

March 2010

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 2 A Spiritual Letter
- 4 A Laundry Tale
- 11 Being Still
- 14 Yes We Can
- 16 Love
- 19 Something to Think About
- 21 Seeking the Comforter
- 25 Finding Reality
- 30 The Seat of the Soul
- 31 Why I Love Being a Satsangi
- 37 Bollywood: A Spiritual Perspective
- 40 Anger
- 44 The Sultan Who Moved His Beard
- 47 My Two Bosses
- 48 Book Review

Spiritual Link

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VOLUME 6 • ISSUE THREE • MARCH 2010

A Spiritual Letter

The very reason we are placed on this earth is to enable us to realize God within ourselves. Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in are due to previous karmas, and so long as we try to act in accordance with his will, whatever the results may be – whether pleasant or unpleasant – it helps us in our spiritual progress. To go back to our Father's house is the main purpose of our coming into this life. All other things we do simply to maintain ourselves in this world. But while doing so, we should not forget the Father who has given us all these things.

You are very lucky to have been given the way to realize the Master within yourself, so you should always devote as much time to bhajan and simran as possible, as that is the only way by which we can be cleansed so that we may be liberated. The more we attempt to do this, the more grace and blessings we receive from him within.

This Master is *within* us and so near, but the curtain of the mind stands in between. If we cleanse and vacate the chamber of the mind, and wait lovingly and expectantly for him, surely he will permit us to see him within. The best way to cleanse the mind is to vacate the nine doors of the body through repetition of the five holy names with love and devotion. Faith and despair are two contradictory things. Happiness lies in surrender and resignation to the Master within. Therefore, please continue with your spiritual practice with increased faith and love, and the Master within will take care of everything else. The results are all in his hands and whatever happens will be for your spiritual benefit.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*



A Laundry Tale

*'Twas on a Monday morning that I beheld my darling,
She looked so sweet and charming in every high degree.
She looked so neat and nimble-o, a-washing of the linen-o,
Dashing away with the smoothing iron she stole my heart away.*

This English folk song gives each day of the week a verse all of its own and allocates a different task to each day. I won't take up these pages by setting it all down!

There's something enormously comforting about domestic routine. I know we groan about the household chores we rush through to get to something else, but at heart we love a well-run home.

In a previous age, household skills were considered desirable in any woman wanting a husband. That's why the song quoted above celebrates these routines, taking us from washing to bleaching to hanging the washing out, to folding it, ironing, airing and finally wearing it.

On the spiritual path we also understand the reassurance that a steady routine brings, and there's a similar hope, underlying our activity, that we'll be pleasing our 'suitor' (our Master).

A-washing of the linen-o

In *Sar Bachan*, Soami Ji often used the metaphor of washing clothes to show us we must cleanse the mind and so bring about spiritual purification. He says:

*The colours of this world are soiled,
take my advice – have them washed clean.*

He also says:

*Go to the Guru's ghaat, O mind
and have the garment of the soul washed clean.*

The *Guru's ghaat*, or laundry, is satsang. It's here that the *garment of the soul*, which is mind, can come into contact with the cleansing power of the teachings of the saints. We may not like to be considered dirty, but our mind, like clothes which have been worn too long, has been around in this creation a long time. The mind is ingrained with ego and encrusted with its often arrogant assumptions. Understanding the teachings helps us to lose this resistant crust. We're then ready to immerse ourselves in the practice that will get to the deep-down dirt.

Deep-down clean

In the shabd quoted above, Soami Ji also says:

*Using the soap of seva, wash it (the mind) with darshan
then immerse it in the water of love.*

On the second day of the week, the folk song has its heroine bleach the clothes. Whether bleaching or soaping, the point is clear – cleaning is hard work and drastic remedies are needed.

The seva which is offered at many satsang centres gives us the opportunity to work alongside others, occupying our spare time usefully whilst having the benefit of being in an environment that is conducive to our spiritual development. Why does Soami Ji call seva *soap*? Soap, bleach and strong cleaning agents are tough on stains so Soami Ji is hinting that we can expect seva to be tough on the mind. This we can only find out through experience. In one way or another,

the experience of seva often forces us towards self-discipline as we find we have to curb the ego, listen to others, abandon some dearly held views and let ourselves become a tiny part of the whole.

How is it possible to persuade the proud mind to voluntarily accept this?

Through *darshan* and *the water of love* says Soami Ji. We may sometimes suffer a little in seva before we find out that the final question to which every problem can be referred is: “Who am I doing this for?” And the answer which settles everything: “For the Master”.

Hanging out

However much the mind is exposed to satsang and seva, it also hangs out in the world a good deal. An intelligent person, when hanging the washing on a clothes line, uses a clothes prop to haul the line with its heavy load upwards and so keep the clothes away from the risk of dragging on the ground and being muddied again. This metaphorical hauling ourselves upwards is often recommended by Maharaj Charan Singh in his letters of advice to satsangis. His advice was frequently about focus and attitude. If we’re trying to lead a life which includes regular time for meditation, it’s quite important to avoid getting pulled into the distractions of the world even – or perhaps especially – on the mental level. In a letter in *Light on Sant Mat* he describes the philosophy of Sant Mat as being: “... to be in the world but not of it, and to go on working and rising above the world while living in it.”

In another letter he advises:

The world exists for us and influences us only when we play through the nine doors, but when we make for the tenth door we rise above the world.

Both letters infer that the choice is ours – to let our attention slip downwards, reacting to each event of life as it comes along, or to make the effort to keep our attention upwards and get to that level where we can show appropriate involvement yet still stay clear of the dirt.

Putting ourselves away

On Thursday our folk heroine gets round to folding up the clean washing: *She looked so neat and nimble-o, a-folding of the linen-o.* Perhaps, at this stage, we should recognize that the parallel with the spiritual life is becoming over-stretched!

And yet ... Don't we 'fold' ourselves away when we get down to the serious business of meditation? Just as the song celebrates a valued domestic routine, the disciples of a true Master are also privileged to enjoy a special and transforming routine. The only difference is that the spiritual routine will eventually be imbued for us with a far deeper and dearer meaning than any domestic exercise can be. The spiritual routine has a basis in the physical – we physically sit down in meditation each day, whether it's on a particular chair or mat, whether it's early in the morning or late in the evening, in our bedroom or spare room or corner of the living room. We may have a cup of tea first, look out at the night sky, read something, wrap ourselves in a shawl or blanket. But after a while, that physical routine is exchanged for the repetition of the five names, a routine that leads us from the physical point of focus between the two eyes and into the level of the spiritual. We have folded away the parts of ourselves that were exposed to the outer world and now we are looking inwards. There is no need to respond to anything outside, and we can be at complete rest.

The smoothing iron

Or we would be at rest, were it not for the ripples created by the mind. Ripples or wrinkles, for this we need to 'dash away' with the

smoothing iron of simran, because it is this assiduous devotion to task that will eventually win the Master's heart.

Time and time again, the mind's attention will slip away from the names and, time and time again, we will have to bring it back again. It is not our 'success' in doing this which counts but sticking with the attempt. The Master expects from us this daily practice session because it is only in this way that we can eventually succeed in gaining control over the mind. This is essential so that with a quiet mind we can begin to hear the Shabd which resounds inside us and which is the ultimate purifying power. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

There should be no strain at the time of simran. Just keep your attention in darkness in your forehead ... and try to prevent the attention from sliding down or going out. If it does, bring it back. When you find yourself calm, one-pointed and introspective, utilize the time for listening to the Sound.

Sound or Shabd is the Power that will in due course pull you up, but the ground must be prepared by simran.

Light on Sant Mat

Clean clothes

Come Saturday, the laundry has been washed, dried and ironed and is being put out to air. Aha! So that's what makes this song so energetic and joyful – each task was leading up to this point, that someone would put on these beautiful clean clothes and go out in them on Sunday. Soami Ji says:

When the garment of the soul is washed clean and pure, the mind is immensely delighted to wear it.

Sar Bachan

In the same way, all that preparation of the spiritual ground, all that attention to simran and bhajan reaches its fulfilment when the Master is pleased and his love blossoms in our heart. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

The Master is never happier than when he sees the disciple working honestly and faithfully, trying to reach his goal. And of course, his blessings always go out to such a disciple.

Light on Sant Mat

Of course, it was the Master really, all along, – the master washerman – who arranged for these clothes to get clean, who came and cast his loving eye over the whole procedure, and who then comes forward, smilingly, to meet the soul in its clean attire. Soami Ji says:

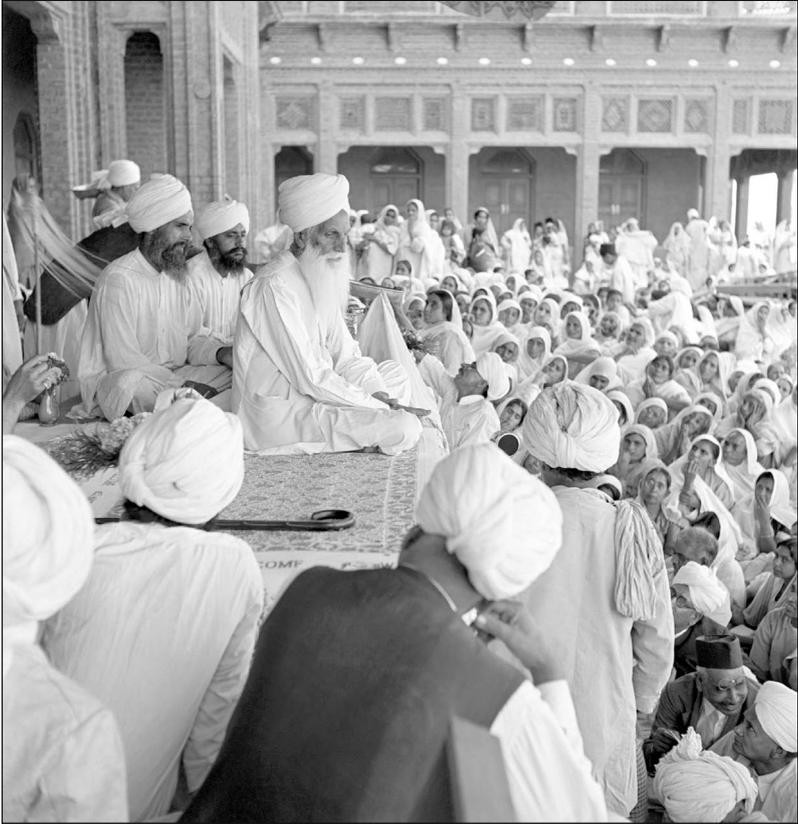
*There is no beloved like the Master,
only he can wash clean the soiled mind.*

Sar Bachan



*If a man is unclean within,
By bathing at pilgrim places
He will not become pure and reach heaven.
Nothing will be gained by impressing people,
For the Lord is not ignorant or naïve.
Adore the Lord, the only God,
And know: Service to the Master
Is the true holy bath.*

Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name



Maharaj Sawan Singh



Satsang is so unique that even God is enamoured of it, and it is incumbent on one therefore to try to find a Saint, and either attend his Satsang or keep His company. For this alone can be the means of his salvation. If one obtains the company of a Saint and develops faith in Him, the fulfilment of his life's mission is ensured.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters Vol 1

Being Still

Sitting still is vital for meditation as only through stillness can one achieve concentration. Yet for many of us this becomes quite a challenge. Not fidgeting in a forty-five minute satsang is hard enough, let alone two and a half hours during meditation. It's almost like going to the gym for the first time and starting off on the treadmill. We think we can easily run for twenty minutes so we set this as our target. In the beginning we have a lot of energy, however ten minutes down the line, we are sweating, out of breath and completely exhausted. Every minute after that seems eternal. Similar is the case with our meditation, we start off with a lot of enthusiasm and with determination to keep still for as long as possible. However, after a while, we may have an urgency to move and every minute after that can seem a struggle.

A good trainer at a gym will advise that it is best not to over exert the body. Stamina is built slowly, by adding a little extra time to that achieved in the previous session. The same is applicable to keeping still; it's not possible to achieve the target in a day or two. We too require constant training. We have to slowly build on the time we have achieved and persistent effort in our daily practice will eventually help us to achieve our target.

At the gym, if we exercise regularly for a few weeks, we will feel much healthier and build our stamina. However, if we then stop exercising, our stamina level will drop and it will be difficult to exercise for the same length of time as we did before. In a similar manner, it is important to persevere and attend to our meditation regularly, gradually increasing the time we give to our practice, without any breaks.

A fitness instructor would also stress the importance of posture when carrying out exercises. A bad posture can result in an injury when lifting weights. Posture is also important in meditation.

When sitting for meditation, it is important to sit in a relaxed position with the spine and neck straight. The chin can be slightly tucked in but not so much that it drops forward. Also, the head should not be tilted backwards or forwards. Both positions might induce us to fall asleep. The eyes should be closed and the attention held in the middle of the eyebrows at the spiritual eye centre. Be careful not to invert the eyes towards the eye centre. The hands can face upwards or downwards and can rest naturally on the knees or thighs. Our whole body should be at ease.

Meditation is an activity that involves both our mind and our body. If we don't adopt a posture that supports and helps the process of meditation, we will be obstructing our meditation practice. The important thing is to sit with our body motionless and our back upright and straight. This will help both our concentration and our health. It is not important whether we sit on a chair, Western style or cross legged on the floor, Indian style; both are fine ways to meditate.

Living Meditation

Another interesting similarity between running on the treadmill and our meditation is that when we are conscious of the countdown meter/clock, our target time seems unachievable. It is much easier to exercise when we are not constantly looking at the time and waiting for our session to end. A similar tactic can be used whilst meditating: if we too become oblivious of the time by focusing on the words we

are repeating when meditating, the question “How long left?” will not be a barrier anymore, and our target will seem more achievable.

After each exercise session, we are advised to stretch our muscles gently to prevent injury. After each session of meditation, we are instructed to attend to our bhajan practice. The stillness and concentration obtained during meditation will make our souls more receptive to the Shabd. However, to experience the Shabd within, a certain level of concentration and stillness has to be reached. The Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu said that the greatest revelation is stillness.



Have all the problems of life ever been solved by any one? If we go on creating them and then continue worrying about them, then where is the time left for meditation ? The mind will never be stilled and become motionless if this continues. It has the evil habit of first creating problems and then when it cannot solve them it starts worrying. This it goes on doing the whole lifetime. We have to stop the mind from this vicious habit and tell it to live within the Will of the Lord.

Our destiny is all marked out and we have to reap what we have sown, then why worry ? Face life cheerfully, doing the best you can under the circumstances and leave the rest to the Lord. Our conscience should be clear and then there is absolutely nothing to worry about. Life will always go on like this in this world. This life is made up of both good and bad karmas, hence these ups and downs. Try to rise above them by keeping your thoughts in Him and His meditation. This will give you that happiness you are looking for and will develop into still greater bliss.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

Yes We Can

November 2008 saw the election of a new President of the United States of America. Many of the speeches given by the winning candidate revolved around a simple slogan which has now entered the language: “Yes We Can”. If applied spiritually, this slogan can apply to satsangis on a much deeper level. The Master always encourages us to adopt a positive approach in everything we do.

All of us grow up and live our lives enshrouded in the cloak of our own ego. This ‘I-ness’ leads us to think that we have control of our own destinies, and any successes we have are a direct result of our own actions. When things are going our way, rather than saying “Yes We Can”, we are quick to say “Yes I Can”.

However, when a misfortune befalls us, when a loved one becomes unwell or we lose our jobs, we start feeling helpless. We feel powerless and start blaming external factors for the negative aspects of our lives. Recognizing our limitations and that everything does not lie in our power, we turn to spirituality in our search for answers. We acknowledge the existence of a higher power and make God-realization our ultimate goal. We aim to achieve a sense of peace and commitment. As satsangis, we seek guidance and refuge from our living Master, who guides us through trials and tribulations by teaching us how to meditate, enabling us ultimately to leave this karmic cycle once and for all.

In our spiritual journey, we may take our helplessness too literally. While all of us love him and acknowledge his presence, some of us tend to believe that only he can actually make us sit down to meditate, and that any lack of effort on our part can be attributed to him not pushing us hard enough. We go from one extreme, “Yes I Can”, to the other, “Yes He Can”.

Understandably, some of us may be confused at this point. If we are supposed to surrender everything to our Master and leave our lives in his hands, then why should the rules of meditation be different?

We need to distinguish between our effort and his grace. Our effort is the start, the expression of our desire to meet our Creator. But no matter how much we meditate, through our own efforts alone, we cannot guarantee our emancipation. It is his grace coupled with our efforts that makes our path easier over time and leads us to our Creator.

Therefore, his instructions to us are simple: to do our meditation to the best of our ability, in keeping with the principles of the path, and to leave all our other worries in his hands. So long as we do our very best, his grace will take care of the rest. All we need to put in is our effort. Together, even though the 'deal' is so much more in our favour, both Master and disciple can conquer the karmic cycle. This is the embodiment of "Yes We Can"; with this in mind, how can we fail?

So as satsangis our next step is clear. All that we are required to do is our duty, our meditation, and then leave all other worries to our Master. Therefore, whenever we encounter a problem in our life, we can ask ourselves: can both my Master and I handle this problem together? The answer will be overwhelmingly clear: "Yes We Can".



To choose a positive path is to affirm one's spiritual nature. All conflict, in the final analysis, is the manifestation of inner conflict. And while we may never be able to make the world into a utopia, we can, the saints tell us, transform ourselves. Through the practice of meditation, we can gradually reclaim for ourselves a higher state of being.

Living Meditation

Love

I have tried many medicines but found none more effective than love. When love starts in one part of the body, it spreads and turns the whole body into gold.

Kabir Sakhi Sangreh

Saints have often reminded us that love is woven into the very fabric of creation. We cannot live without it. Saints are like a wave that emerges from the great ocean of love, the Lord. They are the very personification of love, which is why they are able to use such captivating language when describing it.

True love is all around us vibrating in the form of Shabd. Nature is also an expression of a type of love in which men and beasts alike have affinity with their kind, and are held captive by invisible chains of love and attachment. All creatures great and small are governed by love.

Our happier moments are spent talking about love. One might rightly say that since love is the dynamic state of the soul, mere talk is a search for our essence. Even when we feel empty of love and we imitate it through speech, we are nevertheless expressing an inner urge to find and experience love. Loving words are so potent that even if uttered from an insincere heart, they cannot fail to make an impression. We all have a weakness for love since we cannot live without it.

Just as the teachings of the saints are universal, so is their love for all creatures. Even when sitting at the feet of the Master in such large satsang gatherings, the disciple remains unaware and unconcerned of others around him. He is only aware of his Master. There is not even a hint of jealousy, unlike worldly love. There exists a unique unearthly bond of love between the Master and his disciple. Maharaj Charan

Singh observed that the thread of the Master's love binds the disciple stronger than iron chains.

One of the characteristics of love is that 'love is blind'. The Greeks and the Romans considered that the God of Love (Eros in Greek, Cupid in Latin) was blind because lovers are blind to the faults of the one they love. Sometimes they painted or sculptured Eros / Cupid with a blindfold, just to make the point. Yet Cupid's arrow of love never misses its mark. Although the living Master is not unaware of our shortcomings he turns a blind eye, for he intends to transform us through love rather than harsh measures. Not many amongst us have the humility or courage to accept even constructive criticism. Baba Gurinder Singh once mentioned that if the Master started to divulge our weaknesses in the open satsangs, we would just run away. There would hardly be anyone left in the congregation. In his inscrutable ways, the Master carries on in his mission of mercy and redemption in the certain knowledge that eventually the spirit will triumph over mind and flesh. Masters know how to develop the human potential.

Another characteristic of love is sacrifice. Throughout history this is self-evident in the lives of saints. Their sacrifice is unparalleled. Accepting all manner of discomfort and inconvenience, they lay down their lives in the service of their disciples. They travel extensively to reach their disciples wherever they happen to be placed in the world, carrying the heavy weight of their responsibility without ever complaining.

Our love is a reflection of their love for us. In the book, *Legacy of Love*, Maharaj Charan Singh made a beautiful and profound statement:

You don't fall in love with the Master; Master has fallen in love with us. And then we become restless – we feel we have fallen in love with him. The pull is from within.

We can reciprocate the love the Master has for us through attending to our meditation. As we experience the divine love within, our perspective of life will change and we will see our true essence.



Love is a beautiful and sublime experience of the heart. Books are full of the word "love", but in the tears of love are flowing burning oceans. In the sighs of love there are thousands of tempests, and in the world of love there is no sense of time. A place where there is love becomes sanctified by it. In that environment there is a powerful current of exaltation, but it can be felt only by a heart that is filled with love. If we perform our domestic and other worldly duties with love, we shall enjoy our life in comfort and without any worries, because in the presence of love, the mind and the intellect are powerless to disturb one's inner calmness. Love does not influence only human beings. Even the animals and birds are subject to its elevating influence.

Love is a complete cure for every kind of trouble. Maulana Rum says:

*○ ! the intoxication of my love, be happy, well and strong;
for you are the only physician and cure for all my ailments!*

If we could experience love, we would be our own physicians and could bring peace and happiness to ourselves.

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

Something to Think About

Temptation of the Dates

A holy man was one day walking through a bazaar when he came upon a grocer selling dates. His mind urged him to buy some of the succulent dates. Being a holy man, he tried to reason with his mind, but, being a slave of the senses, it would not listen. All night he dreamt about the dates and was completely unable to meditate.

The holy man was defeated by his mind. So he went into the jungle the next morning and collected a bundle of wood as heavy as he could carry. He sternly told his mind, "If you want the dates, you must carry the load!" He walked only a little way before he fell. Barely able to carry one bundle, he picked up yet another. He fell again and again but walked on, telling his mind constantly, "You want dates!"

With great difficulty, he walked the two and a half miles to town, sold the wood, bought dates with the money and went back to the jungle. He placed the dates in front of him and said to his mind, "Today you asked for dates, tomorrow you'll ask for good food, good clothes and then, a wife. When the wife comes, children will follow, and in the course of time I will be your slave."

Just then a traveller came by. The holy man called out to him and said, "Brother, take these dates."

If you resist the impulses of your mind, you are sure to make the best of your human life. However, if you follow its dictates, you will remain its slave. We must live in the will of the Master. If the Master wants us to tend grass, that should be good enough for us.

Tales of the Mystic East

The Tricks of the Mind

It is the duty of every devotee to keep constant watch over his mind and never let it loose.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

A holy man was once standing near a shop in the bazaar, looking at the goods for sale. A thought came to him.

“O mind,” he said to his mind, “I have heard so much about you. Why not show me some of your tricks?”

“Please wait a while and see,” the mind replied and said no more.

Sometime later, a merchant nearby dipped his finger in some honey he was selling and wiped it on a cloth. The moment this happened, dozens of flies swarmed over it. Then more and more flies came and fought to get at the honey. “Those flies are my food,” a lizard said to itself when it saw the flies, “I will eat them all up along with the honey.” This it did.

Now, the shopkeeper had a cat. When the cat saw the lizard, it pounced upon it and ate it. A dog was standing nearby, and the moment he saw the cat, he chased it and killed it. The shopkeeper lost his temper and asked his servants to catch the dog and beat it, and they beat it so hard, they killed it.

The dog happened to belong to a customer who was buying something at the shop. When he saw what had happened to his dog, he was distraught and abused the shopkeeper. The result was that both lost their tempers and began beating each other.

The mind then asked the holy man: “Are you satisfied, now that you have seen a sample of the kind of tricks that I perform? I am an expert at duping people by creating desires of every kind. Who knows where these desires may lead?”

Tales of the Mystic East

Seeking the Comforter

Seeking comfort is the search for protection and shelter, as well as relief from pain and anxiety. All creatures in this world will, at some point, find themselves in one form of pain or another. This may be of a physical, mental, emotional or of a spiritual nature. We all have a combination of so-called 'good and bad days', or a mixture of varying karmas that make up the tapestry of our life. And it is in those painful moments that we find ourselves searching this world, and looking towards our fellow humans around us for that deep sense of solace, comfort and refuge. The entire world is aching to be comforted, accepted, hugged and, above all, loved unconditionally.

Our mind knows only the language of the senses and will seek to comfort itself via the body. Any sense of touch, taste, smell, sight or sound that is in some way soothing to us, is most sought after. Some of us seek refuge in food and will crave different varieties of foods and tastes in an effort to satisfy that unending hunger or the void within. Some seek comfort in touch and will be seen frequenting nightclubs and seeking out other fellow humans for short-term relationships, as a temporary easing of this inner loneliness. Some seek out beautiful scents and flowers to comfort and soothe our sense of smell.

Others perhaps seek to view some beautiful scenery or maybe a movie. We often seek comfort in family, friends and spouses, but even they are unable to provide us with the ultimate comfort we crave. Albeit this may just be a temporary bondage that is covering up a much deeper longing.

For it is the spirit or soul within us rather than our body that requires consoling and it is our very own mind that requires re-directing from outwards to inwards. Behind the play of life, this

search for comfort is our soul yearning to be reunited with the Lord. Kahlil Gibran explains this as follows:

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain.

The Prophet

This implies that a sense of pain is a prerequisite for the inward journey to begin.

In a strange way, this pain *is* a blessing as it gives us the momentum to go forward and deeper in our quest for this comfort. This journey will lead us to the Ultimate Comforter, referred to in the Bible as the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the Shabd or celestial music that our soul has been thirsting after. Now, after many lifetimes, we have been given an opportunity to visit an inner sanctuary where we can find comfort. Meditation may be viewed as a prayer of comfort that we can do at anytime and anywhere. It soothes and nourishes our soul. It does not require much, other than to sit quietly with eyes closed and silently repeat the five words given to us by our Master, and then give time to listening to, or for the Shabd.

The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* advises us to: “Leave aside this everywhere and this everything, in exchange for this nowhere and this nothing.” Out of *this nowhere and this nothing*, we shall experience the inner light and sound that will comfort our souls.

A photograph in the book *Legacy of Love* shows Maharaj Charan Singh holding a parcel next to his chest. The word *Fragile* is written on the parcel. Does that not sum up symbolically how we all feel at times? Fragile! However, even more important is the message that he is always there to comfort us and keeps us close to his heart.

What follows is a beautiful shabd which describes the Comforter:

*O Lord-Master, I have come seeking your sanctuary.
The anxiety of my mind has departed,
since I obtained your vision.
Without your speaking, you know my condition.
You cause me to recite your name.
My sorrows have fled away, and I merge in peaceful poise.
In utter bliss I sing your glorious praises.
Holding my hand you have pulled me out of the deep, blind well
of worldly attachments and mammon.
O Nanak! The guru has broken my bonds, I was separated and
now I am united with God.*

Guru Arjun Dev, *Adi Granth*



*But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may
remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the
beginning, because I was with you.*

*But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me,
Whither goest thou ?*

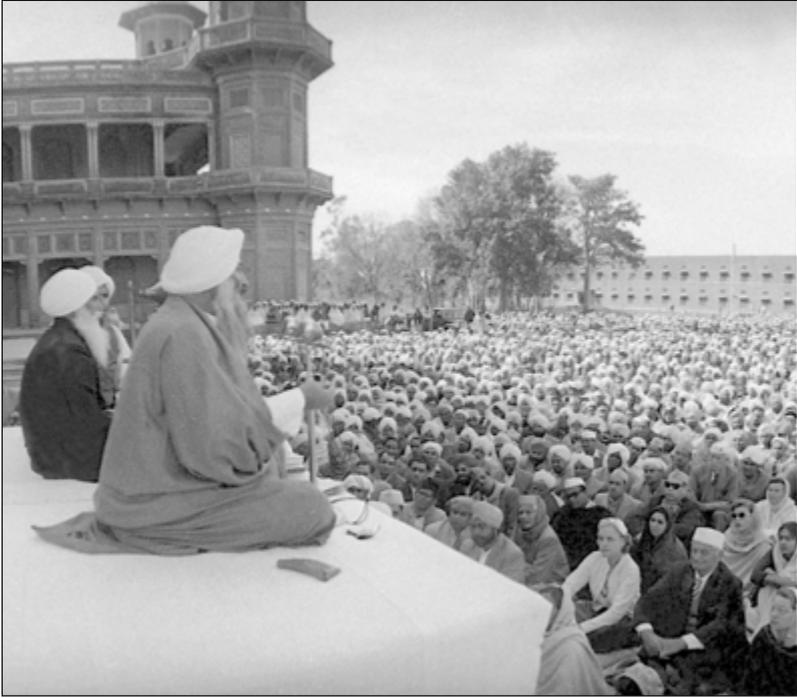
But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:

for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;

but if I depart, I will send him to you.

Bible, Gospel of John



Maharaj Charan Singh



You may be good or bad. There is nothing to worry about. You should gain the company of a saint and listen to his satsang. The fresh air of his invigorating spirituality will bestow upon you the same spiritual health and freshness, and in a short time you will become good yourself. Then the qualities of virtue will manifest themselves within you. Listening to the satsang with your mind and heart, and relishing it, you will easily gain control over your senses, and your soul will become steady...

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

Finding Reality

In nineteenth century Europe, when society was in the throes of the industrial revolution, a political commentator, observing how passively the people accepted the awful conditions in the cities, made a remark which was to become quoted world-wide: “Religion is the opium of the people”.

His view was that the comfort offered by organized religion took away the will of the poor to improve their lot in everyday life. Could the same be said of mysticism?

By focusing the attention inside, in effect saying, “This is where I can escape the pain of living, this is where I can experience the most important relationship which is with my Creator, this is where love is to be found”, does the mystic fail to live his or her outer life to the full? Could mystic experience be compared to a drug which gives a short-lived access to a different level of consciousness, but doesn't help us in the here and now or actually bring us closer to spiritual reality?

What is real?

In our fast-moving modern world, we are prepared to work and play with the things which are clearly not ‘real’, but we want ‘the real thing’ to turn to at the end.

We struggle with the blurred lines between illusion and truth, uneasily aware of how simple it has become to create illusion, whether by electronic means, ‘virtual reality’ or a chemically induced mind state. We haven't quite reached the stage where we have to work out whether the person in front of us is a hologram or actual flesh and blood, but sometimes we suspect that we're not far off. And our difficulties are not just with illusion per se. We find it hard to know

whether we are being manipulated by those in the world around us who purport to be our friends. Are politicians 'genuine' or 'false' in what they say? Journalists constantly pore over the question of whether those in power have told us the truth or not. We long to know which of the two we're dealing with – the real or the unreal.

Where does mysticism – and, in particular, Sant Mat, the teachings of the saints or Masters – fit in to this? Unlike politicians, the Masters don't go out seeking followers or making elaborate promises. They call themselves ordinary and average. They are born like us, grow up like us, and go through the same processes of life in whatever culture they live. They lead a family life, they earn their living, they even play like us. Yet they give a quiet but consistent message which is both radical and surprising. They suggest that the very things around us in which we have the most confidence, including our own physical bodies and even their own physical form are in fact illusion. If we want to find reality, we have to look somewhere else.

Then they tell us about a greater reality which we can be taught to access. It's entered through the human body, by taking the attention between and behind the two eyes, and it leads us far beyond the physical. We don't have to put our faith in this as a long-term, future hope. We can test the claims of the Masters here and now. This is where Sant Mat differs from religion.

From instinct to practice

The Masters appreciate our need to question, test and prove. You may have even heard the present Master ask something like: How do you know that I am who people say I am? How do you know I'm not really just a good actor? You may have heard him jokingly tell stories about those who have not been able to reconcile their idea of how an evolved soul should behave, dress and talk, with how the Master is

in actuality. You may have heard the story about the air hostess who observed the Master on her flight and whispered to her companion: “That can't be the Guru – he's wearing jeans !”

In suggesting that we question him, isn't Baba Gurinder Singh really asking us to question *ourselves*, to look deeply at our own conditioning? Aren't we really, in spite of our feeling of modernity, living in the dark ages? Aren't we blinded by the assumptions we cling to and the idea that spirituality will have certain external trappings and rituals, and then it will be 'real'?

Let's try to answer Baba Ji's question: how *do* we know that the Master is who we think he is? If we are honest, we will have to say that we don't know – but we have a strong gut feeling. There's nothing wrong with that. It's probably the most reliable instinct we've got and we should use it to prompt us to get solid proof. It must lead us to practice so that our instinct can be turned into knowledge, and thence into experience.

To put the Master's advice into practice we must do several things. We must adopt a vegetarian diet, we must give up alcohol and mind-affecting drugs, and we must lead an honest, moral life which includes chastity outside of marriage. These are things which must be established before taking the step of initiation. They are not necessarily easy. They require self-discipline and they require that one can handle situations with other people to whom one may have to say, “I've decided not to eat meat any more” or “I'm no longer drinking, or taking drugs” or “I want to follow this path. I hope you'll support me.” These things may present a number of challenges, but with each challenge met, the seeker becomes stronger.

Obtaining proof

On initiation we then begin to put into practice the method of meditation given to us. We start setting aside regular time each day to

build up contact with our Master through our meditation. We try to control our mind during the day; we carry out the simran and practise listening for the inner sound, the Shabd. These are the things which will bring us proof of the philosophy, of what the Master has told us from his own experience. If we are honestly following his instructions, then the following things should happen.

Although there will be many, many days when our attention in meditation is scattered, if we persevere, we should begin to feel more in touch with what is inside us. We will begin to be aware sometimes of that quiet darkness behind our closed eyes. Our attention will, through simran, start to collect there. Even before we experience sound or light, we will begin to feel a certain contentment, even bliss. That concentration will make us better able to cope with the outer circumstances of life. We should be better able to sort the important from the unimportant, the permanent from the impermanent, the real from the illusion, because we are getting more in touch with our own real selves. Coping with life is not meditation's purpose, but it is a by-product of concentration. Therefore, we do not find that following the saints' advice makes us losers in life, rather the opposite. We stop expecting life to be a bed of roses, that it will satisfy our hopes and expectations, that life will be 'the real thing' for us. And when we do that, when we start finding the real thing inside, miraculously life becomes a pleasure. So that is only the very beginning of testing Sant Mat. The real proof begins when everything that the Master has told us at the time of initiation begins to become evident to us inside, when we start seeing that light and hearing that sound and travelling within. Then we will know first hand, and our faith in the Master will increase by leaps and bounds.

The science of the soul

Sant Mat is not a religion at all. The practice of Sant Mat – which is meditation, is not ritualistic. It's not to give you a bit of comfort until you can receive the reward of heaven in the after-life. It's to make you start travelling now and, as you start travelling, the evidence of whether you are travelling in the right direction will accumulate. So Sant Mat is a science. In the age of science, Sant Mat is pure science because it has a hypothesis and a method which is conducted with the same materials and under the same circumstances by everybody. And a conclusion which will prove the hypothesis.

Maharaj Sawan Singh wrote in *The Dawn of Light*:

An individual may follow any religion he professes, but everyone can practise the science of spirituality and conduct the experiment of connecting the soul with the Lord within ... in order to realize God, he has to enter the laboratory of his body in the same manner as a student of science enters his laboratory. The student of science shuts the outer door so as to exclude noise and avoid distraction. All the instruments, which have been cleaned, are placed on a table In order to achieve success in this experiment of spiritual science, he must have the active guidance and constant help of a saint, whom we can call the master scientist His advice and guidance are based on personal experience and not on mere tradition or hearsay.



The Seat of the Soul

We struggle in meditation because our attention is not concentrated in the simran, it is thinking about the world. From the moment we were born, the mind has come out of the eye focus and has been working outside. The outward tendency of the mind has become a very deep-rooted habit. We have to struggle to reverse this process if we are to concentrate our attention at the eye centre...

...To invert the process by which our attention runs downwards into the world, the first thing we have to do is to locate the place in the vessel of our consciousness from where our attention leaks out. This place is what we know as the eye centre, the spiritual eye, the third eye or the seat of the soul. It is a common error to think of the eye focus as having some particular location in the brain or between or behind the eyes, measurable in terms of inches, centimetres or the points of the compass. We then try to locate this focus with our eyes or thoughts by attempting to place the attention physically between the eyebrows.

When we approach meditation like this, we are very far away from the eye focus. The mind is jumping around, groping blindly for something or somewhere. It is running out by trying to think about the focus, instead of simply relaxing and being in the darkness with the eyes closed. The process of thinking indicates that the mind is scattered, while concentration at the eye focus means the absence of even the slightest twitching of thought. If we are thinking of the eye centre, it means we cannot be in it. If we are in the centre, we will not be thinking about it.

Living Meditation

Why I Love Being a Satsangi

This article was inspired by a nightmare in which I dreamt that I had to give satsang but with only twenty minutes notice! My wife said to me, “don’t worry, it will be fine”. As usual I believed her and calmed down. Then after a few minutes I became concerned and said, “What do you mean calm down! The meeting starts in five minutes and I have no idea what to say.” Suddenly the nightmare ended and I woke up feeling very anxious! Soon afterwards the idea came to me for a satsang about how Sant Mat, the teachings of the saints, has helped me. Here are the ways in no particular order of importance – perhaps it would be different for you?

Provides answers to the big questions about life

Before I came across Sant Mat I had been going through an intense and prolonged period of seeking. I was looking for my relationship with God. I had spent time at a spiritual community, lived abroad in the mountains, and spent time trying to understand my cultural heritage. But nothing felt quite right nor were my questions answered.

Then through an unlikely series of events, that some of you can perhaps relate to through your own experiences of learning about this path, I found out about Sant Mat, and during the course of an unusual afternoon, had all my questions answered by a sevadar. Life was never the same again after that. For me the purpose of life previously had been about “making a difference”. During that conversation, it shifted to being about God-realization and with that, my whole understanding of life changed.

Years later it is so easy to forget these things and take the path for granted. However, with a little reflection, we can become acutely aware

that the path has brought both sense and meaning to life and to our struggles.

So many people are undecided about whether God exists or not, and struggle with the problem of evil, while we, as followers of a spiritual path have, at least intellectually, had these questions answered and learnt a practice that, we understand, will one day bear fruit.

Can be a low cost, high quality life style

This is particularly important in our 'credit crunch' stricken current, and hopefully short, period of history. But that aside, after meditating for two and a half hours a day, working and/or bringing up a family, there really isn't that much time left over for expensive pursuits. On top of that there is, for most of us, a satsang somewhere nearby once a week plus the opportunity to do seva. This is potentially an extremely satisfying, low cost lifestyle.

Maharaj Jagat Singh points to the ideal when he states:

Happy is he whose wants are few. The fewer the wants, the happier the person. "Who doth not want many things, is the king of kings." It is our wants that make us poor. One who has no wants is the richest person.

He continues with a story about Alexander the Great:

During his sojourn in India, Alexander the Great went to see a sadhu living on the banks of the river Beas, about whose supernatural powers he had heard a great deal. He found him sitting on a palm leaf under an umbrella made of banyan tree leaves. This was all the sadhu possessed. On being informed that he had spent all his life sitting there and had remained

there even in torrential rain, burning heat and piercing cold, Alexander offered to build a house for him. This he refused saying, "Why build a house? Are we to live here forever?" Then Alexander asked if there was anything else he could do for him. "Yes, please see that none of your men comes to me," he said.

Alexander offered to give half of his kingdom at the time of his death, to anyone who could make him live just for as much time as would enable him to see his mother. But the physicians replied that, even if he gave the whole of his kingdom, they could not add one single breath to his life. Tears welled up in the king's eyes, and with a deep sigh he said, "Alas! Had I known that a breath was so costly a thing, I would never have wasted them in useless pursuits." Then he directed that during his funeral procession, his hands should be kept out of his coffin with palms upwards so that the world might take a lesson from the Great Alexander, who had planned to conquer the world, but was going away from it empty handed.

The Science of the Soul

Provides opportunities for seva

By creating the opportunity for doing seva, the saints have given us the chance to experience ourselves as part of a larger community. For many of us this means the chance to work with a group of other people from different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds and life experiences, often doing very different activities from what we may do professionally. It is usually relaxing and uplifting. One returns home refocused on the path and keener to sit for meditation, even if a little exhausted!

Then, when there are visits by Baba Gurinder Singh, there is more seva to do. We are willing to get up early, work long hours, work as part

of a team in order to please and serve our Master. Many of us would never consider working that hard for money, but are happy to do it without any expectation of material reward!

Follow a living Master

The founders of the world's major religions passed away many years ago. If you were to tell a friend that there was an opportunity to go somewhere on earth where they could see the founder of their religion and ask him questions, they would probably do anything for the experience. We are fortunate to be able to see the living Masters and hear their satsangs. Our Master and our path can act as an anchor, holding us steady when we face challenges in life.

There have been many such Masters in different times and countries. I think that we do not realize how fortunate we are and how accessible the current Master makes himself. Perhaps one day when sufficient effort has been applied to our meditation, we will truly realize who our Master is.

An antidote to worrying, planning and regret

Yes, the solution to all our problems is Simran 24/7. Prioritizing our focus on the spiritual path will help support us through the inevitable challenges that life brings to us.

Know where you are going when you die

This could reasonably be considered part of the second paragraph of this article but I have chosen to treat it separately as, of all the big questions in life, it is the one that is impossible to ignore. At some point all of us face our own mortality, whether it is through experiencing the death of someone to whom we are very close, or through an illness or near death experience or just through the passing

of the years and the inevitable realization that this brings. In doing so, for many of us, there is a considerable amount of fear to face; fear of the unknown, and regrets about how we have lived, who we have been and who we could have been.

As satsangis we undersand, at least conceptually, that death is not the end of our existence. That we are a soul, a spiritual being having a human experience. That this is one of the thousands of lives that we have had. That when we shed this body, we will be provided with another one to return to this plane or to sojourn for a while on another. That we have nothing to fear because, if we play our part well, and put a sincere effort into our spiritual practice, our Master will meet us at that (not so) final moment.

In the book *Call of the Great Master* by Daryai Lal Kapur, there is a chapter which tells the story of a reformed drunkard and thief who came to the path in the time of Maharaj Sawan Singh. His story ends with him giving himself up to the authorities and paying the ultimate price for his crimes. His faith in his Master enabled him to face his punishment with courage.

Know what to do in retirement (and during other periods of unemployment !)

Even though the Masters advise us not to put off our commitment to our spiritual practice, there are certain times in our lives when opportunities can be grasped.

Maharaj Jagat Singh advises us as follows:

*To one who had recently retired on pension the Master said:
“You should look upon this day as your most lucky day. You have played your game well. All your wordly duties have finished.
Now you should do something for yourself. Up to this time you*

have been doing others' work. Now do your own. All desires and worldly cravings should be turned out from your mind. Tell your mind that you have finished your game in the world and now God's inning begins. Take your mind out from family, children, houses, property, wealth, honour, country and all connections with the world. Bring your mind to such a state that the existence or non-existence of these things may have no effect on you. Now give all your thought, attention and time to God and God alone. Become his now. Cleanse your mind of everything else. Think day and night of bhajan and of nothing else. Work hard. Fight the mind fearlessly. The Guru is with you. With his help, subdue the mind."

The Science of the Soul

These wonderfully inspiring words express the ideal that we are striving for. To become so immersed in our bhajan practice that no matter what happens, we maintain our balance.

Discover what love really is

Over the years I have realized that my understanding and experience of love is limited. The love I have experienced so far has been a little selfish and self-centred. Viewing the saints, it is incredible how they dedicate their entire lives to their disciples, without asking for anything in return. For them, everyone is equal.

Loving the Lord and his creation should not dilute the love we have for our own families. Rather, it can make it purer and improve our family relationships. I am slowly realizing how important my family members are and am trying to spend more time with them.

The saints say that the love we have experienced thus far is the tip of an iceberg. But from earthly love, and a loving heart, spiritual love will grow.

Bollywood:

A Spiritual Perspective

With such rigour have I tried to make you mine, that every particle has conspired to unite us. They say if you really want something from the depth of your heart then the whole universe strives to make it yours... Today, I am convinced that just like my films, in my life all must turn right by the time the end approaches. Happy endings! and if things aren't resolved, then perhaps it is not 'the end', the movie still continues, my friend!

Om Shanti Om, Bollywood Film

Bollywood has become a part of life for many people. The dances, the songs, probably even some of the dialogues are now famous throughout the world. In India and beyond, we have learnt to imitate the actors, dress like them, and have integrated these films into our daily lives. But maybe there is more to these films than just entertainment, a message that we fail to see, or just overlook, that is in fact the base of most Bollywood films. 'Bollywood', a term given to Indian cinema, stems from the culture of storytelling. Initially the films were heavily inspired by the early *nautankis* (street dances), which portrayed famous epic mythologies like the Ramayana, or just parts of it. The Ramayana tells a story of good triumphing over evil. Rama is the hero who, through an injustice, goes into exile. Sita, his wife, accompanies him along with his brother Laxmana. During this period Sita is abducted by the evil Ravana, the monarch of Lanka. Rama faces a series of obstacles when in search of his wife, and has to fight a war against Ravana to rescue her. Finally, Ravana is defeated and Rama and Sita return from their exile to rule their kingdom.

Apart from being a great influence both culturally and philosophically, it is the ultimate love story.

Love is the favoured topic in all Bollywood movies. The early movies would have the hero play the role of Rama, and the actress, Sita. However, over the years the characters have changed; the sets have evolved; the costumes have become fashion statements; almost everything has been altered to suit the modern day taste. But one thing that remains unchanged in many films is the basic storyline. Boy meets girl, they fall in love, but they have to face a variety of obstacles, which could come in the form of a villain, family discordances, or differences in caste and social status, before they can be united in their love. But eventually, fighting against the odds, they do come together in a happy ending. When we watch these films, we might often think, “oh it’s such a common story”, but despite this, why does this story of love we keep seeing again and again appeal to us?

Love also is the very essence of our spirituality, and our spiritual lives follow a similar story to the one described above. Our soul, which is naturally inclined to the beloved, has been abducted from her true home, where she lived with her beloved. The mind keeps her trapped in this world. The Master is looking for her, and when he finds her, he initiates the soul, and then, the battle between the mind and the soul begins. The Master is always there, helping the soul to overcome the mind. All we (as souls) have to do is to follow the guidance our Master gives, and work with him to win this battle. Once the mind has been defeated, we will be united with our Master in our true home.

Looking at this from a Bollywood perspective, our spiritual journey is like a film, where our Master, is the film’s hero, our soul, the heroine, and the mind is the villain and the reason for the separation of the soul and the Master. We need to put in our effort to unite the two and control our mind through our meditation with the grace of the Master.

Until then there is no union and no end to this everlasting film, and we will keep reincarnating in different forms. So until we unite there is no *happy ending* and if there is not a *happy ending* then ... *the movie still continues, my friend*. We usually get bored if a film drags on for too long. So let's find a happy ending to our spiritual film. Through meditation, defeat the mind, unite with our Master and 'live happily ever after'.



The soul, an essence of the Supreme Being, is here dominated by the mind and the latter is led by the senses with the result that the whole creation is running wild and out of control, under the impulse of one or more of the five passions. Thus the mind goes astray and in its never-ending pursuits, finds little repose or respite. Continually does it come to grief but it does not seem to heed the lessons of its bitter experiences. Mind is an excellent servant but a very bad master. Rightly used, it may be made to work wonders, but if allowed to assert itself in a lawless manner, it may bring unspeakable disaster. The right course should have been for the soul to control the mind and the mind to guide the senses and thus reverse the grim situation where men have forgotten their high origin, the purpose of their sojourn on this planet and their real destination. The more they attach themselves to the things of the world, the farther they move away from their Home. The only remedy lies in seeking a true adept and following the path of Nam – an absolute must for ending the rounds of birth and death.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Anger – The Deadliest of the Five Passions

We have all lost our temper at some point. As good hosts we invite anger to visit us and unfortunately we entertain it. Anger is an emotional state that varies in severity from passing irritation, through annoyance to intense anger. We are told that there are many adverse physical effects of anger such as a rise in blood pressure, migraine and increased pulsations and body temperature. It can even lead to mental illnesses such as depression and severe anxiety.

It is said that when animals experience this feeling, they shout and produce high frequency sounds; they physically try to dominate other animals; they clench their teeth and stare intensely. Unfortunately, a lot of us human beings react in the same way when someone does not behave the way we want them to, or says something unpleasant to us. Hence aren't we behaving, in essence, like those animals when we have an anger attack? We forget that the Lord made us humans and granted us the power of discrimination between good and bad.

In this day and age we see supposedly cultured and civilised people shout at inanimate objects: the mobile phone because it won't stop ringing, at a traffic light because it turns red at the wrong moment or maybe at the computer screen because the Internet is slow.

A character in a book by Robert Fulghum tells us that in some of the South Pacific islands, it is said that some villagers used to practise a unique form of logging. If a tree was too large to be felled with an axe, the villagers cut it down by yelling at it. Woodsmen would creep up on a tree at dawn and suddenly scream at it at the top of their lungs. They would continue this for thirty days. The tree would die and fall over. The theory was that the hollering killed the 'spirit' of the tree. Likewise,

our anger at our fellow human beings also has a negative effect on their spirit. However, when we are angry we are often in denial, and even insist that we ourselves are the victims of the malevolence of others. We are often quick to blame others when we lose our temper. However, some introspection may benefit us. We may have heard of the saying: "I asked God for patience, so he gave me adverse situations so I could develop it." Therefore, if we really want to liberate ourselves from these problems, we have to transform our interpretation of what happens to us in our life: transform our own mind so it can learn to accept positively the difficult situations that cause us to lose our temper. When we get angry we are passing the remote control of our lives into the hands of others. If we can remain calm and composed, we will have a better chance of making the correct decision in a difficult situation.

In the Bhagavad Gita it says: "When I succumb to anger, I become my own enemy because I'm poisoning my own system with toxic emotions." Saints have also often reminded us that along with lust, attachment, greed and pride, anger is one of the five vices and we should be wary of it.

There is an interesting legend described in Paulo Coelho's *Like the Flowing River* about the Mongol leader, Genghis Khan. In the story, Genghis Khan went out hunting with his companions. He carried his favourite falcon on his arm. This falcon could fly up high in the sky and see things which a human being could not see. Unfortunately neither he nor his companions could find anything to catch.

Later, he went out again alone with his falcon, and after some time riding and hunting, he grew tired and thirsty. He filled his silver drinking cup with water but before he could drink, the falcon flew at him, and plucking the cup, threw it to the ground. This happened several times, and Genghis Khan grew increasingly angry, lest his companions should notice that a mere bird had got the better of him.

Again he tried to drink from the cup, but when the falcon seized his cup once more, he drew his sword and killed it.

Khan then returned to camp with the dead falcon in his arms. He ordered a gold figurine of the bird to be made and on one of the wings, he had engraved ... Any action committed in anger is doomed to failure.



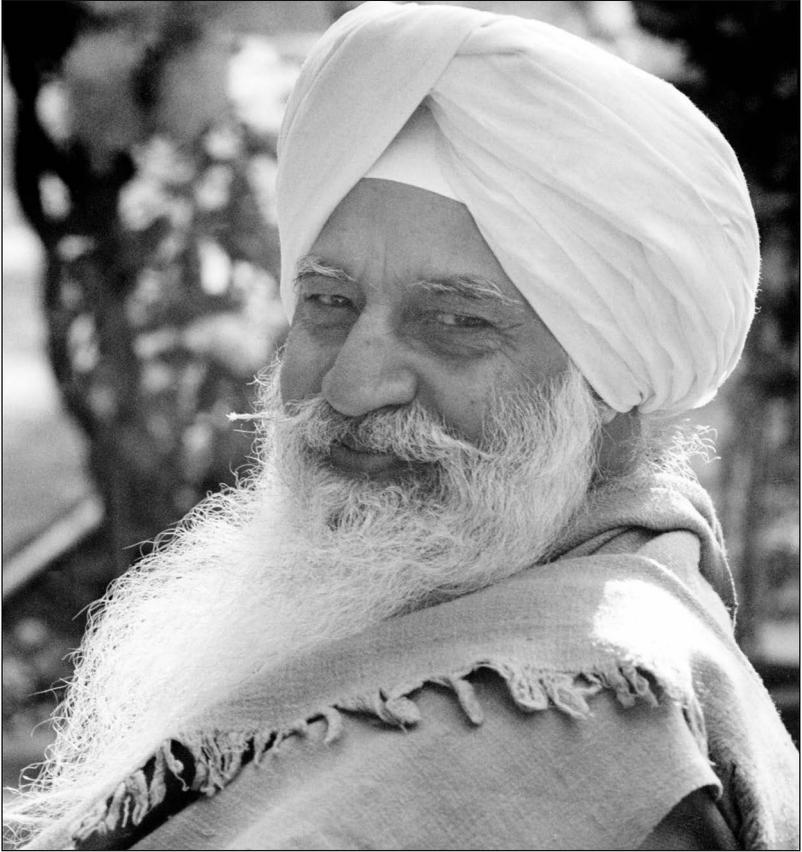
Self-control is emphasized in all paths, in all spiritual disciplines, and in all religions. This should first be practised by exercising your will and firmness of mind, and realising the evils and disadvantages of getting angry. When one is angry, he lets the reins slip out of his hands and thus heads towards disaster. A person in anger cannot think calmly, cannot reason coolly, and, apart from spiritual loss, suffers in a worldly way also.

The best way to overcome such feelings is to apply yourself devotedly to the repetition of the five Holy Names. Not only should the repetition of the Names be done regularly every day at the time of meditation, but, especially at the time when anger seems to be creeping into your mind, you should immediately begin repeating the Names with your attention for about five minutes. You will then find that the raging fires will subside. The more you practise meditation and turn your attention inwards, the more you will get rid of these things and acquire self-control.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

Anger burns up all that is noble. It tears down and annihilates every fine quality of mind and soul. It is consuming fire born of the fires of destruction. Anger is truly the sapping and the consuming passion.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*



Maharaj Charan Singh

The Sultan Who Moved His Beard

There was once a ruler called Sultan Mahmud who often went out at night in disguise, to learn about the condition of his subjects. On one such occasion he fell in with a group of five rough-looking men.

“Who might you be?” asked the sultan.

“Well, friend, to tell the truth, we are a band of thieves,” one of the group told him.

“Ha, that is good,” said the king, “for I too am a thief.”

When the thieves heard this, they were delighted, and the most outspoken among them exclaimed, “Well met, brother. Come and join our band. We were just planning a robbery for this very night, and as you came along we were about to elect a leader; but before doing so, each one of us is to describe his own most special skill. Now, brothers,” he addressed the band, “tell us what you do best.”

“I am an expert at fixing rope ladders in place at the very first attempt,” the first thief said. “When I have done this, hundreds of my companions can use it.”

“My special skill is to break through walls swiftly and silently,” said the second thief.

“But mine is a very rare and useful one,” said the third. “Wherever a treasure may be hidden, I can smell its presence and lead you to it.”

“It is easy for me to understand the language of the animals,” offered the fourth thief, “and this is often of more help than you might imagine.”

Then the fifth and last thief said, “My special skill is that I can always recognize a person once I have met him, even if it is on a night as dark as pitch.”

As the thieves were speaking, the sultan wondered what it might be best for him to say. “My skill is one that you may not yet have heard

of,” he told them when they all turned to him. “By a little movement of my beard I can save even the worst of thieves from the noose of the hangman.”

The thieves, entranced by this unique ability, decided to choose him as their leader.

They put their heads together and, after some discussion, decided to rob the sultan’s palace, which was nearby. The sultan felt compelled to go along with them. As they were walking towards the palace, a dog began to bark. “Tell us, brother, what is the dog saying?” the thieves asked their companion.

“It is very strange indeed,” said the thief who could understand the language of the animals. “The dog is hinting that one of us poor fellows is a sultan.”

At this fantastic notion, all of the thieves and the sultan had a hearty laugh.

They soon reached the palace and fell to work. The first thief fixed in place a rope ladder, by which all of them climbed over the outer wall and into the palace grounds. The second thief broke through the wall of the palace itself. The third smelled out the hiding place of the sultan’s treasure, and led his companions to it. They then tied the treasure into bundles, left the palace by the way they had entered and, once outside the palace walls, divided the booty equally among themselves. They all then quickly dispersed to their homes.

In the morning, the sultan sent out his guards, telling them to arrest the five thieves and have them hanged. But as the poor fellows were being marched to the gallows, the fifth thief recognized the sultan and stepping forward said in a loud voice, “O my Sultan, I can recognize you now in the light of day, for you were with our band last night. Have pity on us, O gracious Sovereign. Please move your beard and save our worthless lives, and all of us will solemnly promise never to

steal again. Instead, we will enter your service and serve you faithfully for the rest of our lives.”

The sultan then took pity on the wretched men and nodded his head. In that timeless gesture of mercy he caused his beard to move. And at once their shackles were taken off and they gladly entered the service of their ruler.

Just so, God comes in human form to put thieves, rogues and all those who are drowning in the phenomena of this world onto the right path. Saints have to resort to all kinds of means to save human beings.

Tales of the Mystic East



The perfect Master does not reveal all that he is on the first day. As the ability of the disciple increases, the Master also reveals more and more.

Saints have various ways of imparting their teachings. It is said that a certain king's son shirked all his studies and instead busied himself all day with his hobby of keeping pigeons. One day a holy man visited the king. "O holy man," the king pleaded, "my son avoids his studies and spends all his time doting on his pigeons. Kindly advise him to study a little."

The holy man sent for the boy and asked, "How many pigeons do you have?" "Twenty," the boy replied.

"That is not good enough," said the holy man. "You should keep one or two hundred – then we can really enjoy their flight."

"All right, Sir," the boy answered, delighted.

When the pigeons arrived, the Saint exclaimed, "There are too many of them. We must give them names."

He gave them names like A, B, C and so on, writing their names on their wings. In this way the holy man taught the boy to read and write.

Instead of forcing people to do something they are reluctant to do, it is better to know their aptitude and teach them accordingly.

Tales of the Mystic East

My Two Bosses

In life I have two bosses.

They're both in charge of various aspects of my life.

They both expect me to do a good job.

Both of them thought I was capable for the job when they accepted me.

Despite these similarities, there are differences ...

One boss pays me too little for doing far too much work.

The other boss pays me in abundance for sitting down and closing my eyes.

One boss yells at me when he wants me to do something.

The other boss keeps sending me gentle (weekly) reminders.

One boss gave me a thick handbook of rules to follow when I joined.

The other boss only has four rules.

One boss threatens to fire me every time I make a mistake.

The other boss smiles and asks me to learn from it.

One boss gets paid far too much for the work he does.

The other boss works far too much for no pay at all.

One boss counts how many sick days I take.

The other boss only counts the days I show up to work.

One boss will keep me hired until he has no use for me.

The other boss has no need for me, but still stays by my side.

One boss expects a good excuse whenever I'm late.

The other boss gives me an excuse to be on time.

One boss expects the job to be done right the first time.

The other boss only cares about the effort I put in each time.

One boss will only accept my successes.

The other boss will happily take my failures.

Book Review



The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas

BY DR. K. N. UPADHYAYA

PUBLISHER: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS; ISBN 978-81-8256-776-4

In India, the majority of people grow up knowing of Goswami Tulsidas and his book the *Ram-Charit-Manas*, often called the Hindu Bible. For non-Indians, however, the life story, teachings, and mystic poetry of Tulsidas are an amazing discovery.

In *The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas*, K.N. Upadhyaya translates and explains selections from Tulsidas' *Ram-Charit-Manas*, as well as others of his works. The *Ram-Charit-Manas* is considered "one of the most distinguished works of Indian literature." It is a retelling of the epic story of Ram, first composed by Valmiki thousands of years earlier. It is said that one cannot understand India until one understands the story of Ram.

The *Ram-Charit-Manas* was the first major Indian spiritual text written in Hindi, rather than in ancient Sanskrit. Thus, the "common man" in India at last had access to the story of Ram directly, rather than through interpretations by the priestly class.

What difference does it make whether one writes in the vernacular or in Sanskrit? What is needed is true love. If one's purpose is served by a blanket, what's the use of a costly silken shawl?

The literal meaning of *Ram-Charit-Manas* is "The Inner Holy Lake of Ram's Act." The book sets out "to disclose the secret of that inner divine lake which lies within everyone and which is always filled with the water or nectar" of God's name.

Ram ... is the protector of shelter-seekers ... And the ocean of compassion. He will grant you shelter, forgetting your offences, if you turn to Him for refuge.

The theme of the “shelter-seeker” has parallels in Tulsidas’s life. Born into the Brahman class, he was orphaned at a young age and was never even given a proper name. Alone, poor, seeking shelter and help, he wandered around saying, “Ram, Ram, Ram.” People called him Rambola, meaning one who utters the word “Ram.” Unlike countless orphans who live and die in obscurity, Rambola was found and given shelter, both physically and spiritually, by his guru Narhari Das, who also changed the child’s name from Rambola to Tulsidas. Later, others added the title of Goswami, meaning “one who has gone beyond the senses.”

Tulsidas lived with his guru about 15 years, studying the Vedas, Puranas, and various systems of Indian philosophy. After his guru’s death, he returned to his birthplace, worked in agriculture, and married. Apparently, he then lost his focus on God, becoming deeply attached to his wife, to the point of obsession. Ironically, it is because of her that the world enjoys the writings of Tulsidas. Early in their marriage, when his wife had gone to her parents’ house for a few days, Tulsidas could not bear the separation. Desperate, he followed her, even crossing a raging river by clinging to a corpse. When he arrived, she was mortified and scolded him:

*Are you not ashamed that you have come running for my company?
Fie to such a love! What else should I say, O my beloved? You have
so much love for this body of mine, which is made up of skin and
bones. If such a love were there for God, you would have gone
beyond the fear of the world.*

Her words shocked Tulsidas. Waking up to the reality of life, he turned once and for all towards God.

*Ram is the mother, father, master, brother, as well as friend,
companion, son, the Lord and the lover.*

Tulsidas emphasizes the importance of a living saint. He explains that the assembly of the saints is the true pilgrimage. In fact, he describes the saint as “the moving place of pilgrimage.”

The same One who is beyond intellect, speech and senses, who is uncreated, beyond mind, maya ...

And who is truth, consciousness and bliss unified, is playing the gracious role of a human being.

Tulsidas explains that only those who are extremely fortunate come into the company of a saint.

... Saints are found only when the Lord melts with compassion.

He goes so far as to say:

The company of the Saints is the root of all joy and blessings.

Tulsidas also emphasises the great good fortune of obtaining a human body.

There is no form as good as the human body. Every living creature yearns for it. It is the ladder that takes the soul either to hell or heaven or to final deliverance ...

The true purpose of human life is to seek God.

The one who always looks upon Ram as his only goal, he alone truly lives in the world, says Tulsi;

All others are mere corpses, moving around in living forms.

Tulsidas warns us not to get caught up in worldly attachments.

Son, wife, home, friends and family – look upon them as highly distracting company. Give up attachment for all of them, equip yourself with equanimity and sit in the company of a saint. Reflect and see, what is the purpose of this human body? Ruin not your real work, O fool.

This “real work” is to realize the True Sound.

Without the realization of the True Sound, tell me, who has not gone astray? It is only when the light of the inner sun arises with the grace of the Guru, the manifest form of God, that a rare few come to know the true Sound.

But this blissful Sound cannot be described; it must be realized through meditation.

The mystery of the Sound and Light is an indescribable tale; it can only be blissfully realized but cannot be described.

Tulsidas enjoins us to practise meditation in the comfort of our own homes, within the context of our own lives.

Now, my friends, return to your homes and meditate on me regularly with steadfast devotion. Knowing that I always abide in each one of you and am your benefactor, give your utmost love to me.

Finally, he gives a powerful message of hope.

What has gone wrong through countless lives can be set right today in this human life at this very hour, assures Tulsidas.

The personal experience of God, the path of love and devotion, the great good fortune of finding a guru and learning how to meditate, the inspiring story of Ram – all these and other spiritual themes make this book a treasure for any sincere seeker. The poetry is beautiful, uplifting, and compelling. One finishes the book thrilled with the timeless, universal message of mystic possibility, eager to experience for oneself what Tulsidas experienced in his lifetime.



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

