

March 2016

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Whom Should We Love?

We grow to love the faces and objects of the world because we see them and interact with them. We love our parents because they gave birth to us, our children because we gave them birth, our wife because she is the mother of our children, and our friends because we have associated with them since childhood. We love our wealth because we have acquired it with our sweat and blood, and our properties because we have inherited them. We love our community and religion because we have been part of them since birth.

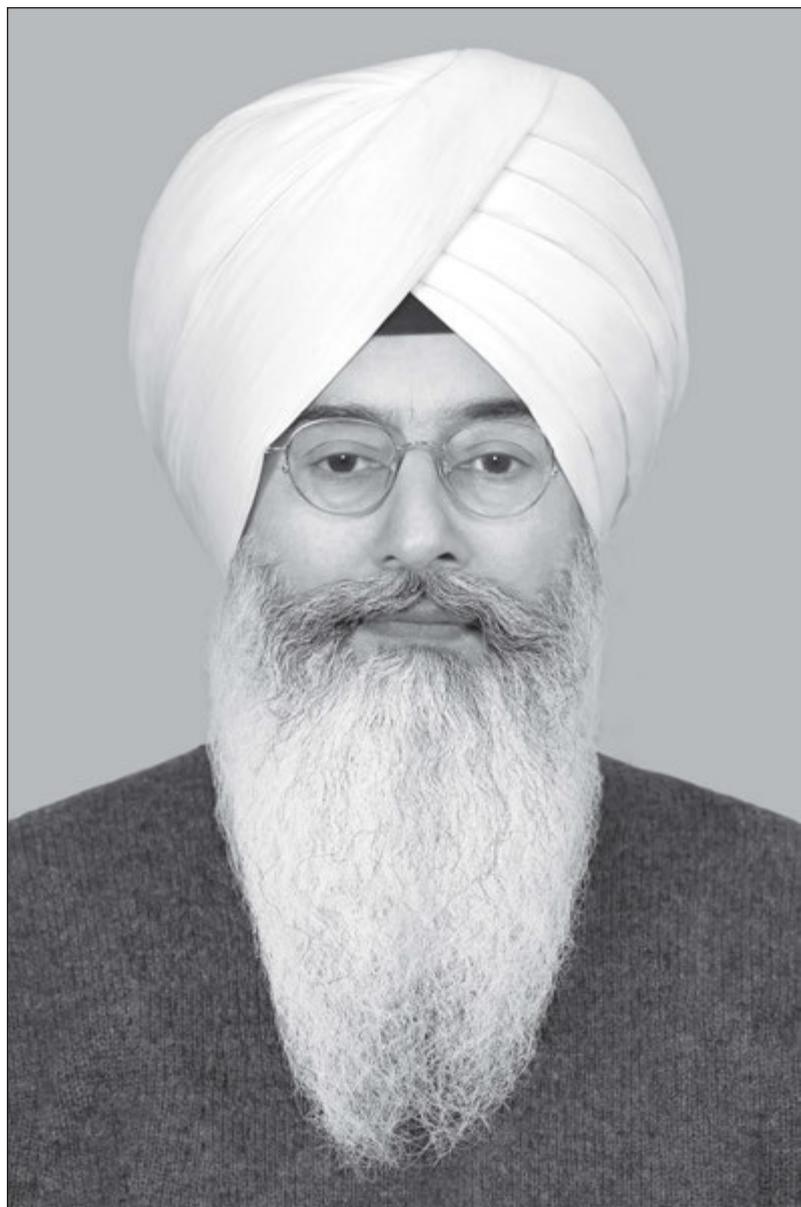
How can we engender love for the Lord when we have only heard stories about him, when we have never even seen him and know nothing of his face or features? Is there someone whom we can love who will instil this love in us, who will create in us love and devotion for the Lord?

We must seek a devotee and lover of the Lord, a true Master, who is connected by an all-consuming love to the Supreme Being. We must keep his company and associate with him so that through him our thoughts and love may also be attuned to love and devotion for the Lord.

Waves rise from the surface of the ocean for a matter of minutes and then merge back into it. The Masters, the lovers of the Lord, are related to the Supreme Being in a similar way. Waves never become separate from the ocean; however high they rise, they also remain part of the ocean. In the same way, the Masters are waves of the ocean of the true Name.

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





Liberation not Dependence

What is it that we want or expect from the mystics? Is it answers to the meaning of love, life and the universe? Is it protection from the challenges of daily living and the promise of a trouble-free future? Or perhaps we want detailed instructions on how to behave, and would like them to take control over certain decisions we need to make? As explored elsewhere in this issue, Sant Mat is a path of liberation; it provides a philosophical framework for understanding divine laws until such time as we come to realize these for ourselves. That being so, the role of the mystics is not to create a paradise on earth, nor is it to resolve our individual problems. On the contrary they expect us to use our own judgment and sense of discrimination. In the question and answer sessions with the present Master for example, when we ask about personal issues, he offers us general advice as to how we may approach the situation or think about it from a different perspective. However, his counsel is not specific; he will not direct us about personal issues even when we press him hard and literally want him either to say ‘yes you can do this’ or ‘no you shouldn’t do that’.

If we think this over, we can find several reasons that may explain why the Masters do not dictate what we should do in these matters. First, some of us may be facing similar (if not the same) predicaments, but since everyone’s situation is different, the best way of resolving these will be different from one person to the next. Therefore, the Masters would not wish to give advice specific to one individual, which might be taken by others to apply to themselves. Secondly, the mystics do not interfere with the law of karma. Our own choices have brought us to the point at which we find ourselves and will determine the future choices we make.

Our sense of discrimination is what distinguishes us from other creatures – this is the third reason why we, rather than the mystics, are responsible for resolving personal questions. As Maharaj Charan Singh states in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, “The Lord has given us the sense to know what is good and what is bad”, enabling us to make the right decisions and reject the wrong ones. Indeed, Maharaj Charan Singh goes on to make it clear that if we are honest with ourselves and listen carefully to our conscience, we often know what is right, what is wrong and therefore what decision we should make.

Fourth, if, for whatever reason, our sense of discrimination is insufficiently developed or our judgment is poor, we can rely on the tenets of Sant Mat to guide us. By adhering to these principles and making our decisions within this framework, we would not act in ways we may later regret. So, when faced with a difficult decision, we may ask ourselves, “How will this affect my meditation? Will this action take me closer or further from my destination?” The answer to this question should help us make the right decision, although just because we know what is right, it does not automatically mean that we will *do* what is right. We may choose to disregard our conscience because we fall victim to the dictates of the lower mind. As Maharaj Charan Singh observes in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

You always know whether what you are doing is right or wrong – if you just listen to yourself. If you don't want to listen, that is a very different thing. The mind itself warns us ... that what we're going to do is wrong. And it is also the mind that forces us to do that wrong thing. There's a struggle and a conflict in the mind always, but we always know what is good and what is bad.

The solution to this conflict is meditation, as it is the only way to achieve freedom from the mind. Through regular practice, meditation

develops our sense of discrimination, enhances our conscience, and strengthens our willpower to resist making wrong decisions.

The fifth and possibly the most important reason why the mystics do not get drawn into personal issues is that their role is directed towards our spiritual welfare, to give us encouragement, advice and guidance on how to liberate the soul from its entanglement with the mind. Resolving our worldly problems is not their job. Maharaj Charan Singh made this clear in a long response to a question by a satsangi who asked him to explain why he would always say, “Do what you think is best” when people asked him for advice. Here is a short extract taken from *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

If you have any spiritual problem, the Master will never put you off... he will always answer your question. But in worldly day-to-day problems, how can you involve the Master?... Even if we involve him, I'm sure we will never obey him. We will still do what we want to do. We're just trying to take a little burden from our own heart and tell ourselves that we are doing what the Master has instructed, nothing else.... The Master is only meant for spiritual problems.... In our worldly life, we have problems at every step and we have to deal with them in the light of what we know, what we practise.

This may come across as a little harsh, especially when there are times when our sense of judgment is clouded and we are unable to decide whether an action is going to take us nearer or further away from the path. In those situations the Masters advise us to make a decision with the best intentions. We are advised to weigh all the consequences, make a decision with a dispassionate mind, and then leave the outcomes to the Lord. Maharaj Charan Singh continues:

[Make the decision] with your best available intellect or reasoning or thinking or intuition – whatever you may have – do your best, then leave it to the Lord. Still you can be wrong, but then you see, you have no other option. What else can you do? You have done your best. Then leave it to the Lord.

Returning to our starting point, Sant Mat is a path of liberation. In freeing us from both the shackles of the mind and the prison of the material plane, the Masters do not wish us to be dependent on their physical form. Like any parent, they hope instead that their love and guidance will enable us to be independent – to have the courage to make difficult decisions to the best of our ability, and to have faith in ourselves to do the right thing.

Above all, they bestow the gift of initiation. As a result, whilst our personal problems will not disappear, if we practise our meditation, not only will we become better at listening to our conscience and more responsive to the suggestions and reasoning of the higher mind, but our attitudes towards material trials and tribulations will change. We will view them as insignificant, fleeting issues that we need to experience to pay off our karmic debt on our journey home.



The Tiny Winner

A group of little beetles arranged a climbing competition to reach the top of a very high tree. A large crowd of woodland creatures gathered around to see the climb and cheer on the contestants.

The race began.

Honestly, no one in the crowd really believed that the tiny beetles would make it to the top. They said:

“Oh, it’s way too difficult!”

“There’s not a chance the beetles will succeed. The tree is too high, the bark is too rough.”

Confirming these predictions, most of the beetles began collapsing one by one, although a few continued to climb higher and higher.

The crowd continued to yell, “It’s too difficult! No one will make it!”

More beetles got tired and gave up.

But one very small beetle continued to climb higher and higher and higher. This one just wouldn’t give up!

Eventually, after all the others fell back, feeling utterly exhausted, the little beetle made one big effort and – finally – reached the pinnacle.

Naturally, all the other contestants wanted to know how the winning beetle had managed to succeed where others failed. One of them asked the tiny creature, “How did you find the strength to keep climbing?”

No answer came back.

The winner couldn’t hear the question. It turned out that he was deaf!

Clearly, the moral of this story is never to listen to the negativity of others – it will cost you the fulfilment of your best dreams. However, it is just as essential to be deaf to the fears and doubts of our own mind, to remain positive, and never give up the struggle to reach our own tree top.

Are We Desperados?

Recently, I attended a concert where a small group of people sang a song called 'Desperado' by the 1970s American rock band, The Eagles. In the song, the narrator speaks to the character Desperado and encourages him to abandon his empty, shallow lifestyle, otherwise a lonely, bleak future lies ahead of him. As I listened, the poignancy of the situation in which the Desperado finds himself made me compare it with our own; I noticed the similarities between the advice given to him and the advice the Masters give to us. Here are a couple of the verses that I found particularly apt.

*Desperado, why don't you come to your senses?
You've been out ridin' fences for so long now ...
[And] I know that you got your reasons.
These things that are pleasin' you,
Can hurt you somehow ...*

*Desperado, why don't you come to your senses?
Some fine things have been laid upon your table ...
Come down from your fences, open the gate.
It may be rainin', but there's a rainbow above you
You better let somebody love you,
before it's too late.*

Living life as outlaws

Often romanticized in films, a desperado is an outlaw. Alone, wild, rebellious and living on the edge, he is disconnected from society. Likewise, inhabiting a foreign land and separated from the divine as

a result of our wild and wayward mind, we too are outlaws. A key feature of outlaws, especially those depicted in cowboy and Indian films, is that they knowingly break the law, choose to be outcasts and live life in exile. Unlike them, however, because we've been roaming the material plane for countless epochs, moving from one incarnation to the next, we've forgotten that we are living the life of an outlaw. In the same way that Desperado in the song needs the narrator to rouse him, we too need our own guide, a perfect Master, and it is only when we find him that we have any hope of coming to our senses.

The Masters awaken us from our dream-like state, and entreat us to take a good look around and see the world as it really is. Their greatest gift is shattering the illusion under which we have spent our innumerable incarnations. They help us realize that we are not who we think we are, that what we believe to be real is a mere mirage, a false reality; even our carefully constructed identity is not real. Indeed, the Masters help us understand that we vastly underestimate ourselves. Our sense of self is associated with our physical body but our true identity is spiritual; we just happen to be undergoing a human experience. Taking account of our whole being – both our human and spiritual needs – the Masters encourage us to adopt an optimistic and balanced lifestyle, to be independent and to use our talents to realize our aspirations. But most importantly, they urge us not to become engrossed by these material goals because their fulfilment is shallow and our existence in each physical incarnation is transitory.

Why?

Going back to our friend Desperado, there is a sense in which his life is driven by impulse, hedonism and recklessness. Towards the end of the first verse, the narrator warns him that such a lifestyle, which *seems* to give him some pleasure, will eventually become a source of pain.

Essentially, this is the same as the core message of the Masters. They too emphasize the dissatisfaction and disappointment inherent in all material pursuits together with the very heavy price we pay for them. In the song, the narrator does not reveal why the Desperado pursues such a detrimental lifestyle, although no doubt confusion, arrogance and fear play a part.

But what of us? In the light of our awakening to spirituality, why do we continue to adopt lifestyles that make Sant Mat difficult to follow? It seems probable that by inhabiting a foreign land and living as outlaws for aeons, it is now extremely difficult to reverse ideas, habits and behaviours that are deeply entrenched within our psyche. On top of this, we find ourselves entrapped by an intricately woven web of karma that limits our freedom and makes it impossible to escape the material plane. Perpetual desires and powerful attachments have so entangled us that we continue to take birth after birth to fulfil them.

From this perspective, our situation appears as desperate as the Desperado's – or is it?

A rainbow above us

In the second verse, the narrator implores the Desperado to cease the foolish, wayward actions that are damaging him (physically, emotionally, spiritually), and to embrace the love and companionship that are right there before him. As for us, there are times when we may benefit from thinking about the “fine things” that have been laid upon our table. In particular, when feeling disappointed with life's turn of events, we might remember the distressing circumstances of fellow humans. Many of us are fortunate enough to have our basic requirements for food, clothing and shelter met way beyond our needs. However, there are millions of people around the globe who are denied these essential requirements or who find themselves fearing for

their safety in the midst of political turmoil. With sheer survival the focus of their existence, there is little room for spirituality. By contrast, our good fortune gives us the opportunity to end our existence as outlaws, and even the busiest amongst us has ample time to devote to spiritual practice, if we choose to do so.

The perfect Masters have taken us into their fold and given us the key to the gate that will take us home. The meditation technique revealed to us is the only way we can escape the misery of the world and return to Sach Khand – our true home. In the meantime, there will be times when, as the narrator observes, it will rain and we will experience tough times. During these periods, we may take immense comfort from being told that “there’s a rainbow above you” and that we have been enveloped in the love and protection of the Master from the very moment our relationship began.

However, believing this to be true on the basis of faith is different from actual experience. For us to progress to realization, we need to be receptive to the currents of love that sustain the universe – the love that has sought us out and put us in touch with a perfect Master. In this sense, we are much like the Desperado. He needs to let somebody love him before he finds himself alone, old, and fed up with his partying; otherwise, he faces a future of loneliness and unhappiness. If we fall into the same trap and stop ourselves from experiencing absolute, truthful love, the future that faces us is one of despondency, discontentment, disappointment, and death – not just once, but ad infinitum. So, like the Desperado, we must come down from our fence and practise our meditation to open the gate to Sach Khand, where love and bliss awaits us and we are desperados no more.



Something to Think About

Signpost and Destination

The devil once went for a walk with a friend. They saw a man ahead of them stoop down and pick up something from the ground.

“What did that man find?” asked the friend.

“A piece of truth,” said the devil.

“Doesn’t that disturb you?” asked the friend.

“No,” said the devil. “I shall let him make a belief out of it.”

A religious belief is a signpost pointing the way to truth. When you cling to the signpost you are prevented from moving toward the truth because you think you have it already.

Anthony de Mello, The Song of the Bird

All books and literature are just to satisfy our intellect. All meetings are just to satisfy our intellect, convince us and then to create an atmosphere for meditation, that’s all.... These are all the means, but if we don’t attend to the end, the means are useless to us.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Open your inner eye, the eye of the soul ... our brain’s reasoning can properly value and understand only those things that are known through the physical senses. Things on the other side as well as God himself can be realized only by the soul.

Quest for Light

Feeling Funny

I wonder why



Search for the Life Force

Mystics turn up in the most unlikely places. One night, by chance, I happened to catch the following poem on a radio programme that was being transmitted to just about every corner of the world:

*There is a Life Force in your daily life.
Search for that Life Force,
Search for that hidden gem in the earthly mound that is your body
O Friend, search for it with all your might
Search for what you're looking for within your heart.*

These lines are attributed to Rumi, a Sufi mystic who lived about eight hundred years ago, and they were introduced by the radio presenter as a “five-line formula for following the Sufi way”. However, since they convey a simple and universal approach to God-realization, they may also be viewed as capturing the essence of mysticism. A sense of urgency is evident in Rumi’s short poem and we might consider the reasons behind this as well as how we may attain the spirituality that he urges us to seek.

Rumi, the nickname of Mawlana Jalal-ad-Din Muhammad, is widely considered to be one of the finest Persian poets. He was born in thirteenth-century Afghanistan but migrated to Turkey at the age of eleven, shortly before his home city was destroyed by the Mongols in 1221. An outstanding Islamic scholar, teacher and Sufi, Rumi’s life took a different path when, at the age of about thirty-five, he met his Master – an enigmatic wandering dervish called Shams (or Shams-i-Tabrizi), who inspired him to search within himself to find the answers to his questions about spirituality. From that time onwards,

Rumi began to write mystical poetry, much of it about his love for Shams, whom he often referred to as “the friend”.

A precious gem within

In the poem above, Rumi’s opening line directly fuses the infinite with the daily life of his audience. Affirming that there is more to life than our daily grind, he identifies this ‘something else’ as being right here, right now – a reality that is both an intrinsic part of our daily life and the core of our existence. And yet, somehow, we miss it. So caught up are we in our daily merry-go-round of work, food and sleep that we remain oblivious to the force that lies within us. This is why we need spiritual masters like Rumi to remind us about the essence of both our own life and that of the entire creation.

Having reminded us of the life force, Rumi not only urges us to look for it, he tells us exactly where to look – within ourselves – and very aptly, uses the gemstone as a metaphor for our search. Almost all gems are formed below the earth’s surface, and in their raw form are embedded in the earth’s rocky layer. It is only after they have been brought to the surface, extracted from the rock, scrubbed, washed, cleaned and polished that the brilliance of the gem becomes apparent. Likewise, the light that gives life to us is buried deep within ourselves, so deep that we remain unaware of its existence. Jesus referred to the same phenomenon when he described our inner light being buried under a bushel. As a result, we live our lives in ignorance of the full meaning of everything we see and do, unable to benefit from the illuminating light which could show us all that there is. Accordingly, Rumi urges us to start searching for the light within right now. Every moment is precious because we can count on having only this life in which to realize the truth. As the spiritual teachers point out, since we only have a limited number of breaths allotted to us, it is in our interest to use each and every one of them in a spiritually fruitful way.

Use all your power

In the fourth and fifth lines of the poem, Rumi beseeches us to use every iota of our being, all our energy, determination and fortitude to find the hidden gem. He understands our condition and the strength required to overturn lifetimes of ingrained habit. The mind, upon learning of the gemstone, has a desire to release the soul which the mind is holding captive. As a slave of the senses, the mind seeks short-term gratification and perpetuates the cycle of karma. Consequently, Rumi urges us to draw upon all our strength to reverse this relationship so that our thoughts and actions are no longer determined by the senses, and the mind no longer controls our soul. If we obtained such liberation, imagine what a difference it would make to the way we approach life. As the eighteenth-century poet William Blake wrote:

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

In other words, since we currently interpret the world through our ego and physical senses, we fail to see that all is infinite – that everything partakes of the divine and is part of the divine. It is meditation that will enable us to go beyond the physical realm.

Use the tools the Master gave you

To reach such a high level of understanding, we need to use the tools the Master gave us at the time of initiation. These are simran and bhajan – repetition and listening in silence. The repetition of five holy names may not seem like a very powerful tool for the task at hand, but let us not underestimate the authority and effectiveness of the

names. Indeed such is the strength of simran that it is the only means through which we can defeat our perennial enemies – the mind and senses. Simran enables us to focus; stops the constant chattering of the mind; closes off its interminable questions and answers, its worries and concerns, its desires and regrets. Simran enables us to collect our consciousness at a single point – the tenth door – and as we pass through, our spiritual faculties are kindled and we begin to see the light and to hear the sound that will enable us to find the treasure within.

The task is simple but not easy, although constantly at our side is a great friend who never fails to provide love, support and advice. For example, Maharaj Charan Singh advises us to read some Sant Mat literature every day to help us concentrate. When thoughts disturb us during simran, he suggests that we should tell our mind that these will be dealt with after meditation. Inevitably we will experience ups and downs, but even the downs are valuable since they often invoke an intense sense of separation, a state which Maharaj Charan Singh has called the painful plight of the lover and one which no lover would be without. In *Light on Sant Mat*, he states:

If we have so much longing and desire for the darshan of the Master, we are having its benefit. Where will that desire and longing lead us? To meditation, where the Master always is. When you won't be able to find the Master outside, what will you do to find him? You will try to find him within. That love and desire for darshan should lead us on the path within and bring us to that level of consciousness where our Master is always with us.

For countless lives we have been searching for something. Now a friend has pointed out what this is (the life force), told us how we may find it, and given us the means to do so. Like Rumi, the Master urges us to find our inner gemstone by using our God-given attributes: *prem, bireh* and *abhyas* – love, longing and spiritual practice.



*Strive, struggle, grapple and wrestle,
None won the battle by weak-kneed submission.
Go on scratching, scraping, and cutting
The stone wall that bars your way.
Cut, hew, gash, break, shatter, demolish, smash,
Rest not for a second, till your very last breath arrives.
Even a worthless effort is better than sleeping,
For the Lord loves our effort, anxiety and struggle.
First put in full effort, then accept what he sends.
Have faith in him and trust his will.
Not putting in effort is like sleeping among robbers.
A bird found napping is sure to be killed.
Giving up is like sleeping, sleep not on your way.
March on until you reach his gate.
When the Master has put a sword in your hands,
He has clearly expressed his wish.*

Rumi, as quoted in *Living Meditation*

Unfailing Support

You appear a bit concerned with your slow progress. The power, Guru, is within you and is ever busy in making matters easy for you. That power is far more eager to meet you than you can possibly think of. The karmic debt of many an intricate nature is to be paid and it is proper that it should be paid while in the physical frame, so that there is no stop on the way within. Your duty is to sit within and knock at the door, and the door will open. The power within does not err. It will open the door when it finds that the time has come. Increase your love and devotion, and entrust yourself entirely to Its care. The power within is not ignorant of what you are doing. It is with you and constantly watches you and guides you. When your love for the power exceeds your love for yourself and the 'I-ness' has been replaced by 'Thou-ness', the form of the Guru will make its appearance visible within.

Spiritual Gems

We must strive hard to subdue the mind and put in every effort to drive away the evil qualities that overpower us. But, if after struggling very hard we still find that we have not advanced a single foot on this long journey, we should not get disheartened. Master knows well that with our feeble hands and feet we shall not be able to accomplish this journey even if were to go on travelling for a hundred thousand years. He wants to impress upon us that unless the Lord's grace intervenes, no one can walk on this path of immortality. When we collapse and fall, and have no strength left to struggle further, then Master's loving kindness and grace will carry us forward as a tottering child is carried in the arms by its mother.

Science of the Soul



Business and Spirituality

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It refers to a strategic planning tool used by managers to assess (as suggested by the acronym) the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations and to identify the opportunities and threats firms face. The technique emerged during the 1960s following a research project commissioned by America's most prominent businesses who could not understand why, despite extensive investment, their Corporate Planning teams failed to achieve the goals that would propel their business higher up the rankings of the 'Fortune 500' list. Turning to ourselves, performing a SWOT analysis may enhance our understanding of the factors impeding and enabling our spiritual journey and thus strengthen our determination to make greater effort. The individual components of a SWOT analysis can be undertaken in any order, so let us begin by taking the letter 'o' to assess our opportunities.

Opportunities

The mystics tell us that below the highest spiritual region, the universe is made up of three planes (causal, astral and material) where a myriad of different forms and beings exist. We are blessed with two of the greatest opportunities available to all the entities across the three planes, although we often take for granted the first of these – human life. The mystics remind us that the human form is a precious gift obtained after millions of lives spent working our way through the evolutionary lifecycle and that it presents a unique opportunity to liberate ourselves from the cycle of transmigration.

Attaining a human form though, whilst necessary, is not enough to accomplish life's true purpose – God-realization. Realizing this objective is possible only if, upon the direct orders of the Lord, a perfect mystic teaches us the method through which we can attain salvation. Such a mystic, our Master from that time onwards, takes full responsibility for guiding us until we reach our destination. Our second momentous opportunity therefore, is being accepted by a Master.

Threats

We face many economic, social and environmental threats daily, but from a spiritual perspective, the failure to take advantage of the opportunity for God-realization is by far the biggest. This, in turn, produces two further perils: the prospect of experiencing death alone and the strong possibility of returning to the material plane. With regard to the former, Rai Sahib Munshi Ram summarizes a satsang given by the Great Master who describes what happens at the time of death. The Great Master makes clear that whilst a Master will protect all disciples when they die, there is no guarantee that he will give darshan to those who failed to practise their meditation:

Those satsangis who do no meditation after taking Nam from the Satguru do receive protection, though they do not get the Satguru's darshan before death. How is this done? When the soul leaves the body, there are three ways for it to go ... on the left the agents of Kal are waiting, while the Satguru is on the right. The agents of Kal call, "Come this way. The way is here." At that moment, the Satguru catches the soul, and does not allow it to go towards the left.

With the Three Masters, Vol. II

The Master will not relinquish his duty just because we have failed to undertake ours but, equally, he may choose not to reveal himself during the very moment when we are the most vulnerable, scared and lonely. Nor will a single one of our material or familial loves offer us a shred of comfort despite having consumed our attention at the expense of meditation. As Rai Sahib Munshi Ram goes on to reiterate, the Master will save our soul from being crushed by the “jaws of Kal,” but our failure to practise meditation will result in another birth in order to complete the work we did not undertake in this lifetime.

Weaknesses

Human nature is intrinsically frail and it is not until we start following the path of Sant Mat that we realize the full extent of our flaws. The source of these is the mind, which compels us to take one action after another, all of which have consequences that lead to further actions and which ultimately become the cause of additional births. This relentless cycle of action, reaction, cause and effect explains our journey on the evolutionary road since time began. As long as the mind is in control, we cannot escape the law of transmigration – but once tamed, it ceases to be our greatest weakness and becomes a source of great strength.

Nam is the only power through which we can control the mind, and Nam is realized through meditation. Herein lies both our greatest challenge and the source of our deepest insight. More than anything else, the practice of meditation reveals the power and obstinacy of the mind and, therefore, the difficulty of the battle we are fighting. Given that the mind assumed control from the moment of our descent from the spiritual plane, it should come as no surprise that making it motionless at the third eye is a lifelong struggle. The task, however, is not impossible, even though it may often feel that way. The Masters

emphasize that each of us has the strength and capability to overcome what is, essentially, a deeply ingrained habit. It just needs considerable effort and determination on our part, the like of which we have not made for anything else ever before.

Strengths

Our greatest strength is that we have the unwavering support of the Master, which will enable us to transcend all our weaknesses and threats. Our relationship with him began before we were even born; in fact our entire life has been planned to take us to his door. Greeting us with open arms, he conveys the urgent message from our Father to go home; he answers our questions and removes all doubts but, most importantly, he makes us fall in love with him. He gives us the gift of initiation, which in the words of the Great Master, “means more than if you had inherited a million dollars, or many millions.” Having connected us to the Shabd, he then works ceaselessly to honour his duty to the Lord and ensure that our soul reaches its spiritual home.

To this end, the Master seeks to reform our bad habits, using different approaches depending on our receptivity to his advice. He begins with a gentle approach but may apply more dramatic measures if we persist with our wayward behaviour. Yet, even though the welfare of the soul is the Master’s primary concern, that does not mean he disregards our material worries. A recurring theme in the letters reproduced in *Spiritual Gems* is that the Master’s protection and support are constant; it is we who remain unaware of how much he helps us. Thus, it behoves us to follow the Great Master’s advice and to leave all our worries, cares, and anxieties to the Master to deal with and, having become carefree, cultivate his love.

It is encouraging to learn that the more effort we put in, the greater the grace of the Lord. In fact, the love that we think we feel for the

Master is a precious gift from the Lord. It is he who makes us think about him. And, as Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, the more receptive we are to his love, “the more it grows. The more effort we put in, the more love we feel and the greater his grace, these will always go side by side.”

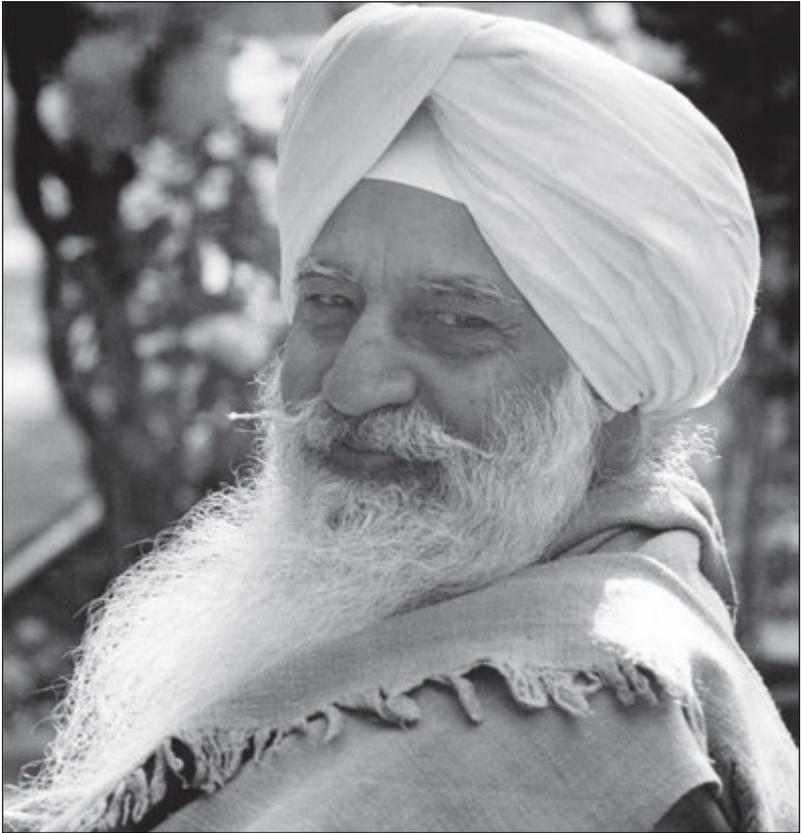
SWOT completed – what next?

In the commercial world, a SWOT analysis is followed by a strategic action-plan that sets out what actions need to be undertaken, who will be responsible for implementing them, over what time period, and how progress will be monitored. Whilst this approach may support organizations in their efforts to achieve their goals, it is less relevant to us because we already have the action plan graciously prepared for us by our Master. All we need to do is to act upon the Masters’ very simple message: practise meditation with as much effort and determination as possible, right here, right now. We can see that the purpose of a review is just to enthuse the mind and get it to take this necessary action. In the words of Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

We should all attempt to sit in meditation every day, regularly and punctually, because this human form is given to us for that very purpose.... If you miss it some day due to unavoidable circumstances or for any reason, try to make up this deficiency at some other time.

There is very little to add to Hazur’s advice, except perhaps, the counsel of Baba Ji, who makes it clear that meditation is non-negotiable and that it is as easy as we make it.





I have no particular message to give you except the classical one that Christ left behind for all humanity, which is "Love one another." For the greater the love we have for one another, the closer we are together, to me and the Lord. It is my hope that the group meetings ... have brought about a deeper understanding of Sant Mat philosophy. It is my wish that you will devote yourself to meditation with this renewed knowledge, love and perseverance.

Legacy of Love

From Loneliness to Happiness

Making our way through life, we look at the world 'out there' from the confines of our body, just like we're looking out of a window. Stuck in a body with thoughts and emotions, eventually we are alerted to our loneliness. To quash this feeling, we go out of our way to spend time with others, even though no one really knows us and nor do we ever really come to know anybody else.

If this sounds like you, then you will know that feeling lonely can often be overwhelmingly painful and on those occasions when there is no one to spend time with, you probably try to distract yourself with other activities, such as listening to music or watching television.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh states:

Everybody is lonely in this life – it's a self-deception to think that somebody belongs to you or you belong to somebody. Sooner or later everybody realizes that one is alone in life – to think otherwise is just a self-deception. I think it's a God-given gift when that feeling comes in us. Then we turn to the Father to hold on to something which belongs to us, to which we can belong.

Being aware of our aloneness is a huge step towards the unfolding of our spiritual nature. We begin to understand that there is little point in deliberately seeking the company of others to indulge in useless talk. Nonetheless, the camaraderie that one feels in the company of others continues to exert some pull over us because, after all, we're human, social beings and the pull from the inside is not yet sufficiently strong. Yes, there have been times when we've longed to be alone, to sit

in the garden or to drive to some isolated spot in the countryside and just *be*. To sit all alone, no talking, no distractions. We may close our eyes in relief at being alone at last, but sooner or later we start to desire the company of others. This is a cycle that goes on and on. Switching between the two scenarios – the desire to be alone and the desire to be with others – we find ourselves in a rather difficult situation. We have nothing permanently outside of us, and we have nothing permanently within – or so it appears to us. Unable to get rid of this aching loneliness, it no longer matters what we accomplish or how many well-wishers we may have.

It is at this point in our spiritual journey that we must persevere with all the strength we can muster and try to use the loneliness to our advantage.

As Maharaj Charan Singh explained in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

There is no permanent happiness to be found in this world. Some are comfortable in misery, others are uncomfortable in misery, but nobody can be happy in separation. That loneliness cannot leave you. It's the yearning of the soul to become one with the Father. You cannot overcome that loneliness.

The feeling of loneliness is a great blessing that the Lord has given us. It is a natural urge that forces us to seek him within, although we don't always recognize it as a benefit. Once, a distraught young woman sought the advice of an elder satsangi. In tears, she described how very lonely she was without friends, no one to talk to, and how she could bear her situation no longer. The elder told the girl how lucky she was not to have the distractions of so-called friends and reminded her that, in reality, she was not as alone as she thought – our true companion is always with us. Reflecting on this, we are better able to understand the

words of the Bible from the Gospel of Saint John, “That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

The path of Sant Mat teaches us that we are never alone; the Master is always with us, looking past our mistakes and shortcomings. So instead of feeling lonely, we could try to feel his constant presence and the unconditional love and protection that surround us. Our awareness of this will emerge over time as we persevere with meditation. Eventually, the time will come when it becomes natural for us, as devotees, to enjoy being alone. The idle talk and other worldly activities will no longer be of interest as the focus of our attention turns within.

So, making our way through life, instead of looking ‘out there’ at the world from the confines of our body, through the window of our eyes, we could reverse the process by looking ‘in there’ at our Lord, our Master and travelling companion. Looking through the window of our heart with the eyes of our soul, we will never feel alone again.



*In truth everything and everyone
is a shadow of the Beloved,
and our seeking is his seeking,
and our words are his words ...
we search for him here and there,
while looking right at him.
Sitting by his side we ask,
“Oñ Beloved, where is the Beloved?”*

Rumi quoted in *Legacy of Love*

Enthusiasm, Fortitude and Stamina

On our journey through life, if we weigh ourselves down with a cargo of stones, we will be unable to reach our destination. If, like the mystics, we accumulate no cargo, then the winds of God's love in the form of the Shabd will power our ship. To make the journey, we need enthusiasm, fortitude and stamina. There will be many occasions when we fail. The Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius, advises us to think positively, to rejoice that we are on a healing restorative path of positive action, rather than get caught up in our failings. He says:

Do not feel qualms or despondency or discomfiture if thou dost not invariably succeed in acting from right principles; but when thou art foiled, come back to them, and rejoice if on the whole thy conduct is worthy of a man, and love the course to which thou returnest.

It is because we carry around with us the baggage of our negative mental habits that we lose heart, lose courage and judge ourselves. We won't let go of them and we even seem to enjoy the misery they bring. Such emotions will take us nowhere. Jesus advised his disciples to be as little children; when we are young we see life with open hearts and minds. Baltasar Gracian, a seventeenth century Spanish Jesuit and philosopher, warns us against a tendency towards sadness and self-pity, pointing out that such tendencies will harm us:

Search for the good in everything. There is nothing that does not hold some good if we but seek it. But the minds of some men are

burdened with such unhappiness that, out of a thousand good points, they manage to strike upon a lone defect, and this they toss about like scavengers of men's minds and purposes.... Be the man who, among a thousand evils, strikes upon the single good. Good finds good, but good that comes too late is as good as nothing.

While it is good to be self-aware, judging ourselves too harshly is dangerous and counter productive. With the same generosity of spirit and tolerance that we show to others, we need to be compassionate and charitable towards ourselves, too.

Our task is to bring our lives in harmony with our spiritual goal, but for this, we have to be patient. A child matures from infancy through childhood and adolescence into adulthood; likewise, for our long-term good, we need to be balanced and permit our development to take place naturally. If we strive to reach our goal by simply suppressing habitual negative tendencies, there will certainly be a reaction at some future date. Suppression and repression are not the answer. The process of putting our lives in order and transforming ourselves spiritually has to be seen as a lifelong, steady evolution towards our goal.

The wisdom teachings of the world put an ideal before us to guide us in this process of spiritual transformation. They encourage us to go step by step in the direction we want, to be practical and to reason with ourselves. We are living as part of the creation and we all have our own destiny which manifests as responsibilities we have to fulfil.

Honest Living



Life's Multiple Journeys

You may have seen those sets of nesting Russian dolls that are sold both as intriguing toys for children and as beautiful ornaments. The smallest doll is enclosed by a slightly larger one, which in turn is enclosed by a larger one still and so on. Likewise, our day-to-day physical journeys with which we are so familiar – the journey to work and back again, the journey to meet up with friends, the journey to the shopping mall – are very much like the smallest doll. These journeys fit inside a much larger one – the journey of our life, which begins at birth and ends with death. A single lifespan, in turn, fits into the greatest journey of all, the journey of our soul, the enduring part of us that existed even before time began.

Thinking about this greatest journey of all raises all sorts of questions. Specifically, who are we, where did we come from, where are we going, and how do we get there? Although Sant Mat presents us with a logical philosophy, the saints suggest that we simply take it as a hypothesis, imparting a method so that we can test it and find answers for ourselves. As many teachers know, learning through experience is far more effective than knowledge gained passively.

The Sant Mat hypothesis and method

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘hypothesis’ as a proposition put forward for reasoning, without any assumption of its truth, and as a starting point for further investigation. In common with the ideas of the major religions, the hypothesis proposed by Sant Mat is that there is a God who made the creation; he is a loving Father, and the true and enduring part of us, the soul, is of his essence. Separated from him within the creation, the soul longs to return to him.

If we accept this hypothesis – that the soul has originated with God and is on a journey through creation back towards him – the crucial question becomes how it can do this. Meditation is the method proposed by Sant Mat, as explained by Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol II:

Meditation is very simple. We all know there is one God, and that he is within every one of us. And God has made us all alike. If he is within every one of us, and if there is only one God who can be found within ourselves, there cannot be more than one path leading back to the Father. It has got to be the same path in a Muslim, a Christian, a Hindu, a Sikh or any other person because the Lord has made us all alike.

To find “the path leading back to the Father” as described by Maharaj Charan Singh, we must collect our consciousness and focus it between the eyes, where we can make contact with the divine within. However, as Maharaj Charan Singh goes on to explain, whilst the soul is the activating power that keeps us alive, within the realms of the material plane it is inextricably linked with mind. And as we know all too well from personal experience, mind is highly distracted, fickle and inconsistent. Indeed, its highly scattered nature remains the key difficulty we encounter in trying to find the inner path. Even if we locked ourselves away in the darkest and quietest of rooms, we would fail to stop the hundreds of random thoughts whizzing through our consciousness. The very nature of the mind means that it never ceases to be active; even when we are at rest, it projects backwards through memory and forwards through worry, which is precisely why Maharaj Charan Singh emphasizes that meditation is critical. It is the only method through which we can gain control over the mind, allowing it

first to focus, then concentrate and eventually, become still so that the soul can awaken and begin its ultimate journey.

Testing the hypothesis: from reflection to reality

The super conscious state that we reach through concentrated meditation makes us aware of the audible life stream that exists within us all. This divine energy, which is forever present and never diminishes, is a part of the Creator. As our concentration improves and we start to hear the sound current, this Shabd, which is God's creative energy, will automatically gather our consciousness to itself and allow us, bit by bit, to experience deeper and deeper levels of reality.

We may ask, "What deep reality? Isn't what we see and hear before us real?" The mystics (drawing upon their personal experience) say "No" They explain that the physical world in which we find ourselves is just a reflection of a reflection of a reflection of the truth. In many ways, this explains the nub of our problem. Since a small bit of reflected glory – in the form of love, compassion, kindness and all the other noble virtues – exists on the material plane, we cling to these reflections because we are unable to recall their pure form. Put another way, we mistake reflections of truth to be real even though they are no more than pale imitations. If there was ever a reason why we need a living Master so that we can discover reality and embrace the spiritual life, this certainly is it.

The teacher

As highly evolved spiritual beings, the mystics personify pure love. In them we observe the best and noblest of human qualities brought to perfection. Exuding love and positivity, their intrinsic magnetism stirs our soul and we feel a strange mixture of love, happiness, and

contentment when thinking about them or in their physical presence. The experience of their love convinces us more than any number of spiritual books or discourses that there is a higher reality and truth. On this basis, we take a leap of faith and ask the Master to impart the method through which we can realize this for ourselves. We call this occasion ‘initiation’ because as the Master instructs us on the three aspects of meditation – simran, dhyān and listening to the sound current – we begin a new way of life.

The purpose of simran and dhyān is to focus the mind and withdraw our consciousness to the eye centre. In that stillness, we do bhajan – listen to the Word of God. This process of “dying while living,” as Maharaj Charan Singh calls it in *Die to Live*, is the key to a joyful life, not least because the most important relationship of our life has begun. The Master is an unfailing friend who constantly seeks our good. Even when we are physically thousands of miles apart from him, whenever we turn our attention towards him, he always responds in one way or another. In this way, slowly and surely, our love and faith in him develops and provides the fuel to carry us all the way to our spiritual destination.

To sum up, the teachings of the saints provide us with a method by which we can discover truth for ourselves. On this spiritual journey we are not alone but receive help, guidance and inspiration from the Master who initiates us and awakens the latent power of love that exists within us all. What appeared to be out of our comfort zone becomes comfortable, what was difficult becomes straightforward. The seemingly impossible becomes possible.



A Thousand Little Incidents

When we come to Sant Mat, the Master makes it clear that the path will not give us any of the material things we may desire, like a big house, a nice car, wealth or fame. However, provided we keep the four promises made at the time of initiation, we are assured of finding an eternal, uplifting spiritual love that is, literally, beyond description. Sometimes though, it seems like our journey is taking far too long. One day we feel very spiritual and on the next, we are consumed by materialism, unable to achieve a state of peace. Neither our desires nor unhappiness will come to an end unless we do something about it. As the Master remarked during a question and answer session, many people express their dissatisfaction about the world but few of us do anything to get out of it – permanently.

Our main issue centres on subduing our mind. Inexplicably, we resist delving deep into the beauty and joy of spirituality, hanging on like crazy to our individuality and the things we want from the world. Fortunately for us, the Master loves our soul more intensely than we can ever understand and offers us a way out of our predicament. Drawing us close to him, he gives us a taste of the love that lies within and weans us away from the illusory loves of the world. In fact, the Master is always working to extricate us from the fire of the world and to return us to the peaceful embrace of the Lord. Our duty is to help the Master. Even though our mind may struggle like a wild animal, snarling, snapping and frightening us, we possess the ultimate weapon – simran. We have only to pick it up and use it to become free.

No doubt, from the Master's perspective, there is nothing to worry about. The soul is already on its way to freedom. *There are no failures in Sant Mat.* Each soul has to take the necessary steps towards the

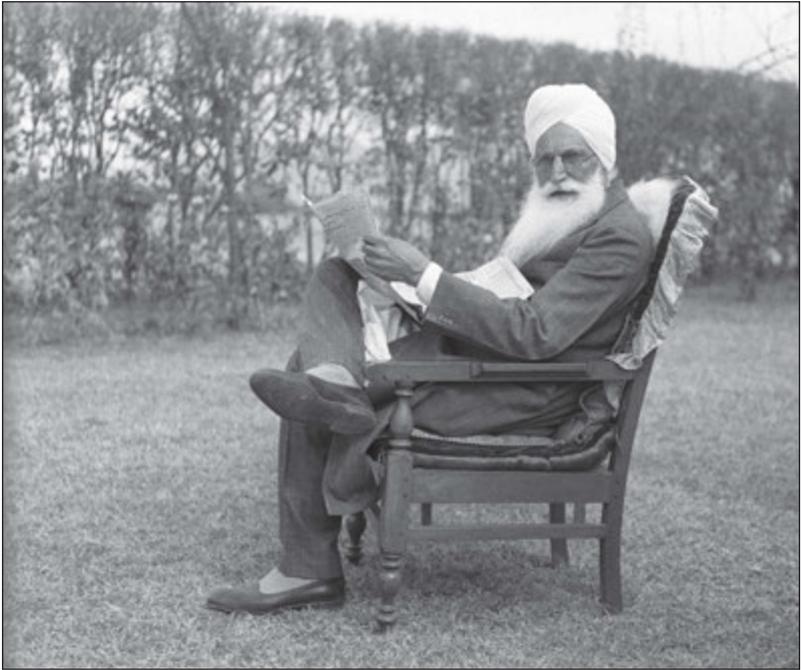
light and no single step is ever really beyond us. Perhaps, when things get hard, that is when we are closest to him as he instils the strength and courage in us to carry on even when we feel the most weak and miserable.

One by one, a thousand little incidents help grow our faith: the moments of darshan, our thoughts of the Master, our efforts to do things right and even our failures. Above all else though, real inner love and faith is built on the little nudges of encouragement that he keeps giving us. A wonderful, loving presence is continuously working on us and we will not be able to resist forever. One day we will surrender. In the meantime, we can behave like a real lover. We can stop to think of him and thank him throughout the day. We can trust him and turn to him. We have loved so many people in this world. We know how to be loving. We should just make him the One. He has already made his choice as far as we are concerned.



The programme for the day was a reception to welcome overseas guests ... Maharaj Ji was not expected to attend. But I believe he wanted to have darshan of his sangat as much as the sangat wanted to have his darshan. A Muslim mystic has said, "God is love, God is the lover, and God is the Beloved." It is all his play – beyond human understanding. So he entered the hall, joy written on his face, and when the sangat had his darshan they too were immensely happy. It was a bonus for them.

Legacy of Love



Wait constantly at this door, for the king may unexpectedly distinguish thee with his presence. The main thing is for thee to be present, and nothing else; thou must be present – nothing else matters. If thou standest ready at the door, thou wilt be favoured by the king's presence.

Farid al-Din 'Attar, *Ilahi-Nama*

Ancient Greece to Modernity – Has Anything Changed?

The Greek philosopher Socrates (469–399 BCE) was renowned for engaging fellow citizens in lively conversations about the nature of the good, the right and the just. Living a simple, frugal life, Socrates, like a true saint, never asked to be paid for his enlightening dialogues. He married, had children and carried out the duties expected of a citizen of Athens, including fighting in war. He could endure great hardships of cold and hunger and went into long periods of abstraction even while on military campaign.

Despite being credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy and contributing significantly to the fields of ethics and epistemology (the origin and nature of knowledge and ways of acquiring it), Socrates wrote nothing about his ideas. Our knowledge of him is therefore dependent on the writings of others, especially those of his disciple Plato (427–347 BCE). As a witness to the dynamism of the exchanges between Socrates and his students, Plato decided that in writing about them, he should recreate the drama of the dialogues both to convey a sense of Socrates' magnetism and to offer the best alternative to being in the physical presence of the great philosopher. This article presents three extracts from these writings. The first explores spiritual love, the second conveys the love for Socrates by another of his disciples, Alcibiades, and the third describes an incident in which Alcibiades is saved by Socrates.

A stairway to heaven

Plato explores the nature of love in a dialogue called *The Symposium* during which friends and acquaintances at a social gathering take

turns to give a speech about what love means to them. Skilled in the art of oratory and rhetoric, each participant addresses the audience with passion and gusto although all focus on the experience of physical love – until it comes to the turn of Socrates. Raising the level of the conversation to the spiritual, he recalls how a priestess named Diotima had once described to him a stairway to heaven, a path leading upward from the superficial beauty of the physical world to a place of pure, eternal beauty where immortality is guaranteed for those fortunate few reaching the top. For Socrates, the very possibility of such a magnificent opportunity validates human existence:

Contemplating true Beauty, above all else, makes life worth living... What would it be like if someone could see Beauty itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not defiled with human flesh and colours and all that mortal rubbish, but absolute beauty, divine and unchanging?... He now has the chance to become loved by the gods and become immortal, if any human can.

When Socrates finishes this description, he states his determination to follow Diotima up to the vision of Beauty and encourages others to do the same:

As a believer I now try to win others round to the view that to acquire this possession (immortality) it would be hard for human nature to find a better partner than love. That's why I tell you that everyone should honour love and that I myself treat the ways of love as very important. So I follow them exceptionally carefully myself and urge others to do the same. It's also why, now and always, I do all I can to praise love's power and courage.

Love for the masters

As the party progresses, Alcibiades, a former disciple of Socrates, gate-crashes the gathering. The golden boy of Athens – aristocratic, handsome, clever, and a gifted leader – he is informed that during the course of the party, a series of speeches have been made about love. Inspired, Alcibiades proceeds, with some remorse, to recount his own experience and begins by describing the overwhelming love he feels for Socrates. Despite his proclamations, we learn that Alcibiades' love is fragile; that his feelings are most powerful when he is in the physical presence of his master, but that away from Socrates he has been unable to resist the lure and glamour of politics. Having surrendered himself to the political arena, Alcibiades goes on to reveal that he broke his connection with Socrates and thus missed a unique opportunity for spiritual advancement.

Whenever I listen to him [Socrates] my heart pounds and tears flood out when he speaks and I see that many other people are affected in the same way. I've heard Pericles and other good orators, and I thought they spoke well. But they haven't produced this kind of an effect on me; they haven't disturbed my whole being and made me dissatisfied with the slavish quality of my life. He often had this effect on me, and made me think that the life I'm leading isn't worth living. You can't say this isn't true, Socrates. Even now I'm well aware that if I allowed myself to listen to him I couldn't resist but would have the same experience again. He makes me admit that although I have great defects, I neglect myself and instead get involved in Athenian politics. So I force myself to block my ears and go away, like someone escaping to prevent myself sitting there beside him till I grow old.

He's the only person in whose company I've had an experience you might think me incapable of – feeling shame with someone. I only feel shame in his company. I'm well aware that I can't argue against him and that I should do what he tells me; but when I leave him I'm carried away by the people's admiration. So I act like a runaway slave and escape from him; and whenever I see him, I'm ashamed of the promises I made to him.

He saved my life

Upon seeing Socrates at the party, Alcibiades' feelings for his master have been awakened once more, and memories of time spent together come flooding back. He continues with his narrative and recalls an incident in battle when Socrates saved his life:

We served together in the Athenian campaign against Potidaea and shared the same mess there... On the day of the battle when I gained my prize for bravery, it was he who rescued me, as he was not prepared to leave me when I was wounded and so he saved my life as well as my weapons and armour... Just as he does here in Athens he was calmly looking out for friends and enemies, and it was obvious to everyone even from a long distance that if anyone tackled this man he would put up a tough resistance. Generally people don't tackle those who show this kind of attitude in combat, but rather pursue those in headlong flight.

Alcibiades ends his speech by drawing attention to Socrates' charisma and the wisdom and truthfulness inherent in his ideas about goodness:

There are many other remarkable things which you could say in praise of Socrates. Some of these distinctive features could perhaps also be attributed to other people too. But what is most amazing about him is that he is like no other human being, either in the past or the present. He is so out of the ordinary, and so is the way he talks, that however hard you look you'll never find anyone close to him.... If you open up his words and see inside you'll find his arguments are the only ones that make any sense. You'll also find they're the most divine and contain the most ideas of goodness. They range over all the subjects that you must examine if you're going to become a truly good person.

The short extracts presented in this article are interesting on many levels: as a historical account of life in ancient Greece; as a philosophical narrative about the difficulties of pursuing a good life; and as a metaphysical discussion about the existence of absolute truth and beauty. Yet perhaps their most striking feature is that we can relate to, if not share, the same feelings, emotions and challenges experienced by our brethren thousands of years ago. We may have made a myriad of major technological advances since the days of ancient Greece, but in all that time, it is evident that the human condition remains unchanged. To progress beyond this, we need – as did our ancestors – someone who has already mastered the spiritual journey, who is a living example of the latent divinity within us and, most importantly, who is able to teach us how to awaken this within ourselves. It is only upon meeting such a being, a spiritual master, that we realize – as others did before us – that there is only one purpose in life: to climb the staircase to heaven and return to the Lord as soon as possible.



The Human Potential – Insights from Shams-e Tabrizi

*This house of the world reflects the human body,
and the human form reflects the world beyond.*

Shams-e Tabrizi: Rumi's Perfect Teacher

The wandering dervish Shams-e Tabrizi was born towards the end of the twelfth century in Tabriz in northwestern Iran. Universally referred to as Shams (a name that in Arabic means 'sun'), it is believed that this perfect mystic came for one disciple, one student to whom he directed all his energy and teachings: Jalāl al-Din Rumi, otherwise known as Rumi. Shams' singular objective was to actualize, share and celebrate with Rumi the divine dimension of human potential and to transform him into a God-realized human being.

Until recently, all that was known of Shams came through the writings of Rumi but following a chance discovery (during the 1940s) of a series of manuscripts comprising Shams' discourses, we now have greater insight into his mystical teaching and the instructions he offers Rumi for God-realization. Though the original manuscripts were not written by Shams himself, they comprise the notes taken of his public and private discourses by those present at that time, mainly Rumi's followers and students. The manuscripts were translated into a Persian book of more than a thousand pages in the 1990s and from which the Science of the Soul Research Centre has published a collection of excerpts in the book *Shams-e Tabrizi: Rumi's Perfect Teacher*. These inspiring excerpts are presented under a series of themes to enable contemporary readers to build a picture of Shams' teachings on

specific topics. The following are just a few of those which focus on the theme of human potential.

157 – When human beings can feel elated with joy at the perishable, imagine what joy and ecstasy they can feel if they spend their energy and capacity, the capital of their lives, on the everlasting, life-giving truth.

Joy in the world pales before joy in God.

221 – What business is it of yours if the universe stems from the primordial? Try to find out whether you are primordial or created. Spend your life finding out who you are. Why do you spend it in finding the universe's origin? To know God is deep? O stupid, you are deep, if there is depth, it is in you! What kind of friend are you, not knowing the details of the Friend's inner and outer state with utmost clarity? What kind of God's servant are you if you do not know his entire mystery and inner condition?

Shams on realizing God and his mystery within.

640 – A true man is one who is happy in sorrow and joyful in unhappiness. He knows that this wish or that objective is wrapped and hidden within this unfavorable state. Hidden within the hopelessness of not having one's objective lies the hope of it, and the sorrow of not having one's objective hides within the objective.

Shams on patience and rising above hopelessness.

705 – Some reached the Sought while they are seeking. The Sought was unveiled at the time of death for others, whereas still others died seeking. Dying with this desire is a great achievement.

Shams on the several ways to use human birth well.



We Are All Sevadars

Extracts from ‘Equilibrium of Love’

The Dera runs on seva. The desire to give, with no thought of recompense, is what drives every single activity here, whether it's cooking in the langar, restoring old books, sweeping the streets, designing computer systems or breaking up bricks for new construction. Many different types of seva are available, whether people possess skills, education and special abilities or not, whether they are initiated or not. There is something for everyone, depending on their situation and capacity. All are happy to work side by side as a rare spirit of love, enthusiasm and compassion permeates the Dera. It fosters a sense of belonging – that's what keeps the institution running. As Maharaj Charan Singh once said: “We are all sevadars, we are all fellow travellers, we are all meant to help each other. We all belong to this institution, so we are all sevadars.”

* * *

When the Great Master announced plans to build the satsang ghar, a wealthy contractor wanted to erect the whole building himself. The master refused his offer with these words: “I want every satsangi, even the poorest of the poor to offer something in seva, even if it is only half a rupee. I would also like all satsangis, rich and poor, to participate in the construction, even if they carry only a handful of sand or a few bricks. The smallest efforts are precious to me. Every drop of perspiration shed by them is valuable for me. This is seva of love and devotion.”

The Man with the Beautiful Eyes

Maharaj Charan Singh's U.S. visit, 1970

In New York, two members of the hotel staff, a plumber and a maid, appeared before Mr. Weekley with a bag of tools and a work order to repair a leaking faucet in the bathroom of Maharaj Ji's hotel suite. Mr. Weekley told them to wait and, going through the room where Maharaj Ji was giving interviews, checked the bathroom, to find nothing wrong with the taps. "There must be a mistake, the taps are fine," he told them. After a moment's silence, the plumber said, "Yes you are right. We made this up ourselves because we want to see the man with the beautiful eyes."

Mr. Weekley was so touched by his guileless confession that, ignoring the line of satsangis waiting outside, he took the plumber and maid into Maharaj Ji's room and said, "Please pardon me, Maharaj Ji, but I could not help bringing these people to see you." The Master got up from his chair before Mr Weekley had finished speaking and stood looking at the couple, a gentle smile on his face. They, for their part, gazed at "the man with the beautiful eyes", neither speaking nor moving. Then the Master shook hands with them and patted them on the shoulder as he said good-bye. They emerged from the Master's room with joy on their faces and tears in their eyes – and they did not even know who he was!

On the morning Maharaj Ji left New York for Detroit, there was a wonderful scene in his hotel corridor: a large number of the hotel workers – maids, waiters, and repairmen, none of them satsangis – had gathered outside the Master's room to say goodbye and have a final glimpse of "the man with the beautiful eyes."

Legacy of Love



The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions

BY WAYNE TEASDALE

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In *The Mystic Heart*, Wayne Teasdale (1945–2004) explores the spiritual dimension which he believes can be found in and experienced through all the world's religions. Teasdale, who taught at Columbia University in New York and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, describes himself as “a lay monk, a Christian *sannyasi*” (in the Hindu tradition a *sannyasi* is one who has renounced the world). Having been initiated into *sannyasa* by Father Bede Griffiths in India, he writes, “I have embraced a Christian form, but . . . from this vantage I strive to integrate humankind's spiritual wisdom within the depths of my own mystic heart.”

Mysticism, he claims, is neither unique to any particular tradition, nor the privilege of a few rare, gifted souls. Mysticism is “really the story of every person who awakens to himself or herself – to the mystery within, without, and beyond us.”

Every one of us is a mystic. We may or may not realize it; we may or may not even like it. But whether we know it or not, whether we accept it or not, mystical experience is always there, inviting us on a journey of ultimate discovery.

In the first, and longest, section of the book, titled “Finding What Unites Us,” Teasdale discusses the nature of mystical spirituality as expressed in the various religious traditions. He describes six basic forms of mysticism, “each valid in its own way”: natural mysticism, theistic mysticism, mysticism of love, bridal mysticism, mysticism of knowledge, and mysticism of the soul. Across all these different forms, he finds that one simple definition of mysticism can be applied to all: “Mysticism means

direct, immediate experience of ultimate reality.”

Teasdale expresses deep respect for “the world’s rich diversity of religious expression,” yet he also makes a distinction between the outward forms of religion and the inner work of spirituality.

Spirituality draws us into the depths of our being, where we come face to face with ourselves, our weaknesses, and with ultimate mystery. Many understandably prefer to avoid this frightening prospect by sinking into external religiosity and the safe routines of liturgy or ritual. A genuinely spiritual person passionately commits to this inner development.

He claims that “The real religion of humankind can be said to be spirituality itself, because mystical spirituality is the origin of all the world’s religions.”

Teasdale explores the concepts about consciousness in different spiritual traditions, including not only Eastern and Western religions, but also the Greek philosophers and the insights from modern physics. He discusses “natural mysticism,” which he defines as “the perception and awareness of the numinous reality of the source in, surrounding, and emanating from nature and the cosmos.” Analysing various spiritual paths, he differentiates between those focusing on the inner path, which he calls the way of contemplation, and those working through the outer path, which he calls the way of action. His analysis leads to the conclusion that the paths are many, but the goal is the same. Ultimately, the inner and the outer must become fully integrated. “When we have cultivated a subtle spiritual awareness, no separation between inner and outer exists.”

Regardless of the tradition, the effects of the spiritual journey on the person are the same. Contemplatives, mystics, and sages, in whatever form of spirituality, undergo a radical refashioning of their being: the theosis, or deification of the person, a transformation that affects their entire life. Their consciousness is greatly enhanced and deepened; they acquire a transcendental, subtle awareness. Their character becomes saintly; their will is fixed on love and compassion,

mercy and kindness... They are not victims of their feelings, nor ruled by their desires. They are free and so are capable of giving to others and their communities.

Coining the terms ‘interspirituality’ and ‘intermysticism,’ Teasdale celebrates the idea that we live in a unique period of human history, “the Interspiritual Age.” Throughout history most human beings have lived in circumstances in which they could only be familiar with their own religious tradition. Fear, hatred, and judgment of other traditions has been the natural outcome of this relative cultural isolation. Today’s increasingly global world has spawned a dialogue among spiritual leaders from various traditions, shedding new light on the core of mystical spirituality which is common to all. Teasdale recounts the history of a number of “pioneers of interspiritual wisdom” from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, who through their own spiritual seeking and attainment synthesized Eastern and Western mystical traditions and laid the groundwork for the vibrant exchanges today between spiritual seekers from many different religions.

The second part of the book is titled “The Practical Nature of the Mystical Way.” In it Teasdale discusses spiritual practice, which he calls the “the crux of inner change” and without which, he says, “spirituality is a hollow affair; it has no substance.” After describing briefly a number of different forms of spiritual practice, including Zen and Vipassana meditation, yoga, chanting, and the Catholic mass, he examines in detail one spiritual practice: the “centering prayer” as taught by Thomas Keating, the abbot of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, from 1961–1981. “Centering prayer” may be thought of as “the Christian answer to Hindu and Buddhist meditation.” Abbott Keating found it described in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous fourteenth-century mystical treatise. There are four basic guidelines for centering prayer. First, you choose a sacred word to repeat. “You are not choosing it for the meaning, but simply to carry your intention to surrender to the divine presence within your being.” The second guideline is to sit quietly, close your eyes, and remain still for the period of centering. The third guideline is about what to do when thoughts distract you from the practice. Never fight the

thoughts, or you will drive them deeper into your consciousness: “just turn ever so gently back to the sacred word, thus renewing your intention to assent to the divine’s presence.” The fourth guideline is to transition gently at the end of the period of prayer, remaining still for another two minutes, rather than jumping up abruptly.

Teasdale describes “the mystic character,” that is, the character traits that slowly and gradually develop as a natural result of mystical practice: moral capacity, solidarity with all living beings, and deep nonviolence.

Life is a journey from hypocrisy to sincerity, from self-centredness to other-centredness and love, from self-deception, ignorance, and illusion to self-honesty, clarity, and truth. We are all immersed in these struggles, whether we realize and accept them or not.... It is really only through an intense life of spiritual practice that we become aware of our human condition. As long as people are content not to look, not to embrace their ultimate vocation to become deified beings, they will chase after every distraction that comes along as a substitute for a life of depth.

Each chapter opens with an inspiring quote. Illustrating the essential unity of mystical insight, these quotes range from William Blake – “if the doors of perception were cleansed, then everything would appear as it actually is, infinite” – to Black Elk:

The heart is a sanctuary at the centre of which there is a little space wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the Eye. This is the Eye of the Great Spirit by which He sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen.



