

October 2016

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 4 Yours Affectionately
- 6 The Gift of Forgiveness
- 10 No Free Jacket
- 13 The Sole Aim of Human Life
- 14 Carry On
- 17 Spirit of Contentment
- 18 What People Think
- 22 Did You Know?
- 23 TTSP
- 26 Can't or Won't?
- 28 The Master Answers
- 31 Half a Century Gone By
- 33 Something to Think About
- 34 A Disciple's Prayer
- 35 Fruit of Obedience
- 37 The Grand Design
- 40 The Story of the Soul
- 43 Spiritualisticks
- 44 The Repartee of the Wise
- 45 Pay Heed to the Instructions
- 49 Heart to Heart
- 50 Book Review

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India
Copyright © 2016 Science of the Soul Research Centre®

Articles and poems that appear without sources have been written by the contributors to this magazine.

VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 10 • OCTOBER 2016

Yours Affectionately

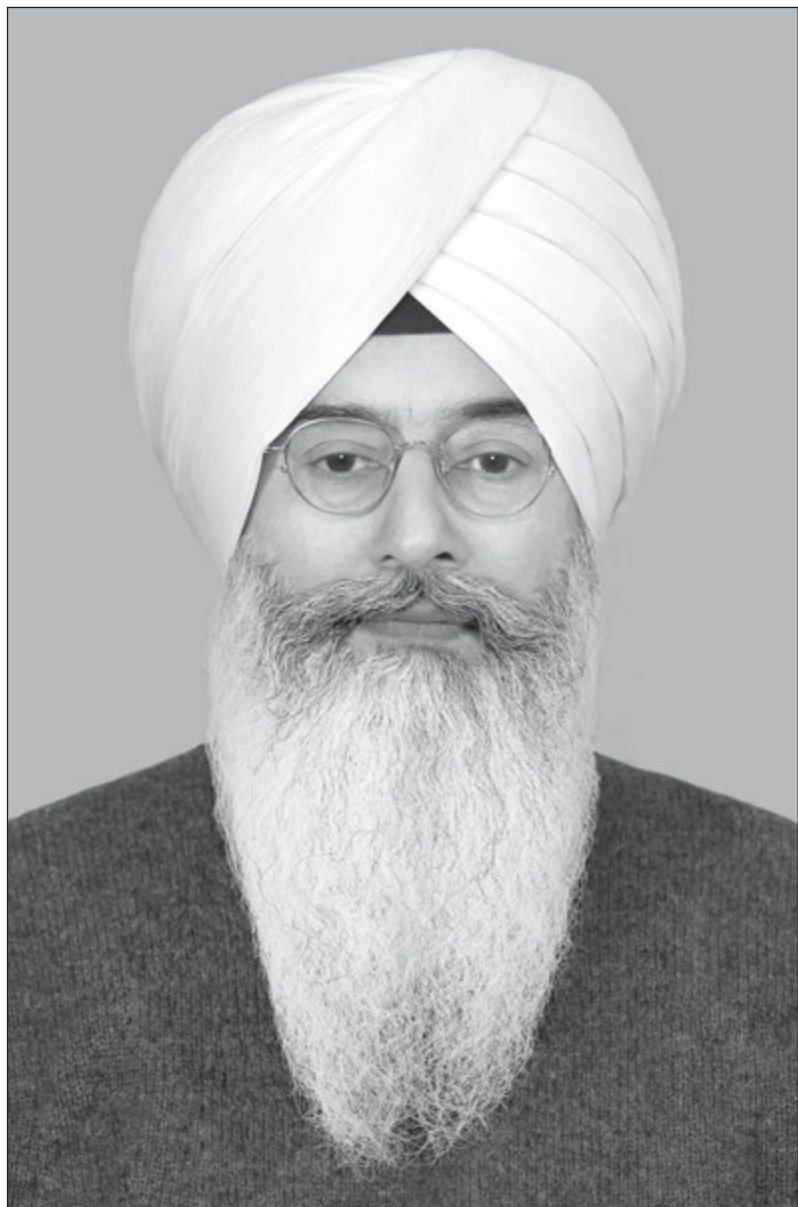
The Lord's gate is open to all. He loves to meet us even more than we can possibly long to meet him. It is he who creates in our hearts the desire to meet him. The Sant Mat programme is very simple: One merely abstains from animal food, alcoholic drinks and other bad habits, endeavours to lead a pure and chaste life, and gives two and a half hours daily to meditation in the way which is taught at the time of initiation.

The feeling of loneliness that you experience is, in fact, a blessing in disguise. In the life of everyone there comes a time when he feels and realizes that there is none in this world whom he can call his own. Throughout our life we select different people and try to make them our own, but after some time we realize that something is still missing. In the end our experience tells us that all these loves are selfish – one is always demanding something from the other. This feeling of loneliness will vanish only when our soul returns to its source, the Lord himself. As a matter of fact, this feeling is the outcome of the thirst of the soul for its Lord, and should be welcomed. If correctly employed, it will lead our footsteps to the palace of the Lord.

May God bless you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*





The Gift of Forgiveness

*Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea,
until they have something to forgive.*

C S Lewis

Forgiveness is indeed a wonderful gift when we are the ones who are in need of it. To know that we have been forgiven fills our entire being with relief and gratitude. However, when the tables are turned – when we are the ones who must forgive – we are generally resistant. We are resistant because our pride or ego has been hurt or because we feel we have been let down and don't deserve such treatment. We ask ourselves, "But why must we forgive them? It's their fault; they have hurt us."

A writer once explained the concept of "unforgiveness" or the inability to forgive others, in the following manner:

Unforgiveness means we desire to hurt the people who have wounded us. It's like the little boy who was sitting on a park bench in obvious agony. A man walking by asked him what was wrong. The boy answered, "I'm sitting on a bumble bee." "Then why don't you get up?" the man asked. The boy replied, "Because I figure that I am hurting him more than he is hurting me!"

Kent Crockett, *The 911 Handbook*

Such an attitude not only harms those who have wronged us, but in fact, causes more damage to ourselves without us even realizing it. We are tormented by feelings of resentment, anger, hatred and bitterness.

Such negative feelings have detrimental effects on our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Therefore, it has been correctly said that forgiveness is more a gift we give to ourselves than to others. It has a significant impact on our own mental and physical health and on our feelings and emotions. It is interesting to note that in Greek the term word 'to forgive' actually means 'to release from one's grasp'. This is exactly what happens when we forgive others. We release all the negative emotions and thoughts of hostility and chains of resentment from our own grasp. So the sooner we forgive, the quicker the unpleasantness goes away.

From a different perspective, Maharaj Charan Singh talks about the possibilities and risks of creating karmic links if and when we are unable to forgive. He says:

So far as forgiveness in the world is concerned, if we don't forgive what other people do to us, we build karmic connections with them They may have to come back to seek our forgiveness and we may have to come back to forgive them. We want to escape from all that. So we don't want justice at all, even if others have trespassed against our rights. We just want to forgive them so that we may not create any karmic link with them that might pull us back to this creation.

Whether you go to a court as the accused or the complainant, you still have to go to court. We don't want to go to the court of justice at all, even as a complainant. We want to escape from this court of justice, so we just forgive.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Mystics constantly remind us that nobody is perfect and we too have erred in one way or another. They suggest that it is pointless to

play the blame game and urge us to let go of things and move on. They even go to the extent of saying that holding on to negative feelings pulls our soul downwards, putting us in a position where we are unable to receive what the Lord wants to give us – his grace. A heart full of love has no room for even the slightest trace of hatred. To be able to merge with the Father – who is the epitome of purity, love and goodness – it is essential that our hearts be clean.

Hatred is so small and poor, so blind and wretched.

Love is so great and rich, so far-seeing and blissful...

Where hatred, dislike and condemnation are,

selfless love does not abide.

*It resides only in the heart that has ceased from all
condemnation.*

*He who knows that love is at the heart of all things, and has
realized the all-sufficing power of that love, has no room in
his heart for condemnation....*

*The spirit of hatred in man can never vibrate in unison with the
spirit of love;*

Love only can apprehend love, and become linked with it.

James Allen's Book of Meditations for Every Day in the Year

From our own experience, we know that it is impossible to meditate peacefully when we are constantly haunted by negative thoughts and emotions. Even if we are able to sit in meditation, we constantly think about those who have wronged us and expect them to apologize and ask for our forgiveness. The ego's first manoeuvre in dealing with the resentment we feel, is to try to get others to confess their faults: "You hurt me, so you must apologize first."

However Maharaj Ji cautions us about holding on to these expectations. He says:

If a person you think should apologize to you, does not do so, why should you worry? It means that you are equally wrong by attaching so much importance to yourself. This is a form of ego, a sort of self-importance. If the other person is expected to apologize and does not, it is he who will have to answer for his actions. By getting angry at his action you are creating self-pride, self-importance, instead of meekness and humility which are the jewels of Sant Mat. It is for you to forgive him and then forget about it. You are still keeping the karmic attachment by expecting forgiveness. The debtor and the creditor both have to appear in court in such a case. In other words, both have to come back into this world to clear the account. Do not waste your precious time in such thoughts and do not activate the mind unnecessarily. Make it stationary and motionless and attach it to the Shabd within.

Quest for Light

So the next time we feel that someone has offended us, we can remind ourselves that this life is nothing but a theatre and, in fact, each actor is merely playing his or her own part in the play. Perhaps we have hurt others previously and this is an opportunity to clear karmic accounts. Forgiveness helps to shatter our delusional thoughts of self-importance and egotism. It makes us humble, compassionate, tolerant and loving, thus helping our soul to reach its true source.



No Free Jacket

It happened a few weeks ago. It was a Sunday evening, and I returned home exhausted from a long day out with my family. It was an enjoyable day which involved shopping at a new mall downtown. Before going to bed, I happened to review the shopping receipt from one of the stores we visited and noticed that the clerk had made a mistake during check-out.

She had not charged me for the new winter jacket that I had bought. It was quite expensive too. At some level, I was happy to save some money, but, on the other hand, my conscience was nagging me to do the right thing. The excuses that my mind came up with were endless. “It’s out of my way.” “I don’t have time.” “Considering the money and effort I have to spend driving back and forth, it really doesn’t make sense. Besides, why should I have to pay for someone else’s mistake?” But my conscience persisted: As a disciple on the spiritual path, what should I do?

At the time of initiation, every disciple on the path of Sant Mat makes a promise to fulfil four vows. These vows are a prerequisite for the Master to be able to help the initiate mould his life and achieve his primary goal – to be released from the endless cycle of birth and death and attain liberation. The vows are straightforward and precise. And when we are uncertain about anything, our moral compass never fails to point us in the right direction.

So, if a cookie contains traces of egg, it is clear to us that we should not eat it. If a beverage or dessert has alcohol in it, then we know that we should not have it. If we have unintentionally taken something that does not belong to us, then we recognize the need to make it right.

And, if we have not attended to meditation for two and a half hours during the day, our conscience urges us to make up for it.

And yet, despite knowing the right thing to do, we frequently have a mental debate with ourselves every time we come across a seemingly grey area. Why does the mind always look for excuses to justify actions that go against our primary objective? We know that we might be able to get away with it now, but we are also aware that at the end of the day we will be accountable; that at some point, we will have to pay for it. The mystics have emphasized time and again that the karmic law is so precise, so inexorable, that even if the wind blew a grain of wheat from your neighbour's land onto yours, you would be held liable for that. So why then do we deceive ourselves? Hazur Maharaj Ji explains:

Being controlled by the senses, the mind does so many karmas – good and bad actions.... The mind is a very obedient servant of its master. In its present state it is such a slave of the senses that it does not want us to go back, merge back into the Lord. Sometimes, as a friend, it tries to deceive us.... The purpose of the mind is to keep us astray, not to let us go back to our original home.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Sant Mat teaches us that we are in this creation because of the karmas and choices that we made in our previous lives. This karmic burden upon our soul is what is preventing us from going back to our true source. So, if our objective is to clear those karmas, it is not logical, on one side, to work hard towards eliminating them and on the other side, accumulate more.

It is for this reason that the mystics encourage us to be sincere about fulfilling our vows and not allow the mind to rationalize what we know is wrong. The vows we have taken are guiding principles that are meant to help us achieve our spiritual goal. They are logical, practical and synchronize harmoniously with the supreme law of spirituality – the law of love.

One cannot aspire to become one with the greatest power in the universe and yet cruelly torture animals for the sake of one's palate. One cannot sit focused in meditation when one is under the influence of alcohol. And one cannot dive into the profound depths of true devotion in the still of the night and then cheat people in the light of day. What would be the point of being on a spiritual path?

In the end, all it took was one phone call. The clerk at the register was frantic when she realized her mistake and was extremely grateful that I called. It turns out, the cost of the jacket would have been deducted from her paycheck had I not phoned and authorized payment on my credit card. The sheer relief and gratitude in her voice made me sleep soundly that night. My conscience was clear. After all, I reminded myself, I did not want a free jacket, I wanted to go back to God.



As long as the mind is a slave of the senses, we are away from the destination. Our destination is upward. The trend of the senses is downward. Anything which keeps us away from the Lord, naturally, is misguiding us. A lover never appreciates anything that keeps the Beloved away. We make karmas under the sway of the mind and senses, and our karmas keep us away from our Lord, the Beloved.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. 1

The Sole Aim of Human Life

The sound current is a wave of the ocean of spirituality, of which the soul is a drop. The ocean, wave and the drop are alike in nature. All three are one. If the soul catches the current and follows it, it can reach its destination, the ocean – and, by merging itself in the ocean, can itself become the ocean.

Every human being has this current in him, but is disconnected from it by the mind, which has placed itself between the soul and the current to keep them apart. Ever since the creation started and the soul separated from the current, it has not gone back to its spiritual home. The simple reason why we find ourselves here in this material world now is that the curtain of the mind keeps the soul ignorant of the current and keeps it attached to the material of this world, which is changeable. Our hopes and desires are confined to this changeable world, and, for their fulfilment, we take birth here again and again, and thereby ever remain dissatisfied and in unrest.

The mind is fond of sweet taste. It does not find lasting taste in the changing environments; therefore, it runs from object to object, and continues wandering. If it can get a lasting thing and a sweet thing, it will certainly attach itself to that and cease its wandering. The current is the only lasting thing; all else is changeable. Therefore, when the mind attaches itself to the current, and cultivates it, it receives what it has been longing for, for so long. On getting it, the mind becomes tranquil, the curtain is lifted, and the soul unites with the waves and the ocean.

With love and faith, continue your practice. Bring the scattered mind to the eye focus and vacate the body below the eyes, so that you go nearer the current and come under its full influence, to get full advantage of it. This is the sole aim of human life.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Carry On

An old Cherokee man was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said, "A battle is raging inside me. It is a terrible fight between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The old man looked at the children with a firm stare. "This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too."

They thought about it for a minute, and then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee replied, "The one you feed."

Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows certain people to readily recover after being knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes. Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Even after misfortune, resilient people are blessed with such an outlook that they are able to change course and soldier on. Resilient people feed the wolf that represents all things good.

Resilience requires a light-hearted perspective and, often, a sense of humour. Even the Master has joked about how we need to laugh our way to heaven. In a true story, a woman divorces her husband after twelve years of marriage, leaving behind only her wedding dress. Heartbroken and confused, the man asks his departing wife what he is supposed to do with the gown. Her reply? Whatever he wants. Taking his ex-wife's suggestions to heart, he started a blog, 'My Ex-Wife's Wedding Dress' where he documented over a hundred alternative uses he found for this piece of clothing. The dress saw new life as a kite, Halloween costume, hammock, oven mitt, jump rope and more. The jilted husband's journey to transform his ex-wife's parting gift became so popular that it was turned into a book and eventually became a best-seller. How's that for turning lemons into lemonade?

Like the donkey who fell into a well, we are not to moan the dirt piled on us, but to shake it off and take a step up until we can step out of the well with the help of the dirt pile. As the saying goes: "Tough times don't last, tough people do."

When the wind blows hard on a tree, the roots stretch and grow stronger. Let it be so with us. Let us not be weaklings, yielding to every wind that blows, but strong in spirit to resist.

Amy Carmichael, as quoted in *The Listening Heart: Hearing God in Prayer*

In Ray Bradbury's book *Dandelion Wine*, a boy is taken ill. No one can figure out what is wrong. He is simply overwhelmed by life. No one seems able to help him until Mr Jonas, the junk man, comes along. He whispers to the boy who lies asleep on a cot in the yard. Mr Jonas tells him to rest quietly and listen. He doesn't have to say anything nor open his eyes. He doesn't even have to pretend to listen. Then he says, "But inside there, I know you hear me, and it's

old Jonas, your friend. Your friend.” He then tells the boy that some people bruise easier, tire faster, cry quicker and get sadder younger. Eventually the words stir something in the boy and he recovers.

We cannot bruise so easily. We, too, need to “rest quietly and listen” through our meditation. We need to practise stilling our mind so we can listen to the Shabd, or divine life force, that will empower us.

The saints and mystics remind us that there is nothing in the world which we achieve without struggle, so then why not struggle on the path? They assure us that if we hold onto our faith, he will see us through. We have to be bold enough to struggle, devoted enough to carry on.



We shouldn't have a defeatist attitude if we have fallen, if we have become a victim of human failings. When a child starts running, how many times does he fall? How many times does he get bruises? But he rises again, gets up again, again starts running. We have all passed through that same phase, and now walking or running is no problem for us. So in the same way, we are tempted, and we do fall, we do become a victim of human failings. But that doesn't mean that we have to submit to the mind, that we have to lose the battle. We have to carry on. Ultimately, success is ours if we just struggle, just carry on.

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

Spirit of Contentment

On one of Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh Ji's visits to Indore, he was accompanied by Mr Sam Busa, one of his representatives in South Africa. In the evening, Maharaj Ji asked Sam to visit the satsang area and see how things were arranged by the local satsang centre.

It was about ten o'clock at night when Sam, in the company of a sevadar, reached the satsang grounds. Most of the satsangis had retired for the night. Sam was taken around the entire complex and shown all the tents, shamianas and places where the sangat was sleeping. It was a cold February night, and because of the very large gathering of satsangis, enough covered sleeping space was not available. Many satsangis, both young and old, were therefore sleeping under the trees, covering themselves with only a thick cotton sheet.

In the morning, Maharaj Ji asked Sam if he had made a round of the satsang complex. Sam replied, "Yes, Maharaj Ji, I did. But I felt very sad, for people were lying on the bare ground under the tents and even in the open under the trees. It was very cold, and they had only ordinary cotton sheets or mats with which to cover themselves. I was shocked; their standard of living is very poor."

Maharaj Ji smiled softly and said, "Yes, Sam, their standard of living is very poor, but their standard of contentment is very high."

Such simple statements made by Maharaj Ji had deep and meaningful messages for those who understood them.

Treasure Beyond Measure

What People Think

Oh dear! How should I start this? What are the right words to say? What is the proper way to behave in this situation? Is this an appropriate place to be seen? What is the correct custom for this ceremony? What outfit should I wear to this occasion? I hope I haven't done anything wrong. What will people think of me?

It is funny how these thoughts enter the mind and dissipate so much of our energy. Children, teenagers, adults, even the elderly constantly suffer from this nagging worry: What will people think?

Ordinarily, public opinion is commonly accepted, as it serves a purpose. It maintains a degree of order with regards to social, political and economic issues, and it provides guidance on society's general code of conduct. Unfortunately, sometimes this opinion is so highly regarded it defines our thoughts, words, decisions and actions. This is when worrying about 'what people will think' has a negative effect on us.

There is a funny story about a couple who bought a donkey from the market. This market was a little far from home, and they had to travel through several villages and cross a bridge before they could reach their own village. Proud and very satisfied with their purchase, the couple agreed to walk with their new donkey side by side. However, on the way home, they passed a village where they overheard a young boy comment, "How silly! Why is neither of them on the donkey?" Upon hearing that, the husband let the wife ride on the donkey while he walked beside them. A little while later, an old man saw them and commented, "The husband is the head of family.

How can the wife ride on the donkey while the husband is on foot?” Hearing this, the wife felt embarrassed and quickly got down to let the husband ride instead.

Further along the way, they met an old lady. She commented, “How can the man ride on the donkey and let his wife walk? He is no gentleman.” The husband thus asked the wife to join him on the donkey. No sooner than later, they met another young man. He said, “Poor donkey, how can you hold up the weight of two persons? They are cruel to you.” Now the couple, completely disturbed that they may be wrong again, immediately climbed down.

When they both walked along with the donkey, they were taunted; when the wife rode it she was embarrassed; when the husband rode it he was insulted, and when they both rode it, they were labelled cruel.

Left with no other choice, the couple decided to carry the donkey on their shoulders. On the way home, they crossed a very narrow bridge. The donkey, who was being carried for the first time, became frightened and so he struggled. The couple lost their balance and they all fell into the river.

Poor couple – they tried to please everyone and where did it get them? Following society or public opinion can have an adverse effect on our lives, particularly when we allow those opinions to control us – when we do not make the effort to analyze what is practical and comfortable for us based on our own circumstances. When we strive to conform to what society expects of us, we disregard our ‘inner-self worth’. We lose our ability to live according to our own needs; we lose our inner balance and peace of mind, and we end up harming ourselves, just like the couple in the story.

How does this relate to the teachings of Sant Mat?

The practice of meditation is not easy. It requires discipline, patience and true love for the Master, even when we find it dry and

boring. The Masters encourage us to build for ourselves an atmosphere conducive to meditation. Reading Sant Mat literature, attending satsang and associating with like-minded people is a tremendous help in building this atmosphere. It helps us to develop the ability to think clearly.

But if we allow society to direct our lifestyle, our thoughts, actions and decisions, how can we be motivated to meditate? Trying to fit into a mould to satisfy public opinion can put undue pressure on the mind about money, status and other things that go against our spiritual goal.

Meditation directs the mind's focus inwards towards love for the Master. Society keeps us entangled in worldly matters, whereas meditation is practised alone. Thus, society and public opinion draw us in a completely opposite direction from the Sant Mat way of life.

The key to living in this world, while successfully working towards our spiritual goal, is understanding how to be balanced. Society has its function in the world. Maharaj Sawan Singh explains that for worldly progress our duty consists of performing actions that remain within the bounds of the laws of the society. At the same time, he also states that if we have decided that we really want to free our soul, to experience and see the Master's true form within us, to listen to the uplifting music of God, then we must ensure that our decisions and actions reflect this desire. Therefore, it follows that we must always be in control of our decisions and thoughts, to ensure that we live in accordance with the teachings of the saints. And this is still possible while maintaining a balance with society's rules and regulations; just as long as we do not entertain our fear of public opinion and place it above our commitment to our spiritual vows and our meditation.

The Masters often tell us, "Be in the world, but not of it." The Great Master explains this expression:

The truly detached person knows that one day his own body, his house, his palace and all his worldly property – all attachments – have to be left behind, and nobody knows when this will happen. Therefore, he lives in this world in name only and gives more attention to the purification of his soul, for he does not wish to barter his soul for the sake of this world. This person knows that God is the highest goal, and can even forget the world in remembrance of him.... He realizes that God is the highest goal, and he forgets his world in remembrance of Him.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II

Through meditation, we gradually develop more love for the Lord, and naturally detach from worldly concerns and attachments. Thus, the more we meditate, the more the Lord's love pulls us strongly towards him so that we may enjoy the bliss and peace that come from the practice. Then our cares and worries and love for the world automatically begin to fade out.

Behaviour based on fear of public opinion can be a great obstacle on the path to spiritual realization. It requires great courage to rise above it. We can draw that courage from the practical advice of the Masters:

If it interferes with meditation, discard it unhesitatingly.

Seekers' Guide



Did You Know?

All times are good for meditation, and one should utilize whatever time suits him. But the morning time just before daybreak, and evening time immediately after sunset are particularly beneficial, because these times (dusk and dawn) unite night and day, and spiritual currents are particularly strong and powerful at such a time.

Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I



Everyone is allotted just so many breaths which he may draw during his lifetime, a certain fixed quantity of food, and all other things which he may receive and may do during his life. Thus his whole life is set and arranged on this basis of his past earnings, of his karma. If then he uses up his allotment prematurely by overindulgence, he cuts his life short by just that much.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, as quoted in *With a Great Master in India*



Our love for the Lord requires constant feeding. Like fire, it is apt to die out without fuel. Simran and bhajan is the fuel that sustains this fire. So never miss bhajan for a single day. One day's negligence in bhajan retards the progress of the journey by one month.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

TTSP

Plush carpeting and marble walls – it was an exquisite office. And at its very heart, sitting at an expensive mahogany desk was a troubled CEO. This man had climbed the corporate ladder to almost the highest rung. He had amassed wealth sufficient for several generations, and possessed a vast collection of properties, art, cars and other investments. To strangers, it seemed that he had it all.

And yet, whoever crossed paths with him knew that he was anything but happy. Everytime he felt the slightest happiness, that warm fuzzy feeling would quickly vaporize and be replaced by disappointment and despair.

As Mr CEO sat at his desk, he wondered what surprises his next appointment would bring. He had recently started a contest within his company to find the employee who could come up with the most effective way to be happy. The prize was a substantial bonus. This contest had sparked the interest of many of his staff, but none had been successful in giving him what he was so desperately searching for. Now, he hoped that perhaps his next appointment might bring him the answer, but he was also beginning to worry that he might never find happiness at all.

A knock on the door snapped him out of his deep contemplation. His next appointment was with the company janitor, who walked in timidly. The CEO wondered how this fellow had managed to get an appointment to see him, and did not hide his irritation when he asked the janitor what he wanted. The janitor smiled and presented a box. As the CEO took the box, he could not keep his eyes away from the face of the man across from him, who reflected so much peace and calm. Did this man work for him? His smile was mesmerizing and one could

tell he was happy. The CEO opened the box and picked up a tattered leather wristlet.

“Sir, that wristlet was given to me by my father. I have treasured it and I thought this might bring you peace of mind and happiness as it has brought me,” said the janitor.

The CEO looked at it distastefully and thought to himself that he would never be caught dead wearing such a thing. However, upon looking closer he saw the letters TTSP finely embossed on the inside of the leather band.

“What is the meaning of this?” the CEO questioned the janitor.

The janitor replied, “Sir, wear this wristlet at all times. Whatever shall come your way, before you decide whether it is good or bad, remember the acronym TTSP, which stands for: *This too shall pass*. That way, you will always be at peace.”

Gradually, the deep lines and creases on the CEO’s face smoothed. He realized that he had unlocked a great wealth: that peace and happiness are not achieved by the circumstances or the achievements in one’s life, but by realizing who we are at the deepest level: eternal beings in an impermanent world. He smiled at the janitor and repeated the words, “*This too shall pass*.”

Those words mean that it is not just the bad events that will pass, but also the good ones. They remind us of the impermanence of every situation, which is due to the transitory nature of the world. Once we accept the transience of all things and the inevitability of change, we will become less attached and will gradually learn to separate ourselves from the events around us. We will learn to enjoy the pleasures of the world while they last, without having to worry about the future. This was what the CEO desperately sought. When we are detached, we are on a higher ground, and we view events in our life as would an actor

playing his allotted part in a play, instead of being trapped inside it. As actors, we realize the impermanence of the play and we try to fulfil our roles to the best of our ability but we are not affected by the outcome.

We can be better actors on the stage of life by playing our part well. Whatever destiny has been allotted to us, we should accept it cheerfully as the will of the Lord. And that you can do only if you attend to your meditation. There is no other way. Otherwise we align ourselves with the acting and take that as the reality, forgetting that we are acting.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III

The ‘wristlet’ that has been given to us is none other than our meditation. The words that we repeat in our meditation are like a pickaxe. Each time we repeat them, we are etching the words “this too shall pass” in our minds, creating a deeper groove with time.

In the theatre of life, as the play progresses, there will be ups and downs: problems at work, illness, death of loved ones, bad investments, a disobedient child, a disloyal spouse – the list goes on. Nobody has ever escaped from problems in this play of life, whether he be a CEO or a leader of a great nation. However, we are working towards a goal – to play our part well and leave this stage one day. In the meantime, we know only too well that there is a divine guiding hand with us at all times.



Can't or Won't?

“I can't meditate” is a very familiar phrase to all of us. We say it and hear it so often that we have actually turned it into a serious and pressing problem; so much so that we often stand up in frustration and disillusionment before our Master to tell him of our plight.

The Master logically explains to us that what we require to sit for meditation are two things that we are already quite proficient at. One is to sit still for a substantial length of time, like we do in movie theatres, cars, planes and many other places. And the other ‘skill’ that is required is to silently repeat the holy names. We know we can do this because constant repetition is something that the mind is perpetually engaged in.

So meditation *can* be done, and if there is still a lingering doubt within us, the Master closes the case by lovingly and confidently reassuring us that if we were not capable of giving what it takes to follow this path, he would not have initiated us in the first place.

“But the mind keeps running away” is the complaint that follows. Once again, we are told that no one is looking at our success rate. All that is expected from us is honest and sincere effort. We need to sit still in a quiet corner and try to keep our attention focused while repeating the five names, and if the mind runs out, then without frustration we need to bring it back to the point of focus and try again.

The fact that meditation can sometimes seem dry, dull and pointless is a different issue altogether; due diligence and a determined attitude is what is required. But unlike a child who is honest enough to say, “I don't want to do my homework”, we claim that we can't meditate, when actually the truth is that we *won't* meditate.

But we *can* meditate, if we try our best. Not only can we do our meditation, but we can also unquestionably succeed. Hazrat Inayat Khan summarizes it beautifully:

Often a person says: "I try my best, but I cannot concentrate my mind; I cannot make my mind still." It is true, but it is not true that he tries his best. 'Best' does not end there. 'Best' really brings the purpose to its fulfilment.

The Heart of Sufism: Essential Writings of Hazrat Inayat Khan



Our Master is all-powerful and certainly one day he will release us from the bondage of mind and senses, through his infinite mercy, provided we turn not from his door, and practise simran and bhajan to the best of our ability, according to his orders.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *The Dawn of Light*

The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Master, would you explain what this means from Spiritual Letters: “Longing for Master’s darshan is equal to or better than just doing bhajan [meditation]?”*

A: Longing for darshan is equal to meditation? But how can you have darshan without meditation? By darshan, Baba Ji Maharaj (Baba Jaimal Singh) meant the inner darshan of the Radiant Form of the Master. But longing to be one with the Radiant Form of the Master you can’t obtain without meditation. The purpose of physical darshan is to create longing for that inner darshan, and then meditation naturally takes us to that level of consciousness where we can see the Radiant Form of the Master. Then the purpose of darshan and meditation is achieved.

Die to Live

* * *

Q: *Master, love is very important on the path. Who helps to develop this love? Does the initiate really have to generate this love himself for the Master, or will the Master himself help the disciple to generate love for the Master?*

A: Brother, it is the Lord’s gift. He gives it. We think that we love. Actually, he gives us his love. We think we love the Lord, but it is he who gives us his devotion and his love. He is within us. He creates that love and devotion within us so that we love him. The love comes from that side, but we have to be receptive to that love. He has given us this bliss, this joy. Nothing comes without his grace. To be frank, it is he who gives us love.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

Q: *What happens to the mind when we die?*

A: Mind does not leave us, brother. The mind has piled up so many karmas, and according to our karmas, we are again given birth. The same mind and soul come back into another body. Another cage is ready for the mind and the soul, knotted together; another prison is ready for the unliberated soul and mind. You leave one body; another body is ready for you. Here your relatives are weeping because you have left them. In another place in this world, your new relatives are all joyful and happy and dancing because you have come. That is the only difference. Nothing else happens. We leave one house, we cut off our relationship with them and we get another set of relatives. We forget the previous ones and we are in love with the new ones. That is all. That is what the mind does to us.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

* * *

Q: *Why can we not eat an infertile egg? We are not killing.*

A: I know that infertile eggs have no life, and from that standpoint you can justify it. But when you start with that, you start with the other also. You get the taste of that and there will be no end to it. If you just start innocently with a kiss, you do not know where you will end; so then you start justifying things. It is better to be strict, and when we are strict about a certain thing, there is no question of compromising. We remain strict, but if we become just a little loose in this way or that way, we do not know where it will lead. Besides, the eating of even an infertile egg hardens the mind by exciting animal instincts, which are antagonistic to spiritual progress.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II



Half a Century Gone By

The teachings of the saints explain that there is no relationship between spirituality and a person's physical age. Spirituality, they say, is universal and ageless – it is for everyone. They tell us that our core, our real self, is the soul, which is in fact timeless and eternal. It is for this reason that no importance is placed on celebrating birthdays.

Yet, passing a milestone as significant as half a century makes a person reflect on the fifty years that have gone by. One realizes how a spiritual life of seva and meditation helps us cope with the ups and downs of daily karma and one comes to the undeniable conclusion that spirituality is the only constant and enduring aspect of human life.

Equally indisputable is the fact that effort is critical. Whether it is in one's spiritual practice or in the management of worldly life, there is simply no substitute for hard work. In every sphere of life, effort is that compelling magnet that attracts the grace of God.

Anyone who wants to succeed at any endeavour simply must apply himself wholeheartedly to the desired task and see it through to completion. It requires a substantial level of dedication and sacrifice but this is the price of success.

We see it in our own lives, in our businesses or even in a hobby that we take up seriously. Mediocre commitment and half-hearted effort yields only mediocre results.

This precious human form is meant for the most important purpose of God-realization. But to become worthy of the grace that will empower us to attain this lofty goal, we need to submit our effort.

It is the business and duty of every disciple to make his mind motionless and reach the eye centre. The duty of the Master is

to help and guide on the path. To control the mind and senses and open the tenth (inner) door depends on the disciple's efforts. The primary factor in this success is the effort of the disciple.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, the Great Master, explicitly explains that we have to control our mind, reach the eye centre and open the tenth door. And we can achieve this only when we assiduously sit down for meditation and raise our consciousness every single day for two and a half hours without fail. This is undoubtedly hard work, but we can simplify or complicate the process. The choice is ours. The Master has put a sword in our hands – the sword of simran. We can wield it against procrastination and lack of focus by persistence. If we can adapt and manage our lifestyle according to the teachings, then meditation will be our priority and everything else will fall into place.

Although a seed has been planted, no one can force the growth of a tree. Our job is to add fertilizer, water it, keep it protected from pests and inclement weather and leave the rest to Mother Nature. That is the extent of our effort. This is the same attitude the mystics recommend we should have towards our meditation, so that the Master's work will run smoothly and the tree of spirituality can continue to grow and yield fruit in our lives.

Who knows how much time we have left? We have seen our family and friends die suddenly or after having suffered through a long and painful illness. They may even have been victims of a natural disaster or accident. The fact is we have no idea when we will die. The onus is on us to be prepared.



Something to Think About

Unless we purge our mind of emotions and passions, we cannot acquire equanimity; without equanimity concentration is not possible and if concentration is not possible, we cannot sit in meditation – which is the most important dharma with all seekers of spirituality. If we shout at someone in anger, if we hurt someone in pride, if we cheat someone in avarice, it will disturb our peace of mind. We will not be able to concentrate and sit in meditation. Therefore, our aim should be: purity of thought, purity of word and purity of action.

Thoughts on Indian Mysticism



This world is perishable and so are all worldly things. The wise man is he who realizes the transitory and illusory nature of this world and all things pertaining to it, and makes the best use of this body by worshipping the Supreme Being, through simran and bhajan. He thus derives benefit from all that the Creator, through his grace, has placed in the body, and takes that priceless jewel, the essence of all – the surat (the soul) – to its real abode.

Soami Ji Maharaj, Sar Bachan Prose



Man is known as the top of the creation. He has created us in his own image – we can become his image from this step. He is pure, the universal supreme Father. From here we also can make our way up and become the universal Father, become his image, become him, merge back into him.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

A Disciple's Prayer

*O mind, let me not cherish any remembrance
that would take me away from the Lord's divine feet.
May my tongue repeat only the Lord's Nam
and my ears hear only the divine melody of Nam.
Let me not bear ill will towards anyone;
it benefits no one and causes misery.
Let my mind always be calm, says Tuka;
through forgiveness and peace one gains inner strength.
Just as a fish writhes in agony when out of water,
so my soul suffers in agony without you.
Just as a person's mind becomes agitated
when he cannot find his buried treasure
even after a thorough search,
and a child becomes distraught
when separated from his mother,
O Lord, please know that this separation from you
is causing the same anguish in my heart.
In how many ways can I tell you of my pain?
Refuge at your feet is the only remedy for my affliction.
Gripping my heart is a gnawing fear
that you may have forgotten me.
Says Tuka: you know my condition, O Lord!
Shower your mercy on me now.
Saints, you are ever gracious and merciful –
pray, grant me one boon:
remind the Lord about me, plead for me
and tell him about my deplorable condition.*

Saint Tukaram, as quoted in *Voice of the Heart*

Fruit of Obedience

One day, a spiritual elder and his disciple were walking through the desert. As they walked, the elder picked up a stick that was lying on the ground. He walked a few paces and then thrust the stick into the ground. Turning to his disciple, he told him to water the stick every morning and report to him if anything happened.

Given the location where the stick was planted, the disciple had to travel for many hours in the hot sun to fulfil this task. But he followed this routine for two years, until one day he saw the stick sprouting a small green leaf.

After another two years of following the same routine, he finally saw fruit growing.

So he went to the elder and invited him to come and look at how the sapling had grown up. The elder walked to the tree and saw the fruit. Smiling, he began to collect the fruit of the tree into a basket. The elder then went to the church of the community and offered the basket of fruit to the monks. The monks asked the elder, “What kind of fruit is this?” To which the elder replied, “This is the fruit of obedience.”



The teacher whom you have met by the power of your past actions, and whose kindness you have received, is the most important of all... Obey him in all things and disregard all hardships, heat, cold, hunger, thirst and so on. Pray to him with faith and devotion. Ask his advice on whatever you may be doing. Whatever he tells you, put it into practice, relying on him totally.

Patrul Rinpoche, as quoted in *Buddhism, Path to Nirvana*



The Grand Design

A Question of Perspective

If you have ever looked through a keyhole, you have probably not been able to focus on more than one subject or person at a time. The reason is simple: our scope is limited by our perspective of depth and field of vision. Similarly, in life we are guided into believing we are the centre of our little universe with ‘me’, ‘my’, ‘myself’ and ‘I’ at the centre.

From the moment we are born, the pampering, the fuss, and the attention rarely seem to wane, so it certainly does seem that everything revolves around us and our little world.

“You are special,” we are told as we grow up, “you can achieve whatever goals you set for yourself,” and the list goes on. We are at the epicentre of it all. But zoom out from that scenario for a minute. Zoom out of your life, your home, your city; out of your job and the country you live in, the planet Earth, the whole wide universe, zoom out to the realm of He who controls not only your life but the zillions of other precious souls under his care. And then, ask yourself: how important am I in the grand scheme of things?

Shakespeare, in one of his plays, says:

*All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts ...*

Maharaj Charan Singh frequently used a similar analogy to express how we ultimately are under the auspices of the one who holds the strings, and we simply move, dance and shake according to his tune, according to his direction.

If we had a realistic grasp of the law of karma, it would dawn on us what little control, if any, we have over our life. Yet we wonder how it is possible that as humans, at the very top of the Lord's creation, we exercise so little dominion over how our lives evolve.

My rules, not yours

Yes we have heard it before: "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail."

All good advice coming from management gurus and in vogue life coaches. And yet surprisingly, this happens to be one of the greatest paradoxes ever! How can we plan anything if ultimately nothing is under our control? We can go through the motions of planning, making lists, pretending we are actively seeking our goals, but until we accept the fact that it all goes according to *his* plan, we will continue to live in frustration time and again. There will be phases when we are happy, when things go our way, but there will be other circumstances when life backfires and things don't go our way, when we look up and wonder what went wrong. Where did I mess up? How did I fail? But the fact is, things did not go wrong, our planning was not at fault.

We simply have not mastered the art of acceptance.

True, this path of Sant Mat is ultimately about God-realization and achieving union with the divine. But for most of us struggling souls, the biggest hurdle in attaining this lofty end is being able to achieve the level of acceptance that makes this objective possible in the first place. Without understanding this and making it part and parcel of our daily reality, we will never reach our ultimate goal.

We have heard it before: It is not the destination, but the journey. There is no gratification in arriving on the top of a mountain in a helicopter. But when you start at the bottom and climb your way up, then the journey itself becomes meaningful.

You might be hearing, but are you really listening?

The Master takes us through this journey with him. If we had the capacity to really listen, to truly grasp his words, we would actually hear him say: “Sweet child of mine, you need to go through this obstacle and challenge now, in order to consolidate your faith and strengthen your resolve.”

Every step of the way he tells us this. At first, we may only be able to take this in when we are in his physical presence. But the message continues, even when we are physically distant from him. Are we listening?

Master endeavours to wean us from our attachments to concepts of God and have us work on building our own direct experience with God. Ultimately, it is a question of perspective. When we stop our endless discussion and the egocentric analysis of the ongoing drama of our lives and focus on the grand scheme of things, maybe then we can start seeing his grand design. Mirdad said to one of his followers:

You have too many ears; therefore you cannot hear. Had you but one that heard and understood, you would require no proof. Therefore I say to you that if you pray for anything at all, pray first and last for understanding.

The Book of Mirdad



The Story of the Soul

One day the Lord asked to see his favourite child. He told him that the time had come for the child to witness the world below in its fullness, and to experience the power of supreme grace. The child was curious for he had known nothing besides the light and love that filled his Father's home. As he imagined travelling the journey with his Father, the child became excited. Filled with anticipation, he asked, "When do we leave?"

The Father smiled, "My child, you will need to make this journey without me; only then will you understand the Truth."

Everything changed that instant for the child. What if he gets lost? When will he return? Who would look after him? With tears, he begged the Father not to send him away for he could not imagine a world without him.

The Father took him in his arms and lovingly explained, "Fear not. Nothing can ever separate us. Even if you forget me, I will not forget you. This journey is for your own spiritual progress and will be filled with many valuable lessons. I promise that my guiding hand will always be upon you throughout the journey. And when the time is right, I will send you a guide who will lead you back home to me; then, your happiness will have no bounds. The ultimate gift will be awaiting you."

The obedient child looked into his Father's eyes and promised, "I will remember you with every step." And with those words, the child was born into the world.

This may be just one of many imaginary stories illustrating our descent into this creation. It reflects the underlying message of all the

saints: that we were once residents of the eternal home in Sat Purush, and were sent down into this creation countless lifetimes ago. It serves to remind us of our relationship with the Lord and our separation from him.

But the true story of our soul is much more complex. Being born in this creation, rather than using the mind as an instrument of cognition, we became a slave of the mind and senses. Instead of learning the Truth – our life's purpose – we became absorbed in the world, imprisoned by our desires and attachments. Life after life, with every action we accumulated a heavy load of karmas that bound us to this material world.

Man himself entwines the rope of karmas, which become a noose around his own neck.

Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name

Without doubt, the most regrettable and tragic part of our journey in this creation was forgetting the eternal promise to our Father: that we would remember him at every stage of our journey.

When you were in the hellfire of the womb, you promised to remember the Lord and recite his Name day and night.... You promised to attach all your attention to his feet and fix your mind on his Name. Whether you lived or died, not for a moment would you forget him.... But you forgot the promise and became a prisoner of illusion.

Kabir, The Great Mystic

Mystics explain to us that the soul feels captive in this mortal body. It is purely for this reason that mankind has never felt truly at home in this world and tries restlessly to search for happiness and meaning in material objects and relationships. Although the yearning to seek the Lord is inherent in every soul, the heavy weight of the mind holds it back by wrapping itself around the sensual pleasures of the world.

I know, dear soul, that you have been in distress ever since you forgot the Shabd and made friends with the mind.... How could you, a conscious entity, get so embroiled in a world that is inert and is but an illusion? This time therefore you should remember God and go home.... The Master will help you find the jewel of Nam within yourself and retrace your way through the inner skies. Just do this now, in this very life, and the Master will take care of the rest.

Soami Ji Maharaj, *Sar Bachan Poetry*

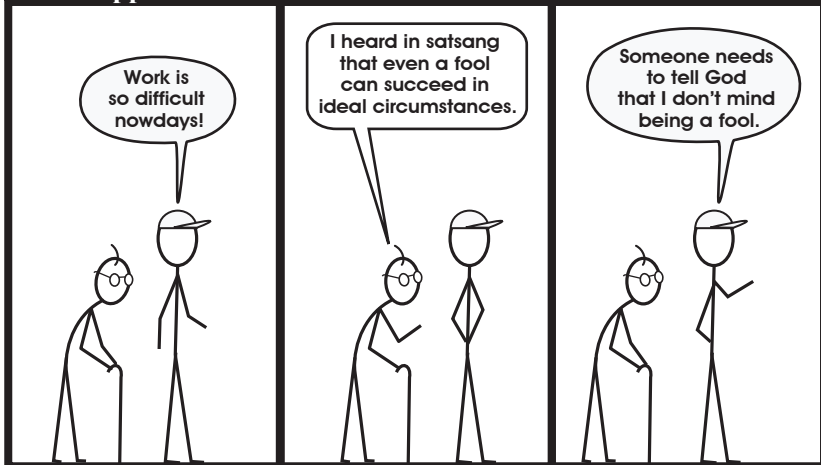
The Lord has fulfilled his promise. It is out of the Lord's boundless love for us that he has put us in touch with his guide, the living Master to take us back to our true home. The Master has travelled the inner path and he is very familiar with every intricate detail of the path. Saints and mystics of all ages have described the Master as the way to the Lord. Through the living Master, our love and longing for the Lord is awakened and we are reminded of our true purpose in life. By connecting us to the audible life stream, he teaches us how to draw our attention to the point from where the creative power emanates. Every time we taste the sweet nectar of the divine melody, the longing to return to our true home increases.

And so the story of our soul continues If we listen to our guide and follow his teachings earnestly, not only will the journey be shorter, but we will be safe and secure in this turbulent ocean of existence. Our duty is to go forward unwaveringly and untiringly, so that we can invoke the gift of grace from the One who calls us unceasingly to return home. With practice, perseverance, faith, and above all, with the Master's loving grace, this journey, which is a blessed opportunity, will be completed one day.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®

Ideal Appeal



The Repartee of the Wise

A disciple once asked the Great Master, “Is long life always a good thing?” The Great Master replied, “No, a long life is useless unless devoted to Shabd and spent in the service of Sat Purush under the direction of the Satguru.”

With a Great Master in India



During Maharaj Charan Singh’s trip to Minneapolis, before the Master faced the television cameras for his brief explanation of Sant Mat philosophy, he was told by the interviewer how the tense and agitated atmosphere that normally prevailed in the studios had been almost dramatically transformed by his presence into one of peace and tranquility, and was asked the reason for this extraordinary change. With his characteristic smile, he replied simply, “If one’s mind is at peace, it also radiates peace.”

Heaven on Earth



A mystic was once asked, “What is to be done to achieve awareness?” He replied, “Consider your life’s duration as no more than the breath you are drawing in at present.”

Pay Heed to the Instructions

We might sometimes think to ourselves: *I am a struggling soul. I am not perfect. I am not always obedient. I do not always do what is right. But I do feel guilty about it. I do feel embarrassed and I do want to turn things around.*

We are all struggling souls on this path and our struggles are evident when we are unable to sit or are not regular in our meditation; they are evident when sleep and laziness, or other activities take a higher priority than our desire to do our simran. We cannot measure our level of progress on this spiritual path because that is beyond our capacity. So we become aware of our struggles when we come to satsang and we are reminded of our true purpose; or when we see the glowing faces and radiant smiles of others whom we assume do not have any difficulties.

Perhaps we are struggling because we have not been able to keep a balance between our duty to the Lord, and our worldly duties. Perhaps we have allowed family responsibilities, personal relationships, illness, business and social activities to take priority over our meditation. At the same time, the core of our being wants nothing more than to be with the Lord.

The result is a guilty conscience – an inner disturbance, which is the cry of the soul yearning to return to the Lord. Deep down, this guilt rips us in two. On one hand, we want to obey the teachings and be one with the Lord, but on the other, we enjoy living life to the fullest. On one hand, we want to do our meditation, but on the other, the appeal and attraction of worldly activities distracts us. With this duality

tearing us apart, how do we expect to meet our beloved Lord? Guru Nanak in the book *Jap Ji, A Perspective*, explains:

*Gems, diamonds and pearls are found within the self
only if one heeds the Guru's sole instruction.*

*The Guru has only one teaching. That teaching is love of
the One and meditation on his Name. Within a person who
moulds his life according to this teaching and fully understands
it, treasures of priceless gems such as the Lord's Name or Shabd
appear. One who does not pay heed to this teaching and does
not mould his life according to it, even after listening to the
words of the Guru, remains devoid of the most precious treasure
of Nam, the Lord's Name.*

A story is written in the *Jap Ji* that provides us with a very fitting example. A king once wished to own a sculpture of a perfect man. So, the king summoned his top sculptor, and, with a profound artistic talent combined with an understanding of human nature, the sculptor created two images of man, identically perfect on the outside. When the king asked the price, the sculptor said that the first piece was priced at one rupee and the second, at one hundred thousand rupees. The king passed both the pieces to his minister and asked him to distinguish one from the other. The minister examined them thoroughly, and through some crafty technique, he found that the first sculpture had a hole going from one ear directly to the other, while the second sculpture had a hole in each ear going in and upwards to the centre of the head of the statue.

The first sculpture, worth only one rupee, portrayed man in the light of an old saying – “In one ear and out the other” – which suggests

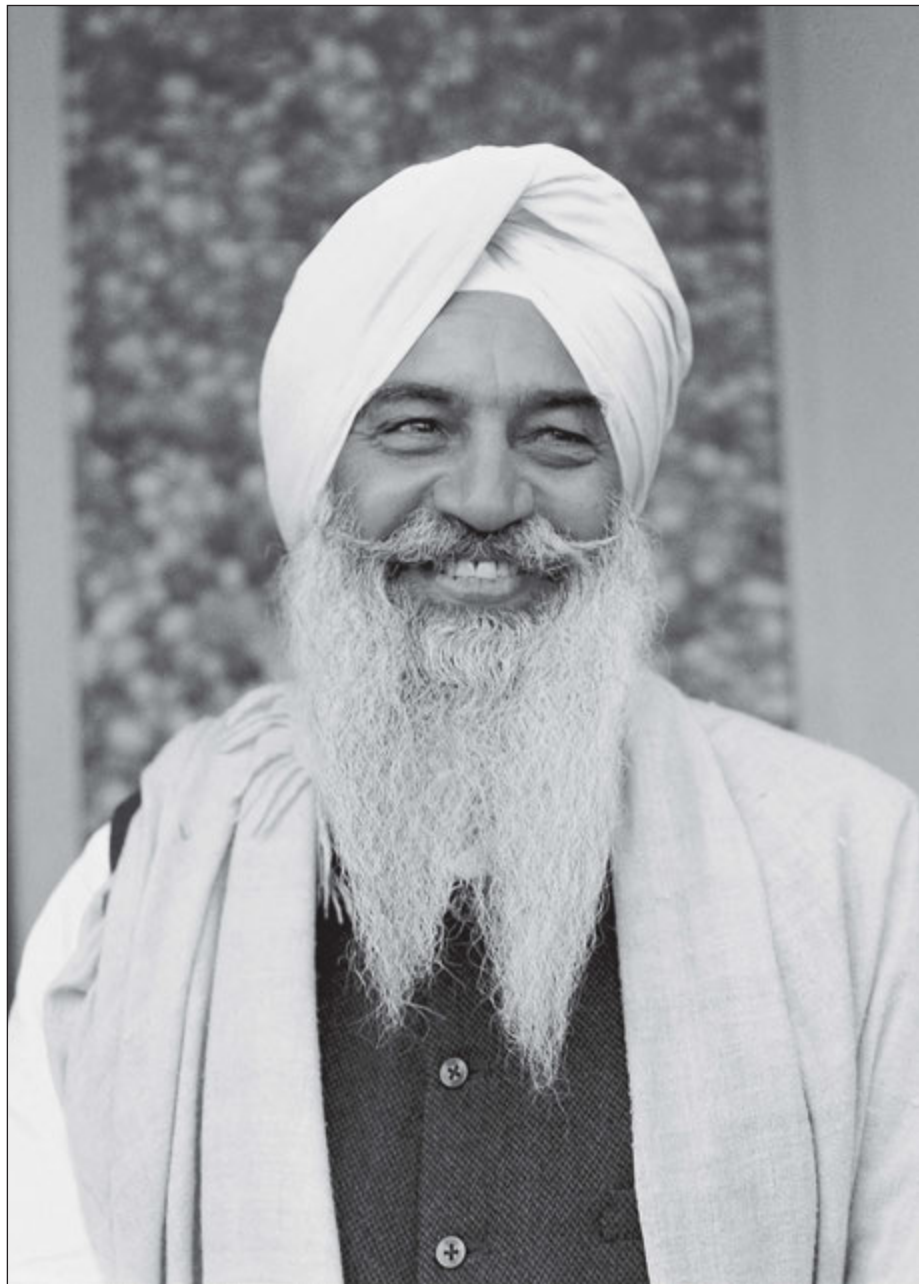
that something is heard but not attended to, or that is immediately forgotten. If we interpret that ‘something’ to be the teachings of the Master, then naturally a man who takes the teachings in one ear and out the other, would be worthless.

It is no wonder that the king agreed to pay the greater amount for the second sculpture, which had one hole in each ear going in and upwards to the centre of the head. This sculpture of the perfect man represents what it means to truly ‘hear’ and absorb the teachings of the Master, and this translates into the dedicated practice of meditation – focused simran at the third eye.

Thus, if we have a guilty conscience because we are not able to keep a balance between doing our meditation and fulfilling our worldly duties or chasing after worldly pleasures, then we are struggling on the path. Our guilt is the cry from our soul who is desperate to return to the Lord. Knowing the value in the Guru’s teachings, we should not let them slip in one ear and out the other, but rather hear with both ears wide open, and register them in our mind, as well as in our hearts. Love the Lord and meditate on his Name.

We should, therefore, mould our life according to the teachings of the Master and sincerely devote time to our meditation. Only by acting on his advice are we transformed, and this transformation allows us to connect to the treasure house of the Shabd. One day, when the inner treasures are revealed and we are able to hear the Shabd, we will be glad we paid attention.





Maharaj Charan Singh

Heart to Heart

An initiate one evening expressed a keen desire to learn Punjabi, the language in which Maharaj Ji gives satsangs in India. The Master simply shook his head and said, “It is not necessary.” Looking gently at his disciple, he added, “The language of love needs no words.”

Heaven on Earth



Information on Article Submissions

If you wish to submit an article for publication in *Spiritual Link*, you may submit a printed typed copy of your article, sent by post to one of the following addresses.

Science of the Soul Study Center
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
4115 Gillespie St.
Fayetteville, NC, 28306-9053, USA

Science of the Soul Study Centre
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
1 Mortimer Road
Wynberg, Cape Town 7800, South Africa

Science of the Soul Study Centre
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
Haynes Park, Church End, Haynes
Bedford MK45 3BL, United Kingdom

Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
27th Floor, Tower B
Billion Centre, 1 Wang Kwong Road
Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong

Articles for *Spiritual Link* should focus on the Sant Mat teachings. Articles should not be based on, or discuss, the personality of the master or of the writer. Articles drawing on the universal spiritual teachings of other mystics can also be considered. Articles must be your own original work. Please understand that your article will be edited according to the requirements of the magazine. Articles must be between 500 and 1,500 words. Only if your article is accepted will you be contacted. When submitting your article, please include your name, age, postal address, and email address.



The Complete Julian of Norwich

BY JULIAN OF NORWICH

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY FATHER JOHN JULIAN, OSJ

PUBLISHER: BREWSTER, MA: PARACLETE PRESS, 2009.

ISBN: 978-1-55725-639-5

Julian of Norwich was a fourteenth-century Christian mystic in Norwich, England. At the age of thirty, she experienced a series of mystical revelations which conveyed a profound message of God's boundless love for his creation. Soon after this happened, she recorded a description of these revelations, or 'showings' as she called them. Some twenty years later, she wrote a longer manuscript adding reflections on the meaning of what she had perceived. It is this longer version, often known as the "Revelations", that is presented in *The Complete Julian of Norwich*. While there are many translations and editions of the Revelations, Father John Julian's extensive introduction and copious notes makes this edition particularly accessible. This edition places Julian of Norwich's text on the right-hand pages with Father John's notes facing them on the left.

The first part of the introduction discusses major themes that recur throughout the text. Those include Julian of Norwich's understanding that God is all love and all goodness, there is no wrath in God, God loves what he has made, and everything that happens is done by him. As she put it, "There is no other doer." As Father John sees it, if there is one overriding theme throughout Julian's writings, it is her optimism. Perhaps the most well-known quote from the Revelations is, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Other sections of the introduction fill in the historical context. Father John pieces together fragmentary evidence to sketch her life. He posits that it was around the age of fifty, after the death of her husband and when her three children were grown, that she became an anchorite – that is, a recluse dedicating her life to prayer, and offering counsel to those who sought it. Father John gives detailed background on the role an anchorite

in medieval England, as well as a description of Julian's cell based on archeological evidence.

Julian explains that the revelations came to her in three ways: by vision, by "word formed in my understanding", and by spiritual insight. Many of the visions are of Christ and his crucifixion. Some are of the Virgin Mary. Sometimes the reader may have a hard time picturing the vision she describes, but it little matters, since it is in her reflections on the meaning of what she has seen that her profound spiritual wisdom comes through. For example, she had a vision of a very small object, "about the size of a hazelnut", explaining that it represented "all that is made" – the entire creation. In her vision she understood that this small object was extremely vulnerable, utterly dependent on grace. "I marveled how it could continue, because it seemed to me it could suddenly have sunk into nothingness because of its littleness." And I was answered in my understanding: "It continueth and always shall, because God loveth it; and in this way everything hath its being by the love of God." In this image of the creation, she discerned the reality of God:

But what did I observe in that? Truly the Maker, the Lover, and the Keeper, for until I am in essence one-ed to him, I can never have full rest nor true joy (that is to say, until I am made so fast to him that there is absolutely nothing that is created separating my God from myself).

She continues with advice that would be helpful to any spiritual seeker:

It is necessary for us to have awareness of the littleness of created things and to set at naught everything that is created, in order to love and have God who is uncreated. For this is the reason why we are not fully at ease in heart and soul: because here we seek rest in these things that are so little, in which there is no rest, and we recognize not our God who is all powerful, all wise, all good, for he is the true rest. God wishes to be known, and he delights that we remain in him, because all that is less than he is not enough for us. And this is the reason why no soul is at rest until it is emptied of everything that is

created. When the soul is willingly emptied for love in order to have him who is all, then it is able to receive spiritual rest.

Julian of Norwich describes the revelations she experienced as “a lesson in love”. From them she learned that “our soul is so especially beloved by him that is Highest”. She came to see that God “comes down to us to the lowest part of our need. For he does not despise what he has created, and he does not disdain to serve us ... because of the love of our soul which he has made in his own likeness.” As she sees it, we humans are “clad in the goodness of God and enclosed – yes, and even more intimately.” She concludes, “Therefore we can, with his grace and his help, remain in spiritual contemplation, with everlasting wonder at this high, surpassing, inestimable love which Almighty God has for us of his goodness.”

Her visions show her clearly that God is in everyone and everything, and that he does all that is done. But this brings up the troubling question of sin.

I gazed with deliberation, seeing and knowing in that vision that he does all that is done. I marveled at that sight with a gentle trepidation, and thought: What is sin? (For I saw truly that God does everything no matter how little.) Wherefore, it is necessary for me to concede that everything that is done, it is well done, for God does all ... and I was certain he does no sin.

The question of sin challenged Julian, because what she understood through the revelations seemed to contradict the teachings of the Church. Ultimately, however, she concluded that “sin has no substance”, no reality. People create pain for themselves by their actions. For a sincere seeker, she says, there is no greater “Hell” than the pain they feel because of their own sins. But she is sure that God does not blame the sinner, nor does he hate the sinner. “For God is all that is good, as I see it, and God has created all that is created, and God loves all that he has created.”

Julian’s advice about prayer seems to stem from profound realizations. In one of the revelations, God says, “I am the ground of thy praying.” In other words, when we turn our attention to him, it is God himself, not

we, who has initiated that turning. “For I am certain,” she writes, “that no man asks mercy and grace with a true intention, unless that mercy and that grace have first been given to him.”

The purpose of prayer is not to ask for anything, but to align our will with the will of the Lord. “Prayer ones the soul to God, for though the soul is ever like God in nature and in essence, it is often unlike God in its external state by sin on man’s part. Then is prayer a witness that the soul wills as God wills, and it comforts the conscience and inclines man to grace.”

Most glad and happy is our Lord about our prayer, and he watches for it and he wishes to enjoy it, because with his grace it makes us like himself in character as we are in nature. And this is his blessed will, for he says this: “Pray inwardly even though it seems to give thee no pleasure, for it is beneficial enough though thou perceivest it not. Pray inwardly, though thou sensest nothing, though thou seest nothing, yea, though thou thinkest thou canst achieve nothing, for in dryness and barrenness, in sickness and in feebleness, then is thy prayer completely pleasing to me, though it seems to give thee but little pleasure. And thus all thy living is prayer in my eyes.”

Ultimately, prayer leads to a state where “all our purpose with all our might is fixed wholly upon the contemplation of him. This is an exalted imperceptible prayer.”

Julian assures us that such prayer pleases the Lord: “Also our Lord God showed that it is full great pleasure to him that an innocent soul come to him nakedly and plainly and simply. For this is the natural yearning of the soul, thanks to the touching of the Holy Spirit.”

By nature do we yearn, and by grace do we trust. And in these two actions, our Lord watches us constantly.... Therefore, it is proper for us to give our best effort thereto, and when we have done it, then shall we still think that it is nothing – and truly it is nothing. But let us do what we can, and humbly ask mercy and grace, and all that we fall short we shall find in him.

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

