

One Spiritual Family

Sant Mat means 'teachings of the saints.' By 'saint' is meant a spiritual adept, one who has experienced union with the divine. These saints or masters teach a path of God-realization which has existed from the beginning of time and has been described through the ages in many different ways.

As modern technology and international mobility make our planet increasingly small, we frequently encounter religions and cultures foreign to our own. Now more than ever, we are able to appreciate the relativity of our own traditions and historical perspectives, even as the leaders of the great world religions reach out through ecumenical movements to identify and acknowledge their common ground.

Sant Mat concerns itself with this common ground which is the spiritual heart, or heritage, of every great religion. Spiritual masters come for this one purpose only: to reveal to the world this common heritage which links all humanity within God's love. By experiencing the oneness of God within us, we can experience for ourselves that we are all part of one spiritual family.

The root of the word "religion" is "re-ligare," which means "to bind back." The true purpose of all religions is to bind back, or reunite, each individual soul with God. Problems come when saints, the great teachers of reality, die. Their followers formalize their teachings in an effort to conserve them, or to gain personal power and prestige. This is how separate religions are born, as the simple common foundations are developed into complex edifices, shaped and coloured by the historical and geographical conditions of the time. Issues of power and wealth gain precedence, and the original teachings become obscured. Spiritual practice is relegated to second place while maintaining the organizational status quo becomes paramount. Soon we find one religion setting itself against another, and man killing his fellow man in the name of God.

Yet if God is one and he is our Father, then we are all his children, a fellowship of humanity. This is what the great saints of all religions teach: There is one God for all humanity, although he is known by a multitude of names. Whether we refer to him as God, Khuda, Wahiguru, Ram, Lord, or by any other name, we are speaking of the same, supreme, omniscient, and omnipotent Being.

Saints teach that God, undifferentiated and one, through his own power, projects himself and creates and sustains the creation. This dynamic power of God is also known by many different names. In Christianity it is the Word, the Holy Ghost; in Judaism, the Word, the Name, the Holy Spirit; in Chinese philosophy, the Tao; in Islam, it is the Kalma; in Indian philosophy, the Shabd, the Word, the Unspoken Language. Each religion, differing in time and place, has described the same power with different words. Saints tell us that each and every living being is imbued with this power. When we refer to the soul within any being, it is to this power that we are referring.

Since every living creature is enlivened by a power which is the projection of God himself, so everything that lives is in essence a part of him. Conversely, the supreme Being is immanent and present within every living creature. The soul is nothing other than pure spirit; but to function in the worlds of mind and matter, it is endowed with

various coverings which conceal its true nature, and it becomes subject to the fundamental dynamics of the creation, the law of cause and effect. This is a law of perfect justice by which all action in the creation must be compensated – thus we live in an invisible prison of debts and credits. The soul, knotted to its covering of mind, is born again and again in different forms to settle this account.

Of all the creatures in the universe, only human beings are self-conscious. But as we live out our daily lives in the physical creation, our essential nature remains hidden, concealed by mind and matter, like a bright and shining light wrapped in many layers of black cloth. Thus, in spite of having the attribute of self-consciousness, most of us remain blind to our true selves.

It is only when we finally meet a saint or master that a soul can rise above this level of duality, of action and reaction, reward and punishment, and discover its true spiritual nature. It is this divine essence within us that is permanent and not subject to the law of justice. Masters have the power to awaken us to the divine spirit within, by acting as a mirror to our soul and reflecting our pure essence to ourselves in spite of the dense coverings that obscure it. They re-connect the soul to the holy Word, and explain the technique of discovering God within the body. They teach a practical method of internal prayer, or meditation, which enables the practitioner to still the mind by withdrawing the soul currents from the outside world and concentrating them instead at the eye-centre, the spiritual heart. Once the mind is absolutely focused at this point, he or she becomes conscious of God.

Sant Mat cannot be termed a religion in the historical sense of the word, as it is not related to any race, nation, community, cult, or sect of any kind. Despite the relatively large numbers of people practicing this way of life, it remains a personal, private bond between each individual and God. The teachings have no bearing on the external aspects of life, other than the requirements that a practitioner be at least twenty-four years old, lead a moral life, abstain from all alcohol and mind-altering drugs, maintain a lacto-vegetarian diet, and give time daily to spiritual practice. Masters do not require anyone to change his or her religion, they never charge fees, and they unfailingly support themselves from their own earnings. They teach us how to nurture the spiritual dimension of life while fulfilling our family and social responsibilities. In doing so, we expand our spiritual horizons and experience for ourselves that divine spirit which enlivens the entire universe. We receive internal proof that we are indeed all children of the same God.