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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Love

*Listen to the tale of love, O loving soul!
Serve the Guru with love and devotion
And sacrifice yourself to his darshan again and again.
The words of the Guru captivate the disciple's heart,
As the sweet babbling of an infant thrills a doting mother.
As a man in love adores his sweetheart,
A gurmukh is enraptured by the form of his Guru.
Eating or drinking, sleeping or awake,
Or going about the business of life,
The Guru's form never leaves his mind.
He feels the pangs of love
As if an arrow were constantly piercing his heart.
A gurmukh who has cultivated such love for the Guru
Will realize the supreme purpose of life.
Until a disciple is inspired
By this kind of love for the Guru,
He should be considered worldly and self-indulgent.
The manmukh just drifts through life,
Belonging to no one.
How can he obtain spiritual wealth?
Radha Soami proclaims to one and all:
Hold fast to Guru's hand now – in this very life.*

Soami Ji Maharaj, Sar Bachan Poetry



Resolving the Paradox

Three houses, side-by-side, are exposed to the same natural disaster. In the case of the first house, the owner is safe and his home remains intact. In the second, the owner escapes unhurt, but the house is destroyed. And, in the third, not only is the structure brought to the ground, but the owner also loses his life. Which of these scenarios would we associate with grace?

Grace, most of the time, seems to be a common and loosely used word. This is because it really cannot be quantified or clearly defined and, hence, is somewhat of an abstract that has come about as a creation of the mind ... to be used freely as part of our spiritual vocabulary.

Many of us, if we met with the person from the first scenario, might say to him, "It is the Lord's grace. You have survived unscathed and you still have a home." We may say to the person in the second case, "You have lost your house, but look at the Lord's grace, you are still alive. It could have been worse. You can always rebuild and start again." But what kind of thoughts would we have for the person in the third house?

Vague as the word is, grace, for many of us has been associated with anything positive or pleasant – wealth, health, fame, life, and so forth. To the mystics, however, breath is as much grace as would be death. Time and again, we hear and read how the Lord's grace is continuously being showered over all. How is it then that a uniform and free-flow of grace is able to differentiate by descending upon one and not on another? How then do we resolve this paradox?

Clearly, the answer lies in our capacity, or rather development, of perception and receptivity. What we commonly term as grace is nothing more than a confusion with karma or justice. The governing law of cause and effect applies only to the individual mind and body, not to the soul. Any physical occurrence that we observe happening to us and to those around us is solely a link in the chain of events of action and reaction in motion – whether it be wealth, poverty, fame or dishonour. We just seem to selectively choose to classify the happier moments as grace, and the more trying ones as karma, perhaps to give the mind the strength and solace to bear it through. True grace, on the other hand, the saints tell us, is compassion. It is the Lord's compassion for the soul.

Emerging from the universal truth, grace is the pure and unconditional love for every soul in the creation; it is but the Lord's natural and helpless attraction towards it. After all, the soul is really no different, possessing the very same characteristics. It is this same compassion that keeps a plant alive in an abandoned area after months of drought, or has readied the next grain of food for a lizard trapped and cemented between two bricks at a construction site. This is the compassion that the Lord has for all forms of life, either by keeping the soul alive in its present gross body, or by allowing it to move onwards on its journey.

The difference then in the common point of view and that of the saints is that the mystic consciousness is elevated to levels where grace is witnessed and experienced in every particle and action, representative of the Lord at work in all situations. Falling short of explanations to identify it, grace is the intangible attribute of the Lord, which has to be uniquely felt by each soul. This, the saints tell us can only be done by tuning in through one's spiritual practice.

Gradually, through meditation, as one comes to re-establish its link with the Divine, the soul begins to experience while the mind quiets down and observes what starts off as a touch to the heart. Growing to become more intense, grace makes its way through the disciple to eventually immerse and envelop him. The response to this is felt at the very core as a deep sense of gratitude, leaving him with sealed lips and a contented heart, softly echoing two words with every heartbeat – thank you ... thank you ... thank you.



*My God, in whom is my delight, my glory and my trust,
I thank you for your gifts and beg you to preserve and keep them for me.
Keep me, too, and so your gifts will grow and reach perfection
and I shall be with you myself,
for I should not even exist if it were not by your gift.*

Saint Augustine, *Confessions*

Something to Think About

For those who learn to die through the practice of meditation, death is not terrifying because they have traced each step in the process of death. Such disciples are receptive to the Master and remain conscious and confident during the experience, accepting it peacefully and without anxiety, regrets or fear. Keeping our attention in the eye focus cannot be overemphasized. It will prove invaluable at the time of death, but also while we are alive. Such is the power of meditation – for living, for dying, and for taking us on a journey beyond body and mind.

Living Meditation

* * *

We are spiritual beings on the path of eternity with duties to perform on the physical plane. We are not merely earthlings who will cease to exist when we die. If we realize that we are spiritual beings, then we will set our goals accordingly and our priorities will automatically fall in line.

A Spiritual Primer

* * *

When you see beauty and perfection in the world, it is nothing but a sign of Him. A beautiful creature is merely a single blossom from the vast garden of God. But remember that a picture fades, a flower dies, and the reflection in the mirror is eclipsed by the real light. It is God who is real and remains forever. So why waste your time over something that is here today and gone tomorrow? Go directly to the source without delay.

Jami, *Essential Sufism*,
as rendered by James Fadiman & Robert Frager

Amidst Uncertainty

During a recent conversation with an acquaintance, he made an interesting and inspiring point. “You are so fortunate,” he said, “that during uncertain times, you have a spiritual Master and follow a spiritual path.” He further continued, “It must make life more bearable, and help one live in a balanced manner I suppose, using spirituality as a filter in dealing with negative events.” He was certainly right in all respects, most especially during last year’s precarious times, where corporate bankruptcies, defaults, fraudulent business practices and massive lay-offs had reached record proportions. The global economic picture seemed alarmingly bleak and unpromising.

We have to be grateful to the Master for exposing us to the laws of creation and the teachings of Sant Mat. By applying our understanding of the inescapable law of cause and effect, we understand that whatever it is we are going through in this lifetime is either a result of our past actions, or is something we will have to account for sooner or later. And so the mystics always guide us to not react negatively to our circumstances. They encourage us to resolve our problems in the best possible way with the resources available to us and, ultimately, leave the results in the Lord’s hands. We are advised to foster an attitude of positivity, detachment and acceptance, and utilize this attitude to see us through difficult times.

For your part make all necessary efforts to improve your circumstances; but leave the results of your efforts to the Satguru’s will. He is not unaware of your problems.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *In the Footsteps of the Master*

During a satsang session when the global economic crunch had just started to make its presence felt, the Master encouragingly reminded us that these dark clouds were unfortunately there for everyone, but that they would eventually pass. In the meantime, he emphasized that we should be strong, uphold our values and never lose sight of our spiritual goal. He further reminded us that we should never consider any gain at the cost of someone else's pain, for that gain rarely ever lasts or flourishes. During the question and answer session that followed, he was very clear about what ethical course of action one needed to take when faced with difficult choices, always giving priority to spiritual values, and keeping in mind the repercussions of any action undertaken.

A life built on another living creature's suffering, whether human or animal, can never be a source of long-term happiness, just as a life built on a lie cannot lead to the truth.

Honest Living

But the fact remains that we are often faced with numerous temptations that lure us to compromise our principles. And once we make anything in the outside world our priority, we can easily be tempted to ignore our scruples. The more we are preoccupied with the material world, the more we weaken our spiritual perspective. Frail humans that we are, it is all too easy to be seduced by life at the surface, and look to the material world for our well-being, sense of comfort, security, and last but not least, happiness.

By the very nature of this creation that we are residents of, mystics remind us that uncertainties and difficulties will always be there. If we seek a permanent solution, the only way out is by not returning to this cycle of birth and death.

There are two practical steps that we can undertake: First, we can focus on living honest and pure lives in order to prevent our karmic debt from increasing. And second, we can diligently build on our meditation, in order to tame the mind and re-direct it from its obsession with the material creation.

Without a doubt, it takes a lot of courage to actually walk the spiritual path and stay on track. Essentially, however, our task is to continually and seamlessly bring our lives in total harmony with our spiritual goal. This process of transforming ourselves spiritually will be a lifelong and steady evolution towards our ultimate goal.



Our hope in difficult times is not based on positive thinking, wishful thinking or natural optimism. It is a certainty based on the truths that God is in complete control of our universe and He loves us.

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*

The Sweetness of His Presence

Once when Baba Farid was a young child, his mother told him that every morning he should spend some time in prayer. The little boy then asked his mother, “If I do my daily prayers, what will I get in return?”

To teach her son to get into this habit of prayer, she told him, “To those who pray every day, God will give them sweets to eat.”

With the anticipation of getting sweets, Baba Farid started to do his prayers regularly. Secretly, the mother would put some sweets under his prayer mat. Every day, after his prayers, he would open his eyes and find the sweets she had left. In his innocence, he would excitedly tell his mother, “Look mother, God gave me some sweets to eat today.”

And so he continued every morning in this way, looking forward to his daily morning prayers and his sweets.

But one day, Baba Farid opened his eyes and didn't look down at the sweets. He didn't eat the sweets but still looked happy and content.

His mother asked, “Farid, why haven't you eaten the sweets God has given you?”

Baba Farid answered, “Once you taste the real sweetness of His presence, then everything in the world has no taste at all.”



The Promise to the Lord

*Why, O soul, why the delay?
Have you forgotten the promise
You made to your Beloved on that special day?
He awaits and longs to be with you –
But, alas, you do not hear His loving voice.
Why, O soul, why do you still waste this day?*

It had been a hectic and chaotic few months. And, finally, after what seemed like years on end, we were seated in the presence of the living Master, away from the world, away from the chaos. Although hundreds of thousands were seated under the same roof, the Master gave each of us the individual attention we craved for. A soothing peacefulness filled our inner being, and the joy we felt was beyond expression. Like a lost child finally reunited in the loving arms of his parents, we asked for nothing more except for time to stand still and for the moment to never end. No thoughts existed; all attachments and possessions were forgotten – being with the Master was all that mattered.

However, the silence in the heart was soon broken by a voice from within: “Here you are in the presence of your Master who is always giving you so much, why do you keep running after the world, when you can have his infinite love within?” And then came the most painful question: “Have you lived up to that promise you once made to him?” Gazing at the Master, feelings of guilt and shame flowed freely for there were no real answers – just excuses.

And yet, the Master responded with the most loving smile as though to say, “It’s still not too late. I’m still here for you – waiting.”

The Master continues to shower his love and grace upon us, even when we indulge ourselves in the world. He encourages and inspires us, especially when we go astray. We do so much for our family members, we spend nights awake when they are sick, but for the one who is prepared to give us everything, for the one who is going to be with us even after we die, we fall short.

Once a spiritual teacher was walking with his disciples and saw a little girl hiding in the corner weeping. “Why are you crying little one?” asked the teacher. She replied tearfully, “I was playing hide-and-seek with my friends, but they didn’t come to look for me!” The teacher sighed and said to his disciples, “In the answer and the tears of that little girl, I hear the sad voice of the Lord, ‘I, God, have hidden myself too, as it were, but no one comes to look for me.’”

He longs for us to turn towards him and his patience is never exhausted even as we cling to the world. We know the material world and our attachments are always the cause of our own pain and suffering, but if we would learn to let go and open up our hearts to receive his love, we would experience his abiding presence, for he longs to give us his all.

Christ has said, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” Maharaj Charan Singh explains this quote so beautifully in the book *Light on Saint John*, and reveals what the Master is willing to do for us:

I am willing to sacrifice anything to save the souls allotted to my care, because my Father wants not a single soul to be lost. I must bring every marked soul back to Him. This is my work. For this He has sent me to your level. I am prepared even to give my life to save them.

Having a Master in our lives is having everything we will ever need. He has made a promise that he will take us back to our true home – and this promise he will fulfil. His love for us is eternal and nothing in this world can ever take him away from us. However difficult life may be, regardless of how often the world pierces our heart, we know that around every corner, we have the light of the Master's love, supporting and guiding us throughout our journey.

The Master deserves much more from us. Time is slipping away from our hands, and who knows what tomorrow will bring: Will we be healthy? Will we have a sound mind? Will we even be alive? While we have these precious breaths, if we expend our energy in our spiritual practice, we will build our treasure within – which at the end of the day is all that is important.

We have said enough in words – what is important is how we use the present moment and commit ourselves through our actions – our sincere meditation is our true commitment to the promise we once made to him. That is all he asks from us. Every moment that we meditate brings us closer to him, and he longs for that day when we become one with him.



Why must we give ourselves fully to God? Because God has given Himself to us. If God who owes nothing to us is ready to impart to us no less than Himself, shall we answer with just a fraction of ourselves? To give ourselves fully to God is a means of receiving God Himself. I for God and God for me. I live for God and give up my own self, and in this way induce God to live for me.

Mother Teresa, *Come Be My Light*

Nothing Ventured ...

As struggling disciples on this path, we face the roller coaster of ups and downs in our lives and our emotions. From the heights of excitement and dizziness we feel in the presence of our Master, to the depths of despair and depression that consume us in his separation.

We sit in the darkness of meditation, searching for his Light and love, feeling and knowing that it is there, but unable to reach it due to our own shortcomings. Our wayward mind has imprisoned us in the quagmires of worldly complications, binding us with the trappings of possessions and acquisitions. In the words of Rumi:

Man is a mighty volume; within him all things are written, but veils and darkness do not allow him to read that knowledge within himself. The veils and darkness are the various preoccupations and diverse worldly plans and desires of every kind.

A Treasury of Mystic Terms, Vol 5

This generation consumed by worldly materialism has tried in vain to live oblivious to God. The recurrence of spirituality in the world is like a mass confession by humanity, that materialism has failed. Many, seduced by the worldly pleasures and possessions, may have proclaimed: “We are rich, we have everything we want to enjoy;” but have also discovered that like physical beauty, riches are also only skin deep and not enough to satisfy our eternal souls. We are still left destitute and hungry for something more.

*To love what is deficient, trapped in time,
Is more than foolishness, it is a crime -
And blasphemous the struggle to evade
That perfect beauty which can never fade.*

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

Where do we get the notion that man's idea of success and God's are the same? We may win a Nobel Prize, we may become talented artists, we may achieve fame and fortune, but without the gifts of intelligence, imagination, personality and health – which are all endowed by the Lord – where would we be?

Are we not born with nothing? Do we not die with nothing? And would we not be nothing indeed without the Lord's infinite mercy and love?

*Naked and empty-handed you came into this world, and naked
and empty-handed you shall leave it.*

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

We come into this world with nothing; and if we are anything, it is because God is everything. If He were to withhold His grace for one brief instance, if He were to deny us the breath of life for one moment, our physical existence would shrivel into nothingness.

The overriding purpose of the Masters is to impress upon us the need to realize the Truth, the Shabd within. This singular purpose, if pursued with sincerity and unwavering determination, alters our perception and direction in life.

It is not possible to persuade our rebellious mind, through reason alone, to change its ways and thoughts. Daily practice in meditation is the only way to convince the mind that its determined resistance

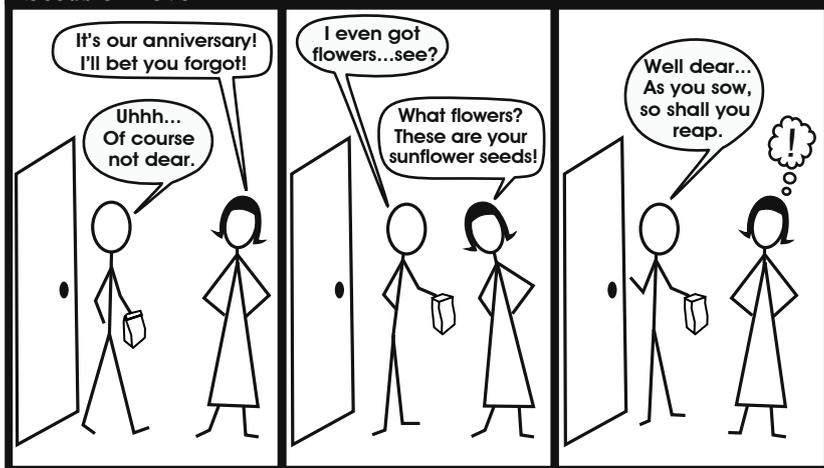
to all things noble has brought it no tangible benefits or happiness. Because of the survival instinct of the mind, it has always acted in its immediate and quick-fix interest. The Masters explain that the mind's tendency is to react to the events and situations in life, rather than focus on the objective. This is largely why our attention has remained scattered and fragmented.

To develop our spiritual acumen, we need to venture with persistence, even as we sit in the darkness of our meditation ... waiting; for nothing ventured is nothing gained. It is no small challenge, but the Master holds us in the embrace of his compassion and consideration. He sustains us even as we cannot visualize his immense love and magnificence.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®

Seeds of Love



Meeting My Master

When I first spoke of Sant Mat to my parents, they were dismayed, thinking I would lose strength with little or no animal protein in my diet. I was unwilling to antagonize them for I felt that if patience and restraint were exercised, they would be so persuaded of the sincerity of my convictions as to realize that no harm could come to me.

In the meantime, the Colonel had arranged for me to spend a part of the Christmas holidays at Beas with Mrs Johnson, an American disciple living at the Dera. Before this, however, I was destined to meet my dearest Master for the first time when he visited the Colonel's house in New Delhi, to which city our office and my family had moved for the cold weather season. No words of mine can describe my eager anticipation on that clear sunny October afternoon at the office. The Colonel had gone ahead to meet his guest and later he telephoned to say that the Master wished me to come to him. Riding to the house on my bicycle, I felt as though I were flying on air down the Secretariat slope. This, I thought, is how it feels, this rapturous ecstasy of return to meet the Master from whom your soul has been separated for perhaps as many as eight million, four hundred thousand different species of life.

At last I arrived and there he was, impeccably dressed, an upright stately figure with a long snow-white beard and high turban and a countenance of quiet dignity, smiling into my eyes and holding out his hand, with a deep "Hello" of greeting. While he shook my hand and I murmured a conventional reply, my mind felt as though it was metaphorically bowing at his feet. It is strange how we contain ourselves at such a time when our inner selves leap and dance for all the world like an exultant puppy greeting a much loved master after a long separation.

Flora Wood, *In Search of the Way*

Living a Legacy of Love

Living a Legacy

One fine day, ten, twenty, thirty years down the road, when we look back at our lives and reflect on the life that we have led – what would it be? What is the legacy that we are leaving behind? And if we were to sum it up in one sentence – ten sentences – what would these be?

Do we realize the purpose of our life and our ultimate goal? Are we objective in our actions or do we react to every stimulus around us? Do we react to the people and circumstances around us? And if so, what is becoming the sum total of our life? Where are all our actions taking us?

When we are in the final days of our life, what will we want? When death extends its hands to us, where will we turn for comfort? Will we hug that college degree hanging on the wall? Will we ask to be carried to the garage so we can sit in our cars? Will we find comfort in rereading our financial statements? It seems that our lives today have become one big reaction. We need to sit down and introspect on our purpose and priorities.

When we see ourselves, do we see the purpose we are made for? In a world of confused identity, let us be firm in our role. As we emerge from this lesson of life, we should emerge with a defined purpose – to practise spirituality. There is no question as to why the Lord created us. We know our purpose. If we live in obedience to His will, then we can enter into our final years with the assurance of knowing that life was well spent and that our home is but a wink away. And is there any greater reward than this?

A Legacy of Love

To live a legacy of love, we need to understand what it is to love – we have forgotten what it means to love. Love is a power within us. The more we give, the more we get. As is aptly written in the book *Legacy of Love*: “It is his legacy of love, his most precious gift to us that holds us on the path he placed us on. He always said, ‘Love is within you, and is not to be found anywhere outside.’”

Let us take an inventory of our hearts. Are we living in the overflow of the Master’s love? How well do we love the people in our lives? Does the way we treat people reflect the way he has treated us? But loving people is not always easy. It is not easy to love those who have been the source of heartache, rejection or loneliness. Conventional wisdom states that a lack of love implies a lack of effort. So, we try harder, dig deeper and strain more. And with that, there is one essential step that we cannot afford to miss – turning to him whom we know is love, whom we experience as love. We receive his love so that we can give love ourselves.

Will we ever love perfectly? No, this only the Master will. But we will love better than we ever have. When kindness comes grudgingly, we will remember his kindness to us and ask him to make us more kind. When patience is scarce, we will thank him for his and ask him to make us more patient. When it is hard to forgive, we will not list all the times we have been given grief. Rather, we will list all the times we have been given grace and pray to become more forgiving. We will receive first so we can give. We will drink deeply from his endless love.

And when we do, we will discover a love worth giving – a legacy worth living. If we could choose the path we wanted, and we could fill it with one word, the answer would be love. Let our every action be so full of love – that love becomes the be-all and end-all of our lives.

Did You Know

Regarding initiation by the Master in person or through his representative, it is one and the same thing. It makes no difference at all. It is the power of the Master that is working through the representative when he initiates someone as instructed by the Master. It is only for the sake of convenience. Initiation by the representative under instructions from the Master is as good as initiation by the Master in person.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

* * *

The spirit has lived in bodies for ages, and its connection with the body has become so perfect that the withdrawal looks almost abnormal. But that is through ignorance. It falsely believes the body to be its home, and when the spirit learns that its home is not in the matter but that it is imprisoned by it, and that now in the human form there is the chance to break this connection, it wakes up, and the longing to ascend is aroused. It gains strength slowly. Rising and falling and struggling against mind and matter, it makes headway up with the help of the saints. The rise and fall are natural and so is the struggle.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Anger

It is certainly an emotion all of us have experienced at some point in our lives. Many of us become completely absorbed by it, and in a fit of insurmountable rage, furiously unleash on perhaps an undeserving victim. Or we may be on the receiving end of another's fuming wrath, unable to understand what we did to deserve such hatred and negativity. No matter what the circumstance, or who was at fault, it is clear that bursting out in a fit of anger is never the correct solution or attitude.

The unfortunate truth, however, is that almost all of us lose our temper on a daily basis. It may be at a family member, a colleague or even at a fellow sevadar. The degree to which we are enraged may vary, but nonetheless it invariably leads to disastrous consequences and hinders our spiritual progress.

For all of us, it is therefore crucial to understand the harmful effects of anger, and strive to control this resentful feeling.

Why is anger detrimental to our spiritual progress? As Maharaj Jagat Singh explains:

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

The Science of the Soul

In order to make any progress on this path, great importance and emphasis is placed on being completely still, and concentrating on the inner silence within. This is impossible to achieve with a heart filled

with anger. Furthermore, upon advancement on this path, we realize that the core of this path revolves solely around love. Love for the Lord. Love for all creatures and beings in this creation. That being the direction we are headed in, how do we expect to advance on this path with hatred, anger and rage? We must keep in mind that any anger in our heart always leads us away from our goal.

Anger is a great enemy on the spiritual path – a single spark can kindle a million misdeeds. A single wave of anger aroused by ego can drown devotion and all good deeds.

Kabir, The Great Mystic

Anger is a powerful emotion filled with poison. It brings an immense amount of intolerable hurt and despair upon the recipient. It also clouds our judgment and distorts our clear thinking. Furthermore, it instills in us an immeasurable amount of negativity in our daily thoughts and actions. Not only does anger hinder our spiritual progress, it destroys us tremendously from a health perspective as well.

Most of our actions are done on the spur of the moment, without thinking. Always reflect calmly. If you knew how much harm anger does to your liver and heart, you would never lose your temper over anything. Ask a physician and he will tell you how blood becomes poisoned in a fit of anger.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, The Science of the Soul

Upon understanding how anger can lead to disastrous consequences, we need to pay attention to controlling and overcoming this negative tendency. Maharaj Charan Singh provides us with excellent advice:

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 the 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.

Light on Sant Mat

The key is meditation. Nothing more is required of us. Meditation is critically important, and is the only solution to this disease. Meditation helps rid us of our ego and detaches us from worldly affairs, thus leaving us indifferent to any situation or circumstance around us.

As our consciousness withdraws from the extremities of the body up to the eye centre ... our frailties and weaknesses begin to disappear. Lust, anger and other negative sister passions leave, and positive powers are awakened in us. It is then that man realizes his real value and true worth.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

The next time we find ourselves in a situation that could potentially infuriate us, instead of reacting with anger, we must remember the beautiful words of wisdom provided by the mystics and consciously act on it. As Saint Kabir says, “Anger is momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you.”

True Prayer

A young man was in deep trouble. His life had taken a turn where family and health were both not in his favour. Physically, financially and emotionally, he was suffering. He could see no way out of his crisis, so he dropped to his knees in prayer and said, “Lord, I can’t go on. I have too heavy a cross to bear.” The Lord replied, “My son, if you can’t bear its weight, just place your cross down. Then, open that other door and pick out any cross you wish.” The man was filled with relief and said, “Thank you, Lord,” and he did as he was told. Upon entering the room, he saw many crosses; some so large the tops were not visible. Then, he spotted a tiny cross leaning against a far wall. “I’d like that one, Lord,” he whispered. The Lord replied, “My son, that is the cross you just brought in.”

We pray every time we need the Lord’s help. When we go to a temple, we offer a few words to Him. When we are running late and get stuck in traffic, we repeat His name over and over again. When we cut our finger with a knife, we immediately shout His name. When our baby is born, we thank Him with tears of happiness. If our child gets hurt, we grasp our heart and beg Him to protect her. When we see something wrong around us, we urge Him to make everything right once again. When we lose a loved one, we cry and ask Him why. And when life seems to be drowning us in worries and difficulties, we sob and beg Him to help. Like the man in this story, the moment we feel we cannot take a step further to help ourselves, we fall to our knees and pray for His mercy and kindness to reduce our cross, or even carry it for us.

The cross we carry is something we created ourselves from our previous actions. We could have physically or emotionally hurt

someone; cheated and lied to family, friends or business associates; or we could have avoided paying our financial debts. We cannot track everything we have done to create this cross, because these karmas have accumulated over many lifetimes. When our past creates problems in the present, and our cross seems to be breaking our back, it becomes natural for a prayer to escape our lips.

However, prayer is something greater than asking for help with words. Prayer is the way for us, as human beings, to unite our souls with the Lord, so we may finally and completely escape from the cycle of birth and death.

Mystics explain that prayer is the essence of spirituality – through it we begin to realize God. By communicating with Him through prayer, we recognize Him as omnipresent. Through prayer, we realize how merciful and loving He really is.

We find that when we pray, our inner stability increases, our fears are reduced and inner purity shines within us. Through prayer we learn the virtues of patience, humility, love, honesty, charity and forgiveness, and every time we pray, our faith in the Lord strengthens. Prayer is also the best relaxation. The soul, mind and body gain blissful rest and happiness, which cannot be obtained by any other means. The greatest purpose of prayer is that we learn to accept and live according to the will of the Lord – this means we learn to submit to our fate, and leave the results of our actions in the Lord's hands.

True prayer is practised within ourselves because the true temple of God is within us – we don't need to search anywhere or go far distances to pray to the Lord. We simply need to look for Him at the eye centre – He is closer than our very breath. The highest form of prayer is not in reciting fixed verses or phrases, or pleading for help, but in awakening the Lord within ourselves through meditation.

Maharaj Sawan Singh explains in *Philosophy of the Masters, Vol III*:

When you pray, enter the closet of the body and shut the outer doors. Do not let the attention wander outside. Open your heart to the Lord within. He will listen to the prayer made in this secret spot.

When our attention is on the Master, our problems and difficulties fade into the background. This opens the way to the Lord and makes us fit for His mercy and grace. In the same way, we must be patient when we put in the effort to listen to the Shabd, the divine melody within. When our practice is perfected, we will feel the peace and bliss within.

Just the thought of this stirs the desire within us to unite with the Lord. This way we rise above the costumes of body and mind, and reach the presence of the Lord from whom all blessings originate.

The famous words of Saint Kabir (as quoted in *Kabir, the Weaver of God's Name*) come to mind whenever we speak of prayer and difficulties: "All do simran during the gloom of adversity; in days of sunshine few repeat the Name. If man does simran in happiness, he will not suffer adversity's pain."

As we continue to pray in meditation daily, we may one day find ourselves saying the same words that Ole Hallesby said to the Lord (as he wrote in his book *Prayer*):

There come times, not so seldom with me at least, when I have nothing more to tell God. If I were to continue to pray in words, I would have to repeat what I have already said. At such times, it is wonderful to say to God, "May I be in Thy presence, Lord? I have nothing more to say to Thee, but I do love to be in Thy presence."

The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Most of the events of our lives are predestined, but is the event of reaching home the only event that is not predestined? That is, can we reach this home whenever we put the proper effort into it?*

A: Brother, from that point of view, everything is destined in the sense that when the Lord wants us to go back to Him, He creates those circumstances, that atmosphere which makes us think about Him, about the path, the way leading back to Him. Without His grace, we will never come on the path or on the way of devotion; or, in other words, we will never come in contact with the saints at all without His grace. When He wants us to come back and to merge into Him, then only all these processes start; then only we come in contact with the saints; then only we start meditating. But we, ourselves, have to work, we have to make ourselves receptive to His grace. He will create the circumstances for us in which we can work our way back up to our home. So, when He wants us to do so, then only do we work. But unless we make the effort and work, we cannot reach our destination.

The Master Answers

* * *

Q: *Can the intellect ever fully understand the teachings of Sant Mat?*

A: No. I would say to understand the real teachings of the saints is to experience them.

Die to Live

Q: *Master, could you please explain this saying from the New Testament: “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”*

A: You must have seen buildings being constructed, and generally when a mason is working, he just picks up a brick for the foundation and says, “It does not fit in here,” and he throws it away. But ultimately the same brick may find a place in the roof, at the top. You often see masons working like that. Similarly, he says that those people who have been rejected by the world might find themselves at the top. They may be accepted by the Father, by the saints or mytics – when their time comes. They are rejected in the beginning and accepted in the end. When the time of that brick comes, it finds its place not just on the ground, but even at the top. So when the time of the disciple comes, he follows the Master and is attached to the Shabd and Nam. When the time has not come, he is put aside. The saint may even be living as his next door neighbour, but he will not hear him. He will have no faith in him. However, when his time comes, then that very soul may find its place at the highest point on the path.

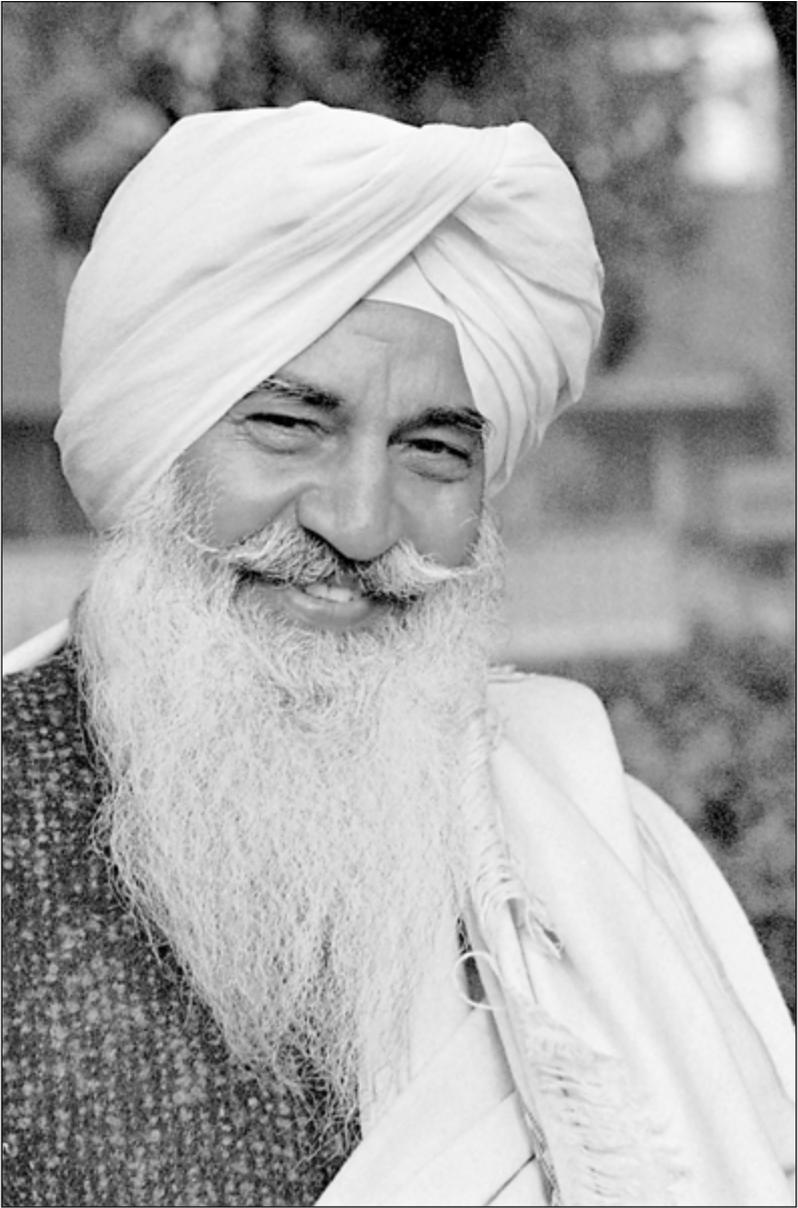
Light on Saint Matthew

* * *

Q: *Can you tell us more about love and how we can develop it ourselves?*

A: The more you give love, the more it grows. The more you share it, the more you will have it in abundance. The more we share it with His creation, the more He gives us, and the more we feel nearer to Him.

The Master Answers



Maharaj Charan Singh

Do You Love Me, Master?

As we sit every day struggling with our mind in meditation, we invariably prepare ourselves for yet another set of hours that will be spent in an attempt at obedience with no good odds in our favour as far as rewards.

And by rewards we mean the kind that we get in our daily lives when we try to please a loved one and which come in the form of phrases like, “I love you” and “You’re the best!” or gestures like bright smiles and warm hugs.

Wouldn’t we love to interact in this manner with our Master too? Isn’t this, in fact, why we get up to ask him all those questions, which we already have the answers for? Sometimes the questions come in the form of, “Master, can you talk about love?” or “Can you throw some light on the relationship between a Master and his disciple?” All along what we really want to know is, “Master, do you love me? Do you see me when I sit for meditation? Are you happy with me?”

We are always told that our relationship with our Master is internal; time, matter or space does not bind it. Therefore, if what we are looking for is some sort of a hint from his side that will prove that he is, in fact, interacting with us at all times, then we will have to learn to recognize those subtle phrases and gestures that Master uses to converse with us, a dynamic conversation that we may not be aware of but which is definitely there.

If a child were to ask his mother, what it was that she actually did for him, what would she say? How can a mother account for all those sleepless nights that she spent trying to pacify her sick child at his slightest discomfort? How can she account for all those times that she brought him to school and quietly watched him through a back

window to make sure that he was fine? How can she even begin to account for the pain that she felt in her heart every time her child would cry?

When we are sitting in an airport alone, Master is sitting on the chair right in front of us. When we are at the doctor's office getting stitches, Master is blowing the sting away. When no one is there to help us in times of our need, Master is holding out his hand.

We can't even begin to imagine what our Master does for us, and how very much he is a part of everything that is happening in our lives. If we could only be more receptive to his presence, life would be so much easier, even exciting!

The question that we may wish to ask ourselves then is not whether Master loves us or whether he is watching us. Instead, a more suitable question would be, "Can I see him?" or in fact "Am I looking his way?" When a child does all his homework, picks up his mess, eats all the food on his plate and does all the things that his parents want him to do, he doesn't for a moment hesitate to run to them with his head held up high, knowing that he can ask for whatever he wants, convinced of the fact that they are pleased with him. On the other hand, if that child has not done his homework, has left his room in a mess and has fed his meal to the dog under the table, then chances are he will instinctively hide himself from his parents out of shame.

If we are not obedient disciples, which equates to not doing our meditation regularly, then unconsciously we too hide from our Master, for how can we face him? At that point, it is not that he is not with us, it is we who are just too embarrassed to look his way.

On the other hand though, when we wake up early, when we do our meditation and follow our Master's instructions to the best of our ability, we will also intuitively know, for a fact, that Master is pleased with us, that he is watching over us and that he loves us very, very much.

Repartee of the Wise

According to a legend, there was once a traveller who came across a wise man sitting outside his village. Upon seeing the wise man, the traveller decided to ask him what kind of people lived in that particular village, since he was looking for a suitable place to settle down.

In answer to the traveller's question, the wise man asked, "Well, good man, what sort of people lived in your village?" The traveller replied, "Oh, they were really mean and cruel." At this, the wise man said to him, "Well, I am afraid the same kind of people live in this village too."

After some time, another traveller passed by the same village and he too asked the same question of the wise man. Similarly, he was asked, "You tell me first, what kind of people lived in your village?" The second traveller replied, "The people in my village were very kind and courteous." The wise man then said to him, "Don't worry, son, you will also find the same kind of people in this village."

The wise man's companion who witnessed both incidents was now perplexed and demanded to know why he had said entirely different things about the people of his village to the two travellers. The wise man said, "Brother, this is because most people often find what they look for!"



Silence Is Golden

The tongue like a sharp knife ... kills without drawing blood.

Buddha

Imagine that you wake up one fine morning and find that there is a surprise package waiting for you at your doorstep. But before you open the package, you have the option of learning its contents, after which you may decide whether or not you would want to open it. You decide to take that option. You then discover that the package contains the power to love and hate. You learn that this power can get out of control very easily. It can confuse, lie and can create many problems. It is extremely difficult to tame or contain, and it can deliver malicious and cruel poison. It can be peaceful and sweet at one moment, but can be bitter and harmful the next. After learning all this, would you be willing to open that package? Probably not. And yet, each day, we all open this destructive and dangerous package, in the form of our tongue, without any worry or conscious thought.

Speaking comes to most of us as naturally as breathing. It has been said that the tongue is the most exercised muscle of our body. It is estimated that in a typical week, we speak enough words to fill a five-hundred page book as we freely express our thoughts, opinions, judgements and beliefs. What is more striking is the fact that more often than not, we are oblivious to the positive or negative effects these words have on the people around us and ourselves.

A woman once approached a spiritual teacher and asked for his advice. “My husband and I are always quarrelling and I am having a difficult time. Could you please advise me what to do?” The spiritual

teacher replied, “That is very easy. I will give you these special lozenges that emit positive vibrations. Keep them in your mouth when your husband comes home and all will be well.”

The woman took the lozenges and followed his advice. Sure enough, every day she noticed that there were no more arguments. After ten days when the lozenges were finished, she went back to the spiritual teacher and said, “I would give anything if you could let me have more of those lozenges. They were wonderful. Ever since I started taking them, our home has been so much more peaceful.” The spiritual teacher then explained, “My child, it was not the lozenges that brought peace to your household; it was your silence. At the end of the day, when you both are tired and weary from a long day’s work, naturally you are not in tune with each other. By keeping silent, you had nothing to quarrel about and this brought harmony into your home.”

If we were to ask spiritual teachers for advice on how to practise wise speech, they are likely to answer with one word: silence. A rule laid down by the noble Buddha which is also echoed in other cultures, is a valuable one for all to follow. He says that if what you have to say is truthful, kind and useful, then say it. If not, silence is best. Speaking distracts and scatters attention while silence collects thoughts. It draws attention inward and strengthens the spirit.

If a person cannot go twenty-four hours without a cigarette, we would say that they were addicted to nicotine. If they could not go twenty-four hours without a drink of alcohol, we would label them as alcoholic. But what if someone could not go twenty-four hours without speaking an unkind word to, or about anybody? Would it then not be fair to say that they were addicted to gossip and slander?

The ability to take control of your words, rather than letting those words control you, is vital for spiritual progress. You have to be more conscious of your thoughts and words, and the power they unleash.

The capacity to sit quietly, to avoid the distraction of televisions, laptops or cell phones is becoming rare. To those who would seek a spiritual path, there is one requirement that for many is daunting and turns them away. That requirement is silence. Maharaj Sawan Singh says, “Let no one imagine that they can ignore this law and still make headway on the path.”

We should remember that a word once spoken can never be taken back; it is out of our mouth and it will have an effect whether we like it or not. That is why each time before we speak, we should try to ask ourselves: Is what I am about to say going to uplift the other person? Will it inspire, motivate and create forward momentum? Will it dissolve fear and create safety and trust? Will I create a positive effect by speaking out these words? We should all take inspiration from Maharaj Jagat Singh who sums up the value of silence when he says:

Much physical and spiritual energy is dissipated by talking. Silence is golden. Speak as little as possible. Open your lips only when it is most necessary. And when you must speak, do so in the most kind and gentle manner. Never lose your temper over anything. You are not running this world. Leave that to Him whose function it is to do so.

The Science of the Soul



The Reason

A Letter from Maharaj Charan Singh

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 are 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 simran and bhajan 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 within.

The 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.

Light on Sant Mat

A Relationship of Love

Inside each person is a treasure trove of love, a storehouse of devotion for the Lord, lying there, brimful. There's not just a drop or two, there are oceans, full to the brim.

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

Love is the essence of the relationship between every Master and his disciple. The bond they share is so unique that no worldly relation can even stand close to compare. When a perfect Master takes a disciple under his shelter, there is no turning back. The Master will deliver his promise, come what may. Slowly but surely, he moulds his disciple into the principles of Sant Mat, he ignites the flame of longing and eventually dyes him in the deepest hue of love.

The Master awakens us from our slumber and he asks us to question ourselves: Why are we given this human birth; why are we asked to meditate; why are we tied down to this creation; why not strive for the ultimate? Having given the utmost importance to meditation, the Master urges us to think deeply what is the purpose of this meditation – why do we sit in one place for two and a half hours; what are we doing this for? He explains that meditation is our life support, and that if we even had the slightest inkling of its importance and necessity, we would not compromise it over anything.

The Master guides us in the best possible way. His powerful words leave an echo in our hearts, raising our awareness to his divine play. Once reluctant to accept what life may offer, the disciple now sees the true significance of everything in life – his perspective has broadened and he happily lives in the will of the Lord. His attitude becomes that

of love and gratitude. He takes everything that comes to him as the Lord's blessing.

The greatest gift that the Master bestows is that he nurtures the seed of love within each disciple. He awakens each of his disciples to the love that is latent in all. Being the perfect Master with the finest qualities, he transforms his disciple to be like himself – perfect in every aspect. As the disciple progresses on the path, he is filled with magnificence – as Hazur Maharaj Ji often said, “All good qualities just appear like cream on milk.”

Finding a true Master is the most fortunate event in a disciple's life – there is no better friend one can find. The Master gives his disciple the method of going within. He himself takes his disciple to his true abode and makes him taste the blissful nectar of Nam.

Now you have been given the method. Practise this method every day for two and a half hours, whether in one, two, three or four sittings, and if you don't see the Light after two weeks, come and grab me by the arm!

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

The Master assures us of the treasures within – what are we waiting for? Let us delay no more and hold on firmly to our Master's hand because once he takes us into his fold, we will experience a special love like we have never known before.



Memorable Quotes

There is neither in heaven nor on earth anything sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing loftier, nothing happier, nothing more precious; for love is born of God.

Thomas à Kempis

A breath that does not repeat the name of God is a wasted breath.

Kabir

*You need another eye, so you may behold His beauty;
You need another ear, so you may hear the Word of the Friend.*

Muinuddin Chishti

Simplicity doesn't mean to live in misery and poverty. You have what you need, and you don't want to have what you don't need.

Maharaj Charan Singh

Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God. Faith puts God between us and our circumstances.

F.B. Meyer

Do not lose heart. The battle has just begun and fight courageously. Mind is not stronger than the sound current. The Master is with you. He is watching your every movement. He is prepared to fight your battles with you. Take him as your helper. Have faith in him. Fight the mind and you will succeed.

Maharaj Sawan Singh

Death – The Inevitable Journey

*It is not death that a man should fear,
but he should fear never beginning to live.*

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

Life is fleeting and it is only a temporary sojourn in this world. Yet, we go about our lives filling its chapters with dreams, attainments and acquisitions, believing that each page of our vast volume will bring us untold happiness and tranquillity. It is one of the paradoxes of human life that we seem to believe that our existence on this earth is eternal and death is avoidable. Sadly, we forget that we are all travellers on a journey to nonexistence. The shadow of death remains immeasurable and mysterious, and yet we must all inevitably proceed towards it.

In fact, death begins with life's first breath. Since death can strike at any moment and should never be regarded as a distant event, self-awakening should be our top-most goal. Perfect mystics explain to us that death is not what it seems. It is a joyous birth into a life that is far more magnificent, far more splendid than anything we can ever imagine on this physical plane. In reality, death should be regarded as an anticipated return back home, for it is the weary soul's ascent to its resting domain. They explain to us that it is possible to face death in the eye by preparing ourselves for this inevitable event. In *Living Meditation*, it is stated:

Meditation is the single most practical thing we can do to prepare ourselves for what we will experience when we leave the physical world at the time of death. Death will then hold no mystery for us. Instead of being a frightening experience, it

will become something we anticipate, something full of wonder, beauty and promise – something to look forward to, something we know.

Meditation is nothing but a preparation for what we will experience when we leave the physical body at the time of death.

We have been given this physical body only temporarily so that we may be able to prepare for our journey to another state of existence. This outer covering will no longer be required as we graduate to the next level of our development, and we will discard it just as we would cast away a worn out garment. Using an analogy between a silkworm and the soul, Saint Teresa of Avila explains that we must all learn to die like a silkworm. Motivated by a strong inner desire to become what its life on earth is intended to be, the silkworm, forfeiting the world of mulberry leaves and broad daylight, withdraws from the world, plunges itself in utter darkness and then emerges as a beautiful moth. Like a silkworm, if we hope to fulfil our purpose of this physical life, we must undertake the mystical journey within and experience death. However, Saint Teresa profoundly exclaims that taking this plunge and preparing for physical annihilation is no easy task:

Note very carefully, daughters, the silkworm has of necessity to die, and it is this which will cost you most; for death comes more easily when one can see oneself living a new life, whereas our duty now is to continue living this present life, and yet to die of our own free will. I confess to you that we shall find this much harder, but it is of the greatest value and the reward will be greater too if you gain the victory.

Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Complete Works*

Once we have experienced leaving this body voluntarily and have learned to ‘die while living’, we will no longer regard death as some dreadful catastrophe, for the shrouded mysteries of death would be fully revealed and the shadow of darkness would vanish. We would then understand that we have been placed on this earth in accordance with a divine purpose, one that would channel every thought and deed of our existence. This is evident in the life of Jalaluddin Rumi who experienced death while living and was waiting for his entrance to the Royal Court of Magnificence. In fact, the night of Rumi’s death is known as ‘Rumi’s Wedding Night’, the occasion when Rumi was finally united with his Beloved in eternal life – a unification he had so often sought in mystical practice. His death had led him to exaltation and divine glory where happiness knows no bounds.

*On the day of death, when my coffin is on the move,
Do not suppose I have any pain at leaving this world.
When you see my hearse, say not
“Leaving! He’s leaving!”
That time will be for me union and encounter.
When you commit me to the grave,
Say not “Farewell! Farewell,”
For the grave is a veil over the reunion of Paradise.*

Jalaluddin Rumi, as quoted in *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love*

Once the fear of death is removed, we will no longer be blinded by it. Death would then be regarded as a release from the body, an opportunity to depart from this physical plane, to be united with our Beloved – who is so glorious, so full of mercy, so full of love – and an invitation to take abode in His celestial sanctuary.



For Thou Art With Me

In the twenty-third Psalm, we read: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” This is a beautiful sentiment but how many of us truly believe it with regard to the Master?

On the face of it, we seem to exhibit enough faith in the path and our Master. We go to satsangs regularly, do our sevas punctually and even manage to take a trip or two to the Dera. We say that the Master is always with us and believe that his guiding hand is upon us. However, let our faith never be tested. If we truly had implicit trust in our Master, we would not worry endlessly about things that are beyond our control.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to say, “Faith in the Master means to follow and live according to his teachings.” The saints try to guide us to a higher level of understanding. We cannot develop faith in the Master just by talking about it or creating concepts. Faith arises naturally from awareness and realization as we progress on the path.

There is an ancient story of a Samurai warrior and his bride who were crossing a river by boat. A storm suddenly set in and the Samurai’s wife instinctively started to panic, while the Samurai himself remained perfectly composed. Seeing her husband’s tranquil state, the wife said, “How can you be so calm and relaxed? Should you not be thinking of a way to save us from this terrible storm?” At this, the Samurai unsheathed his sword and in one smooth action held it at his wife’s throat. The wife started to laugh and the husband asked her, “Why do you laugh? The sharp blade of the sword is inches away from your throat and may injure you.” The wife replied, “What fear can I have when the sword is in your hand? I know you love me and that

you would never harm me.” Hearing this, the Samurai smiled and explained to his wife, “Just as you are sure of the hand which controls this sword, I am sure of the hand that is behind the storm. The Lord controls and knows everything. Whatever He wills, let it be so.”

The origin of the word *faith* can be traced back to meaning ‘the duty to fulfil one’s trust’. So how does one get to the state of having this level of trust in the Lord? For us to develop and strengthen our faith, we need to discharge our duty by attending to our meditation. As Maharaj Charan Singh has written, “Please remember that true faith only comes from meditation. The more you meditate with love and devotion, the more faith you get.”

Much like grace on the path, faith is a two-way street. Our meditation will help us strengthen our faith and live according to the teachings. At the same time, as we develop more faith on the path, we will automatically give a higher priority to our meditation.

When we are indifferent to our meditation, when we do not make it the most important daily event in our lives, we are losing the opportunity to develop the faith we need to follow the path. By initiating us, our Master has shown that he has faith in us. He has demonstrated his belief that we can live the teachings on a daily basis. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to show some faith in ourselves and fulfil the promise we made at the time of initiation.

In truth, faith is also a gift from the Lord. Maharaj Charan Singh has told us, “Faith is the most precious of gifts that the Lord can confer on a devotee.” Slowly but surely, as we continue our efforts in our meditation, the Lord also bestows on us the gift of faith. And it is through this gift that one day, no matter what the waves of karma bring into our lives, we will be able to say to the Lord, “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.”



Maharaj Charan Singh

Heart to Heart

Colonel Sanders describes an incident which took place during an English group meeting with Maharaj Charan Singh on his visit to the UK in May of 1970. He writes:

The little VIP's of this occasion were the babies and children, who had a special darshan to themselves. In order to let their parents and everyone listen to Master without interruption, a separate nursery on a floor above had been equipped with toys and games, and those in charge combined to keep the children happy. At the close of the meeting on each day, and before refreshments, Master went up to see and bless them as he had promised. On the second day, all the parents left the hall and went up to stand behind the circle of chairs on which the children were waiting. Tiny, whispered "Radha Soamis" greeted the Master in turn, although shyness overcame some. One little girl, however, who only found her voice when he had passed by (and was apparently not heard) soon remedied matters. She gave his shawl a reminding tug, much to his and everyone's amusement; then he touched her head – "Radha Soami" he answered gently.

Thus Saith the Master

* * *

An extract from a letter by Maharaj Charan Singh: "My whole trip is just wonderful and it cannot be described in words. People are so loving and kind and doing their best to make my stay pleasant everywhere. I do not remember having done anything in this life to deserve so much of their love. They receive me with a smile and their eyes are full of loving tears at my departure. People are very receptive to satsang. I cannot describe Maharaj Ji's grace and blessings on me ..."

Treasure Beyond Measure

Book Review



Love is the Wine: Talks with a Sufi Master in America

BY SHEIKH MUZAFFER OZAK

EDITED BY SHEIKH RAGIP FRAGER

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Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak, who died in 1985, was the nineteenth Grand Sheikh of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes (followers of the Sufi path). Founded in the 1600's in Turkey, the Halveti-Jerrahi Order is a branch of the Halveti Order which dates back to the 1300's. In this book of informal talks, Sheikh Muzaffer gives the reader a glimpse into Sufism as a living tradition in today's world.

He says, "*The path of Sufism is the elimination of any intermediaries between the individual and God. The goal is to act as an extension of God, not to be a barrier.*" Because God is love, acting as an extension of God means feeling compassion for your fellow human being and acting on that compassion. Thus, the Halveti-Jerrahi Order engages in various relief projects. The sheikh says, "*To be a dervish is to serve and to help others, not just to sit and pray. To be a real dervish is to lift up those who have fallen, to wipe the tears of the suffering, to caress the friendless and the orphaned.*"

The sheikh describes the stages in the spiritual transformation of an individual:

The lowest state is that of being completely dominated by your wants and desires. The next state is to struggle with yourself ... A much higher state is to be satisfied with whatever God provides for you ... The highest level of the soul, the pure soul, is not a part of the creation ... The pure soul is a part of the Infinite.

The result will be that we enter into the realm of love. “*Love is to see what is good and beautiful in everything.*” The sheikh goes on to explain:

Love is a special pleasurable pain. Whoever has this in their heart will know the secret. They will see that everything is Truth and that everything leads to Truth. There is nothing but Truth. In the realization of that they will be overcome. They will sink into the sea of Truth.

This is the goal of all human beings. “*You can get there by yourself,*” he says, “*but that is the hard way.*” In the passage from which the title of the book is taken, he says, “*The sheikhs are the pourers of the wine and the dervish is the glass. Love is the wine. By the hand of the wine pourer, the glass – the dervish – is filled. This is the short way. Love could be offered to one by other hands. This is the short way.*”

The editor of this book is well-known in the field of psychology, having founded the first institute granting graduate degrees in Transpersonal Psychology. It may be less well-known that he is also a sheikh in the Halveti-Jerrahi Order. To create this book, Frager compiled and edited transcripts from meetings, dinner conversations and lectures. He “*struggled to retain Sheikh Muzaffer’s wisdom, warmth and humour*” as he organized these rich, oral teachings into chapters on such topics as Love, Faith, Self-Knowledge, and Submission.

Like many other Sufi teachers, Sheikh Muzaffer would rarely teach in a linear fashion. He would typically approach a topic from a variety of viewpoints and liberally insert stories and parables to illustrate his points. Often one story would lead to another, or a reference in one story would call up another story that became ‘nested’ within the first.

The reader will enjoy not only the sheikh’s deep spiritual insights, but also his typical Sufi style of teaching and his humour. One humorous story he tells concerns the devil, who was complaining that people blame him for everything. He claimed, “I am innocent!” and set about

proving it. He loosened the stake to which a powerful ram was tied, then folded his arms and sat back, doing nothing more. The ram broke loose, charged into the house and broke an expensive mirror. So the mistress of the house killed the ram, but her husband got so angry about this that he divorced her. Then the woman's brothers came to fight the husband, who gathered his relatives, and soon there was a vast feud and many people died. "You see?" said the devil. "Why should I be responsible for all the awful things they did to each other? I just loosened the stake." Sheikh Muzaffer concludes, "*Watch your stakes.*"

He illustrates many points with stories from the Qur'an. For example, he tells the story of Zulaikha who fell so madly in love with Joseph, the most beautiful of all prophets. Zulaikha loses everything because of her love – wealth, power, position and even her reason. Yet, through this intense love she realizes the Truth. Years later, when she is an old, ragged beggar, Joseph offers to marry her, but she says, "No, Joseph. My great love for you was but a veil between me and the Beloved. I have torn that veil aside." As Sheikh Muzaffer concludes, "*Through her great love for Joseph, Zulaikha found what we are all seeking, the source of love.*"

The chapter on Dervish Education weaves together many stories about Ibrahim Ad'ham, the king of Balkh. These stories depict the gradual process of a wealthy and powerful king turning toward spirituality. For example, lying in his bed, the king hears noises on his roof. When he realizes that someone is trying to plow a field on the roof, he thinks they are idiotic. But a voice from the rooftop answers, "Well, if you think that you can find God in your silken sheets and in bed, why not plow on the roof of the palace?" As Sheikh Muzaffer points out, this disturbing incident was an 'invitation' from God. Each of a series of anecdotes demonstrates other invitations from God, but Ibrahim Ad'ham had to become ready to respond to those invitations:

At our level, we often don't accept God's invitation immediately. We wait. We consider and contemplate. Ibrahim Ad'ham had considerations also. He wanted to be a dervish and to devote his life to find himself and to find God, but he had a lot to give up. He had to give up a whole kingdom, and give up the state of a sultan.

