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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
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He It Is

*He it is,
the innermost one,
who awakens my being
with his deep hidden touches.*

*He it is
who puts his enchantment upon these eyes
and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart
in varied cadence of pleasure and pain.*

*He it is
who weaves the web of this maya
in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green,
and lets peep out through the folds his feet,
At whose touch I forget myself.*

*Days come and ages pass,
and it is ever he who moves my heart
in many a name,
in many a guise,
in many a rapture of joy and sorrow.*

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*



Practice Makes Perfect

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Bible, Matthew 5:48

Maharaj Charan Singh used to tell us that if we were perfect we would not be here.

Our spiritual path is a journey from imperfection to perfection. The author of *The Gospel of Jesus* writes:

There is human perfection and divine perfection, the one being a reflection of the other.... If it seems to us that the creation has imperfection, then that is only from our point of view. If the creation is to continue, it has to be the way it is or all the souls would immediately return to Him. There has to be something to keep souls here – and that something is what we call imperfection. Just as a shadow only exists because of the light, so too does imperfection only exist because of perfection. From His point of view, the creation is entirely as He wants it: it is perfectly imperfect.

We have created our own imperfection and we perpetuate it on a daily basis through the choices we make. The world we see and the life we live is our own choice. If we choose not to get up and meditate, we perpetuate our imperfection. If we get up and meditate, we work at developing our own perfection.

It is our conditioned freedom of choice that creates and perpetuates the personality or ego. An artist captures an impression on

a canvas which is an expression of something from within himself. The appreciation of a painting is always subjective, as viewers of the canvas can never see the original image in the artist's mind. All they see is the reflection on the canvas and they cannot always interpret and understand the artist's depiction.

Our lives are like paintings: every choice we make adds a facet to the picture we create. Our deeply engrained beliefs form the background or watermark on our canvas, and the splashes of colour represent the choices we make. It is these choices that build the personality.

We may think the painting we are creating is near-perfect, but those with whom we interact will quickly find flaws in the image we project of ourselves, because the image of who we think we are is very different from the image they perceive. Like the critics of an artist's painting, they can never be inside our head. No one can know the level of our pain, our joy or the overpowering paralysis of our fears. Each of us can only interpret from our own level of experience. At best we have no more than a vague understanding of each other.

As we observe the painting, we rarely think of the pure white canvas, the foundation which made it all possible. It is this foundation – this purity – that is the perfection we seek. This is our true essence and nature: the Shabd. But on our own we don't know how to contact or experience the Shabd. As with everything in life, we need a teacher to explain the spiritual process to us and to guide us in the right direction. Once we accept the Master's teachings, it is our responsibility to practise what he teaches us. This will slowly lead us to progress along the inner path leading us from imperfection to perfection. Practice makes perfect – and perfection is our release from this world.

When we are obsessed with the creation, splashing colours over our canvas in the play of the ego, we have forgotten the Lord and are

pursuing personal desires and personal enhancement. At this time our attention is focused in the world, which means we have turned away from reality – away from God. Then the individual self, with its narrow and petty vision, becomes stronger.

When we focus on God we move away from the self and move closer to God and divine perfection. If God is the essence of perfection, we must make ourselves worthy of meeting Him. Therefore our starting point on our spiritual journey must be to develop the human virtues of perfection. Once we have developed human perfection, we have the foundation on which to build divine perfection. This foundation is built by following the four principles unconditionally – without compromise.

We could refer to them as the four perfections because they are the stepping-stones that will lead us to perfection. The first three – the vegetarian diet, abstinence from alcohol and recreational drugs, and living a moral life – create the necessary human virtues in us.

The fourth principle, our meditation practice, develops in us a greater awareness of the Shabd, which leads us to divine perfection. As we become more aware of the Shabd, it helps us persevere with the first three principles.

In *The Gospel of Jesus*, we read that the best and most effective approach in the quest for human perfection is to seek divine perfection through meditation on the Word of God – the Shabd, through which our good human qualities become apparent. It is from a divine and perfect Master that we receive the grace to become perfect too, for as Jesus said, the disciple will become like his Master:

*The disciple is not above his Master:
But every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.*

Bible, Luke 6:40

Some of us do our meditation as requested by the Master – that is, we sit each and every day for the required two and a half hours without fail. Some of us sincerely try to meditate but find it an ongoing battle, while others are hopelessly casual in their approach to their meditation. Still others simply quit when the going gets tough. We need to keep reminding ourselves that the Master's teachings take hold and work their magic in a very subtle way and that we must have patience. If we eat ice cream every day for a month, it becomes a habit. The taste buds crave the ice cream. If we do our practice every day as we should, the mind will eventually crave the practice.

The only thing that will give us the inner strength we need to break our old habits and the powerful hold the senses have over us is to attach ourselves to the Shabd, which we do through our regular practice of meditation. Meditation inspires us – it makes us realize that we can let go of worldliness. It is this letting go that sets us free to pursue perfection.

When we are able to let go of the patterns on our canvas and the obsessions we have with improving our picture, we will come to realize how unimportant they are, and this will be a sign that our practice is reaping rewards. And although purity and perfection may still be a long way away, we are slowly disentangling ourselves from the world as we learn to surrender more completely to the Master's instructions – to his will.

Surrender in any form is never easy and to surrender our will to the will of the Master is extremely difficult. The Masters tell us it can only be done by attaching ourselves to Shabd. It is only through the power of Shabd that we can slowly remove all the impressions imprinted on our mental body and uncover the pristine being within – just as we would slowly and carefully remove the colours left by the

strokes and swirls of the artist's brush to reveal the pure white canvas underneath it all. We are told that the final goal is so great and sublime that we should not allow anything to get in the way of achieving it.

It will not benefit us to simply pay lip-service to the path. We have to practise, otherwise we are simply wasting a wonderful opportunity to reach both human and divine perfection. Meditation is our journey to perfection under the guidance of a perfect Master.

Again we read in *The Gospel of Jesus* that the tasteless water of an imperfect and worldly human being is turned into the sweet wine of perfection through the intermediary of the Truth, the Word of God. With such a promise, where should our effort be – in the gratification of the ego or the pursuit of perfection? We should be consistent, sincere and intense in our practice, and should not allow our desire for perfection to weaken. We also read this in *The Gospel of Jesus*:

The rendezvous with this beautiful, radiant and spiritual form of their Master is the first goal to which the devotees of the universal mystic path aspire. The only obstacles to experiencing it are those that lie within the mind. For only a pure and perfect soul can come before the radiance of one who is purity and perfection personified.



Appreciate What You Have

The owner of a small business, a friend of the poet Olavo Bilac, met him on the street and asked him: “Mr Bilac, I need to sell my small farm, the one you know so well. Could you please write an announcement for me for the newspaper?”

Bilac wrote:

FOR SALE: A beautiful property where birds sing at dawn in extensive woodland bisected by the brilliant and sparkling waters of a large stream. The house is bathed by the rising sun. It offers tranquil shade in the evenings on the verandah.

Some time later the poet met his friend and asked whether he had sold the property, to which he replied: “I’ve changed my mind. When I read what you had written, I realized the treasure that was mine.”

In reality we possess nothing, as all things belong to the Lord, but on this plane during this illusion we exist in, for this lifetime, there are certain possessions that we regard as belonging to us. The number and quality of these possessions was determined by our fate karmas for this lifetime. Every single possession should be valued and regarded as being in our trust for the Lord. It is immaterial whether these possessions are extensive or few – as satsangis we know that we receive exactly what is in our destiny; no more, no less. It is totally idiotic to feel proud because we have much, or to feel deprived because we have little. In fact, if we look at things objectively, we actually need very little to fulfil our daily needs. The rest is just trimmings and frills, and unfortunately Kal often uses them to boost our ego.

But something else was written into this life's destiny. We received something of such immense value that it cannot be comprehended or fully realized by our puny human minds. We received initiation from a perfect Master. We have the astral form of a perfect Satguru awaiting us at the eye focus. This is not a fairytale; it is a fact stressed by the Master over and over. All we need to do is meditate regularly and punctually, with loving devotion and concentration at the eye centre for the daily required time.

Bilac's friend had to read the description of his property before he realized the treasure that was his. We have so many books, where again and again we can read descriptions of the treasure that is ours. Let us take this to heart. Let us constantly be aware of just how great a gift we have received – of just how lucky and blessed we are. Let us not neglect our duty.

Isn't becoming blasé about it, becoming used to it and taking our treasure for granted, a bit like contemplating the "For Sale" sign?

Luckily for us, this possession cannot be sold, but it can lie dormant somewhere in a corner, like something hidden away in a cupboard, seldom used and often forgotten. What a waste! What negligence!

Let us wake up before it is too late. We do not know how much time was allotted to us for this lifetime. Let us fully realize our treasure and diligently polish it, guard it and try to comprehend it. It is beyond price.





Maharaj Charan Singh

A Question of Choice

The month of January is named after the Roman god Janus, an appropriate personification for the start of the new year. This particular Roman god had two faces so that he could look ahead toward the future and back at the past at the same time. As we get rid of an old year and look forward to a new one, let us all try to be a little like Janus.

We know through experience what we did wrong and what we did right, and hope to do better this year. A new year is unfolding – like a blossom with petals curled tightly, concealing the beauty within. This year let us make every effort to reveal the beauty of the divine light that is within all of us.

For satsangis, our primary focus in life is our spiritual duty, which is staying within the four principles. By following these principles we clean up our act, because God cannot reveal himself to a contaminated mind. These principles are the only way to break free from the karmic debts that shackle us to this material world, life after life, endlessly, like a hamster on a wheel.

In *The Path of the Masters*, the author explains that karma means the law of nature which requires that every doer shall receive the exact result or reward of his actions. That is the underlying principle of cause and effect. He writes:

Directly applied, the law of karma demands that every living being ... from amoeba to archangel, from mind and soul to the Creator of the Three Worlds – everyone must receive the exact balance of accounts, the precise compensation for each and every act. And so, this is karma.

There are three types of karma. Firstly, there is *sinchit karma* – this is the store of accumulated karmas of past births. The lord of karma may draw upon this store of karmas and assign it to be lived out at such times and places as he may determine. Once it has been drawn and assigned to the soul to go through in this life, it then becomes *pralabdh karma*, which is the second type of karma. This is fate or destiny karma which must be paid off in our current life. Thirdly, there is *kriyaman*, or new karma, which is the result of our choices that we are making from day to day during this life. We may reap its payment at once or at some future time during this life. After our death what is left may be stored to be drawn upon in some future lifetime.

Karma, whether deliberate or inadvertent, has to be paid off. The Master teaches us to stop blaming our karmas; he tells us to treat every action we take as our own choice, which will create a new *kriyaman karma*. We have to act as if we're sowing new seeds. With this attitude, we would not blame our behaviour on previous karmas, and we would take more responsibility for all our actions.

Everything may be the Lord's will from the Lord's perspective, but we cannot use that as an excuse not to make moral choices. After all, we're still operating at the human level.

In what seemed to be a complete contradiction, Hazur Maharaj Ji once said that we have less free will than a puppet. If everything is predetermined, and we have no choice in the matter, then how can there be *kriyaman karma*, which is the result of our choices?

In *Mysticism, The Spiritual Path*, the author very eloquently explains this apparent contradiction. The following is paraphrased:

Things of one plane are true and real for that particular plane, but in the higher light of a subtler plane the truths of the lower

planes become deceptive and unreal. Therefore, from a higher plane, this physical world and its apparent truths become unreal and we cease to exist as separate beings.

Thus we can say that reality has levels. At the highest and final stage, reality is in its absolute truth and purity. There is no duality and all is the divine One, whole and indivisible, all-knowing and all-transcending.

For us human beings, this world is real – it *does* exist, just as for the deluded mind, the world of delusion is a reality. For the mystics of the absolute stage, reality is the transcendent One; for us, it is this world of ever-changing multiplicity. Perfect mystics embrace the absolute reality of Oneness; we grope in relative reality or duality.

This settles the question of whether humans make their own choices, or whether everything is predestined and foreknown by an all-knowing God. Both can be true at the same time, for they are truths of different levels of reality.

Our existence as human beings and our free will are realities of the same order. They are real according to this plane, but unreal in the absolute truth of the highest region. Another reality of the lower planes is time – that is, the illusion of life unfolding in sequence. From the higher perspective, everything is taking place simultaneously, in the now.

The contradictions in mystics' writings are thus due to the fact that they are truths of different planes. What is true at one stage may not be true at another. When we are in the physical world, free will and duality are the truth for us, but the final truth is still the absolute truth of all-knowing, transcendent Oneness.

What this means is that when Maharaj Charan Singh said that we have less free will than a puppet, he was speaking from the viewpoint

of a perfect mystic who is always at the level of absolute truth. When the Master tells us that we always have a choice, he speaks to us at our own human level, and free will or choice is true at this stage of human understanding.

This entire material universe is made up of one or more of the four elements – of earth, air, fire and water. All the lower forms of life are possessed of all four elements, though some are dormant. In higher life forms like mammals all four of these elements are active. And the Masters tell us that we humans are the top of creation because we are the only creatures that have a fifth element, ether, which allows us discrimination or the capacity to make choices.

So human beings making their own choices as their lives unfold in time and space is the truth for this plane. While we are human beings in this universe of the elements, this is our reality.

The French philosopher Voltaire said:

Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her: but once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards in order to win the game.

By way of explanation: the dealing of the cards is our pralabdh karma, the karma apportioned for this life, while the way we play the cards becomes our kriyaman karma, the karma we create every day.

Buddha said, “What we think, we become.” This means that everything that makes up our own personal lives was originally formed in our thoughts. Thoughts lead to actions and actions lead to reactions. This is an inescapable law. All Masters throughout the ages have taught this fact. It is the nature of the mind to give expression to our thoughts on the physical plane.

When we understand that we reap what we sow, then, in a sense, we sow whatever we wish to reap. If we think this is not true, think about how a person becomes a doctor or a lawyer. He has a thought of what he wishes to become, then he has to 'sow' the seeds of education in order to reap the rewards of qualifying. We are sowing and reaping almost every minute of the day. This sowing of crops can be as simple as deciding what to wear, or as complex as becoming a criminal and having to reap the crop of that karma for however many lifetimes.

In *The Book of Mirdad* we read:

Aye, Man invites his own calamities and then protests against the irksome guests, having forgotten how and when and where he penned and sent out the invitations. But Time does not forget; and Time delivers in due season each invitation to the right address; and Time conducts each invitee to the dwelling of the host.

Here Mirdad is stating that we may have made foolish choices in a previous life and then, in this life, we protest against our irksome guests – the karmic consequences of those choices.

People often say that if you believe in karma then you're a fatalist, but the author of *The Path of the Masters*, writing on karma, states:

This great doctrine, instead of leading to a dull fatalism, is in fact the only teaching in the world that shows exactly how man is the architect of his own fortune, the creator of his own fate.

A fatalist is one who resigns himself to the fact that he has no power to control his future, and that everything that happens to him

is just the 'hand of cards' that some higher power dished out to him. Whereas just the opposite is true: we are truly the architects of our own fortunes, the creators of our own fates.

Understanding that at this level we do have free will is very exciting, and we need to utilize this in our favour by choosing to earnestly attend to our daily meditation in an effort to break the fetters of our sinchit or reserve karmas. We need to decide what we want to happen at our moment of death – the choice is ours. We can choose to do our meditation every day. Meditation and the grace of initiation from the living Master are the only way to achieve liberation from reincarnation, and it is up to us to choose whether to meditate or not. The results of that choice will decide our future.



*We are undergoing our fate, in which we have no choice. But we do have the choice to work anew as we please, for our future....
We are, therefore, at present doing a dual function: In regard to fate, we are helpless, but in new actions we have a free hand to sow for the future.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Leaving Everything Else Aside

Maharaj Charan Singh has stated that this creation has been created “perfectly imperfect”. If it were not so, it could not continue, as the souls would be liberated. Kal has to make sure that no one escapes without paying the karmic account in full. Therefore the mind will ultimately use everything in its power to retard the soul’s progress. The mind will be led astray to get itself entangled in sowing and reaping, until such time as a marked soul is brought into the presence of a perfect living Master.

When that moment arrives, such a soul should lose no time in getting hold of the lifeline that is being given to him. If a seeker forfeits this ultimate gift of release from the wheel of birth and death – reincarnation and transmigration – it might not easily come again. The privilege of the human form is given only after the soul has evolved through the cycle of 8,400,000 species, and who knows how many times a seeker might have already completed the cycle? Soami Ji says in *Sar Bachan*:

Leaving everything else aside, one must implicitly obey the Satguru of his own time, and faithfully follow his instructions. This will lead him to success. This is the long and short of everything.

For an initiate this means that everything is finalized through initiation. Sant Mat tells us that our fate karma, some sinchit karmas and perhaps even some kriyaman karma have to be paid off in this life, and this can be done through steadfast meditation.

All that the Master asks of us is absolute obedience to the way of life he has prescribed, and daily meditation. This will earn us his grace, and his grace will break the bonds that tie us to the creation. It's his grace that will help us clear our karmas. If the initiate implicitly obeys the Satguru, he cannot remain in this creation a moment longer than it takes to pay off the karmas. It is that simple.

Maharaj Charan Singh says that we should concentrate on simran, as ultimately this is what will take us to the Radiant Form of the Master. Simran is the repetition of the five holy names which are entrusted to us at the time of our initiation. This is our lifeline. Hazur Maharaj Ji has compared it to a child enjoying the fair, the worldly show, while holding on to his father's hand. But when we let go of his hand, when we forget our simran, we feel unhappy and uncomfortable, lonely, and desperately lost. The moment simran continues, the sun shines through again.

Baba Jaimal Singh gives the following advice:

Be concerned only with your meditation. The affairs of the world will take their own course; they just go on and never come to an end.... Bhajan and simran is our real work.... This will always remain with us, as it is the Satguru's gift. This gift will grow, and never diminish.

Spiritual Letters



You and other satsangis are urged to keep doing your bhajan and simran. If there are mosquitoes around, that's good. At least you will get up at night to do your meditation!

Spiritual Letters

The Cruelty of God

In the *Mathnavi* Rumi talks about the ‘cruelty’ of God, and describes it as the supreme grace. The cruelty that comes from God, he says, is worth more than a hundred acts of mercy.

*God's worst cruelty is better than all the mercies of the two worlds...
In His cruelty lives hidden tenderness:
To submit the soul to God out of love for Him
Makes its essential life blaze and grow.*

Andrew Harvey, *Teachings of Rumi*

The very term ‘cruelty of God’ may sound a bit shocking to us. But what does Rumi mean when he talks about God’s cruelty? He is referring to that long-ago action when God separated all his souls from himself and sent them into exile – forcing them to go into a state of separation from himself. And one has to ask why such a drastic step should have ever have been necessary. What loving parent would ever want to throw his child out of his home, to live in a state of misery? Every single seeker who ever lived must have wanted an answer to that question!

Also in the *Mathnavi* Rumi uses the analogy of a reed flute to describe the cry of the soul as it longs for the place from which it once came – the reed flute which sings its song of pain because it remembers how it was once torn from the reed bed and now longs to return there. We all know this soul-longing. It’s what brought us to the path and it’s what keeps us on the path. And it may well have made us wonder about the curious nature of the love of God.

Omar Khayyam was a monumental figure who lived in Persia in the eleventh century. He was a renowned mystic and also a mathematician,

scientist, astronomer and philosopher. And he even devised a calendar said to have been more accurate than our present Gregorian calendar. But now, nine centuries later, he's known mostly as the author of the famous *Rubhaiyyat* from which we so often hear quotations. ("The moving finger writes and having writ, moves on ...", to give an example.)

In this same *Rubhaiyyat* he complains to the Lord:

This soul of mine was once thy cherished bride.

What caused thee to divorce her from thy side?

Thou didst not treat her thus of yore.

Why then now doom her in the world to abide?

Rubhaiyyat of Omar Khayyam,

translated by Edward Whinfield

Maharaj Charan Singh used to tell us that the deep soul-loneliness we feel is in fact the hunger of the soul for its Lord, and that it will persist right up to the time that the soul is reunited with its Lord. This feeling, he said, has been deliberately planted in the heart of man.

Why would the Lord separate the soul from him and then make it grieve in its separation from him, stranded in this world where there is so much suffering? The mystics tell us that the Lord wanted the soul to love him. The Lord wants it to grow in consciousness, so that it could return the Lord's love to him. In *The Dawn of Light* Great Master explains it like this: that in the beginning our souls were comatose and the Creator wanted them to become fully conscious – by making them experience suffering.

So, in an odd kind of way, any pain that we might feel while stuck in this hostile world is really a blessing. If this world were a perfect place, we would probably be perfectly happy to stay here forever. It's the loneliness and the suffering we experience down here in the creation

that provides a strong motivation for us to work, to do our meditation, to escape from here.

Omar Khayyam tells us something quite startling: that we were the very reason this whole grand creation was brought into being. We were the lofty goal, he says, for which the creation was designed. We may see ourselves as small and unworthy, and at this stage that's what we are, but we are the reason why all the universes and vast inner realms came into being!

*Man is the whole creation's summary,
The precious apple of great wisdom's eye.
The circle of existence is a ring
Whereof the signet is humanity.*

Just to create a scenario in which his precious souls could go through every conceivable type of experience and in the process eventually come to know and love him, the Creator devised the whole great play of creation. The idea is quite mind-boggling! And yet we can sense that it must be true.

Unfortunately, in the process of coming down to this low physical existence each soul has acquired coarse layers of mind, an astral body and finally a physical body equipped with senses that demand to be satisfied. And through actions at this level to keep the mind and senses happy we've become covered with karmic dirt. All this is blocking the soul from returning to a state of pure spirit, unless that dirt can be scrubbed and burnt off – through suffering or also, in our case, through meditation; and of course through the working of his blessed grace. And while this is happening, the soul is suffering in the separation from its source.

For most of us it's difficult to love God – and therefore long for him – if we don't *know* God. It needs someone we can relate to at our human level, someone we can love because he is at our level; in other words the human form of our Master. And this is of course why we have a living Master – so that we can see him in all his glory and magnificence and fall in love with him; and then perhaps, through that love, come to yearn for him when we no longer have access to his beautiful physical form. Then we will mourn for him, Hazur Maharaj Ji says, and we'll be the *fortunate* ones who mourn for him.

And in the mean time the practical effect of this mourning is that it forces the disciple to meditate – to keep trying in the face of constant struggle to climb the steep slope to him: the only route he has given us to reach him.

Maharaj Ji tells us in *Die to Live*: “In separation, the disciple will direct all his devotion and longing within to find the Master, and ultimately he will find the Comforter.” The Comforter meaning of course the Shabd, the Shabd from which the Radiant Form emerges as the form that we'll recognize when we finally do reach that level within.

We're repeatedly told that there *is* no separation – that the Master is always with us, inside us. But still the feeling of separation may be there. And it seems that the Master might well *want* us to feel separation from him. It seems that this may be necessary for the disciple – it's good for him. It can create a yearning in him for his Beloved that's a more powerful incentive than anything else to make us work to find him.

Love is a strange thing. When we're young and naïve we tend to look at it through rose-tinted spectacles. Then life teaches us that it's not all joy; it frequently brings with it a lot of heartache. The Masters go a step further. They tell us that love *always* involves pain. That's the real love: the love that knows both pleasure and pain.

In *Die to Live* Hazur Maharaj Ji speaks about the pleasure in the pain:

We have to pass through that agony of separation from the Father before we can achieve the happiness of union. But there is a pleasure in this pain. If you tell a lover or a devotee, “I would like to take this pain away from you,” he will never let you take it away. If it is so painful, why don’t they leave it? But they can’t. They don’t. They find pleasure in that pain.

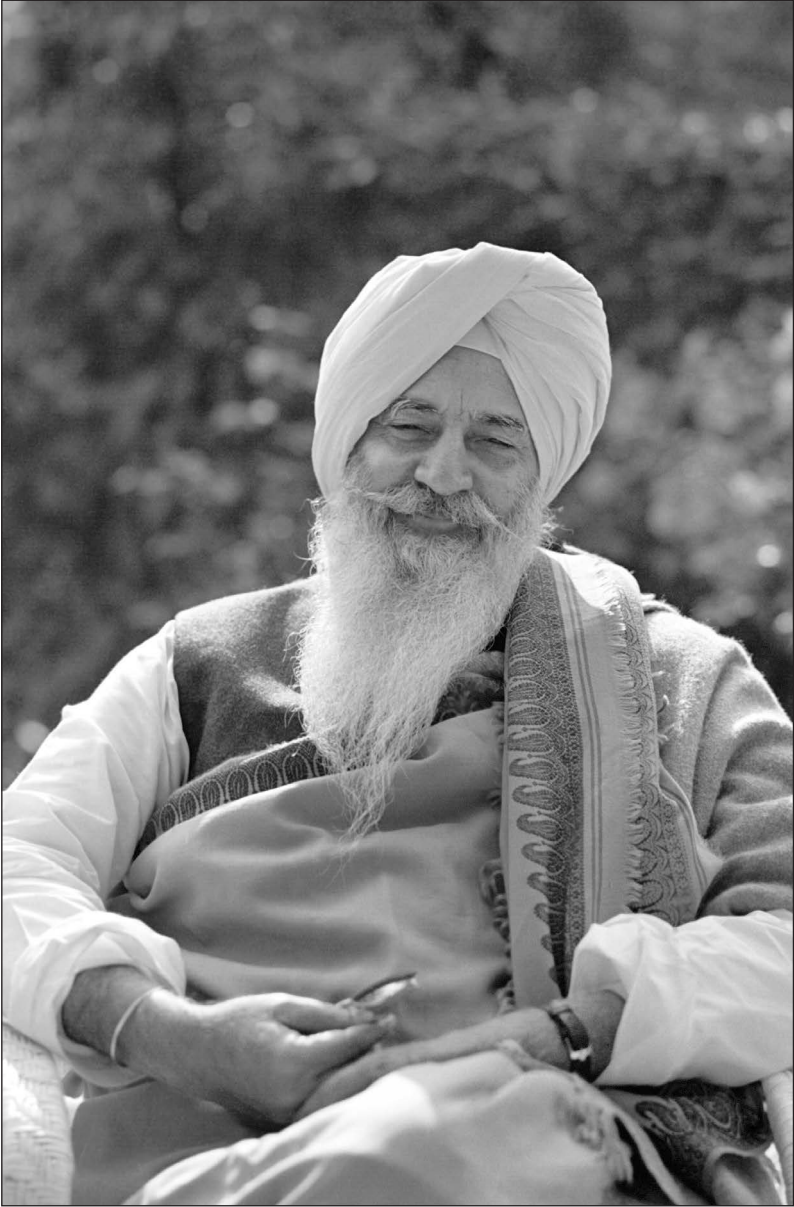
We may have difficulty understanding this apparent contradiction. But in a way it does make sense. Many of us have known the joy of being in the physical presence of our Master. And we’ve also known the ache of missing him when away from him. But in this missing him, painful though it may be, is a sharp memory of him – infinitely preferable to having no memory of him at all. In some way we *know* that this missing him is valuable. It’s part of our spiritual unfolding. We would not want to lose it.

All our heartache, all our helpless struggles, all our self-blame, all our poor efforts to please our Master by trying to live the path as he has told us to do, all our sadness when we fail him – they’re all part of a long journey. All this is part of the growing of our soul into consciousness.

Rumi tells us:

*Don’t run away, accept your wounds and
let bravery be your shield.
It takes a thousand stages
for the perfect being to evolve.*

Maryam Mafi and Azima Melita Kolin,
Rumi, Hidden Music



Maharaj Charan Singh

Punctuality

Rai Sahib Munshi Ram was very punctual. If Great Master said: “We will leave at five in the morning,” at four-thirty Rai Sahib would be ready, completely packed and dressed, sitting on a chair waiting for the Master. He was so particular about anything you told him. But Great Master used to relax sometimes. If he said six o'clock, and somebody came, it might be seven before he was ready. But Rai Sahib would not tolerate it, he would say: “You told me six and I am ready.”

He would always call out in the morning: “I'm ready, Sir.” You could hear him from the Great Master's house, where he would be waiting.

Great Master often used to say: “Rai Sahib will be coming, please let me go in time.”

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Heritage*



A skeptic asked a Master: “Is there any scientific evidence of what you talk about?”

The Master said: “If you believe, I am that evidence. If you practise, you shall be it.”

Swamini Vimalananda Saraswati, *Meditation Techniques*

Living in His Presence

The mind has been described as rain that keeps falling when the sky has cleared. It does what it has always done, no matter what the situation. Even at advanced stages of meditation, we are told the mind resists stillness, resists concentration and strives to maintain movement.

Every moment is a moment of truth. Those of us who are not spiritually evolved tend to separate our lives into a spiritual component and a worldly one. We dedicate a small portion of the day to spiritual practice, then get back as quickly as possible to business as usual – to normal life. Whereas meditation is quiet concentration, our normal life is distracted activity.

Of course, it is wrong thinking to compartmentalize life into meaningful and trivial elements. It is all critically important. If we cannot be totally focused in the moment, we can at least attempt to carefully observe and actually be aware of what is going on in our lives: what we do and say and think, how we react; how we deal with anxiety, what we find humorous or uplifting.

This kind of self-monitoring can become unnerving though, and it will remain so until we allow the Master to occupy a more permanent place in our moment-to-moment existence. When this happens, when we become centred in the awareness of his presence, then we start to understand that every moment is a moment of truth.

How would I behave in a specific situation if Master were there? Very differently from the usual impulsive, emotional, judgmental and careless way that has characterized my behaviour thus far. The Master is, of course, present at any given moment, so even if we cannot

actually experience that reality in the fullest sense, we can develop an awareness of his presence simply in the knowledge that it is so.

This is partly faith, partly effort and partly his grace – the three pillars on which our spiritual progress is built. The objective is not merely to be a better-behaved person, but rather to be more spiritually conscious.

Maharaj Ji has urged us to allow the atmosphere generated during meditation to extend into our entire day. This means that our calmness, our focus and our longing should permeate our so-called normal lives. Our Master is with us not only spiritually but also mentally. In this way, sustained awareness becomes an ever-growing consciousness, which in turn, eventually manifests as the experience of living in his presence.



As the physical body gets more involved in outside pursuits, the mind should be kept absorbed in simran. Listen to the Shabd-dhun every day – even if you do it only for ten minutes, it should be done every day. And understand undoubtingly that one day the Satguru will take you to Sach Khand. Read daily from the sacred writings, even if you read only one verse.

Baba Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*

The First Step

In the introduction to *Sar Bachan (Prose)* we read what the final stage of our spiritual path will be like:

Its primary attributes are wisdom, love and power; or as some prefer to name them, intelligence, joy and energy. This is the abode of the Supreme Creator and numberless hosts of pure spiritual beings possessed of unimaginable god-like greatness and splendour and enjoying the most intense happiness. This region is practically boundless, or limitless, in extent. It knows neither death nor change nor any imperfection.

Those who are initiated can experience it in this life. It is not a distant pipe dream – it is realizable in this lifetime. When we were accepted for initiation by the living Satguru, one of the criteria for choosing us was that we have the potential to make the transition during this very life. Our karmic load was light enough and we had enough love, which meant that we had the potential to make the transition from this pain-filled world to a state of pure intense happiness. Not only do we have a human birth, but we have also been granted the gift of initiation – we are a few among the many.

Consider how rare this is. If we stop for a moment and become aware of this, we will realize that we have already made gigantic progress on the path. There is now actually very little between us and supreme happiness – only a conditioned mind still blocks the light. The Master has given us the method to break through the barrier of the mind: to focus the attention and experience this state as a real and permanent experience, an unimaginable godlike greatness

and splendour. An intense happiness will result from the practice of bringing the mind to stillness and then tuning our attention into the life force, the sound current and following it to its source – a state of absolute purity.

Standing back and looking at the situation objectively, one would think that we would be practising day and night, and for most of us that was the intention at the beginning. But it didn't work out that way. The mind proved to be unruly and stubborn and the effort needed proved to be too much. At the time of initiation we thought that, unlike all these other slackers, we would be enlightened by the week after next at the latest! But after a while, the promise of four lifetimes as the most it would take to make the journey looked like our only hope. Yet when the Master is asked about 'four lifetimes' he has answered that he knows nothing of four lifetimes, there is only this lifetime!

As the clichéd and familiar statement says – the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. It's time to take that step. After many years of initiation, some of us are still at the starting point on the path. We are staring into the distance trying to see the wonders that lie ahead and despairing that nothing has come into view. That is because we are missing the fundamental step – that of taking the first step.

For some of us our history on the path goes back decades. The intellectual grasp of death and the desire for a really meaningful spiritual experience led a lot of us to the path when the empty promises of salvation by religious structures failed us. For those of us who started out in the 1960s and 1970s, we now had a real guru and a real meditation practice. We were streets ahead of others, or so it seemed – except the scenery was not changing.

We have strictly followed the vegetarian diet, attended lots of satsangs, improved our morality and had years of getting up for an

attempt at meditation – why? Because our Master has told us that we can make the whole journey to our source in this very lifetime. As unlikely as it seems, this means that we could one day become fully realized, superconscious beings in a state of perfect bliss – God-realized.

Stop for a moment and get past the familiarity of the promise. See that this is a definite possibility! Most of us have settled into the fact that it is not really going to happen any time soon, but the Master reassures us it *can* happen. Why then are we still here after such a long time? Because we wander in the vast unending unreality of our mind and we are unaware of it.

If we are not aware of the mind and its virtual reality, how can we tell, even as a satsangi, what is real and what is fantasy? How do we tell whether we are experiencing reality or whether the mind is simply creating fantasy? Simran can separate reality from fiction inside, but what if we are still some distance from inside? We are like a fish in water, unaware that we are living in water. Our experience beyond the water cannot even be thought about because we would have to be aware of the water first. It is the same with the mind.

What is the mind? Where does it begin and where does it end? All our experiences are in the mind, so how do we actually know that the way out is not just another mind experience?

The Masters tell us that the way out is through the eye centre and into the spiritual realms beyond, riding on the sound current, but after all these years we may still have no inner experience. We may get discouraged at the lack of inner experience, but still we will have the faith to continue and to please him. And we will become more conscious of what we are doing – which is to try and stop the mind, to remove its power to delude us, and to enter into the inner world and make the journey to pure consciousness.

When we cannot tell the difference between reality and mind fantasy, the need for an experienced guide is a vital necessity. He has explained the way out, given us instructions and offered to lead the way. The first step is to stop getting lost in the mind, for the way does not lie in the mind but past the mind. This is the barrier we face. No amount of intellectual manoeuvring is going to take us any distance along the way because the intellect, which is the reasoning power of the mind, cannot be threatened into submission. It must first be satisfied; then we are able to follow the path and do our meditation without doubts. Beyond that it is only of value in carrying out our worldly work.

The practice as taught by the Masters is the practical way of saving our consciousness or attention from being lost out here in a state of endless misery. We are trapped in the wheel of reincarnation. When we were born we were dealt a hand of cards. We now have to play it to win, and Baba Ji tells us we *can* win. The hand of cards is our karma – our fate for this life. We have a certain degree of choice in what we do – in how we play our hand. We don't have absolute free will but we do have conditioned free will. This emotive subject of free will is used by some to explain away or justify their situation and lack of progress. Those who take this approach do not do themselves any favours.

Maharaj Ji explains conditioned free will by saying that our will is conditioned by our birth circumstances. He points out how different someone's outlook and reaction would be if they were born in Russia or the United States. We are trapped in a conditioned mind, and the intellect has to be satisfied for the mind to escape the prison of conditioning. This is possible – and the first step is to see the value of the path of the Masters. The second is to request guidance on the path from the Master. The third is to walk the path according to the directions given by the guide – the perfect living Master. Most of us are

likely to have met the first two conditions. It is now a case of taking the first step on our journey inward.

The method of the Masters is to still the mind – not to sort it out but to still it. Most of our problems exist in the mind, so to try and sort out our problems with the mind is a bit like washing the dirt out of our clothes in muddy water. Still the mind and we still the troubles. The Masters advise us to stop all this analyzing and not to be waylaid by the mind. They teach us that meditation is the first step to stilling the mind, and this is done with simran.

Take the first step. Give it priority in your life because it is the way. Take advantage of this great gift from which we can uncover our godlike greatness and experience the most intense happiness, rather than whatever it is we experience in our daily lives now. This godlike greatness and intense happiness should be our fundamental reality. Right from the beginning of our journey on the path, we can get a taste of the huge rewards of doing our meditation.



Meditation is the highway of the wise to Enlightenment. The basic idea is to go inside ourselves effortlessly and in silence and to progressively reach quieter levels of the mind until we transcend and experience the quietest level, the Absolute. Through repeated practice we become very well acquainted with the Absolute and we start to make that our existential home. With time and practice, transcendence becomes a perpetual daily reality where we experience this silent world of bliss together with our normal daily routine. This is Enlightenment and with this new way of living comes the wonderful ability to cheerfully and effectively deal with everyday life while living a fulfilling and joyful inward life.

Gustav Barnard, *A Simple Plan for Enlightenment*

Sant Mat Made Simple

The mind has complicated our meditation, our simran, our way of life and everything else for us – when it is actually all so very simple. To see it as easy, all we need to do is shift to a positive attitude.

Take for instance ‘going inside’. When we close our eyes and look at the darkness inside, then we are inside at the eye centre, but the mind by habit slips out and down almost immediately. The effort needed now is to repeatedly and patiently pull it back, until it becomes natural for it to sit still in the centre looking at the darkness. This darkness is caused in fact by our looking inside at the black sky in which the light, the stars, the sun, moon and the Radiant Form of the Master will eventually appear. But first the attention must be fully collected and focused in this darkness.

When we look at something outside, we see it because the attention flows from the eye centre, through the physical organ of the eyes, to the object that we are looking at, and we see it effortlessly. When we close our eyes and see the blackness inside, we have reversed the flow of attention from outside to inside. Now hold it there inside. It is the attention that is seeing inside, just as effortlessly as it was seeing outside.

The physical eyes cannot see the darkness inside. They need light to see. The ears can't perceive the darkness, nor can the tongue taste it, neither can it be felt by the sense of touch. We are now inside. Hold the attention there in that darkness and, being there, repeat the Master's holy names slowly and with love, with the full attention of the mind.

This simran or repetition of his names impresses upon the mind the darshan of the Master. If we think of the name of anyone we know, his face is projected before the mind's eye. When we call the Master by

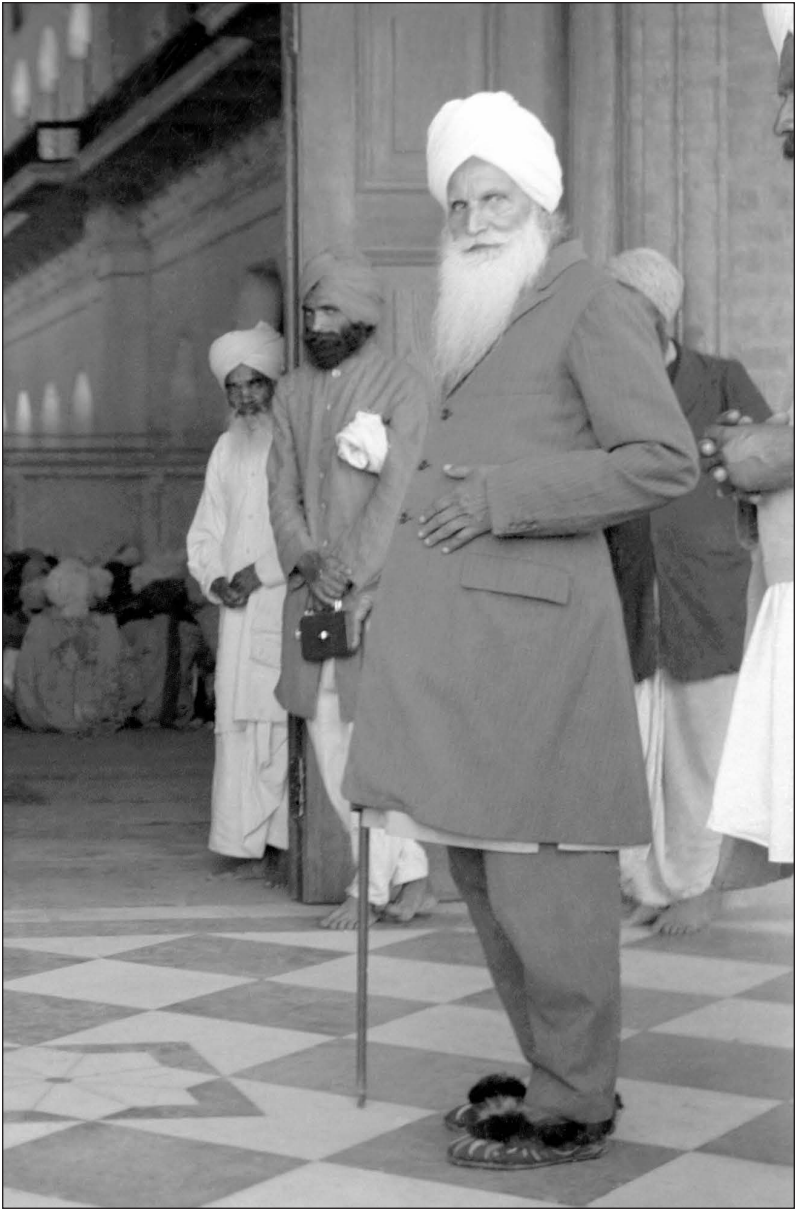
his real names, his face appears before us. We should not think of the names as just mere names, but as the Master's real names in the five major regions inside, infused with his power, to which he will always respond without fail.

This approach to seeing meditation and going inside as being extremely easy is possible when we strictly embrace and treasure the Master's four great gifts to us, which we normally call the four vows or principles of the path. And what a great gift each of these principles is!

Just imagine what grace it is to be saved from the cruel and barbaric habit of eating meat, with all its incumbent dulling and disease-forming effects. Not even to speak of the enormous load of bad karmas that we are spared from. Just think how blessed we are to be saved from the effects and consequences of consuming alcohol and perhaps becoming addicted to habit-forming drugs, which at best eventually leave us physical and mental wrecks. And then to be given the proper guidance on how to live clean, upright and morally sound lives, which purifies and ennobles us and brings us so much closer to him. And we are given the supreme gift – we are shown how to do at least two and a half hours of meditation every day, after being connected to the Shabd or Sound. These are four great gifts from the Master with a value beyond compare.

It really is all so straightforward and simple. If we adopt a positive attitude we will realize this, and we will find in practice that this is actually so. Don't allow the mind to tell you otherwise.

Always keep things sweet and simple. Obey the Satguru implicitly. Sit down and just do your meditation. If the Master says that two and a half hours of meditation every day will please him, then try to give at least that, and if possible, a bit more. For when we can please him, what more is there for us to do?



Maharaj Sawan Singh

Time

Some of us are always keeping time, some finding time, some making time, some spending time, some catching up with time, some fighting for time, some arriving early and some running late. Some are having a good time, some going through bad times, some rising at an auspicious time, some abstaining from activities at an inauspicious time, some doing things at the right time, some arriving on the dot, some remembering the good old times and some looking forward to better times.

Some are clocking hours, some counting days, some dying for time and some say they have no time to die! Strange that this man-made clock-time seems so real and has such a sway over us.

Time is a concept created and sustained by the mind. We divide it into the past and future with reference to the present. However, the past and future are known to us only in the present. When the past occurred, it occurred as the present and when the future occurs, it will occur only as the present.

Therefore the present, this moment here and now, is the very essence of time. Ignoring this essence, is not all discussion on the past and future laughable, like counting without the number one?

Thus to live in the past or future is to deny the very essence of time and life, the here and now... The present too is timeless and therefore beginningless and endless. The essence of the present is the pure Presence or Awareness, the 'I' that gives existence to the very concept of time. This presence or 'I' can only be experienced here and now, never as 'there' or 'then'. 'I am' is the essence of all our experiences.

Swamini Vimalananda Saraswati, *Meditation Techniques*

The Golden Age

According to Hindu Scriptures the passage of time is divided into four yugas or ages, each lasting an indescribably long time. They call the first age the Golden Age and describe it as a time when truth and contemplation are dominant. People live very long lives in harmony and tranquility. This age is followed by the Silver Age, when lives are shorter, and charity and sacrifice play the dominant role. Then comes the Copper Age when human lives are even shorter still and characterised by idol worship and acts of piety. Lastly comes the Iron Age. This is a time characterised by discord and strife and people live very short lives, generally filled with negative emotion and aggression.

The Masters tell us that we are now in an Iron Age and, no doubt, we would agree with that as a description of the world in which we find ourselves. True, there is some beauty, kindness, love and compassion to be found all around us – in our own lives, in the lives of people we know and in our environment. However, we would probably have to agree that strife, discord, hunger, enmity, poverty, misery and disease seem to characterise our world more accurately than love and harmony.

Therefore it might come as something of a surprise to be told: *Now is the Golden Age.* For us, this is the truth.

Soami Ji, the first of the Radha Soami line of Masters, has this to say:

*The three ages of gold, silver and copper have passed
without any of us knowing the method of Shabd practice.
In the Iron Age, Radha Soami, in His mercy,
has openly made known the secret of Shabd.*

Sar Bachan Poetry.

Soami Ji tells us that even though the three happier ages have passed, our souls are still here because we did not know the method of Shabd practice. The Masters tell us that release from the cycle of transmigration can only come about through Shabd practice. A soul must be accepted for initiation by the perfect living Master of his time and then, by following the Master's instructions, he will gain emancipation from birth and rebirth and enter his own personal Golden Age, an age that precedes reunion with the Creator in Sach Khand.

In previous ages the Masters were very selective when accepting disciples. There were rigorous tests disciples had to pass before being deemed fit for initiation. The conditions of life may have been more harmonious and peaceful, but the soul was as trapped as it is now in the Iron Age.

Fortunately for us, things have now changed. Now, in the Iron Age when existence itself is often a trial and an ordeal, the rules have been relaxed and most people who apply for initiation, after meeting certain basic and relatively simple criteria, are accepted. The ills and miseries of the Iron Age are deemed to be so great that the Masters have taken pity on souls and lowered the requirements for initiation. This is a boon beyond our comprehension.

The Masters have never been as active, as visible or as accessible as they are today. Their teachings have been published and distributed throughout the world in dozens of different languages. This is a great boon to mankind.

Still, people will say, the Iron Age *is* a time of ugliness, brutish behaviour and misery. How can anything about it be described as golden? Perhaps it is a question of perspective and attitude. How can we appreciate beauty if we have never seen ugliness? How would we understand the value of good if we could not compare it with bad? What would light mean without darkness?

This is a world of duality. And it is this very state of the world that makes us yearn to leave and find something better. We have been given glimpses of beauty, peace and love, and long for more. Who knows how hungry for this ideal state we would be, were it not for the negativity that we see all around us. It is possible that we would not have searched for, nor as eagerly embraced, the path of Sant Mat with its promise of a true Golden Age, were it not for our dissatisfaction with the Iron Age.

Within our personal lives the same principles of duality apply. Our soul longs to return home to Sach Khand, to perfect peace, joy and love. This, however, is a state of utter purity, cleanliness and beauty. Who of us fit that description in our present state? We need some serious cleaning up! Perhaps we need darkness to seek light, perhaps pain is the scrubbing brush required to cleanse us of impurities. Our Master wants to get the job done now, so any scrubbing that may be going on in our lives should be gratefully welcomed.

Turning within, to the world of spirit, can only be done with the help of a perfect living Master. Anybody who has met a Master and heard his teachings knows of this escape route. The only questions that remain to be asked are: What are we doing with this gift? As satsangis stepping out of the darkness of the Iron Age into the splendour of our own Golden Age, how are we saying 'thank you'? Are we living the lives of true satsangis, or are we resting on our laurels?

Soami Ji offers us these words:

*Anyone who sings Radha Soami's Name
will swim across the ocean of existence.
All conflict will end,
all pain and agony will cease
and they will find peace.*

*Rarely does anyone know the secret
of that boundless Name.
But the ones who do
reach the far shore,
never to be reborn into this world.*

Sar Bachan Poetry

In other words, we're promised permanent exit from the Dark Age and entry into the Golden Age. There are no 'maybes' here. He says: "will swim". "will end", "will cease" and "will find". This end result is not open to speculation. The Master guarantees that his disciples *will* "reach the far shore, never to be reborn into this world."

However, he does not say, "I'll initiate you and take you home. Just sit back and enjoy the ride!" He says, "Work with me. Cooperate fully on the journey."

Are we doing that? What have we got to do in order to cooperate fully? In short, we have to adapt our lives in order to make the path our priority.

It all starts with meditation, of course, and the Master's grace. It means planning one's day in such a way that there are two and a half hours available for meditation. The present Master is often heard to say that disciples don't have a time problem, we have a focus problem. We will happily prioritise and focus on worldly issues; set time aside for family and worldly concerns, but not give our meditation the same focus.

We all too easily allow worldly activities to compromise those meditation hours. We watch television or read until too late, or eat a heavy meal too late at night. Our whole day must be structured in such a way that we find ourselves in tip-top condition for our meditation sessions. They are not a chore; they are the privileged hours we share

consciously with Master. Meditation is our own personal haven in the midst of the Iron Age. It is time out with our Master where, with practice, we can access peace, tranquility and profound joy.

Once the meditation is done, then the rest of the day looms like a wild horse needing to be tamed. Let's say we spend six hours asleep and two or three hours sitting. That leaves about fifteen hours to live for our Master in a way that is a credit to him.

The pattern of our daily lives is shaped by the karmas allotted for us for this lifetime. But now we have to ensure that we don't add more to our karmic debt. We have to be strict vegetarians and avoid meat, fish, chicken, eggs, alcohol and drugs. We must never relax our vigilance. Leading a pure, clean, moral life in thought, word and deed is where things can go haywire. It means we must earn our living honestly, declare our income honestly to the taxman, never try to wriggle out of paying our dues at all times. It means we must keep our very thoughts clean and pure. It means we have to strive every day to follow the example the Master holds up before us.

However, he knows we are not yet perfect and he understands our limitations. What he wants from us is constant effort at meditation, at improvement of attitude. He wants us to discriminate between good and bad and choose the good.

And we have to learn to accept his will cheerfully and gratefully. He is now in charge of our destiny and every single thing that happens to us, happens with his love and approval. Everything that comes to us is an opportunity for acceptance, gratitude and submission to his will. In this way worries, fears and problems of all sorts fade away and are transmuted into gifts from him; iron is turned into gold.

Milk and Eggs

One of the most commonly asked questions when we first come to this path is: Both milk and eggs are animal products, so why are we allowed to drink milk but not eat eggs – even if they are not fertilized and would therefore not interrupt a life cycle?

To answer that question logically, let's first discuss 'tattvas', which we might roughly translate as 'elements'.

In *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, the author explains that the word 'tattvas' can be rendered as 'elements', though they're something very different from chemical elements. A tattva is the primary element of the essence of matter, of which this creation is made – everything that exists on the physical plane. The highest essence is ultimate reality or God himself. The basic elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether, are generally seen as referring to the gross state of matter found in the physical world, but we should understand that in the context of Sant Mat all are a reflection of more subtle states.

All elements are present in all the 8,400,000 species of this creation. Species are divided up according to the number of elements 'active' within each, the other elements being present but 'dormant'.

Let us consider the active elements in some of the known species:

- Vegetables have only one active element: water – the other four being dormant.
- Insects and their eggs have two active elements: fire and air.
- Fish and their eggs have two active elements: fire and water.
- Reptiles and their eggs have two active elements: fire and earth.
- Birds and their eggs have three active elements: water, fire and air.
- Mammals have four active elements: water, fire, air, and earth. They lack only ether, which gives the power of discrimination.

- Humans, and only humans, have all five elements active in them: water, earth, fire, air and ether. Ether is the element from which all other elements are derived. Humans are therefore called ‘the top of creation’, the only species having the power of discrimination.

All life subsists on life in this world. In order for us to survive, something else has to die, and this carries a karmic debt. This is why the Masters instruct their disciples to abstain from eating flesh foods, including fertilized or unfertilized eggs.

Eggs, whether they are fertilized or not, may be regarded as part of the reproductive system of their species. They have as many active elements as the species that produced them and they carry the same karmic debt.

Milk is not a part of a mammal’s reproductive system but a nutrient provided by the cow for the calf, which we can share without harming the cow or the calf. There is no karma in drinking milk, and therefore the Masters do permit the use of milk.

We must realize that when the Master says that an element is ‘active’, this activity is provided by the divine power. Therefore the more elements that are active, the more active the divine power is in keeping that plant or creature alive. This has a direct bearing on the consequences of karmic interaction which is responsible for keeping souls bound to the creation. The higher the life form taken, the greater the karma that will be incurred.

Of course karma is not the only factor that determines whether a soul will be tied to the creation indefinitely. Divine mercy and grace may allow any soul to be marked to return to the Father, even in this lifetime. But the Master asks us to condition our bodies and our minds to make such a return easier by following a vegetarian diet and living a wholesome life.

This mind-body conditioning is necessary, not only for our health, but also for our peace of mind and the ability to concentrate our attention, all of which are necessary to meditate. Meditation is the *camino real*, the royal road that turns the attention toward the Sound, the Shabd, by means of which the Masters take their disciples to levels of higher consciousness, and ultimately back to the Father.

The law of karma is very clearly expressed in the Bible in such words as: “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7), and “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:23, 24; Matthew 5:38).

No, that does not mean that people are exhorted to exact revenge. This means that we must pay for every atom that we take from this creation, and collect every atom owed us, before we can leave the creation and attain liberation.

Our Master will always do his job and he will certainly take us out of this creation and back to the Father, but we must cooperate by leading an honest life, by taking the least possible from this creation, and by doing our meditation.



The Loincloth

In *Divine Light* Maharaj Ji tells us that if a bee sits on the rim of a cup filled with honey, it can enjoy the sweet taste of the honey and can also fly away safely. But if it were to sit in the cup itself, it would lose both the honey as well as its life. “Thus,” he says, “we must live on the edge of the world as a spectator and not allow ourselves to be drowned in its sensual pleasures.”

It is so easy to be sucked into the world, as one action leads to another. This is explained in the following short story told by the Catholic mystic Anthony de Mello, in *The Prayer of the Frog*:

A guru was so impressed by the spiritual progress of his disciple that, judging he needed no further guidance, he left him on his own in a little hut on the bank of a river.

Each morning after his ablutions the disciple would hang his loin-cloth out to dry. It was his only possession! One day he was dismayed to find it torn to shreds by rats. So he had to beg for another from the villagers. When the rats nibbled holes in this one too, he got himself a kitten. He had no more trouble with the rats but now, in addition to begging for his own food, he had to beg for milk as well.

“Too much trouble begging,” he thought, “and too much of a burden on the villagers. I shall keep a cow.”

When he got the cow, he had to beg for fodder: “Easier to till the land around my hut,” he thought. But that proved troublesome too, for it left him little time for meditation. So he employed labourers to till the land for him. Now overseeing the labourers became a chore, so he married a wife who would share the task with him. Before long, of course, he was one of the wealthiest men in the village.

Years later his guru happened to drop by and was surprised to see a palatial mansion where once a hut had stood. He said to one of the servants, “Isn’t this where a disciple of mine used to live?”

Before he got a reply, the disciple himself emerged. “What’s the meaning of all this, my son?” asked the guru.

“You’re not going to believe this, sir,” said the man, “but there was no other way I could keep my loincloth!”



Let us consider what we need. We need food for our stomach, clothes to cover our body, and some kind of roof over our head. By retreating from the world, will our stomach stop demanding food? Will we no longer need clothes, or a roof over our head? We will have relinquished the earnings of our own honest labour and the food of our own homes, only to hold out our hands like beggars for others to fill our stomach.

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

Book Review



Spiritual Perspectives: Maharaj Charan Singh Answers Questions, 1960-1990

BY MAHARAJ CHARAN SINGH

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“Any questions, please?” With these words Maharaj Charan Singh Ji opened countless question-and-answer sessions during the nearly thirty-nine years he served as master. These words were his open invitation to his disciples and seekers to interact with him and voice their concerns, confusion and doubts. With infinite patience, Maharaj Ji attended to each person, offering spiritual perspectives on whatever issues troubled them.

From 1960 onwards, many hundreds of Maharaj Charan Singh’s question-and-answer sessions in English, for audiences mostly from the West, were tape-recorded in various ways, formal and informal. The sessions took place all over the world – at Dera, Delhi, Mumbai and on foreign tours. Collecting, digitally restoring, transcribing and verifying all these tapes and then selecting and topically organizing material from them for the book was the work of hundreds of sevadars over more than two decades. The published collection also incorporates most of the questions and answers previously included in the books *The Master Answers* and *Thus Saith the Master*. The resulting three-volume work, *Spiritual Perspectives*, is without a doubt a monumental addition to the world’s mystical literature. With it we gain a lifetime of the teachings of a great contemporary mystic, and in near-verbatim form as they emerged during his everyday, informal and personal exchanges with disciples.

The first volume of the work, titled *Understanding the Basics*, covers such topics as the mystery of creation, karma, the role of the master and the relationship of the soul with God. The second volume, *Walking the Path*, includes topics like personal commitment, the practice of meditation, effort and grace, and the constant struggle with the mind.

The third volume, *Living the Life*, presents the master's answers on subjects such as satsang, seva, living a balanced life and the relationship of disciple and master.

Maharaj Ji's answers address the most profound truths of Sant Mat, with sublime eloquence, but always in simple, easy-to-understand language. For example, when describing Sant Mat as "the teachings of the saints," he explains who saints or masters are with an analogy:

You have seen the waves in the ocean. They all arise from the ocean. They merge back into the ocean. Every wave is different from one another, and yet they have roots in the same ocean, they are part of the same ocean, so they are all one. Anything you throw into any wave, the wave will take it to the bottom of the sea. The sea is the same; no matter which wave carries that article, it will carry it to the bottom of the sea. So all masters are just waves of that ocean. We submit ourselves to the masters, and they carry us to that ocean.

As another example, when once a questioner suggested that "no matter how much effort we put into it or how hard we try, if the time is not right, we will never get home," Maharaj Ji responded:

Brother, it is just like this: A beggar comes to your door to ask you for alms, but first he wants to be assured that he is going to get something from the house before knocking at the door. Otherwise, he is not going to beg. This is a wrong attitude. We are all beggars at the Lord's door. We have to beg.... And I assure you, if we really beg from our heart, he is always ready to give. If we come one step, he comes ten steps to receive us.

His answers were very practical, such as in discussing how we are to live our everyday lives. His fundamental message was to live at peace within ourselves:

Everybody is miserable in separation – though some may be comfortable in their misery – so they want to find peace within themselves. When we are able to achieve that peace within ourselves, wherever we go, we will radiate peace. If you go to a happy person, he will make you happy in no time; if you go to a miserable person, he will make you miserable in no time. So first we must obtain that peace within ourselves; we must live with ourselves.

Spiritual Perspectives conveys the substance of Maharaj Charan Singh's teachings on many subjects, but much else as well. Those who were privileged to hear Maharaj Ji speak will be reminded here, even from the printed answers, of his charming manner of expression. A turn of phrase, an image, a story frequently employed will stir the memory of his voice. Even perusing the Table of Contents one recalls his vivid use of language from section headings: "Give him any name," "Arresting the teachings," "Digest it within" or "Swim along with the waves."

No matter how familiar one is with Maharaj Ji's books and audiotapes, *Spiritual Perspectives* will offer many surprises. For example, once when the master was asked about the idea that every initiate would complete the spiritual journey in no more than four lives, he said:

You see, Soami Ji explains it. One life is for devotion and love of the master. The second life is just for attending to meditation and merging into the shabd and nam, just to live in the nam, always intoxicated with that nectar, with that shabd and nam. The third life is for going across Trikuti, to the second and third stage, from where you don't have to take birth again at all. And the fourth birth is for going back, straight up. That is what the Lord devised, but he does not mean that we have to take four lifetimes. It means if you take it very slow, even then you'll be able to cover the journey within four lifetimes. If one can run, if one can go at jet speed, so much the better.

Many readers will simply read the volumes from start to finish, cover to cover. But also, for anyone seeking answers on particular subjects, the volumes offer comprehensive indexes. Since in an answer addressing one theme Maharaj Ji would often touch on other themes as well, the index is essential for a reader investigating a single topic. The index also includes references to phrases, metaphors or stories that Maharaj Ji commonly used, an unusual feature giving the reader another way to locate an answer, perhaps one vaguely remembered from a tape or from hearing it in person. For example, under “withdrawal” is listed “analogy of cloth and thorny bush,” under “separation” appears the “story of Mira Bai and her love for her guru” and under “relationship to God” is “analogy of child at fair.”

As much as it reveals the teachings, *Spiritual Perspectives* reveals the intimate and loving connection Maharaj Charan Singh formed with his sangat from abroad. As he himself said, these question-and-answer sessions were just an excuse for master and disciples to spend time together:

I am quite conscious that many people don't have a question, even when they come to ask a question. And even if they do have questions, they are not interested in the answer, and they don't want any answer. And whatever answer I may give them makes no difference to them. They only want to talk; they only want to keep me here; they only want to hear me. I am quite conscious of it.... So this game is going on. And I know every day it will be the same. It's not one session or two sessions, or one meeting or two meetings. For the past thirty-five years, this question-and-answer is going on. No dearth of books have been printed, no dearth of tapes recorded; same questions, same answers.... I don't know what is the reason, but it is going on. They want to be here and I want to be with them; they want to be with me, and we are here. You can explain it in any way.



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

