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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India
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Letter from the Master

You say you are not much encouraged with your meditations. You should devote more time to the practises, until thoughts cease and soul and mind collect in the eye centre and then go inward. All knowledge is within. As long as the mind wavers, it is not seen, just as one cannot see his reflection in muddy and disturbed water. Our minds are dirty with low and outward desires, and are constantly wavering. They are ignorant of what lies within. Concentration is the first step of the soul's inward journey.

Repetition of the holy names during one's daily routine work is very useful. One is thinking about a thing within oneself; therefore, when one sits for devotional practices, the mind is naturally turned in this direction....

When you have controlled the mind and it raises no thought, but is lost in the sound current, you will then see spiritually within. As you have such an earnest desire for going within and seeing the Master, rest assured that you will one day succeed. Increase time for devotional exercises.

Knowledge is within you. Sound current is the knowledge. Sound current is independent of its surroundings. It stands by itself. It is the essence, and all else sprang from it. Humanity is entangled with matter and does not even study the mind, not to mention the sound current or the spirit behind the mind. On account of its association with changeable things, it is subject to change, dies, and is reborn. This will continue as long as it does not catch the unchangeable. It must rise on the sound current and reach Sach Khand, the place of perpetual bliss.

Do strengthen your faith, make the mind motionless; and when it becomes motionless, it will begin to see within. For instance, if you



shut a boy indoors, the first thing he does is to break the doors and windows; and when he cannot find a way out, he gets tired and sits quietly. He then begins to see what lies in the room. Mind is like the restless boy. It has to be closed in against its will, and when it acquires a taste for the interior, it does not go outside.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



Only Meditation Will Lead to Liberation

*If the smell of food could satisfy hunger,
Why would food be cooked in every home?
If a glance at water could quench thirst,
Why would water be stored in every home?
Looking at the shade of a tree gives no relief
Until one sits under it.*

*Songs about the glory of the Lord
Bear fruit only if there is firm faith in the heart.
Just knowing about the path leads nowhere –
Only meditation will lead to liberation....
Repeat the Lord's Name incessantly.*

Tukaram, Ceaseless Song of Devotion

Keeping the Atmosphere

It takes about a year to plan Master's official tour to a centre. During that time, if we want to attend his visit we have to make all kinds of personal arrangements. We have to decide whether we will fly or drive, arrange for our hotel, food, and request vacation time if we work. Just as important – we focus on our spiritual life.

There is anticipation, excitement, love and longing at the thought of being in the presence of the Master. We hope that seeing him will recharge our spiritual batteries and get us back on track and working towards our main goal in this life, that of God-realization.

Now, months after his visit – when our Master has come and gone – we might ask ourselves, “What has happened to our longing for darshan and for being in his physical presence?”

Master has talked about how we have to keep our objectives before us and work hard to line up our actions with these objectives. We have heard so many satsangs, we have been on the path for so many years and we have seen him so many times. Now, he says, what is needed is the action. It is time to apply what we have been learning.

While it might seem easier to keep our objectives before us and attend to our meditation when we are visiting at Dera or doing seva at one of the centres, the challenge for us is to bring that atmosphere of the peace we felt, that determination that we had, into our everyday life.

How can we recreate that atmosphere? How can we attend to meditation and keep him in our thoughts in the middle of the chaos of everyday life? How can we keep the focus on him?

Maharaj Charan Singh has said that twenty-four hours in a day are enough to attend to our jobs, our families, our sleep, our other duties and to give at least two and a half hours to our meditation.

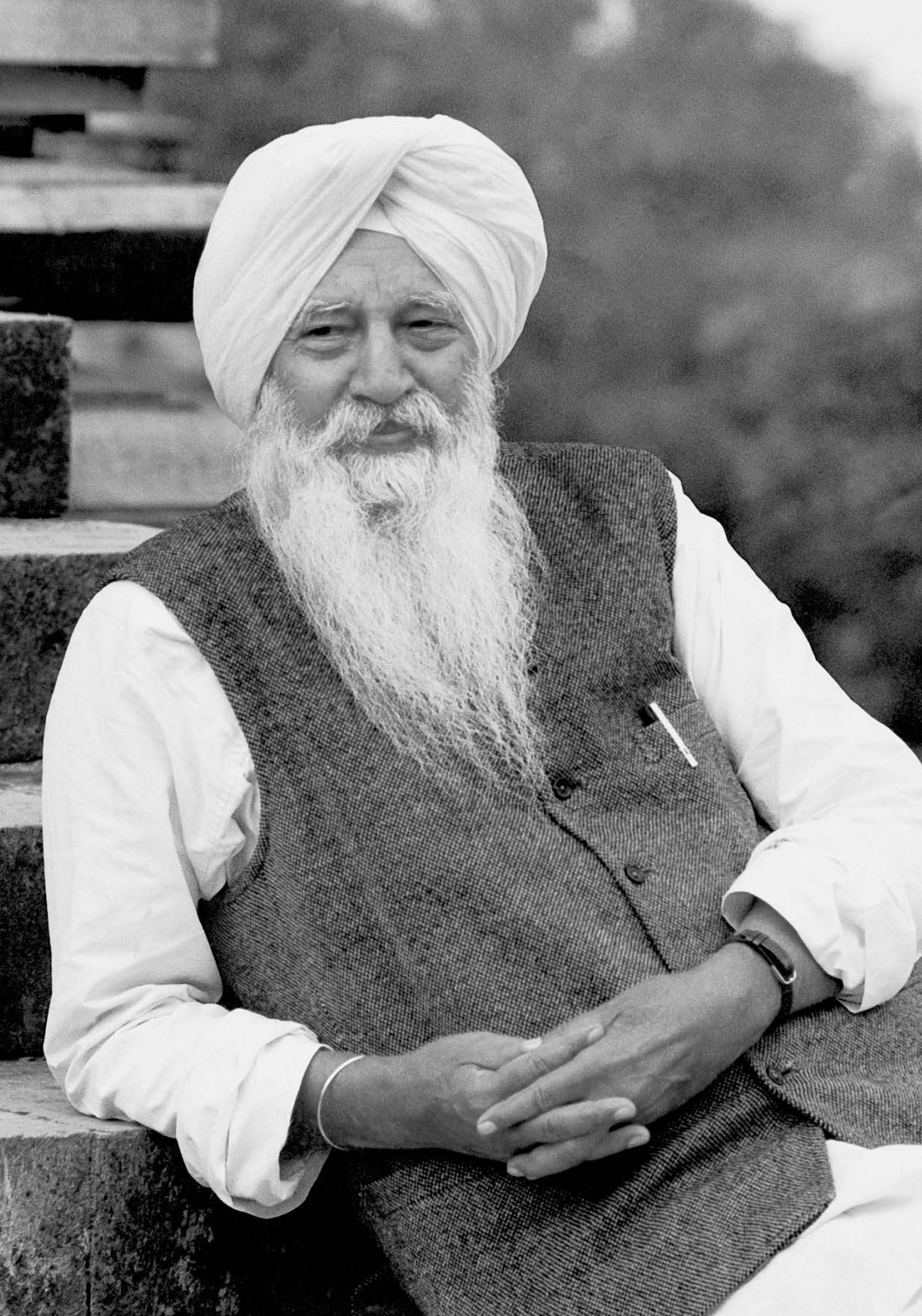
We have to make the time, we have to make meditation our number one priority, and then the rest will fall into place. The atmosphere that we seek will be with us. The Master often tells us: Words will just give us words but actions will give us actions.

This, then, is our next step: Doing our simran and bhajan in order to keep the atmosphere of him alive every day of our lives.



*Without the company of a Saint,
there can be no discourse on God;
Without such a discourse one's delusion
cannot be dispelled;
And until delusion is dispelled,
One can never have unwavering love for God.*

The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas



Enjoying Meditation

The Master has given us the advice to frequently reflect on two questions once in a while: What is the purpose of meditation and why do we do it? This reflection will help us prevent meditation from becoming a meaningless action, a mere ritual. To answer the first question, Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Die To Live*:

The purpose of meditation is nothing but to obtain that peace of mind. Actually, all this tension and depression that we feel is due to the scattering of our mind. When our attention is scattered we become very restless, unhappy, and we lose that peace. The more we concentrate at the eye centre and the more our attention is upward, the more peaceful we become, and only then we enjoy that bliss and happiness within....

Peace we can obtain only when all coverings are removed from the soul, when the soul shines and becomes whole, and it becomes worthy of merging into the Lord....

In order to get tranquility and peace, the only method is meditation, which takes our mind back to its source, thereby releasing us from the mind and removing all coverings from the soul.

Tulsidas, a well-known Indian mystic, confirms this in one of his poems in *The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas*:

*There can be no happiness to the soul:
And no rest to the mind,
So long as one does not meditate on God,
Relinquishing desires, the abodes of sorrow.*

To obtain this inner peace and happiness, our Master has given us a very simple method in meditation – simple because we only have to repeat five words during simran and to listen to the celestial music during bhajan. It is so simple that everyone can do it, irrespective of age, education, intelligence or health. Everyone can do it. Yet most of us say that it is very difficult to practise. The Masters confirm this. How is it possible that something apparently so simple can be so difficult to practise? Tulsidas gives us the answer: The mind has never been at rest. Forgetting its natural heavenly bliss, it wanders day and night, drawn by the senses.

*It has become soiled by the mire of many karmas,
Accumulated through innumerable lives.*

The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas

Meditation seems difficult to practise since our mind is not used to being at the eye centre. For innumerable lives it has been scattered, tempted and distracted by worldly pleasures. How reasonable is it to expect that it will be at rest in the eye centre and in an instant be cleansed from all its impressions, the mire of many karmas?

These unreasonable expectations can lead to frustration, when during meditation thoughts continuously interrupt our simran, sleep overwhelms us and concentration feels impossible to attain. This frustration is a reaction or a manifestation of our ego, for it has to admit that it is powerless and helpless; it can't do what it wants and has to surrender to a greater power. The purpose of meditation can only be fulfilled by his grace. Initially, this is difficult for our ego to accept.

Maharaj Jagat Singh says that when we notice that frustration or feel we want to become rebellious, we should continue with our meditation, and he explains why:

We must strive hard to subdue the mind and put in every effort to drive away the evil qualities that overpower us. But, if after struggling very hard we still find that we have not advanced a single foot on this long journey, we should not get disheartened. Master knows well that with our feeble hands and feet, we shall not be able to accomplish this journey even if we were to go on travelling for a hundred thousand years. He wants to impress upon us that unless the Lord's grace intervenes, no one can walk on this path of immortality. When we collapse and fall, and have no strength left to struggle further, then Master's loving kindness and grace will carry us forward as a tottering child is carried in the arms by its mother.

The Science of the Soul

If we can keep the purpose of meditation in mind, we will find energy, power and inspiration to begin anew every day. That's why the present Master has given us this advice to reflect on, not for the purpose of evaluating our daily meditation – but this is what we usually do. We tend to focus on the results of our effort and compare it with an ideal, while we should really focus on the effort. By doing this we deprive ourselves of the opportunity of enjoying our meditation. Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest, shows us the difference between his experiences when he focuses on the result of his prayer instead of on his effort:

Every morning at 6:45 I go to the small convent of the Carmelite Sisters for an hour of prayer and meditation. I say "every morning." But there are exceptions. Fatigue, busyness, and preoccupations often serve as arguments for not going. Yet without this one-hour-a-day for God, my life loses its coherency

and I start experiencing my days as a series of random incidents and accidents. My hour in the Carmelite chapel is more important than I can fully know myself...

The only way I become aware of his presence is in that remarkable desire to return to that quiet chapel and be there without any real satisfaction. God is greater than my senses, greater than my thoughts, greater than my heart.

Henri Nouwen, *Gracias*

The present Master gives us the advice to learn to enjoy our meditation, to enjoy just doing it and to leave the results to him. When we take his advice to heart, we will see that this attitude will help us to focus on the repetition of the names during simran and to listen to the Shabd during bhajan. This will deepen our concentration.

We must first learn to settle the mind in simran, and stay there, enjoying the practise with gratefulness and humility.

Living Meditation

We will learn to enjoy the meditation also by reflecting on the second question: Why do we meditate? If we can answer this question sincerely with “because my Master has asked me to,” we may start to enjoy it. For what is more enjoyable than doing something at the request of our Master, knowing that it pleases him most? We are very fortunate to be allowed to do this seva of meditation.

The Master appreciates every moment we engage in our meditation practice, even when we are distracted, restless or sleepy. Every moment we try to get close to him within, pleases him. Hafiz confirms this in a loving and compassionate way in one of his poems, using the

metaphor of a dance for our effort to be near our Beloved: the dance of our soul with her Beloved. It is a difficult dance for us and Hafiz explains why. But the fact that we try to draw near the Beautiful One again and again makes the Beloved defenceless and will lead to the moment that he can't withhold his love any longer, the love that will bring rest to our mind and happiness to our soul.

*You have not danced so badly, my dear,
Trying to hold hands with the Beautiful One.
You have waltzed with great style...
To have neared God's heart at all.
Our Partner is notoriously difficult to follow,
And even his best musicians are not always easy
To hear.*

*I Heard God Laughing, Renderings of Hafiz
as rendered by Daniel Ladinsky*

Hafiz's message is clear. If we are honest and sincere in our effort, what does it matter that we do not see or hear anything inside? So what if we have to start our simran again and again because our mind is still scattered and thoughts come in between? So what if we have to start our bhajan again because we fell asleep? What is important is that, despite all our weaknesses and shortcomings, we are sincere and honest in our effort and keep on trying to get close to the inner Master. What is important is that we are doing what our Master has asked us to do. And when all our efforts to meditate please him so much, why not shift our focus to the effort and just do it – just enjoy the practice.



Always Be in Rapport with the Lord

*Always be in rapport with the Lord
And enjoy true contentment –
This is the state of ineffable serenity.
There is no peace except in the Name of the Lord –
Meditate on it with one-pointed attention.*

*Experience the state of superconsciousness
Where the Lord's love surges
And you will see your own form
In each particle of the creation.*

*O Nama, the Lord will make
The pupil of your eye his home,
And your eye will expand
To contain the entire universe*

Saint Namdev

The Difference

I got up early one morning
and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me,
and heavier came each task.
“Why doesn't God help me?” I wondered,
He answered, “You didn't ask.”

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me,
He said, “But you didn't seek.”

I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
“My child, you didn't knock.”

I woke up early this morning,
and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.

Author Unknown



What Karma?

A child is sick. We lose our job. Friends betray us. The stock market drops. We break a leg. Karma! Karma! Karma!

But is it bad? Or is it grace?

Master tells us that at the time of initiation he, personally, takes over the administration of our karma from Kal. Master buys our I.O.U.s, as it were. Yet, probably few of us think deeply about just what that means. We assume that there is a purpose for the changeover, but we do not much concern ourselves with puzzling out what it is, especially when we are new on the path. We are too warm and happy in the cosy nest Master makes for new initiates. We do not think too much about the growth pangs, which must come later. If we think about the administration of our karma at all, we probably don't spend much time pondering who it is that administers it. Certainly Master does not say he will absolve us of our destiny or debts due for payment in this life. He never says that we will not be required to pay.

Regarding his role as administrator of our karma, Master tells us that a father's measures to correct the child sometimes may seem far more severe than those of the law; the father seeks improvement while the law is concerned with justice or equalization of accounts – an eye for an eye, punishment for crime, reward for virtue.

We have learned to expect and to live with duality: hot, cold; up, down; good karma, bad karma. Even knowing that Master is the administrator of our karma, we still tend to think in terms of these opposites. We tend to look upon pain as bad karma and on pleasure as good karma or his grace. Consequently, we plead for Master's grace, the good; and we pray for the fortitude to tolerate the bad, the painful, when it comes. Of course, we are generally secretly hoping to avoid the

pain altogether. Or, barring that, we hope that Master will arrange for the pinprick rather than the fatal stab. Yes, we relish the good and try to grin and bear the bad. So does the world.

But what is good? What is bad? What is karma? What is grace? Is grace getting what we 'want' or is it getting what we 'need'? Is grace only the easy, the comfortable? Is it only the pleasant? Or could it also be the hard scrubbing that we must have to become clean? Once, when someone asked Master for his grace, his response was something like: Are you sure you want it? Are you sure you could stand it?

Is it not possible that everything – the apparent good, the apparent bad – may all be grace, since Master is the administrator of our karma and, at the same time, the source of all grace? Is it possible that everything which touches us, even our karmic debt, is grace, grace, and more grace? Is it not grace to be permitted to pay off our karma and to pay it when and in the specific way he chooses? Is it not grace to pay our debt, no matter how painful, for the purpose of going home rather than for the sake of Kals' justice, which binds us more and more firmly to the world? Is not everything that comes from Master a blessing? Does not his touch on our 'bad karma' make it a blessing? Is a gift of sorrow or pain less a gift than one of pleasure? When both are from his hands, are they not equally precious? Can he give a bad gift?

How can we imagine that anything bad can befall us when we are in Master's keeping? To this plane of garbage pails and outhouses, he came for us. It is his responsibility, his joy, to take us home, and in the quickest way possible. In *Quest for Light*, he says, "More love will come into your heart when it is safe and fitting." He knows what is good, what is safe for us. He knows the proper treatment and, yes, the timing of that treatment to make us strong. The medicine to cure the disease of maya may be bitter, but can we say that it is bad karma? Can we say that it is less than good? Can we not trust Master enough to know that

his touch is always sweet, always tender? And do we not know that he, and only he, can touch us? Must we, like a small wild bird, try to escape from the hand that would bind the broken wing?

So, what karma?

The Master administers our karma with love. He is not demanding payment for payment's sake. He is seeking to make us clean and whole. How can we – with our tiny, limited vision – question his methods? Furthermore, as we know, when pain comes, he always gives us a special sense of his presence and love. He is so near at those times.

Yet, we cling to, beg for, his 'good' gifts calling them grace, while we recoil from his gifts of pain, calling them karma. Is it the gift, not the giver, that we cherish?

When will we appreciate that we are no longer under the law of justice, but under the rule of love? Rather than whining or wailing, "Karma! Karma! Karma!" in times of pain as though it were bad, should we not sing, "Grace! Grace! Grace!" at all times in happy gratitude? Should we not strive to joyfully accept and treasure all of his gifts as the gentle touch of the Beloved?

Adapted from Radha Soami Greetings, February, 1975



Role of the Master

*Man continues to stumble in ignorance and
thus goes on suffering from the shaft of pain.
He is bereft of the company of the holy;
who but the Saint can put him on the Path?
If he were to meet the benevolent Satguru,
the primordial mystery would be unravelled.
Indeed, O Tulsi, the Master would wipe off the stores
of karma and drive the Angel of Death away.*

Tulsi Sahib, Saint of Hathras

In this short poem, Tulsi Sahib imparts to us in very simple, truthful words the importance of a perfect living Master. He makes us painfully aware that without the love, guidance and abundant grace of a spiritual adept, our salvation is literally doomed. We will continually be born again and again as any one of the 8,400,000 species inhabiting the earth.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I, Maharaj Sawan Singh quotes Guru Arjun:

*By our fate karmas do we move about in this world;
Undergo pleasure and pain;
Incarnate in different lives,
Take to slander and become arrogant
and devoid of love and devotion.
Consequently, we fail to achieve our only goal in this life,
Which is God-realization.*

It may be many, many lifetimes before we are born as a human being again as it is only in the human form that God-realization can be found and salvation granted.

While being so engrossed in our worldly pursuits, attachments and desires, we become unaware of what our real purpose is in this human body. Granted, we need to work, take care of our families (monetarily and emotionally) and take care of our physical bodies so that we can handle our responsibilities more easily, but our utmost effort should be to enhance our spiritual efforts. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

The human body is a priceless gift bestowed on man through the Lord's grace. The purpose of God in conferring this rare gift is to afford to us an opportunity to return to our true home.

Quest for Light

We, as human beings, can reunite with the Lord here and now. Actually, we were never separated from him, but we have forgotten this. We feel separate because the layers of karma that have blanketed us through our past lives have made us incapable on our own of seeing or hearing the Lord within us. We go about our daily lives completely oblivious to the fact that we are missing our chance for God-realization. We work, play, acquire unnecessary possessions, cry, kick and scream when things don't go the way we want; or we become elated and boastful when they do. We worry incessantly about our bills, children, jobs, etc. We may not all have the same lists of worries and concerns but we all have lists, nonetheless. We put too much physical and mental energy into our daily lives and too little into our spiritual lives. We literally do "stumble in ignorance" as Tulsi states, and we will continue to suffer for it.

There is no one, not one soul on the face of this earth, not even the people whom we love and who love us in return, who can help us with

this dilemma because no one can rescue us from this except a perfect living Master who is part and parcel of the Supreme Being. If we are fortunate enough to come in contact with such a Master, our endless journey will cease and our salvation will be guaranteed. But it is a rare few who are lucky enough to have this privilege. And luck or good fortune is exactly what it is. Maharaj Sawan Singh says, “It is only due to great good fortune that worship of the holy feet of the Master can be had.” (*Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. III)

For all that we will ultimately get in return, Master asks very little of us. There are four vows, none of which are impossible to keep: maintaining a lacto-vegetarian diet; living a clean, moral life; taking no drugs or alcohol; and doing two and a half hours of daily meditation. By adhering to these vows we lessen our load of karma, slowly, as we become less world-oriented. The Master patiently waits to give us all he has as soon as we become strong and firm in our efforts to control our minds and to be one with God. It is a life-long journey that requires our every effort to control our mind through simran – the repetition of the five holy names imparted to us by our Master at the time of initiation – and bhajan, listening to the Shabd, which is the sound current or audible life stream that resounds continuously in every being. We need to arrange our days so that as much time as possible can be afforded to this practise. After a while, we will realize that we are not missing the world’s entanglements and will desire more and more solitude to pursue meditation.

The real work of our lives, meditation, has a purifying effect that over time will enable the mind to become our friend instead of our foe. It is the mind that hinders our progress, as it desires to remain entangled in the world, where it has had free rein over us. But even this powerful mind will succumb when it realizes the benefits of meditation, and it will then become a friend that will aid

us tremendously in our endeavours to be more focused on the path.
Dadu writes:

*As many as are the waves of the sea,
so many are the desires of the mind.
Stilling them all, one sits with contentment
holding the thought of the One
in his self.*

Dadu, The Compassionate Mystic

Our mind will eventually want us to sit in meditation and will no longer put trivial thoughts and worries into our heads to prevent us from progressing. If we were more silent during the day, sought more solitude and lived more simply, we could spend more precious time doing our simran. Being more focused on this practise of repeating these five holy words during the day will be of great benefit to us when we sit for our simran and bhajan during our meditation.

The Masters have given us all that is needed to achieve God-realization: simran, bhajan and abundant grace. Answers to many of our questions can be found in the multitude of our own Sant Mat books. We can read and be inspired, but ultimately it is our meditation, our sitting in stillness at the eye focus, that will awaken us to our true selves.

Maharaj Charan Singh writes:

Mere reading of the scriptures or listening to the teachings of Saints is not enough. We must put the teachings into practise and travel the Path ourselves.

Die to Live

The Master came to untangle us from life's worries, woes and short-lived joys and happiness in this world. Again in *Die to Live*, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

If we had no devotion, no desire for meditation, we would not have come to the Path at all. The One who has pulled us to the Path will also give us all those things. He has not forgotten us after pulling us to the Path. He is still there within us.

The loving hands of our Master are extended to us every moment, ready to bestow all his help and grace as we journey back to our true home. We need only to take our hands off the world and uplift them towards him to receive these blessings. Our success on this path is guaranteed.

We should be full of gratitude every day, knowing that our loving Master is rescuing us from this endless cycle of karma and guiding us on this path to self – and God-realization.

In the *Adi Granth*, Guru Amar Das says:

*The Master alone has the key;
None else can open the door.
Without a Master, no one can obtain the Name;
Such is the law laid down by the Lord.*



Letting Go

The present Master told us recently, that all we need to do is sit down, close our eyes, repeat the names and let go. These instructions sound easy enough. The first three directives we have no problem with, but it's the 'let go' part we cannot always get a handle on.

What exactly are we supposed to let go of? If we just think of it in reference to meditation, we have an inkling of what he's talking about. We all know well the process of gearing up our simran as we begin to let go of our prattling thoughts. We all know how much concentration it takes to hold that defensive line of simran against that offensive line of charging thoughts – thoughts that do not like to be told to take a back seat nor to be ignored for any length of time.

When we put 'letting go' into that frame of reference, we all nod and say, "Ah, yes, I know that game." This process of letting go of our thoughts takes constant, sustained, focused, and deliberate attention. And it takes the ability to pick up the ball (the simran) when we have been brutally attacked and brought down by the enemy (our thoughts) and then turn away from those thoughts and get back into the flow of simran.

In meditation we focus all of our attention on simran and on letting go of the thoughts as they surface. In *Living Meditation*, it says:

When we sit for meditation, we should be absolutely relaxed, start our simran and let ourselves go. Therefore, the first step in meditation is to place simran at the eye centre.

Then, in the next paragraph, it says:

If we begin in an unfocused way, our meditation continues to be unfocused throughout.

So here we have another condition important to the start of our sitting. Focus. It continues:

By switching our thoughts to simran, we extract ourselves from the world of concepts. We let go of the need to be endlessly entertained by our thoughts, give up our addiction to inner chattering, and step out onto the path of inner peace.

But that's not the whole story, because letting go is a more complex concept than just letting go of our invasive thoughts during meditation. Letting go becomes the story of our lives.

We ultimately have to let go of our preconceptions of reality. We have to let go of all illusions of control. We have to let go of the idea that our ego matters. We have to let go of everything related to me, myself and I. We have to let go of all that we are grasping and clutching and holding on to in this life.

In our personal lives, the words 'let go' can strike fear in our hearts. We seem to have a congenital preference for the illusion that we are the captains of our own ship, in charge and in control! The words 'let go' mean to abdicate control: to release, to surrender, to give up our sense of possessiveness, our definitions of 'mine' and 'not mine.'

It is so hard to let go sometimes, to loosen our grip on our grudges and grievances, our worries and frets. But in life we will be asked to let go of our children as they become adults; we will be asked to let go of the walls we have so carefully constructed that we believe will protect us; we will be asked to let go of what we believe is right now in our possession – the little we have.

We get better at letting go as time passes – not just because what we are carrying gets lighter with time and less painful, but also because our mind over time becomes more and more open to letting things go. It understands that letting go is something that can be done. It's just a mental habit.

Once when someone asked Baba Ji how to let go, with a smile he lifted the corner of his kurta between thumb and forefinger and let it drop. That's how easy it really is. So we start to let go of the negative, small, petty and unimportant stuff. We let go of trying to control the results of our actions. We let go of the past and old self-images.

Letting go is a journey that never ends, right up to our final act as a human being, which will be to let go of our physical body, to let go of our life in this world and of all the attachments that go with it. That final release, the relinquishing of the small, convulsive, controlling self, will free us to be embraced by something larger and more loving than we can possibly imagine.

When we finally are able to let go into the depths of inner silence, we will find all that we seek. We will wade into a never-ending sea of love with our Master, who is there offering us his hand and who will be with us from that moment on.



Discrimination

We are different from animals. Animals are compelled to follow only their instincts, yet we, as human beings, have discrimination. Unfortunately, we often misuse this powerful gift. We tend, the present Master has suggested, to discriminate outwardly and falsely when we should discriminate inwardly and truly.

As we relate to other people, we frequently discriminate – differentiate among them – on the basis of social and economic class, gender and skin colour. Outward discrimination based on the circumstances, character, or physical characteristics of others is not the way of the Shabd Masters: never has a person been refused initiation on this basis. Criteria such as caste, position and skin colour do not matter in the eyes of the Masters. Maharaj Charan Singh is quoted in *Heaven on Earth*:

God is the father of us all and... we are all his children, no matter what religion, caste, race or country we belong to.... If the ocean has no caste, how can the drop have any?

Not only did Hazur make this statement, but he acted to end the discriminatory practise of ‘untouchables’ eating in a separate part of the langar. A second example concerns the hospital he established. He directed that the hospital would be open and free of charge to all those in need, not just satsangis.

On the other hand, inner discrimination is encouraged on the path. This kind of discrimination involves looking into ourselves and learning to discriminate between actions that will help our meditation and actions that will take us further from our spiritual goal. With

continuous practise, we can convert our false outer discrimination of other people into an inner discrimination of our own actions. We then become able to recognize what, within us, is aligned with the Master and what, within us, is contrary.

Within ourselves, we are all struggling souls. Our outward differences, so evident in worldly affairs, have no spiritual meaning whatsoever. We focus our attention according to the Master's directions and, thereby, change our attitude. We start to see that the cruel judgments we make of others are a direct reflection of our own spiritual weaknesses.

It is a challenge for us to accept the Master's relentless cleansing of us through meditation. Although the process is not always pleasant, one result is a finer ability to discriminate within ourselves. With continuous spiritual practise, our minds are transformed and our relationships with others – even if they are troublesome – become more loving.

The Masters are sensitive to people's different needs; in fact, they respond to different individuals in different ways. However, there is always love and respect, never denigration or condescension. That's the way we want to be.

To grow spiritually, we must exchange outward discrimination for inward discrimination. The twists and turns of destiny, which compel us to work out our livelihood and contribute to a harmonious family life, give us opportunities for this inner discrimination on a daily basis. We are not animals who do what we desire without regard for the feelings of others. We are disciples of a perfect Master. When we make the mistake of discriminating against others, we can apologize and change our behaviour. Through meditation, we obtain the inner strength to change our attitudes and actions. Not only do we come to

understand that other people are equal to us, but we realize they are the same as us: drops of radiance, all.

Ignorance and selfishness may trip us up, but the Masters remind us through their words and deeds that we can use discrimination for its intended inner purpose. There is the way of the mind and the way of the Shabd: Our discrimination has to do with that sincere inward choice of following one over the other. That effort will automatically help us refrain from cruel, false discrimination.



*You have this opportunity to ascend the throne –
Give up your habit of pecking through rubbish heaps.*

Soami Ji Maharaj
as quoted in *Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol.II*

*Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding
of one principle: some things are within our control, and
some things are not.*

*Epictetus: the Art of Living:
A New Interpretation*

The Rain Bird

Sant Kabir was walking along the bank of the Ganges, when he saw a rain bird fall into the river after having fainted for lack of water. He watched the poor bird closely, to see what it might do. Even though it was a hot summer day and the bird was dying of thirst, it would not drink the river water of the Ganges.

“When I see this little rainbird’s devotion to nothing but the purest rainwater,” Sant Kabir said to himself, “and that even when it’s dying, it will not save its life by drinking the river water, it makes my devotion to my Master seem very small in comparison.”

Adapted from Tales of the Mystic East



As a fish cannot live out of water, and as the thirst of the rain bird can be quenched only by the raindrop, so Saints yearn for the Lord; only the sight of Him can quench their thirst for Him.

Sant Kabir, as quoted in
Tales of the Mystic East

Keep On, with Love and Longing

The Masters are constantly encouraging, and yes, even cajoling us to sit for meditation. Some of us may sit for the full two and a half hours, but the question is, how do we sit? With what attitude do we carry out the most important task of our life? In the following quotation, Maharaj Charan Singh shares with us how best to approach our meditation:

Meditation is nothing but asking the Lord for his grace to eliminate that veil of darkness from our way.

Thus Saith the Master

Regarding the kind of pleading that Master is referring to, here is a stunning anecdote from the book *Shaped by Saints*. The author talks about an encounter he had in Badrinath, the supreme pilgrimage spot for Hindus. The main shrine, which is fifty feet tall, stands on the very bank of the majestic Alaknanda River. While there, he visited a well-known yogi and asked the yogi to bless him. By way of reply, the yogi gave him this poignant message:

You see the Alaknanda below us? It flows from Nil Kanta on its way to the ocean – such a long way away! What tremendous love she must have for the ocean! It takes so long to reach it, but no one can stop her owing to the force of her love. Your love for God should be like that: patient, constant, undeterred. Like a mighty river, the force of divine devotion will wash away any obstructions on your way. Keep on, with love, until you reach God's ocean.

Devi Mukherjee, Shaped by Saints

What a potent and beautiful metaphor the yogi used to illustrate the ideal level of intensity our love and longing needs to reach in order to attain our goal. We all want a love for our Master that is patient, constant, undeterred. We all want a longing that compels us to keep on, with love, until we reach God's ocean. Fortunately the Masters have given us the means with which to develop that force of love and longing. By doing what the Masters have asked of us – to live the Sant Mat way of life and to do our meditation – we can build and create that strong current of devotion.

As the yogi explained, the mighty river of love will not only rush us forward, but will wash away any obstruction in our way. What could stop us if our love and longing had this kind of strength? Imagine developing this surging power of divine devotion, tapping into this swelling centre of love when we sit to meditate or when we go about fulfilling our worldly obligations. Imagine being like the river in the metaphor, whose force of love could not keep her from reaching the ocean. How we would keep on, with love. What then could prevent us from reaching our destination?



It is the business and duty of every disciple to make his mind motionless and reach the eye centre. The duty of the Master is to help and guide on the path. To control the mind and senses and open the tenth [inner] door depends on the disciple's efforts.... The primary factor in this success is the effort of the disciple.

Maharaj Sawan Singh
Spiritual Gems

It's the Effort that Makes the Difference

“Does the Master meet us at death if we've seen no light in our meditation or heard no sound?”

The present Master answered this question somewhat in the following manner: Sound and light are not linked to progress; one can be an elevated soul without seeing or hearing anything. Sound and light are just signboards to give us confidence that our meditation is on track. But, he added, sometimes, to keep the balance, it may not be in our interest to have sound and light within. He went on to explain that the teacher knows at what stage his students are. Some need a pat on the back, while some need a pull on the ear. To be given sound and light might make us overconfident. What is important, he said, is just to keep on doing our meditation – and attach ourselves to the effort rather than the results. For us it's the effort that makes the difference.

We have often heard meditation described as the most difficult thing in the world, that to live the Sant Mat teachings means a constant struggle with the mind. And though the results are not in our hands, effort most certainly is.

In *Living Meditation*, a poem attributed to the great Sufi mystic Rumi focuses on the need for effort in meditation. It begins:

*Go on scratching, scraping and cutting
The stone wall that bars your way...
Rest not for a second, till your very last breath arrives.*

No wonder that Master puts so much emphasis on effort! He told us that just to be initiated, just to have a Master is not enough. The Master is there to guide and support us, but he is not going to do our work for us. He will put us in touch with the Shabd or Word, but we will get results only when we start practising, when we take action. He made it clear, in that very straightforward way of his, that if we want God-realization, our actions must reflect that desire. Empty thought will not take us to our goal. If our desire is not reflected in our lives, he said, either we are confused or we do not want God-realization. Our desire has to find expression in the way we live, in the way we speak, and even in the way we think – in our strict obedience to the principles of the path. Most of all, it has to find expression in real effort in our meditation, a life-long effort until, as Rumi puts it, “your very last breath arrives.”

We are told in fact that the Lord’s grace comes even before we make any effort, that effort is possible only as a result of his grace, and that our effort then brings more grace, so that we can make still more effort. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

The more effort we make, the more grace he extends to us to be able to make more effort until we have reached our goal. So with love and faith, continue the practise and he will take care of the results. No amount of effort is wasted. He is ever loving and merciful.

Light on Sant Mat

Grace and effort equally are what sustain us on the path. The image of a bird flying with both wings working together is a fitting analogy. Both wings are equally necessary for flight: Without one wing the

bird cannot even lift off the ground, just as both the attributes of grace and effort are equally necessary for us to walk this path. If we truly want to go upwards, we have to develop the effort wing and make it as strong as the grace wing or we will not be going anywhere. This is the crux of our dilemma. There is no limit to his grace, but we stall in our attempts at effort. And that stalling keeps us from going aloft.

It is said that the breeze of God's grace is blowing constantly, but we have to adjust our wings to catch that breeze. Paradoxically, the only way we can try to catch his breeze is through our efforts at meditation.

In time one comes to realize a funny thing about following this path: It can be relatively simple or it can be difficult, depending on our attitude. It's simple if we adapt the rest of our activities to it, if we make it our life. Then there are no difficult choices to make, no great sacrifices. But if we try to somehow squeeze Sant Mat into a lifestyle that is not really compatible with it, then we run into trouble. And then comes the frustration and the discouragement because it just doesn't seem to work.

In *Die to Live*, Maharaj Charan Singh Ji gives this advice:

If love is there, it is there.... But by meditation everybody can grow that love.... Everybody can grow that feeling, that love, that intensity, by meditation.

It doesn't matter in the least that our daily meditation seems ineffectual, because it's the effort that's important, not the results. It's the effort that brings the grace, and the grace is going to ensure that, once our karmas are over, we will find our Master inside and be taken back to our real home.

As Rumi says in his poem:

*Even a worthless effort is better than sleeping,
For the Lord loves our effort, anxiety and struggle.*

There are times, in spite of our best intentions and years of effort, that our meditation seems to achieve so little. But if we just think about it, don't we suffer all that heartache and agony because of our attitude, because we're looking for results instead of getting satisfaction out of the effort itself? This is precisely why we don't value our meditation. But to the Masters, every bit of meditation, whether it produces results or not, is valuable.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Die to Live* that every meditation is good. No meditation is bad. Every minute spent in meditation is to our credit because it's adding something to our treasure in heaven. But we judge our meditation as a failure because we don't see proof that it's producing something. Again this preoccupation with quick results. We forget that when it comes to spirituality, most of us are just babies. We really do need to learn to crawl and walk before we can run.

In his poem Rumi describes what we might see as years as just "a few days".

*O wise man! Labour as hard as you can,
As all the prophets and God-men have done.
Work for a few days, then laugh for the rest of your life.*

Working just a few days makes it sound quite easy. But of course we don't find it so easy. We certainly find the struggle long. That's understandable, because what we are trying to do is bring the mind in check and concentrate the attention in the eye centre. And that's the labour of a lifetime. We don't doubt that in the end it will all be worth

it. But we do tend to get impatient. We want things to happen quickly and, when they don't, we get discouraged. We lose the sharp edge of our enthusiasm. Perhaps we even start looking for excuses not to keep trying so hard.

The Master can see right through our excuses, even if we manage to fool ourselves. What we are trying to do, of course, is to excuse what we see as our failure. It's distressing for us to admit to failure because that hits us right where we hurt: our ego. One of the most illuminating passages in any of our books is an extract from Maharaj Jagat Singh's satsangs, included in *The Science of the Soul*:

When a man presumes that he can subdue the mind by his own labour and powers, the Lord makes all his efforts fruitless in order to kill his ego. When he falls into despair and realizes his utter weakness, then the Lord's grace and gifts are beheld by him.

Sometimes we confuse longing with frustration, because we really do want to find him inside. But if there is longing, then there's no question of not meditating just because we don't see results, whereas frustration could drive us to just give it up. In the end, it's a matter of just doing the meditation as an act of obedience, as a duty, and then trusting him to play his part. As Rumi advises in his poem:

*First put in full effort, then accept what he sends.
Have faith in him and trust his will.*

We are told by the mystics that those of us who hunger for God-realization are strangers here, strangers in a foreign land. For us this is a hostile environment where even our own mind and our own senses conspire against us. At any moment we can fall victim to such

passions as pride, anger, greed, attachment or lust – the devices of the mind – which will lead us into creating more and more karma to delay our return home. Not only do we have to be on guard against them, but we also have to arm ourselves against them: with our meditation. This is not the time to make excuses, to claim that we're too helpless to meditate.

In Rumi's poem we have this warning:

*Not putting in effort is like sleeping among robbers.
A bird found napping is sure to be killed.
Giving up is like sleeping, sleep not on your way.
March on until you reach his gate.*

“Giving up” in this case means just giving up, just believing that we can't meditate. We can't afford to do that, not if we want to reach his gate. Remember what Master said: If we want God-realization our actions must reflect that desire. We're not going to get it just by asking for it. We have to work for it.

He also told us we can fool our neighbours, we can fool ourselves, but we can't fool the Lord. And what he wants from us is our effort. He has set a wonderful goal. He has told us how we can reach it. Now it's up to us to work towards it. As Rumi says in his poem:

*When the Master has put a sword in your hands,
He has clearly expressed his wish.*

This simply means keeping that goal in mind in everything that we do and living this path twenty-four hours of the day. In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh tells us:

Meditation is a way of life. You do not merely close yourself in a room for a few hours, and then forget about meditation for the rest of the day.... Everything that you do must consciously prepare you for the next meditation. So meditation becomes a way of life, as we live in the atmosphere we build with meditation.

If we make meditation a way of life in the way that Hazur has explained, there's no reason why we can't make the necessary effort. If we attach ourselves to the effort and not to the results, there's no reason to become discouraged. There's no need for excuses.

Our lack of effort amounts to ingratitude. Our Master has singled us out from the millions and millions of souls in the creation to bring us back to him. If we don't do that little bit that he asks of us, that's ingratitude.

Gratitude is something that makes us want to please him. We are not concerned with what we can get in return. All we want to do is please him, give him a little something in return for everything that he has given us. And all we have to give him is our effort. There's nothing else he needs from us.

But if we don't feel that gratitude, what does it mean? That we don't realize what he has given us, and therefore we don't appreciate it. Then this could be a very long path indeed.

Of course, there are no promises that a burst of effort on our part will suddenly make the path shorter or easier. But that's not the point. Someone who sets out to climb Mount Everest knows that he won't get to the top in a day. But he also knows that he won't get there at all unless he starts climbing. In our case, not only do we have a guide, we have someone who gives us the help and the strength we need for every step of the way.

One of the most beautiful passages in our literature is a letter written by the Great Master to someone who obviously needed a bit of encouragement to keep up his effort:

I am well aware that you have struggles. You have some things within yourself to overcome and some things outside of yourself which must be surmounted. But you can do it. If you have full confidence in the inner Master, he will always help you. And often when you find the difficulties greatest and the hour darkest, the light will appear and you will see that you are free. Let nothing discourage you. This is no light proposition, but your getting Nam means more than if you had inherited a million dollars, or many millions. You are one of the lucky sons of Sat Purush, and he has chosen you to get Nam and go with the Master to Sach Khand. You must reach there. Nothing can prevent you. But you can hasten the progress or retard it, as you like.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



Let him accomplish things in his own way rather than in the way that you desire. Try to adjust yourself to all that he does and you will never be unhappy.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Stay Awake!

These short poems are taken from the Hindi *Kabir Sakhi Sangreh* using an original translation.

*Kabir, what's the point of sleeping –
Stay awake, calling the Compassionate!
One of these days you'll really sleep –
Stretched out flat with feet apart.*

*Kabir, what's the point of sleeping –
Why not get up and avoid weeping
 from pain?
You will sleep blissfully
When your home is the grave.*

*Kabir, what's the point of sleeping –
Why not crave to stay awake!
Each breath is a ruby, a diamond:
Count them out one by one
 into the Master's care.*

*Kabir, what's the point of sleeping –
Why not stay awake and see?
Absorb yourself in His company –
You've been separated from Him so long....*

*You've wasted your life in sleep.
You want a harvest? Stay awake.*

*The Lord doesn't hold back Truth:
When you ask, He gives.*

*Go on calling Beloved, Beloved –
Don't go to sleep, persist!
If you call out day and night,
He'll start calling you in return.*

*Sleep is better than being awake
If you know how to sleep:
Attention absorbed within,
Simran going on gently
 all on its own.*

*To sleep while awake,
To be absorbed while asleep –
Attention held fast,
The flow unbroken.*

*Kabir, the Creator is awake –
But no one else.
We are either awake in sensual pleasures
Or fast asleep at devotions.*



Shabd

*The beginning and end of all things is Shabd.
All gross matter, the sky and so forth, subtle matter,
Sound, form, taste and scent are all Shabd.
Whatever exists is Shabd.
Whatever is manifested from Shabd
cannot be anything but Shabd.
Shabd is our creator.
Shabd is our sustainer.
We are of Shabd and Shabd is ours.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh,
Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. IV

Our real Master is the Word, the Logos, Shabd, Nam, the audible life stream or whatever name one may choose to give it. The Master is that power manifested in human form.

Maharaj Charan Singh
Introduction to Die to Live

It is by sitting for meditation that we empower our soul, receive spiritual nourishment, become spiritually strong to face the world and learn to make contact with the Shabd within.

Living Meditation

Next!

Wouldn't it be sweet if our anxiety and fretful nature could be replaced by the simplicity and acceptance expressed in one word – “Next!”

Whatever the challenges in our lives, we want to be ready to meet them. Whatever we wake up to – whether in our professional life, relationships, or health conditions – we want to have the same poise and balance as the person behind the bakery or deli counter, welcoming his next customer with the friendly greeting, “Next!”

What bewildering, demanding assignment has life given us today? What completely outrageous problem must we find a way to now solve? Whether it's a leak in the plumbing, a funny noise in the car, or a raised eyebrow from our doctor, the idea of simply facing the task straightforwardly is appealing. All that is required is an open heart, a curious mind, and a willingness to engage with reality.

There are, of course, alternative ways to view the world. One of the more common approaches is to hope each morning when we open our eyes that the day will go smoothly. Smoothly being that nothing should interfere with our pre-existing plans. No unpleasant delays or detours should confront us, especially no events that make us aware of our own limitations.

If we approach life with the expectation that nothing ought to interfere with our own predilections and preferences, we are likely to resist and reject much of what happens to us. Resisting what is real, fighting with reality, getting angry and depressed with ‘what is’ is an exhausting and, ultimately, losing battle. Reality has a persistent way of showing up on our doorstep. We can waste a whole lot of time wishing reality were simpler, less demanding. But the ever changing

circumstances of our lives keep presenting themselves to us. The critical question is: How will we respond?

We may not have the temperament or the spiritual maturity to greet every challenge with peaceful composure or to delight in whatever is God's will. It takes trust in our teachings and our Master to welcome each new disruption in our life calmly and with composure. Baba Ji has frequently reminded us that it's not so important what life deals out to us as it is how we react to it.

There is appeal to the image of someone behind a counter yelling out "Next!" – determined to offer what service and talent are available when a new proverbial 'customer' appears. As we get older, we must ask life's challenges to get in line and take a number. And we can fully expect some of the 'customers' to be gracious and some to be difficult. Some of the changes ahead will bring astonishing new life. Some will break our hearts. And when one challenge appears to have been met and fully addressed, we can be confident that the next challenge is waiting in the wings.

Next!

Euripides wrote 2,500 years ago, "All is change; all yields its place and goes." (*Little Book of Positive Quotations*, 2006) Then we find ourselves face-to-face with the mystery of whatever comes next.



True Is the Lord

True is the Lord, true is his Name,
and infinite are the expressions of his love.

All living beings pray: “Give, give,”
and the Giver goes on showering his gifts.

What then could we offer him
for a glimpse of his court?

What words could we utter
that would move him to love us?

In the ambrosial hours of early dawn,
meditate on the true Name
and reflect on his greatness.

Through past actions
we attain the robe of the human form –
through grace, the door to liberation.

Thus we come to realize, O Nanak,
that the true One is all there is.

Jap Ji: A Perspective

Book Review



The Dhammapada: The Sayings of the Buddha

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION BY JOHN ROSS CARTER AND
MAHINDA PALIHAWADANA

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The *Dhammapada* is Buddhism's most popular and well-known scripture. As an act of devotion, millions of Buddhists recite the text daily in its original Pali language or in a translation. *Dhammapada* literally means the "sayings of the *dhamma*" (in the Pali language "*dhamma*" means "*dharma*," variously translated as "religion," "truth," and "cosmic moral law").

Siddhartha Gautama, or the Buddha, is traditionally considered to have lived circa 563 BCE to circa 483 BCE, in the Magadha region in the northeastern Indian subcontinent. His father, a king, attempted to shield him from the realities of life, but at age twenty-nine the prince unexpectedly encountered old age, sickness, death – and a serene ascetic. Shocked and inspired, he ran away from his palace, wife, and newborn son, and became an ascetic. For the next six years he practised various severe forms of asceticism, but failed to find peace of mind. At this point he is said to have discovered the Middle Way – a path of moderation between the extremes of self-denial and self-indulgence. He began meditating under the famous Bo or Bodhi tree in what is now Bodhi Gaya, India, vowing not to move until he had fully attained the Truth. After forty-nine days, at age thirty-five, he attained nirvana. For the next forty-five years he conducted an extensive ministry in Magadha, teaching his *sangha* (congregation of followers) how to attain nirvana, often in their very lifetimes.

The *Dhammapada* is a compilation of 423 of the Buddha's verses arranged in twenty-six loosely thematic chapters. The Buddha spoke them presumably in the regional Magadhi tongue, using rhythmic and repetitive verse as a memory aid; indeed, his words were memorized

and passed down orally until over a century later. Then, on the foreign island of Sri Lanka, they were written down in a local dialect that would eventually become known as Pali.

The Buddha begins with the famous “twin verses,” telling his listeners, in terms they would understand, that the state of one’s mind is of paramount importance. If with a mind “*polluted one speaks or acts, / Thence suffering follows / As a wheel the draught ox’s foot.*” Conversely, if with a tranquil mind “*one speaks or acts, / Thence ease follows / As a shadow that never departs.*” With these words the Buddha portrays negative thinking not just as wrong or immoral, but as inevitably causing suffering. Throughout the book he repeatedly places before listeners an option: Which way do you wish to live your life?

*‘He reviled me! He struck me!
He defeated me! He robbed me!’
They who gird themselves up with this,
For them enmity is not quelled.*

*‘He reviled me! He struck me!
He defeated me! He robbed me!’
They who do not gird themselves up with this,
For them is enmity quelled.*

*Not by enmity are enmities quelled,
Whatever the occasion here.
By the absence of enmity are they quelled.
This is an ancient truth.*

The Buddha often warns his listeners about Mara – a then-colloquial name for Death, the implacable enemy of all life. He implies that the problem of the mind is in some manner the problem also of Mara; in overcoming one’s mind, one overcomes Mara. In other words, overcoming the mind is a question not just of psychology – of altering one’s thoughts from bad to good – but also of dealing with a metaphysical force that constantly seeks to prevail over unwary unenlightened beings.

The Buddha gives listeners hints as to how Mara defeats, and is to be defeated:

*Whoever dwells seeing the pleasurable, in senses unrestrained,
Immoderate in food, indolent, inferior of enterprise,
Over him, indeed, Mara prevails,
Like the wind over a weak tree.*

*Whoever dwells seeing the non-pleasurable, in senses well-restrained,
And moderate in food, faithful, resolute in enterprise,
Over him, indeed, Mara prevails not,
Like the wind over a rocky crag.*

The Buddha repeatedly emphasizes that those who conquer their minds triumph over Mara:

*They who will restrain the mind,
Far-ranging, roaming alone,
Incorporeal, lying abiding –
They are released from Mara's bonds.*

And

*Knowing this body to be like foam,
Awakening to its mirage nature,
Cutting out Mara's flowers, one may go
Beyond the sight of the King of Death.*

How do listeners conquer both their minds and Mara? According to the Buddha, by attaining nirvana, which ends the soul's bondage to the wheel of transmigration. Nirvana is commonly understood as a state attained after death, but a study of early Buddhist teachings reveals that the Buddha as well as many of his followers attained nirvana while still alive. But how does one attain this nirvana (in Pali, *Nibbana*)?

*Those meditators, persevering,
Forever firm of enterprise,
Those steadfast ones touch Nibbana,
Incomparable release from bonds.*

Nirvana, then, is achieved through earnest meditation, and meditation is the answer to both the problems of life and the onslaughts of Mara.

The Buddha describes the path of meditation as a battle of self-conquest:

*He, truly, is supreme in battle
Who would conquer himself alone,
Rather than he who would conquer in battle
A thousand, thousand men.*

He explains that self-conquest through meditation and controlling the mind is not easy. It is much easier to busy oneself with activities and to keep the mind in a whirl of thoughts:

*Easy to do are things not good
And those harmful for oneself.
But what is beneficial and good,
Is exceedingly difficult to do.*

Yet he encourages the spiritual aspirant to take up the battle:

*Make a lamp for yourself;
Strive quickly! Become a wise one;
With stains blown out, free of blemish,
You shall not undergo birth and old age again.*

He stresses again and again that the path he teaches is simple and direct. If one follows this simple path to control the mind, one has no need of outward practices:

*Just this path, there is no other
For purity of vision.
Do ye go along this [path];
This is what will bewilder Mara.*

The *Dhammapada* touches on many other themes such as karma, transmigration, the inefficacy of rites and rituals, the self-defeating nature of evil, and the surpassing value of the company of Enlightened Ones.

The *Dhammapada* is readily available in print and online in the Pali-language original and numerous translations, English and otherwise. The translation reviewed here, by John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, includes an 18-page introduction offering a concise and accessible, yet in-depth, explanation of the text. It also summarizes recent advances in scholarship on the *Dhammapada*, explaining the place of the Pali *Dhammapada* within the larger Buddhist Dharmapada literature. The authors had published this translation earlier with more extensive scholarly commentary: *The Dhammapada: A New English Translation* (Oxford, 1987).

Another beautiful translation is *The Dhammapada: The Path of Truth*, by Ananda Maitreya and Rose Kramer, (Parallax Press, 1995). Non-Buddhist Eknath Easwaran's translation of *The Dhammapada* (Nilgiri Press, 2007) explores *The Dhammapada* as an Indian spiritual classic. Harvard Sanskrit and Indian Studies scholar Glenn Wallis's *The Dhammapada: Verses on the Way* (Modern Library, 2004) includes a helpful "Guide to Reading the Text." Finally, *The Dhammapada* (Shambhala, 2005), translated by Gil Fronsdal, a Buddhist meditation teacher and Stanford PhD in Buddhist Studies, is a sensitive and insightful offering.

Let us conclude with an especially cherished *Dhammapada* verse:

*Refraining from all that is detrimental,
The attainment of what is wholesome,
The purification of one's mind:
This is the instruction of Awakened Ones.*

