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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Key to Ecstasy

*I have found the true Name,
It is always with me
Like a string of pearls
Around my neck.
I now repose
In the narrow litter
Of the palanquin
Whose five bearers
Have become feeble.
My Master has given me
The key to the unyielding lock;
Whenever I like I open the door:
Dressed in the dancing costume of love,
I enter the town whenever I please
And I dance, and dance in ecstasy.
Says Kabir: Listen, friends,
I'll not come to this city again.*

Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name



The Dance of Light

I am conscious of something within me that plays before my soul and is as light dancing in front of it; were this brought to steadiness and perfection in me, it would surely be eternal life!

These words were written by Saint Augustine, one of the most significant early Christian thinkers, who was born in the year 354 in what is today Algeria.

Maharaj Charan Singh describes the seeming instability of the inner light of which St Augustine wrote:

When we see the inner light in the beginning, we see just flashes, it comes and it goes; but actually it is the attention which falls down and the attention which comes back.

When the attention is there, it sees the light, and when it drops down it sees darkness, and so we think flashes of light are coming. And then we see shimmering types of light; again we think the light is not steady, that the light is shaking, but it is the mind which is unsteady, and which is shaky, so we get a shimmering effect of that light. What we see all depends on the stage of concentration of the mind.

Die to Live

Mystic and religious texts frequently use words such as light, fire, brightness, or radiance to describe the soul. Because the soul is a spark of the divine light of God, these and other similar metaphors are also often used in relation to God. So we see that in *Sar Bachan Poetry* Soami Ji describes God by saying:

*I am at a loss to describe the beauty of Sat Purush himself.
Each pore of his body emits the light of ten million suns and
moons put together.*

The word 'light' is commonly used by Christians as a metaphor for Christ, referred to in many biblical passages. For example, Luke describes him by saying:

*For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under
heaven, shineth unto another part under heaven; so shall also
will the Son of man be in his day.*

Luke 17:24

So the Son of man, the Master, will light up the world – he will bring spiritual understanding. However, Luke puts in the overriding aspect of time, for he adds 'in his day'. This clearly means for the people of his time, when he is in the physical body.

And in Saint John, Jesus himself says the same thing: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (St John 9:5).

Here Christ states that he is the light of the world only as long as he is in the world. Maharaj Ji expands on this by explaining the deeper mystic meaning of this statement. Christ did not say that there would be no light in the world after he left it. He indicated that we should go to a *living* Master, for it is only through a living Master – who is the light of the world during his lifetime – that we can get his instructions and guidance to take us back to the Father.

The sun and its solar energy are the source of our warmth and light, which is why many early civilizations worshipped the sun, the giver of

energy and life, while darkness has traditionally been associated with the devil and satanic and evil activities.

In darkness we can't see and know what is happening around us and we often feel vulnerable and without defence. As darkness envelops our world, it causes a feeling of insecurity as familiar objects seem to disappear into the shadows of the night, and we may easily become afraid. But this fear or a feeling of foreboding is a mental conditioning we impose on ourselves.

Darkness has its place. The Creator who created light also created the dark. If he is everywhere and in everything, then he cannot be separated from darkness. He is in the darkness as much as he is in the light – so what is there to be afraid of?

For example, after sitting in meditation for many years, we come to know the darkness within and embrace it. We learn to rest quietly in it as we repeat our simran. It is only our impatience for inner light that actually distracts from that peaceful darkness within. We should embrace that inner darkness with patience rather than be impatient for the light to dispel its calmness. Darkness is restful and it is infinite. At this stage of our practice, the inner light may come and go, but darkness remains; it is always there.

The Great Master writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

If you cannot see light within, then you should fix your attention on the darkness and keep peeping into it. The darkness will change into light.

The darkness will change into light as our concentration grows. Our increasing focus brings with it a hint of the Shabd, the source of both inner light and sound. Experience of the Shabd is our heritage – but we have to work to receive it. And that work is our meditation.

When we enter a dark room we see nothing. However, if we open the curtains, drawing them back from the window, the room is flooded with light. The window is synonymous with the third eye, and it's here that we start to contact the Shabd: the source of both light and sound which is constant within. To find that window is the purpose of our concentration. Once we find the window within and draw back the veil, we will experience the light, for as the Great Master tells us in *Spiritual Gems*:

If your attention is steadfast you will see within yourself the effulgence of the spiritual world. You will see the bluish constellations – the stars, suns and moon – which are at the threshold of the inner world. Fix your attention in the bright star and continue repetition. When the star is approached, it will burst, and you will cross through it – the starry sky has been crossed.

Then you will see the great jyoti, the thousand-petalled lotus, and the Master's Radiant Form. You must see these things – have no doubt. It is certain.

In the following quote, Christ refers to the eye centre – the single eye, where the inner light is to be found. He says: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matthew 6:22).

In *Die to Live* Maharaj Ji tells us that concentration will bring us to the level required to see the light within. Our concentration remains inadequate because of our inability to calm the disturbances of our mind. We have the ability to concentrate on worldly things, so the reason we can't still the mind is either because we are too lazy to practise concentration or we allow our attention to be scattered

during the course of our day. Either outcome is the result of not doing simran throughout the day. Stilling the mind is not something we do only when we sit down to meditate. We need to be conscious of our mental condition and focus during the day as well.

‘Wysiwyg’ is a computer term – it stands for ‘what you see is what you get’. What we feed the mind during the day is what we get at the time of meditation – it is exactly what is going to be reflected back to us. Sant Mat is not dictatorial. We are given the directions to follow and it is up to us how we choose to follow this path. Nobody is going to tell us what we can and can’t do. By our own feeble attempts at meditation, it will eventually get through to us that if we fill the mind with worldly pleasures – excite and delight it during the day – it will take that much more effort to try and settle it down at the time of meditation.

If we want to ascend from the darkness into the light – if we want to experience this light – then it is important for us to do our simran and our daily meditation. To become aware of this light within is his grace, even the tiny flashes we may sometimes get. The Masters repeatedly ask us to do our meditation so that we can enjoy the bliss of this inner experience. They want us to experience this divine light – they want to give it to us. Maharaj Ji even said that our meditation is simply an excuse for the Master to shower this grace on us.

To travel this path of light is the greatest gift we can ever have. It is the means to make our final ascent out of darkness and the pain and suffering of this world, into the higher worlds of bliss and peace in the light and sound of the Shabd.



Love and Devotion Alone

If we look on the Internet it's easy to find statistics on world literacy: how many people have a reasonably good education, and how many people can't read or write at all. In some countries in Africa, like Burkina Faso, the illiteracy rate is as high as 84 per cent, and in Afghanistan two out of three people are completely illiterate. Probably illiteracy is also quite high in the foothills of the Himalayas, home to thousands of devoted satsangis.

Throughout the world, barely six people out of a hundred have any kind of higher education, so those of us with this so-called privilege might perhaps feel a bit smug. But as far as the path is concerned, has this helped us? Not at all. In fact, quite the reverse!

In a letter to one of the early American satsangis Great Master wrote:

Your mind is scattered. Worldly learning scatters the mind. Simple-minded folk go in easily. The hill people of 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 in this path is simplicity of mind, faith and love.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

In another letter to the Americans, Great Master wrote:

The hill people are usually simple and pure-minded. At the very time of initiation there were many who saw the light within themselves and heard the Bell Sound. I was in the foothills of the Himalayas for satsang. Some twelve hundred were initiated.

On account of their scattered minds it is difficult for the educated to concentrate.

Spiritual Gems

Of course, we know it was not our destiny to be born in the foothills of the Himalayas and grow up with simple minds, easily able to go in and up after initiation. But the fact remains that as far as the path is concerned, with all our so-called cleverness we probably have a serious built-in disadvantage. And we have to work that much harder to overcome it. What Great Master might have added in his letter is that these minds of ours present a huge obstruction, and concentration might take an entire lifetime.

Looking back over the centuries, we learn that some of the Masters have come from simple backgrounds. Others, however, have not. Soami Ji was a Master who was well educated and he wrote many wonderful poems, among them one which reveals the absolute helplessness of the soul to overcome the mind, but which also reveals the secret of getting out of this mind trap. This is what the soul tells the mind:

*Life after life I have been your slave, and you my master.
You are called the lord of the three worlds ...
Gods, humans and yogis are under your control,
no one dares act in defiance of your commands.
You can trap anyone you want in this world
and set them free whenever you like.*

Sar Bachan Poetry

We know then that the mind is powerful. In the light of this, the soul asks the mind why it continues to languish in this world of darkness. If the mind does not free itself from this base world of

matter, the soul says, it (the soul) will also continue to be trapped here. It begs the mind “to soar with me to the heavens without delay”.

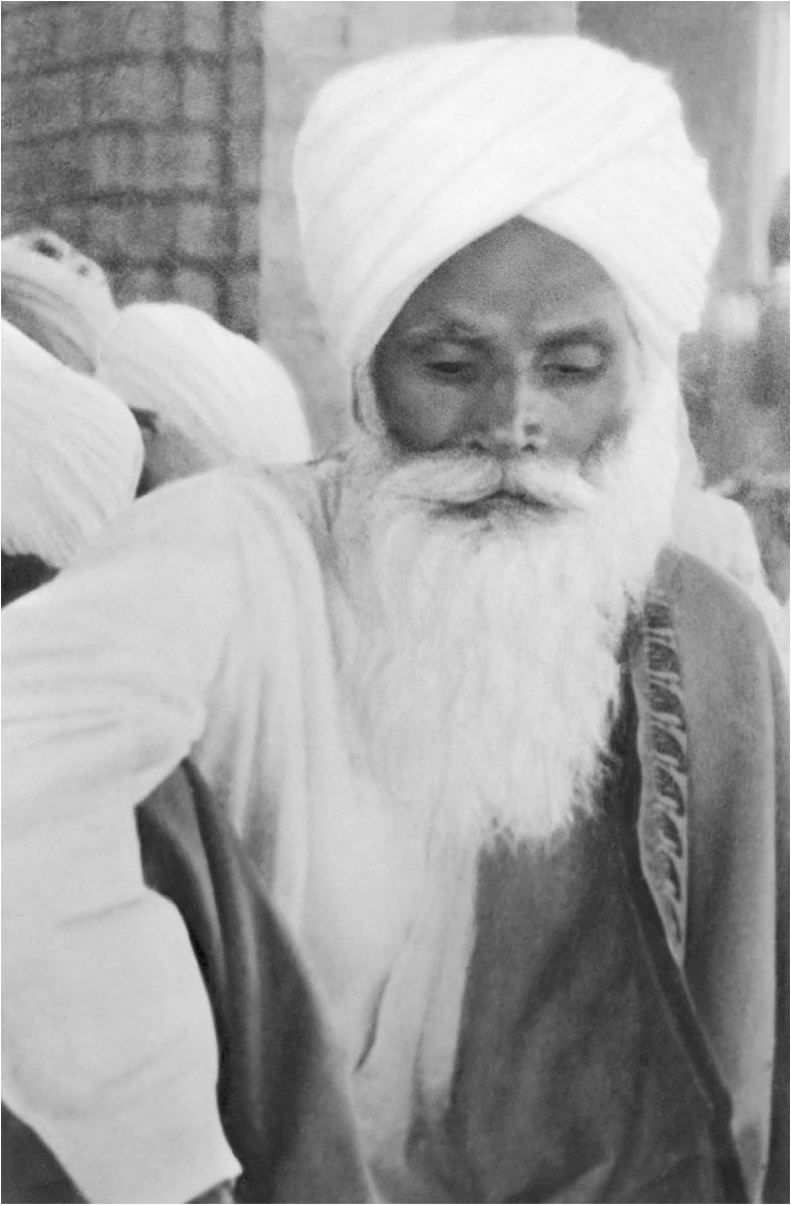
And then the mind confesses that it cannot give up its addiction to the pleasures of the senses, even though it wants to. It asks:

*How can I ascend to the sky within, O beloved?
I therefore suggest we beg for the Master's help. ...
When the Master showers his grace on us,
he will keep me in check.
I can never go up by my own strength –
I must meet the Master,
the emancipator of prisoners.*

And in the poem, this is what happens:

*Hearing this, the soul was overjoyed:
Come quickly and let the Master cut our bonds!
Both went to satsang and submitted themselves. ...
Holding hands they rose up to the inner sky.*

Isn't it odd that in the poem there's quite a tender relationship between the soul and the mind? In fact the mind calls the soul 'beloved'. The mind doesn't see itself as the soul's enemy. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that the mind is the soul's enemy only as long as its tendency is downward. And because it's so strong, there's absolutely no way we can overcome it without help. But then, Maharaj Ji says, when it hears the music of the Shabd and enjoys that pleasure, it wants to rise up to its own home inside. As he explains it:



Maharaj Jagat Singh

When, through meditation or concentration, the attention collects at the eye centre, and with the help of shabd or nam it returns to its own original home, there can be no better friend than the mind. When it is on its way back to its own home it becomes our friend because only when the mind is on the way home can the soul also be on its way along with the mind.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

What we usually don't realize is that the mind itself is suffering here. Whenever we feel pain or unhappiness, it's the mind that's feeling that pain. When we feel depressed or lonely, it's the mind that feels those things. Life is certainly not all joy for the mind down here in the creation. It longs to be happy. So if it can find something to make it look inward for happiness, its tendency will be to turn inward. So this is our great goal: to get the mind to turn inward. It's a real challenge, though. And it might take the rest of this lifetime.

But let's think about those lucky people who seem to be getting it right – who don't seem to be tied down so much by the mind. There's one thing that strikes us like a hammer blow when we go to the Dera: the beautiful faces of so many of those simple people, and how they light up like lanterns when they see their Master. If you glance around while you're sitting in satsang, you see those beautiful faces that just shine with love and adoration when they see him. They are focused on him alone. And then you realize that cleverness has no place on this path. All that's needed is love and devotion. Love for the Master and unflinching devotion to him.

Once we fall in love with our Master, it's our attachment to him that will pull us up. When this attachment becomes strong, it takes precedence over any other ties that may have been keeping us here in the creation. And then we will be irresistibly drawn to that

stronger attachment. Something Hazur Maharaj Ji must have said a thousand times while he was with us in the body was: “You go where your attachments are.” If we are more attached to our Master than to the faces and places of this world, then this will pull us inwards and upwards.

Ultimately our escape from this creation won't depend on how good or moral we've been. It won't depend on how much karma we've paid off. It won't even depend on how much meditation we've done. Primarily it'll depend on our attachments – or to be more specific, whether we are attached to the creation or to the Master and the Sound Current, the Light and Sound within. And this stronger attachment will take us out of here forever. No more coming back!

Great Master specifically tells us in *Spiritual Gems*:

The followers who love the Master and have no desire for anything of this world shall not be reborn, even if they have not made much spiritual progress while here. ... On the other hand, those who have worldly desires left in their minds at death will have to be reborn, notwithstanding their devoting long hours to spiritual exercise.

So this is really something worth working for. And if our meditation remains difficult and apparently unproductive, let's keep working at it. Let's be patient and just keep trying to do our best.

The truth is that even though our Master wants our meditation, ultimately we'll have to rely on him to carry us up. We learn through hard experience that we are helpless to do this on our own. We may struggle to lift our consciousness higher than our big toe! And this is probably exactly the way it has to be. We need to be shown our helplessness before we can surrender ourselves to our Master.

In *Gurbani Selections*, Vol. II, Guru Arjun Dev makes it very clear that every single thing is in the Lord's hands, and the Lord keeps everyone wherever he wills. He says:

*A person's power doesn't lie in his own hands;
the supreme Lord is the doer and the primal cause.
The poor individual simply obeys the command,
for it is only what pleases God that finally comes to pass.*

And when that time finally comes – when we've been trying for long enough, then we can look forward to eternal joy and bliss beyond imagining. If a disciple has been faithfully doing his work, then at long last the full treasure of the rewards of his meditation will be revealed, when he sees the indescribable glory of his inner Master. And swept up into that wonder, unaware of anything else and drunk with bliss, the soul, together with the mind, will soar up into the sky of Trikuti. And once it's free of the mind, perhaps even far, far beyond.



*The Lord creates his own love within us. We're just an instrument.
We feel that we love him, but he is the one who is pulling us
from the inside. He is the one who is creating that love. The pull
starts with him. But we should at least be receptive to the pull.
The Lord worships himself through us, in other words. ... But we
have a certain part to play, so the part is being played through
us. Without his grace nobody can worship him, nobody can love
him – because we are all blind. We are all lost in this illusion.
And we could never think about the Lord unless he creates ... that
atmosphere in which we can build our meditation.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II

Longing for God

This may well be the deepest intrinsic desire in man: a longing for God. We long for him because we were once one with him and our souls experienced his love. And then he separated us from himself.

In a mysterious way we remember, and for the rest of our lives we seek to re-experience, relive and return to that love that we once felt. In fact, if we let ourselves feel this separation fully, we suffer. This sense of emptiness never goes away – and it shouldn't, since it is the driving force of our existence. But all too often we suffer so much that we try to ignore the emptiness we feel, or fill it with something else, or someone else.

What love can we feel here on earth that will make us forget the love of the Creator? How many times do we rush to obtain a temporary satisfaction in order to quell the dissatisfaction? Yet this suffering is our greatest good. What would happen to us if we stopped feeling this emptiness and restlessness? We would, without question, stop seeking God. If we were satisfied, why seek for more?

Maharaj Charan Singh told us that this longing or loneliness is the Lord's way of pulling us to him:

If we didn't feel that feeling of loneliness within ourselves, then perhaps nobody would think about the Father. If these outside faces and objects could hold our attention and make us happy permanently, forever, nobody would think about the Father. We react back, we rebound back from all this, and then we turn to the Father to seek that bliss and peace and happiness within.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

The insatiable longing in our heart is the prayer that never ceases. And it is the prayer that God answers by drawing us closer to him. This restlessness makes us remember our Creator and seek him whether consciously or unconsciously. Often it develops into a sense of deep loneliness.

The Masters tells us that loneliness is natural because it is a subtle expression of our soul's longing to meet the Lord. Often, we may feel a deep void as the world may lose its charm. This feeling of emptiness and disenchantment has great value if properly understood and acted upon.

Loneliness drives some people to destructive behaviour, and so it can seem like a curse. But it can be a blessing if we allow it to drive us within and bring us to the Master. We must choose how to handle it. The Masters advise us to turn to the Lord to ease our loneliness. From meditation we get peace and comfort, therefore meditation is the only option.

Let's think of the moment we last experienced a closeness to our Master. Although these moments are rare, this experience of closeness allows us a taste of his love for us. But we get distracted by life. Instead of craving a deeply satisfying love for the Lord, we settle for a house, a family, a few friends, a job, a TV, and a yearly vacation. Our souls are starving!

Even if we have possessions or even success, we will never find real or lasting satisfaction. This hunger is not a mere physical or emotional hunger. It is a hunger – a hunger from God and for God. Some may not know they long for him because they don't know him. And yet, the core battle in everyone's life is to know God, to worship him, to experience his presence, hear his voice, trust him in everything – even when he seems to disappear.

The paradox of our time is that we spend more but have less; we buy more but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences but less time; more medicine but less wellness. We read too little, watch too much TV, and meditate too seldom. While we are gaining understanding about our world, have we grown in our knowledge of the Creator of the world? Despite everything that is available to fill our hunger, it's obvious that something is still missing. Evidence of that is seen in all the emptiness, broken relationships, shattered dreams, substance abuse, and acts of violence that surround us.

Yet in a deeper sense, these aren't so much the problems as they are symptoms of a larger problem. The deeper issue is that we try to fill up that ghastly hole in the pit of our stomachs that is really in our souls. We try to fill it with food, with power, with relationships. But this is a hunger for God, and the only possible food is meditation. The only place to invest our heart, soul, mind, and strength is with our Master, and him alone, because he too longs for his disciples. His heart rejoices when we draw near to him through meditation.

We are drawn to the path because we are hungry for love. However, the big question is: What is our capacity for love? How much hunger do we have? In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh says this about longing :

It is a gift from the Lord. You can't create it. He creates his own longing, the longing for himself. I don't think there is any way to create that longing at all. He is the One who created that yearning and longing within the Saints. Meditation strengthens that longing and helps us to rise to the level where we can experience that longing, and ultimately merge into that Being.

God is self-sufficient and needs nothing to be complete. Yet he loves us so much, so overwhelmingly, that he wants us to benefit from his abundant blessings. We may not always feel that he longs for us, but he plays a game of hide and seek with us – to make us long for him.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II, the Great Master tells us that longing is created in the disciple when he is unable to get what he yearns for. When the mind finds little apparent progress despite its labour, he says, it grows restless and begins to feel a sense of separation from the Master. And it's this longing that burns up worldly attachments and desires and eventually makes us fit to travel inwards to where the soul wants to go.

By separation from the physical form of the Master, a deep longing is produced to meet him inside. And when a devotee does not see the form inside, the absence of the form produces restlessness and anguish in the mind. This is when we are given the great gift of yearning. But in order to nurture that deep spiritual longing, which will take us to the Master within, we have to do our part. The journey of Sant Mat can take the disciple to the innermost level of Truth, but it is up to the disciple to travel there. The Master can tell us about the Truth and point us to it, but he cannot experience the Truth for us.

A mature level of devotion is one where the disciple realizes that the true Master is always close, even when he feels so very far away. Meditation is the way we have to keep calling him. Meditation is the means by which we keep trying to direct our attention inwards and upwards to bring us to that state where we will finally become intimate with the real Master, the Shabd Master – the Radiant Form which we long to see. It's then that we'll come to experience real love for the one for whom we're yearning.

In *Light on Sant Mat*, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

Love for the Master comes by having darshan inside, that is, by seeing him inside. It is only then that the feeling of real love springs up. In the beginning we have to practise it more or less. If we carry out his wishes and commands and follow his instructions faithfully, a feeling of confidence and love springs up; and it also leads to darshan inside, which further promotes and strengthens his love.

Our Master is more eager for us to be successful in our journey than we ourselves are. His sole purpose for coming into this world is to bring us into the presence of his Radiant Being, which will take us up to become one with the Creator again.

Still, the path we walk to meet his Radiant Form is long and slow, and it may sometimes feel as if we're travelling this road alone. And it will remain so until we become conscious of him within. And then, at last, we will realize that we were never alone.



*One day your heart
will take you to your lover.
One day your soul
will carry you to your Beloved.
Don't get lost in your pain,
know that one day
your pain will become your cure.*

Azima Melita Kolin & Maryam Mafi,
Rumi – Hidden Music

A Path of Patience

Lord, grant me patience, but hurry!

St Augustine

One thing we all learn fairly quickly on this path of the saints is that it is not a sprint, but a marathon. Cheap tricks and quick results are not a part of this way to the self. Weeds spring up in days and mature in weeks, while a giant oak tree takes a lifetime to develop and mature.

Baba Ji speaks a lot about spiritual maturity. It's the opposite of the petulant little 'me' that wants all the goodies now without the requisite time and sacrifice. This is a path of patience. After all, who is it in you that is pushing and demanding? It is your ego-self, the very part of you that must die in order to enter the light. Patience and time destroy this barrier of the self which stands between the soul and union with its Lord.

Supreme discipline, concentration and patience are required to master this path. First we must frame and focus our attention completely and then eliminate all competing centres of mental energy and conflicting agendas. These drain precious attention that would otherwise be channelled towards our ultimate goal.

On the path of patience we learn the difference between force and technique. One might take the example of the macho (egotistical) golfer who, full of gusto and zeal, attempts to crack the ball with full force down the fairway. What happens? It inevitably slices to one side or dribbles a few paces forwards. In contrast, a young lady (much weaker and humbler) with a beautiful technique and timing drives the ball effortlessly down the fairway.

There is a fine line between spiritual greed and well-intentioned effort. A good meditation technique takes longer and requires patience

to develop, but in the long term yields superior results. Nevertheless it is quite subtle: it is that 'effortless effort' or 'relaxed concentration' that we are striving for. Grasping at enlightenment causes us to stumble over our own egos.

Ultimately, patience is humility. After all, what power does the small self have? Is it not a humble surrender to the overwhelming pull of the all-knowing Shabd that sets us free? Patience is an attitude that says "You know best, O Lord. May your will be done in your own sweet time."

Do we really know what we are asking for? In truth, the immature soul could never deal with an instant surge of spiritual power. The Masters have always said that the soul is released the way a silk cloth is removed from a thorny bush – one thorn at a time, with great patience and care. Haste, the impatience born of ego, only damages the delicate process. Hence Baba Jaimal Singh's aphorism that "to hasten is satanic", meaning that it is the way of Kal or the mind.. We cannot force the rosebud open; all we can really do is tend and water the soil and sit in that sunlight, day after day, and the beautiful work is done seemingly of itself. Knowing how to wait, to endure, these are the qualities of a mature soul.

It is a thing of great beauty to be in the presence of those old souls who have completed a lifetime of devotion and inner work. There is an indefinable lightness and purity that gently radiates from their ageing forms. There is no apparent force or counterfeit spirituality, just a gentle surrender cloaked in the sweet fragrance of humility and devotion. With patience and time we are eventually refashioned and formed into the image and likeness of the Lord upon whom we steadfastly contemplate. This is a path of gradual transformation and becoming.



The Way, the Truth and the Life

Many of us may have had the following kind of experience. We have a query about our insurance policy and it appears that a phone call is the only way to sort it out. So we gather our wits, patience and all possible information and dial Customer Care. Inevitably there is no live voice on the other end, just a pre-recorded voice asking us to press one of half a dozen numbers to narrow down the options. This is repeated three or four times – while our temperatures rise and patience begins to fizzle out. Eventually this disembodied voice says: “Dial 29 for a consultant.”

Hoorah! So we dial 29 and wait – finally a voice answers, again pre-recorded, saying all the consultants are busy, our call is valued, please wait. At which point a terrible synthesized version of a popular song starts to play, and the waiting continues. Five minutes later, after countless requests to be patient, patience runs out and we put the phone down. So frustrating! Has the old privilege of talking directly to a live person who can help us disappeared for good?

Happily not. The most important aspect of our lives, the path of Sant Mat, is not like that at all. The number of disciples following the path may have grown to millions, but we can still contact the CEO directly. We can write to the Master – the letters are answered and the replies always get delivered. We can travel to the Dera, sit at the feet of our Master and even address questions directly to him. He even visits us in our countries. And we can have private “phone calls” with him lasting two and a half hours every morning.

Does his accessibility make us undervalue what we have? Does it make us forget who we are actually dealing with? Master is not just a voice on the other end of the Customer Care line. He is not

the head of the accounts department. He is not the CEO of Quick Fix Insurance. The one who gazes directly into our eyes as he answers our questions and travels all over the world to visit us is none other than our Master, who is sent by God to free us from this world. The fact that he is in a human body and accessible to us should not blind us to who he is.

In the Bible, Jesus Christ says: “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”. (John 14:6) This simple statement tells us the whole story of Sant Mat. For us, the Master is indeed “the way, the truth and the life”.

Until we meet his Radiant Form, and become one with him, we cannot really grasp who he is. We can, however, read what has been said about the Masters, most particularly what has been written by perfect saints themselves. For example, Maharaj Sawan Singh wrote:

The perfect Masters are those who have distinguishably become one with the Lord. They are born in human form according to the wishes of the Lord, so that they may take souls from the lower regions and unite them with the Lord. They connect with the Lord those who follow their instructions, and make them like themselves.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. V

It is the Master’s Shabd Form that will take us home once he has initiated us. In his Shabd Form, Master is the door that opens into the spiritual world; he is also the guide on the road that leads to our home, and once we are there, we will discover that he is also our destination.

It is the sound and light of the Shabd, the Master’s true form, which will attract our soul like a moth to a flame and draw it out of its prison into eternal freedom. Left to its own devices the soul would never

find its way home. It will remain trapped here in the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The soul may have a deep-seated longing for home, but it is powerless to act unless it receives a helping hand. On its own it is lost in the darkness of a labyrinth with no exit.

This has been our story for countless, lonely ages, and we have become weary and dispirited. The world can no longer offer any pleasure, happiness or security that can be relied upon to last. We have come to understand this, maybe only subconsciously, and we have started to yearn for something, someone, who can offer security, truth, light and hope. This yearning is the Lord's gift and generally precedes the appearance in our lives of a living Master.

The enormity of what a Master represents is very difficult for us to understand with our intellect. We are dealing with concepts and images that almost seem like fairy stories. The Master is like the ultimate prince, come from a faraway land, to rescue the damsel in distress, release her from her wicked jailer and return her to her long-lost Father's home.

The way out of darkness, the path back to God, can be realized only if we catch hold of the Shabd, and our Master is the worldly manifestation of the Shabd. He has been sent by God himself, and he is, indeed, "the way".

He is also "the truth". Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Light on Saint John*:

It (the Word) is the truth, because it never perishes. It has created the whole universe. Everything we see will perish, but not that creative power, the Word.

The true essence of the Masters is Shabd – eternal and imperishable – and their teachings never change. Masters may come at different times

and speak in different idioms, but their message is always the same. They tell us that there is one God and the way back to him can be found only through the living Master. This is the unchanging essence of mystical teachings.

People everywhere have wrapped layers of disguise around the truth – rituals, ceremonies, creeds and dogmas – to such an extent that many have lost sight of the truth altogether. It is the Master's job to reveal it. He explains the teachings and he shows us how to make contact with the Shabd, the truth itself. Through the Shabd we can begin to approach and know God. There is no other way that this can happen.

And what about our soul's true home? We know all our worldly homes. They, like the people in our lives, are impermanent and perishable. Sach Khand is a different story. Sach Khand, God's home of truth, beauty and love, will never perish, and it is our birthright. The soul has a memory of all this, and longs for it.

We all need and yearn for something real and true in our lives – a person, a belief, a hope that is unchanging. Only our Master, the Shabd in human form, can satisfy this need. And somehow or other, we have found our way to him. We sit in the palm of his hand. Eternal life, filled with peace and bliss, awaits all those initiated souls who follow the Master, the Shabd, along the path of light and sound to its final destination, Sach Khand. The soul longs to return to its source in God, from which it was separated originally.

Only through the Master can we be granted this perfect destiny. His Radiant Form will guide us along the whole journey until finally we merge with the Lord. Our love and gratitude should know no bounds.



Is There a God?

However much we may be absorbed in the affairs of living, at some stage in our lives everybody, however fleetingly, wonders whether or not there is a God and if so, where is He? Even the adamant atheist – somewhere deep in the recesses of his mind – is unsure whether his assertions are correct or not. ...

Logically, it is impossible to know for certain whether or not there is a God, for intellect and thought cannot perceive Him. Yet, through reason it is possible to approach the subject. Mystics say that the amazing diversity, complexity, order and organization in the universe has not come into being by chance. There is a supreme Intelligence behind it. Modern science may have discovered and described something of this incredible order, but cannot understand its origins. The existence of this order tells us something.

The story is related of a 'primitive' man who is walking in the wilderness when he comes across an old-fashioned pocket watch, lying on the ground. He picks it up, examines it, discovers how to wind it up and notices how intricately and beautifully all its parts fit together and interact with each other. It does not take him long to come to the conclusion that such a clever instrument could not have formed itself by chance. The pocket watch must have had an intelligent creator. The case is similar with the universe in which we live.

When we look up into a clear night sky, we can see thousands of stars. Yet, with only a few exceptions, the stars are all members of our own galaxy and represent far less than a billionth of the stars in the physical universe. ... Yet, the moons, planets, stars and galaxies are ordered in such a way that they never collide with each other.

John Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus*

Borrowed Splendour

*Sunlight fell upon the wall;
the wall received a borrowed splendour.
Why set your heart on a piece of earth, O simple one?
Seek out the Source
which shines forever.*

In this little poem Rumi concedes that this world is splendid – there is much to admire in it. But its splendour is borrowed from the inner worlds, he says. We may be deceived into thinking that the wall in the poem emits its own light, and under this mistaken impression we may desire to own a mere “piece of earth”. However, he urges us rather to seek out the source of all beauty so that we can find that which is everlasting. Instead of trying to possess a fragment of the physical creation, we can have everything. In finding the source, we can become united with the One.

If there’s great beauty in the creation, this is not some random accident. If there is a design there must be a designer. We read in *One Being One* that to believe that the creation happened because of some act of random chance is like believing that “a hurricane could blow through a junkyard and create a jumbo jet”.

It does seem that the creation has been rather carefully planned. If we took the time to look at it sensitively, we would become conscious of a power that is hidden in it – we would give thought to the Grand Designer. However, we generally value what is unreal more than what is real. And therefore, in pursuing what is of this earth, we can have no more than a piece of it. What’s more, we deny ourselves our real heritage: In so doing we don’t seek out the Source which is eternal.

In spite of all the material objects we embrace, we will still carry no more out of this world than we can take out of a dream. Yet much of our time on Earth is spent acquiring stuff. The mistake we make is forgetting that everything is given to us in trust. In *Spiritual Letters* Baba Jaimal Singh writes to his disciple Sawan Singh, who would become the Great Master:

All your possessions were given to you in the beginning by the Satguru, so they should have been held in trust. They were never to be regarded as your own. . . . Understand that “I am nothing”. All is Satguru’s. I do not exist. . . . So surrender yourself and step aside my son. Consider that each and every thing in the world – body, mind and wealth – belongs to the Satguru, that you are nothing.

This advice was given by one Master to a Master-in-the-making as a reminder of the illusory nature of the creation. It also encourages an attitude of humility. Being humble does not mean that we have to stop striving for worldly success. We should strive to attain a good education, or a promotion at work. But being humble also means internalizing the fact that nothing on this plane can belong to us.

Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us there is nothing in this creation to be proud of. He asks:

Are we proud of our youth? Have we never seen anyone in old age? Are we too not going to grow old? Are we proud of our looks or our beauty? Have we never seen the faces of sick people in hospital? . . . We are proud of our money, but have we not seen the wealthiest of people, kings and rulers, roaming the streets like beggars? We are intoxicated by power, but have we not seen

influential and important leaders hunted down like animals, made to stand before firing squads or thrown into jail? These are people who were so powerful that others would bow to the ground before them.

Spiritual Discourses, Vol. II

Nothing here is permanent. As Rumi points out in his poem, this is nothing but a shadow world. And in *Dawn of Light* Great Master provides this translation of a poem by Kabir Sahib:

*Primordial Maya did in cleverness create
A false show which in Pind she did thus adumbrate.
In Anda first a copy drew,
of which she here a shadow threw.*

Pind means this physical world and Anda, the astral world. So Kabir is revealing that the physical creation is a copy of the astral region. But to us it is so alluring that we are tricked into believing it is real. We fail to realize that everything in the physical world has been created by the Universal Mind – which has drawn its power from the Source of all. As we read in *One Being One*:

Everything we perceive with our senses is just a projected image. There is light in the projector: that's the One Being. Then there's the film through which the light shines; that's the mind. And then there's the screen on which the projected images appear: that's this world.... Switch off the light in the projector and everything disappears.

We are so busy accumulating little pieces of the created world when the Creator himself could be ours. Why approach the ocean with a teaspoon? Why stand across from the waterfall when we could stand beneath it and be drenched in grace?

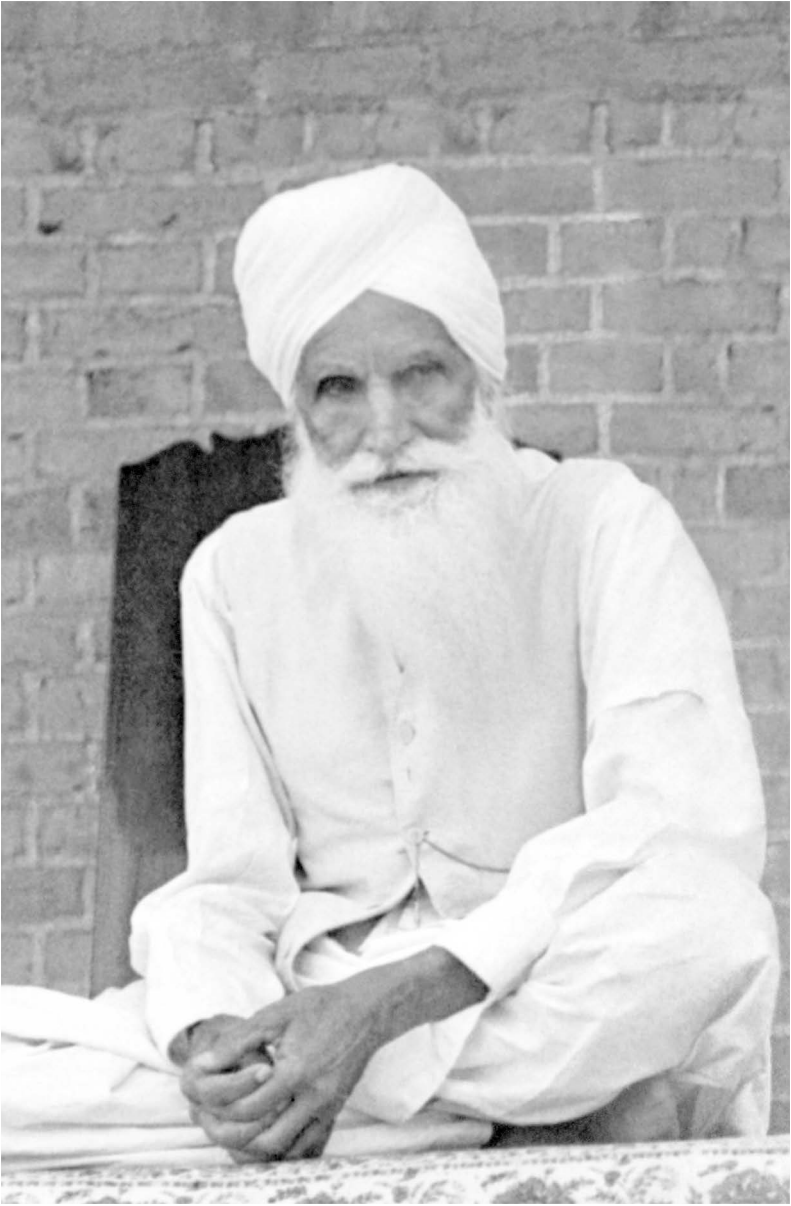
In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, Hazur tells us the physical world is made of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Earth will be dissolved by water; water will be evaporated by fire; fire will be consumed by air and air will merge back into ether. Finally, ether will go back to God. So there has to be something to hold this whole universe together, to prevent dissolution. You can give it any name, he says. We call it Shabd or Nam.

In *With a Great Master in India* Dr Julian Johnson wrote about the beauty of the sunset at a time when he was with Great Master:

At last the sun dropped down below a purple curtain and suddenly spread out upon the river a great sheet of gold. ... This disciple sat at the feet of the Master as he watched the sun go down at last behind the city. The Master sat quietly talking to a few enquirers concerning the way to approach the inner worlds. ... Someone remarked to the Master of the great beauty of the sunset colours. Glancing towards the west for a moment, he said: "Yes, it is much like the colours in Trikuti, the second region."

At another time they were visiting an abandoned palace in the city of Jaipur, admiring its faded glory. Great Master turned to the young doctor who was acting as a guide and remarked:

One who goes inside will see many palaces, rare and beautiful buildings, landscapes, gardens and all sorts of scenes vastly



Maharaj Sawan Singh

more beautiful than any that an earthly raja ever built, or that man ever saw on this plane.

The gardens and palaces we see in this world are reflections of what exists in the inner regions. In *Dawn of Light* Great Master quotes Soami Ji as saying that when approaching the fourth region one can see palaces that appear to be made of pearls, with their top stories made of emeralds, rubies and diamonds. In the fifth region there are palaces of gold set in fields of silvery light. But the treasure of all treasures is that we get to behold the King of kings, who then himself takes us on to meet the monarch of all, Radha Soami. And most incomprehensible, Soami Ji says, is that all of this is created and sustained by the power of love.

What an amazing legacy we have. This is our birthright. When we wish to claim our divine heritage, the Lord sends us a Master. Once he links us to the Shabd, no one can ever deny us our divine heritage. Yet, how we waste our time chasing after shadows and reflections!

Rumi tells us: “Seek out the Source, which shines forever.” This Source is not far away. We have this assurance in *One Being One*:

He is never apart from His creation. He is always there, within every little being, every soul. It can never be said enough, never recalled enough, never lived enough. He is in the present moment, right now. He is within. He is without. Whenever the mind is quiet, we will find Him in our being. He is the “wind beneath our wings”. He is not what we think. He is what we are.



Daily Miracles

Many of us are probably familiar with the playwright Noel Coward's famous line, "Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun." One wonders what he would have said about people who get up in the dark hours of morning every day of their lives, sit stock still for two and a half hours silently repeating, over and over, the same five words. Perhaps the playwright would have found this equally as mad.

And there may be times when we would almost be inclined to agree with him. After all, it is so much more comfortable to stay in bed. But then, for most of us, meditation is not a madness, but a miracle – a miracle of love that happens every day.

A lot of people in today's world meditate, for whatever reason. But how many of them were taught their technique by a perfect living Master who could reconnect their souls to the Word of God? Because this, in fact, is what our meditation does. Satsangis are not making it up as they go along; they're not following a *Meditation Made Simple* manual; or choosing one of a hundred suggestions offered by Google. Our meditation technique comes from a living spiritual Master who is acting in direct response to a request from God: that his marked sheep be initiated and brought back to him. Is this not a miracle?

The percentage of initiated souls on this earth plane is minute. We initiates of perfect living Masters are indeed marked by the Lord with a final expiry stamp and a return address – initiated by a Son of God, cared for by him for the rest of our earthly lives, finally to be escorted by him to their original home in Sach Khand.

But still, even though we might know this intellectually, sometimes meditation may seem a bit more like a daily grind than a daily miracle – especially when it is cold, when the body is aching or worldly cares are overwhelming. In fact, if we ever sit down and think about it,

maybe the big “why?” question comes up. Why do we do it? Many of us, probably most of us, meditate because of what seems to be the real miracle: that the living Master has come for us. We meditate because he asked us and we promised.

Granted, at the time, we didn't know what the promise entailed. We didn't understand that something as seemingly simple as repeating five words for two hours every day while sitting still, could be fraught with difficulty. What could be so difficult about two hours and five words? We soon discover – everything!

And yet we still do it. Why? Out of love for our Master and out of desire to please him through obedience and effort – which seems to be all that we can offer him. Someone asked Maharaj Charan Singh: “Maharaj Ji, how does a satsangi's love grow from an intermittent thing, to one of God-absorption?” He replied:

There is a very special process. ... That is meditation. You see, meditation creates love. It strengthens love. It deepens love. It grows love. Ultimately it illuminates you and it make you God. That's all meditation.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

We must never forget that the entire meditation package is a gift from God himself. We don't get marked because we are so marvellous or so deserving. We get marked because he takes pity on us. We don't get up to sit because we are so wonderfully spiritual. We get up to sit because he wants us to and so he pulls the right strings. We don't feel love for the Master or God for any other reason but that God has planted the seed of his own love within us.

It's through the process activated by our meditation that our Master works his daily miracles within us, quietly transforming us into better

people, and helping us with our karma. Here are Hazur Maharaj Ji's words on what meditation is doing for us.

Meditation changes the very attitude of our life. ... You see, even if we don't experience anything within, ... meditation changes our outlook on life. It makes us humble. It makes us more loving, more kind, more God-fearing.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

For countless lifetimes we have been blind to the world of spirit and deaf to the voice of God reverberating within us. We have been totally involved in the world of senses. Our Master now needs us to change our orientation from down and out, to inward and up. We need to become alive to the inner world. And our Master needs our co-operation to make this miracle happen. He needs us to show up obediently every morning, to take our seat and try our best. It seems we have to be there for the alchemy to work.

Masters tell us that meditation is also about paying off or lessening the impact of our karmic debts. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

Miracles happen with satsangis at every step of their lives. They're all individual miracles. A miracle is something that happens within, not outside. How our karmas are being taken care of, what we are supposed to pay and how much remission we get – these are the miracles of the mystics. ... A miracle is the remission of our karmas – how much remission we get inside, what help we get in meditation, what help we get to go through our karmas in this life so that we are not affected by the worst karmas which we have to face. These are the miracles of the Master.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

This whole business of karmas is such a mystery to us. But even here Master works his daily miracles, often turning sword thrusts into pinpricks. We, of course, have no way of knowing whether what we are going through is the full karmic episode or an abridged version, but whatever it is, it happens under Master's loving, watchful eye and with his full approval.

From a spiritual perspective, meditation is all about reaching the eye centre and eventually entering the inner spiritual realms and meeting the Master's Radiant Form – contacting the Shabd. It's all about the journey back to Sach Khand. If we want to return to God, then there is only one way, and that is by attaching ourselves to the Shabd, which will draw us up and take us home. And we have to participate in this journey actively. We have to meditate. Master needs us to participate actively and willingly as he works his miracles.

Someone once asked Hazur Maharaj Ji whether the Masters perform miracles on our behalf that might otherwise be explained as coincidences, and he replied:

They perform spiritual miracles, so to say. We who are slaves of the senses, slaves of karma, slaves of the world, who are bound to this world – they detach us from here and take us back to the Lord. That is the greatest miracle they can perform, and that is their main mission in this life.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I



Divine Music

From our limited human viewpoint, one of the most significant characteristics of the Word of God must surely be that it can be heard within when a person practises the correct spiritual exercises or sometimes even spontaneously for brief periods when the mind is quiet and deeply concentrated. The Word is heard in the form of the most beautiful music. It is the primal and pristine music of creation's dawn, of the beginning of everything. It resounds unceasingly within every particle of creation and within every soul.

It is awe-inspiring, breathtaking and blissful. And it automatically instils in its listeners a sense of true worship, something quite different and a million times deeper and more real than the feelings generated by ritual or ceremony. This is the Voice of God, the divine Sound, the divine Music, the real Music of the Spheres which keeps the universe and all souls in existence. It is the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit...

In life, our highest or most inspired moments are often those of complete absorption in something. Depending on the person, it may be beautiful music, the pageants and wonders of the natural world or some other experience of the five senses...

The sights, sounds and phenomena of this world are of a limited duration. The music of the Word, the divine Music, however, goes on and on, for as long as creation lasts. The music of this world is created by making sound vibrations in the air. The divine Music is created by God as His Primal Vibration by means of which He fashions and sustains His creation. External music is heard with the outer ears. The divine Music is heard with the 'ear' of the soul, the hearing faculty of the soul.

The Gospel of Jesus

Ever-Present Shabd

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, the Great Master has defined the essential aspect of all spirituality:

The Shabd is the basis of all true religions, for religion means “that which connects us with the Lord”. ... Shabd is all-powerful and is the Creator of all. It is therefore the seed of the entire creation. Whatever is in the seed is also in the tree which springs from it.

We are told that the real form of our Master is Shabd. The Masters have constantly reminded us not to chase after the Master in his physical form – that our focus should be on meeting the Master on the inside, his Shabd form. It is also in his Shabd form that the Master is constantly with us. Maharaj Charan Singh repeatedly told us that the Master is closer to us than our very breath. He was telling us that we and the Master are inseparable.

This becomes more real to us if we keep reminding ourselves that the real Master is Shabd – and that this Shabd, this audible life stream, is what sustains everything in the creation. Not only is the Word or Shabd present in every cell in our bodies and in every other part of the creation, but it sustains each and every particle. Withdraw the Shabd from these infinite numbers of particles, and they – and the entire creation that depends on them – will cease to exist. We would then experience instant dissolution. Without Shabd to maintain the energy or life force in the creation, there would be nothing. The creation as we know it would simply cease to be.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, the Great Master provides this very clear explanation of Shabd.

The Shabd is the very essence of the Lord and it sustains millions of universes and regions. ... It is the life current which originates from the Lord and pervades everything. The Lord creates and sustains the entire universe through this great Current of Power. It gives life to the whole of the creation and can take every living being back to his original home or the Lord.

We read in *One Being One*:

He is in the creation, and the creation is in Him. If He withdrew His Word, everything would vanish, like switching off a light. Through His Word, He is present in every little (and bigger) particle of His creation.

That means that he is constantly present in us. And to add to the wonder of this, we're told that, as initiates of a perfect living Master, we can have conscious access to this wondrous Shabd. Through our one-pointed meditation, we can experience its awesomeness. And at the same time we can prove its existence for ourselves, once and for all. What is profoundly encouraging is that this Shabd, this sound, can be heard in our meditation.

In *The Path of the Masters*, this most important aspect of Shabd is highlighted, which enables us to irrefutably prove the existence of the audible life stream for ourselves.

We come back now to that particular phase of the audible life stream which concerns us most – the fact that it can be heard. This is an amazing thing, marvellous to contemplate! This idea is

so utterly new, to the Western world in particular. It amounts to the most important discovery of modern thought, and yet it is not a modern discovery. It is a fact of nature well known to Masters during the most remote ages. It is the loss of this important knowledge that has left most of the world in spiritual darkness.

We don't need to be spiritually advanced to hear the Shabd. The Masters recommend that whatever sound we hear when we do our bhajan, we should focus on it. With time and focused attention, this sound gradually transforms from its most elementary or basic variations to the divine music.

As we are all inherently spiritual beings, and the Shabd permeates every part of our being, we are already in possession of all the qualities required for God-realization. This is our ultimate goal and we will reach it. It will take time and no doubt much effort, but in our own Master we have a personal, loving friend and guide to support and direct our every move along the way.



Shabd is the essence of all reality and existence – the divine Word, the heavenly Harmony, the celestial Music. It is the light and life of all creation; it is the very being of the ultimate absolute; it is the supreme current of spirituality, a wave or tide of the ocean of Godhead. It permeates all creation; it pervades the whole cosmos. Only the transcendent soul can come in contact with it; only in a superconscious rapture of mystic transport can we touch it and know it. ... Only in a moment of eternal consciousness do we become one with it.

Mysticism, the Spiritual Path

Escape from the Matrix

In the movie *The Matrix*, the character Neo is given a choice of the red pill or the blue pill by his mentor Morpheus. He's told that if he takes the blue pill, the story will end and he will wake up in bed and believe whatever he wants to believe. "But if you take the red pill," Morpheus tells him, "you will stay in Wonderland, and I'll show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."

Upon taking the red pill, Neo then discovers the truth about the Matrix. He discovers that what he has been experiencing within the Matrix is a simulation of computer programs, designed to make his experiences seem real. Neo learns that the Matrix is controlled by artificially intelligent machines using powerful computer programs as agents, to seek out and eliminate threats to it.

In a way we can compare this world to the Matrix in the movie, in that the majority of souls have taken the blue pill. They are unconscious of the realities of this physical world. They live in a dream-like state, believing that this world is real. They chase after all the pleasures of this world looking for joy and happiness, not realizing that these can never be found in this world of duality.

If we had a choice, would we take the red pill or the blue pill? If we had the choice of discovering the path of truth or remaining in a dream-like state, oblivious to the truth and our own real nature, what would we choose?

Let's focus on what it means to take the red pill: to discover the path of truth, to free us from bondage with this world, and let us attain eternal happiness. How do we escape from this Matrix? How do we become conscious and escape this illusion? The answer to this enigma lies in realizing that we are spiritual beings having a human



Maharaj Charan Singh

experience – not the other way around, as so many may think. So, in order to escape from this Matrix, let us think about what our Matrix is, and how we have got to this point.

The children's book, *The Journey of the Soul*, provides a simple illustration of our origins by explaining that “God is a wondrous Ocean of Light called Love.” This ocean contained many millions of drops of light, each one being a soul. God then willed into existence the creation, including all the spiritual regions, using a “wondrous luminous wave of Sound and Light”. This sound current, the Shabd, is the very essence and life of all things.

There are four spiritual regions below the soul's original home, Sach Khand, including this physical plane. The physical world, and the two spiritual regions above the physical world, are the domain of time. The first region is the astral plane and the second is the causal plane. It is here in the causal region, also known as Trikuti, where the mind is acquired. Upon the soul's descent from high region through this region, the mind and soul became knotted together, with the mind obscuring much of the soul's light.

It is the control of the mind over the soul and the resultant actions of the body under the influence of the mind that causes an accumulation of karma. With the build-up of more and more karmas the soul starts forgetting its true abode. It is this wheel of eighty-four that has become our Matrix, keeping us trapped here for millions of lives.

Just as the artificially intelligent machines control the Matrix in the movie, so does the domain of time belong to the mind or negative power, also referred to as Kal. The efforts of this power are directed towards keeping the souls within its domain, and it does an excellent job. The negative power serves as a spiritual filtration system, a task allotted by the Supreme Lord, to make sure that no unclean and unprepared soul leaves Kal's jurisdiction.

So how does this filtration system work? As in *The Matrix*, where artificially intelligent machines use powerful computer programs as agents to seek out and eliminate threats to it, so the negative power uses agents, the five passions of the mind – lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride – to ensure that the soul is constantly distracted from seeking an escape route out of the creation. The result is the entrapment of the soul in the cycle of birth and death.

Distracted by these five passions, souls wander aimlessly for millions of lives, creating more and more karma to further entrap them. But for those who have been marked to return home, the Lord has created an escape route. The mystics tell us that within the human body there is the equivalent of a secret door by which we may return to the Lord. That secret door is the *tisra til* or third eye, located somewhere above and between the physical eyes.

But only a living Master can show us how to find our way out through this secret door. The task of the Master is to collect certain marked souls and bring them home. Therefore, the Master is the only one who can unplug us from the Matrix.

The Master can see who is fit for this path. He draws us to the path, and creates in us a love for the Lord and a desire to return home. Once we are initiated, his Radiant Form is always with us, even if we don't realize it, to guide us on our journey home.

Masters all come into this world with the same teachings. These teachings include four principles – guidelines for a very specific way of life – which allow us to make the desired spiritual progress. They include a vegetarian diet, abstinence from stimulants and drugs, and a moral life, as a foundation to the practice of meditation for a minimum of two and a half hours a day. At initiation disciples are taught to sit quietly with their eyes closed and concentrate at the eye centre. We are taught to withdraw our attention by repeating five holy names, called *simran*.

We all know that we cannot stop the mind from running out into the world, but with the help of our simran, we can give it something much sweeter: attunement and attachment to the Shabd. We soon find, though, that our meditation is a journey that cannot be achieved in a couple of sittings. We may not hear the Sound Current in the beginning, as our soul is covered with layers of karmas. But with the practice of meditation, and the grace of the master, those karmas will be removed, layer by layer.

Sadly, though, the majority of souls within the Matrix may choose the blue pill, so to speak, as they feel that there is so much still to achieve and enjoy in this world. But then there are those who are searching for something more meaningful. These are the souls who may be fortunate enough to be directed to the path of truth.

By taking the red pill in our analogy, these souls take a leap of faith and follow the teachings of the Master with discipline, sincerity and love. In the movie, Morpheus says to Neo, “Sooner or later you’re going to realize, just as I did, that there’s a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.”

The fortunate souls are the ones who become devoted to a Master. Those who abstain from animal products, alcohol and drugs; learn to love their fellow beings; and do their meditation with single-mindedness are the ones who will enjoy happiness beyond anything that the lovers of the world could ever imagine. They are the ones “walking the path”, not just knowing it.

Let us make use of the opportunity that’s been offered to us. When we hear the words of a perfect living Master, let’s remind ourselves that those words come from a place of truth. So let us place our faith in him and do what he asks – to achieve our goal of unplugging ourselves from the Matrix.



The Other Paltu

*There used to be another Paltu.
I was given the gift of devotion
because they thought I was he.
I caught the Name he was supposed to get—
Paltu's devotion was given to me.*

*I found it lying there—
Someone had dropped this incredible wealth.
I picked it up casually,
closed my hands over it, hid it away.*

*It was fated otherwise,
but there was a confusion
in the karmic account —
No one knew but me.*

*Eventually they found out;
they thought about it but didn't take it back.
That's the way of the rich —
if they make a mistake,
they can afford to let it go.*

*I am a no-good—
God clearly made a mistake.
There was this other Paltu—
and He thought I was he.*

Saint Paltu

Book Review



Annamalai Swami: Final Talks

EDITED BY DAVID GODMAN

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In 1928, at the age of 22, Annamalai Swami came to the ashram of his guru Sri Ramana Maharshi, affectionately known as Bhagavan. For ten years he served his guru and the community at the ashram. In 1938, he was instructed to stop his service and devote himself to solitary meditation.

By the 1980s, thirty years after the death of Bhagavan, many devotees had begun to seek out Annamalai for instruction on Bhagavan's teachings. Then, during the last six months of his teaching, just before his death in 1995 at the age of 89, audio recordings were made of Annamalai Swami's talks. David Godman, a leading expert on the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, transcribed and edited those recordings to produce this book.

As Godman points out, Annamalai Swami's "deep experience of the subject matter enabled him to communicate it with rare authority." His years of constant meditation had brought him to "a continuous awareness of the Self." But he always saw himself as simply conveying what he had learned from his guru, whose instructions served as guidelines for his entire life. He would say, "Bhagavan often used to say: The physical Guru is outside, telling you what to do and pushing you into the Self. The inner Guru, the Self within, simultaneously pulls you towards the Self"

Although Annamalai had received almost no formal education, he was able to express his guru's teachings in a way that was simple, clear, and even elegant. The Self, he said, is the one single reality behind all the diverse forms. To illustrate this point he used a vivid metaphor: "There may be different varieties of light bulbs but the current that activates and sustains them is the same. You must learn to become one with this activating current, the unmanifest Self, and not get caught up in all the names and forms that appear in it."

Annamalai offers many enlightening descriptions of the state of Self-awareness.

When you have become one with the Self, a great power takes over you and runs your life. It looks after your body; it puts you in the right place at the right time; it makes you say the right things to the people you meet. This power takes over you completely, you no longer have the power to decide or discriminate. The ego that thinks “I must do this” or “I should not do that” is no longer there. The Self simply animates you and makes you do all things that need to be done.

Describing the spiritual seeker's search for the Self, he said:

When you are not aware that your glasses are resting on your nose, you may look for them all day long, thinking that they are lost. As a consequence, you believe that they are an object to be found. Eventually you realize that you were wearing them all the time. While the search was on, that which was being sought was, in reality, that through which the seeing was taking place. You were looking for an object that finally turned out to be the subject that was doing the seeing. So it is with the mind and the Self. Mind sets up a notion that the Self needs to be found, and then proceeds to hunt for it as if it were some object that could be located in some interior place.

If the Self is not some object to be located somewhere within, how then is one to find it in the darkness?

If there is darkness, you remove it by bringing light. Darkness is not something real and substantial that you have to dig out and throw away. It is just absence of light, nothing more. When light is let into a dark room, the darkness is suddenly no longer there. It did not vanish gradually or go away piece by piece; it simply ceased to exist when the room became filled with light.

He explained that we put ourselves in an “imaginary darkness”:

The Self is not an object that you either see or don't see. It is there all the time shining as our own reality. If you refuse to acknowledge its existence, if you refuse to believe that it is there, you put yourself in an imaginary darkness. It is not real darkness. It is your own wilful refusal to acknowledge that you are light yourself. This self-inflicted ignorance is the darkness that has to be banished by the light of Self-awareness. We have repeatedly to turn to the light of the Self within until we become one with it.

He described the Self as manifesting through spiritual light and sound. “The light of the Self cannot be extinguished. It is eternal and immanent. It is not like ordinary lights that can be switched on and off. Once it is discovered within, it will be on all the time.” About the sound of the Self, he said,

The sound is happening in the Self... The soundless sound of the Self goes on all the time. It doesn't make a sound – it is the subtle sound. If you tune into this sound – you can't actually listen because it is not physical noise – that tuning in will lead you to the peace of the Self.

On mind, Annamalai explained how Bhagavan taught that “Mind is just a shadow. Attempts to catch it and control it are futile. They are just shadows chasing shadows. You can't control or eliminate a shadow by chasing it or putting a shadow hand on it. These are just children's games.” Therefore, Bhagavan did not teach his students to fight with the mind in meditation:

Usually when you sit in meditation, you are struggling to achieve something, fighting to gain control over the mind. Bhagavan did not advise us to engage in this kind of fight. He told us that there is no need to engage in a war against the mind, because mind does not have any real fundamental existence.

The mind, he says, projects an unreal mirage. “If you want to see with the eye of the Self – switch off the projector of the mind. The infinite eye of the Self will then reveal to you that all is one and indivisible.” He hints that there is no need to go on stumbling in the darkness. “You stumble around in the darkness of your mind, not knowing that you have a torch in your hand. That light is the light of the Self. Switch it on and leave it on and you will never stumble again.” Fundamentally, it is a matter of what we choose to be aware of. “In every moment you only have one real choice: To be aware of the Self or to identify with the body and the mind.”

While the idea of simply switching the attention to the Self sounds as if enlightenment should be instantaneous and even effortless, Annamalai Swami recognized that for most people it entailed many years of steadfast effort. He said,

If you leave your house and start walking away from it and you continue this habit over many years, you will be a long, long way from home when you finally decide you've had enough and that you want to go back to where you started. Don't be discouraged by the length of the journey and don't slacken your efforts. Turn 180 degrees and face the source of your outward journey and keep moving back to where you started. Keep moving back to your source and don't let anything distract you on the way.

In one vivid image, he conveyed both that we need relentless perseverance in our spiritual journey and also that this journey is utterly natural, following the course of our own higher nature:

Be like a river on its journey back to the sea. It doesn't stop, take diversions, or decide to flow uphill for a while. It just moves slowly and steadily back to the place from where its waters originated and when the river dissolves in the ocean, the river is no more. Only the ocean remains.



