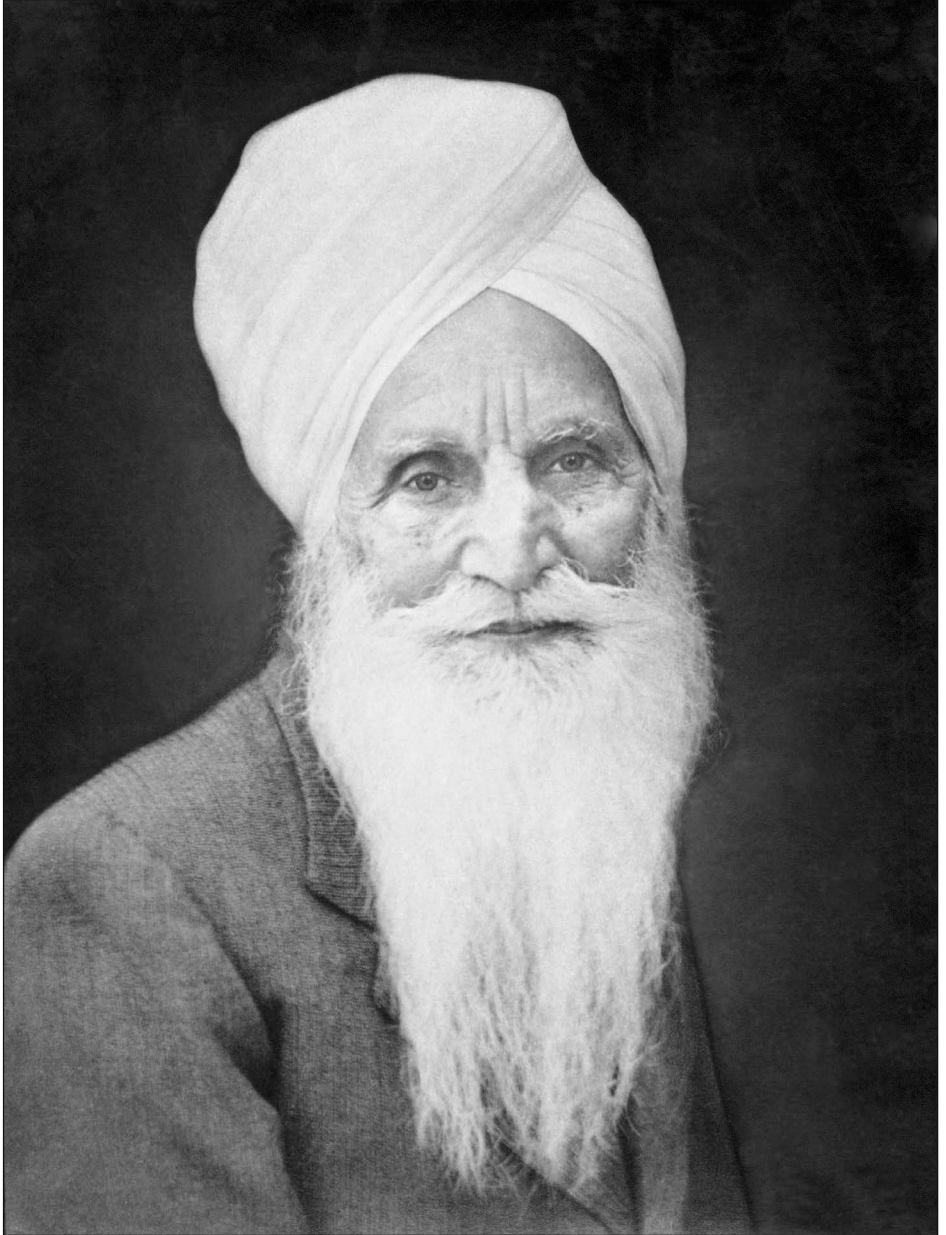
The relationship between us and the Lord is that of a part to the whole. There is no distinction between the ocean and the waves. There is no difference between the sun and its rays. The Lord is never unmindful of us even for a moment. He is always looking after us. We have never been separated from him. He is always with us and pervades our entire being. ...

If we become childlike, the Lord himself watches over us. But when we grow in our intellect and begin to reason and ruminate, then we feel unhappy. If we turn to him and hold fast to his garment, live in the world but not let go our hold of him, as a child does with his mother, we will be happy. Beg of him, eat and drink and cry out, “O mother! I am yours, whether dutiful or otherwise. I am in your lap. Where else could I go if I left you?” But this should, however, be said with love, truth and simplicity. There should be no cleverness about it. The waywardness of upright children is forgiven. The Lord also relishes love, simplicity and faith. ...

Continue to be children of God. Do not surrender the rights of your precious patrimony. Know the Lord as immanent and conscious. Remember him as a living entity. Have devotion. ...

Some regard him as father, others as mother or friend or husband. You may remember him in any role or relationship. There need be no dispute about it. They all mean the same thing although in different words. Create love for him in your heart.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters*, Volume IV



Maharaj Sawan Singh

The Question Is a Simple One

We tend to complicate matters. We are human.

To be human also means to have senses. If we could be without any senses, we probably would be finer creatures, nearer to our Creator, further down the path. Because we have senses, and the senses still play a part in our existence, we complicate matters.

To be human furthermore means we have a limited intellect. If we could perceive things limitlessly, we would be able to see how everything fits together, each forming a part of a whole, fitting in like pieces of a puzzle. We would be able to understand that certain events take place, seemingly working against each other for the eventual common good of the creation. But because we have limits that prohibit us from knowing all, however intelligent we may be, we complicate matters.

This complication of matters leads to a lack of understanding about why events which are clearly in conflict with each other could be good. How can wars, poverty, disgrace, hunger, hurt – all these things – be condoned by God? How can anything that creates disharmony come from God? Because God is almighty, this means that nothing happens without his approval. So how can events and situations which seem so evil come from God? We do not have the capacity to understand this.

Erwin W. Lutzer, in his book *Making the Best of a Bad Decision*, writes how things seem to work against the obvious direction but still form part of the success story. He refers to this as ‘clock-wise’ and says:

When I was a boy on a farm, I loved to take things apart. My eldest brother was able to take apart a tractor motor, repair it, put it back together, and make it run again. The best I could do

was take apart a clock because I was intrigued by all the little wheels. Some were going in the same direction as the hands of the clock, and others were going counter-clockwise. Some were going fast and some slow. Because some of the wheels were spinning in opposite directions, it seemed as if some of the parts were working against themselves. But when I looked at the face and realized it kept time accurately, I had to admit that all the parts were working together for good.

Mark my words: When you have a bad day, it may be a very good day from God's standpoint. God is working to bring about your ultimate good. Only He can do that. When He synergizes events, they fall together for good. I don't know how God takes sodium and chloride, both of which are poisonous, and puts them together to create salt, without which we could not possibly live. I don't know how God takes sin and disappointment and brings them together and makes something good out of them, but I'm convinced that He does. If you love Him and are called, you're in the circle of those who benefit from this special work of God.

This clockwork which we call 'life' sometimes throws challenges at us which we cannot understand. It complicates matters to the extent that we lose balance and focus. We become entangled in scenarios where our priorities are blurred.

In times like these we would do well to remember that we are limited. We would do well to remember then that we do not have the ability to clarify these events. We would do well to remember that we have a teacher, a guide, who has told us what to do and how to do it. In times like these we need to remember only what our guide tells us.

So, how direct and honest are we with ourselves when we have to ask certain questions about our own behaviour? Do we also avoid the issue, or cloud it with justification, analysis and argumentation?

If clear thinking prevails, there is the ability to firmly sift through words, reasons and situations, discarding all the irrelevant stuff, to be left with only the relevant issue. And often when this point is reached, we find that *the question is a simple one*.

God throws life at us in return for our past. We can use life to justify not attending to our principles as we should, or we can sift through all our arguments – life's wheels spinning in opposite directions – discarding them one by one, and come to the real issue. The question is a simple one: Am I attending to my meditation?



Your mind is scattered. Worldly learning scatters the mind. Simple-minded folks go in easily. The hill people in this country are such, and in several cases their souls went in at once as soon as the secret of concentration was imparted to them. Therefore, what is required on this path is simplicity of mind, faith and love.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The Simplicity of Truth

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the towering genius of German literature and science, once wrote: “Nothing is true but that which is simple.” Many of the world’s great thinkers have agreed with him.

Looking up at the heavens on a dark cloudless night, one is presented with a spectacular display of trillions of stars. The amazing truth is that all of those celestial bodies, without exception, have their motion relative to each other controlled by a single law, the Law of Universal Gravitational Attraction. Isaac Newton, too, pondered this nightly show and was able to bring this truth down to a single simple short formula.

At the other end of the physical scale, Albert Einstein was able to bring an understanding and quantification of the enormous energy holding together the components of every atom in all forms of matter. His incredibly simple formula merely combines mass with the speed of light.

What about Sant Mat? Can the vast concepts contained in the teachings be condensed down to a simple essential truth? A simple formula? Such a formula should surely be capable of being understood by any soul entitled to a human birth, regardless of intellectual capacity and level of education. This formula could well be $1+1=1$: The first 1 being our soul (which is a drop of Shabd), and the next 1 being the Shabd form of the Master, which once we are initiated, eventually merge and become one. That is the essence, the bottom line of Sant Mat: Master and disciple.

All that is required for the understanding of this concept are certain inner attributes potentially inherent in every human being, viz. faith, love and devotion. These qualities are awakened by the Master himself

at the appropriate time. If we were to sit in front of the Master and ask him: “Why am I here?” he might well reply, “Because *I* am here.” And he could just as easily add: “And I am here because you are here.” He is here for each of his disciples. That’s what the path comes down to – Master and disciple.

The Master has promised us that he will, without fail, take us home. But there is work to be done. We have to be scrubbed clean of all the dross of desires and karmas before we can be presented by him in the court of the supreme Lord. We have to be purified of the results of mind-domination during our many previous lives. And we are still today governed in our thoughts and actions by the same mind. It is merely doing its job. But we must do our duty and play our part in assisting the Master in his task of taking us home.

The work we must do could be seen as falling under two headings: living the Sant Mat teachings, and daily meditation. We are living the teachings when we consistently follow his instructions – the object being to approach the state of surrendering our own will to the will of the Master, of the Lord. This way our actions will tend towards becoming karmaless, thus facilitating the process of our salvation.

One thing he asks of us is that we should always try to be happy. We should always remember that whatever befalls us has been stamped ‘APPROVED’ by the Master, who has taken over the management of our karmic account from Kal. We know that whatever the karma is, he assures us it is for our good. We should not therefore be anything but happy. Besides, he also assures us that being miserable won’t help anyway.

Here’s a good way to look at life: When beset with setbacks, rebuffs and knocks, tell yourself, “It actually doesn’t matter – *we are going home!*” What does it matter what life dishes up to us? We are going home! No need to fear the future of the world as it is gloomily predicted in the media – we are going home!

Let us have faith in the Master. Our homecoming is assured. In a stanza from Soami Ji's *Sar Bachan Poetry*, he urges us:

*Take hold of the Guru's feet, my friend!
Why keep wandering in transmigration,
now that you have a human body?
Use the human birth to your best advantage,
love the Master and think of the world as a dream.*

Taking hold of the Guru's feet is submitting to his will – which in effect means trying to be a better human being, trying to live the teachings. We must keep a constant watch on our thoughts, desires and actions. We have to continually try to abort the tendency to think and react with the lower mind. We have to stop and rather let our thoughts and reactions be governed by the higher, noble mind. Our motive at all times should be love. We should ask ourselves how the Master would want us to handle every situation as it arises. And that would be with love: love at the level of the eye centre – higher mind.

There is an interesting definition of love in Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*:

*Love is a verb – to do. The feeling of love is the fruit of love.
Love is to serve, sacrifice, listen, empathize, appreciate, affirm,
forgive. Love is a value which is actualized through loving
actions.*

A neat definition of a level of love rare in our material world. Shakespeare, too, in a sonnet refers to a higher form of love: "Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds." A higher-order love endures even if all around is subject to change; just as truth is not

subject to change. Love alters not in altering circumstances. Such love is a gift from the Master, which we earn according to the effort we put into our meditation.

Our struggle with the mind begins every morning when we wake up. “Come on get up, the Master is waiting,” says the higher mind. “Lie a bit longer, it’s warm and comfortable here,” says the lower. Choosing to respond to the call of the higher mind is in fact demonstrating love and devotion for the Master.

The two aspects of mind pull in opposite directions, and our behaviour, thoughts, speech and actions reveal which of the two is dominating. Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh often used to say that we can have no worse enemy than the mind, but we can also have no better friend.

The Masters are supreme examples to us of how to live the path. One has only to watch how Baba Ji, the quick-acting, businesslike, fast-travelling Master for the present time, in the evening meetings at Dera, shows infinite patience, tolerance and empathy with question after question, many of these longwinded and convoluted. He always stresses the handling of all problems we encounter with love and compassion. He personally sets the example for us of ego-control.

Hazur also used to tell us that in our dealings with others, our approach should be one of love. And he remarked once that most of our problems in this creation come from our tongue. If we could control it, he said, we could solve 90% of our problems.

For control of our tongue Buddha provides a simple short formula. He is reputed to have said: “Before you speak, ask yourself : Is it True? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind? – TNK. Like TNT it has a powerful effect! To apply TNK continually requires real ego-control. That is living the path. How do we get there? How do we with our limited willpower subdue the mind which has dominated our thinking and behaviour for so many lives?

This brings us to the second of our duties as mentioned earlier. We have to meditate daily according to the Master's instructions. It is by holding our attention at the eye centre during meditation that we do the greatest seva for the Master. It is then that he does his work inside us. It is then that he applies his grace and love to prepare the soul for the journey. By meditation, love for the Master is developed.

To a question about creating love for the Master ourselves, Hazur replied that we ourselves cannot do this – he gives his love. But we can make ourselves receptive by meditation. By living according to his commands we are invoking his love and becoming receptive to him. His love is a gift from him. And when we become receptive to that love, he becomes our everything.

Soami Ji writes in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*The Guru is the life-breath of my existence,
The Guru alone can set me free.
There is no beloved like the Guru,
The Guru alone will reform me, purify me.
Yama, the lord of death, and Kal have fled in disarray,
Only the Guru lives in my heart.*

Here again, Master and disciple. Simple.



Our Master is not the flesh. Our Master is the Word, the Shabd, the Logos, which is within everyone of us, and we are in touch with that. So everyone has his own Master within himself.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives, Volume III*

Another Life, Another Movie

I'd like to propose an exercise for you to perform – preferably as you're waking up. Somehow this works best on a Monday morning. As you're just becoming conscious, think to yourself “Ahh, it's Monday already. Whatever happened to the weekend?” (This is normal on a Monday morning, right?)

So what did happen to the weekend? Now it's Monday morning, and whatever happened on the weekend isn't there anymore. What happened to it? For that matter, what happened to last week and last month and last year? And we can go back decades, looking at all the joys and tragedies of our lives. Where are they now? What happened to them? No matter how high the highs and how low the lows, none of that exists any more. So was it actually real? It seemed real enough when it happened. So, how can a thing be real one moment and unreal the next?

Reality cannot change from moment to moment. That's how we define reality: *it is that which never changes*. Even if we come back after a thousand years, reality will still be identical, unchanged and precisely the same as it has been for all time. So what then does this say about the life we are living and the world in which we are living? It's a little like an old-time movie, the kind made on a celluloid strip. A sequence of still pictures which, when moved past a very bright light, projects onto the screen what looks like a moving image. The *now* is that bright frame where we are aware of what seems to be real. But the celluloid strip that moves out of the light and into the dark is the past, moving increasingly into the grey murk of distant memory. The future is the sequence of images approaching the light, of which we may get a vague sense just before it happens. It is as if the future comes lurching out of the grey obscurity of time and for a brief moment appears as

our reality, in the *now*, and then it careens out into the dim distance of history, never to return.

Or does it? Imagine if God had a mischievous sense of humour, and out of our sight and awareness, he joined the ends of our celluloid strip together, chuckling to himself and saying, “I wonder if this poor soul will notice that he’s seen this movie before...!”

This might be a bit of grim humour, but actually it might just be a lot closer to the truth than we’d like it to be! How many lifetimes have we incarnated into this world? More than we can count. Do you imagine that there is anything left that we have not done before? Has history not taught us that we tend to make the same mistakes over and over again? The human race has a very poor record in this regard.

So here we are again, in another life, another movie. What kind of story will our life story be? Will it just be another tale of lost opportunities and repeated mistakes, or will we take a moment to step back from it all and try to get our lives in perspective, try and find a place for ourselves in the greater scheme of things? Baba Ji said once that at one time we insisted on our right to choose. We made bad choices and so we ended up where we are now. Once again, he said, we have the opportunity to choose. So what will we do with this opportunity?

Well, when we are struggling to make sense of the whole thing, when life starts to feel unreal and we start to wonder what it’s really all about, where do we go for answers? How do we find substance and reality? We have tried, time and time again, to find some kind of satisfaction, some sense of belonging in this world, only to be plagued by a persistent dissatisfaction, an inner discontent that we simply cannot shake. We have pursued riches, relationships, name and fame, possessions, sensual pleasures and in fact, pretty much everything that we could think of. What has been the result? We always end up feeling emotionally drained and dissatisfied. We find ourselves with a heavy

heart, wondering if we will ever be able to satisfy this nameless need within us that simply will not let us go.

We are driven by forces we do not understand, and when we reach the point where we feel we have tried everything that the world has to offer, we start to explore “the road less travelled”. We have started to explore the various ‘ologies’ and ‘isms’ in the hope that we can find some greater meaning in our lives than the one that popular culture has to offer.

And so it is that one day we came into the orbit of spirituality, and those who pursue it in their various ways. We heard of various religions, yogas, penances, austerities, and so on. There seem to be an almost endless number of different ways that people are adopting to try and find their way back to God. After exhausting ourselves in our efforts to do likewise, we finally realized that this too was leading us nowhere.

And then we came into contact with the Master. This was a landmark event in our lives, because what we heard now was a completely different take on “how it is” – and what it’s going to take for us to get out of this world of shadows that we have been living in for so long, and enter the domain of the true reality.

What do the Masters tell us? From ancient times, the Masters have always advised struggling souls that the only way out of this labyrinth of the creation is to raise the attention to the tenth door or eye centre, and pass beyond. There is no other way. The secret of salvation lies within. This is the only route we can follow to find God – to get to know him.

What is the one characteristic or defining quality of God? The mystics of both past and present are unanimous on this subject: it is love. So how do we approach the One who is all love? Well, there is an old principle in nature, namely, that like attracts like. To approach God, we need to develop love.

And how do we develop love? Well, this is a much misunderstood point. The most important thing to know is that, contrary to common

opinion, we all have *abundant* love within us. What do you think is the driving force that brought us to the path in the first place? What do you think is behind that persistent discontent within us, the one that never entirely goes away? This is the soul's pain of separation from the Father, and it is born out of nothing but pure love for Him. It is there already – we just need to let it out and embrace it! All these long ages we have been running away from it, trying to distract ourselves from it. But this pain of separation is the most powerful sign of hope that we have. Far from running away from it, we need to realize that it is the key to our spiritual future.

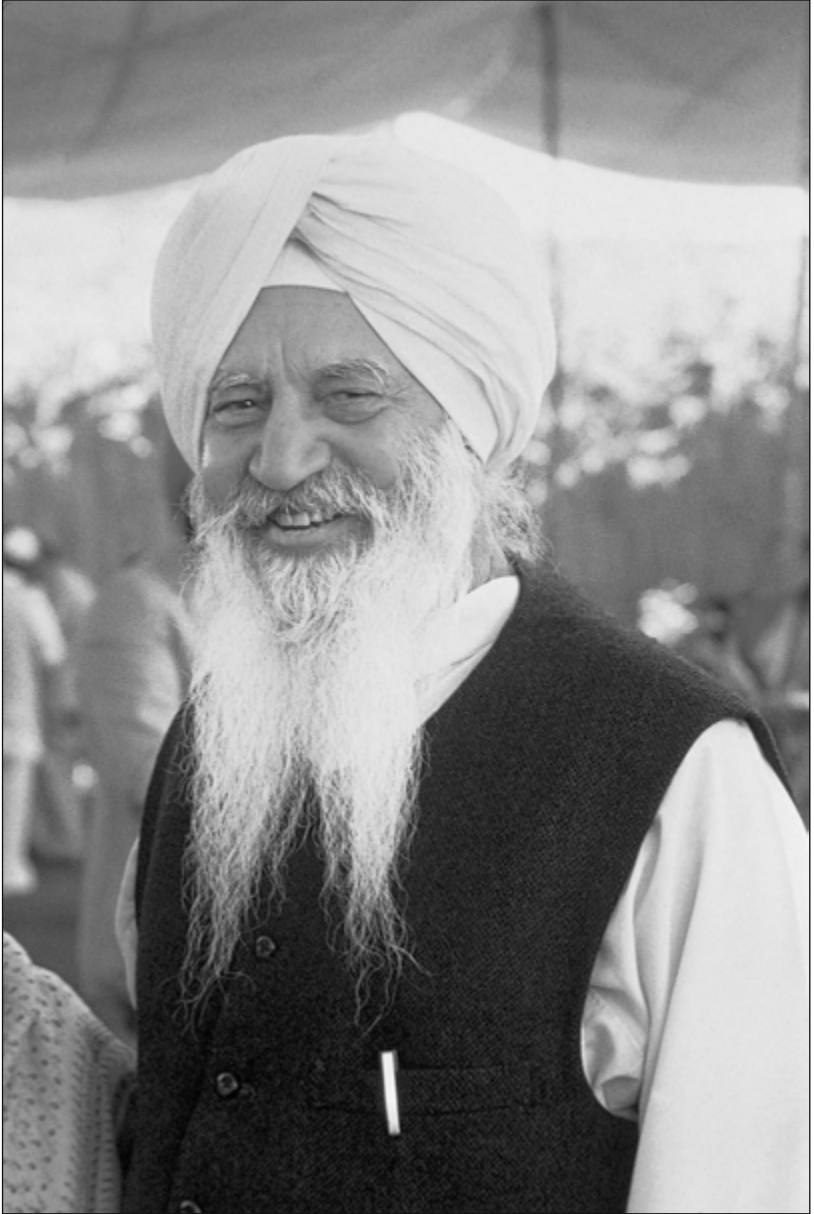
So at the end of the day, when we analyze our situation, when we assess what is our true position, what lies within our inner heart, then we come across certain facts. Firstly, we have an unbridled passion to return to our Father. The fires of separation burn brightly within us. Our whole being yearns with an insatiable desire to return to where we truly belong, and to merge in love and bliss with our Beloved. The other is that we have been granted the inestimable grace of initiation by the perfect living Master of the time.

We cannot overstate what an incredible stroke of good fortune this is. By virtue of this fact alone, the way that was closed for untold centuries and millennia, the pathway that was lost for innumerable ages is now open before us. All that remains is for us to travel upon it.



My only wish is that you try to contact the Radiant Form of the Master within you, so that you may become sure by actual experience of the great truth taught by the Master. This is the greatest service that a disciple can render to his Master.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *Science of the Soul*



Maharaj Charan Singh

In Search of the Self

The Greek philosophers said, in essence: worship the gods if you must, but your first duty is to find out who and what you are yourself.

This timeless enigma leads us to ask questions such as: Who am I, why am I here, where am I going, and what is the reason for my existence?

We try to understand the nature of our self through our intellect and reasoning, because our sense of self is lodged in our mind. But this sense of who we are constantly changes. Our thoughts, moods, desires and images pass through our minds like a never-ending movie, according to our changing circumstances. All that these changes succeed in doing is to raise more questions than we can ever find the answers to.

If we turn to the Masters for these answers, they tell us that this mind-driven physical self on which we put so much emphasis is an illusion, and that we will never be able to find the answers to our questions through reason and logic. All spiritual Masters tell us that we have an inner self – our deeper consciousness or soul, which is beyond the mind, reason and logic. Sant Mat teaches us that we must first become aware of this inner self before we can have any real awareness of God.

Hazur Maharaj Ji explains this quite simply, by saying that when the soul gets released from the clutches of the mind and is able to travel further, this is self-realization. When it goes back to its origin, the Father, this is God-realization. So, unless there is self-realization first, how can there be God-realization?

This of course leads to another round of questions, such as: What is this other self, how do we recognize it, and how do we get in touch with it? More importantly, if there is another self within us, why are we not aware of it, and what is its substance?

The Great Master gives us the answer to these questions. He says:

On reaching Par Brahm, all the material, astral and causal coverings of mind and matter that envelop the soul are removed. Then the soul is pure spirit. This is self-realization. Here there is no form, no cover, no shape, no youth nor old age – only the soul, shining in its pure radiance, a drop of existence, knowledge and bliss, capable of comprehending the great ocean, its Creator. Now the drop tries to reach and mingle with its ocean.

Spiritual Gems

The Masters tell us to change the direction of our search. Instead of looking outward, we must look inward. But the only concept we have of an inner being or self is the one that has been created by our mind. And as we have seen, this mental creation is not our true self.

In a discussion with the spiritual master Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, a disciple referring to his physical self, said: “I am what I know myself to be.” And the master answered him saying:

You cannot possibly say that you are what you think yourself to be! Your ideas about yourself change from day to day and from moment to moment. Your self-image is the most changeable thing you have. It is utterly vulnerable, it is even at the mercy of a passerby; the loss of a job, an insult, and your image of yourself, which you call your person, changes deeply.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, *I am That*, Part I

To know what you are, you must know what you are not. And to know what you are not, you must watch yourself carefully. Your personal image of self is based on such factors as: where and when you

were born, who your parents are, where you live, what work you do and so on.

We need to separate ourselves from the images we have of ourselves, created by our karmic situation. False ideas of who and what we are make us slaves to the ego. The aim of Sant Mat is to help us each to know who and what we really are – in other words, to let us realize the true self within, and to let go of the mental image we have of ourselves.

What an exceptional gift the Masters give us with initiation on to their path to God. Initially, at our level of consciousness, we really cannot appreciate the enormity of this gift. This gift is all about consciousness, because the path the Masters travel to God is a journey through consciousness.

In mysticism, consciousness is essentially the same as the soul. God is described as an ocean of consciousness, and the individual as a drop of that ocean of consciousness. Soul, consciousness and Shabd – these are different words for the same essence. In a question and answer session with Maharaj Charan Singh, a disciple asked him, “Is the real form of the disciple the same as the real form of the Master?” And Maharaj Ji replied, by asking and answering his own questions:

What is the real form of the Master? Shabd. And what is the real form of the disciple? Soul. ... And what is the difference between the soul and Shabd? It is the level of consciousness.

Spiritual Heritage

So the difference between us and the Master is also the level of consciousness. Our spiritual journey takes us from the restricted consciousness of this level, through the higher realms of creation, until we reach the supreme Lord himself.

The Great Master tells us that the Lord is the great storehouse of consciousness, the embodiment of reason and the treasure house of intelligence. He is the repository of love and compassion. He is the whole, Great Master says, and we are parts of him (*Philosophy of the Masters*, Volume IV).

When we are in darkness, how do we grow into an awareness that we are already part of the Lord, the great storehouse of consciousness? This will be possible only by opening the window at the third eye so that we can become flooded with the light and sound of the Shabd. This is the promise of Sant Mat: to teach us how to open the window, the inner eye, so that our being may be flooded with the light and sound of the Shabd, the Lord. The Master's promise is that he will guide each one of his disciples along this path of ever-expanding consciousness to the inner realization of the self.

We know that this journey through consciousness is undertaken in meditation. Although it may not be so easy to do the spiritual practice, it is worth our while to try, for it will show us the reality behind the illusions of the creation. Realization of the self lies behind the veil of the mind, and it is only when the mind has been made motionless that we can be aware of what lies behind the veil.

Stilling the mind is a tough and daunting task. For aeons the mind and the senses have danced their way through the pleasures of creation, enthralled by everything it has to offer. As a result, it is as if the body and ego are fences that keep us confined within the field of illusion, forced to interpret whatever comes our way with our limited and constricted consciousness. Instead of wisely choosing to return to the Master and the Lord, we have chosen to make a pilgrimage in the opposite direction and to worship at the shrine of materialism. The creation rather than the Creator has captured our love and attention. Somehow we have to turn that around.

We know about the Master's promise to us, but what about our promise to him? Our first concern should be to open our inner eye, which we can only do if we adhere to the four principles of Sant Mat: a vegetarian diet, abstinence from alcohol and drugs, and leading a moral life are the foundations on which our meditation is built. If we short-change any of them, how can we expect our meditation to be successful? Our responsibility is to *live* the teachings. In *Die to Live* Maharaj Ji says that meditation is not just closing yourself in a room for a couple of hours. You have to give it a practical shape in your daily routine.

The Great Master tells us that man is the greatest book, and the reason we came to this planet is to study that book. Self-study is essential to fulfil the purpose of human life, and our search for knowledge of the self must be undertaken within – through meditation. He says:

You will understand the value of this path as you go within and rise. It is acquired by effort, by love and faith. It cannot be had by asking nor by paying dollars. Its price is selfless, pure love. It is within you. It is for you. It will come to you when you are fit to receive it, therefore, make yourself fit for the reception.

Spiritual Gems

In *Mysticism, the Spiritual Path* we're told that there are three stages in developing our inner spiritual realization. The first is simply talking of mystic knowledge without having attained any inner enlightenment. This is easy and pleasant because everyone likes to talk like a mystic. However, mere talking is of little benefit. The second is doing the mystic practices with zeal and earnestness. It is actually doing the mystic practice that brings transcendent knowledge and bliss. The third and final stage is living in the higher spiritual levels of consciousness.

This stage is only reached after one has so thoroughly mastered the second stage that one has made a home in the subtle spiritual realms. Mystics of this highest stage live in the upper regions of spiritual consciousness and come into the body only when they have to deal with people of this world.

The Great Master says that the Master is not only a body:

He is the power that guides and helps us at every stage and in every region, during our inward, spiritual journey. When we are in the physical body, he instructs us through his physical form and, as we proceed further, he assumes the form of each region – all the way up to Sach Khand.

Spiritual Gems

So, to reach the level of a spiritual Master we have to stop talking about the path and do the mystic practice, as instructed by the Master.



Enough has been written and enough has been said. Now what is wanted is silence and work. Speaking distracts and scatters your attention. Silence collects thoughts. It draws your attention inward and strengthens the spirit. Now set yourself earnestly to practice. Practice makes a man perfect. Be as perfect as your Creator.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

How Do We Meditate?

Those of us who get up early to meditate probably all have our little rituals before getting started. Our routine might go something like this: We get out of bed and wash our face; maybe we brush our teeth and comb our hair. We may even have a cup of tea. And when we sit down we try to adhere to the general instructions: spine straight; position comfortable but not so comfortable that we fall asleep. And then we start our simran – or we continue our simran, if we were doing it while preparing! We also try for that concentration that is so difficult to attain.

But there could be more to it than all this. In *Die to Live*, Maharaj Charan Singh tells us, over and over again, that we should attend to our meditation with love and devotion. To remember that the one whom we love is sitting at the eye centre waiting for us makes us eager to meet him there. It helps to focus our attention.

If love is going to have an impact on our meditation, it should be reflected in every area of our lives. How can we expect spiritual progress, how can we meditate, if we harbour resentment or jealousy against somebody, or if we feel bitterness or anger about our destiny in life? To have real love in our heart means tolerance and acceptance. To have love for and faith in the Master means we will be happy with whatever circumstances he places us in. It means wanting to please him through our actions, especially by making faithful and regular meditation our number one priority in life.

Why is devotion important? To be devoted to somebody or something means that the object of our devotion is of primary importance to us – as our meditation should be. Devotion turns an act of service into an act of love. It means continuously thinking about the

object of one's devotion, being always ready, willing and keen to spend time and effort on it. If we can feel real and deep devotion when we meditate, it will become so important to us that we will allow nothing, no circumstance, to keep us from doing it. We will organize our life around our need to meditate and everything else will take second place to it.

But, of course, now comes the all-important question: How do we get to feel that kind of love and devotion? Those emotions will not materialize out of thin air. Maharaj Charan Singh answers that question in *Die to Live*: "Attending to meditation will automatically generate love and devotion in you, and when you attend to your meditation with that love and devotion, naturally you will get results."

So if we think that we are lacking in love and devotion, let us meditate with real longing for it in our hearts. By doing that, these will come to us – automatically. Maharaj Ji tells us that meditation itself will bring the love and devotion we need to improve the quality of our meditation. Then we will sit and meditate the way our Master wants us to meditate.



*If you love your Master with your whole heart
You have achieved everything.
Otherwise his company won't help you.
Water and stone live together
Yet the pebble remains dry within.*

Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion

The Special Ingredient

Sant Mat is essentially a path of spiritual practice – in other words, that loaded word: meditation. The Masters tell us that for a satsangi there can be no more important task. A satsangi who does not meditate is not a practising satsangi, but a satsangi in name only.

Do you despair when you hear this? There are many satsangis who feel that meditation is such a struggle that they'd rather avoid it. This is not merely a great pity – it is a tragedy. The one thing above all others that should be our source of peace and solace becomes instead a source of suffering for us.

Baba Ji addresses this point very clearly when he tells us we must enjoy our meditation. Not should – but must! He goes even further and says that even if we fall asleep, we should enjoy our sleep! What a wonderful way of looking at it!

This bears some thinking about. Why should we find meditation difficult? Why shouldn't we enjoy it? There are two main reasons. One is that we have certain expectations of performance that we are not living up to. The Master makes it very clear, however, that he is not putting any pressure on us to perform our meditation to a particular standard. He says all he wants is that we simply do it. Who are we then to set a standard for ourselves? Do we think that perhaps there is some secret merit to be gained by pressurizing ourselves, then feeling guilty? There is absolutely nothing to be gained by feeling guilty about our practice. To burden ourselves with guilt is not a positive approach. The positive approach to any failure is to admit that we are human after all, and to get up and try again with more determination than before.

By setting a standard for ourselves we are spoiling the greatest gift we have ever been given. Since we cannot possibly know what to expect

in meditation, it is counterproductive to keep looking for something particular. As soon as we start looking for a specific something, we close ourselves off to everything else. There may be other subtle yet beautiful gifts coming our way, yet we are unaware and unappreciative of them. This is an adventure into the unknown for us. We should be receptive and grateful for absolutely anything that comes our way.

It is we who choose our attitude towards meditation. We can make it fun or we can make it drudgery. Baba Ji tells us that we should make it fun. If we find our practice difficult or burdensome, then it is we who have made it so. It is as easy to make our meditation fun and a pleasure as it is to make it boring and a drudgery. The results of this change of attitude will be well worth the effort.

We are not being asked to produce results. Results are the Lord's to give as he sees fit. We are only being asked to put in effort. What is the point of making this an unpleasant task? Will we achieve anything positive by approaching it with a negative attitude?

The Great Master famously wrote that if you can hold the mind still in the eye centre for three hours, then you must go within. But we can't hold it still by force. Forcing creates tension, whereas we have to be absolutely relaxed in meditation.

Having said all this, let's think about a special ingredient that will make our meditation, and our lives in general, more enjoyable: love! When we have love in our hearts, anything can be a pleasure – including our meditation.

What do the Masters mean when they talk about love? Is it the warm fuzzy feeling you get when you see a baby or a young animal? No, the type of love they speak of is something far beyond these brief upsurges of emotion.

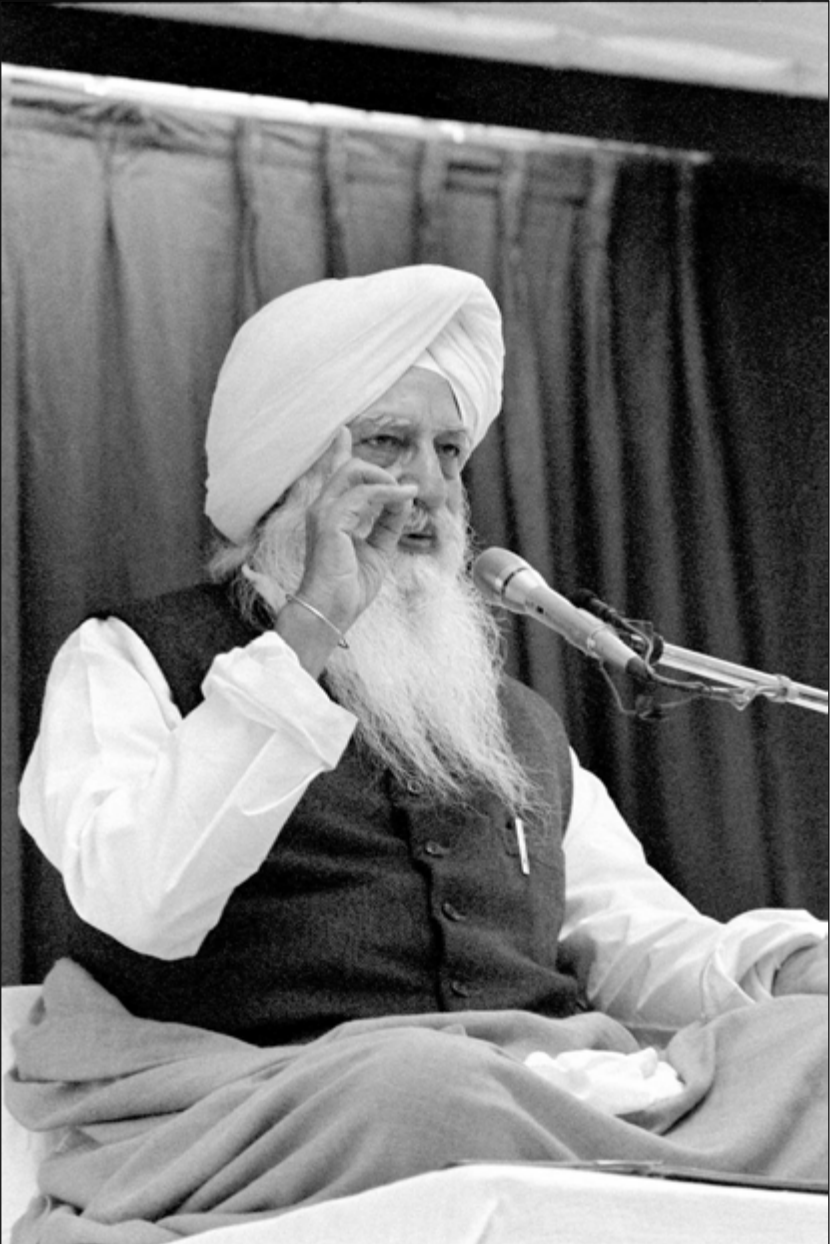
In Volume II of *Philosophy of the Masters* Maharaj Sawan Singh writes:

It is love alone that can give peace and happiness. Without it life is dry and worthless, and even the joys of heaven are of no value. A palace will appear as dreadful as a graveyard to a person who is bereft of love. But even the ill-furnished and dilapidated huts are beautiful if they are brightened with the spark of love.

We are drawn to the path because we are hungry for love. However, the big question is this: What is our capacity for love? How much hunger do we have? Maharaj Charan Singh often gave this example: If you have a plate of delicious food in front of you, but you have no hunger, you will not eat; if you are hungry, but there is no food in your plate, you will not eat; but if you have a plate full of delicious food and a good appetite, you will automatically eat with relish. Neither the hunger nor the food are in our control. These are gifts. All we can do is work for more hunger and wait for more food. The work, of course, is meditation.

Now, let's consider another question: Is love enough? According to the Great Master, it is not. He tells us that intense longing is also required. Longing, he says, is vital on the spiritual path, and it is the natural outcome of love. He calls it the active state of love. He tells us:

This intense longing always surges up like a wave or current in the heart and refreshes the mind with remembrance of Him. As a result, the heart's agony is assuaged by continuous remembrance and contemplation of the Lord. This creates a feeling of happiness. It is a stepping-stone, over which a seeker has to tread to attain communion with the Lord.



Maharaj Charan Singh

In order to meet the Beloved, intense longing comes first, in the same manner as flowers bud and bloom on a fruit tree before it can bear fruit. ... In other words, this longing is a prerequisite for meeting the Lord.

Philosophy of the Masters, Volume II

So here, too, we might ask: how do we become filled with a true longing that will eventually unite us with God? We've been told that this longing is also his gift. He gives it where and when he sees fit. But we can try to make ourselves receptive to it. And by now we know very well how to do that – meditation, meditation, meditation. The meditation can't be avoided. But do we want it to be a source of frustration in our lives or do we want it to be a pleasure, a joy, a source of peace and bliss? Baba Ji tells us the choice is ours.



*I am happy tonight, united with the Friend.
Free from the pain of separation,
I whirl and dance with the Beloved.
I tell my heart, "Do not worry,
The key to morning I've thrown away."*

Rumi: Whispers of the Beloved

Translated by Mafi and Kolin

Discover Your Simran

Simran is really such a crucial part of our spiritual practice, and yet many of us have still not acquired the habit. Every time we have a problem that worries us, every time we have to plan something, every time we get busy with anything that requires a little attention, our simran just vanishes.

When we're initiated we're told that we have to repeat the five words of simran in order to focus our minds at the eye centre, in order to start making contact with the Shabd – the Word, which is not a spoken word but the power which brought the whole creation into being. And simran will connect us to the Shabd. That's why it is so indispensable for us. No simran, no Shabd. And preferably simran that's done with love and devotion.

In *Spiritual Letters* Baba Jaimal Singh tells his disciple Baba Sawan Singh:

Simran's current links up with the Dhun [the Sound] and the current of the Dhun links one with the Shabd – and the Shabd is the very essence of the Anami Lord himself. For this reason, if simran is done with love and devotion, steeped in the soul's seeing faculty, it brings great joy and bliss. Grace and mercy then descend in full measure.

There are a couple of things of interest in this quote: Firstly, that the simran which has been given to us by our Master has power – it produces a current of its own, and it's this current that merges into the current of the Shabd. When our simran becomes concentrated, we make contact with the Shabd. Secondly, if we can do our simran

with love and devotion when we sit for meditation, this will help to focus our attention at the eye centre. And thirdly, we need to engage the *seeing* faculty of the soul. We need to look into the darkness at the eye centre – really look. If we can visualize the face of our Master there, so much the better, but if we can't, we need to peer into the darkness.

So there is a specific way of doing our simran, in order for it not to be just a mechanical repetition. But of course Hazur Maharaj Ji has told us that even mechanical simran will lead to concentrated simran. We just have to keep doing it – because it has to become our link with the awesome pulling power of the Shabd.

The Shabd, which sustains the entire creation, emanates from the topmost spiritual region, the home of the Lord himself. The Master also comes from this region, and the power that he infuses into those words which comprise our simran also comes from this region.

When the soul was separated from God and descended into lower regions, it took on the company of mind. It is the mind which is responsible for keeping the soul bound to this material creation. And what our simran has to do is still the mind. It is to gather the soul currents from every part of the body and focus them at the eye centre. When this has been done, the soul will turn within and commence the inner journey.

But of course this won't be easy. The mind is attached to the senses and the sensual pleasures of this creation, all of which keep us bound here. Moreover it's carrying the burden of countless karmas, incurred over perhaps millions of lifetimes. How can it get rid of that burden? It can do so only with the help of a perfect Master who, when he initiates a disciple, takes over the administration of his karmas, and arranges his life in such a way that the karmic debt can be paid, without incurring too much new karma. But not only does the karmic debt have to be paid; the mind also has to be purified of the dirt which it has collected in its long sojourn here. For this it needs the cleansing power of

simran. Not the words as such, but their inherent power, the power that the Master infuses into the words at the time of initiation.

We might doubt that our simple simran can achieve something so challenging. But look at it this way: If one were to take a scale with two pans, and if you placed the mind and all its karmic burden and all its dirt in the one pan, and if you placed simran in the other, simran is sufficient to balance the weight in the other pan.

At this stage though, the soul is still utterly dominated by the mind. And so we have to rely on the support of one who comes from the region beyond that of the mind. This help comes when we meet a Master, when he places us on the path and gives us initiation.

But this is only the beginning. On this physical level the Master's work has in fact been done. Now we have to meet him inside to travel with him and complete the journey. And the point where we meet him is beyond the eye centre. It is the disciple's responsibility to withdraw the soul currents to the eye centre. It is not the Master's responsibility. He gives us simran in order to withdraw the soul currents to that point at which we can meet him within.

When we hear this, we may feel apprehensive. We may even feel despair, because anybody who meditates will know how tricky the mind can be. But then, maybe we're not taking into account the power of simran. Maybe we need to change our perspective. Rather than being concerned about the weight of karma on the mind, let's rather concern ourselves with the power of simran.

Something else to think about: It is no good resorting to simran only when we need help. We should be doing our simran even when things are going well. Simran needs to become the activity that our minds revert to, like a default that a computer is programmed to go to automatically, when there are no other activities that demand our attention. When we

can achieve that, our simran will become sweet. Then we will discover the joy of our simran.

But still, it's not easy. In fact, Baba Ji said recently that meditation is not meant to be easy. What we're trying to do here is use our simran to stop any extraneous thought from entering our mind to distract us. How can we check those thoughts? There is a way.

Let's picture this: You're holding a loosely woven black cloth in front of your face. At first, all you see is black. But when you look more closely you may be able to make out a form on the other side. Perhaps even a shimmer of light. That's how we need to look into the darkness at the eye centre. And when we do that with attention, concentration really does start to take place. This is something that has to be worked at, of course, and there will be many times when the attention slips away, but with practice it will work.

The Masters are always being asked questions about exactly how we need to meditate in order to achieve our goal of going within. In reply to one such question, Hazur Maharaj Ji once made it sound so simple:

*When you close your eyes, you are automatically within. ...
When you close your eyes you see darkness. Mentally, keep your attention in this darkness and do your simran with the attention of the mind. ... You are just to close your eyes, and when you close your eyes you will automatically be behind the eyes in this darkness.*

Spiritual Perspectives, Volume II

If this is all that's needed, then we have all 'gone within' many times! And it does seem that just doing this – closing our eyes, starting our simran and looking into the darkness – is all that the Master expects of

us. In fact, during a recent session at the Dera, Baba Ji said this several times. Just do that much, he said, and the Master will do the rest.

It would be good, though, if while looking into the darkness we could visualize the face of our Master there. But even if we can't hold on to the image of his face, we can at least look into the darkness. And we can enjoy the darkness; we can be comfortable in the darkness. The darkness can become our shelter, our place of peace. We can enjoy being there while paying attention to each word. If we can do this, the mind will learn to concentrate.

But while we're so concerned with discovering our simran, there's something else we should never forget. Ultimately the quality of our meditation depends on grace. By our own effort we can achieve nothing. It's only because he is pulling us towards him that we feel the need to do any meditation at all. It's only because of his grace that we even remember to do our simran. Any effort we make is far more thanks to him than it is to us.

We read in Volume II of *Spiritual Perspectives*:

Everything is done by the grace of the Father in this world. A seeker can achieve nothing without his grace. Without his grace a seeker would not even know about the Father, what to say of reaching the Father, what to say of trying to achieve his destination. ... By his grace we have that longing and desire in us to go back to the Father. We search, we read books, we find the path; we try to tread the path, try to achieve that object. ... Everything happens by grace.

The Meaning of Life

If we examine the average person's life, it would seem that it's all about finding happiness through improving one's lot in life: earning a comfortable livelihood, having relationships and raising a family. If people are not actively involved in such pursuits, they are perceived as having empty lives. But can any of these constitute the meaning of our lives, and can they give us a true sense of purpose?

Some would answer that they do, since what else is there? That's a poor argument, of course. The weak point is that even if one were to achieve all these goals, there is no guarantee that they would bring happiness. Even if one were to land a good job, there's no guarantee that you would be able to hold on to it. And even you marry and have children, these too are no guarantee of life-long happiness.

The question naturally arises: where else can we look for meaning and purpose in our lives if the 'traditional' pathways do not qualify? Well, first we have to understand the reason why they don't qualify, and that is because they are all unreliable and relatively short-lived. Even if we are particularly successful at all our worldly endeavours, and achieve wealth and fame and have lots of friends and an idyllic family, there is still one serious problem: All of us are going to die. This is an unassailable reality. Therefore, no matter how much we achieve here, one day we will have to leave it all behind, and someone else will get it.

So now we know where *not* to look for purpose and meaning. Where then *do* we look? What is there that endures and is not limited by our mortal lifespan? And how are we going to find it, since it is obviously not in this material world that we call our home? The honest

truth is that without proper help and guidance, we would not have even the slightest hope of finding answers to our questions.

Happily for us, there are those who know the answers to all these questions, and they seek us out and offer to share their superior knowledge with us. There have always been those great souls upon this earth who have possessed this knowledge, and they have always taught struggling souls the means by which they can indeed find their way to that which is lasting and true – upon which we can base a meaningful and purposeful life. These are the Masters.

They point out that the world in which we live does not contain the solution to our problem, and that continuing to seek meaning and purpose here is not only futile but actually perpetuates our unhappy situation. Therefore, we need to look somewhere else. But since this world is all we know, we find ourselves asking, “What else *is* there and where should we look for it?”

The Masters say: Look within. Of course, initially, we don't even know what this means, but they explain that within us is the entire universe. The macrocosm is contained within the microcosm. This is not easy to understand but, they say: Put your judgment on hold, accept this as a postulate, and put into practice the teachings which we will give you, and the truth of all this will reveal itself, in the fullness of time.

The Master gives us the practice of meditation, which, when performed correctly, *automatically* leads us in the direction that we need to go. Even without fully understanding or grasping what the Master is trying to tell us, this practice will take us to the point where we experience this truth *directly* for ourselves. At that point further explanations will be entirely redundant, because we will just *know*.

In the meantime though, before we achieve this state where everything stands revealed, we have this thing called ‘normal life’. Somehow we also have to cope with having a physical body, and having to house

it, feed it and generally look after it, which necessitates us having to earn a living. This tends to take up most of our time, so that we have precious little time and energy for much else. How do we pursue the meaning and purpose of life in these circumstances? Even if we're retired, there's still so much that we have to do, to keep body and soul together in this world.

Well, the Master has one word for this: balance! Basically this means that we have to find time for all of these things *and* create a balanced lifestyle for ourselves. We need to look after our physical needs, and we need to look after our spiritual needs. We need to do our duty by our family, our friends and our community, *and* we need to do our duty by our Lord and Master. We need to find ways to prioritize what is important in our lives and give our time and attention to that, and with whatever time and energy we have left, we can attend to other things also.

So yes, we have to take care of the body, we have to eat and bathe and generally pay attention to our physical health, but we should always remember that this body has a sell-by date, and each day brings it closer. Basically, we should be preparing ourselves for that day when our time will come to depart this world, because that is when we will experience our true situation, our true status in God's universe.

In the meantime we need to understand that the very first essential in the whole process is the perfect living Master of our time. Without contacting him we cannot even begin our journey. He is to all intents and purposes the be-all and end-all of the path for us. We need to cultivate our relationship with him. Initially, devotion will consist of our trying to carry out his instructions to us, as given at the time of initiation. Eventually, however, as our love grows and blooms, our entire focus in life becomes our Master, and every moment of every day seems to be centred on him. Our every action gets weighed in the

scale of his approval. Our greatest wish is to please him and serve him in whatever way we can.

When we were initiated by the perfect living Master of our time, we received the most wonderful and powerful gift imaginable. We should appreciate this fact and think deeply about what it is that we would like to accomplish with whatever time remains to us in this life. There are many things that we could do. But we should constantly remind ourselves that these may come back to the same point: they are confined to the realms of mind and maya, and by pursuing them, we too will be confined to the realms of mind and maya. The point is that our true identity is that of soul. This soul has been wandering in this creation for untold ages and has become weary of it all. Its great desire now is to return to its original home. Our Master has given us the gift of devotion to the Name. The task before us is merely to answer the call of our spiritual heart and follow the road leading home.



*To nurture the Guru's devotees
the true Lord has created the earth –
the drama of birth and death is only a sideshow.
One imbued with the love of the Guru's Shabd
gets absorbed in Truth and goes home with honour.
Bereft of the true Shabd one receives no honour,
and without devotion to Nam, O Nanak,
how can one merge into the Truth?*

Gurbani Selections, Volume I

The Diamond

Even the richest person can be poor if he's always hungry for more than he has. Great Master tells us:

Wealth or poverty depend on the absence or presence of desires, respectively. He who has no desires is rich. He who does not desire anything is a sovereign.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello illustrates this truth with a telling story.

When a sannyasi reached the outskirts of the village and settled under a tree for the night, a villager came running up to him and said, "The stone! The stone! Give me the precious stone!"

"What stone?" asked the sannyasi.

"Last night Lord Shiva told me in a dream that if I went to the outskirts of the village at dusk a sannyasi would give me a stone that would make me rich forever."

The sannyasi rummaged in his sack and, pulling out a stone, he said, "He probably meant this one. I found it in the forest yesterday. Here, it's yours if you want it."

The man gazed at the stone in wonder. It was the largest diamond in the world – the size of a man's head.

All night he tossed about in bed. At break of day he woke the sannyasi and said, "Give me the wealth that makes it possible for you to give this stone away."

The Song of the Bird

Book Review



The Inner Life (full title: *Christian Counsel, on Divers Matters Pertaining to the Inner Life*)

BY FRANÇOIS FÉNELON

ENGLISH TRANSLATION ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN JAMES W. METCALF, ED., *SPIRITUAL PROGRESS* (1853) AVAILABLE FREE ONLINE AT WWW.PASSTHEWORD.ORG/DIALOGS-FROM-THE-PAST/INNERLIFE.HTM

The *Inner Life*, by François Fénelon (1651–1715), offers guidance on developing a deep inner awareness of and love for God. Born into a noble family in France, Fénelon became a priest and eventually the archbishop of Cambrai. He came under criticism for his defence of precepts associated with Quietism, a doctrine condemned by the Church that taught that the believer could experience God’s presence by becoming inwardly still. While he was not stripped of his post, he spent his last years under censure, confined to the area around Cambrai.

The *Inner Life* comprises thirty short chapters with titles like “On the Advantages of Silence and Recollection” and “On the Interior Operations of God to Bring Man to the True End of the Creation.” Fénelon’s 17th-century language may be challenging for some readers, but his guidance remains as relevant for spiritual seekers today as it was in his time. His insights are profound and subtle, and his advice practical:

Let us be accustomed to recollect ourselves during the day and in the midst of our occupations, by a simple view of God. ... While outwardly busy, let us be more occupied with God than with everything else. To be rightly engaged, we must be in His presence and employed for Him.

An excellent means of preserving our interior solitude and liberty of soul, is to make it a rule to put an end, at the close of every action, to all reflections upon it. ... Whether of a vain joy or sorrow. Happy is he whose mind contains only what is necessary, and who thinks of nothing except when it is time to think of it!

We must not wait for a leisure hour, when we can bar our doors; the moment that is employed in regretting that we have no opportunity to be recollected, might be better spent in recollection. Let us turn our hearts toward God in a simple, familiar spirit, full of confidence in Him. The most interrupted moments, even while eating or listening to others, are valuable.

In the chapter entitled “On the Employment of Time,” he explains, “There is a time for everything in our lives; but the maxim that governs every moment is that there should be none useless; that they should all enter into the order and sequence of our salvation.” While we may think certain circumstances we have to go through are mere distractions from the real purpose of our lives, Fénelon claims that God “has never assigned us a barren moment, nor one which we can consider as given up to our own discretion.” A fundamental error most people make is to seek their own self-interest in every circumstance, though they may do so subtly and unconsciously:

For we misemploy our time, not only when we do wrong or do nothing, but also when we do something else than what was incumbent on us at the moment.... We are strongly ingenious in perpetually seeking our own interest; and what the world does nakedly and without shame, those who desire to be devoted to God do also, but in a refined manner, under favor of some pretext which serves as a veil.

Therefore, Fénelon cautions the reader to practice “fidelity in small matters.”

Great virtues are rare; they are seldom needed, and when the occasion comes ...[we are] sustained either by the brilliancy of the action in the eyes of others, or by self-complacency in our ability to do such wonderful things. Small occasions, however, are unforeseen; they occur every moment, and place us incessantly in conflict with our pride, our sloth, our self-esteem, and our passions. It would please us much better to make some great sacrifice ... and retain our old habits in little things.

These “small matters” seem trivial, but by neglecting them, Fénelon says, “the soul becomes accustomed to unfaithfulness.” He describes how this neglect creates a division between the person and God: “At first, it is but an atom; but the atom becomes a mountain and so forms a sort of chaos between it and God.”

Fénelon speaks of prayer as a simple inward turning, with love, toward the presence of God within. In the beginning those who desire to love God may experience a wonderful sweetness in prayer, a feeling of grace or ‘consolation’ from God, as well as illumination. But when these gifts are withdrawn, they lose heart.

Many are tempted to believe that they no longer pray, when they cease to enjoy a certain pleasure in the act of praying. But, if they will reflect that perfect prayer is only another name for love to God, they will be undeceived. Prayer, then, does not consist in sweet feelings, nor in the charms of an excited imagination.

Dry, desolate prayer serves to force the soul to “attach itself immediately and solely to God, instead of to his mercies.” As Fénelon says, “Such love is chaste; for it is the love of God in and for God; we are attached to Him, but not for the pleasure which he bestows on us.” Often people in this state may “think that everything is going to ruin, when, in fact, the foundations are just beginning to be solidly laid.” This is because progress on the spiritual path is contrary to our expectations: “We expect gain and not loss, consolation and not suffering, riches and not poverty, increase and not diminution. But the whole of interior work is of an opposite character; to be lost, sacrificed, made less than nothing. . . . That we may be forced to cling to Him alone.”

After all, Fénelon declares,

The source of all our defects is the love of self; we refer everything to that, instead of to the love of God. Whoever, then, will labour to get rid of self, to deny himself, according to the instructions of Christ, strikes at once at the root of every evil, and finds in this simple abandonment of self, the germ of every good.

Fénelon warns us that even efforts to improve ourselves may have love of self as their inspiration.

The sum of the principal directions for attaining true liberty without neglecting our duties is this: do not reason too much, always have an upright purpose in the smallest matters, and pay no attention to the thousand reflections by which we wrap and bury ourselves in self, under the pretence of correcting our faults.

Clinging to distress over failures is, according to Fénelon, merely a form of pride. Instead, he says: “Be not discouraged; go straight on; quietly bear the humiliation of your fault before God without being troubled by the anguish of a wounded pride that cannot bear to see itself imperfect. Your fault will be of service in causing you to die to self, and to become nothing before Him.” A simple commitment to follow God’s way suffices: “Our illumination from God discovers the lightest transgressions, but never discourages. We walk before Him; but if we stumble, we hasten to resume our way, and have no watchword but Onward!” He reassures us that the way becomes ever easier: “God will gradually make it pleasant and easy for you, for true love is obedient without constraint, and without strife or effort.”

Fénelon speaks of the freedom from all care – what he calls “true liberty” – that comes with self-abandonment to God, of “becoming less than nothing.”

Let us cast all our cares, then, into the bosom of so good a Father, and suffer Him to do as He pleases. Let us be content to adopt His will in all points, and to abandon our own will absolutely and forever. How can we retain anything of our own, when we do not even belong to ourselves?

Having thrown off the burden of self, which we formerly carried, we are astounded to behold the simplicity and straightness of the way. We thought there was a need of strife and constant exertion, but we now perceive that there is little to do; that it is sufficient to look to God with confidence, without reasoning either upon the past or the future, regarding Him as a loving Father, who leads us every moment by the hand.

Book reviews express the opinions of the reviewers and not of the publisher.

