

Spiritual Link



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A Simple Path

When you think about the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta – helping orphans, nursing the sick and the dying, giving hope to the poorest of the poor – you can't help but wonder: Where did she find the strength to go on with this challenging work, decade after decade? Many people who met her said she radiated a sense of peace. The love in and all around her was tangible. What was the inexhaustible well from which she drew that peace, that love?

Once, when she was asked, she said she followed a “simple path.” The principles of that simple path are:

The fruit of silence is prayer.

The fruit of prayer is faith.

The fruit of faith is love.

The fruit of love is service.

The fruit of service is peace.

How might this relate to our path of Surat Shabd Yoga, the path that connects our consciousness with the Shabd or Nam, the power that sustains all life?

The fruit of silence is prayer

For Mother Teresa prayer did not mean asking for things or saying some formula of words. By prayer she meant turning the attention to the Divine within, being still within, being aware of and attentive to the presence of the Divine. It was what the French mystic and

philosopher Simone Weil called “the waiting or attentive and faithful immobility that lasts indefinitely and cannot be shaken.”

We would call it meditation. In meditation, we say we are knocking on the Lord’s door, but perhaps it is just the opposite. In the Bible we read: “I stand at the door and knock: If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me.”

Who is this “I” who knocks and calls out to us? It is the Lord. Can we hear him knocking, asking to be let in? Can we hear his voice? As Simone Weil says, “It is for us to remain motionless . . . without averting our eyes, listening relentlessly, and waiting, we know not for what.”

So listening is the essence of prayer. Listening is the essence of meditation – a whole-hearted, single-focused listening. As the twelfth-century Sufi, Hakim Sanai says:

*Bring all of yourself to his door:
bring only a part,
and you’ve brought nothing at all.*

What does it mean that the fruit of silence is prayer? We are speaking here of an inward silence. A little outward silence is nice, of course. It can be helpful to have fewer things pulling at our attention all the time. But what we really need is some inward silence. We need a quiet mind, a peaceful mind to bring to meditation, if we are to listen.

The Master has said that our peace of mind is very important and that we should never sacrifice our peace of mind for anything of this world. Nothing is worth sacrificing that inward peace of mind! Of course, we do sacrifice it all the time. We may flare up in anger

over some trivial thing. We may let worries and fears or thwarted desires and ambitions take over all our mental space. When we sacrifice our peace of mind, we don't have that silence, that stillness and calmness to bring into meditation.

The Masters have given us a method to quiet down the mind, to bring it into stillness. That method is simran. Repeating the five holy names whenever possible throughout the day, is the only way we can prepare the mind to turn, in silence and stillness, to listen for the Lord's voice. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

If you leave your mind alone, it will have other, worldly thoughts. It won't be still. It will always think something or other.... So why let it go astray, why not pull it back? We are helping it not to run very astray and wild. The more it runs astray and wild, the more difficult it becomes to pull it back. That is why, whenever we get time or we are mentally free, we do simran.

If we keep simran in our mind, we just might begin to find the inner silence.

The fruit of prayer is faith

If we attend to meditation, the result is faith. This may sound backwards from the way we often think about faith. Don't we need faith first to follow this path? The Masters point out that it is good to ask questions and take time to satisfy our intellect in order to commit ourselves to the practice of life-long meditation. Hazur also says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

Faith actually is built by meditation, faith comes by meditation, faith comes by experience. Otherwise the mind always remains shaky.

Meditation will be able to create that faith. It generates faith, it creates faith, it strengthens faith. Faith grows by meditation.

When we know something through our own personal experience, then we have a level of certainty, or faith, that really can't be shaken.

The fruit of faith is love

This word faith has several aspects. In one sense it is about belief, a belief that deepens into firm conviction. But in another sense, there is the kind of faith you have in a good friend. Through experience and time, you may come to know that your friend really is always there for you, is your well-wisher, cares about you – and you develop faith or confidence in that friendship.

Hazur says simply attending to meditation faithfully every day brings this kind of confidence, which he says is impossible to attain in any other way. In *Light on Sant Mat* he says:

The more you pay attention to bhajan and simran, and especially to the simran which is the repetition of the five holy names – with attention at the eye centre – the more will the feeling of love and confidence spring in your heart; and you will feel that you are not alone.

We may not be seeing lights or soaring to great spiritual heights, but we develop the confidence that our friend is there for us. As Great Master says in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV: “The Lord is never unmindful of us even for a moment. He is always looking after us. We have never been separated from him. He is always with us and always pervades our entire being.” Can there be a truer or more

faithful friend? The faith we develop in such a friendship can't help but bear the fruit of love. As Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, "That is how our love starts growing. The more time we give to meditation, the more our love grows. And it grows until we become one with the Lord."

The fruit of love is service

Mother Teresa says in the book *A Simple Path*, "When you know how much God is in love with you, then you can only live your life radiating that love." She explains:

God is everywhere and in everything and without him we cannot exist.... There are so many religions and each one has its different ways of following God. I follow Christ.... Because of this I am never afraid. I am doing my work with Jesus, I am doing it for Jesus, I am doing it to Jesus. And therefore the results are His, not mine.

Because, for Mother Teresa, Jesus Christ was the face of the Divine, she saw Jesus in each person she met, each person she served. She said, "We serve Jesus in the poor, we nurse Him, feed Him, clothe Him, and visit Him." She saw Jesus Christ in every person she met.

Hazur says something similar in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III: "When you see the Father within yourself, then wherever you look in this world, you will see the Father. Then, when you meet people, you do not see the people but the Creator who is in them." So when we serve others, we are in fact serving God through them.

Mother Teresa reminds us, "We are all God's children so it is important to share His gifts." Great Master echoes the same sentiment: "We are all children of the one Supreme Father.

Everybody has a claim on what he [God] is bestowing. Share the gifts with the poor, the orphaned and the helpless. We are all partners.” This, he says, is the very meaning of being human. “Humanity simply means love for the Lord and his creation. Its other name is sympathy or compassion, fellow-feeling, or heart-felt attraction.” Therefore, Hazur counsels in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

If we can do anything to help anybody, we should. That is our duty – we are meant to help each other. Humans are meant to help humans.... We should be a source of strength to each other.... Soami Ji says that your heart should be very, very soft to other people and you should be very compassionate, very kind.

Seva means selfless service, and it is a wonderful opportunity whenever we get the chance to serve. However, Mother Teresa also advises us in *A Simple Path*: “It is not how much you do but how much love you put into the doing and sharing with others that is important.” Perhaps one of her most famous sayings is, “Do ordinary things with extraordinary love.”

The fruit of service is peace

Service in the context of our path takes many forms: seva of the body, like the good works that Mother Teresa performed; seva of wealth, seva of the mind, and seva of the soul. The Master tells us that the highest form of seva is seva of the soul, doing our meditation to release the soul and let it fly home to the Lord.

Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “All these sevas are done to achieve one seva, which is also the biggest seva – to bring our consciousness in touch with the Shabd by means of our meditation.” This seva leads to the peace that passeth all understanding.

We may recall that the Masters have said that our peace of mind is very important. It is so important that we should not sacrifice our peace of mind for anything in this world. That peace gives us a mind that can be calm and be quiet, a mind that can even be silent and turn within.

Mother Teresa described her path as a simple path. We might think of the steps along that simple path as a circle. If the fruit of service (seva) is inner peace, that peace gives us the silence that bears fruit in being able to listen to the voice of God (bhajan). Then the fruit of bhajan brings us faith, which bears fruit in love, which takes form in service, which gives us peace, and in that inner peace, stillness and silence, we naturally turn to meditation. Listening to the Shabd attentively, receptively, we come to know deep communion with the Divine within, and faith follows, deepening our love, leading to service that is more humble, more selfless – and that brings peace.



Our health, our prosperity and so forth are all decreed beforehand, and the proper thing for a satsangi is not to worry about them, but with faith and love in the Master to do his or her duty and all that one can possibly do, without worrying about results. As you grow in spiritual meditation and develop good contact with Shabd, the confidence in the inner Master and Shabd will grow and you will realize that you are in very safe hands.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

The True Form of the Master

Listen, dear soul, and let me explain:

*Unique and wondrous is my real form,
which no one can perceive until I lend a hand.*

*Practise meditation and subdue your mind
by holding your sense impulses in check.*

*Raise your soul – rise up through the sky of Trikuti
and go beyond the top of Surn.*

Sar Bachan Poetry

Soami Ji makes this spiritual plea to practise meditation so that we may perceive the real form of the Master. He explains, in the same poem, that this realization happens only when the Master “lends a hand.” And he assures us he will show his true form, “Have patience, keep the company of the saints and I shall purify you through my grace. I shall not rest till I show you that form – why are you in such a hurry?” Just think, if we get to experience all that, why wouldn’t we want it as soon as possible? But, he reminds us to allow the purification to take place, to be patient, to remember that our destiny is in the Lord’s hands. Soami Ji states that he won’t rest until he has shown the disciple his true form. Then he adds:

*I carry your burdens in my own heart
so that you may be free of worries
and nurture my love in your heart.*

*Give up your misgivings, be steadfast in your love –
I shall myself help you put in the effort,*

*I shall myself take you to your ultimate home.
Listen to what Radha Soami has to say:
all will be worked out
as and when the supreme will ordains it.*

This should assuage all our fears and worries because the Master reminds us that our destiny is to return to our true home and merge with the Lord, and that he takes our burdens so that the love he has planted in us can be nurtured and can grow.

On the mental roller coaster ride we have created for ourselves, we want what we want, when and how we want it. But with that kind of a ride comes ego and the absence of the Divine. We create our own worries and problems, but the Master comes along to relieve us and to remind us that the outcome the Lord has planned for us is for the best. He continues to guide us through the map of our destiny in the direction of our true home.

It is said that years ago in Scotland a family dreamed of going to the new world in America. They worked hard, saved every penny, and finally had enough money to board a new ocean liner to America. A week before their departure, their youngest son was bitten by a dog. After the doctor treated the son, the entire family was forced into quarantine for fourteen days in case the boy had contracted rabies. The family was devastated. The father cursed his son and God for dashing their dreams. He watched in anger from the window as the huge ship set out for America. Five days later he learned that the ship had sunk, killing hundreds on board. The grateful father then realized that their bad fortune was in fact a blessing; he hugged his son and thanked God for saving them all.

This story is a reminder that we don't know what our blessings really are; the events in our life, regardless of how we view them, are

set to guide us or push us toward our destination – our destiny. The saints come to show us the way, to awaken us to our predicament, and to provide us with the solution. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Quest for Light*:

In Sant Mat we should try to live within the will of the Lord and accept whatever he sends to us. Every person has his destiny with which he is born and nothing can change it. Everyone is reaping the results of his past actions. Life and death are entirely in the hands of the Lord.

Hazur reminds us that since our future cannot be changed – it is already written – we should be thankful to the Lord for this life and the opportunity to return to him. Our map is already created. We cannot alter it, but we can enjoy it and appreciate it; we can take advantage of it and learn from the Master's teachings.

From our perspective, life might seem random, but nothing is really random. When we are born, where we grow up, who we come in contact with and what those relationships mean to us are not at all random – they are destined. Many of us have jobs where we work with thousands of people in a lifetime, while others only interact with a few people. Some of us have certain talents while others have not even discovered what talents they have.

Our lives are mapped out carefully as if in invisible ink. We find ourselves colouring in the lines that cannot be switched or erased. It is a unique journey for each of us. We are not alone; we are always accompanied by the mapmaker who understands us so well. The saints know how the mind works and they give us our most effective tools – simran and bhajan – which, in turn, give us the courage to go through what cannot be changed. Maharaj Ji addresses this in a letter published in *Quest for Light*:

Nothing can happen which is not in your destiny.... Material things will always be taken care of by your destiny and nothing can change it. You brought it with you when you were born in this world. Then why attach so much importance to them? Why not let the mind think of bhajan and simran instead?

Meditation builds the relationship with the Master. Meditation helps lighten our karmic load. It helps us control and still the mind; it helps us to let go of the worries of the world. Eventually we learn that meditation is the solution to everything that comes our way. Meditation is the most important tool the Masters give to their disciples. It gives us the strength to gracefully fulfil our destiny. Meditation helps us break down the barriers that hold us here – greed, lust, anger, attachment, and ego. And eventually meditation helps us merge into Shabd.

Even though all aspects of life are destined, the saints continue to help us aim high, to refrain from finding fault with others, and to refrain from becoming so harsh with ourselves that we become worried or discouraged.

Worrying is counterproductive. What is productive is doing our meditation and living a Sant Mat way of life. Be worry-free when it comes time to sit and spend time with the Master each day. Remember our ultimate goal – to devote our life to God and merge into him. It is a ‘life changer’ as they say – a shift in consciousness. How many lives have we had and not known there was a way back to our true home? We might not even have been curious about our true identity. It is no wonder that we can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the process of shifting our minds from worldly aspirations to spiritual ones. But we can take heart we are not alone in the quest. Hazur reminds us in *Quest for Light*:

Do not feel unhappy, frustrated or in despair whatever the circumstances may be. Face life courageously, with patience and courage, remembering that the Lord is there to help you and guide you, if you place your trust in him. Attend to your simran. Always keep the holy names with you throughout the day. This simran has great power and it will give you much strength.

We have only to experience the power of simran to remind us of the truth of this statement. Our simran is our language of love for the Master, who is always with us. When we are lonely, frightened, angry, or out of sorts, how many times have we turned to simran and found comfort there? Our job was and is to keep taking one step at a time toward God-realization.

The thirteenth-century Persian poet Jalaluddin Rumi reminds us in the book *Rumi and His Path of Love*, to continue to come to that place for meditation:

*Come, come whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.
It doesn't matter.
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vow a thousand times
Come, yet again, come, come.*

Rumi reminds us that what is in the past is in the past. Wherever we are, whomever we are in this moment, we can put aside our guilt, our despair, our woes, our wandering, and be with the Divine. Rumi is trying to bolster us – encourage us to show up, to just keep coming to that place of meditation, and to be with him. The Master loves it when we give him our attention – when we turn to him. Our

destiny is already written. On our spiritual journey, we only need the Master and our meditation. We must do our part. We can help the Master help us. When we meditate, we are helping him to lift our veil – to awaken that which is hidden within us.

If nothing is random, if it is all planned out exactly as it is to be played by each of us in our starring role of our life, why not be the best at it? Why not be happy with the role that we landed in this big play of life? Why not play that role of disciple to the best of our ability? Eventually, we will be united with him – why not put in our effort now?



The divine call of my Beloved comes to me.

“Awake,” he says,

“from the dark winter’s sleep of materiality.

Your spiritual springtime has come.

Let your heart blossom; let love appear.

*Hidden in the flowering of your heart
is the promise of an abundant harvest.*

*So come, dear soul, do not hide your face
in the narrow byways of this world.*

Fly like a dove to the inner skies.”

Commentary on Song of Songs 2:10,

in Song of Songs: The Soul & the Divine Beloved

Fill in the Grooves of the Mind

During the early 1970s, much of the land at Dera was reclaimed so that buildings could be constructed to accommodate the growing sangat. Disciples lovingly moved mounds of earth dug out of the hills to fill deep ravines. Using a head ring and a basket, devotees first went to the digging site where willing helpers filled each basket with dirt and placed a load on each head. Each disciple carried their basket to the dumping site, tossed the basketful of dirt into the ravine, and then headed back for a refill. This human conveyor belt moved tons of sandy earth throughout the Dera under the watchful eye of the Master.

In the book *Legacy of Love*, there are pictures of Maharaj Charan Singh overseeing mitti seva, as this manual transport of dirt was called. This gradual transformation of the land from deep gullies and ravines to flat land by purely human effort was an astonishing and monumental task. Slowly, deep ravines were filled in, one small basket at a time. There was often more love in the sevadar's basket than there was dirt. But with each trip, bit by bit, the ravine was filled. Master was watching over the work and showering his love on each sevadar – each trip filled with love, filled with simran, and a basket of dirt.

Our simran is so much like that mitti seva. Just imagine that each round of simran is a basket of love and devotion filling in the deep grooves of our mind. And know that Master is there with us, overseeing our effort and showering us with his grace. The deep ravines in our mind, created by eons of past karmas, will eventually be filled in with each round of simran. Slowly, slowly as we continue the repetition, the mind begins to smooth out, and many of our negative traits are lessened.

We have often read or heard that not one round of simran goes to waste, so when related to the image of mitti seva, the benefit of repetition becomes immediately understandable. The more ways that we can understand how important simran is, the better – because simran not only makes us fit by helping to eliminate negative tendencies, it is also our bridge over the ravine of illusion, the illusion of separation.

Let us bring Master our simran! Fill each basket of love and devotion with simran! Over and over, one-pointedly, let us carry our simran to him inside. In time, the grooves of our mind will be filled with his love.



*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.*

Sant Tukaram, *Voice of the Heart*

Master's Grace

*Why are you confused and disheartened, dear soul!
Take it from me
the Master will ferry you across the ocean.
Kal cannot touch you
if you hold tight to the banner of Shabd.
You should become enthralled with Shabd
and refuse to be swayed.
Ignore all misleading talk –
acknowledge the path of the Master as true.
Rise up and establish yourself in the realm of Agam,
as Radha Soami has explained to you.*

Sar Bachan Poetry

This reassuring poem by Soami Ji reminds us that the Master will take us home. Our role is to “become enthralled with Shabd” and to “acknowledge the path of the Master as true.” He reminds us that if we hold tight to Shabd (to our meditation of simran and bhajan) and if we follow the teachings prescribed by the Master, then we are protected from the negative power and will be delivered back to the Divine. The poem is full of loving advice and gives us insight into the strength of the teachings and the power of the Shabd. It also reminds us that “Kal cannot touch you if you hold tight to the banner of Shabd.” He is trying to empower us to be vigilant in our attempts to follow the teachings and to focus on Shabd. So here Soami Ji reminds us that by attaching to the Master and Shabd we can detach from worry, confusion, and despair and then return to the Divine.

Saints teach us that true happiness can only be found if we search within, for the kingdom of heaven lies within us. Happiness will never be found if we go on searching in the outer phenomenal world. That little two-letter word *if* provides us with one of the truths – that unless we seek spirituality within ourselves, we will not find it. So, as the Masters remind us, if we search within the human frame, we are going in the right direction.

Not only is this an inward search, but at the heart of the saints' teachings lie three great concepts or realities: 1) the Word or Shabd is the creative power or spirit out of which the whole creation arose and which sustains all life; 2) the Master is a realized being, who bears witness to the Word and who can awaken others to its presence within; and 3) salvation is possible during this very life, not in some vague afterlife.

Inherent in Sant Mat teachings is the need for a living spiritual teacher who has made the complete spiritual journey and can, therefore, instruct each disciple in that same method of spiritual evolution through a daily meditation practice. If we wish to extricate ourselves from the illusion of this world, we must meditate to go beyond mind and achieve the real purpose of our human birth.

The karmic balance of cause and effect is implied. It's conditional, much like statements our parents might have said: "You can have dessert if you finish your vegetables." Or the teacher who said, "You all can go out for extra break if you work quietly for the next ten minutes."

The condition that Soami Ji is reiterating in this poem is, "Kal cannot touch you if you hold tight to the Shabd." Soami Ji is reminding us that Shabd is our true protector; it is our association with the Divine. By holding tight to our meditation, we are in the Master's company, and he is protecting us, supervising our lives, regardless of our destiny.

We read about the power of meditation, the power of Shabd, and the power of the company of the saints, but when we don't feel we are experiencing that power we may get disheartened. Perhaps that is why Soami Ji reminds us in the beginning of this poem that we need not be disheartened, confused or discouraged, because the Master will ferry us across the ocean. This is a statement – a promise – a balm to soothe our troubled and weary minds. This bold statement is full of compassion and understanding of our predicament.

If we study the four vows of the path, we can see the relationship that they have with karma: To follow a lacto-vegetarian diet creates less karma than diets that subscribe to meat eating and the killing of animals. Sant Mat is a path of love, and we don't wish to cause unnecessary harm to any of God's creatures. To follow a healthy lifestyle by abstaining from alcohol, drugs and tobacco – maintaining a healthy body and a mind that is not altered by certain substances – is important when trying to raise the consciousness to a higher level. We need to follow a lifestyle that is in keeping with the 'Golden Rule' by treating others the way we wish to be treated.

These first three vows lead to the fourth – to meditate two and one-half hours every day. We are told there is nothing more important in our lives. The Master assures us that *if* we meditate, he will take care of the rest. Again, a condition is put into place – a bargain is made. What a bargain! That one action every day is so important that the Master will literally take care of the rest. If we meditate, the soul that has been trapped for many lifetimes gains freedom.

Soami Ji ends the poem with the following statement, "Rise up and establish yourself in the realm of Agam, as Radha Soami has explained to you." Soami Ji is giving direct advice and clearly telling us what we must do. Agam is the inaccessible, the unfathomable;

and thus he is imploring us to rise up to that level – to make the effort to awaken the consciousness through meditation and to “establish” ourselves. He will be there to help. We don’t know the way but the Master does. It has often been said that we must keep knocking at the door of the Master. It often seems as if he is giving us the door, the strength to lift our arm to the door, and the desire to knock. We are so close: We have been given this human birth, the true Master, and the path of love. The conditions are truly right for going home in this lifetime.



*Why trek so far on pilgrimage, friend?
The first thing to do is purify your mind.
Going on pilgrimage can't purify the mind;
just sit still in one place – you'll see.
If the mind is pure, you'll find God
in your very home.
Devotees see him wherever they may be.
This is my only advice, Janardan tells Eknath,
nothing is greater than this.
Eknath in *Many Voices, One Song**

Our Life Within

We are living in an illusion, not seeing things for what they really are. We only see those things that are perishable and impermanent. Things change continually in this physical world. What we see today is different from what we see tomorrow. Our bodies are continually rebuilding cells until we die. However, when we die, we really have a chance to be freed from this illusion through the Word. The radiant music that is discovered within the human body is unending and carries us to the Lord.

*Within the body there is played, O Kabir,
Music unending – played without instruments.
That music – the Word – resounds
Throughout creation.
Whoever listens is freed from illusion
And meets the Lord face to face.*

Kabir, The Great Mystic

What does Kabir, a saint from the fifteenth century, mean when he says there is unending music within? When we sit quietly and close our eyes so there are no distractions, what do we hear? Kabir says there is music within the body (Shabd) and that whoever listens to it is freed from illusion. Not only can we listen to the Shabd but its music can take us to an understanding of the purpose of creation, and we can meet God “face to face.”

The core teaching of the saints is worship of the Name of the Lord – Nam, Shabd, Word. The Name is omnipresent, all-pervading, everywhere.

The Name is also omnipotent, having unlimited power. This power or force of the Name or Word is in every particle of the universe. It existed before time, and exists today and forever. This great truth is spoken of in the gospel of John in the Bible:

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him,
and without him
was not any thing made that was made.*

The very idea that a sound or a word could create the universe and then maintain it or keep it going is astonishing. But the saints tell us that the Word is the Creator who made all that exists. Maharaj Sawan Singh, often referred to as the Great Master, states in *Spiritual Gems*, “The power that has created the entire universe is Shabd.”

In Psalms it states, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.” Maharaj Jagat Singh explains in *Science of the Soul*, that it is by developing our inner intuition, we can know this is true:

One may doubt how Sound [the Word] can create and maintain the universe. This is not the subject of intellect or reasoning. Reasoning takes us only to a certain point. Beyond that we have to take the help of anubhav (inner experience), and till we have developed the power of comprehension without reasoning, we have to depend upon the inner experiences of those who have gone within and have seen with their own eyes. In the meantime, faith must replace reason.

The Shabd is the law of the Lord. By his command all things come into existence. We put our faith in the Lord and Master until we experience the true reality of the Shabd, the Word. It is through the teachings of the Masters that we learn the way within.

The Word is God and we humans are made in his image and likeness. Shabd is the energy source that supports our life and all of creation. The Lord is the Ocean and our true self – our soul – is a drop of this Divine Ocean. By living a Sant Mat way of life – attending to our meditation and following the three other principles – the disciple’s soul merges into the Ocean. The soul can become one with God during this very lifetime. Maharaj Charan Singh answers one of his disciples in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, by saying:

*Sister, who would like to be a drop ... and not become an ocean?
Who would like to be a part and not become whole.*

Only by returning to the source from where we came originally can we experience the peace we long for, the love we long for, the happiness we long for. In this human lifetime we have been given the opportunity to control the mind, clear our karmas, and practise ‘dying while living.’ The soul can become one with God only when it has a human body, comes in contact with a living Master, is taught how to meditate, and is guided back home by the Master. The living Master is able to relate and communicate with us, human being to human being. He gives us the tools to become one with God and attain peace and everlasting happiness. Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*That Shabd is within everyone, irrespective of caste or creed.
Whomsoever the Lord has created, that Shabd is within every*

one of us.... The same Shabd is in humans, same Shabd is in the Master, and same Shabd is the Lord.

Only the Shabd can pull us back to the Father so that we can realize God and become one with him. The Shabd, the Word, never changes nor will it ever perish. Great Master writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

The truth lies within you, within everybody. Without that truth, we could not live for a second. Just as the sun is in the sky but its rays illuminate the earth, similarly, truth is within us – in the brain, behind the eye focus – but its rays activate the entire body. If we could hold our attention in the eye focus, our attention would then be able to grasp the truth. So long as the attention is scattered in the body or out of the body in the world outside, our face is turned away from truth.

How is truth or the Word revealed? Only a living Master who is alive at the same time the disciple is alive can reveal this. One needs to find a living Master, or more accurately, the Master will find the disciple, one of his marked sheep. It is through initiation by the Master that the Word can be revealed. This is the first step toward God-realization.

When the disciple begins hearing the Shabd, the harmonious music from within, he is so fascinated by the beautiful, rich, and magnetic sound, that his attention begins to shift away from the world and turn inward and upward. Automatically, a disciple begins losing interest in worldly activities and becomes more and more attached to the divine melody within. Attachment to the Word creates detachment from the world and reveals the life within. The Indian mystic Kabir Sahib is often quoted as saying: “Your Beloved is within you.”

Selling Joseph: A Cautionary Tale

Many people like stories from ancient scripture. The characters are familiar. The plot lines are predictable. And the distance from our time back into the ages is so formidable, we presume that the struggles described therein are not like our own daily struggles. Yet, we should never assume that we can just comfortably be entertained by such legends, for when the mystics take hold of these stories, they shed an intense light on the old texts.

For example, the thirteenth-century Sufi, Farid ud-Din Attar, in *The Conference of the Birds*, makes an enlightened interpretation of the story of Joseph from the Hebrew scriptures. Joseph, the favoured son of Jacob, was the one who was given the coat of many colours. In the Bible, it is told that his jealous brothers threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery.

Attar enlarges and expands this story for our benefit. He tells us that when Joseph was sold into slavery, the slave trader was so startled by how cheap the price was, and how eager the brothers were to make the sale, that the trader insisted on a formal sales receipt. He made all ten brothers sign it. Then, when the Pharaoh bought Joseph, the sales receipt went with Joseph.

As the years passed, Joseph became favoured by the Pharaoh, and quickly rose in the ranks of the empire, eventually becoming King. One year, a terrible famine fell on the entire region, including the land where the ten brothers lived. They were so desperate for food and grain they went to beg for sustenance from the King. They did not recognize Joseph, their brother, as the man on the throne.

It had been many years since they had abandoned him. But he recognized them.

Joseph told them, “O men, I have a document, in the Hebrew tongue. No one here can read it. If you read it to me, I will give you plenty of bread.”

Since all of them were fluent in Hebrew they happily accepted and said, “O King, bring the paper!”

At this juncture, the narrator in Attar’s story interrupts his prose and says to all who are happily engrossed in the unfolding drama: “May your heart be struck with blindness if your pride keeps you from hearing this story as your own.”

Suddenly we are commanded by Attar to pay much closer attention. No matter what we might have thought at the beginning of this story from scripture, it isn’t really about the past. It is a story about you and me and our relationship with God.

Attar concludes his account of Joseph’s story with these words:

Joseph handed them the receipt. They took it and fell to their knees, trembling. Not a single line of it did they dare read out loud, nor did they have the courage to say what it contained. All suffered distress and grief, afflicted by what they had done to Joseph.

And then, just in case we are having a difficult time understanding what this story has to do with our discipleship, Attar offers his commentary. He explains that when we go before God, every deed we have committed and every decision we have made is presented to us – especially concerning the choices we have made about where we have placed our attention. Did we give our attention to our soul, the most precious part of ourselves and our most prized possession? Or, on the contrary, did we neglect our soul and scatter

our attention out into the world? Attar reveals that Joseph, in this story, represents our soul. Then Attar asks each and every one of us questions like, Have you thrown your precious brother, your soul, into a well? Have you abused and neglected your soul? Have you constantly given your attention away to trivialities and deceptions?

Then he says:

*Don't you know, you nobody beggar
that you sell a Joseph at every breath?
Joseph in the end will be your king.
The jewel of the High Court, and
you will go to him as a naked, hungry tramp.
If money was what you wanted –
why did you sell him so cheap?*

This is a question worth pondering. Why do we “sell” so much of our time and attention, the precious opportunity of this human life, so cheaply – to Facebook, television, dreams about vacations, promotions or renovations to our homes? When we, initiates of a living Master, promised to give our time and attention to meditation and simran, and to remembering the One to whom we actually belong, how did we manage to get so lost, so distracted, so negligent? Why have we given our lives to the transient and fleeting distractions of this world and all its momentary pleasures?

The Masters, who see our spiritual poverty and starvation, say, “Begin again. Begin now.” With every breath, we have the opportunity to remember the Lord. A satsangi complained to Hazur, “Maharaj Ji, my meditation is so poor, that I feel it doesn't even count as meditation.” The Master replied in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

Well, you can count all twenty-four hours in your meditation. If you build around you an atmosphere of meditation, every breath you breathe is meditation for you.... If the Lord is always in your heart, in one way or another, then every breath is meditation. Meditation is not closing yourself in a room for a couple of hours – meditation is a way of life.

Let's not sell our soul, our 'Joseph,' so cheaply. By giving our time and attention to the Lord as we promised, and living life in the atmosphere of meditation, we will not be afflicted by our choices but will rise to the throne of the King.



*Don't presume the road is short!
Many oceans and deserts lie between the Beloved and us.
Only the brave can be Wayfarers in the Path,
For the journey is long and the waters deep.
It's best to go on this journey weeping and laughing
And riddled with amazement.
If we discover even a trace of the Beloved,
That will be something! ...
Since life without the Beloved isn't worth a dime
Go ahead, be brave, discard your precious life.
If you are willing to give up your precious existence,
The Beloved will reward you with eternal existence.*

Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*

The Importance of Seva

In Sant Mat the importance of seva, meaning selfless service, is paramount. Mahatma Gandhi summed up the importance of service in his statement, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Through service one loses one’s sense of self-importance and becomes humble. But we can share only what we have within ourselves. This is why Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

Everything we get is from meditation or from seva or satsang. These are the three things that help us in our spiritual development, and we should try to concentrate on only these three things. Either we should be attentive in satsang, or we should be doing some seva or we should be in meditation. These are the means for our spiritual development.

Sevas other than meditation are a means to an end. That is why the Masters ask us to faithfully attend to meditation as our key seva. Even when putting in our best effort, we don’t know when we will experience any visible inner progress because that is not in our control. He will take us inside when he sees fit. Fortunately for us, the Master has promised to return us to Sach Khand. We can relax and know that he has our best interest at heart. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh writes:

The whole of meditation is seva. The purpose of meditation is to prepare us to accept what the Lord gives, to prepare us not

to expect. In prayer we always expect, but in meditation we always accept. That is the difference between meditation and prayer. We pray because we're expecting something; we do meditation because we are preparing to accept what he wants to give us. In prayer we speak to the Lord; in meditation we hear him. So meditation itself is a seva. First we have to clean the utensil, then we have to fill it. This is also known by mystics as seva. So whenever a disciple can get an opportunity for seva, most welcome.



*If you learn to love repeating the Name,
the web of illusion will be torn away,
the ocean of the world will evaporate.
In this age of darkness, tell me,
has anyone ever made the crossing
by another practice, however great?
Reading or teaching scriptures can't do it –
just repeat the Name.
Rituals can't lead to knowing God,
you can't achieve it with yoga or austerity – ...
You earn the fortune of devotion
only in the company of mystics.
God has given me his promise, says Namdev,
no other method is needed.
Namdev in *Many Voices, One Song**

War and Peace

No matter what you do, people will always be at war... We read the history of five, six, seven thousand years ago – before that we don't know anything. We see the tribes have always been fighting with each other, countries have always been fighting with each other, people have always been fighting with each other, families have always been having family feuds. This has always been going on, and this will continue.

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

We are living in troubled times. When we turn on the news, it is filled with pain and suffering – wars, suicide bombers, mass shootings, political upheaval, terrorist attacks and on and on. And we fear that events of this magnitude may interfere with our way of life.

How much attention do we give to these things? Do we – followers and initiates of a Master – worry about world and local politics or being injured in a terrorist attack? Do we scour the latest news for the latest stories on whatever topic we are worried about? Do we blog about these things? Do we read every post of our politically-motivated Facebook friends and get just as riled up as they do about the injustices of the world? How much are we agitating our minds and reinforcing our negativity worrying about these things? Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

You cannot reform the world. But you can reform yourself so that you are not affected by peoples' fights, their quarrels, because everybody is being dominated by the mind. As long as the mind is ruling us, there will always be war. This is ego which puts us

against one another. And due to that ego, we are part of this creation.

The ego is our sense of self as an entity separate from all others. It is the uncontrolled ego that causes conflict in the world. Individual egos want what they do not have and believe it is their right to take it by force. It is this ego that binds us to the creation through its desires and the actions taken to fulfil them. This is how we continue to sow the seeds of karmas that keep us in the cycle of birth and death.

All this fighting and upheaval and wars will continue; we cannot control them, so we have to rise above them with our meditation and obtain inner peace. That inner peace will shine from us and affect everyone we meet. This is how we can influence what is happening in the world – by changing ourselves to become more content, more peaceful, more loving. Hazur continues:

You go to a miserable man and in two minutes he will make you miserable. You go to a happy person and in two minutes he will make you forget all your worries and problems and make you happy. Because you always radiate what you have.

This is why the Masters encourage us to look at what we fill our minds with. TV programs and novels about murder and other atrocities affect our mind. They depress us and encourage negative thinking that helps make us continuously unhappy. Uplifting stories about people showing love and compassion to one another encourage positive thinking and make us happy.

Our minds are affected by what we talk about and what we listen to. Spending time with satsangi friends can be uplifting if we talk about Master and the path. But if instead we only talk about

everything that is wrong with the world or gossip about each other, it can lower our spirits and encourage negative thinking. We have to watch what we feed our mind because the mind can raise us up or drag us down.

Being aware of what is going on around us and taking positive action is not a bad thing. The obstacle is only in the degree of attention we give to negative events in the world. If we become obsessed with these problems, our meditation will suffer and that is the one thing that we must protect. Meditation is important to our lives because it will give us the inner peace we need so that we are not affected by worldly events.

Hazur concludes by saying, “We should try to obtain peace within ourselves. If we are able to get peace within ourselves, we will radiate peace wherever we go.”



We can be happy only when we go back and merge into the Father. We can be happy only when we are on the path to our home.... When you see your home from a distance, you are happy that you have seen it, yet you are still away from your house. The actual peace you will get only when you enter your house, when you are in your home. Similarly, the nearer we are to the Lord, the nearer we are to our destination, the more contentment we feel within; the more bliss, the more peace, the more happiness we feel within. The true and eternal happiness, bliss, peace and contentment we can feel only when the soul is merged back into the Lord.

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

Why?

What keeps us separated from God? Why do we not behold him when we close our eyes? Why is meditation so difficult? Why does progress seem so slow? A story by an unknown author provides the answer to these questions in an interesting and thoughtful manner.

A disciple of a particular master used to sit in meditation every morning. One day he noticed a spider in his room. He thought about the spider during meditation and hoped that it would not crawl on him or bite him. The next day he thought that the spider descended right in front of him, and he spent his entire period of meditation thinking about the spider. Each day the creature returned, gradually growing larger and larger each time. The student was so frightened that he decided to put a knife in his lap during his meditation practice; if the spider returned, he planned to stab it with the knife and kill it.

First, he went to his master to tell him about the problem and how he planned to deal with it. The teacher said, “Don’t take a knife and kill the spider. Take a piece of chalk instead. When the spider appears, mark an X on its belly. Then report back to me.”

Being a dutiful disciple, he followed his master’s instructions and put a piece of chalk in his lap when he sat down to meditate the next day. When the spider again appeared, he resisted the urge to attack it and instead drew an X on the spider’s belly just as his master had suggested.

Later that day he reported back to the master and told him what he had done – how he had drawn the X on the spider. His master told the disciple to lift up his shirt and look at his own belly. There was the X.

The spider was a distraction in the disciple's meditation – a distraction that loomed larger every day.

A poem in the commentary to the *Song of Songs* so beautifully illustrates this dilemma:

*The distractions of the mind, encompassing the soul,
keep guard on the inner citadel, and hold me back.
They are the ones who know where my Beloved is
and why I cannot find him.
Then my soul merged into his,
travelling higher until we came to the source of Wisdom,
The essence of my existence.*

Commentary on Song of Songs 3:3 in,
Song of Songs: The Soul & the Divine Beloved

So, it seems it is our own mind that stands in our way and creates the obstacles to meditation. We can overcome these obstacles by persistently obeying our Master's command: to keep returning to our meditation every day. That simple act is a giant victory.



I Met a Mystic

*My orphan soul is on the move at last.
She tears herself free from ancient confines.
Body clings fast, crying out, "Don't go!"
desperate not to be left behind
like an abandoned house in a bad neighborhood.*

*Don't look for me on the mean streets
in the city of my youth.
That is all behind me now.
I had a sudden change of fortune.
I met a mystic and my good days began.
He taught me there is more to life
than this place where I've always been
and the tragedy of who I think I am.*

*The mystic struck a single match of Holy Name
that set ablaze my mind and account of payment due
with freedom's fierce and purifying flame,
then burned down this orphanage of the world
where I wandered endless empty hallways
in search of all I lost when I fell into space and time.*

*In the ashes of my burned-out broken dream
the mystic made me close my eyes
and turn my gaze within.*

*Behold! Amid the starry mists of all eternity,
in wave upon wave of welcoming light
I heard the Father of us all calling me
to come back to the shores of home.*

*O loving Voice of Light and Sound!
Had I only found you hidden here inside
and known the comfort of your company
throughout my lifetimes tumbling down
beneath the grinding stone of centuries
in exile's dark and lonely realm.*

*But that is all behind me now.
I had a sudden change of fortune.
I met a mystic and my good days began.
He taught me there is more to life
than this place where I've always been
and the tragedy of who I think I am.*

*Rose petals drift down to earth
to bless and celebrate
a barefoot orphan on a lonely road
at last proclaimed beloved child
long lost to the King of Light.
And thus begins a royal escort home
to the sound of beating drums.*

Original Submission by a satsangi

Meditation – Action and Union

Farid ud-Din Attar, a contemporary of Rumi, wrote the following:

*Standing on the shore of the sweetest ocean
We are all parched – dying of thirst
Be ever patient with the affliction....
Since separation from Me is not in your destiny.*

Somewhere deep within us we remember the boundlessness of our true nature before this apparent separation occurred, and it haunts and nags at us. And yet we tend to live our lives as if we have all the time in the world to get rid of the illusions that hold us and attach us here. We remain “parched – dying of thirst.”

Why? Because we are human – we are in the world and it is so easy to get more and more distracted from our spiritual priorities. We are attracted to and enmeshed in the things of the world because we seek experience and pleasure. When one pleasure begins to become dull to us, we seek something else. Perhaps, we were even attracted to this path because we thought that our meditation would provide us with colourful and spectacular experiences, and without realizing it, even our spiritual lives have left us feeling dry.

It's really somewhat disingenuous to say we can put all our energy and thought into success in our outer life and, on the other hand, have a successful inner life without putting our priorities in order. After all, it has been taught by every saint, in every religious tradition, that the only way to true and lasting happiness, in this world or the next, is through our meditation.

The Masters suggest that the truly brave are those who make meditation the centre of their lives. It has been said that it takes courage to make choices in our life that are aligned with our real purpose and to seek that deep stillness in the midst of the karmas that come our way. But the Masters tell us that this stillness and happiness can be experienced in this lifetime.

What kind of lasting happiness are the Masters talking about? What is a successful inner life? Do we think it entails running to the hills, standing on one foot under a tree meditating for years; or does it entail the slow transformation of our entire orientation to our life? Because these answers aren't immediately obvious and forthcoming, we may turn again to the world and its pleasures for comfort. Perhaps without realizing it, we even evaluate our 'success' on the path by the same measures that we apply to our worldly pursuits. In applying this type of thinking to our meditation, we judge it by unrealistic standards. Meditation, Master says, is simple, but not easy. Its importance can never be ignored.

Meditation, the Masters tell us, will eventually answer all our questions and give us everything we need.

The Masters promise their disciples that through meditation the disciple may attain forgiveness for lifetimes of sin, the mind and ego will become still, and the separation between the disciple and ultimate truth will be removed. What mystics don't say is that our lives will magically become easier.

Consider that when we initially make our commitment to sit in meditation, we may have no idea of the larger truths that we seek. But there is power in that commitment to sit – especially if we can keep that commitment. There is a common saying, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." While many of us feel so restless that we can't even sit for one minute in meditation, the act

of trying to sit time and time again shows that we can exercise some control over our mind. This act of trying repeatedly will make a large and critical difference in our life. Hazur says in *Light on Sant Mat*:

Do what you can as best as you can, even if it is not deep and one-pointed. If you cannot find much time, if concentration is not attained and the mind wanders, do not be discouraged.

So perhaps our image of a meditation full of skyrocketing and firecrackers is not what we get. It may be through the simple act of repeatedly doing our meditation that we become stronger, gain determination, and burn away our self-imposed limitations. So we get up again, we try, we fail, we succeed, we get up, we fail over and over and over, and eventually we succeed.

Our meditation helps us become more sensitive to the divine plan of our life. Loving repetition of the holy names will naturally make us aware of the constant presence of the Master. Through the deepening of our simran and remembering him in all we do, our consciousness automatically will become purer. We can attain the mental and spiritual balance and equipoise that Master encourages us to have. The Master refers to meditation as the anchor to our sanity.

In *Living Meditation* the author explains this process:

When we recognize ... and release our thoughts we are remembering the teachings.... Each time we let go of our thoughts and go back to our simran, we win a heroic and courageous victory. We are, as it were, swimming against the current, returning home to our source ... we are turning our attention upwards to the eye centre.

Most importantly, by switching our thoughts to simran, we extract ourselves from the world of concepts and the dramas in our lives. We give up our addiction to the inner chatter and step into the path of inner peace.

If we make an effort to keep our mind in simran, the soul then gradually regains its power. The stronger we become, the more real, potent, and transforming our spiritual life will become and the more unreal the drama of this life becomes. This repeated effort and Master's grace enable the mind and ego to release their grip on our souls.

Contrary to what we may think, our meditation may not give us an absolutely clear perception of the spiritual truth we think we are seeking. The truth is that, at this level, the mind finds itself in the presence of mysteries too vast for human comprehension. While the mind says, "I can handle this," the body must also transform to be able to withstand the Shabd.

Maharaj Jagat Singh explains this to us in *Science of the Soul*:

Our consciousness permeates the entire body, down to our toes. We have to draw it up again and bring it to the eye centre, and send it upward. It is then that the door is opened. But the drawing up of consciousness or shaking it loose from the material body is a slow and labourious process. It has been called the "way of the ant."

All that is required is to persist with patience, hope, faith and love. Then success, he reminds us, will be ours.

While we might think we are missing something in our meditation if there are no inner skyrockets and fireworks, actually, the result of our meditation finds its best expression in the very way

we live our life. With meditation, we may find that positive qualities of being fully human begin to appear. We may be more focused, more kind, more loving, more content. We may eventually begin to prefer living in the atmosphere created by meditation.

This is what the Masters mean when they tell us that the entire purpose of our existence here on earth, is to become one with the Lord – to shape our lives so that everything we do points us toward self- and God-realization.

If, on the other hand, we see our meditation as separate from our daily life, we will soon understand that this is just a symptom of our still fractured nature that needs to be healed. More meditation, we are told in *Living Meditation*, is the only remedy for this fragmentation, this “cosmic fracture that has not only separated us from God and the Master, but has also torn apart our inner being.”

We have to build our whole life on the principles of seva, love, devotion, humility, and meditation. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Light on Saint Matthew*:

The One who has created you is more anxious about you and takes much more care of you, is more concerned about you, than you are about yourself.... Have faith in the Father.

It is for us to find within ourselves the tenacity and endurance to follow the Master’s teachings to the end. We cannot hope to have love or devotion, peace or happiness, without a true and strong commitment to our meditation.

We get there on the pathway of grace that he is constantly putting before us; we get there because we have been pulled to something that is far greater than we are, and he has made us willing players in this plan.

We get there by the day-to-day decisions that we make to engage in the repetition of simran that will clear the way and dissipate our egos for the sake of our true self. The guiding spirit for this stupendous task is the Master. Tulsi Sahib says:

*Listen, thou art constantly being called from the
Most High.
There ever beckons thee the voice of thy Beloved.
It is not meeting with the Beloved that is arduous;
What is difficult, O Taqi, is that it is hard to behold him.
Without the grace of some realized guide, says Tulsi,
the path of salvation is distant.*

Every morning, every day, each of us is invited to become aware that we are standing in the presence of God – in the presence of the inner Master. The invitation from him is his request that we meditate. We are not alone in this endeavour, for he is helping us in every way.

Our response to the Master's invitation to us is to fulfil our promise to him. None of what our soul seeks will come without it. As the Masters say, separation from him is *not* in our destiny.





Cultivating Stillness: a Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind

WITH A COMMENTARY BY SUI-CH'ING TZU. TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY EVA WONG

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Cultivating Stillness is a translation of the classic Taoist text *Qingjing Jing* (“The Classic of Purity and Stillness”) attributed to Lao-Tzu, author of the *Tao-te Ching*. It was probably written during the Six Dynasties era (220 – 589 CE). The text is a principal work of the Taoist canon and is recited and studied to this day in the training of new Taoist initiates. It is equally appreciated by Taoists and Chan (Zen) Buddhists. In this edition, Eva Wong has translated the twenty-four segments of the *Qingjing Jing* itself, along with an important later commentary which, according to Wong, originated during the Ch'ing dynasty (1628 – 1644 CE). Wong believes that the book was meant to complement an oral tradition; it emphasizes the importance of having a living teacher in order to receive proper spiritual instruction.

The text lends itself to multiple levels of interpretation – as pure Taoist philosophy, as guidance for practice of *wu-wei* (selfless action and simple living), and as instruction for the esoteric “internal alchemy” and meditation. Fundamental aspects of Taoist philosophy are illustrated by the *wu-chi* diagram which depicts the cosmology that underlies the teachings of *Qingjing Jing*. The diagram presents *wu-chi* as the source of all creation, before the beginning of the creation. It is

the vast expanse of nothingness in which there is no differentiation or substance. Below that is the realm of *t'ai chi*, where *yang* and *yin*, the opposites of positive and negative, separate from each other. From *yang* and *yin* the five elements of fire, water, earth, wood, and metal are created. They in turn manifest the generative, creative energy; and below that the “myriad things” – the realm of the material creation – come into being.

It would be impossible in this review to examine all the symbolism condensed into the *Qingjing Jing* and its commentary, but we can get some idea from the passages quoted below. The text has a total of 24 passages in all

The First Passage: Wu-chi.

The ancient sage says, “The Tao has no form. It gives life to heaven and earth. The Tao is void of emotions. It moves the sun and moon. The Tao is nameless. It nourishes all things.”

Commentary:

The sage symbolizes the goodness inherent in all sentient beings. The origin of the ancient sage is difficult to fathom. He is the manifestation of the Tao and can appear in many forms. As the Elder Emperor of Three Realms, he is called the Heavenly Teacher of the Ten Thousand Dharmas.... Since he takes on many forms it is difficult to enumerate all his incarnations. Sometimes he appears as a Confucian sage. Sometimes he appears as a Buddha. Sometimes he appears as a Taoist immortal. His deeds are limitless. He is elusive and mysterious. He guides our intuition, instructs us in the virtues, and induces stillness in our hearts....

The Tao is nameless and has no form. It has no beginning and no end. When forced to give it a name, we call it the Tao. The Tao

nurtures all things. Even insects and plants receive nourishment from the Tao. If human beings are willing to return to Tao, they must find someone who can show them the heaven and earth, the sun and the moon in their bodies. They must cultivate and follow the Tao that cannot be named.

The Sixth Passage summarizes the struggle everyone faces in the spiritual quest:

The spirit tends toward purity, but the mind disturbs it.

Commentary:

Humans are created from the descent of heavenly breath and the ascent of earthly vapor (chi). Humankind emerges from the union of yin and yang. The spirit is the original nature in us... The spirit tends toward purity and stillness. Knowledge tends toward action and disturbs the mind so that it cannot be still... As this continues, the body and mind are injured. When the spirit weakens, a hundred illnesses arise. Therefore, we need to realize the value of the human body...

You who are born in human form should not spend your time foolishly. You must value your original nature and your life. Recognize the difference between spirit and knowledge. Do not confuse the true with the false...

Immortal Lu says: "Existence in human form is difficult to achieve and you already have it. The Tao is difficult to find. If you do not transcend human existence now, when will you get a better chance?"

The Seventh Passage names "craving" as the single obstacle to cultivating stillness. The commentary discusses the six thieves (eyes, ears,

nose, tongue, body, and mind). It spells out the seven emotions and the ten weaknesses which are destructive when they are taken to an extreme:

All mortals are affected by the destructive effects of the six thieves, the seven emotions, and the ten weaknesses.... Do not let the six thieves drag you into the dark realms of suffering....

*The light of the spirit shines through the night of samsara,
The commoner and the sage both come from the same family.
Stop all cravings and the pristine body will appear,
The movement of the six thieves is like clouds that cover the sky.*

Then the text explores the meditative process. The Tenth Passage is called “Nothingness”:

Look into your mind and there is no mind. Look at appearances and appearances have no forms. Gaze at distant objects and objects do not exist. Understand these three modes of cognition and you will see emptiness.

Commentary:

Gaze within yourself. All thoughts arise from mind. If there are no thoughts, then there is no mind. Thoughts emerge from forms. If there are no forms, then no thoughts can arise. Look at the sky, earth, sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, and buildings. When these objects do not exist then forms do not exist....

Since ancient times, those who have attained the Tao to become immortals and buddhas have practiced concentration and forgetting. In this world, many people are attached to appearances and think that their physical body is the original body.

The text goes on to discuss stillness, emptiness, and the importance of being true to our “original nature,” which is often called *Te* in Taoism. *Te* is the cosmic principle of the Tao active within the individual human person. Passage Twelve says: “Original nature can intuit all happenings. In original nature is the essence of goodness. Be natural in your actions and you will always be pure and still.” Taoism always emphasizes the importance of being natural – not pushing oneself ahead or trying to change the course of events, but acting effortlessly, without personal motive, following along the path of Tao. This will allow us to be receptive to the Tao.

As Passage Thirteen says: “Abide in stillness and you will gradually enter the true way (Tao). When you enter the true way (Tao), this is called receiving the Tao.” The commentary explains that the true way has always been transmitted orally from enlightened teacher to student, and whatever has been written has been “encoded in symbolic language.” Yet, the true way is one and the same for all.

Passage Fourteen, titled “The Mysterious Achievement,” offers a deep lesson:

Although we speak of attaining the Tao, there is really nothing to attain.

Commentary:

Although it is said that you attain the Tao, you are really receiving nothing at all. The Mysterious Gate, the Singular Cavity, and all the treasures described are in the body and not anywhere else.

That is why it is said you receive nothing; you possess them from the beginning. If you want to attain the Tao you must train and discipline yourself. You must be steadfast like stone and iron,

and you must not waver... Your will must be centred or you will abandon the path along the way... You must cultivate yourself from within. Then you will receive the Tao.



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