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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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O Mind, Why Be Proud?

*One day this body will mingle with dust
and you will be cast back
into the cycle of birth and death.*

*Cultivate humility and meekness in your heart
and save yourself from lust and anger.*

*Love the Master, put your faith in him
and absorb the nectar of Nam within yourself.*

*Don't do what your evil mind suggests,
but keep the Master's teachings in your heart.*

*This willful mind won't surrender,
for it thrives on greed and self-indulgence.*

*Pay no attention to what your mind says,
or your association with it
will be your downfall in the world.*

*Understand the nature of this fool, then capture it,
and never abandon the shelter of the Master's feet.*

*Secure the Master's form in your eyes
and ascend to the inner sky
through the practice of Surat Shabd.*

Soami Ji Maharaj, Sar Bachan Poetry



Making Progress

Human beings are infatuated with progress. In every field of action, people calculate. They evaluate and analyze their growth and development to see where they stand; to decide whether their effort towards a particular endeavour is paying off. It is a method people use to determine success or failure. If a person is making progress, he is labelled a success; if he is not, he is deemed a failure. It is a typical approach associated with worldly matters.

The problem arises when this mindset is applied to the spiritual life. When a disciple's motivation on the spiritual path is to make progress, he starts off on the wrong foot and carries with him the burden of expectation. He expects progress to come in the form of inner experiences and if, after a while, nothing happens then the disciple feels disheartened. He concludes that he is a failure and assumes that the meditation is not working.

But the Sant Mat Masters lovingly explain that first and foremost there is more to spiritual progress than experiencing the Light and Sound. On the spiritual path, progress comes in the form of a deep and profound process called 'realization'. And it is called a process because it represents a series of subtle yet definite changes that the disciple undergoes throughout the spiritual journey.

It begins with all the little realizations that a disciple experiences: like when one learns that getting angry does more damage to himself than to anybody else, one therefore makes a genuine effort to control his anger; or when one understands that honesty is not just about telling the truth, but also about being true to oneself; or when one realizes that words have an immense power to hurt people and consequently has learned not to react when situations arise.

All these valuable lessons are a result of an increased awareness that is a very real part of one's spiritual progress. And as this awareness grows, the disciple starts to feel, appreciate and respect the presence of the Divine in everything he does. He becomes a better person and a more humane being until, eventually, he reaches the pinnacle of all realizations: when the soul, having shed all its covers, realizes its true spiritual nature and joyfully exclaims, "That am I". And it finally sees that the soul and the Lord are of the same essence; that one is the drop and the other is the ocean, and that both were in each other all along.

Advancing on the spiritual path is not the same as making progress in the material world. In Sant Mat, there are no calculations. There is no judgment and there are no such things as success and failure. The mystics remind us that in the court of the Lord, there is only one unit of measure and it is called 'love'.

At satsang one day, the Great Master made the statement that going inside and advancing to higher regions depended more on love than upon anything else. A satsangi asked, "Can that love be developed in every disciple?" The Master's reply was very significant and should be remembered. He said, "No, that love is a gift of the Master." Then the satsangi asked, "Will the disciple always get it?" The Master said, "Why not, if he works for it? Everyone else pays wages earned, and so if anyone works for the Master, he must draw the wages due him."

With the Great Master in India

Every disciple on the spiritual path is 100 percent dependent on the benevolence of the omnipotent Lord. Only His compassion and mercy can liberate the soul from the huge debt of karma that keeps it imprisoned in this creation. So, in matters of the spirit, it is not about

making progress, it is about invoking His grace. It is about sitting in His presence every single day during meditation and begging for forgiveness. It is about obedience, submission and the helpless desire to please the Beloved for the sake of love and love alone.

And if the disciple does nothing else during his entire life but take this one small, faithful step, then he never ever has to worry. Because for such a devotee, the Supreme Father will take a hundred thousand steps and will Himself descend from the highest region of universal spirit and carry His precious child back home.



*Go on in all simplicity;
do not be anxious to win a quiet mind,
and it will be all the quieter.*

*Do not examine so closely into the progress of your soul.
Do not crave so much to be perfect,
but let your spiritual life be formed by your duties,
and by the actions which are called forth by circumstances.*

*Do not take overmuch thought for tomorrow.
God, who has led you safely on so far,
will lead you on to the end.*

Saint Francis de Sales,
A Selection from the Spiritual Letters of Saint Francis de Sales

Something to Think About

Ceaseless effort to make our life pure and truthful is true prayer. This draws to us the mercy of the Lord, and His grace and limitless blessings then fulfil the sincere and pure desires of our heart. By merely asking of the Lord or the Master that we may love Him, we do not, as a matter of fact, begin to love Him. But if we consciously pray for a truthful and pure life and try to elevate our life, we will then be moulded as He wills and will begin to realize His presence and to share His love.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol 3

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Attitude is more important than circumstances, failures or successes; than money or poverty, illness or health. If we have a positive attitude, we will make the best out of even the worst conditions. If we have a negative attitude, we will be miserable even in the best of circumstances.

A Spiritual Primer

* * *

If we always feel perturbed with every little thing, then how can we concentrate, how can we meditate? If we make every little thing an issue the size of the Himalayas, then how can we concentrate? We have to forget; we have to forgive; we have to train our mind to take things easily, lightly, to laugh them away, ignore them. This is all training the mind.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Human Being

You are a human being. What does that mean? Mastery of life is not a question of control, but of finding a balance between human and Being. Mother, father, husband, wife, young, old, the roles you play, the functions you fulfil, whatever you do – all that belongs to the human dimension. It has its place and needs to be honoured, but in itself it is not enough for a fulfilled relationship or life. Human alone is never enough, no matter how hard you try or what you achieve. Then there is Being. It is found in the still, alert presence of consciousness itself, the consciousness that you are. Human is form. Being is formless. Human and Being are not separate but interwoven.

Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*

Human Alone Is Not Enough

We have a body, two arms, and we walk on two legs. We go to work, care for our families, and appreciate the taste of fine dining and entertainment. Our brains have produced the brightest of talents, propelling us into unimaginable realms of science and technology. Within us lies the ability to discriminate. We are humans – clearly, the top of this creation.

While on the surface we collectively present ourselves as a species that functions while maintaining a sense of order, internally we seem to be in a constant state of conflict and chaos. Deriving our ever changing identities from all our role-playing and responsibilities, we barely even remember what, if any, is the purpose behind it all.

When we analyze the situation, we find that over time, the dependency on the need to be rewarded has grown significantly in everything that we do. As a result, we begin to rely on external

gratification and stimulants – such as mid-day cappuccino time-outs, weekend getaways, or even late-night television – as temporary escapes instead of savouring them for what they are in the moment. At work, we are preoccupied by thoughts of the badly needed break, and while on our break, our attention is on the office ... dreading going back.

We have all heard teachers' remarks such as: "He has the potential, but his heart just isn't in it," or "He lacks the enthusiasm." The same possibly applies to us now, only it isn't school anymore; it's the rest of our lives. This is what it means to be *only* human – living, but with a lacklustre attitude to life.

Being – Our God Identity

God, or any other name that we give to the Creator, at present is merely an ambiguous character or phenomenon that we have constructed in our minds as a result of all the years of reading and accumulating of information and concepts. How then, if it is even possible, is one to validate the existence of this invisible force?

Mystics have explained that the divine spark of the Lord is in every one of us. In fact, it is who we really are – the soul, our true being. We are not conscious of this due to the fidgety nature and scattered attention of our mind. 'Being' is our formless identity and cannot be found using tools of science.

A hint of evidence of this marvel, however, can be observed in more familiar and less philosophical examples such as athletes and artists. A tennis player is able to maintain incredible speed and accuracy in serving and timing the ball, so that it repeatedly hits its mark cross-court, while also engaging in strategy and swift footwork. Similarly, how great composers create masterpieces out of nothing. Scientists have termed this state of awareness in which these gifted persons

perform as being ‘in the zone.’ It is a heightened state of alertness where dissipated attention is collected and then channelized into action. However, this is only a temporary state for an interval of time, after which the attention once again spreads itself out.

Saints, on the other hand, live their entire lives in the zone. They think and act in this state of higher consciousness having realized the Being within. Not only do they operate in this mode of bliss, but they also invite and teach us how to do the same through meditation.

Human Being – Becoming Perfect

It is through spiritual practice that one is able to connect and align with Being. Meditation teaches surrender, and surrender leads to acceptance. Acceptance finally eradicates personal will, thus allowing us to align with our God-identity within.

The human then evolves to the pinnacle of the species to become perfect – a true human being, hence fulfilling the purpose of this human birth. Charged with an inexhaustible supply of divine energy, one then lives carrying out day-to-day activities with a renewed passion and enthusiasm for life.

And at death, it is only the body that dies. For those who die as merely human, the body perishes as another awaits somewhere in ‘the cycle of eighty-four’. For the awakened ones who die as human beings, the soul merges back into universal consciousness, forever ending the cycle of birth and death.



Love Transcends All Pain

One day, when Bayazid of Bistam was walking along the market place of Baghdad, he saw a criminal being whipped by the authorities for a crime he had committed. His back was scarred and he was bleeding excessively as a result. However, what surprised Bayazid was the expression on this criminal's face. There was no fear, no pain; instead he had a smile and his eyes were shining. After his punishment was over, and once the crowd had dispersed, Bayazid took care of the man and covered his wounds.

Bayazid then asked the man, "I watched you – you were not even aware of the pain you were going through. Tell me, what is your secret that you did not even shed a tear during this most painful ordeal?"

The man replied, "I am in love with a beautiful woman. Over the past year, I have tried to win her love but not once did she look my way. Today, as I was being whipped, I saw my beloved. Seeing my state, she had tears in her eyes! For those tears, I would undergo the same punishment a hundred times over."

Bayazid told his disciples, "This is the way that we must love God. If our attention is focused on our Beloved, then we can surpass any worldly suffering."



*Love sweetens pains; and when one loves God,
one suffers for His sake with joy and courage.*

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Fearless

Have you ever seen a toddler learning how to walk? As long as his attention is focused on his father, he is relaxed and in perfect balance. But as soon as he looks down at his wobbly legs, he loses his footing and falls.

Likewise, we are spiritual babies, learning to walk on the path of Sant Mat. As long as we keep our focus on the Master, we find that we are in complete balance, oblivious to the happenings around us. But the moment we turn away from Him, and look down at our wobbly and sorry state, we are overcome with fear and fall to pieces.

How often have we questioned the Lord about why, at our lowest moment, He seems to have forsaken us. He lovingly explains that He is always there with us. If we cannot see Him or feel His presence, it is our own lacking and failing. His grace is ever flowing, like a bountiful spring of water offering a cool drink to the thirsty soul. But if our hearts are not receptive, our thirst can never be quenched. As Maharaj Charan Singh explained to a disciple:

Master is looking at every single one of us on the inside all the time.

Thus Saith the Master

These are turbulent times in which we live. Mankind is harassed by tensions, fears and phobias. The collective disease of humanity is that man is so hypnotized by the world, so engrossed in worries and fears, that he has forgotten his true essence, that which is beyond thought and form. He is so consumed by time, that he has forgotten eternity. Instead of focusing his gaze on the Lord, he looks down at his wobbly

legs and finds it difficult to hold his stance. His fear keeps him rooted on the spot, or worse, it allows him to fall.

To some extent we are all afraid, and when we allow this fear to dominate our thoughts, we forget all logic, and react badly to the events that play out before us. Like a deer that is caught in the headlights, instead of running off the highway to safety, it freezes in its tracks, waiting for the accident to happen.

We allow fear to take control of our thoughts and our lives, be it the fear of flying or the fear of dying; the fear of illness, pain or suffering. And the pain that we feel is very real to us – so real that it can sometimes be unbearable, leaving us crying in agony. But this suffering is of our own making – our destiny is the outcome of our past karmas.

Fortunately, the Master does not leave us to face these karmas alone. He faces these times with us, supporting us so that we don't lose our balance. Time and again, he shows us in many ways that his presence in our lives is even more real than the pain that we experience. We have only to keep our focus on him, like the child who is focused on his father, taking his baby steps towards the father's outstretched embrace, oblivious to all that is around him. Maharaj Charan Singh lovingly explains:

Whatever karmas we are born with, whether they are good or bad karmas, we have to go through them without losing our mental balance, taking them as the will of the Father. Whatever we have sown in the past birth, whether it is good or bad karma, we have taken this birth now to reap the results of those karmas. So we have to live in the will of the Lord and pay for all those karmas without losing our balance. We can do

*this only if we are filled with love and devotion for the Father.
Without this love and devotion it is not possible for us to live in
the will of the Lord.*

Thus Saith the Master

The Master's protecting hand is always within our reach, helping us retain our balance, shielding us from being buffeted by our karmas. As the saying goes: "The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot protect you."

Whatever may happen, wherever we may go, the Master's grace is always with us, like a shelter that protects us from the raging storm. He has tied us to himself with this knot of initiation and given us the ways and means to turn our focus to him and him alone – through meditation.



With the help of meditation, you are able to rise above these fears and you are able to shed them all. Otherwise, in one way or another, you are always frightened of something or other. We must attend to our meditation, and slowly and slowly, we are able to shed all those fears, and we become fearless. Then we're not frightened of anything, whatever may happen in this creation. Meditation makes us fearless.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Thus Saith the Master

Contentment

On one of Maharaj Charan Singh's visits to Indore, he was accompanied by Mr Sam Busa, one of his representatives in South Africa. In the evening, Maharaj Ji asked Sam to visit the satsang area and see how things were arranged by the local satsang centre.

It was about ten o'clock at night when Sam, in the company of a sevadar, reached the satsang ground. Most of the satsangis had retired for the night. Sam was taken around the entire complex and shown all the tents, shamianas and places where the sangat was sleeping. It was a cold February night, and because of the very large gathering of satsangis, enough covered sleeping space was not available. Many satsangis, both young and old, were therefore sleeping under the trees, covering themselves with only a thick cotton sheet.

In the morning, Maharaj Ji asked Sam if he had made a round of the satsang complex. Sam replied, "Yes, Maharaj Ji, I did. But I felt very sad, for people were lying on the bare ground under the tents and even in the open under the trees. It was very cold, and they had only ordinary cotton sheets or mats with which to cover themselves. I was shocked; their standard of living is very poor."

Maharaj Ji smiled softly and said, "Yes Sam, their standard of living is very poor, but their standard of contentment is very high."

Treasure Beyond Measure



Happiness does not lie in wealth and property, but in contentment.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, as quoted in *Treasure Beyond Measure*

Positively Biased

Justice – it is the paradox of our existence. We assume it, and even demand it, but when we stand before a judge and jury we dread it. Not necessarily because we are guilty, for we might be completely innocent. But we still fear the judgment. We dread it because we realize that there is one factor in this physical world that even our innocence cannot withstand – bias.

Why does it surprise us that we are faced with imperfect justice in an imperfect world? Being human inevitably involves emotions, preferences, preconceived beliefs and prejudices – all things that result in a person who is biased rather than perfectly fair: predisposed to one side, not perfectly impartial. This is the predicament we are living with in this realm of the flesh. It is the epitome of duality – that in a universe governed by the karmic theory of perfect justice, we are living amidst bias and inequity.

Immersed in this quagmire, we have pitifully become a part of it. Our mind, happy to adopt yet another perversion, has distorted its innate ability to discriminate and rendered itself prejudicial in practically every respect. And worse than that, it has also become judgmental and condemnatory. How sad it is that every facet of life is blanketed by the shadow of a negative bias. And how much sadder that we fail to even see it. We never notice our own prejudices even when we complain bitterly about those of our fellow inmates. We never realize our own judgmental attitude even when we suffer the painful barbs hurled at us by others. We ignore the ugly tint cast by our own jaundiced eyes even when we are repulsed by the lack of impartiality of our peers. We have been infected by the viral nature of this biased

world, and we have surrendered to it with total abandon – lock, stock and barrel.

Wearing our shroud of negative bias, we thus push forward on the treadmill of life. And day after day, as we move closer to that fateful moment of our final breath, we sometimes forget that we will soon stand before our Maker, when our every act will play back for us, either in full glory or in utter shame. And it is at that moment of perfect justice that the irony will hit us: that it is not justice we actually desire – not neutrality, but something else. When it comes to our failings, our offences, what we really want is to be judged with a positive bias. We want mercy and forgiveness.

The physical world has conditioned us, consciously or unconsciously, to behave with a negative bias. To judge and to condemn, based on the notion that justice must be served. But what is justice? It is the application of rules and laws to administer the appropriate punishment for every crime. And thus, perfect justice requires a perfectly neutral and unbiased judge, a neutrality that stems from absolute objectivity and complete lack of emotion – in other words, a judgment devoid of compassion, forgiveness, mercy and most of all, love.

And this is where the hat drops, for if there is love, there can never be neutrality – only partiality. Our final desire to be judged with a favourable prejudice is, in fact, a desire to be judged with love, the very essence of our Creator.

From the darkest depths of our transmigratory nightmare, love carries us to the very heights of pure spirit. And learning to live life positively biased with love and compassion must be the greatest achievement of human birth, for it alone enables us to make that journey from where there is truly no return – the leap from here to eternity.

Having Faith

It had been a distressing month. There had been news of friends and family, one after another experiencing some form of tragedy or misfortune. We watched a dear friend lose a loved one. Another suddenly discovered she had a debilitating illness and had to be hospitalized in order to undergo excruciating treatments. And a third acquaintance had business problems and was going through a major financial crisis. Each one of them was carrying a heavy burden, and as much as we tried to help them, all we could do was bear witness to their pain. There was no way we could understand what they were going through.

However, there was a lesson to be learned from all those who went through this phase in life: the ones who kept their faith alive, who held on to the Master's hand and accepted their fate, who made every effort to carry on with their lives positively, came out stronger in the end. When it seemed as though their world had fallen apart, and we wondered how they would pick up the pieces of their shattered lives, they were able to sail through their problems and come out shining, stronger than ever – purely because they held on to the power of faith in the Master. They saw the Master as the navigator of their lives and believed that whatever happened, however painful it was, took place for a reason, and behind the scenes they experienced a greater power giving them the support and strength to go on. We witnessed how Master's grace was amazing, but that one could only experience this grace if one holds on with unshakeable faith and love, without blaming the Lord for the pain that one has to go through.

In *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence writes:

When He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His grace and favours plentifully: there they flow like a torrent, which after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Faith is such a great power that it can give each of us an unbelievable amount of strength. If we were filled with faith in the Lord, life would be so peaceful, we would be surrounded with so much positivity and we would experience His presence in every facet of our lives. As Kabir has said (as quoted in *Sultan Bahu*): “Whosoever has faith in his mind has the Master always with him.” However, where there is no faith, life would be empty and filled with cold darkness. Faith is the rock whereby one goes through the path of the known to the unknown courageously and with self-confidence; it is where one finds shelter from fear and worries. It enables us to keep our sense of balance even when strong winds seek to throw us off course. Faith keeps us bound to our Lord at all times, good and bad.

Faith is the foundation on which the whole superstructure of religion and spiritual progress stands. It is the root of the tree of Godliness. Without faith there can be no achievement in any worldly art or spiritual matter. Faith is the most precious of gifts that the Lord can confer on a devotee. If one has little meditation to his credit but has full faith and love, his future is assured.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

However, faith does not come so easily. The analytical nature of the mind encourages us to question, to have faith only in that which can be proven. In fact, Sant Mat asks us to explore the teachings so that we can experience the truth within ourselves. True faith, therefore, is not blind. Faith is based on our experience which we receive through sincere practice. We have faith, therefore, when we courageously dedicate ourselves to proving truths beyond our grasp, following the lead of our Master. Saint Augustine has given the definition:

*Faith is to believe what you do not see;
the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.*

Creeds of Faith and Inspiration

So how does one cultivate this faith within? Faith is not something that we can attain by asking. The saints tell us that sincere meditation will build our faith in the Master and the teachings. Faith comes from our meditation and faith also supports our meditation.

*Please remember that true faith only comes from meditation.
The more you meditate with love and devotion, the more faith
you get.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light

Walking along the spiritual path is like trekking through jagged mountains. We will experience the highs and the lows – there will be times when we are inspired by his love, and faith is easy; yet there will be times when we have to climb steep rocks and the journey is difficult. However, a disciple who continues to persevere will slowly begin to overcome these obstacles. Gradually, he will enjoy the

meditation practice. This then feeds his faith and love, and he attends even more eagerly to meditation.

As Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

The more time you give to meditation, the more grace of the Master comes to you in the form of love and devotion. The Master is within you and sees what you are doing. He never keeps back the wages of anyone. Sant Mat is not a path of disappointments or failures; it is one of joy, success and eternal bliss.

Quest for Light

Life will throw many challenges our way where our faith in the Lord is tested. However, if we build our lives according to the teachings of the Masters and attend to our meditation sincerely, we will build a strong spiritual foundation, so much so that nothing can shake our faith. We will face life boldly, holding the Master's hand. Just as a child has nothing to fear if his parents stand by his side, we too will always feel secure in the Master's inner presence. We will truly believe: "With faith all things are possible."



If one's faith is firm and unshakeable, and one daily gives time to the practices, and has no worldly desires, then there is no power which can bring one back to this plane.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The Third Vow

As Explained by Maharaj Charan Singh

All the vows are very important. If we don't have a good moral character outside, we can never make progress within at all. There are so many temptations within. If you are weak outside, you'll be more miserable and weak within; you'll never be able to make much progress.

Then, if our attention is always dropping to lower centres, it is difficult to withdraw our consciousness up to the eye centre. Unless we lead a good, clean life, and unless we are able to concentrate here at the eye centre, we can never make progress at all.

And we are also sowing seeds. Christ made this very clear in the Bible when the people were about to stone a lady accused of adultery. Of course he saved her, but he also advised her: "Go and sin no more." And to the man whom he cured, he said: "You have become whole; go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." You must abstain from all these things, and since you have been put on the path, you have the opportunity to become whole now. And "a worse thing come unto thee" means you may have to come back to this creation again to pay for all these karmas if you don't abstain from these acts.

Then Christ also explained how to account for what you have done. He says, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Withdraw your consciousness to the eye centre and see that Light within yourself. That Light and Sound will help you to purify your mind, by pulling it from the senses and taking it back to its source.

Die to Live

The Only One in the World to Love

A New Birth – 18 June 2005

Exactly four years ago, the most gracious gift of all gifts was granted to me – the gift of initiation. I was the young girl who felt that this was it – that this in itself was an end, an achievement. And sitting for my meditation for two and a half hours daily was going to be an easy routine.

A Newer Reality – 18 June 2009

I wondered what life before 2005 was. I corrected my thoughts: life was not life then. It was mere existence. And neither was meditation easy, nor was it a routine, to be done and finished with. Meditation was, as Dr Julian Johnson put it, “a living vibrant force – it could be heard, and its power could be felt.” Of course, it took me years to understand this. Even today, I am a young baby and am only scratching the surface of the vast reality within.

But there are days, like today, when that feeling arises more strongly. When you realize the treasure you have received is no small one. That it is not a treasure that is hidden, but one that permeates each cell of your being; that shapes each thought, each action, each desire.

And the more you meditate, the more you want to meditate, the more you feel the need, the craving to meditate from within. When simran has become the only mode of conversation with the Divine, (and how badly you need to converse with the Divine!), when the world is falling apart, when fear surrounds you, when anger consumes you, when complaints are the only vibes that flow from you, when it is

beyond any human being's capacity to help you even if they wished to, you turn to simran. And He listens to you; you feel it. Churning each round, you just put in your effort.

The Only One in the World to Love

And before you know it, you feel the difference, you feel the presence. You feel that awareness of being listened to, of being loved ... like you were the only one in the world to love! And you know what the magic potion is; and that is when you do not want to leave it – no matter what your circumstance in life is. Whether you are content with life or complaining, meditation becomes your insatiable need – your first priority, your constant contact.

And So...

On days like these, you want to pause and reflect ... and thank the Divine for nothing else except this gift, without which everything else is bland. You want to vow yet again to keep doing your best. You want to live with the divine presence throughout your day. You thank Him for never leaving you, for being faithfully present and patiently persistent, for loving each one of His children as if she were the only one in the world to love.



*O my God, the best of Thy gifts within my heart is the hope of Thee
and the sweetest word upon my tongue is Thy praise,
and the hours which I love best are those in which I meet with Thee.*

Rabia Basri, as quoted in *Rabi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*

Did You Know?

One way of speeding up the progress is to keep on repeating the five holy Names mentally any time – whenever you are not particularly busy or are engaged in work which does not require presence of mind. You may do this without attracting attention or inviting comment, but the moment something has to be attended to which requires your attention, you may stop your mental repetition and attend to the work at hand. This will enable you to concentrate more easily when you sit for meditation at the appointed time.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

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Wealth or poverty depends upon the absence or presence of desires, respectively. He who has no desires is rich. He who does not desire anything is a sovereign.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

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The more diligently disciples practise their spiritual exercises and the more they advance on the path, the greater their sensitivity to the inner guidance of the Master will become, and the more readily they will follow the inner impulses and inspiration, which they will perceive more clearly, more frequently and irresistibly. They will experience the ‘pull within’ more strongly and the invisible presence of their Master will become even more perceptible to them. Their longing for meditation will intensify and their need for worldly things will lessen.

Adventure of Faith

The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Why does meditation get harder instead of easier? At first you can do two and a half hours when you start, but it seems more and more difficult. Initiates, when new, seem to do better than those who have struggled for a long time. Many satsangis find meditation increasingly difficult.*

A: That is what they feel, that it is becoming increasingly difficult, because they become so anxious to achieve what they want to achieve, that when they don't achieve it, they think their meditation is becoming difficult. Actually, it is becoming easier and easier. The very fact that they feel it is becoming difficult is because of their longing, the desire in their heart and their mind to go back to the Lord. And that is His love. More longing and love is coming in them, and they're becoming more anxious and more desperate to go back to Him. They're achieving the result of meditation without their even realizing it. For the devotion, the love, and the earnestness that is coming in us every day to go back to the Father paves our way ahead.

Die to Live

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Q: *Besides getting more sleep, would you advise repeating these Names slower so that the mind would be forced to concentrate?*

A: No, speed of repetition does not make any difference. Whether we do it fast or slow, does not make any difference. We should just do it at normal speed. It is concentration which matters here. That is the main thing. You should do your simran with the attention and while keeping it here, at the eye centre.

The Master Answers

Q: *Is not God's grace the power to shape all that we are destined to become?*

A: God's grace is always there, but brother, we have to become receptive to His grace. If it is raining very heavily and your cup is upside down, not a drop of water will get into it. You have to put that cup with the right side up, then it will be filled with rain water. So, God's grace is always there, within every one of us, but we have to be receptive to that grace, and by receptive I mean that we have to withdraw our consciousness to that point where His grace is coming day and night. Unless we attach ourselves to that and unless we are filled with that love and devotion to the Lord, naturally these desires and attachments of the world will not go out of us. There is no limit to His grace, which is everywhere, but we have to be receptive.

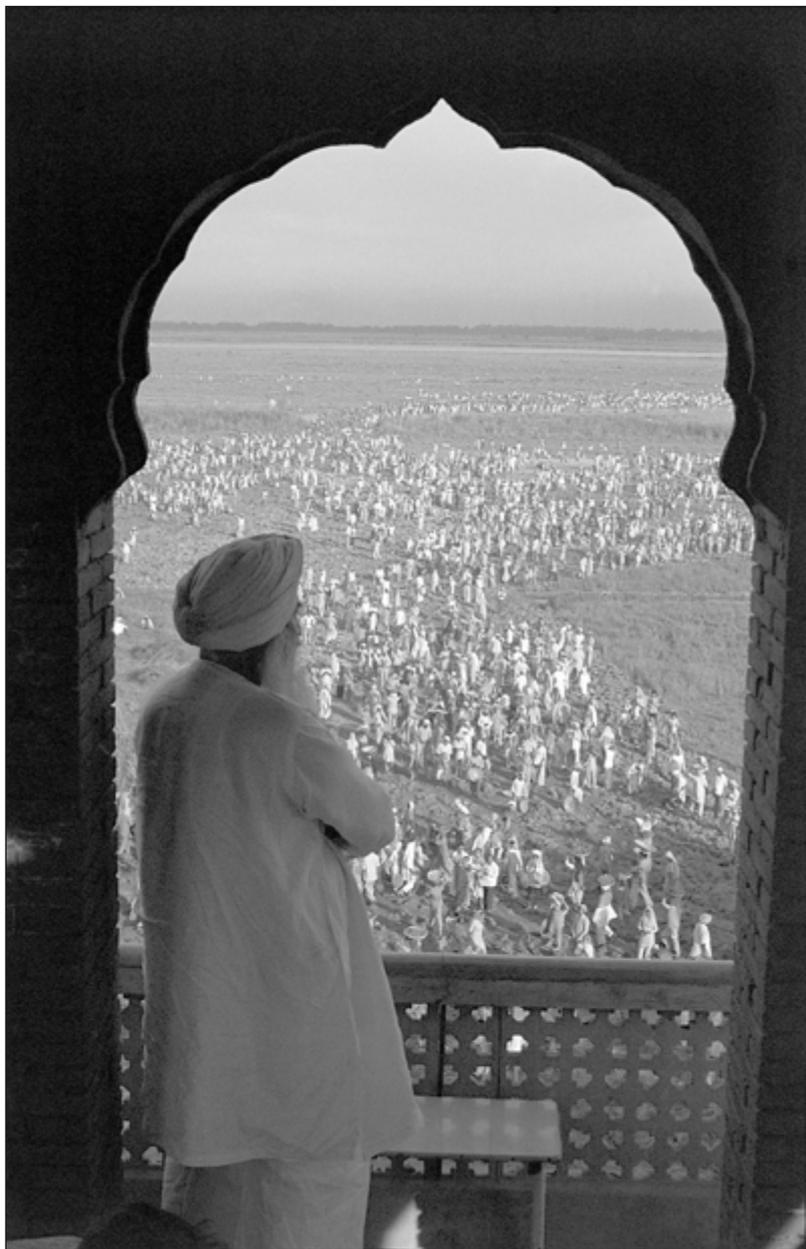
The Master Answers

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Q: *Should we resist or avoid someone who is not friendly or aggressive?*

A: You can save yourself from the situation. Christ said: "Be wise like a serpent and harmless like a dove." The moment a serpent hears any noise, he at once leaves. "Be harmless like a dove." Don't harm anybody at all. But he says, be wise like a serpent, not harmful like a serpent. A serpent can harm or even kill you with his poison. So he says: learn from a serpent. Avoid the situation. Why meet trouble unnecessarily, if you can avoid that situation? Be wise. And having all the power with you, be harmless like a dove.

Thus Saith the Master



Maharaj Charan Singh at mitti seva

A Soul's Quest

As travellers on this journey of life, we soon realize that no amount of material riches can lead to fulfilment. Our endless struggles have only led to further resentment, bitterness and discontent. Despite the hustle of everyday life, a certain sense of loneliness dwells in the heart of the disciple. When this awareness dawns on him, he sees life from a whole new dimension.

He then embarks upon an inner journey in search for answers to his spiritual quest. An iota of spiritual hunger has set in, a tiny flame has been ignited in his deep recesses and he longs to fulfil his soul's desire. It is precisely at this time of his life that God mysteriously intervenes. The aspirant enters into a direct personal communion with a mentor, a spiritual director, one who will guide him on every step of his inner journey.

As a sincere seeker, he undergoes significant phases. Struggling with his mind, he keeps his faith steadfast, believing that he will someday penetrate the darkness within. He wakes up before the break of dawn, hoping to meet his Beloved, hoping to meet his Friend whom he has been told is always accessible, always ready to answer his call. He tries to still his mind and shrugs off every thought that stands in his way of spiritual progress. He experiences certain indications, though they may be subtle, of the existence of the higher consciousness and earnestly longs to deepen his communion.

However, there comes a time in each disciple's life when he feels that he can no longer move on. Devotion to God seems to lose its gratifying value, contemplation becomes extremely difficult and totally unrewarding, the spiritual terrain has changed beyond recognition, and a sense of absence prevails. At such a time, what must the disciple

do if he is experiencing darkness, if the shadows of doubt of God's existence are creeping in, if his doubts are blurring his vision of faith? In *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the mystic reassures the soul:

Lift up your heart to God with a humble impulse of love and have Himself as your aim, not any of His goods ... Set yourself to rest in this darkness, always crying out after Him whom you love. For if you are to experience Him or to see Him at all, insofar as it is possible here, it must always be in this cloud and in this darkness.

This spiritual journey is a loving courtship between God and the soul, and without this process of purification, the soul would never be able to fully experience the abundance of spiritual splendour that is awaiting it. Like gold that must be refined in a blazing fire in order to show its true purity, the soul is being refined in the flame of God's love. The Lord's purpose of concealing Himself is to rouse in the seeker a deeper yearning; it is His calling for the sincere aspirant to come deeper into His realm.

Therefore, O spiritual soul, when thou seest thy desire obscured, thy affections arid and constrained, and thy faculties bereft of their capacity for any interior exercise, be not afflicted by this, but rather consider it a great happiness, since God is freeing thee from thyself and taking the matter from thy hands.

Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*

The Beloved is ever watchful and protective of the soul who is lost in the wilderness; and the soul should remain faithful and continue

to persevere in the face of difficulties. Unless the disciple remains steadfast and harbours the deepest commitment to the path, and unless he sincerely yearns for his Beloved to be the sole inhabitant of his heart, he can never experience God's presence and unfathomable love. When the Lord finds such a faithful soul, out of sheer grace He reaches out and takes it into His loving arms.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux herself endured great hardships in her inner quest, but expressed her rejoicing on obtaining her abode in His sanctuary. She encouraged all who despaired to rise above their disappointments and to persevere in their efforts.

By practising all the virtues, keep lifting your little foot to climb the stairs of sanctity and do not think that you will be able to get up even to the first step. At the top of these stairs, He (God) is looking at you lovingly. Soon conquered by your vain efforts, He will come down Himself, and, taking you in His arms, will carry you forever in His kingdom where you will not leave Him again.

My Vocation Is Love: Thérèse of Lisieux, as rendered by Jean LaFrance

The soul then realizes that it was the Lord's grace that created the void in the first place and it was the Lord's grace that cleared the void. It becomes aware of its own weaknesses and how little it would have progressed on this inward journey had the Lord truly forsaken it.

Having had first-hand encounter with the Beloved, the soul then longs for nothing more except the 'burning of the heart' to remain aflame. These words are echoed by Rumi, who expressed his yearning for the Lord's presence and desire for his flame never to be extinguished:

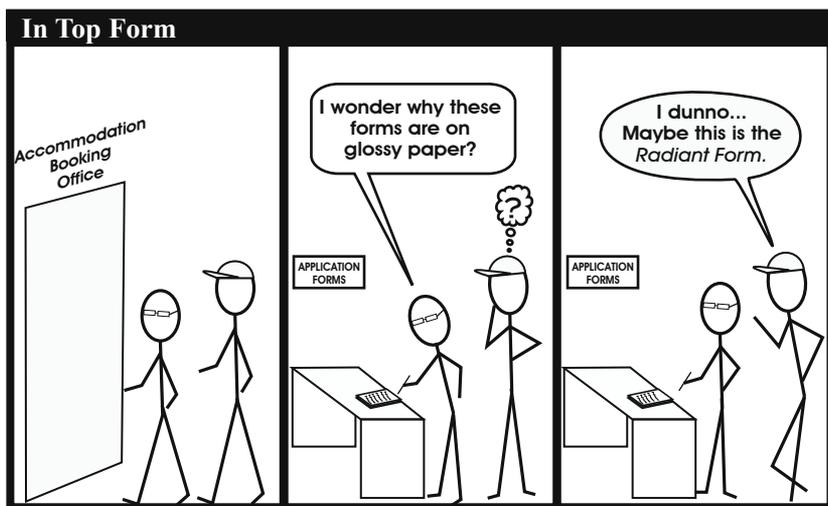
It is a burning of the heart that I want; it is this burning that is everything, more precious than the empire of the world, because it calls God secretly in the night.

As quoted in *Thinking Outside the Church:
110 Ways to Connect with your Spiritual Nature*

The soul now realizes that this ‘burning of the heart’ was a necessary progression for the soul to attain spiritual bliss, as it now rests in the ecstasy of the Beloved’s warmth.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®



Memorable Quotes

One who practises humility before all created things captures the Creator.

Tukaram

The value of seva is not how much one offers, but in the feelings and love with which it is offered.

Maharaj Charan Singh

Happiness on earth is but a fleet and passing ghost, which man craves at any cost in gold or time. And when the phantom becomes the reality, man soon wearies of it.

Kahlil Gibran

Thy right is to thy work, but not to its results. Let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be attached to inaction.

Bhagavad Gita

People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the seas, at the long course of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering.

Saint Augustine

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.

Maulana Rum

Anticipation

The opportunity to see the Master in his physical form gives us something to look forward to. The minute we know that we will be able to spend a few days with him, we mark it down on our calendars, and from then on, the countdown begins. Our minds become absorbed in the thought of our beloved, and we constantly find ourselves in a world of our own. We imagine the various scenarios that could unfold when we are with him. Hundreds and thousands of thoughts occupy our mind and we secretly hope that something out of the ordinary will happen.

From the moment we mark that date down on the calendar, we start becoming his 'good' children. We attend to our meditation more regularly, we focus more on our seva, and above all, we get so immersed in the anticipation of it all, that we start to worry less about our worldly activities. Gossip takes a backseat in our lives – it is no longer as important who wears what, and who said what to whom. Desires for a bigger house, a better car and more wealth disappear temporarily, as we now desire only him. Slowly but surely, we try to become true to the word 'disciple'.

This feeling is what we all seek on a permanent basis. Especially after a trip to the Dera or when the Master visits us for a few days, we convince ourselves that we will make this feeling last. It is unfortunate, though, that no matter how much we desire it, somehow after a few days back into our daily routine, the feeling just fades away.

Perhaps it is the depth to which we are involved in our materialistic lives that causes this sudden change. Or perhaps it is because we depend so much on the Master's physical form that our minds only allow us this feeling when we know we are going to see him.

The saints have used the relationship of a parent and child to describe the bond between Master and disciple. Many times, in their satsangs, they have explained how dependency pulls a child down. The love of a parent is meant to help a child grow in confidence and eventually become independent. However, if the relationship becomes one of dependency, then that child will never be able to stand on his own feet. The same applies to us with our Master. He gives us that love, but the whole objective of him doing this is so that we can be inspired to meditate and seek him within. Only then will that feeling, which we are all trying so desperately to achieve, become permanent.

The question to ask ourselves is: how badly do we want it? If we remember just for an instant how that feeling entirely transforms us and inspires us, then yes, we want it. We should want it. The real form of our Master is his Shabd form and to create that permanent love, that is what we really need to seek. It is time to graduate to a higher level of love and experience a state that thus far we have only heard about – one that we know will truly surpass the imagination. Maharaj Charan Singh summarizes it beautifully in *Legacy of Love*:

*May your love for the form
culminate in the love of the formless.*



Repartee of the Wise

A seeker went to visit Rabia Basri. He found in her home a partly broken jug, a very old straw mat on which she slept and a brick which she used as a pillow. The seeker said: "I have many wealthy friends. Shall I ask them to bring some items for you?"

Rabia replied: "Is my Provider, your Provider and the Provider of the wealthy not the same Being?"

The seeker replied: "Yes." Rabia then said: "Has He forgotten about the needs of the poor on account of their poverty while remembering the needs of the wealthy?"

The seeker replied: "No, that is not true."

Rabia then said: "When He never forgets anyone, why should we remind Him? He has wished this condition for me and I am pleased with it because that is His pleasure."

* * *

A group of disciples were discussing the definition of the quote: "Those who know, do not say; those who say, do not know." When their Master entered the room, they asked him to explain the meaning of the quote. The Master asked his disciples, "Who among you knows the fragrance of a rose?" All of the disciples replied confidently that they knew. The Master then said, "Put it into words." All of the disciples were silent.

The Space in Between

When we are blessed by the physical presence of the Master – whether through his visit to our country or our trip to the Dera – our meditation is filled with renewed hope and resolve. We feel closer to him and his presence in our lives becomes palpable.

We realize that we are tired of the suffering and sorrow that assails our daily lives. We finally comprehend what the Master has been telling us all along: it is time to graduate to the next level in Sant Mat where all that matters is our practice. We realize that now is the time for action.

Over time, however, despite our dedication, it is possible to become despondent over our lack of progress. In a result-oriented world, we are disappointed when we do not achieve the inner experiences we expect; the dryness of our meditation becomes overwhelming. We feel we are suspended in an in-between world where our love is not strong enough to pull us to the Master but at the same time we do not enjoy the world either.

An ancient Indian philosopher has given the example of the potter's wheel to describe this stage of the disciple's life. The mind is doing its job by spinning the wheel to create pots full of thoughts and desires. When the mind stops spinning the wheel, even though desires are not being created, the wheel goes on spinning out of the momentum of past karma.

And so, this space in between the Master and disciple, while painful, is a natural step in our evolution to achieving union with the Lord. The wheel needs to continue to spin so that our karmas are completed.

Indeed it is at this stage where we most need to retain our positivity and approach our meditation with renewed resolve. Once we put in dedicated effort, the Lord will surely hear our pleas. As Maharaj Jagat Singh says:

So long as we lean on others He lets us do so, but when after repeated disappointments, we surrender to him completely, regarding Him as our only sheet-anchor, He comes to our succour instantly.

The Science of the Soul

At times like this, we need to remember not to focus on the results of our meditation but on our effort. One is reminded of the story of a disciple during the times of the Great Master. The disciple decided to isolate himself in the hot summer months to dedicate his time fully to meditation. Unfortunately, all did not go as planned. The mind rebelled, his meditation was dry, and after one month he felt that he had achieved no progress. Full of disappointment, he went back to the Great Master and asked why his Master made him waste a whole month without any tangible results. The Great Master patiently and lovingly explained that what matters is the effort not the results, for it is our efforts that will result in the opening of the Lord's floodgates of mercy.

So also the Lord will accept even our most feeble attempts at devotion, provided they are grounded in love and sincerity. Maharaj Charan Singh used to give the example of the benevolent teacher who allows dedicated students who have shown demonstrated effort to graduate to the next class even if their exam results fall short of a passing grade.

In the final analysis, as we read in the Adi Granth:

We meet Him, only when He causes us to meet.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to tell us that all we can do is knock on the door. One day the Lord has to open the door and let us into His presence.

And so, when the space between the Master and us becomes unbearable, we must remember that no teacher is more benevolent than our Master. Our duty is just to sit diligently for our meditation and wait for the wheel of karmas to come to a standstill. It is not for us to evaluate or analyze the quality of our meditation. Indeed, our posture does not matter; the results do not matter; all that matters is our effort, our love and our sincerity towards eliminating this space in between – forever.



O God,

You exist. I exist not.

*Can that which exists not demand something
from that which exists?*

Who am I to do such a thing?

Khawaja 'Abdullah Ansari, *Intimate Conversations*

Falling in Love

Love. We have no control over it. When we fall in love, we truly fall. We plunge deeply, head over heels, with such intensity and velocity that we push aside all obstacles in our way. Albert Einstein himself said that “gravitation cannot be held responsible for people falling in love!” It is another force – a force more powerful than us that tugs at our soul from deep within. We hardly have any choice in the matter. And just like that, at the snap of divine fingers, we find ourselves right in the middle of the vortex of love.

Falling in love is actually quite simple, and often takes very little effort on our part – it just happens. And in that state of intoxication, we often make romantic promises and lifelong commitments to our lovers “to love and to cherish, in sickness and in health until death do us part.” In such a state, many of us have promised our beloved Master that we will meditate for two and a half hours every day.

The velocity of that initial fall into love fuels us at first, and every chance we get, we want to sit silently in remembrance of our beloved. For many of us though, this honeymoon period soon comes to an end. What happens when we wake up one morning and no longer have the desire to meditate? How are we to cope when the love that once fuelled us starts to feel like a distant emotion – like a vague memory or blurred glimpse of a beautiful dream that we once lived?

When falling in love was effortless, why is staying in love such a challenge? The truth is, falling in love was a divine gift of sorts to bless our union; whereas staying in love requires hard work on our part. A seed of love was planted deep within us, and how magnificently intense it felt to have the divine gardener stroke our soul; but now it is

our responsibility to water that seed in order to keep our love alive and help it to grow.

Everybody can grow that feeling, that love, that intensity by meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Nonetheless, when love's intensity has weakened, and the gardener is nowhere in sight, we can easily begin to grow desperate. We start to plead, cry and beg for grace, for mercy and for love! We want to jump right back into the vortex of love! But Maharaj Jagat Singh explains that our cries are useless unless they are supported by effort:

Our prayers and pleadings are quite useless, unless these are supported by all the effort on our part to push the door open. Remember that a Master cannot be deceived or cheated. Unless the yearning to meet him is intense and true, he remains silent and unattentive.

The Science of the Soul

Perhaps our petition for love should be made in a language that he understands – our meditation. Our cry for love is better heard when made in the silence and stillness of our hearts – rather than by calling out to the Master for grace every time we stop putting in our efforts. Mirdad explains:

Be not in a haste to importune the smith each time you lose or misplace the key. The smith has done his work, and he has done it well; and he must not be asked to do the same work over and again. Do your work, and let the smith alone; for he, once done

with you, has other business to attend. Remove the stench and rubbish from your memory, and you shall surely find the key.

The Book of Mirdad

The truth is that everything we will ever need to tread this path was given to us at the time of initiation. We received the gift of love, as well as the key to keep that love intense and alive. Meditation is the only key, meditation is the only answer, and meditation is the sole door back into that intoxicating state of love. We must keep the vows we made to our lover, and rest assured, our lover will keep the promise he made to us. And before we know it, just like that, we will find ourselves falling helplessly in love all over again.



*When your love for that power exceeds your love for yourself
and the "I-ness" has been replaced by "Thou-ness",
the form of the Guru will make its appearance visible within.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems

Spirituality: A Way to Live, A Way to Return

Nowadays, irrespective of how simple or complex a piece of equipment, appliance or gadget we purchase is, a user manual is included. Consumers are advised to go through it to gain better understanding of the parts, function, care and maintenance of the equipment. We seem to be able to master the operations of every model of even the most complex of cameras, mobile phones, laptop computers and an endless list of gadgets. But have we ever given serious thought to the human body? Where do we find the care and instruction manual for this intricate masterpiece? More importantly, have we acquired mastery of its functions and operations?

Sure, we have doctors, fitness trainers and nutritionists, to name but a few – professionals who advise us on issues of the physical. But what about the essence of the human body – our true form, our only reality – the soul or spirit? The saints tell us that the outer garment is simply that, and serious thought should be given to the care and nourishment of the soul as it is immortal, divine and of noble heritage. It outlives this physical shell and bears the consequences of choices that are made by the weakened unruly mind, which itself is under the domain of the senses. The soul or spirit is what breathes life and gives form and meaning to the physical.

In *The Path of the Masters* it is explained: “The individual soul or spirit is the real man, it is a spark from the infinite Light, a drop from the ocean of Being. As such, it is one with Him, one in substance, one in qualities. It is in the soul that all consciousness and all power resides. All below the soul, even the mind itself, is unconscious, automatic and mechanical in action. In fact, everything in existence is entirely dependent upon spirit for its life and activity. Even the

humblest plant or the smallest insect lives and carries on its activities by virtue of spirit, the tiny spark of spirit that gives it being. All else in man passes away or is discarded by him on his upward flight towards perfect freedom.”

The Masters, through their discourses, remind us that although we are housed in a body, we are not the body – we are spiritual beings going through the experience of being human. Thus they maintain that it is only through the process of spirituality, of spiritualizing ourselves, that we are able to empower our soul consciousness, acknowledge its existence and free it from the bondage of the mind. They tell us that we have to work on overcoming our weakness of strongly identifying ourselves with the outer physical form and the material world. Our top priority should be to consider our obligation to our spirit. And the practical way to instill or apply spirituality to our lives is through the process of meditation as taught by the Masters. After initiation by a perfect living Master, meditation consists of withdrawing the attention to the eye focus through repetition of the holy Names, contemplation on the form of the Master, and listening to the inner Sound for a minimum of two and a half hours daily. The Masters tell us that the instant we sit for meditation, we actually begin to tread the spiritual path, and it is also at this moment where concepts begin to be left behind and experience begins.

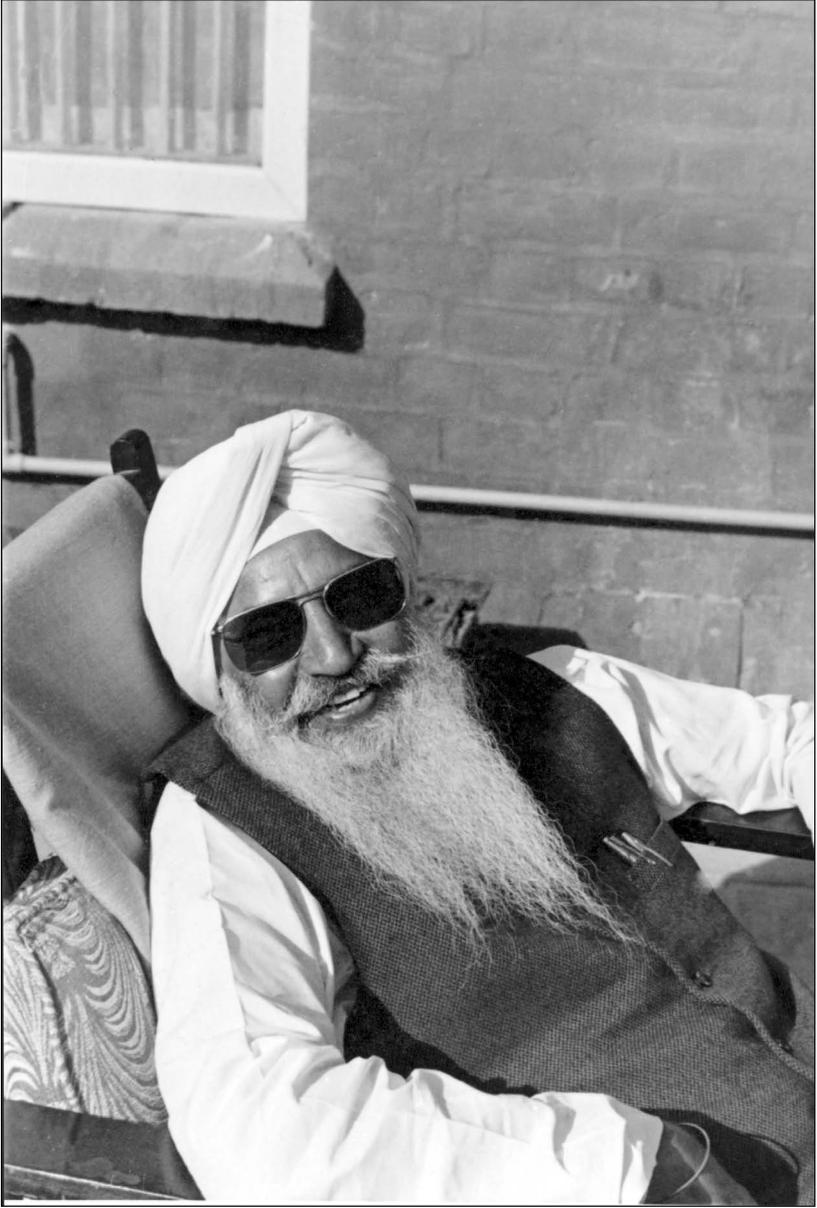
Meditation is a cleansing process for the mind, whereby it gradually becomes purified, refined and uplifted. Moreover, it enhances the development of positive human qualities such as humility, kindness, compassion, patience and understanding. These positive qualities enable us to think positively; they strengthen our mind to act in our long-term interest. We develop a better and more accurate understanding of the reality of our human condition, and are thus better equipped to face the ups and downs of life with equanimity.

Listening to spiritual discourses, reading spiritual literature and attending to seva are tools that can inspire us to pursue our meditation practice with fervour. We can further support our spiritual endeavors by being selective and vigilant about the things we choose to see, hear, talk or think about, as well as the company we keep. Spirituality and meditation should take a practical shape in our lives, reflecting in daily action and in our whole routine. We are advised:

If we want to achieve higher levels of spirituality, we must take action. We must take the steps that will lead us in that direction. Our actions must reflect our spiritual desire. If the desire for communion with Shabd is not reflected in our actions, either we are confused or we do not want to evolve spiritually. Our spiritual desire has to be expressed in the way we live, in the way we speak, in the way we think and adhere to the principles of the path. Most of all, it has to be expressed through our meditation.

Living Meditation

The spiritual path gives us much wisdom, guidance, light, sustenance, strength and consolation. It is, in fact, the ‘user’s manual’ for the upkeep of our soul. The Master is our spiritual mentor, our spiritual Father. By initiating us, he starts us on our homeward journey. And by doing so, he also gives clear purpose and direction to our life. The Masters advise us that by practising meditation daily, we can embark on the spiritual journey and, in the process, develop clear thinking, peace of mind and inner joy. And by perfecting this method, we gain liberation from the cycle of birth and death, and experience eternal bliss.



Maharaj Charan Singh

Heart to Heart

From the time Baba Jaimal Singh appointed Maharaj Sawan Singh as his successor, Hazur's mother no longer regarded him as a son but treated him with the reverence due a Master. I can still vividly recall an episode when Maharaj Ji, dressed all in white, came out into the courtyard and stood with his hands folded respectfully in front of his mother. Although Hazur was mature and stately, he stood before his mother like a loving child. His mother, also dressed in white, folded her hands in reverence to Maharaj Ji. Maharaj Ji said, "Mother, please don't fold your hands like this." In a tone of affection and respect, his mother said, "Please permit me – you are more than a son to me."

Daryai Lal Kapur, *Heaven on Earth*

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Maharaj Ji was on holiday. He entered the houseboat lounge looking dashing in his elegant churidar pyjama and kurta, and commented, "I feel like doing satsang." His companions enthusiastically responded, "Please sit down on this divan and talk to us of love." "What," he asked, "can I tell you of love? Do you know what love is? Love is a gift from the Lord." Lighthearted, and most beautifully, he had given the saints' teachings in a nutshell.

Legacy of Love

Book Review



One Light Many Lamps

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY VICTORIA JONES

PUBLISHER: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS, PUNJAB, INDIA, 2009.

ISBN: 978-81-8256-815-0

Sometimes the truth can best be shown in a language that even a child can understand. In a world where many religions claim that they hold the exclusive franchise on salvation, where ethnic conflicts lead to persecution and bloodshed, it is refreshing to discover a new children's book, published by Radha Soami Satsang Beas, entitled *One Light Many Lamps*. The text does not try to indoctrinate its readers into religious beliefs or advance any divisions or distinctions between human beings. Instead, author and illustrator Victoria Jones offers a spiritual vision of humanity, portraying every human being as a child of God, loved by God and full of the light and music of the divine.

The lively illustrations offer a colourful and sparkling imagining of a creation whose dimensions are vast and mysterious. The Lord is depicted as a luminous being taking a small baby in His arms, and showing the child both the majesty of the inner realms and the splendour shining in this world. God is concerned to show even this tiny child the love that creates all life, and the power and light that reside in all souls. One can hardly look at the illustrations and not acknowledge the universal presence of God in the world. This message is powerfully and beautifully made evident in the bright eyes of children, children of every culture and land.

The author weaves the story around one baby who is soon to be born. Before its birth, the Lord wants to give this "Little Soul" certain "gifts" so that one day the soul will share them with the people of the world. These "gifts" are great spiritual truths about the oneness that underlies all multiplicity. So, as the story relates,

The Lord scooped the Little Soul up into His arms and said, 'Come with me, Little Soul, and learn how the One becomes the many.'

Then the Lord splashed into the shimmering stream sending musical waves of light high into the air! He swung onto a great glowing note and off they sailed.

Using the repeating theme of how the “One becomes the many”, the story shows the wondering child how the One Light, the One Sound, the One Creator, the One Power, and the One Love can be seen in every particle of the world, in every soul, and in every faith tradition. In the story the soul repeats each lesson “so it could remember what it had learned and one day share it with the people of the world”.

This would be a lovely book to consider giving to a child. However, any seeker after spirituality might enjoy it, adults included. None of us is too old to be reminded that our presence here on this earth is a gift, that we share this creation with others who are also God’s beloveds, and that God surrounds us all as “a sea of light, made of endless love and peace and nothing more.”

The Journey of the Soul

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY VICTORIA JONES

PUBLISHER: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS, PUNJAB, INDIA, 2003.

THIRD EDITION.

ISBN: 81-8256-044-6

It is impossible to explain in human language the origin of the soul, the nature of God, or the manner in which the creation came about. So saints the world over have always resorted to metaphor and parable, using imagery to hint at truths which can only be known through experience.

The Journey of the Soul presents a parable of the love between the soul and God. In simple language and beautiful illustrations, it tells of the soul’s long “journey” from separation from God to joyful reunion. To depict the Lord and the soul, the book adopts a metaphor used by many saints and mystics and presents the Lord as an ocean – a brilliant, shining

ocean of love – and the soul as a drop of that ocean. Using language that is universal, this book invites “children everywhere who wonder about God and His creation” to understand life as a journey:

May every child, of every race and faith, find inspiration in these pages – an insight into our origins, the long journey of life, and the wonderful possibility of finding our way back to our common Home.

In this picture book, the creation is explained as a play in which the Lord wants all the souls to participate. “God has made His play seem very real, so His souls completely forget that they are just actors playing parts.” The narrator counsels: “And whenever a scene is sad or hard, remember you are only playing a part. The real you is your soul, a perfect luminous drop of God Himself, so His love, power and greatness are all within you!” On the stage of the creation each body is a costume which a soul wears. Whether the costume is of a reptile, an insect, a plant or a human, the costume is not the reality.

With their body costumes on, all the soul-drops look different. But underneath their bodies they are still the same little drops of Light and Love. We all belong to the same family because we all have the same One Father, God, the Great Lord. We should always be kind, gentle and loving to every living being because a soul lives inside each one.

When the book discusses death, a subject that can be disturbing to a young child, the text is reassuring and the illustrations upbeat, showing a smiling soul-drop rising up out of a dead lady bug, radiant in its joyful release. For the child reader who feels abandoned by God or confused by the things going on in his life, the narrator offers encouragement in a warm and sympathetic voice:

Talk to God. Feel Him shining inside you, loving you and giving you all the strength you need to play the part He gave you, courageously and well. This is called faith in God. If you will always remember

Him and have faith in Him, you will be happy inside yourself, no matter what happens in his play of "Life".

The narrator also explains the feeling of loneliness or emptiness a child may have, perhaps without being able to identify it.

When the Lord wants one of His souls to come back Home, He makes that person feel lonely deep inside, like something is missing. This is the Great Lord's special way of reminding the soul that its Real Home is not in this world, but back in the Ocean of Light.

The final section of the book describes how the Lord sends His "Great Power" to guide yearning souls on the journey Home. Dazzling illustrations invite the child reader to stretch the imagination to realities beyond the scope of the physical world. Initiation is shown as the touch of the Master's soul to the disciple's; the tishra til is shown as a door in the forehead which opens to reveal a hidden path leading into "an amazing new world" where the Master's Radiant Form "is made of nothing ... but the Stream of Sound and Light!" The Master leads the soul through "many marvellous and magical lands" and finally, "lifts the soul-drop back up into the Ocean of Light."

The Journey of the Soul offers children of all ages a story that may seem as fantastic as any fairy tale, and yet addresses the deepest questions that can trouble a child's mind: Who am I? What is death? Why do I feel lonely? What is the purpose of life? As the opening page of the book says, "May this story take you on a journey of exploration; a discovery of truth in all its simple wonder and delight."



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

