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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Come, My Beloved Master, Please Come!

*Come, my beloved Master, please come!
Many days have passed in eager anticipation –
please bring forth bliss and blessings.
With my eyelashes I want to sweep the path you walk on;
my eyes eagerly wait for you –
please set your feet on the path.
Night and day I await your arrival;
please turn your gaze towards me.
With heartfelt zeal I decorate my courtyard,
trying to imagine how I would worship you –
I sacrifice my body and mind to you.
I want to circle around you
and bow my head at your feet –
I would be content to simply listen to your words.
I am just a slave at your feet, O Master Sukdev!
I want to be completely absorbed in your darshan.*

Sant Charandas



His Love

For the majority of us who are drawn to the path, it is the living Master who first catches our attention. Before we had knowledge of the Master and his teachings, it was unthinkable that there could be a God-realized soul living during our lifetime – one who could not only teach us the way back to God, but who promises to take us back to God.

This was an astounding discovery. To learn about the living Master was an irresistible draw, and we quickly found that as we began our study of Sant Mat, so too began our love affair with the Master.

But what does this actually mean? How can we love the Master? Many of us who were initiated by Maharaj Charan Singh never had the opportunity to even see him physically. So how is it possible to form a relationship with the Master, let alone love him?

Little do we realize that each one of us is special to the Master, and this is not our love affair with him – it is his love affair with us. It is he who loves us, who draws us to him and who creates love in us for him. In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II, the Great Master explains:

A Master possesses the unique magnetic power of love. ... This magnetic power is an inherent quality of the Master and emanates from his every action and movement. Everything that radiates from the Master – the light of his beautiful face, the lines on his forehead ... the lustre round him when he speaks smilingly – all pierce the heart of the devotee and thus attract him to his Master.

We don't really understand anything about this divine love, nor do we understand the love the Masters have for their disciples – for their entire sangat. However, in our absolute ignorance and, blinded by our exuberance at finding the path and the Master, we rush headlong into Sant Mat. The old adage: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread” may well apply to many of us. Kahlil Gibran warns us that this relationship with the Master is not as simple and as easy as it first seems. He writes in *The Prophet*:

*When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.
And when he speaks to you believe in him,
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind
lays waste the garden.*

*For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you.
Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest
branches that quiver in the sun,
So shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their
clinging to the earth.*

Didn't we all rush to follow our Master when he beckoned to us? And didn't we find his path far more difficult than we ever imagined? And if we didn't believe him, we wouldn't be reading this. And yes, many dreams and ideals have been shattered. Little did we know that accepting his crown meant we would, by our own hand, crucify our self – annihilating ego and personality. And truly, as we grow

spiritually, so are our many branches and attachments to the world pruned and cut – often painfully – and our very roots are being shaken loose from all the attachments, concepts and perceptions we once held dear.

So why do we continue on this path of ‘self-destruction’? Because we have no option. Because he loves us and we can’t resist him. For as Gibran says in the same book: “Think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course.”

The Master is a beacon of light in our world of darkness. We may still have much ground to cover to reach that light and it is only love that can take us closer to it. To achieve that love is the true aim of our life. And that love will blossom into sweetness only through our correct practice of meditation. It is only through his grace that we can truly experience the euphoria of his love – and it is our meditation that makes us receptive to his grace. The perfect Catch-22 – we can’t have the one without the other! But to become a recipient of this wonderful gift of love one has to follow the instructions of the Master.

Hazrat Inayat Khan, a Sufi Master, tells us:

Those who have benefited by the life and the Message of the Divine Message Bearers are not necessarily the followers of their Message, but the imitators of their life; for they have not followed the teaching only, but followed the Teacher, who is the living example of his teaching.

The Masters work tirelessly and endlessly to guide and nurture us. Through their endless patience they cajole us – beg us – to put spirituality first in our lives, so that they can take us back to the Lord and our true home. This untiring dedication is even to the detriment of their own well-being.

The Masters are bound to these lower planes of existence through us – even if they themselves are no longer in the physical body. It is both their love for us and their commitment and dedication to take us back home that keep the Master's Radiant Form here – watching and guiding us from within. The more we meditate, the sooner our Master will also be able to return home. Perhaps we forget this when we neglect our meditation.

Not only that, but we deny ourselves the greatest treasure imaginable. For the Great Master tells us that surrendering one's life to the path of love gives to life a unique and exquisite taste, which can be enjoyed only by a lover, for love is a beautiful and sublime experience of the heart. Love, he says, is like a fountain of fragrance in the garden of life. Without love we are like a lamp without oil or like eyes without sight.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II, the Great Master gives us an indication of what love is when he says:

It is not easy to understand love because its true nature and greatness cannot be described in words. It is a pure and delicate feeling or emotion, which can be experienced only by one who is in love. ... Actually, love is another name for God. And just as it is not possible to reduce God's greatness to mortal dimensions, so also is it not possible to describe adequately in any words known to man, the grandeur and sublimity of love.

When the Master speaks of love, what he refers to is almost the opposite of what we call love. Worldly love is delusion – it waxes and wanes. When physical forms or circumstances change, what we call love changes with them. Falling in love for us is conditional and is a function of the mind, with the result that it may eventually fade with time.

But the Masters' love is different. They are steeped in the flow of divine love, and their love for us pulls us into the orbit of these powerful currents of love, through which we become irresistibly drawn to them. This love is a gift from the Master to us.

The writer of the introduction to *Treasure Beyond Measure* tells us:

The beauty and spiritual radiance of all that the Masters say and do is beyond compare. As disciples, we can only watch in love and gratitude a grace we hardly understand poured upon ourselves ... that is beyond all normal human comprehension.

We have to work to be receptive to their love. It is wrong for us to have the attitude that because my life is in the Master's hands, he will make me sit and give me the desire to meditate when he wants me to meditate; after all, my meditation, like everything else, is his responsibility. The Master is the facilitator, we are the doers; he is the foreman, we do the shovelling. We cannot abdicate our responsibility in the spiritual process. After all, the Masters repeatedly tell us that effort is in our hands while the results are in his. So we have to play our part consciously – we must put in the physical effort to sit, and create the mental attitude to do our simran. It is our responsibility to withdraw our attention from the world.

In its natural state our soul is in love with God, and its most fervent desire is to return to God and be united with him once more. Therefore, if he gives us his love, it is our responsibility to be worthy of his love, and our meditation is nothing but the process of becoming worthy to receive his love. We meditate through love. We meditate because we love him. We meditate because we want to be conscious of his love. Meditation is to rise to the call of his love because we want to be in the presence and the company of the one we love. The Great

Master tells us that we should be happy just to be trying to approach him within – trying to be near him.

Our days in this world are numbered, and maybe in our ignorance and negligence we do not make use of the Master's divine presence among us. Will we go away from here utterly lacking spiritual treasures? Kabir advises us:

The idea that the soul will join the ecstatic just because the body is rotten – that is all fantasy.

Amit Goswami, *Physics of the Soul*

Perhaps we will learn some wisdom from all we hear and read about the Master's love, which will inspire us to give our devotion and love to the Master rather than to the world. For then we will join the ecstatic, and witness the marvel of who the Master really is.

Sheikh Abu-Saeed Abil-Kheir sums it all up beautifully for us in a verse from his book of poems *Nobody, Son of Nobody*:

*Your Creator, the Lord of All Creation,
has given you two gifts, both sought after by all creatures:
your heart, the capacity to Love,
The light on your face,
the potential to be Loved.*



He is the one who's pulling us from within. ... Actually, he is in love with us. But for that we would never be in love with him at all.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Taking One Step

We're told that one of the essentials of our path is repetition. We know that this certainly applies to our simran – it's what simran is all about. But how many times do we go to satsang to have the same teachings repeated to us over and over again? Hasn't the repetition become something so familiar that it just goes in one ear and out the other, without us giving it very much thought?

Let's take this sentence as an example: 'If we take one step towards him, the Master takes ten steps towards us' – or sometimes we hear it as: 'The Master takes a hundred steps towards us.' Do we think about what this means any more? Do we realize that apart from hearing that the Master is eager to help us, we're being told that for the Master to take his ten steps or a hundred steps, we have to take that one step first? So let's think about what part we have to play on this path and what part the Master plays.

The Masters make it clear to us when we're initiated that we need to live according to certain principles. We're expected to meditate every day, ideally for at least two and a half hours each time. This meditation may prove to be a tough battle, and we have to put all our energy and our will into it. To be a seeker of God-realization means that we should accept that this is not going to be a walk in the park. Perhaps we need to take a good look at ourselves to see how serious we are about doing our own work.

Do we really appreciate what we've been given: a chance, after all these hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, to return to the home of complete love and joy and bliss from which we came? No more pain, no more disillusionment, no more loneliness or heart ache, no more

suffering, ever! This is what our Master wants to help us to achieve. But in return he wants our total and sincere commitment to his path.

However, what if we really are making our best effort and still our meditation seems to be unproductive? Is this a reason to become discouraged? Not at all. Our meditation can never be unproductive. We really just can't see what it's doing for us. And this is where it's important to trust our Master – to have faith that he's doing something important with whatever effort we can give him.

We've been told not to look for results in our meditation, such as seeing light or hearing sound, but rather to get attached to the effort. And we can do that, even if we see no results. We can get satisfaction from just doing our meditation. Our meditation can become a habit that's an indispensable part of our day. Even though we have no control over the results of our meditation, still we can set our alarm clocks, get out of bed and sit for meditation. It may feel to us that the quality of our meditation is awful, but still we can sit. And we can try to gear our entire lives to ensuring that meditation is a significant part of every day – so that everything we do becomes a preparation for the next meditation.

The way of life and the effort are what is important, not the results. In fact, results are the last thing we should be looking for, because meditation has a different purpose. It's intended to save us from ever coming back here, by cancelling – on some invisible level – the karmas that could force us to take another birth.

That is why Baba Jaimal Singh could write in one of his letters after his disciple Sawan Singh broke his leg:

My son, please do not mind this suffering ... endure the pain as it is good for you – it will last only a few days. Years and years of a satsangi's sufferings are paid off within a few days.

Spiritual Letters

One thing we often tend to forget is that most of what is happening to us on this path happens at a level that we don't see. We meditate for years without feeling that it's becoming easier, and we may get distressed about this. What we don't realize is that these apparently fruitless efforts of ours are the one step we're taking that prompts the Master to take his ten steps, or a hundred steps, towards us. What's more, if we trust that he is doing his work and we continue to do ours, he can free us from all our karmas in this very lifetime. Perhaps this, above anything else, is the great value of being initiated by a living Master. He is ending our long, long stay in this physical creation.

In that same letter, Baba Jaimal Singh promises his disciple:

The soul, that is, the individual being, having become pure, will catch the Shabd-dhun and become absorbed in it, and the Shabd-dhun ... will take it to Sach Khand. ... Now no more births lie ahead. All and everything is to be worked out in this very body.

Spiritual Letters

We read these things and it feels quite unreal: something that could happen only to a great soul like Sawan Singh who would become the next Master. Surely it can't also apply to us? And yet it can – provided that we love the Master, have no attachments and are doing our meditation. Great Master specifically said this in letters to his own disciples:

The followers who love the Master and have no desire in their mind for anything of this world shall not be reborn even if they have not made much spiritual progress while here. They will be made to stay at some intermediate station from where they will go up to their destination by degrees.

Spiritual Gems

How much more convincing do we need? We have this promise from the Masters. Let's trust them. And let's keep taking that one step that will let them take their hundred steps towards us.

This is where our faith comes in. We can't hope to understand what our Master is doing with our effort – how he is using it to clear our karmas, to destroy the seeds of all those old karmas which could drag us back for another birth. This is all part of his invisible work that's far beyond our understanding. But let's not doubt that he can do this. He can do anything!

We cannot understand the power of the Master who has taken us in his hands. Let's not even try. Let's just be profoundly grateful that he has accepted us as his own, and is busy preparing the way for us to return to our final home. And let's at least give him our obedience and our effort – the part we play in this very mysterious process. It may still be unclear to us, but we can say that whatever's happening is an invisible result of our meditation.

In fact, the Master has taken complete control of our lives, making everything we do part of his work for us. Everything in a disciple's life is geared towards God-realization. Everything is according to his will. We are not doing anything – we are merely his instruments. In everything we are simply carrying out his work.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to tell us something similar, although he used different words – namely, “He worships himself through us.” Once we see and really accept that this is true, then something momentous happens in us: we start to submit ourselves, humbly and gladly, to his will. Then we're happy to do what he asks of us, because we start to understand that when we obey him, we become active and willing partners in the process of his preparing us for our sublime destiny. Then we want only to please him; we want nothing but what he wills for us. Then his will becomes our will.

In *Die to Live* Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us: “If he advises you to do bhajan and simran . . . he will also create that pull in you for bhajan and simran, and he will also make you sit for bhajan and simran.”

So this is how he is worshipping himself through us – by making us do our meditation. Then he can do the rest. And he can *drown* us with his grace. Elsewhere in *Die to Live* Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us the Master is anxious to give to us – more anxious than we are to receive. That’s why he’s pushing us to do our meditation. He makes us *want* to meditate. If we think that we have love or longing for him, that very love and longing is his gift; it’s all grace that comes from him. He is worshipping himself through us.

Ultimately he is doing it all. From our limited point of view, it seems that we do have an important part to play: we still have to obey his instruction to meditate. But the fact remains that he is prompting us to do that meditation. And so that’s what we do and will continue to do – even though we know full well that it’s not our meditation that will take us back to him. He himself is the one who is bringing us to him. As Maharaj Charan Singh tells us:

Everything the Lord is doing himself. What are we doing? Leaving all these things to one’s own effort, one could never go back to the Father. The question of going back wouldn’t ever arise. . . . So it is not the meditation which is taking us back to the Father. It is the Father himself, through the Master, who is taking us back to the Father.

Die to Live



A Change of Character

The change of character which comes about through the struggle to practise the presence of God is both a means and a result.

You are offered the bait of delight. You taste it and it is withdrawn. Then with great care you watch yourself to see what are the most propitious moments and states of mind for this delight to reappear. You try not to let yourself get excited in your daily activities, either pleasurable or unpleasurably, because then at the time of meditation your mind will not be still enough for your spirit to feel that presence. You plan your day with careful economy so as to allow the greatest amount of free time for meditation.

Your whole life becomes a conspiracy with yourself to escape into God. And yet when escape is not possible, you cannot afford to allow yourself the least impatience, because impatience, too, defeats your end.

So you see yourself slowly becoming quiet, calm, patient and aloof, and you wonder at yourself with great and secret joy. Because all this seems infinitely right, exactly what you were made for. And there is contentment in your heart, so deep as to be unruffled by surface annoyances.

Nancy Pope Mayorga, *The Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary*



An Attitude of Gratitude

Maharaj Charan Singh often referred to adversity as a blessing in disguise, for it is during the most difficult times in our lives that we are pulled closer to the Lord. Mystics explain to us that all events that appear to be misfortunes are not really so – every situation we go through takes place for a reason. Whether adversity is given to us to discipline us or to strengthen our power of resistance, each incident takes place as a result of our previous actions. We may never understand what the Lord's plans are for us, but the mystics explain that the suffering we go through in this world purifies us and makes us worthy of that eternal joy within.

As harsh as it may sound, a death in the family, financial difficulties or humiliation are all signs of his grace, because grace is anything that turns us towards the Lord. We should be grateful for any event in our life that reminds us of him and his love for us and makes us shift our focus to him. Every day is given to us as a gift, and the only appropriate response to it is gratitude. We should let our gratitude to the Master overflow, in the form of meditation, for every blessing he is showering on us.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion into clarity. It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important learning opportunities. If we apply this attitude and take whatever comes to us as the Lord's will, then whatever we receive will become divine in itself. When asked about this once, Maharaj Jagat Singh said that the best and most appropriate way of appreciating his kindness and expressing our gratitude is to give more and more time to simran and bhajan.

Thankfulness is an effective antidote for discouragement and depression. In many cases when we are down and depressed, have we ever noticed where our focus lies? On ourselves. What happens when we focus on God or our Master and start giving thanks – where is our focus then? No longer on ourselves, but inward and upward. Gratitude leads to tranquillity and peace of mind. A person who is thankful isn't a big worrier for the most part; he doesn't fret much because being thankful gets his mind off problems and results in peace and contentment.

Surrender to the will of God is made easier if we embrace the present moment. We should value and be totally satisfied with each moment. By learning to see his presence in every small detail of our lives, in all happenings, whether enjoyable or painful, we will tap into the unending reservoir of his love. What he has arranged for us to experience at each moment is the best thing that could happen to us.

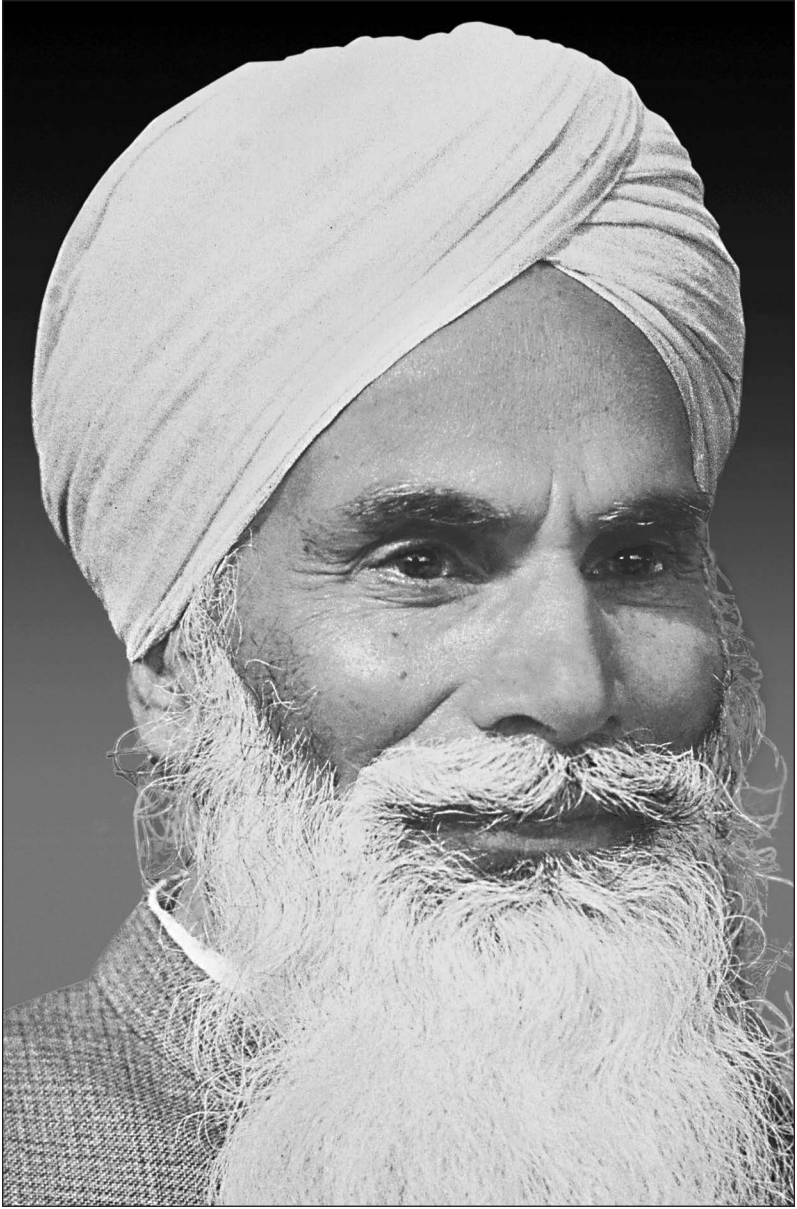
It is our resistance to his will that is the source of all our problems. We must remember that our senses and our earthly desires will never be satisfied, so we would do well to seek the Lord or our inner Master alone and hold only lightly to the perishable things of this world.

Maharaj Charan Singh explains how changing our attitude to life will bring us closer to happiness by making us better able to deal with those difficult ups and downs we encounter:

If we try to pick up all the splinters of the world, we cannot succeed. But if we have strong shoes on our feet, they do not bother us at all. The saints arm us with that meditation – the strong shoes – so that the ups and downs of the world do not bother us. We rise to that stage, that level, where our worldly situation makes us neither happy nor unhappy.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III





Maharaj Jagat Singh

Analysis Paralysis

Analysis paralysis is the state of over-analyzing or over-thinking a situation, so that a decision or action is never taken – in effect, paralyzing the outcome. The basic idea of analysis paralysis is expressed in this short poem entitled ‘The Centipede’s Dilemma.’ In psychology it is known as the centipede effect. This is when a normally automatic or unconscious activity is confused by too much reflection on it.

*A centipede was happy – quite!
Until a toad in fun
Said, “Pray, which leg moves after which?”
This raised her doubts to such a pitch,
She fell exhausted in the ditch
Not knowing how to run.*

Attributed to Katherine Craster in *Pinafore Poems*

This poem pretty much sums up what too much analysis and doubt can do to us on the path. It can cause us to fall exhausted in the ditch of this world and put a stop to us running towards our goal.

At some point, we have all found ourselves in the crushing grip of this dreaded condition where we simply can’t make a decision. Do we over-analyze Sant Mat, causing dozens of seemingly unanswerable questions to swirl around our brain? – like: Is the Master a true Master? Will we ever experience the light and sound that the path talks about? Will the Master really be there when we die, or will we be faced with darkness, with nothingness? Such questions and feelings of unreadiness can cause us to squander precious time and lose our peace of mind.

The root cause of this problem is our own ego, which doesn't like the unknown. It will plant all sorts of ridiculous scenarios in our head in order to keep us from acting. Its most fervent desire is to have us frozen in fear until the wonderful opportunity that this human birth offers us passes us by.

Spirituality is attained only through inner revelation. One cannot have an inkling of it until the intellect and senses are made still, because the faculty within us that comprehends this truth is far subtler than either the mind or the senses, and hence beyond their grasp. Trying to grasp God intellectually is impossible, for as Guru Nanak says in the Japji: "By pondering, man cannot have a conception of God, even though he may ponder over lakhs of time."

But unfortunately, at our human level, we have only intellect at our disposal. We are free to think, and that is the heart of the problem. This thinking is out of control. Thinking has led only to more thinking and more questions. We seek to know the innermost forces which create the world and guide its course, but we conceive of this essence as outside of ourselves, not as a living thing, intrinsic to our own nature.

It was the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung who said: "Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes." We need to move beyond thinking. Does all this thinking make us happier and more joyful, or does it disconnect us from a deeper and more meaningful experience of life that the path offers us?

We constantly try to occupy our mind by filling it with information. When we quietly contemplate, we might realize that there is more to life than our present reality, where we endlessly crave to know without any satisfaction. Eventually the mind will become exhausted trying to find an answer – like a dog chasing its own tail. It is only the ego that wants to find an answer. After all, our questions are created by the egoic mind. The truth lies not in more answers but in fewer questions.

Our notions about this mind-made physical world are always filtered through the senses, and therefore are always incomplete. Thinking is simply a tool – like our five senses. But we have elevated it to such a high status that we identify ourselves with our thoughts. We try to understand using the rational mind, but it was never thinking that connected us to God. We have always been connected. Thinking is what keeps us in the illusion of separateness and the experience of limitation. The more we align with thought, the more removed we become from the source.

We don't want to keep Sant Mat easy – we want to understand everything, but our understanding is distorted and conditioned. By good luck, by mercy or by divine plan we are on the path. The only thing to do now is to walk on it. But at every step we have questions – how, why, where? Our intellect is so inadequate that we will never be able to find the answers we seek using reasoning. However, used constructively, the intellect is a great friend on the spiritual journey.

When true Masters come into this world, the negative power also becomes very awake and active to ensure that we get confused and confounded, with the result that we don't reach our goal easily. So if the Master is not in front of us in the form of simran, contemplation or Shabd – then it is the negative power which is there. We need to cling fast to the Master and stop depending on our own cleverness and intellect. The moment we try to steer our own vehicle, we will be lost. With our limited vision and limited experience, we can't do it. In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh Ji says:

*Mind is the deadliest of foes, but the most useful of servants.
When it turns wild and gets out of control, it heads for certain
destruction. When properly awakened and controlled, there is
no limit to what the mind can do.*

Once we have been initiated we need to practise the process of controlling our mind, so that it becomes the servant and ally of our soul. There is no end to our desires, and we know how easy it is to be dominated by them! At the root of this problem lies the habit of giving free rein to our mind so that it goes wherever the senses lead it. If we learn to control our mind, we automatically gain control over our senses. Maharaj Sawan Singh says that while the mind derives its life-force and energy from the soul, at the same time it does everything possible to suffocate the soul.

With the habit of clear thinking the mind will look to our spiritual growth and spiritual well-being. Our uncontrolled thinking, on the other hand, fuels desires, makes the ego stronger and contradicts all efforts to put our soul in charge. Allowed to go its own way, not referring to its power of discrimination, the mind quickly becomes our downfall. Maharaj Jagat Singh says:

Satsangis should form the habit of 'thinking' – clear thinking. ... Clear thinking is ninety percent abhyas (spiritual practice). Clear thinking is a blessing. It can easily be attained by a little practice.

The Science of the Soul

Wisdom is in our midst – hidden in plain view – but we are too preoccupied with our thoughts to recognize it. We need to drop all thinking and resistance. We need to turn our attention inwards and sacrifice our mind by following the four vows we take at the time of initiation – the commitments we make to our Master.

As the meditation practice stabilizes it becomes possible to see that our thoughts and emotions are just that: thoughts and emotions, personal mental projections or electrical impulses. Seeing these projections in a clear light, we release our grip. The resulting

light-heartedness we experience enables us to go deeper into the meditation practice. The deeper we go the more clearly we understand the true nature of the mind.

Strengthened by meditation we are able to watch how the mind, in expressing itself, creates infinite scenarios and then dissolves them again. We see for ourselves how its reservoir is unlimited, how there is no end to its creations. We start to recognize that the source of our problems lies in the deceptive nature of our mental creations. We yearn for lasting solutions in an ever-changing world. Because we treat the world as permanent, we look to it for the lasting happiness we crave.

Clear thinking shows us that it is our distorted perception that leads us, again and again, to seek happiness in situations where the final outcome can only, by its nature, be frustration, separation and pain.

Clear thinking is attained by practice, and it is well worth cultivating it to help us avoid falling into our own mind traps.

Clear thinking takes us deeper in the practice of meditation. Once the thought waves are stilled, our soul experiences a higher reality through its faculty of direct perception. With our shifting mind anchored we perceive things and remain unaffected by them. Thus a two-way process is created: as we think clearly, it becomes easier to concentrate in meditation; and increased concentration, leading to the unperturbed receptivity of a heightened consciousness, allows the Shabd to be revealed.

In his poem 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', William Blake puts it this way:

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.



The Gift of Love

If there's love, there is nothing to speak about, and if you speak, there is no love. Love loses its depth when you try to express it. The more you digest it, the more it grows. It is more to experience than to express.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

How does one reach the stage of realizing the love of which Maharaj Charan Singh speaks – especially as in this realm of mind and maya we are all emotion and very little love? While the soul is dominated by the mind, our experience of love is mostly emotion. However, if we manage to channelize our emotion, turning it into devotion, love will automatically develop. Real love is beyond mind and maya. It is found at the spiritual heart centre – the eye centre.

Love has no language, no proof. We can only experience love. True love is divine: it radiates from the soul, which is pure love. God is all love. And the soul, being a particle of the Lord, is thus also inherently love. Therefore we all have the potential for divine love within us. Some of us may feel or experience it more than others. This depends on the relative load of karmas that weighs upon our soul. Love raises our soul upwards towards its own home – to its father in Sach Khand. But, again and again, the passions associated with the senses pull it down. The senses dominate the mind, which wraps our soul within it, covering it with layer upon layer of karmas, from eons of lives.

Our Masters tell us that we cannot cultivate love on our own. They shower us with their love as a reward for our meditation: The more effort we put into meditation, the more love they shower on us. Love itself is grace, for as the Great Master asserts: “Love is a gift of the Master!”

Meditation is the work we do for the Master, and we should do it out of love for him. Meditation on the Shabd takes our soul back to its original home, and is the only method by which we cut the connection between our mind and soul for ever. By listening to the Shabd during bhajan the mind is controlled and subdued.

As Soami Ji puts it in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*A million other methods will fail to tame it,
it will submit only by listening to that melody.*

Shabd is the only sword that cuts at the root of all our passions, eliminates ages of karmas, and liberates our soul from the grip of our mind. The more we are attached to the divine melody of the Shabd, the more the mind's karmic load fades away and the more our soul shines. That divine sound is so effective that a single spark of it can burn all our karmas – just as we may pile up a huge collection of wood, and it requires only a single spark to turn it into ashes. However, mystics tell us that it is not our puny effort at meditation that will burn our stock of karmas; rather, it's ultimately the grace of the Master that will do this. Our daily and regular act of sitting for our spiritual practice is a *sine qua non* for evoking that divine grace. Actually, the Master gives us considerably more than we deserve or 'earn' from our meditation.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh Ji explains this saying:

The real lover never bothers whether he receives or not. He believes only in giving, because the more you give the more it grows. It's not that the more you get the more it grows. Love is in giving, not in taking.

The more we do the Shabd practice, the more love develops within us until finally we become one with that love. Such love is a powerful solvent that dissolves all the material and subtle attachments that come our way, until only love remains. Love cultivates love: the more we have of it, the more we will love our Master. He is the embodiment of love, being constantly connected to the Shabd, the creative Word.

The pity is that we are not supposed to love what we see – in other words, the creation; and we are supposed to love what we don't see – the Creator himself. So we spend our lives wasting our love on that which we should not have loved, and that is the whole tragedy of our love.

But when the seed of divine love sprouts within us, we have no choice but to love our Master who embodies that divine love. Only then can we surrender unconditionally – which is to lose our insignificant identity and merge into the Lord. It is only by losing ourselves in divine love for the Lord that we can find eternal peace and happiness.

In divine love, the more we share, the more it expands, until we love all without any discrimination whatsoever. The beauty of spirituality is that we become one with the object of our love – the Lord. We become permanently dyed with the hue of his love.

The basis of spirituality is love, and we are like rivulets that merge into the river which ultimately merges into the ocean of love – the Lord. It is important to keep in mind that it's the intensity and depth of our love that will take us to our eternal home in Sach Khand.



Free Will or Not?

If we are asked the question: “Do we have free will?” the answer will depend on what level we interpret the question. At a very literal level, the answer is: yes, we all have free will. We can all make decisions on anything. Every day we are faced with situations that have several options and we make decisions and act accordingly. In fact for most of our lives, and in respect of all choices we face, we exercise our freedom of choice and take decisions we each think are appropriate at that time.

We have been making decisions ever since we were little children and have always acted on the basis that we had free will. The question of whether we had free will or not, probably hadn't entered our minds until we heard of the teachings of saints. If we always had free will and have always acted on that basis, what do the teachings of the saints have to say about it, and do they have an alternate view?

Saints point out that from the perspective from which we view it, we do have free will and we act as if we have free will. They also point out that from a higher perspective the free will is not so free. We therefore need to try and understand the saint's perspective and the relevance of their perspective.

They teach us that from a higher perspective, we have very limited or no free will. Now how is that possible? The Saints explain that we are souls embodied in this human frame. Our soul is a drop of the ocean of god and that means that the soul is pure, untainted and possesses all the attributes of God. When creation began the souls were sent into creation. On arrival they were pure and without karmic burden because they were still actionless. At this stage, it could be said that we had free will. But after our very first act, we sowed a seed and created a corresponding reward that we had to reap. As we continued

to act, we continued to accumulate karma and create a limit on the free will we once had.

Maharaj Charan Singh explains this concept by using the game of chess as an analogy. He would say that when we make our first move in chess, we have several choices or free will. But once we make our first move, our next move is conditioned by what we have already done. This means that our first move automatically limits our second move. As in the case of chess, as we make each of our next moves we further limit our options for the move thereafter.

Hazur explained that our existence in creation is no different. He would say that the present birth we have taken is a consequence of all the previous karmas that we have accumulated. That is why we had no choice as to where we are born, whether we are male or female, which parents we are born to, how many brothers and sisters we have, what race, colour or religion we are born into. If we carefully analyze the situation we will agree that we had no freedom of choice at all in these matters. That is why saints teach us that we have very limited free will if we look at it from a higher perspective.

The Saints further teach us that in addition to us not having free will in the circumstances into which we are born, these conditions go a long way in moulding and shaping us and our thinking. The way we speak, dress and act as well as all our mannerisms and thinking is influenced by factors over which we have no control. Although we may think we have taken the decisions to be what we are and where we are, we neglect to consider the extensive influence and impact all the surrounding circumstances had on our decisions. In reality, what we have been exposed to had a great influence in our choice and therefore limits our choice, just like each move on the chess board limits our next move. So the apparent freedom of choice or free will we have is just an illusion.

Just as these subtle circumstantial factors influence our decisions, there is another great determinant in our decision-making process: our destiny. Although we may think that we make our decisions independently, the reality is that destiny is an extremely subtle factor that influences us in both the direction we take and the destination we are meant to arrive at. So if we are destined to be an engineer, in addition to all the factors that influence us in that decision, our thinking is also guided and drawn towards making the decision that will fulfil our destiny.

In effect we have two forces that eliminate our free will. The one force is the way we have been moulded by our past experience and external influences which, in effect, push us to make a decision we think we make freely by our choice. The second force is the one that pulls us towards our destiny. Although these forces are subtle and almost invisible to us, the Saints advise us that from a higher level it is very clear that these forces are at work.

So our awareness or perceptibility of free will depends on which level we view it from. If we view it from the level we operate at, without an awareness of the influence of everything around us, then clearly we have free will. We have freedom of choice. We make decisions. We choose what we can do or want to do. At this level, we are the ones that choose how we act.

However, from a higher level of consciousness it is clear that the choices we have are limited by our past experiences and our destiny.

From an even higher level of consciousness – from the level of the consciousness of God – we have absolutely no free will. The reason is that God created the entire creation and is the director, while we are mere actors on the stage and we do as we are directed. From that level of consciousness we are mere pawns in the play and we are moved by His will.



My Soul, My Soul

What is our soul? It is not simply a hypothetical entity occupying space in our forehead. It is a conscious force at the core of our being, a unit of consciousness, a microscopic drop of the essence of God. Our soul can never die – it is the immortal part of us. But sadly, it is mostly a relatively dormant energy and its God-like qualities remain latent within us.

It is very difficult for us to relate to our soul because we are so immersed in the physical world and our soul is so ethereal – it is far beyond the level of consciousness we use to function in this world. Hidden in the attic of our body, the eye centre, we starve our soul of love, oblivious of its needs. There it sings its sad song as it constantly calls to the mind. This great sadness of our soul is the fire of longing that burns within – longing for its release from the despotic grip of the senses, its entrapment in the body and the oppression of the mind.

Mirdad tells us: “Rejoice because your heart has been seized with the Great Nostalgia; for that is a promise irrevocable that you shall find your country and your home.”

When the soul’s deep longing is ignited in us Mirdad likens us to “sleepwalkers in a world which is apparently wide awake, following a dream which those around us neither see nor feel.”

Although we are mostly unaware of the state of our soul, there are times when we have a faint inkling of its existence. In *One Being One*, a quote from S. Radhakrishnan explains:

Off and on, in some rare moments of our spiritual life, the soul becomes aware of the presence of the Divine. A strange awe and delight invade the life of the soul, and it becomes convinced of



Maharaj Charan Singh

the absoluteness of the Divine, which inspires and moulds every detail of our life.

Rather than wasting so much time on nurturing the body and pandering to the mind, we should focus more on our soul so that we can release it from its bondage. Great Master gives us this inspirational disclosure: that the soul merges in the Lord as soon as it turns its attention towards him. Then that which remains dormant in us becomes manifest.

By pandering to the mind we turn away from our soul and focus our attention on the personality and the five senses. But our true reality extends beyond this, to the subtle, invisible realms where our soul is more at home. It is from their perception of these subtle realms that the Masters speak and act. Their words and actions attract our attention – because they awaken something deep within us, something that both stirs our souls and draws us to them.

But mostly we perceive a world where we are separate and alone as we strive to survive – in a world where intentions are somewhat irrelevant and we are not consciously aware of the effects of our actions and thoughts. However, the perception of the Master is very different: He perceives a world in which we are never alone, where the universe is alive, conscious and intelligent and where, rather than being irrelevant, the intention behind an action determines its effects – which extend far beyond the physical world.

In a lovely explanation of intention Hazur Maharaj Ji explains the benefit of parshad:

Actually when parshad is given, it is not the candy which is the parshad, it is the Master and the disciple. It is the Master's intention in giving the parshad that makes it parshad for

the disciple. It is for the advantage of the disciple ... and the Master's good wishes are the parshad for the disciple. The candy is just a means. You can't take the good wishes in proxy for someone else. ... Parshad doesn't pass through to the disciple by eating it; it passes through by other means.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

We have now come to the Master with the intention that this life be used to free our soul from the mind and the senses. Doing this requires a different relationship with our mind. The author of *The Book of Disquiet* writes:

My soul is impatient with itself, as with a bothersome child; its restlessness keeps growing and is forever the same. Everything interests me, but nothing holds me. I attend to everything, dreaming all the while. ... I'm two, and both keep their distance — Siamese twins that aren't attached.

This explains the relationship between the soul and the mind. Both are tangled up in the body. Each has an awareness of the other, but they pull in different directions.

This unfortunate mind–soul relationship is the trap that keeps the soul in the creation and away from its essence. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that even when the soul has withdrawn from the body to the eye centre, it is still attached to the mind and retains its identity. Even when it leaves the mind, the impressions of karmas still cover the soul, and they keep the soul away from the infinite. This is the power of the impressions we create – they are so strong that even between the mind and Sach Khand those impressions are still with the soul.

It is the power of these impressions that fuels our ego and causes us to neglect our soul. If we could only take control of our mind and curb our relentless desires, we would be able to reduce the impressions we create and weaken their power and hold over us. But our ego is far too strong. It constantly pulls our attention outside, away from our soul as we create ever more binding impressions. The unfortunate result is that our soul remains an ethereal concept.

Ekknath Easwaran likens the fight to control our ego to a battle. He writes that the subject of the Bhagavad Gita is:

The war within, the struggle for self-mastery that every human being must wage if he or she is to emerge from life victorious, and that the language of battle is often found in the scriptures, for it conveys the strenuous, long, drawn-out campaign we must wage to free ourselves from the tyranny of the ego, the cause of all our suffering and sorrow.

The War Within

We will never reconcile the relationship between our soul and our mind while we have an egotistical attitude. The Masters so often tell us of the importance of humility on the spiritual path. Generally humility is associated with self-worth in an egotistical sense. But true humility is a quality of the soul. It isn't any outward display or something we can feign, for humility – being of our soul – is a quality that is unconsciously reflected in our actions and attitudes. Golda Meir, a former prime minister of Israel, put it into perspective when she said: “Don't be so humble – you are not that great!”

We are told that humility is the hallmark of all saints. The Great Master tells us that “the ornament of Sach Khand is humility.” And Swami Vivekananda explains humility this way:

The concept of humility does not mean “crawling on all fours and calling oneself a sinner.” ... Each human being is the Universal; recognizing and feeling oneness with everyone and everything else in the universe, without inferiority or superiority or any other bias, is the mark of humility.

The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1

Sincere humility is how one feels inside; it is a non-judgmental state of mind. A humble person is not himself conscious of his humility.

Through our practice of meditation we begin to lose the arrogance and pride of the ego, which is then replaced by the natural humility of our soul. Our daily meditation is the time when we rekindle the trust and love of our soul – the process in which we slowly reconcile the relationship between our mind and our soul. It is to free our soul from the constraints of the mind and senses, and launch it on its homeward path.

Maharaj Charan Singh has said that our intentions and motives go a long way – they have far-reaching effects. Our asking for initiation indicated our intention to realize our soul and go back home to Sach Khand. By receiving initiation that intention has been put into motion, and it must come to fruition. For Maharaj Charan Singh, explaining Baba Jaimal Singh's letter to the Great Master in *Spiritual Letters*, says:

The day you are initiated you have reached Sach Khand. ... It means your roots have been planted there, the seed has been planted. It will sprout one day. ... It is assured that one day the seed will sprout, the soul will reach its destination.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

And as Mirdad said: ‘That is a promise irrevocable.’



The Treasure Behind the Stove

Bulleh Shah warns us that there is a heavy price to be paid for loving God, as He has hidden himself:

*O, Bullah, none can behold the Beloved,
And whoever sees Him is not to be counted.
He has no shape, no form, no colour;
He has hidden himself like a thief.*

God – the force that created and sustains the universe – has a wonderful secret: Although he is omnipresent, he can only be realized and revealed once a soul has reached the top of the evolutionary cycle and been given the rare and privileged form of a human body.

It is only in the human form that the soul is given reason to probe the purpose of existence: Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I so desperately unhappy? Why do I feel so hopelessly helpless?

No matter how fortunate we may be – enjoying a good life with good health, wealth and all the so-called blessings that life can bring – some souls will suddenly be overcome with a strange longing for something more, for something different. This is when God's grace has kicked in. The term 'kicking in' is probably very applicable to many of us, as this awakening can be an overwhelming experience.

Grace is generally associated with that which is pleasant, but the saints say that grace can be quite the opposite. They say that grace will lead a seeker to search for the meaning hidden behind life itself. It brings the realization that nothing lasts, that this creation is not perfect and enduring, that today's joys and fortunes can disappear in an instant, and that all the misfortunes we endure are out of our control.

This triggers the search to find a solution. But where does the seeker start? One finds that it is a lonely battle, an intense personal quest, and frequently nobody else is interested or of any help.

This awakening comes in the form of a deep longing – Mirdad calls it “the great nostalgia.” Saints and mystics have all described their own longing in their poetry: their *bireh*, the unbearable pain of longing that becomes the fate of those chosen to return to their spiritual home.

When the great nostalgia grabs you it is like an incurable disease, an irritating unwelcome guest who squats in your house. Nothing will remove it. It is like an uncomfortable itch for which there seems to be no permanent cure. But then, when all seems lost, something wonderful happens – our homing device is activated.

When the Creator started his play of hide-and-seek, he fitted each soul with a homing device. This is the great nostalgia – the longing for ultimate truth burning within. Once *bireh* is activated it is unrelenting. It enters our consciousness and never leaves us, becoming our most precious possession. It is the Creator’s Universal Positioning System that guides us on the homeward journey. It also announces that the predestined moment for the return journey of a specific soul has arrived.

Having been exiled from its home at the beginning of time, the soul was sent down into the lower regions, not as punishment but to undergo a process of evolution according to the plan of the Creator. The awakening is the wake-up call to return home. Like an alarm clock, it is set for a specific moment in time. However, this clock cannot be turned off so that we can continue sleeping; once activated it rings incessantly within.

But the return journey will not be a leisurely, easy stroll. The soul has been enslaved by the mind, which in turn has been hijacked by the five senses. Like intruder plants in a garden, the five senses invaded

and trapped the mind, creating a cosmic net of karmic attachments over eons. The intellect cannot grasp the enormity of the evolution that this implies, let alone the time span.

It is impossible for the individual soul to secure its own release from the accumulated karmic dross acquired through reincarnation and transmigration. Therefore, the Creator sends one of his sons, a perfect living Master – a shepherd – to bring his sheep back to him. They might still want to run off into the world, but eventually they are firmly caught – even carried on the shepherd’s shoulders – to rejoin the fold.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that only grace can ultimately detach the soul from the illusion of this creation. In *Die to Live* he says:

With whose grace do we gain admission to the court of the Lord? Surely not by our own efforts. Alone, we can do nothing. We can never, by ourselves, traverse the uncharted terrain of the inner path. We owe everything to the immeasurable grace of the Master. He showers his blessings on us ... pulling us out of this quagmire of illusion.

Many metaphors are used to explain the slow process of detachment required to traverse the inner path. One of the images given is that of a precious silk cloth thrown over a thorny bush. It cannot be pulled off in an instant, as it would be ripped to shreds. It will take time and patience to detach it from every thorn. Maharaj Charan Singh so often told us that we have no idea of how long we have been away from home in this creation, and that we can only slowly and slowly, stage by stage, journey homeward – removing the precious cloth from thorn after thorn with the utmost care.

It seems to us that our search for the Lord within gets more difficult the longer we are on the path and the more we try to find him. Maharaj Charan Singh explains that this perceived difficulty that some people feel is because of their longing. He says in *Die to Live*:

They think their meditation is becoming difficult. Actually, it is becoming easier and easier. The very fact that they feel it is becoming difficult is because of the longing, the desire in their heart and their mind to go back to the Lord. And that is His love. More longing and love is coming in them, and they're becoming more anxious and more desperate to go back to Him. They're achieving the result of meditation without their even realizing it.

This inner search is described in a charming fable in *Vedanta for Modern Man*. It tells of a rabbi who dreamed a number of times that he must leave his own small house in the ghetto of Cracow and travel to Prague, for there on the bridge leading to the castle, he would find a treasure. Finally the rabbi decided to obey his dream.

Arriving at Prague and going to the bridge he found it guarded. So he waited for a long while. At last the captain of the bridge, noticing the old man hanging about, spoke to him kindly, asking what he was waiting for. The rabbi, being cooperative, told him. The captain however remained as friendly, indeed breaking into laughter and becoming confidential.

“Why,” he told the poor old pilgrim, “I myself had a dream of just the same nonsensical sort, but, as you might say, it was even more upside down! My dream told me to go to the house of an old rabbi in Cracow in the ghetto there ... and behind his stove I would find a treasure! You see what nonsense dreams are! There's no treasure on the

bridge, I can assure you. And you and I know that the last place in the world to find a treasure – this bridge would be better – would be in the dwelling of a starving rabbi in the Cracow ghetto.”

The rabbi – who had forgotten to tell his friend where he had come from – bowed and said nothing more. He returned straightaway to his home, dug behind the stove and found a buried bag of gold coins.

The Masters are like the captain on the bridge. They direct us to the treasure within, telling us that the treasure of Shabd is not outside but is to be found inside the house – the body – where the Creator has buried it. The stove is synonymous with the mind, behind which the treasure is buried. Our meditation is the digging. The treasure of Shabd is the only thing that will satisfy our burning longing within, and to find it we must dig behind the mind.

Our meeting with the Master is God’s ultimate gift of grace because it is the answer to our incessant longing. After initiation our Master will accompany us all the way back to Sach Khand, our ancestral home. And reaching there, our longing will end.

In our ignorance we simply do not appreciate the grace we have received in coming to the path. There are no words to thank our beloved Master for the gift of initiation. When Maharaj Charan Singh was asked if there was anything one could give him in return, he replied that the best gift you can give your Master is the gift of meditation. Nothing else matters.



It is by his grace that our mind turns towards him and it is he who creates the thirst and longing, which in turn takes us back to him.

Quest for Light

A Lesson from Trees

Inside each person is a treasure trove of love, a storehouse of devotion for the Lord, lying there, brimful. There's not just a drop or two, there are oceans, full to the brim.

Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol. II

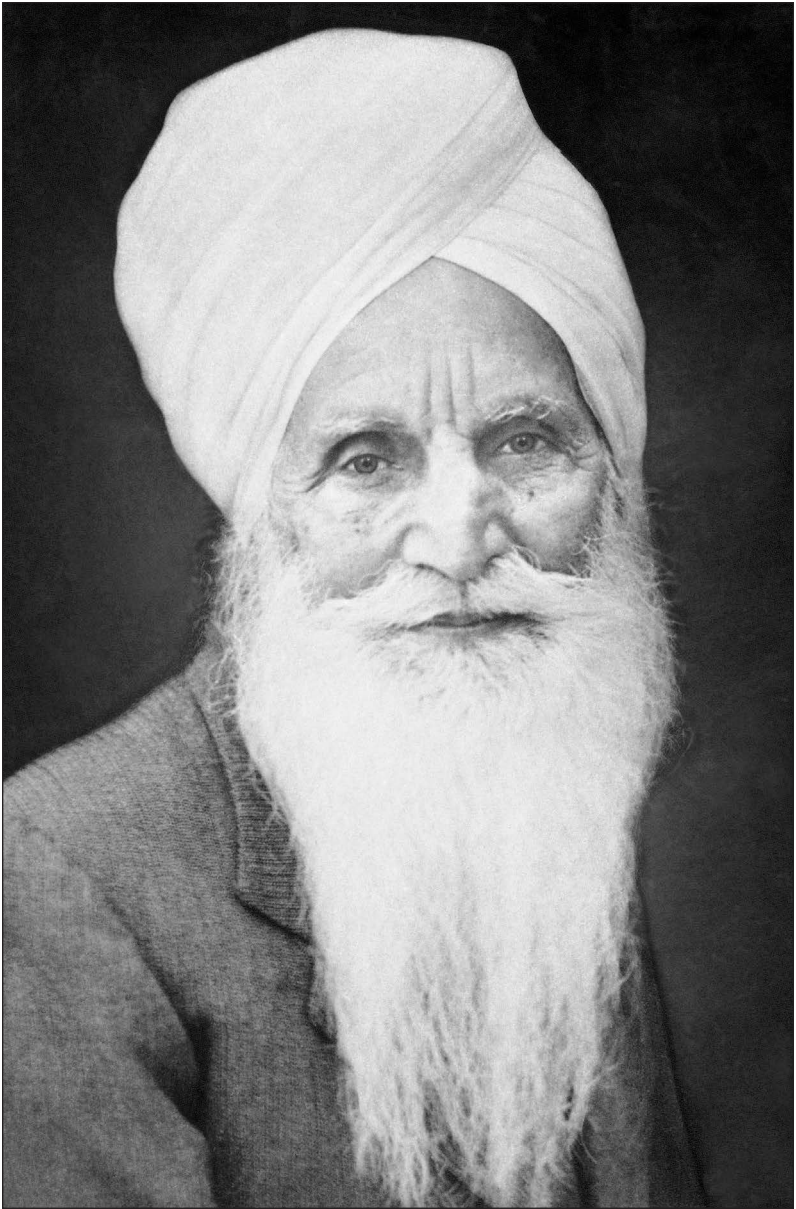
These beautiful words came from a discourse given by Maharaj Jagat Singh. Stuck in this world of travail, misery and all manner of evils that seem to get worse as time goes by, this wondrous state described by the Master seems like a fantasy. Yet he says that this devotion is inside each person – not one or two, not some, but every person.

The Masters stress that we should relax and be happy. What's more, they themselves provide the perfect example of happiness, light-heartedness, good humour and all the qualities of joy and love.

We all know that on this path meditation is the key, and although it seems so difficult and dreary and long, we have to buckle down and just do it. Yet, is it really so difficult, or is that the way one's mind chooses to see it?

The Masters have always stressed the need for a positive attitude, accepting whatever comes our way – both the good and the bad – as being his will. What is happening has already happened, so the saints tell us. Our destinies are mapped out step by step, breath by breath, from birth until death. Our soul has been going through this cycle, in all the myriad forms of life, for a very long time. Now, as initiates on this path, we have been given the key to escape this prison.

But, as we satsangis and seekers are only a handful, let us consider the apparent plight of the vast majority of souls who continue to revolve in the creation. In *Discourses of Sant Mat* the Great Master



Maharaj Sawan Singh

describes the process of reincarnation and remarks: “The heaviest punishment on the earth plane is descent of the soul into a tree.”

Now this is an interesting point: The very worst punishment is to become a tree! And yet surely a tree is one of creation’s greatest masterpieces. From our human-consciousness point of view, to be a tree would certainly seem a terrible punishment. Yet one may ask, is a tree unhappy?

Eckhart Tolle, in his book *The New Earth*, says of a sapling:

The sapling doesn't see itself as separate from life and so wants nothing for itself. It is one with what life wants. That's why it isn't worried or stressed. And ... it dies with ease. It is as surrendered in death as it is in life.

Interestingly, in *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, it is noted that the fire element or *tattva* is dormant in all plants so they have no mental concept of ‘getting about.’ Neither do they express the weaknesses of frustration and anger associated with the fire element. Does this fact not make it understandable why the Masters insist on a vegetarian diet – the eating of which incurs the least karma and can be paid off through meditation?

Generally trees and most plants – despite their always being exceptions to the rules in this complex creation – grow straight and towards the light. At the time of initiation, one of the instructions we are given on meditation posture is to sit still, with the spine as erect as possible. And to think that there are trees that are thousands of years old – which is of course why it’s a heavy karma to take the form of a tree. But how’s that for patience?

According to the scale of elements, trees and plants are considered one of the lower forms of life, but we would not be able to survive

without them. Think of the service they perform in providing us not only with our food, but also the healing medicine they give us. What would we do without the oxygen trees supply, and the shade they provide?

Maharaj Charan Singh made the planting of trees at the Dera a priority. He said: “Trees are the breathing lungs of man. They look wonderful and are beautiful and give protection to birds.” And what about wood – its sheer beauty and myriad uses?

Hazur Maharaj Ji’s hobby of photography was well known to us all. When his mother asked him why he took so many pictures of flowers, he told her, “They don’t ask anything of me – and they always smile.”

We can draw inspiration for our spiritual lives from many living creatures in the creation and from the magnificent trees around us, if we care to look for it. Many express the qualities that we, as seekers of spiritual perfection, strive to achieve through our meditation. And are we not all the expression of his love?

Sant Charandas explains that the divine melody is the source of love, devotion, knowledge and salvation. It is a never-ending stream of energy which flows from the fathomless Lord. It creates and sustains the whole universe and simultaneously flows from the Lord to the creation and back.

In fact, all the saints speak of this dance of love in every particle of the creation. Sooner or later we will, through our meditation and Master’s grace, realize and become one with this treasure trove of love.



*Just as the perfume of flowers spreads fragrance all around,
the company of Saints or enlightened persons exalts the people
around them.*

The Dawn of Light

Finding God

The book *Yoga and the Bible* begins with the following quotation from Saint Matthew (7: 7–8):

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

These words indicate the deep longing of the soul for a higher and more perfect life. Such a life has been sought by spiritual seekers throughout the many ages of the world's long history. This search is not new. It simply restates the age-old spiritual quest of man, the never-ending search for the truth of human and eternal life: for an abiding reality above and beyond the triviality of human existence.

We also read in the Bible, in Psalm 33:6:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

This quote tells us there is a Creator – that incomprehensible power that brought the creation into being. It also tells us that he created through the Word – the creative force. This universe did not just come about by itself. When Hazur Maharaj Ji was asked how one could believe there is a God – a Creator – he answered that when you look at a painting you know someone has painted it. Similarly, if you look at the creation around you, you must realize that something or someone made it.

This creation with its endless universes and everything in it is a manifestation of the Creator's existence – his Will – the result of which is his omnipresence. It all evolved from a totality of One – a super-consciousness which blasted itself from oneness into multiplicity. The spark of this Oneness is present in everything that it created and is ever-present in an evolutionary process which saints, through the ages, have referred to as God's plan. The Hindus call it his *leila* – his play.

The Creator himself is unchangeable and eternal, but his creation is constantly undergoing change. Living beings come into this world for a designated period and then die. The vegetable and mineral kingdoms are also subject to change. It is a constant evolutionary process in which the energy or spark of the Creator remains in every particle of the creation. But it is only a human being who has the ability and the privilege to be able to realize the Creator – that divine consciousness that we term God.

The soul, being the eternal essence of God, cannot rest or find peace except in God's essence. The link between the soul and God is his eternal energy, the Shabd, referred to in the Bible as the Word of God. It is through this power that the soul returns to God's essence.

But this will only happen when, through the grace of God, he calls an individual soul back to him. At this point the all-consuming search for answers begins to die a natural death. Now slowly and subtly the changes that take place within the individual lead away from confusion as enlightenment begins.

Now comes the understanding that God can be realized only within oneself. He is not to be found outside in nature, idols and places of pilgrimage, nor in scriptures and holy books. Whoever has perceived him, whoever will perceive him, has done so or will do so only within himself. It is only after realizing him within that one begins to see him everywhere.



Tukaram's Secret

There is a story related to Tukaram as told by Amit Goswami in his book *Physics of the Soul*. The story brings into focus the attitude we should display to family and friends in our daily interactions with them.

A disciple inquired of Tukaram about how his transformation came, how he never got angry, how he was always loving, and so forth; he wanted to know Tukaram's "secret."

"I don't know what I can tell you about my secret," said Tukaram, "but I know your secret."

"And what secret is that?" the disciple asked curiously.

"You are going to die in a week," said Tukaram gravely.

Since Tukaram was a great sage, the disciple took his words seriously. During the next week, he cleaned up his act. He treated his family and friends lovingly. He meditated and prayed. He did everything he could in preparation for his death.

On the seventh day, he lay down on his bed, feeling weak, and sent for Tukaram.

"Bless me, sage, I'm dying," he said.

"My blessing is always with you," said the sage, "but tell me how you've been spending the last week? Have you been angry with your family and friends?"

"Of course not. I had only seven days to love them. So that's what I did. I loved them intensely," said the disciple.

"Now you know my secret," exclaimed the sage. "I know that I can die at any time. So I am always loving in all my relationships."



Book Review



The Awakening of the Human Spirit

BY HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

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The Awakening of the Human Spirit by Hazrat Inayat Khan (1888–1927) explores the longings, the challenges, and the potential of the human spirit. Inayat Khan is often credited with introducing Sufism to the West. In 1910, with the encouragement of his *murshid* (spiritual teacher), he left his native India and sailed to America. He came initially in the capacity of a musician, but soon shifted to teaching the Sufi path, and spent the rest of his life in America and Europe teaching that path to seekers. His Sufi teachings are often termed Universal Sufism because he saw the essence of Sufism as fundamentally at one with the teachings of mystics and saints of all other cultural or religious backgrounds. As he explained it:

Knowledge can be divided into two aspects: one is the knowledge we call learning, and the other aspect is knowing. ... One scientist, one inventor, one learned person has one argument; another comes and says, "This is not what I think; I have found out the truth about it, which the one who looked before did not perceive rightly." This has always been and will always be so with the outer knowledge. But with that knowing that is the central knowledge there has never been a difference, and there never will be. The saints, sages, seers, mystics and prophets of all ages, in whatever part of the world they were born, when they have touched this realm of knowing, they have all agreed on this same one thing. It is therefore that they called it Truth.

To know that truth, he says, one has to break the bondage of the body. He describes the human spirit as being imprisoned in the body and longing for freedom. Referring to the saying of the Prophet "Die before death," he asks, "What does this mean? It does not mean 'Commit suicide.'

It only means, 'Study the condition of death.' One need not die. Play it; one should play death and find out what it is."

It is by playing death that one arrives at the knowledge of life and death, and it is the secret of life that will make the soul free. The different planes of existence, which are hidden behind the cover of this physical body, begin to manifest to the person who plays death.

Inayat Khan describes three prerequisites for attaining the inner life. The first condition is that one "should value the inner life more than anything else in the world, more than wealth, power, position, rank, or anything else. It does not mean that in the world he should not pursue the things he needs; it means he should value most something that is really worthwhile." Second, if one really values the inner life he should give "his precious time" to it. The third prerequisite is

that the condition of his mind should be relieved of that pressure that is always present in a person's heart, when he thinks that he has not done what he ought to have done towards his fellow men, be it father, mother, child, husband, wife, friend, or whoever it is. If the pressure is troubling his mind, then ... his heart is not at rest, for he feels he has not done his duty, he has a debt to pay to someone. It is an essential point that the adept takes care that any debt to be paid in life does not remain unpaid.

According to Inayat Khan, one begins to follow the spiritual path in earnest only when certain positive qualities come to the fore. "When a man's attitude has become a loving attitude, and when he has developed a tendency to serve, to forgive, to tolerate, to have reverence for all, good and bad, young and old, then he begins his journey." To progress on that journey, however, one needs to let go of one's preconceived ideas and be open and receptive.

When a person is holding onto certain beliefs, he is not going forward. And with many good qualities and high ideals, with

religious tendencies, with a devotional temperament, with all the spiritual qualities that one may have, yet one can remain standing in the same place. Either these ideas are holding the feet as if with nails, or the hands are somewhere holding onto the railing and not letting one go further.

For Inayat Khan the spiritual path is a journey of discovery each of us must pursue individually:

Is immortality to be gained, to be acquired? No, it is to be discovered. One has only to make one's vision keener – in other words, to explore oneself, but that is the last thing one does. People are most pleased to explore the tomb of Tutankhamen in Egypt in order to find mysteries, regardless of the mystery hidden in their own heart. Tell them about any mystery existing outside themselves, and they are delighted to explore it. But when you tell them to see into themselves, they ... make difficulties, they raise complexities by their own complex intelligence. They do not like the straight way.

He describes the process of spiritual development as a relentless battle to overcome one's own lower nature. "As soon as one has started on the journey, one's lower nature rises up, and all one's follies and weaknesses want to drag one down to earth, and the struggle of breaking these chains requires the strength of a Samson." However, he says, people often have a mistaken notion that this spiritual battle is about overcoming and subduing the pleasures of the senses.

The Bible speaks of self-denial, but this is often misinterpreted. Self-denial, according to general belief, means denying oneself all that is good and beautiful, all that is worth attaining; but in reality self-denial does not mean denying oneself all that is good and beautiful, it means denying the self; and that is the last thing one wishes to deny. And the automatic action of this denial is to open the door to the inner life.

By entering the inner life, one finds the 'friend' he has longed for: "The friend who is a friend in life and after death, in pleasure and pain, in riches and poverty, one upon whom one can always depend, who always guides rightly. [This friend] is hidden in one's own heart. Who is this friend? Man's own being, his true inner being. That friend is the origin, source, and goal of all."

But the question arises: if that friend is one's own being, why then call him a friend, why not call him one's self? The answer is that no doubt this friend is really one's own being, but when the greater Self is compared with the present realization, one finds oneself smaller than a drop in the ocean. Man cannot very well call that friend himself until he has forgotten himself, until he is no more himself.

Forgetting oneself – or in Sufi terminology, annihilating the self so that one lives only in the friend – is the essence of the spiritual path. Inayat Khan describes the character of one who has attained the inner life. Such a one is

a mystery to everyone; no one can fathom the depth of that person, except that he promises sincerity, he emits love, he commands trust, he spreads goodness, and he gives an impression of God and the truth. For the man who has realized the inner life every act is his meditation; if he is walking in the street it is his meditation; if he is working as a carpenter, as a goldsmith, or in any other trade or business, it is his meditation. It does not matter if he is looking at heaven or at the earth, he is looking at the object that he worships. East or west or north or south, upon all sides is his God.



