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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Yours Affectionately

I am glad to learn that after long and patient waiting you have received initiation. You have been put in touch with the sound current. This is the connecting link between your soul and the Creator. Your mind with all its paraphernalia is the disturbing element or the curtain that keeps the soul away from the current. All else besides the current is negative, therefore illusory and transitory, changing and changeable, dispersing and distressing.

The force of the negative power will decrease in proportion to the attention given to the current. The first step is to come within; that is, our thoughts should be confined to what lies within us, for it is only then that we can be said to be sitting within ourselves and only then will we feel at peace.

Just as a wanderer in a forest loses his way and finds no rest till he returns to his home, similarly our attention remains outside. It is always directed outward through the nine portals of the body. It remains in communion with the outside objects or their impressions, and this habit has become so fixed that we can hold our attention within us for barely a second. The Western mind even abhors the idea of vacancy.

The attention has to be brought inside, and when it likes to rest there, like the wanderer coming home, it will find peace within. This bringing in of the attention is done by repeating the five holy names in the manner you have been told. Repetition should be done with the attention held at the eye focus. Repetition without fixing the attention is no good. This repetition with attention impresses on your mind the idea of what lies within you and tries to take you there.

From the time of initiation, when the Master takes over the charge of a soul, he is more anxious than the soul to see it installed on the throne of bliss and peace. Even if the devotee, through some chance, leaves the Master or loses faith in him, he, on his part, never leaves. He will someday bring the devotee on the path again. His mission is to take souls up, and a soul once initiated is never deserted. This is the law.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *The Dawn of Light*



Only You

*One moment, You are all I know, Friend.
Next moment, eat, drink and be merry!
Another moment, I put every beast in shame.
O'Friend, how will this scatteredness that is me
find its way to You?*

Shaikh Abu Saeed Abil-Kheir,
Nobody, Son of Nobody

Here the Sufi poet Shaikh Abu Saeed Abil-Kheir accurately describes the plight of spiritual practitioners on the path. When we are in the physical presence of the Master, we feel a certain sense of security and peace, and all worldly anxieties seem to vanish. Our hearts are filled with joy and our entire being is permeated with his love. And in that moment, our heart implores, “You are all I want, Master.”

But as the Sufi mystic points out, the next instant, when we are outside the sphere of our Master’s presence, we find ourselves eating, drinking and making merry. We busy ourselves in amassing wealth and increasing our bank balance. We chase one worldly desire after another. We fill our social calendar to the brim. We become so engrossed in satisfying our worldly appetites that all our noble thoughts about the Master and the path seem like a long forgotten dream.

This is because we are caught in the middle between the world and the Lord. The soul has the inherent desire to seek and merge in the Lord. But it is obstructed by the deeply individualistic mind. This mind keeps the soul tied to the world and holds it back from its source. It is for this reason that we feel the full intensity and onslaught of the mind at the time of meditation.

So as disciples, we need to ask ourselves: are we willing to vanquish the mind so we can finally reunite with the Lord? Or are we going to continue to succumb to the sensual pleasures of the world?

*I saw an ant carrying a grain of rice
And then she spied a lentil along the way.
She was puzzled how to carry both.*

*Kabir says she cannot –
She must take one and leave the other.
A devotee must choose between the Lord and the world.*

Kabir, the Great Mystic

Some of us may think we chose the Lord the moment we decided to tread on a spiritual path. We abstain from meat, alcohol, smoking and mind-altering drugs; we lead a moral life and try to devote one-tenth of our time to daily meditation. We somehow convince ourselves that we are doing everything in our capacity to love Him. But is this enough? In our present state, our heart is divided or scattered by many loves. Our mind is continually engaged in repetition and contemplation of worldly forms and objects: family, career, children, money, to name a few. Have we really left room for love of the Lord?

There is an incident narrated in Legacy of Love, where a lady got up during a question-and-answer session, and repeated over and over again to Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, “I love you, I love you, I love you.” He did not interrupt her. When eventually she had emptied her heart, he responded simply, “Sister, you didn’t say ‘only.’”

Saints advise us to love the Lord with *all* our heart, with *all* our mind and with *all* our soul.

One is reminded of the story of the disciple who wanted to understand how to achieve God-realization. His master asked him to bring a sieve and fill it with water. Try as he might, the disciple was unable to fill the sieve. The master then took the sieve and threw it into the ocean, showing the disciple that the only way to truly be with the Father was to merge in him completely.

If we are scattered in our love, we are like a man in search of water who digs a little here and a little there. He will no doubt die of thirst. It is only by digging deep in a single spot that the man will ultimately find water.

When we repeat the holy Names and hold our attention at the eye centre, we are ‘digging deep in a single spot’. Saints say that it is behind the eye centre that we will get everything we have been looking for: peace, bliss and love. The Master’s love for us is infinite, absolute and constant. And we will only be able to understand the true meaning of love when we

sit for meditation every day. Because when we meditate, we are slowly but surely erasing the imprint of worldly love from our hearts and replacing it with love for the Master, which is a requisite for God-realization.

Devotion to the Master is to love him. It is to live according to his orders and directions – physically as well as mentally. In other words, one should give away one’s heart to one’s Master. It is essential that we give our heart to our Master, for, when one gives away one’s heart, one automatically gives one’s whole body and puts one’s entire life in the hands of the Master.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II

With the Master’s grace, when we go within and meet his Radiant Form, we become filled with his love. We have the single desire to never be separated from him. The same mind that was so intoxicated with worldly pleasures now becomes still. It loses interest in flitting from one worldly love and attachment to another. Nothing in this world attracts it. Nothing else exists. The Master is his sole companion, support and anchor – here and hereafter.



*In all this world, there is only You.
When all else ceases, there is only You.*

Legacy of Love

Something to Think About

The secret of success in the path is “Bhajan, more bhajan, and still more bhajan.” (Practice, more practice and still more practice.) With bhajan only for three hours, the scale will always weigh heavily on the worldly side. You ought to become wholly and solely God-minded. Throughout the day, no matter in what occupation you are engaged, the soul and the mind must constantly look up to him at the eye centre. All the twenty-four hours of the day, there must be a yearning to meet the Lord, a continuous pang of separation from him. Nay, every moment, whether eating, drinking, walking, awake or asleep you must have his name on your lips and his form before your eyes.

For the past countless ages, we have been separated from him and have been wantonly wandering out. We have been so much chained and dragged by the mind and illusion that we have completely forgotten the Lord and our divine origin. We need a complete reorientation. We must tell our mind that in thousands of lives have we acted according to its behests, and now we are determined to dedicate this life to God and God alone. Every spare moment must go to bhajan. Now all our time must be his.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Money has entangled us to such an extent that we don't understand anything. Yet we cannot survive without it. Even for acquiring necessities we need it. But don't go and become its servant – make it serve you. Whether you get a lot or a little, it doesn't matter.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol. II



Your Child is Ugly

He was sitting in the train staring into space while his three noisy children were running around causing mayhem. “Why isn’t he stopping them?” she thought annoyingly. “What kind of a father is he?”

Suddenly, almost as though he heard her thoughts, the man came out of his trance. “Please forgive me,” he said to the lady sitting beside him. Looking at his carefree and happy children, he seemed oblivious to the chaos they were causing. And then softly, he said, “We are on the way to the hospital where their mother has just passed away from an accident.” Still looking at his children, he said, “I want to see them this happy for as long as I can. After today, nothing will ever be the same.”

Mystics explain that human beings are the top of creation because they are the only species that have the power of discrimination – the ability to determine right from wrong. The purpose of this precious gift of discrimination was for human beings to make the right choices for themselves, towards their own progress and evolution.

But somewhere along the way, under the influence of the ego, human beings started to use this faculty to judge everyone and everything but themselves. Consider how many things in everyday life are subject to judgment: the weather, politics, people, food, behaviour, clothes, attitude; every moment of the day people are judging something or someone. “The weather is awful,” “She is so talkative,” “That politician is a fool,” “The food was horrible.”

People render judgment too easily and often without considering the consequences. In fact, often we don’t even realize we are being judgmental when we make comments about situations or people. The question arises, what exactly does “being judgmental” mean?

The dictionary defines the word “judgmental” as a negative word used to describe someone who has or displays an excessively critical point of view; one who forms an opinion without knowing all aspects of a situation or one who thinks of himself as superior to others.

The Sufi mystics have said that to not pass judgment on others is not just a question of kindness, etiquette and sympathy; it is considered an attitude of worship towards the Lord. It is based on the realization that

the Supreme Father is the creator of all and therefore all beings are his children. It is from this perspective that they equate judging others with pointing out the defects of a child. Would anyone ever say to a mother, “Your child is ugly”?

In the same way, mystics remind us that the Lord resides in the heart of every living being. By judging or pointing out the defects of others, we are doing so in the presence of the divine Parent.

Beware of injuring the heart of any man. God lives there. To those who break another's heart, the gates of heaven shall ever remain closed.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Sant Mat teaches us that every human being is a complex creation of past actions and reactions whose thoughts and behaviour are based on the individual's karmic DNA. There is no way of knowing what a person has been through to reach his current disposition in life. It is impossible to understand why people behave the way they do or what part of their mental, physical and emotional history from hundreds and thousands of lifetimes has led to a particular action or behaviour.

Pundit Lal Chand, a close friend and colleague of Sardar Bahadur Ji, recalls an incident in 1921 when he felt unhappy with one of his laboratory superiors. One day, he complained bitterly to Sardar Bahadur Ji about the behaviour of his senior colleague. Sardar Bahadur Ji listened quietly to him and then said:

Every man's mind and understanding are conditioned by his own previous karmas, and though he tries to project himself in his best light before others, he thinks and acts according to his karmas. If you do not approve of a person's thoughts and actions, it does not mean that you should hate him, nor does it entitle you to speak ill of him. Never hate anyone; any caste, creed, race or nation. Slander and hatred are unpardonable sins.

Maharaj Jagat Singh Ji, as quoted in *Heaven on Earth*

After Sardar Bahadur Ji urged Pundit Ji to go to his colleague and seek his forgiveness for speaking ill of him, the man was deeply moved. From then onwards, he always treated Pundit Ji with affection and respect.

The fact is, passing judgment on others is an act of monumental pride. It exposes the state of our own heart and reveals our lack of capacity for kindness and empathy. When we judge others, in that moment of weakness, we forget that we too have flaws and weaknesses.

He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

Bible: John 8:7

Instead of judging, the saints advice us to have a charitable view – to accept everything and everyone as they are. And the only way to attain this level of surrender is to keep taking the “medication” of meditation.

By focusing the mind on simran as much and as often as possible, we keep the ego at bay. Replacing negative thoughts with simran cleanses the vessel of the mind, preparing it to receive the nectar of Nam.

It is this elixir of love that subdues the ego, and washes away all the negative qualities of the mind. Only when the mind is pure does one see the spark of God in everyone. And at that stage, automatically, there is no more judging, only understanding, acceptance and love.

Indulging in criticism or praise is sinful because no one can be described as he really is. If we must praise anyone, we should praise our Guru, and if we must find fault with anyone, it should be with ourselves.

Soami Ji Maharaj, *Sar Bachan Prose*



Kuch Kar Ke Dikhao, Kuch Ban Ke Dikhao

Do Something, Become Something

This is a phrase that we may have heard in satsang, one that has deep meaning attached to it. What is that 'something' that saints tell us we need to do? They say that we need to fulfill the purpose of this human birth. We have been blessed with a human body and have the power to discriminate. We are the only species who can achieve this. The rest of creation is limited to acting only within the parameters of its nature. This ability to discriminate allows us to make better choices through increased awareness and mental poise.

The saints explain that we have to increase our awareness. We have to purify ourselves and let the true self, the soul, shine in us once again. Meditation is the way to refine and purify ourselves and consequently increase our awareness.

The saints tell us that we have unlimited, under-utilized potential waiting to be harnessed. However, we are so engrossed in this highly material and sensual world that we seldom think about what we are doing.

To achieve a better state of mind so that we can make the right choices, respond instead of react, and be loving and kind human beings, we have to prioritize our spiritual goal. We need to take our commitment seriously and persevere. If that implies sacrificing some time from the rest of our schedule, then that's what we should do. We have to practise like athletes who wish to compete in the Olympics and bring home those shiny gold medals. Or like the young pianist who devotes hours of practice to be able to play beautiful harmonies perfectly in front of huge audiences.

We have to be deliberate about how we spend our time. We should devote a minimum two and a half hours for meditation first, then fulfill our worldly commitments as best as we can. Meditation will equip us to fulfill all those responsibilities well. The stilled mind will be able to cope with these challenging responsibilities and obligations. We cannot just wait for the 'perfect life' to happen to us or for perfect circumstances before we sit down to meditate.

Our second task is to become something. We have to become a worthy child of our divine Father – the Creator himself, whose love for us is boundless. We do this by turning to a true living teacher, a human beacon of spiritual Light.

The Masters teach in so many ways: by giving enlightening discourses, by being a good example, and most important, by initiating seekers on the spiritual path. The Master-disciple relationship commences with initiation and evolves and matures with the practice of meditation. Meditation is the alphabet of spirituality. However, it is said that what is being taught by the spiritual guide cannot be expressed in words and cannot be explained with concepts: it is a reality that must be experienced, and this experience comes through practice. The Master points his disciples towards a reality that is within the disciple himself. He helps the disciple re-discover that reality, but the Master cannot do the work for him.

The relationship between a spiritual mentor and his disciple is one of love. As the great poet Goethe said, “We learn only from those we love.”

In *The Spiritual Guide* the author explains the wondrous teacher-disciple relationship that exists in eight different spiritual traditions and cultures. Despite the diversity, there is commonality in the relationship that leads to the understanding of God.

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.

Look upon your teacher, the spiritual friend who teaches you here and now what to do and what not to do, as the true Jewel of the Buddha.... Consider every word of your sublime teacher as the Jewel of the Dharma. Accept everything he says without disobeying a single point... The teacher is the main refuge... Recognize him, therefore, as the quintessential union of the Three Jewels. Follow him with absolute trust and try to pray to him all the time. Remember that to displease him with anything you do, say or think is to renounce the entire refuge, so make every effort to please him

all the time. No matter what happens to you, be it pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, sickness or suffering, entrust yourself entirely to the Jewel of the teacher.

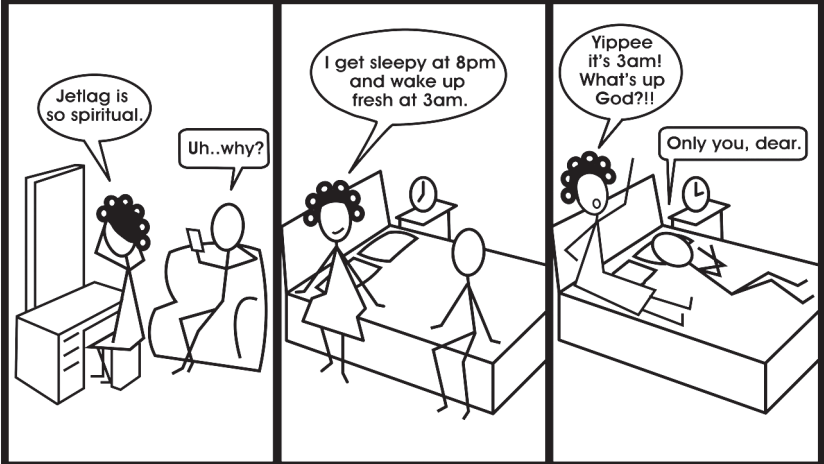
Patrul Rinpoche, as quoted in *The Spiritual Guide*, Vol. 2

A living teacher, mentor, guide, friend, father – he is bestowed with many titles. If we can do as he tells us and follow the vows implicitly, then there is every possibility that we will walk shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand with him to our desired destination and thereby become one with the Creator.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®

Time Zone : Alone



When the Master Answers

If the entire world stands on one side and I am on the other, I will answer all their questions and difficulties. I will not change or convert the talk nor hop from branch to branch. My words will contain answers within answers and conditions within conditions. Every question will have ten answers and proofs, with such grace and sweetness as is yet unwritten in any book.

Shams-e-Tabrizi

The Master travels extensively around the world holding satsangs and question-and-answer sessions for the benefit of spiritual seekers everywhere. Many of us also take the opportunity to seek his guidance about worldly aspects of our lives. We find his answers full of wisdom and insight. Through these sessions, we feel inspired to pursue both our spiritual and worldly endeavours. Our interaction with him gives us strength and support.

We need somebody to put life in us. We definitely need a teacher to know that science of spirituality. And inside it is impossible to travel at all on the right path without a teacher.

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

The physical form of the Master is our starting point in understanding spirituality. He explains the teachings to us and then sets us on the path to following them. Our love for a true living Master is meant to transform into love for the Father. Through our meditation, we cultivate devotion for the Shabd, or the divine sound current, which is within us and will ultimately pull us back to the level of the Father.

With seven veils has Mirdad veiled his face, that he may teach you and the world, when you are ripe for teaching, how to unseal your lips and to unveil your eyes, and thus reveal yourselves to yourselves in fullness of the glory which is yours.

The Book of Mirdad

If we are content to just see the physical form of the Master and make no attempt to go within where we can develop a constant companionship with the inner Master, we are missing the point of the spiritual path. The real

intimacy comes through meditation. That is the technique by which we can establish a true and eternal bond with the Master. The practice will reach a stage when the effort to withdraw our attention will be easier than the journey we sometimes have to make to see the physical form of the Master.

Once a seeker asked his Master why we keep coming back to see him. The Master replied that he did not know why, because for the one who is meant to understand, one look from the Master is enough.

*A thousand miles away is my Master's abode,
But I always see him nearby.
It's of little consequence if he's physically out of sight;
My heart is his real home.*

Sultan Bahu

Does our inspiration to follow the teachings continue beyond the presence of the physical Master? When we hear him speak, to what extent do we follow his guidance, and to what extent do we bend the teachings to do what is convenient? We will find that our spiritual maturity is reflected in the relationship we enjoy with the Master when he is physically not around. Moreover, our spiritual courage and stamina is reflected in how we mould our lifestyle and steer our efforts in line with his teachings.

May the longing to grow in grace not remain dormant in you, who have been privileged to witness so many examples of the holy life.

Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

The Master assures us that our initiation is an indication of our ability to complete the spiritual journey. We have been empowered to meditate. The answer within all his answers is meditation. His condition for our spiritual attainment is meditation. The proof of the teachings lies within the practice of meditation. For when the Master answers with such grace and sweetness, the true disciple shows obedience through meditation.

Upon meeting a Zen master, a psychiatrist asked him a question that had been on his mind. "Exactly how do you help people?" he asked. The Master answered, "I get them to where they can't ask any more questions."



The Modern Disciple

There was once a disciple who lived in the forest with his Master. One cold dark night, it was raining heavily and the roof began to leak. The Master said to his disciple, “My son, climb up onto the roof and find where the rain is coming in. Do whatever you can to stop the leak.”

Now, the disciple wanted to follow his Master’s wishes but he thought to himself, “It is cold and dark out there and I shall get very wet. I could easily slip and fall and break my leg, and anyway I do not think I wish to go out there at all.”

“Master,” he said, “if I go up on the roof, I would have to go higher than you. I couldn’t possibly do that, it would be most disrespectful!”

The Master said nothing, but went quietly outside into the rain, climbed onto the roof, and mended the leak himself. When he came down he noticed they had run out of firewood.

So he said to his disciple, “My son, go out into the forest and collect some wood for the fire.”

Now, again, the disciple wanted to follow his Master’s wishes, but thinking of the forest, he felt afraid. “It is so dark out there, and there are wild animals. I could easily get hurt. I could even be eaten alive.”

His mind raced around, looking for a way out. “Master,” said the disciple, “to leave you and go out into the forest I would have to turn my back on you. I couldn’t possibly do that, for it would be most disrespectful.”

Again the Master said nothing, but went quietly out into the forest, and collected some wood for the fire.

When he returned with the wood, it was time to prepare the evening meal. He cooked it, and when it was ready he called to his disciple, “My son, the meal is prepared, come now and eat.”

At this the disciple came running and threw himself at his Master’s feet, saying earnestly, “O my Master, please forgive me! Twice I have disobeyed you. I could not possibly disobey you a third time. This time I will certainly do as you bid.”

Tales of the Mystic East



Crush the Pearl

History tells us a beautiful tale of the Master-disciple relationship. If we look back in time, we hear of the sacrifice disciples would make in order to lead a life of spirituality and follow the Master's word. Obedience and surrender to the Master was of utmost importance.

There is a story of King Mahmud and his loyal servant Ayaz, which portrays this level of obedience. One day, the king assembled his courtiers and showed them a magnificent pearl. The king passed the pearl to his minister asking him his opinion of it. The minister praised it, saying it was worth more than the gold a hundred donkeys could carry. Then came the King's instructions – break it! The minister replied that his hand could not do such a thing. The king rewarded him with a robe of honour. This went on with fifty or sixty courtiers. One by one, they imitated the minister and received new wealth from the king.

The pearl was then given to Ayaz. The king asked Ayaz his opinion, who could reply only that the pearl was more splendid than he could describe in words. Upon the king's instructions to Ayaz to break the pearl, much to the astonishment of the entire court, Ayaz crushed it into tiny pieces. The court assembly screamed at the recklessness of Ayaz, "How could you do that?" Ayaz replied, "What the king says is worth more than any pearl. I honour the king, not some coloured stone."

For a disciple on the path of God-realization, obedience is a necessary quality to cultivate. As Hazur Maharaj Ji says:

If we really love him, we will obey him. We cannot say we love him and, at the same time, not obey his instructions, not live the life he tells us to live. That is not love for the Master. If we really have faith in him, if we really love him, we will want to do what he wants us to do. And he wants us to meditate; therefore we should also try to meditate.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Over the passage of time, the perception of 'obedience' has changed. In the good old days, it was a quality people aspired towards, whereas today it is perceived as a liability. We may not fully comprehend the necessity for being obedient today, because from a young age, we are

encouraged to become independent thinkers. In this modern age, the labels we give to obedient people are words such as submissive or docile, and in this sense, the trait of obedience is something society generally frowns upon. Children are encouraged to be confident of their own decisions and are more inclined to do things their way rather than listen to their parents. A husband and wife relationship has evolved over time into each partner wanting their independence without having to 'obey' the dictates of their spouse.

This focus on independent thinking prioritizes the individual but in the process limits our spiritual potential. There is much more emphasis on "I, me, and mine," but the more we develop this line of thinking, the harder it becomes to attain our goal of self- and God-realization. The entire purpose of the spiritual path is to crush the ego and merge into the divine. When we put the self ahead, we are following the dictates of the mind and intellect, which is in complete contrast to the teachings. If we have a true desire to attain salvation, we must learn to surrender our ego, our self, our identity to the Master.

In *The Path of the Masters*, Dr Julian Johnson asks:

Why surrender your individual will or personality to a Master? Isn't that going back into voluntary slavery? Isn't that another way of crushing individual initiative and strength of character? The answer is that complete surrender to the Master is the only avenue or path to complete liberation.

Suppose you are lost in a dense forest. You haven't the least idea of the way out. You might wander around in there for days or weeks and finally die of starvation and thirst. But along comes an expert woodsman fully acquainted with the woods. He offers to show you the way out. Now, will you quibble about surrendering your own will to his?

This analogy very aptly describes our plight today. We have lost ourselves in this world of illusion, and the only way out is to surrender to the 'woodsman', to the Master.

How do we begin this process of surrender, for surely we know that this change cannot happen instantly? The answer is that much like Ayaz, we need to crush the pearl without question. We need to meditate every single day for our allotted two and a half hours. There should not

be any room for our intellect to take over and question the necessity of meditating. We must have a strong resolve to crush our mind every single time it tells us we are too tired to meditate, or that we have something else of utmost urgency which requires our time instead. If we make this a constant habit, then gradually we will begin to shed our individuality and begin the process of merging with the Lord. Slowly and surely, bit by bit, our ego will be replaced by humility. Then it will be easier to accept his will at every moment of our lives, and ultimately surrender ourselves completely, so that we may finally go back to our true home.



The Master's Promise

The Great Master had initiated a large number of Nepalese and other people from the surrounding hilly tracts, who throughout their lives had been killing goats and other animals for sacrifices and also for eating. Before this also, after initiating, the Great Master would always be slightly ill. But this time it was much worse than usual, and it made us all very nervous and apprehensive. On the tenth day his condition grew very serious. The doctors lost all hope. This state lasted for three days, and even after that we spent many sleepless nights and days. But during all this time the Great Master's joviality and good humour remained the same. One morning, the professor inquired about his health and asked how he felt.

"I am quite *tayaar bar tayaar* (ready to depart)," replied the Great Master.

This came like a bombshell and we were all overcome with grief and consternation. The professor could not restrain his tears. In a voice choked with emotion he asked, "In whose charge are you leaving us, Great Lord?"

"Why? Where am I going?" he asked.

"You said, Sir, you were '*tayaar bar tayaar*,'" replied the professor.

"Yes. I am *tayaar bar tayaar*," said the Great Master.

It was then that we realized that he was indulging in a little play upon the words '*tayaar bar tayaar*', which in Nihang Khalsa terminology meant that he was quite fit and healthy. Soon after this, he recovered very speedily. On the fourth day, he came out and sat for some time in the sun on the lawn in front of his house.

Some days after this he was sitting on the lawn in an easy chair when we, both the professor and I, being alone with him, thought it was an opportune time to make a request we had in mind. The professor started the conversation as follows:

"Maharaj Ji, you are the Lord of earth and heaven – would you grant us a boon?"

The Great Master appeared to be saying, "Yes, ask," when he suddenly restrained himself and inquired, "But what boon do you want to have?"

We kept silent for some time.

"Well, come on, speak out," said the Great Master, smiling.

We were sitting at his feet on a mat, and like a child I said earnestly, “Whatever it is, our Lord, promise that you will grant it.”

At this the Master laughed and said, “I am not a prophet. How can I grant a request unless I know what it is?”

“Our Lord! You are not a prophet, but prophets come from you,” said I.

The professor then blurted out, “Sir, we wish that we may leave here before you go.”

It is perhaps needless to say that in the presence of the Great Master we were always so awe stricken or reverence stricken that we sometimes forgot what we had proposed to say.

“Yes,” the Great Master replied, “you can gladly leave whenever you like. I intend to stay here till the end of September.”

An involuntary laugh escaped our lips. Our Lord also laughed innocently, thus conveying to us that he had understood our real meaning. “Not from Dalhousie, Sir, but from this earth. Please ordain that we may leave it before you go,” said I.

“No. You should neither desire to live nor wish to die. Leave everything in the hands of him who is the Lord of life and death,” he said.

“We do not want to live here a single moment without you,” we implored him. “Life without you would be worse than death, our beloved Lord.”

“I shall always be with you. That I promise,” said our Lord.

Call of the Great Master



The Importance of Darkness

Saints of the mystic path tell us that in order to see the Light, one has to embrace the darkness. Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh explains:

Keep your attention between the eyes and do simran: do not try to listen to the Sound. As far as possible, do not let your attention stray away from the point between the eyes. If you cannot see the Light, go on looking into the darkness. This seeing is called Nirat, the soul's faculty of seeing, the exercise of which is indeed a difficult thing.

With the Three Masters, Vol. III

In their answers, the spiritual Masters almost always say two things in combination when talking about doing simran. They say “Keep your attention between the eyes, at the eye focus, in the forehead, and do simran.” They rarely just say, “Do simran” but we usually ignore the first instruction and only hear the second part. Hence, sometimes we just ‘do simran’ without paying attention. However, in order to achieve concentration, it is necessary to pin down the seeing or visualizing faculty as well as the thinking faculty. Both need to be engaged. If we cannot do dhyan (which the Masters say we cannot do) and we do not see inner light, then we are not ‘off the hook’. Instead, we must actively ‘see’ the darkness within and holding on to that, do simran.

When you close your eyes, you are here in the centre of the darkness in the forehead, and being there, you do the simran. You also feel that your Master is there and that you are there in that darkness and you are doing simran in the presence of the Master, if you can't visualize his form. So be there and also feel your Master is there, and that will hold your attention there in the darkness.

You close your eyes; you see nothing but darkness. Be there and do simran. Being in the darkness, do simran. That is what I mean by looking at the darkness.

Doing simran is an effort you are putting forth, for when we do simran, we have to forget the whole world. We are concerned only with the darkness in our forehead. We close our eyes and we see nothing but

darkness, and when you close your eyes, you are there where you should be. Keeping your mind in that darkness, do simran.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

If we allow our imagination to combine with our memory and create scenes which play on the inner screen of our minds, then we are not focused on the darkness. Rather, we have allowed our simran to become a background voice-over to our own personal slide show. This kind of simran does not deliver concentration.

You be at the eye focus, which means to be in that darkness. When you close the eyes, you are there where you should be. Being there, you should do simran.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

The advice from the Masters means that we need to put in double the effort to do effective simran – to see both the darkness and repeat the simran, two things together, not just one thing. We are trying to hold two faculties in check, not just one.

As long as your attention is there in the darkness, you are there, but when you start thinking about all the problems of the world, you are not there, whether you see the darkness or something else. When your attention is there, you are there. If your attention is not there, you are not there.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Effective meditation means that we need to approach meditation like the words from the famous song *The Sound of Silence* written by Paul Simon: “Hello Darkness my old friend, I’ve come to talk with you again...”



The Master Answers

A selection of question and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Maharaj Ji, I haven't been initiated because I am still a scholar, but I believe and have faith in you as my master. I would like to know whether you guide and protect me like you guide and protect the already initiated souls?*

A: My dear child, the Lord is in every one of us and he protects all his devotees. If you are filled with his devotion, with his love, naturally it is his grace which is pulling you from within, and if he's creating that pull he will not forsake you, he will not ignore you at all. He will always be guiding you.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Q: *Maharaj Ji, in the initiation I remember there were several things towards the end of the initiation that the Master said – that if we follow those things we would be saved from returning to the world again. There were five or six prescriptive things the master said, like reading the books, keeping good company ...*

A: At the time of initiation, we are told only about meditation, nothing else. We are told that this is not a religion. Now you know the art of simran and dhyan and hearing the sound. You should not feel that you have to cut yourself off from all your worldly activities, that you have become superior or better than everyone else or that you have to separate yourself from your worldly obligations. Then we are told to digest whatever we achieve within, not to divulge or to vomit outside but to digest all this within ourselves. We are told that we should try to attend the meetings to derive strength from each other. There are many problems which come in meditation which are generally solved in satsang. And if we have no opportunity for satsang, we should read the books. Then if you still don't find the answer, you can write to me. That is all in the initiation instructions. Only these things will help you and nothing else. The instructions are very simple.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Q: *Master, how can we possibly clear all our karmas?*

A: By meditation. That is the only way. You see, brother, the Lord's grace is not lacking; our efforts are lacking, our sincerity is lacking, our faith is lacking. The Lord's grace is not lacking. He is more anxious to pull us than we are anxious to go back to him. But for that we would not be on the path at all today. It is because of his pull that we find ourselves on the path.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Q: *Well, is it correct to assume then that once you are initiated everything that happens to you is for your own spiritual good? That everything that happens is helping you to go back to the Father?*

A: At least we should take it in that light. It may be a bitter pill to swallow sometimes. Because, you see, it's good from the Father's point of view, not from the worldly point of view. Our concept of his grace is something very different. We think that if he gives us a very good partner and a good house and a lot of money and a good reputation in this world, if we are worshipped by people, then the Father's grace is very much on us. But his grace may come in a different way. He may take your wife from you or your child or your friend. And you may become frustrated by this world and turn back to the Father. That may be his grace, to pull you out of all the attachments of the world and make you realize the reality, which you never would have thought about otherwise. You were so much engrossed in your own love, your achievements and your own wealth that you have practically forgotten him. That is not his grace. His grace is what pulls you back to him, and that may be a very bitter pill. Our concept of his grace is something very different – it is always from the worldly point of view.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III



Prayer

An Explanation by Maharaj Sawan Singh

For initiation into spiritual practices and for circumstances favourable to a spiritual way of life, it is very important to implore God or the Master for help. When a person realizes that despite his best efforts all his plans and endeavours have failed, he gets disheartened and gives up trying. But one who is realistic tries to achieve his objectives and at the same time recognizes God as the prime mover and the cause behind all causes. He relinquishes ambition and leaves the results of his endeavours to God, believing implicitly that God knows and does what is best for him. He thanks God if the results are favourable (from his point of view), but he also accepts with a smile the outcomes that fail to meet his expectations. At every step, he beseeches God for help because he knows that there are so many things that are beyond his capabilities. This call for divine help and intervention is generally called prayer.

God lives in our hearts and is the fountainhead of all powers. When we remember or think about him, we derive power from him that helps us find solutions to our problems. This process also gives us patience, contentment, calmness and the capacity to endure. Our soul is a descendent of the Lord and is imbued with great potential. A person makes use of these powers as his mind generates potential energy through concentration at the time of prayer. Those who are familiar with inner supplication make use of the inner grace of the Father, while others who raise their hands in external prayers in temples and mosques receive the benefit of their prayers in proportion to their faith and the concentration of their minds.

Prayer is a universal sentiment. When a person finds himself helpless in a given situation, he seeks the help of some superior power who, in his judgment, has the willingness and capability to redress a grievance or an unmet need. Similarly, when he finds himself in a forbidding situation – perhaps his friends have turned against him, his relatives have deserted him, he has nothing to fall back on or sees no way out of his predicament – he begs God or those august souls who are one with him for help. All religions allude to the fact that one can achieve spiritual perfection only through supplication to God or the Master. Prayer is the shortest and the most natural way to communicate with God.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. III



Forget Progress to Make Progress

Maharaj Charan Singh describes our predicament when we try to measure our progress on the Sant Mat path:

Sister, we can only measure when we know how much we have yet to cover and how much we have already covered – only then can we know. If you know your destination is 100 miles away, and you have been able to cover one mile, only then can you measure. When you don't know how far your destination is, how can you measure your spiritual progress? How can you know how much of a dent you have been able to make in that big heap of karma? We can never know. But by meditation we definitely know how much our attitude has changed towards the whole creation, our environment, our relations.

Through meditation our own attitude changes towards everybody, and we feel that bliss and happiness within ourselves. That is the measurement we can make, by which we feel that we are progressing in meditation. But how much we have covered and how much we have yet to clear, it's impossible to say. But definitely meditation helps us to get that peace, bliss and contentment from within. We don't get so easily upset. We take life easier and accept God's will as life comes. So our life changes in that way – that advantage you can feel, but you can't say how much you have already covered and how much is left. That is impossible to know.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

In this statement, Maharaj Charan Singh is being very frank. He is realistic when he says it is truly impossible to measure our progress. There are so many factors in the progress equation that are unknown to us, so there is really no way to figure it out. This calculation is beyond what our minds can process. Thus, efforts in this direction are simply pointless and can derail our enthusiasm, causing us to become frustrated and discouraged. Therefore, the Masters tell us that it would be in our best interest to forget thinking about progress altogether.

If we want to see some measure of improvement in our spiritual lives, he advises us to simply look at ourselves. How much have our attitudes and habits changed? How much love do we have in our hearts for our

Master and fellow men? How content have we become with what the Lord has given us? These changes that we see in ourselves are the measure we can use to see how following a spiritual path has benefitted us.

Most of all, we should focus on our spiritual commitments, especially meditation. There is no Sant Mat path if there is no meditation. If there is no meditation, there is no progress. So we have to concentrate on our continued effort because this is the most difficult thing to do.

When the Master initiates us, puts us on the path, naturally he wants us to make progress. If he didn't want us to make progress, he would not have put us on the path at all. When the disciple is able to withdraw his consciousness to the eye centre and become attached to that Spirit within, the disciple is happy and the Master becomes happy, because it is the duty of the Master to take that allotted soul back to the Father. So when the soul is progressing within on its way to the Father, naturally the Master is happy. The Master always wants that disciple to try to follow the path. When the disciple is putting in effort, the Master will not withhold his grace. The Lord is always there to help us.

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

Therefore, we must try putting in the effort to meditate. The mere fact we are on the path means that we have the capacity to meditate and the ability to progress. But our efforts must be there, for only with sustained effort can we tap into his grace.

All of us know only too well that we need his immense grace to keep our meditation going. There are so many challenges a disciple faces in worldly life. Even for someone who has been on the path for many years, there will be times when meditation is difficult and dry. But if we continue to try despite the challenges, his grace will always be there to support us.

Well, brother, when the Lord wants you to put in effort, you will automatically put in effort. You don't have any excuses to give at all. He will give you the environment, facilities, opportunity, the pull, the yearning within. You can't help but put in effort then. It's not that you are getting up at 3 o'clock in the morning – there's someone that's awakening you. You will not get rest the whole day unless you attend

to your meditation – there is someone who is creating that unrest in you, who is pulling you towards him. We are pursued, actually. But we should try to do our best. We shouldn't try to find any excuses. But when he pulls our soul, he will just pull it.

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

To experience true progress, we should forget about monitoring our progress. Instead we should focus on sustaining our efforts at meditation, because only when we put in effort, will we witness the Master's grace.

Any minute you spend in love and devotion for the Father is to your credit. It's a stepping-stone. You are making some progress – maybe at an ant's speed, but you are making progress. Any little bit of love and devotion for the Father is to your credit.

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

As true spiritual disciples on the Sant Mat path, our focus should not be on progress but on diligent and sincere devotion towards our spiritual duties. When this happens, our love for the Master blossoms, and so does his abundant grace. Inevitably, progress just comes naturally.



Did You Know?

There is no greater wealth than progress on the spiritual path – a wealth which accompanies us even after death. We accumulate this wealth by perseverance.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

There is no power on earth or heaven greater than the power of the sound current. It is the primary power. All other powers are derived or secondary. So anybody who is connected with the sound current and practises, must accept once and for all that he cannot be adversely affected by hypnotists, spiritualists, mediums, or any of their clique. Even the angel of death dare not come near one who is connected with the sound current.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The Masters do not find it consistent with the will of the Supreme Father to use extraordinary powers to upset the usual routine of life and set in motion novel reforms. The Masters understand that the will of the Supreme is being carried out among the people. So they are content to let the Supreme Father manage the world in his own way, and they themselves obey with loving submission whatever the Father directs them to do. The management of the world may not suit us, but evidently suits the one who is doing the managing. So we had best leave it at that. The Masters look upon the drama of human life from a vastly higher point of view than most of us, and so they understand it better. They are not in such a hurry as we are to work revolutionary changes. They accept the principle that the Supreme Father is already doing the best that can be done for the people under the circumstances.

With a Great Master in India



Play It Right

In the game of life, destiny deals us a set of cards – circumstances that we have no choice but to work with. Nevertheless, we are told that it is up to us how we play the game. We could have a great hand and lose, or we could have a lousy hand, play it right, and still win.

In order to attempt to play it right though, we must start by accepting what comes our way as being the result of our own past actions. When faced with difficult situations, we can curse destiny, we can cry and rebel, or we can accept the consequences of our own actions, take responsibility, and try to pick up the pieces.

It would be one thing if we could simply fold and cut our losses. But when there is no such choice in life, if we have to play the game whether we like it or not, then why not play it right?

One of the most effective ways to help us improve our game is to focus on solutions and not simply on the problem. After all, how many times have we been able to clear a traffic jam by swearing our way through it? How many times have we settled our bills by complaining about how expensive things have become? Or how many times have we alleviated pain by moaning and groaning? Rather than spending our time and energy complaining about things and not getting anywhere, it would be a smarter choice to try and focus on a course of action that would help solve these problems.

We have to be careful though, because once we have thought about what we need to do in order to solve a problem, what tends to set in next is worry about the possible outcome of our actions.

Once we take everything into consideration and make a mindful choice on the card that has to be played next, then there is no point worrying. It is understandable to be afraid of some of the possible results, but what is unwise is repeatedly going through them in our head and consequently multiplying our grief.

We can only try our best; other than that there is nothing else we can do. Once the batter is mixed as per the recipe, there is nothing else that needs to be added to it to obtain a sponge cake – it just has to be put into the oven.

Yes, we can pray for it to turn out the way we would like, but even this is not necessary. Our Master will give us that which is best for us; he always does. We should know that there is always some good in whatever he deems fit for us – it is just a matter of focusing on the donut and not on the hole.

After the 17th-century scholar Matthew Henry was accosted by thieves and robbed of his purse, he wrote this in his diary:

Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourthly, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.

As quoted in *Every Day Deserves a Chance*

Life is about where we choose to put our attention. If we consciously try to allocate our attention to finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems; if we make a mindful effort to do our best given the circumstances and then leave the rest to him who knows better; and if we keep attempting to focus on the positive no matter what may be going on in life, we will find that it is easier for us to cope.

Nevertheless, there will be many times when difficult circumstances will draw our attention forcibly in their direction, making us feel disillusioned, debilitated and perhaps powerless to make the necessary choices.

We have been emphatically reassured over and over again that our worldly and spiritual lives will be taken care of, provided we are sincere in our meditation; that is, sincere in our intention, our preparation and our execution of it. If we keep our part of the bargain every day, come what may, our Master will help us make the necessary decisions.

If we do our meditation, we will know and feel that we are not playing the game of life alone; that the Master-player is on our side, cheering us on, supporting us and doing everything in his power to make sure we end up playing it right!



Repartee of the Wise

A story is told about Sri Aurobindo. He was asked by a philosopher, “Do you believe in God?”

“No” he replied, “I do not believe in God.”

The philosopher was shocked. “I thought you had seen God,” he said.

Sri Aurobindo laughed. “Yes, I have seen God, that’s why I say I don’t believe. Belief is out of ignorance. I know. I don’t believe.

As quoted in *Concepts and Illusions*

One of Guru Gobind Singh’s disciples, Bhai Kanhayya, who was responsible for the supply of drinking water to the Guru’s soldiers, was seen offering water to the enemy soldiers wounded in the battlefield. When the matter was reported to the Guru, he called Bhai Kanhayya immediately to explain his conduct before those who had charged him with treason.

Bhai Kanhayya said, “My Lord, I am unable to distinguish enemies from friends. I see you in all of them – how can I refuse *you* a drink?”

Hearing this the Guru said that Bhai Kanhayya had rightly understood his teachings and commented:

*A person who has shed
the veil of ignorance from his heart
will treat everyone the same,
whether Hindus or Turks.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *My Submission*



Unburdened by Love

A missionary serving the needy youth of an impoverished area of Nigeria was walking his daily trek to get fresh drinking water, a good sixteen-kilometer round trip. On his way back, painstakingly lugging the heavy 25-litre jug of water, while profusely sweating and thinking of the sacrifice he made every day bringing water to his fellow missionaries, he noticed a woman in front of him balancing the same 25-litre jug on her head. But that was not all; in each hand she carried a sack of cassava – the staple food of poor Nigerians, and also strapped to her back was a baby.

The missionary was stunned, but what caught his attention even more was how the woman was singing and smiling as she carried the heavy burden on her head, arms and back! She showed no sign of hardship or disdain for her situation. Running to her, the missionary offered to help carry her burdens, to which she laughingly told him that she didn't have any burdens, that the water and cassava she carried was to feed her child whom she loved with all her heart, and that great love unburdened her, so much so that she felt no weight on her head, arms and shoulders.

Her message touched the missionary, and he never ever again confused a blessing with a burden. It made him understand that true love can never be a burden for the one you love, no matter the situation, and that bad situations are an opportunity to serve the ones we love in whatever way or capacity we can.

From a spiritual perspective, many have heard the Master say that love is to give, give and give! The Sant Mat teachings tell us that submission is the highest expression of love, and living in the will of the Master is a primary element in the Master-disciple relationship. Who is the best example of this? None other than the Master himself. He practises what he teaches.

The Master's mission is to unburden his disciples of the illusion that is this life, and he does it with love and compassion – by teaching us the path of Light and Sound, and reinforcing our connection to the Creator. And though we still have to face the ups and downs of our destiny, ultimately, we now know where we are headed.

In the fantasy story *Alice in Wonderland*, when Alice reached a fork on the road, she asked the Cheshire Cat: “Which road do I take?”

The cat replied, “Where do you want to go?” “I don’t know,” Alice answered. “Then,” said the cat, “it does not matter.”

Such is the condition of humanity. However, a disciple of a true Master is no longer an Alice in the wonderland of illusion. The Master has given clear directions. What remains is for us to focus on our daily spiritual duty. By doing so, we will develop love and devotion and the discipline and commitment needed to silence the mind so that we can unburden ourselves from illusion and reconnect with the Creator.

Maharaj Charan Singh put it in perspective when he said:

This world was created, we are separated from the Father, and we are condemned to this separation. Unless we merge back into him, we cannot escape from birth and death. We have to grow spiritually within ourselves to understand the purpose of creation. And then perhaps you won't even ask the Father why he has created you, because you will be one with the Father and will understand.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Most of us have been on the path for some time. We have struggled and have yet to see results. The journey is not easy. In fact, it would be impossible but for the grace of the Lord. We should never lose hope; Master assures us that he is with us every step of the way.

A disciple asked Hazur Maharaj Ji: “We put in so much effort, and it seems like nothing comes for a while, that we’re in that vacuum you speak of. We’re putting in all this effort to give up our ego and give up the world, but my mind rebels. How do I deal with my mind?”

Hazur Maharaj Ji replied:

Brother, what do we give up of the world? What are we supposed to give up of the world? What is your concept of what you have to give up? You don't leave your families. You don't leave your children. You don't leave your job. You don't leave your house. You don't leave your friends.

What do you give up? Do you give up the sensual pleasures? One can enjoy those in a family life. What is there to give up?

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

In a very gentle way, the Master tells us we have it easy, yet we complain about the little burden we have to carry, not realizing how light he has made our load.

Whatever part the Lord has assigned us to play, we have to play, but with a detached mind. If a honey bee sits on the edge of a utensil containing honey, it will taste the honey and fly away with dry wings. If it lands right in the middle of the honey, its wings will become heavy and it will not be able to fly away – it will die. So living in the world, discharging our obligations, we have not to forget the purpose for which this human birth was given to us. When that purpose is before us, automatically, naturally, we become disinterested in worldly things. But we don't run away from them.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

And so we continue our journey fulfilling our destiny, unburdened through God's love, singing the sound of silence all the way home.



Heart to Heart

When Maharaj Ji prepared to leave Washington on June 15, Mr Weekley voiced the feelings of all the satsangis who had gathered to say good-bye:

“Maharaj Ji, we can never repay you for all the gifts you have bestowed on us by your coming.”

“I am not leaving this place empty-handed,” the Master said quite seriously. “The beautiful smiles, the laughter, the love they have given me – I will need extra luggage to carry this back to India with me.”

Heaven on Earth

One evening in October 1988, we were with Maharaj Ji. Losses due to the floods at the Dera were on everyone’s mind, and Mrs Bharat Ram asked Maharaj Ji, “What was the loss to the Dera because of the floods? It is said to run into millions of rupees.”

Maharaj Ji’s reply was typical of his attitude towards human beings as opposed to money. He said: “Behenji, I only know that there was no loss of human life in the Dera. That concerns me the most.”

Treasure Beyond Measure



BOOK REVIEW

Jalal al-Din Rumi: Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi (Selections)

TRANSLATED BY FARIDA MALEKI

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To be with Rumi is to dance with him, to sing with him, to open our own heart to the “murderous and amorous gaze” of the beloved. “My religion,” Rumi said, “is love.” Specifically, it is love for his teacher, the one whose beauty is so great that Rumi embraced the death of his limited self for the joy of union with him. “Shams-e Tabrizi,” he said, “since the first day I saw your face, my religion has been love for your face.”

This 13th-century Sufi mystic, scholar, teacher, poet and lover poured out his devotion in five great works, including the *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, the source for the poems in this volume, and the immense *Masnavi*. The *Divan* offers more than 44,000 lines of poetry, all on the subject of his love for his teacher, Shams-e Tabrizi. They portray his anguish of estrangement from his beloved and the joy of his union with him.

This translation uses simple modern English together with factual commentaries to cast light on the deep mystical meanings of Rumi’s message of transformation through love.

*Your love made me drunk, made me clap my hands.
Drunk and unaware of myself, what can I do?
Once a sour grape, now I am sweet.
I cannot make myself sour again...*

His poetry is like a jewel that we can hold up to the light of our own inner awareness and savour each illuminating facet. We gain more insight with every reading.

*Love is a sea, its ... water like fire, its waves like pearls.
The pearls are secrets, whose every facet
leads a wayfarer to inner meaning.*

Rumi uses innumerable metaphors and images to reveal subtle inner meanings. Wine symbolizes the intoxication of inner Sound and Light; a house made of water and dust is the human body. The rose garden is where the lover's heart opens, and the sun has the radiance of Shams-e Tabrizi.

Rumi's life story, told briefly in the book, itself offers profound spiritual messages – particularly, the story of his interactions with his master Shams. The accounts of Shams' and Rumi's first meeting vary but agree on the instantaneous recognition and intensity of feeling between the two men. They then spent several months together in seclusion. From first contact with Shams, Rumi was transformed both within and without. "When your love enflamed my heart, all I had was burned to ashes, except your love." Rumi gave up teaching and preaching, forsaking his role as the conservative Islamic lawyer to become a wild, abandoned dervish. This caused consternation and resentment within the community, but Rumi was adamant in his loyalty and devotion to Shams. "I am not afraid. I will not run away from the beloved who's killing me."

*People are saying, "You should not be that way!"
I wasn't like this – he made me this way...
I will fill earth and sky with gratitude
For, though I was earth, now I am sky.*

But the path of love rarely runs smooth, and after only a few years Shams disappeared, leaving Rumi for good. Rumi's son wrote that his father's "wail and cry reached heaven. All heard his lament, young and old." Shams' final departure ensured that Rumi would have to turn within to find him. Rumi wrote, "The lighted lamp kissed the unlit lamp and went away. He fulfilled his aim... Why should I go on searching the world when my beloved is within?"

Rumi promises each of us that the same inner spiritual union he sought and achieved is possible for all; it is a hidden treasure to be found within us. He declares that the beloved is nigh:

*With eyes closed, you ask,
"Where has the bright day gone?"
Then the sun hits your eyes, saying,
"Here I am! Open the door!"*

The signs of God's intimate presence pervade us within.

*Where is one mouth from which
The fragrance of the soul is not coming?
Where is one heart to which that Sign is not coming?*

...

*Has anyone taken a few steps towards
The rose garden of love
To whom a hundred salutations
From that Gardener are not coming?*

Rumi makes the spiritual goal seem close, attainable, already and eternally our own.

*With every breath,
the song of love
resounds from left and right.
We're going to the sky.
Who wants to come and see the sights?*

*We have been to that sky
and befriended the angels.
Let's all go again, for that is our town.*

*We are higher than the heavens,
greater than the angels.
Why not pass beyond them?
Our home is the Divine.*

Ultimately, in the dance between lover and beloved, between seeker and the one sought, the lover realizes that the beloved does all; it is he who seeks us and takes us back to himself. Rumi speaks in the voice of the beloved calling to the lover:

*I have come to pull you to me by the ear –
To seat you in my heart and soul,
To make you lose your heart and self.*

*I, sweet spring, have come to you,
O rosebush, to draw you joyfully to my side,
To scatter your petals.*

*I have come to this house to beautify you,
To take you, like lover's prayers,
Above and beyond the sky...*

Yet Rumi makes clear the effort, dedication, and sacrifice demanded of the lover.

*He asked, "How long will you persevere?"
I said, "Until you let me in."
He asked, "How long will you eagerly wait?"
I said, "Till resurrection day..."*

*He asked, "Where is the hardship?"
I said, "In the alley of your love."
He asked, "How are you doing in there?"
I said, "I persevere."*



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