

August 2014

# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# By the Guru's Grace

*By the Guru's grace one nurtures love for God  
and receives the divine jewel of Nam.*

*By the Guru's grace one intuitively appreciates  
the value of this precious jewel.*

*By the Guru's grace one pursues the path of Truth.*

*By the Guru's grace one puts faith in the true Lord.*

*Should it so please the Lord,  
the Guru reveals the Unperceivable One.*

*By the Guru's grace, O Nanak,  
one escapes the blows of destiny.*

*By the Guru's grace  
one is purified by the gift of Nam.*

*By the Guru's grace  
one fixes the attention in a state of tranquil absorption.*

*By the Guru's grace  
one receives honour in the divine court.*

*By the Guru's grace  
the Supreme Lord, the destroyer of fear, is attained.*

*The Guru inspires devotion to Nam;  
himself united, O Nanak,  
the Guru unites others to God.*

Gurbani Selections 1



# The Power of Love

If one thinks of the way things work in the world, of how complex our environment is, and how many different forces are at work, one has to ask: can I as an individual take credit for anything at all? If we set ourselves a goal and we pursue that goal with all the resources at our disposal, what are the realistic chances of success?

Looking at the bigger picture, to the extent that we are able, we can easily see that the complexities of life make the outcome of our efforts unpredictable at best. Sometimes one can see just how much the outcome of our actions is affected by circumstances and forces totally outside our control. At best we can hope to influence it, but it would appear that the casting ballot lies in other hands.

Since we have the inestimable blessing of initiation by the perfect living Master of our time, we can safely assume that he, at least, is aware of the bigger picture. (In a very real sense he *is* the bigger picture!) Knowing the whole picture puts him in a situation of control. But what do the Masters do? Do they assume control? Do they shape and mould the destinies of humanity? No, they say: 'Sweet is the will of the Lord.' The Masters of all the ages have advocated living in the will of the Lord by saying "He knows best."

And how do we live in his will? This is less obvious, since it follows that if we are to live in his will, we must sacrifice our own will. So how do we surrender our will? Is it even possible?

The nearest parallel in our experience is that of love. When we really and truly love people, we want to please them. We want to do what's best for them. When we find ourselves in love with another being, we automatically find ourselves less concerned with what is going on with us and more focused on the object of our affections.

Only in the state of love does the ego automatically take a back seat and become subservient to the will of the Beloved.

It is not possible for us to consciously submit our will, to eliminate our ego; it is simply not in our capability. But in the state of love these things occur automatically. So perhaps we should abandon our efforts to eliminate our egos and live in his will. Instead we should focus on what will create that love within us, and release that latent power within us.

Both Maharaj Charan Singh and Baba Ji have told us that the love is there already; it just needs to be uncovered, like a light bulb that is wrapped in dark cloth. Our long association with body and mind has totally wrapped us in layer upon layer of karmas and desires. And until these have been dealt with, that inner light will not shine, and that love will not manifest.

But when we turn to our Master within, when we attend to our meditation and approach the eye centre, whether we succeed or not, love begins to dawn. As that happens, ego fades and weakens and our one growing desire is to please him. And how do we please him? By doing as he asks, by meditating and living the Sant Mat way of life.

Life sometimes really seems to be like a carpet that is rolling out in front of us, and rolling up again behind us. Past and future have an almost perceptible unreality about them, which should leave us with questions about the 'reality' of the present – the present which seems so tangible and undeniable that we tend to believe in it.

But our Master has taught us differently. It is all the Lord's play – the shadow-show of our karmas, a projection of our fond delusions. So let us simply love him – while we toil under his direction to find our way to his feet.



# Love and Its Opposite

The clear and penetrating eye of love sees only love. The highly fractured lens of the loveless and mind-dominated eye sees through the lens of its own faults and fissures. It sees only minds and not souls. It sees only a particular distortion of itself. It is a state of being, a level of awareness that keeps you at arm's length from everyone else and from unity. It is a faculty of the critical mind that, although perfectly 'correct' in its observations about others, keeps us locked in separateness.

If your whole being were purified and made clear by love you would not even see faults, just the underlying perfection of existence. In the end, the Perfect One sees only his own perfection reflected in everyone.

The entire lattice work of minuscule thoughts, opinions and preferences in all its incredible complexity and detail is mind, the fractured lens. If we step back and view mind in its totality, there is a single consequence: it blocks the stream of divine love-light from flowing through into our lives and all of creation. There are two great paradigms of awareness: unity and separateness. When the egoic structure is dormant we are connected to the Flow and part of the All. When it awakens and asserts itself in a trillion small guises we are cut off from the All. Actually, the story of life is the perpetual swing between love and its opposite, separateness – of being connected to God and being orphaned from God.

Henry Mann, *Love Stream*



# What Are We Waiting For?

If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit the mind has never really been our friend. It tortures us in adolescence, misleads us in adulthood, and taunts us with regret and humiliation in old age. We have been duped and we have been hustled. We have been misled and we have been deluded. We have been fed lies and empty promises – all because we took the company of the mind. We are given a human birth for the sole purpose of escaping this prison of the creation and finding our way home to the lap of the Creator. But instead we are deceived by the mind and the veil of illusion again and again, birth after birth.

No one has ever found lasting happiness in this creation, but that does not stop us from trying. We continuously throw ourselves into the world thinking that we will somehow be different from everyone else, that somehow we will be able to escape the tragedy and the disappointment. We are always running towards something that we have convinced ourselves will bring us happiness. This is the cunning design of the creation that keeps us trapped here: the eternal promise of happiness and our desperate, failed attempts to realize it.

The more we follow the dictates of our mind, the more we commit our soul to further incarceration, the deeper we become entrenched in this world. The mind doesn't care; it is only along for the ride, enjoying the good things while they last and then tormenting us with regret and shame when we end up in trouble. This is the cycle of birth and death: life after life, the mind makes us chase its objects of desire. We follow its dictates, and we pay the price.

It is not a comfortable realization, but currently we are held captive by the mind. We are born either male or female, and we have no

recollection of our true origin. We believe we are this body, this personality, this mind. We are told that we belong to our parents and that they belong to us. Then the net is extended wider. There are grandparents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles. We are given a family name, and we are told that we belong to a certain religion because we have been born into that religion. We embark on our careers and start families, and become consumed by our desires for wealth and possessions, and for position in society.

Masters tell us that we work day and night to try to own that which can never be ours; and to that which is already ours, the Lord himself, to whom we do belong, we give no attention. Only the soul can enter the court of the Lord, and unless we can rise above the mind and release ourselves from its shackles, we will never be able to free ourselves from the illusion.

Since the creation began, no soul has ever succeeded in conquering the mind and reaching the Lord of its own accord. The same laws that allow the creation to continue govern our escape. First, the Lord must want a soul to return to him. No soul can decide on its own exit. Second, when the Lord wants to collect one of his souls he sends a Master, in the human form, to collect that soul, and the Master takes it as his supreme responsibility to ensure that the soul returns to the Creator. The living Master is able to communicate with us because he inhabits a human body, he is living in the world with us, he can instruct us on the means to achieve salvation, and he provides a living example of one who has achieved the end goal.

Amidst all the confusion, deception and uncertainty that the mind and creation have to offer, the Master is the only one who will not disappoint us. He is the one who has been quietly waiting for us to turn to him. The Master is the one who awakens us to the truth and

gives us the means to conquer the mind. He is the only entity in the creation who is considering our best interests. All else is deception.

He has been entrusted with a secret weapon, the greatest power in the universe and the only power greater than the mind, the only power that can conquer the mind. This secret weapon consists of sound and light, and it is called the Sound Current, the Shabd, the Logos, the Name, the Word or Nam. This Nam is within us. It is the sound and light of Sat Purush himself. As the mystics tell us:

*Nam is the root of all knowledge;*

*Nam is the door to salvation.*

*The one whose heart is occupied by the Lord*

*Falls not into the entanglements of the world.*

*Guru Ravidas*

By instructing his disciples in the practice of listening to this sound, the Master gradually breaks down the illusions that have held the soul captive for so long. And it is a very gradual process – there is no overnight cure – because we have very deep roots in this creation.

If we cooperate with the Masters, if we heed their gentle advice, we assist in the process of freeing our soul from mind and illusion. If we don't, we remain forever in illusion. We can keep talking about the Lord and the Master, we can keep coming to satsang and doing physical seva, we can donate money to the sangat and still we will remain deceived. We will continue to love the world and we will continue to act in delusion.

Only when we meditate, only when we make an effort to direct our attention to Nam, will we begin to destroy that veil of ignorance that stands between him and us. By falling in love with the Sound and the Master, its embodiment, we start to disable the mind and maya,

and we automatically have less interest in this world. When there is nothing left to keep us here, then we will be able to leave this body at will and become familiar with where we are to go at the time of death. And at the time of death, the disciple who is fortunate enough to have attached himself to Nam in this lifetime passes easily and effortlessly from this world to the next, and continues steadily upwards towards his true home, never to return to this madness.

The disciple who is less fortunate, the one who continues to throw himself into the world and give himself over to sense pleasures, despite the continuous pleadings of his Master, will not become familiar with his destination. In a state of bewilderment and confusion he will run towards the things he loves – he will continue to run after the illusion, and will likely have to take another birth. But, as an initiate of a perfect Master, he will not be allowed to fall into the hands of Yama, the lord of death. The Master will still take charge of his destiny and ensure that the disciple's next birth is more advantageous from the spiritual point of view.

How long do we still want to turn a deaf ear? Imagine the bliss of not wanting or needing anything of this creation. Imagine the freedom and power of being with your Master wherever you are – never alone, always happy, above circumstances, wealth and possession. Do we want to wait until we have exhausted ourselves dancing to the tune of Maya, until we have been utterly defeated in our attempts to find lasting happiness, before we start to take heed of the Master's words? We should resolve once and for all to stop falling for the lies of the mind and devote ourselves to the practice of Nam, whereby we will achieve freedom and happiness, and then victory will be ours, here and hereafter. We will move from delusion and suffering to enlightenment and bliss. There is no sense in denying ourselves relief for a second longer.

Masters come in their infinite mercy to detach us from the creation, but they never use force; it is not their way. They use love, compassion and forgiveness. They use only gentle persuasion, pleading with the disciple to save himself. Is it not time we paid heed? What are we waiting for?



*Without the Master*

*no one will ever cross the ocean,  
without his Nam no one will ever find salvation.*

*Without attending satsang*

*no one will ever learn the essence,  
without love no one will ever meet the Friend.*

*Without the proper technique*

*no one can penetrate the inner sky;  
without grace the mighty gates will not open.*

*Without surat no one can ever catch the Shabd,*

*without nirat, the soul cannot sustain itself  
at the level of the Shabd.*

*First and foremost, develop love for the Master,*

*then conquer the mind and drink the nectar of Nam.*

Soami Ji, Sar Bachan Poetry

# Our Quest for Fulfilment

Anything one desires in life comes at a cost and with some effort. Long years of study are needed to acquire an education; hard work is required to succeed in business. No athlete receives medals and recognition without having first put in strenuous daily training. So in this life, as in any endeavour, we are required to make sacrifices in order to obtain whatever it is we have set our minds to – or whatever it is we truly desire.

All human beings are in constant pursuit of happiness and are seeking meaning in this life. Whatever it is that people do with any zeal – whether it is a hobby, a sport, social activities or even work – they do it in their quest for fulfilment. Which of these outward activities bring us any lasting happiness, and are we ever able to really quench our thirst for fulfilment for any length of time? We should also ask ourselves if we will be able to take any of these activities with us into our old age – and beyond this life.

If one looks at humanity and its frenetic behaviour, little seems to satisfy the average person for long. Job hopping, rampant consumerism, rising divorce rates – surely these are indicative of the fact that the path to true fulfilment does not lie in this physical realm. A verse from a poem by British poet Matthew Arnold reads:

*What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth?  
Most men eddy about  
Here and there, eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,*

*Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving Nothing;  
and then they die.*

Extract from 'Rugby Chapel'  
*Dover Beach and Other Poems*

This is really the course of life for most. So much of humanity perceives life to be only about education, social status and career, and they consider these synonymous with success and a life well lived. However, in the Bhagavad Gita we read that:

*Pleasures from external objects  
Are wombs of suffering.  
They have their beginnings and their ends;  
No wise man seeks joy among them.*

So we know full well that external objects, status, achievements and the physical creation in general bring us no lasting happiness or fulfilment and that we remain miserable. This material plane of creation has been described by the Masters as a 'vale of tears'. Masters are well aware that there is no lasting happiness in this physical creation. A measure of happiness may be found in small snatches here and there, but lasting happiness – the kind that grows and builds upon itself – is not the type of happiness that is synonymous with this physical creation.

As seekers after truth, let us then ask ourselves this key question: "What is it that we really and truly desire?" Consider what your reply might be if you were to ask yourself: "If I were to die in the next ten minutes, what would my regrets be and what would I try to change immediately?"

Regrets and attachments are what most people cling to in their last moments as the body dies. In addition, they fear the unknown and wonder if they have enough faith to let go and to embark upon a new journey. Many of us will regret, to a greater or lesser degree, the amount of time we neglected to spend in meditation and in the conscious company of our beloved Master. Who would want to leave this world in such a pitiful, apologetic state – with the knowledge that we did not do what we promised the most important person in our life that we would do? We have to seriously consider what it is that is worth our time, consideration, love and devotion.

The following story confirms for us the fact that we really are the most fortunate people alive:

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was leaving his office, and said, “Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side.” Very quietly the doctor said, “I don’t know.” “You don’t know?” the man said. “You, a religious man, do not know what is on the other side?”

The doctor was holding the door handle and from the other side of the door came the sound of scratching and whining. As he opened the door, a dog rushed into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, “Did you notice my dog? He’s never been in this room before. He didn’t know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he rushed in without fear.”

“I know little of what is on the other side of death,” the doctor continued, “but I do know one thing: I know my Master is there, and that is enough. And when the door opens, I shall pass through with no fear, but with gladness.”

We have a Master awaiting us. We have been given a platinum key to the door that separates us from the other side, from that which is the lasting solution to our innermost desire. We have love, something real and lasting, that we can take with us when we die: something that grows and grows and can never be taken away from us. We have a Master and we have love, the very thing that will end all misery, displacement and discomfort – for all eternity. And we have our meditation.

Surely there cannot be anything more worthwhile than our meditation. Meditation enables us to develop an intense attachment to our Master as well as to overcome our fear of death. No matter how pathetic we may feel our effort is, every little bit of effort counts. Our beloved Master looks lovingly only at our virtues and our potential. It is we who judge ourselves and concentrate on our failings. Though we may not be perfect, though we may remain under the terrible sway of our mind, we have the ability to choose to make an effort. We have the opportunity to work towards attaining what we really want from life.

There may be nothing worse than facing death – the only certainty in life, which can come at any moment – with fear, apprehension and guilt. Is it worthwhile, then, chasing after the things of this world beyond what is required of us in fulfilling our worldly obligations?

When death comes knocking at our door, let our attachment be only to our Master. Let us depart knowing we have tried our best to take care of our spiritual well-being and let us leave with not a shred of fear for the seemingly unknown, but rather with unbridled joy in the anticipation of our imminent union with our beloved Master.



# Ask Nothing of God but God

If you had the opportunity, what would you ask of God? When Shams of Tabriz was a child, this very question was put to him by his own Master, Sheikh Abu Bakr. At the time all he could do was to nod towards his Master, indicating that all he wanted was his Master. Shams said that although he could not talk at that moment, he was “entirely full of words, talk and meaning”. At that moment all Shams wanted of God was his Master. And, of course, he later became a Master himself – the Master of the well-known and well-loved Sufi poet, Rumi. Surely if Rumi had ever been asked what he wanted of God, he would have replied in the same vein.

Shams is further quoted as having said: “Having had God’s inspiration since childhood, I can train a man with words so that he becomes free of himself (his ego) and can advance on the path.” To train with words – is that not what we do daily when we are engaged in our meditation, when we are repeating words in order to make contact with the Word?

We meditate with the purpose of becoming free of ourselves, of ridding ourselves of our ego and of advancing on our chosen spiritual path. Not unlike athletes who train for the Olympics, we put in hours of training daily, a tenth of our day in fact, to achieve spiritual fitness. As spiritual athletes we train conscientiously with our inner eye always on the ultimate trophy, as we desperately want to make our dreams of glory come true. There is nothing that we want more than to step up on to the podium of Sach Khand and receive the gold medal of God-realization.

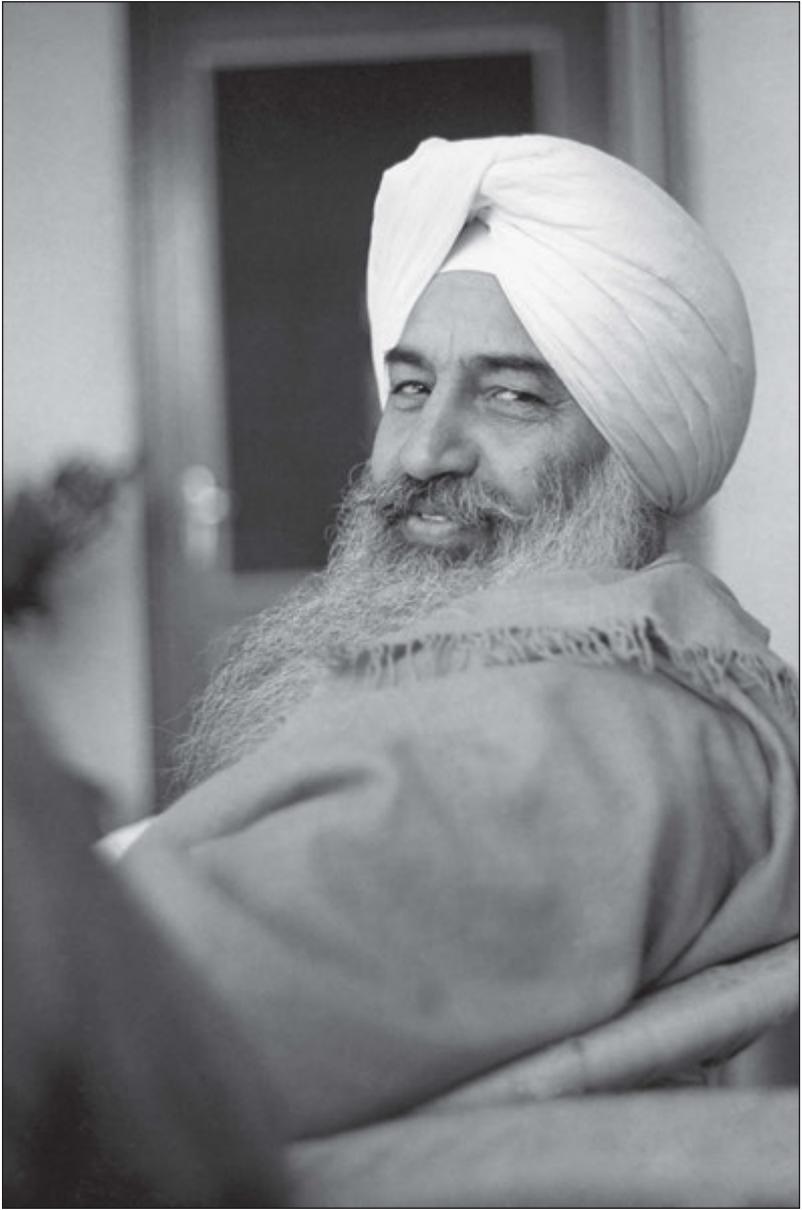
An expert coach can enhance an athlete’s performance greatly. As spiritual athletes we have the best coach available: one who knows

exactly what the preparation entails. We have access to the one who has completed the race successfully – and who has already won the ultimate prize. How fortunate we are to be able to rely on a Master who has already gone through the trials and tribulations himself, a Master who knows the hidden dangers and who can confidently share with us the secret of his success and guide us on our way. We as satsangis should count ourselves blessed – able to refine our spiritual technique through training with the help of one who is completely familiar with the only way to reach the top.

We call ourselves satsangis: people who associate with truth, seekers after truth. Knowing what it is we seek, what it is we want from God, we make a daily appointment with destiny. We enter a quiet space, shut our eyes and our minds to the world and spend time connecting with the Shabd, the life force, the love, the Lord from whom we originated and to whom we owe our very existence. In order to still our busy minds, we do simran, repetition of the Lord's names, in remembrance of the Supreme Lord. We do dhyān, visualizing our Master, and we do bhajan, listening for the Shabd, the divine sound, the primal creative force that reverberates through our bodies, minds and souls.

It is in these quiet moments, when we have left the world of coarse matter behind, that we prepare to enter the subtle spheres of consciousness. It is here on the inner planes that we want to become fully aware of that Shabd, the life and love force that keeps us connected with our origin, our source – the creative Word of God. So, like Shams, we train with words to attain the Word.

To support our training, our meditation practice – the tenth of our day that we dedicate exclusively to the Lord – we need to lead lives conducive to meditation. We should not harm others or ourselves, we should not incur karma, we need to show loving kindness to all



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

and conduct our lives with honesty and integrity. If our sole concern in this life is the reality of spirit, connecting with the Divine, then the principles that support our quest are not hard to follow. We no longer want to have anything to do with that which stands in our way to self-realization; we need to push away everything that may hinder us in our sincere quest to attain God-realization.

We have to make leading a spiritual life our main concern, and meditation our first priority. And we should do this now, while we have our health and sanity (or some measure of it!) for there is no way to tell the time, place or the circumstances of the destined demise of our bodies.

Shams also tells us about a perfect adept who, before he died, joyfully leaving his body for the eternal union with his Beloved, exclaimed: "Stop, O my camel, joy is complete! It is time, the journey fulfilled." We will all reach the end. For everyone the journey will some day be over, sooner for some than for others. The time will come for us to leave our bodies, alight from our camel, the beast of burden that carried us across the desert that is our life on this plane of phenomena. Will we have fulfilled the purpose of our journey? Will we rejoice, like the adept, when death comes, or will we mourn our lost chances?

We all seek the promised land where the One who is Sought resides, and we know that we cannot reach it by ourselves. We need to be spiritually fit, and we need help. We need someone to offer us guidance, sustenance and support. We want to find one who can help us. We want the one who is at one with the One, so that we too may become One. Who do we turn to for this? Who can possibly be better qualified than our beloved Master?

Shams tells us more about the Sought, stating that there is no doubt that there is a Sought in this world, and that the world was created for him and for the benefit of his followers. This world, this

edifice or royal tent, as he calls it, was erected “for Him, not He for it.” He tells us clearly that “No seeker, on his own, can attain Him unless ‘the Sought’ reveals Himself to him.”

After having floundered around by ourselves for countless centuries, in different life forms, having tried every other route in the book, we come across the Sant Mat path one blessed day: on the day that the Sought chooses to reveal himself. By his Master-plan we come into contact with the Master of the plan. By divine design, on the day and hour specified, we hear of the Shabd, and of the one who can initiate us into its wonders and set us off on our way. We find, or are found, and we establish a relationship with our Master – or rather he establishes one with us. We are immensely blessed to have a perfect living Master, who can reveal the mysteries of the mystical path to us.

It is by the grace of the Supreme Lord that we become recipients of the grace of the Master of our times. It is, after all, the Supreme Lord who sends Masters to our plane of existence to reveal to us, in words that we can understand and in images that we can follow, our spiritual origin, which is our spiritual birthright and the heritage that awaits us – once we declare ourselves willing to return. And we are more than just willing; we are keen, we are so very eager to look into the face of Love again.

A true seeker, says Shams, is one who hangs around other seekers in the hope of finding the one who is sought. Rumi, Shams’ disciple, later mirrored this in a poem when he said that he is looking for anyone who knows of anyone who knows Him.

Everyone who seeks God and who wants nothing from God except God, will surely find what he is seeking. Now, have you made it very clear in your own heart and mind what your soul’s reply will be if you are asked: “What is it that you ask of God?”

# No Greater Blessing

We call the spiritual teachings we follow the path of Sant Mat. It was the eighteenth-century mystic, Tulsi Sahib, known as the Saint of Hathras, who first coined the term 'Sant Mat' for the teachings of the saints. It is said that he did this in order to stress the basic unity of all the teachings of all true saints. Soami Ji Maharaj took over this term from Tulsi Sahib, and it is by this name that our spiritual path is now known.

Have you ever wondered what is it in us that makes us want to follow this path and heed the saints; what it is in certain humans that makes them want to hear words of profound wisdom? At some stage in their lives these people realize that there is more to the world than the purely material sphere of existence. They develop a sensing and a knowing that a deeper love exists, and they start longing for the Lord, wanting to experience the ecstasy of spiritual love. Before they even have the words to express it, they feel the need to experience the joyous exuberance of being in touch with the creative loving force we call the Holy Spirit or Shabd. They realize that what the sixteenth-century saint Tulisdas says in the following verse is true:

*There can be no happiness for the soul  
And no rest for the mind, even in a dream,  
If one does not meditate on God,  
And relinquish desire, which is the abode of sorrow.*

*The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas*

Seekers then set off on a journey of discovery, wanting to walk the path that leads them back to the Lord. In order to do this and make headway towards self- and God-realization a person must fit certain requirements. Apart from developing a deep love and longing for the Lord, one also needs courage and steadfastness in the face of what will constitute the biggest challenge of one's life: reuniting with the Supreme Lord. We will need stamina to stay the course, and a high level of spiritual fitness if we are to make the grade. It is a long and arduous climb to the top and we do not see results overnight.

The next thing that is required is honesty and truthfulness. By not deceiving ourselves or others in any way, and by taking an honest look at ourselves and the efforts we put in to make progress, we can monitor our efforts and adjust them according to our goal: the attainment of spiritual liberty and freedom from the dictates of the mind.

Thirdly, we need to develop humility. We have to become a humble servant of our Master, placing our trust in him and following his instructions implicitly, adhering to the principles of Sant Mat and not thinking that we know better about what is required in changing our lifestyle to suit our spiritual purpose. Should we adhere to the path of Sant Mat with courage, honesty and humility, we stand to gain an immense reward for our efforts.

Fortunately we do not have to walk this arduous path alone. Goswami Tulsidas tells us that there is no blessing in the world equal to that of meeting a saint. We have a Master, a saint of the highest order, one who has come from the ineffable abode of Shabd, to teach and guide us, as we can only ever make contact with the Shabd with the help of a perfect living Master. It is from our Master that we receive the greatest gift of all: initiation. He gives us the method of joining the soul to the Shabd within, so that we can cross

the astral and causal planes and merge with the Supreme Power in Sach Khand.

What is being asked of us in return? We are required only to give of ourselves – our time and our energy in the form of meditation, of paying attention to and focusing on the spiritual instead of the material aspects of life. We are not asked to give up our worldly wealth; and we will attain more wealth in the form of the spiritual riches that await those who courageously, honestly and humbly seek the Supreme Lord within.

We are on this path because we seek the all-embracing love of the One who loved us first – regardless of our human follies, foibles and flaws. Despite our failings love still flows to us from the source of all love. In time we will be moved by its power and beauty and be carried to our spiritual home on the current of love, the audible life stream.

All that is required of us is to do our meditation, courageously and steadfastly, in all humility and in obedience to the will of our Master. We do this out of gratitude for the love and forgiveness that our Satguru bestows on us. He offers us deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Who would be so foolish as to decline such an offer? The price we would have to pay for missing this opportunity hardly bears thinking about. Now is the time to completely surrender to him, to follow his will and to reap the benefits. Now is the time to heed Goswami Tulsidas' advice when he says:

*Cherishing the desire in your heart  
That He, the most merciful one,  
Would impart to you the technique  
Of obtaining divine wealth,  
You should unswervingly and most dearly love the Saint.*

*The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas*



# What Is There To Be Proud of?

During his 1982 tour of South Africa, Maharaj Charan Singh was asked: “How can we learn to be humble?” His response was: “Sister, what is there to be proud of?” Based on the reaction of people in the audience who burst into laughter, and the next person, who hastily proceeded with his question, the profundity of Maharaj Ji’s answer may have been lost. Let’s try to remind ourselves of the wisdom of that answer.

If we had to ask ourselves this question today, we might claim that we have much to be proud of. We may, for example, be proud of our material possessions, our physique or our position in life; or of the success we may have with our studies and our jobs, or even of our health and our families. At our level of awareness, it could seem logical that since we worked hard to accomplish these achievements, being proud of them is no crime. So what could Maharaj Ji have meant when he asked: “What is there to be proud of?”

In order to understand his question, we should examine what we are proud of, then ask ourselves why we are proud of it, and if we are justified in being proud of it. If one is proud of one’s academic achievement, possible reasons could be being the top of the class or receiving merit awards. But an analysis will reveal that what we learnt and regurgitated in our exams is knowledge developed by others and imparted to us. So what is learnt is not our own achievement but someone else’s. We merely take other people’s knowledge, memorize it and pass it off as our own. So can we be proud of our academic achievements?

If we carefully analyze everything that we could possibly be proud of, and if we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that our individual role or contribution is minuscule. Even with regard to our intellectual understanding of spirituality, there is the risk that we can

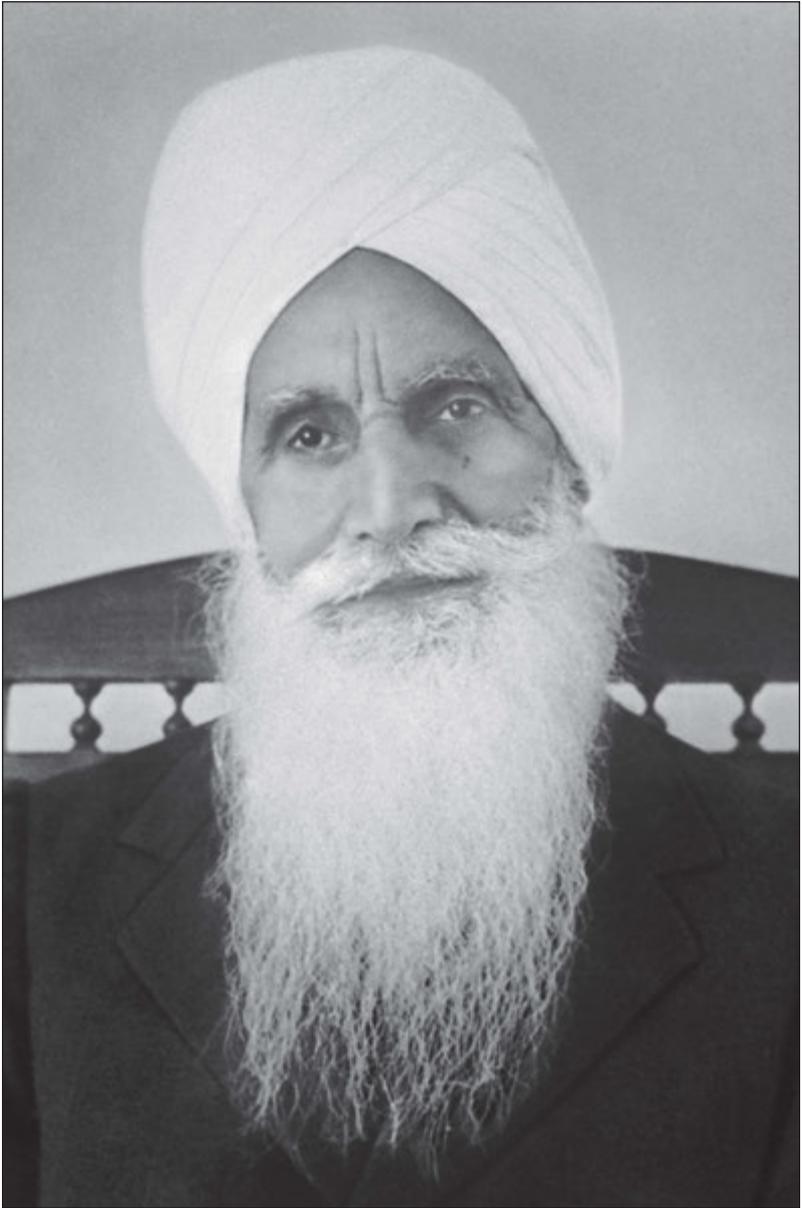
become proud, feeling that we may know more than others. But is our intellectual understanding not due to the grace of the Lord and the teachings of the Masters? Without their teachings we would know nothing. What is there then we can be justifiably proud of, if we cannot even claim credit for our understanding of spirituality?

Our pride usually arises when we take credit for something or think we are better or more important than others. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*As long as the mind is in control, it always wants to be the master. Mind does not want to be the slave – it does not want to surrender to anyone. The mind always feels: I am better than everybody in the world; I am superior to everybody. So unless the mind becomes pure, unless we are able to eliminate the ego, we cannot be filled with humility.*

The Masters explain to us that another name for mind is ego. Ego is essentially the notion of individuality or I-ness, as a result of which people may think and behave as if they are more important than everybody else. It is a sense of self-importance or superiority over others. Ego tends to disregard the existence of the soul and God, and presumes that the mind exists independently and is superior to all.

The primary attribute of ego is its subtlety. It has been compared to a tiny black ant on a large black rock on a dark, moonless night. This means that it exists but it is invisible to us, or that it is camouflaged as something else. Another name for ego is pride. It is considered to be the worst of the five passions and the very last to leave us before we reach the pure spiritual plane. So if ego or pride is the last to leave us, it has to be the greatest stumbling block in our spiritual ascent.



*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Therefore it is best we understand it thoroughly, so that we can be aware of its pitfalls and assist in its demise.

The opposite of or antidote to ego is humility. Of all human qualities, perhaps the most admirable is humility. This is most evident in the living Masters, who are the perfect examples of humility. Baba Ji once used an analogy to illustrate the futility of our self-importance or pride. In a household, he said, the father may be the most important person, but in the neighbourhood someone else would be more important. Similarly, in the city the mayor will be more important, while in the province the governor will be, and in the country the president will be more important. So our sphere of importance is relative and very limited, and there is always someone else more important than us.

We are invariably humble before someone more important than us. So if we realize that we are not as important as we think we are, it becomes easier to be humble. Of course, in the whole creation the Lord is the most important, and by comparison we are insignificant.

But how can we come to the realization of our insignificance and eliminate pride and ego? How can we become humble? This can only be achieved through the spiritual practice of meditation. The object of meditation is to focus our attention at the eye centre so that the mind gets a taste of a pleasure that is far beyond any pleasure ever experienced here in the creation. Unless we give the mind a pleasure better than the sensual pleasures, it will always run downwards and outwards towards the senses. When our attention is fully concentrated at the eye centre, we experience the joy and bliss of the divine melody within us, and there is no pleasure greater than this experience. The mind then ceases running downwards and outwards towards the senses, and slowly the senses lose their

control over the mind. The mind now loses its control over the soul and the soul becomes dominant.

When the soul is released from the clutches of the mind its brilliance becomes evident, and it shines. All the good qualities of love, forgiveness, chastity, detachment, contentment and humility rise to the surface like cream that rises to the top of the milk. Until we reach this stage, however, we remain victims of anger, greed, lust, attachment and ego.

Humility is an attribute of the soul, while ego is an attribute of the mind, and these two are diametrically opposed. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*We can only get humility when we are able to eliminate ego. Ego comes out of the mind, so unless the soul leaves the mind, we can never realize the real humility at all. When we are able to eliminate the ego, then we are filled with humility because there is always humility in the soul, but there is none in the mind. Mind always wants to assert itself. It does not want to submit to anybody at all.*

If the key to meditation is love, then how should we meditate? It helps to sit with an attitude of begging for his help and grace because this is not an easy task that we're undertaking. And then it helps if we feel love for our Master – love which he gives us in response to the effort that we make to practise meditation as taught to us at our initiation. In the process we use the habits or attributes of the mind. The mind generates thoughts, so in meditation we replace these thoughts with repetition of the five holy names given to us by the Master. While repeating these precious names we should heed Maharaj Ji's advice when he says:

*Put your whole mind in these words; you will automatically feel the love and devotion. Let no other thought come in your mind. Let the whole of yourself, the whole of your mind, be in the simran.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

Simran may be accompanied by dhyān, the visualization of the form of the Master. We do this to assist us in keeping the attention at the eye centre. Once we have concentrated the mind, we are then asked to listen to, or for, the Sound. It is this inner Sound that will ultimately pull us upwards and inwards to the Lord within. Once we attach ourselves to this inner Sound and Light, we automatically lose our identity or ego, and our individuality. It was Great Master, in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. III, who said: “The way to God is firstly humility, secondly humility and thirdly humility.”



*Accept that humility, submission,  
and devotion to a Master  
are the way for the present age.  
With a pure and still mind  
raise the banner of Shabd to the sky.  
Through the inner practice of Surat Shabd  
hold on to the path of five sounds.  
Climb the ladder of Shabd step by step,  
and reach Sach Khand, the region of Satnam.*

*Soami Ji, Sar Bachan Poetry*

# Is There a Creator?

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

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

When we look up in to a clear night sky, we can see thousands of stars. Yet with only a few exceptions, all the stars are members of our own local galaxy and represent far less than a billionth of the stars in the physical universe. Were we to look with a powerful telescope into the dark spaces between the stars, we would find myriads of tiny luminous points. But these tiny points are not stars. They are entire galaxies. And only those that are close enough to be seen.

Our local galaxy, the Milky Way, is an average sort of galaxy, possessing about 400 billion stars or suns. Some others contain even a thousand billion stars. And like over 90 percent of galaxies, the Milky Way is arranged in an orderly flat spiral disc, with arms as in a whirl or vortex. The stars circle around the centre of this whirl; planets orbit around the stars; moons orbit around the planets. Yet, the moons, planets, stars and galaxies are ordered in such a way that they never

collide with one another, though if they had happened to be much closer, then long ago they would have all fallen into each by the force of gravity.

In the heart of matter itself, the same processes are at work. Intensely active points of matter – subatomic particles – circle and pirouette around each other following laws which man can hardly comprehend. Yet the same subatomic processes are at work in far off galaxies. Everything – at all places in the physical universe – bears witness to a repeating and universal order....

In living creatures, the order is even more complex and fascinating. Each cell teeming with highly organised activity. There are hundreds of thousands of interactions of various kinds every second. And not only are they all integrated with each other, but the entire living creature functions as a whole, with all its cells in harmony with each other....

Yet there is more. Scientists, intrigued by all the order and organisation, have identified several thousand apparent coincidences in the natural world, without which neither life nor the physical universe could exist. ...

The discoveries of science do not, in themselves, prove the existence of a God. Mystics would agree, for such evidence – however powerful – is only circumstantial, requiring human interpretation. All the same, such facts are proof of something bigger than chance as the overall controlling force in the material world. Before forming an opinion, therefore, of whether or not there is a God, it is wise to know something of the physical universe which He is supposed – or supposed not – to have created. Does it bear witness to a Designer? And the answer is: it does.

John Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus*



# Move Out and Let God Move In

The Masters tell us that, of the five passions, ego is the last to go. Letting go of the ego means surrendering to the Lord, submitting completely to his will and accepting whatever he sends us with gratitude and with complete trust in him. It means not having even the smallest desire to have anything different. This is actually something immense that is required of us, and there is only one way to achieve it. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us:

*You can't surrender without going in. You can't surrender your ego without meditation. These are all intellectual surrenderings: "I have given my ego to you; I have surrendered my mind to you; I live in the Will of the Father; I don't do anything without Master's permission"— and the next moment you will dance to the tune of the mind. This is no surrender. It may be good to think like that, but real surrender comes only by meditation.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

As satsangis we believe what our Master tells us and we trust him implicitly. It is our love for him and our trust in him that inspires us to obey him, to do what he asks and to completely surrender to his will. In the popular book called *Mister God, This Is Anna*, we find this description of trust:

*The price of not being frightened is trust. And what a word that is! Define it how you like, and I'll bet you'll miss the main point! It's more than confidence, more than security; it doesn't belong to ignorance or, for that matter, to knowledge either. It is simply*

*the ability to move out of the 'I-am-the-centre-of-all-things' and to let something or someone take over. And as for Anna, she had simply moved out and let Mister God move in.*

Moving out of the “I-am-the-centre-of-all-things” means letting go of the “I am, I have and I know” part of our thinking. When we think of ourselves, it is from our human perspective – our ego likes to think that our individual qualities make us unique or important. Yet, everything in ourselves that we are so proud of is merely part of the illusion in which we are living. It does not make us superior to anyone at all. It is the fate karma that we have been allocated in this life, as a result of our actions and desires in previous lives. Even if we are world-famous, even if we are rich in material wealth, even if we have some enormous talent, our soul is no better or no worse than that of the next person. All souls are the same beautiful drops of Shabd, but with different mind-coverings, accumulated through the ages. Let us then put aside the ‘I’ and concentrate on the soul. This sounds so simple, but it is probably the hardest thing we will ever attempt to do.

We must not become disheartened in our efforts to fully surrender. With our Master’s help we will grow stronger, but it is up to us to make the effort. Although we as yet have no real concept of what true surrender means, we sincerely want to get there and experience the full meaning of it for ourselves.

Our surrender takes the form of obedience to our Master. We should confront the mind and force it as much as we possibly can to obey the Master’s instructions and requests. The road to surrender starts with trusting and obeying the Master, by being the best disciples we can manage to be, by attending to our simran and our bhajan, repeating the names and listening to the Shabd, the sound current emanating from God.

Let us picture the path of surrender as slowly plodding up the slope that leads to the eye centre, where the Radiant Form of our Master awaits us. At times we may stumble or even slide back, but our determined effort will undoubtedly result in progress. Each time after getting up, dusting ourselves off, perhaps even sniffing a little, wiping away a tear or two and applying all our determination, we will have reached a little further along this slope. We will be encouraged by the small but significant victories we achieve along the way. Once we reach the eye centre, the most difficult part of the journey will be over, and in our Master's company we will progress further. Success has been promised to us, so let us persevere on our journey.

We have surely read enough books and heard enough satsangs to realize that meditation is the only method of making progress. Our simran and bhajan are the walking sticks, the crutches we use to climb the slope. Simran and bhajan, our meditation, is the answer to everything. That is what will get us there and that is what the path of the Masters is all about.



*As long as the mind is dominant there's no surrender, there's no living in the Will of the Father, there's no elimination of the ego. You can achieve real surrender only when all coverings are removed from the soul. Then the soul shines, it becomes perfect, and then it is capable of merging into the Perfect Being. That is real surrender, that is real love, that is real devotion.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

# What Is Really Mine?

How often do we not start a sentence with the word “My”? My house, my car, my husband, my business, my life ... On the plane where we exist we have been duped into believing that certain things belong to us. Little do we realize that for this specific lifetime, whatever we appear to own was determined by our fate karma. In reality, we do not possess anything at all, since everything belongs to the Lord. Every single possession should therefore be regarded as being held in trust by us for the Lord, and valued as such. As followers of Sant Mat we should know that what we receive is exactly what is our due, according to our allotted destiny – no more and no less.

If we own much, we may start thinking how clever we are and how well we negotiate business deals or how much effort we personally put into creating our wealth. Our own minds may then create a trap into which we fall so easily, our ego will be boosted sky-high, and we will go smugly on our way, focusing on our material wealth at the expense of our spiritual wealth. We do not realize that:

*All beings in the world are helpless puppets in the hands of destiny. There is nothing that they can accomplish by their own efforts.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Should we own only a little, in spite of having worked hard for it and having used sound judgment, we may begin to feel resentful and angry. We may start leading lives of bitterness and envy, which is hardly conducive to developing our spirituality

There was however something else that was written into our destiny for this lifetime: that we would, at a specific time and place, come into contact with a perfect living Master and that it would be our great good fortune to be initiated by him. He would make us his and we would belong to him, as he belongs to us.

Not only is the precious gift of initiation now in our possession, but also the Master's promise that he will help us reach our destination, Sach Khand. He has given us his word that he will help us get there. By having initiated us, he has not only given us the five holy words but also his own solemn promise that he will see us home. We have received Nam, the greatest gift; one that keeps giving for all eternity. And all that is required of us in return is that we acknowledge receipt of our greatest possession by doing our meditation daily.



*The Master does not leave or forget the disciple after initiation. He is always with him, guiding and leading him. In his Radiant Form, he helps the disciple at every step, accompanying him throughout the spiritual journey. The Master not only guides and helps during the disciple's lifetime, but stays with him even at the time of his death, and afterwards.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

# The Time Is Now

We know what our sole job in this creation is – we know there is no getting out of it. Yet we dither around with so many doubts, fears and endless questions for almost our entire lives. Maharaj Charan Singh used to say:

*Whether the answer to your question is in six pages or in a book or in one line, the answer is the same: bhajan and simran! It depends upon how much time you want to take to understand that answer – whether by reading the whole book or by understanding only one or two words.*

*Die to Live*

This very succinctly sums up what Sant Mat is all about. But we, as human beings, are not willing to accept something so simple. We like philosophizing, complicating matters and going around in circles, only to finally arrive at the inevitable solution – the need for meditation. We do everything except this one essential job, and then wonder why our Master does not take pity on us.

We may go to the Dera. There we sit in the presence of the physical form of our Master and with our whole being we beg him for his grace. We try to get as close as we can to him to get good darshan. We stare unblinkingly at his face, at his eyes, hoping for a glance from him. We expect his grace to manifest itself in a form we would like to see, in a form we deem desirable. Sometimes he humours us as a loving father would humour his children and gives us what we want, in the form we want. But the time comes when, like any good parent,

he knows it is time to stop pandering to the demands of his children. He knows it is time for his children to move on from the first grade.

The Master then starts giving us what we need, not what we want. Perhaps we cry and scream, we throw tantrums and we sulk, but he remains apparently unmoved, ignoring every attempt to get his attention. Having been spoiled for years, we think that our parent has stopped loving us. Why does he no longer give us what we want? Why is he so cruel and heartless? We would be quite happy to stay in the first grade for the rest of our lives, but our parent loves us too much to allow this to happen. He therefore adopts a hard demeanour for our own good, to shake us up and bring us back to reality. It is time for his children to grow up and to realize that there is a specific way in which he gives his grace, and there is a specific method through which he expects his children to earn his grace.

Our Master often says that the Lord is a humble giver, but we are proud beggars. Some people demand grace from the Master, specifying exactly when his grace should come to them, how it should be delivered to them, and what form it should take when it arrives. And when his grace and love is given to them in the form of initiation, some do not even recognize it, because it is not packaged in the way they expect. Some of those who have received his gift of initiation do not even unwrap the gift to see what is inside; they don't even read the card of instructions that comes attached to this gift! The unwrapped gift is put away in the top drawer of the cupboard and forgotten about. And yet, year after year we sit in front of him, begging for his grace, when it is already ours for the taking. It is ours, provided that we do the necessary work. As Maharaj Jagat Singh has said:

*One does not become a satsangi simply by being initiated.  
One must mould his life in accordance with the principles of*

*satsang. Every thought, speech and action must conform to them. Actions speak louder than words. Thoughts are even more potent. A satsangi's daily conduct must bear the hall-mark of excellence and must reveal that he is the follower of a true Master.*

*Science of the Soul*

Sant Mat is not an insurance policy which guarantees us salvation simply because we have received initiation. Although initiation is no small matter, although it marks the culmination of a journey of thousands of lifetimes, it is not the end of the journey. Baba Ji tells us that the event of our initiation may be taken as the projection of our desire to grow spiritually. Unless we take action, we will not become true satsangis.

It's our own action that's important. Without it, we could have the greatest ideas and the greatest plans in the world and we would still fail. Whereas a modest idea and an incomplete plan often produce success when accompanied by enough action. We have just got to get moving. One of Sir Isaac Newton's principles of motion, which states that "a body at rest tends to remain at rest and a body in motion tends to remain in motion", definitely applies to this action principle. Once we have taken the first step, the next step seems easier to take. It's a natural law that if we do nothing, nothing will happen; if we take minimum action, results are going to be minimal; but if we take extensive action, then we will be rewarded with extensive results. This is in keeping with Newton's third law of motion: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction".

Not even science will let us escape from action. The whole universe is driven by action. Action is forced upon us as time is limited, and we have to prove our worth in the limited time available to us. Without

action we would not have a job, we would not earn a living, we would not be able to feed our families, we would not have a roof over our heads. So where in our wildest dreams did we get the idea that we have unlimited time to achieve salvation? We are running a race against time, and if we do not prove our worth soon, we might find that it is too late.

Baba Jaimal Singh wrote in one of his letters:

*Do not waste time uselessly. Be concerned about time spent in vain, and regret why so many breaths were wasted, since they were utilized neither in worldly affairs nor in spiritual pursuit.*

*Spiritual Letters*

Our lives reflect our priorities. Actions speak louder than our words, for everything we do is done in accordance with our priorities. The time we get up, what we eat, what we think, what we do and what we abstain from doing, all stem from our priorities. We determine our top priority, and this becomes the most important thing that we want in life. We should imagine ourselves inverting the present direction of our mind. We need to keep hammering it into our mind to turn around, convincing it that it has to invert its apparently natural downward tendencies and that it has to look upwards and act on what our Master says. If we choose to allow a pleasure-seeking society to brainwash us, our lives can easily become superficial and artificial, with priorities dictated by superficial and artificial needs.

Let us remember the loving words of Maharaj Charan Singh in *Die to Live*:

*I can tell you one thing: just attend to your meditation. There's no other way, there's no other short cut. By attending to*

*meditation you are automatically progressing towards your destination, and you will become another being and lose your identity. Meditation is the only remedy.*

It is imperative that we choose to live the life of a true disciple. Meditation has to be our top priority. All other considerations have to take second place. If something interferes with our meditation, we should discard it without thinking twice. The philosopher Goethe reminds us that things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. Without meditation, we will continue to be part of the cycle of birth and death. We need to realize that every time we sit for meditation we are doing the most important thing a human being can do. Once a true living Master has initiated us, there is nothing more important than meditation.



*Do not indulge in idle, frivolous talk. If you are conscious of your spiritual poverty, devote every minute to becoming worthier to receive your rich heritage. Mere light-hearted gossip (frivolity) makes a mockery of your prayers before the Lord. It brands you a hypocrite and cuts at the very roots of spirituality. Extravagant spending of precious time and energy is incompatible with your pleading for grace. Think more, and talk less.*

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *Science of the Soul*



*Maharaj Jagat Singh*

# Lost in Thought

Most people spend their entire lives imprisoned within the confines of their own thoughts. They never go beyond a narrow, mind-made, personalized sense of self that is conditioned by the past.

In you, as in each human being, there is a dimension of consciousness far deeper than thought. It is the very essence of who you are. We may call it presence, awareness, the unconditioned consciousness. In the ancient teachings it is the Christ within, or your Buddha nature.

Finding that dimension frees you and the world from the suffering you inflict on yourself and others when the mind-made “little me” is all you know and runs your life. Love, joy, creative expansion and lasting inner peace cannot come into your life except through that unconditioned dimension of consciousness.

If you can recognize, even occasionally, the thoughts that go through your head as simply thoughts, if you can witness your own mental-emotional reactive patterns as they happen, then that dimension is already emerging in you as the awareness in which thoughts and emotions happen – the timeless inner space in which the content of your life unfolds.

The stream of thinking has enormous momentum that can easily drag you along with it. Every thought pretends that it matters so much. It wants to draw your attention in completely.

Here is a new spiritual practice for you: don't take your thoughts too seriously.

Eckhart Tolle, *Stillness Speaks*



# A True Disciple

Sant Mat is not for the faint-hearted – being on a spiritual path requires great courage. Fortunately we do not walk this path alone. We know that our Master is there to help us overcome the challenges we have faced for so many lifetimes, those challenges that have for endless millennia kept us from reaching the ultimate destination on our spiritual path: the salvation of our soul. Soami Ji entreats us:

*Be valiant of spirit  
and disentangle yourself, in any way you can  
from the web of worldly attachments.  
Only those who have fought and subdued their mind  
are truly brave ...  
First cultivate love for the Master,  
then listen to the Shabd within.*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*

In our quest for spiritual fulfilment and as seekers after truth we have one goal in mind and, despite the many challenges along the way, we should never give up until the goal has been reached. We would not have been attracted to this spiritual path if we did not have the courage to see it through. Courage is nothing other than “fear that has said its prayers”. This is according to the Swiss theologian Karl Barth – to which author Joyce Meyer has added a few words, so that the popular quotation now reads: “Courage is fear that has said its prayers and decided to go forward anyway.”

A true disciple is one who has placed his trust in his Master and one who is courageous, committed and responsible. Not for a single

moment does a true disciple lose sight of the spiritual goal of attaining self- and God-realization. True disciples are disciplined in their spiritual practice and lead principled lives. A truly devoted disciple never compromises and never gives up on the heartfelt yearning to meet the inner Master, the Shabd and the Supreme Lord.

And if we have truly set our sights on self-realization and God-realization, we will do everything in our power to reach our goal. If we are focused on what we want to attain, we hold a vision of it before us. We can only achieve what we can visualize. If you cannot see God, how can you hope to reach him and realize him if not through his emissary, the Master, the one appointed by the Supreme Lord himself to lead us on our quest and guide our souls back to our true home?

A true disciple is discerning and knows what, or who, he wants to achieve. And he knows how to concentrate his attention and focus his energy on achieving this. If we lack courage, insight and discernment we will not be able to make correct choices in life, those that work in our favour spiritually. Discerning minds believe only half of what they hear, and a truly discerning person knows which half to believe.

A true disciple knows his own limitations, and we know that we need help, that we have to look up to and follow our Master, the one who leads us in the right direction: by example, by his words and his actions. We have so much to learn from our Master, who has such immense generosity of spirit and compassion; through his enthusiasm and his positive outlook, he continually guides us to change our lives by changing our attitude. He leads us to change our attitude towards life and towards what really matters – our meditation.

We have the great good fortune to be in the human form and as such we have the capacity to develop the necessary skills and acquire the necessary knowledge to change our lives accordingly, in order to meet our greatest challenge head on. We need to lead a principled life,

never compromising on any of the principles on which we base our spiritual lifestyle. Leading a principled life builds character and our character becomes our compass, steering us through the storms of life, keeping us on track and directing us towards our destination.

We as satsangis have pledged an oath: we have committed ourselves to devoting one-tenth of our day to our spiritual practice. To be committed to a cause is to stop talking about it and start doing something about it. It means taking action, moving step by step, without wavering, in the direction of our goal. It means turning up punctually for our duty, day after day, and executing it to the very best of our ability. The more we meditate, the easier it gets and the more we want to do it. Practice makes perfect. Unfortunately though, the less we practice the easier it becomes not to practise. Attending to our spiritual practice every day is the only way to become more competent in what really matters in life.



*Above all, devote yourself to the Master  
and think of all else as secondary.  
Enshrine the form of the Master in your heart  
and grow within yourself the kind of love  
that a moonbird has for the moon.  
This is the only practice  
that will let you find that kind of love.  
Once devotion to the Master is complete,  
your soul will automatically ascend to the inner sky.*

Soami Ji, Sar Bachan Poetry

# The Drummer Boy

It's when we start to meditate that we realize our mind is never still. It chatters constantly, jumping from one thought to another. Many teachers have suggested different ways to achieve a state of quiet calmness, and many of us may have tried one technique after another. But it's only when a true mystic shows us how to turn inwards that we can check the agitation of the mind.

By way of illustration the modern Sufi author Idries Shah has a charming story to tell:

There was once a small boy who banged a drum all day. He would not be quiet, no matter what anyone else said or did. Various people who called themselves gurus, and other well-wishers, were called in by neighbours and asked to do something about the child.

The first told the boy that he would, if he continued to make so much noise, perforate his eardrums; this reasoning was of course too advanced for the child. The second told him that drum beating was a sacred activity and should be carried out only on special occasions. The third offered the neighbours plugs for their ears; the fourth gave the boy a book; the fifth gave the neighbours books that described a method of controlling anger through biofeedback; the sixth gave the boy meditation exercises to make him placid. Each of these remedies worked for a short while, but none worked for very long.

Eventually, a real Guru came along. He looked at the situation, handed the boy a hammer and chisel, and said, "I wonder what is *inside* the drum?"

What will take *us* inside, of course, is the hammer and chisel of meditation. And eventually we'll find that's where our real home is.





### **A Way of Self-Knowledge and The Threshold of the Spiritual World**

BY RUDOLF STEINER, TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER BAMFORD

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Austrian-born Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) has been influential in many fields, first becoming known as a scientific, literary, and philosophical scholar respected particularly for his work on Goethe's scientific writings. However, as translator Christopher Bamford says, "Rudolf Steiner was above all a spiritual teacher, a teacher of a new, cognitive path of meditation into the spiritual world." Bamford writes,

*From his earliest years, Steiner experienced that the creative presence of the invisible, spiritual world was as real, universal, and certain as the reality of the so-called physical world revealed through the senses, which it permeated.... He dedicated himself to the task of providing a path whereby others could experience the certainty of spiritual reality – and all that followed from it – for themselves.*

In 1924 Steiner founded the General Anthroposophical Society, which today has branches throughout the world. His insights have led to innovative and holistic approaches in medicine, philosophy, education, and many other fields which together have contributed to a better understanding of humanity physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The two slim works combined in this volume are some of Steiner's most personal books, offered as a 'report of soul experience.' *A Way of Self-Knowledge* was published in 1912, and *The Threshold of the Spiritual World* in 1913. In these works Rudolph Steiner offers 'meditations' and 'aphorisms' drawing from and exemplifying his own spiritual research. He notes that the 'content' of his experiences is his own, and another person may discover a different content. It is the method or path for

developing consciousness which he wishes to convey, a method which he says comprises a spiritual science.

Readers may find the writing in this book challenging. Sometimes a sentence may need to be read over several times before one can grasp its meaning. This seems to be Steiner's intention. He believed that rigorous, clear thinking forms a foundation for the development of higher consciousness. Particularly for people from the West and for those who are highly educated, he taught, the disciplined practice of deep, clear thinking is a necessary step in spiritual growth. He intended the reader to go beyond the thoughts themselves to observe the consciousness that is producing those thoughts. As Bamford summarizes Steiner's teaching, for those with the 'present Western brain formation':

*The only healthy way to clairvoyant cognition is through the enlivening of ordinary thinking by practices of meditative attention and concentration. There can be no 'leap' to higher psychic or spiritual levels that by-passes these practices.*

A *Way of Self-Knowledge* consists of eight 'meditations' that describe a path to a state of consciousness from which one can come to understand the nature of human existence. Calling these sections of the book 'meditations' rather than, for example, 'chapters' is deliberate. As philosopher Friedemann Schwarzkopf explains in his preface to the volume, Steiner's writing here can only be understood through 'meditative reading':

*'Meditative reading' requires that we take each sentence as an invitation to move our centre of awareness ... to a place that the author describes. The key is not to speculate about the information contained in the text, but rather to ask, "How must I move my attention in such a way that the text makes sense?"*

He employs a metaphor: while sitting inside a house, if one looks at an aerial photograph of that same house, one might attempt to envision the place and the angle from which the photograph must have been taken. In

meditative reading, it is this effort of the attention that brings realization. As Schwarzkopf puts it, the realities Steiner describes are “wordless experiences, cast into language. The experiences themselves are much larger, wider and richer than words are able to convey.” In meditative reading, “we slow our reading to the point where we enter the timeless state... Now experience becomes the teacher.”

Meditation One is entitled ‘The Physical Body.’ Here Steiner explains that when the soul is “surrendered to the appearances of the outer world through the senses,” it is engulfed in joys, wonders, delights, awe, fear, and pain through association with the physical body. In this state, “while it is given over to the outer world,” it cannot “truly know anything of itself.”

Meditation Two is entitled ‘The Elemental (or Etheric) Body.’ Steiner speaks of the initial experiences in which one becomes aware of a subtle or etheric level of reality, existing beyond the limitations of the physical. Here Steiner stresses that to judge such experiences correctly, one must be able to relate to the outer world in a completely healthy way after the experience is over. The understanding of the outer world should become clearer.

Meditation Three is entitled, ‘Clairvoyant Cognition of the Elemental World.’ Steiner says, “When you perceive phenomena through the elemental body, rather than through the physical body, you experience a world unknown to sensory perception and ordinary rational thinking.” One then begins to notice the inner life of all our surroundings. These experiences bring an awareness and appreciation for the various forms of life, which we did not have prior to this inner awakening. Like ice floating on water, the sensory world floats on the subtle world, though the ‘water’ – the spiritual reality – remains invisible to the senses.

Meditation Four is entitled ‘The Guardian of the Threshold.’ According to Steiner, as one approaches the threshold of the supersensory world, the soul feels its complete helplessness. Ego is now revealed as a destructive force that has deceived the soul. Until true humility and helplessness is realized, the soul must wait to complete its journey. The image of a guardian standing at the threshold is central to Steiner’s teachings, and Meditations Five through Eight discuss the lessons learned while waiting in helplessness at the Threshold. Steiner states,

*Behind the outer world given to us in our daily life, lies another world. A powerful guardian stands at the threshold to ensure that people experience nothing of the laws of the supersensory world. For doubt and uncertainty about that world are more easily borne than the sight of what we must leave behind if we wish to enter it. Until we ourselves approach the threshold, however, we are protected from those experiences.*

Who is this guardian? On careful reading – meditative reading – one may come to see that the guardian is one’s own ego. So long as ego is there and so long as we are attached to the physical world, we block our own way forward. Moreover, Steiner hints, the door at this threshold cannot be pushed open by the efforts of the striving soul; rather it can only be opened from the other side, that is, by a power greater than oneself. Therefore, the soul will also realize its utter helplessness before it crosses that threshold.

In *The Threshold of the Spiritual World* Steiner presents additional perspectives on his spiritual method through a series of ‘aphorisms’. For example, in Aphorism Three entitled ‘The Human Etheric Body and the Elemental World’, Steiner discusses some of the challenges facing the soul on the spiritual journey. As he says, while one is still limited to the physical level, the spiritual world is something quite foreign to the soul. It has no attributes that one can recognize in the sensory or material world. Thus the soul may find itself facing darkness for long periods of time. Sometimes it experiences a sense of dread. The soul may fill itself with thoughts of the world to drive away that sense of dread.

At the end of the book, Steiner speaks of the discovery of our spiritual self: “Finally, through the true ‘I’ in a supra-spiritual environment, human beings discover themselves as spiritual beings, even though all experience of the sensory, elemental, and spiritual worlds – that is, all experience of the senses, of thinking, feeling, and willing – pass into oblivion.”



