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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India  
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# Jewel of Liberation

*In the clan of the mystics, a Master is king;  
in the three worlds, no other God than he.  
The guru brings rest to my life –  
ocean of happiness, treasure house of love,  
mountain of courage, he never wavers.  
He is the Supreme Being, the root of detachment  
who undoes the knot of body and soul.  
He supports his devotees, mothering them  
with the milk of abundance –  
in the home of lovers he's the wish-granting cow.  
He paints our eyelids with the collyrium of Knowledge,  
shows us our own inner treasure. –  
his teachings bring us the best of luck.  
He, the jewel of liberation,  
disciplines the cruel, erases the negative  
and rescues souls in numberless ways.  
Within my body, the true Varanasi,  
he has taught me the repetition  
that releases me.  
Now, says Dnyaneshwar,  
I see only the face of my father within.*

Dnyaneshwar,  
*Many Voices One Song*



# The Song of the Reed

The 13th century Sufi poet Rumi opens his most famous work, the *Masnavi*, with a haunting poem called ‘The Song of the Reed’. He compares the soul to a reed flute which cries when it remembers the reed bed from which it was once torn, the home to which it now longs to return.

*Listen to the song of the reed,  
How it wails with the pain of separation.*

This is the story of every one of us. Inside each of us there is a soul crying to return to where it came from. We may not always be aware of its weeping, but probably there have been times when, inexplicably, a kind of deep sorrow wells up in us. We do not know where it came from, we don’t even understand what it is. But we know that somehow we are yearning for something – something that can restore a long-lost joy and bring meaning to our lives.

This longing in the soul is very real; it is what has pointed our lives in a certain direction. It may be like a fire burning inside us. As Rumi says:

*The sound of the reed comes from fire, not wind –  
What use is one’s life without this fire?  
It’s the fire of love that brings music to the reed.*

But where does this love come from? Surely not from the soul itself. The poor little soul has spent long ages in forms in which its consciousness was virtually nonexistent and is only just waking up. It

is still bemused and bewildered. Its consciousness is very low. But our Father-Creator has made something stir in us. He has started calling us home.

It is the love of God that is the driving force behind everything in the creation – behind everything that exists. The mystics even tell us that it was because of this great love that the Lord separated all his souls from him and sent them down into the creation – so that they could wake up and learn to love him also, in the way that he loves us. This same love is what will bring his souls back home.

But let us not imagine that any of this happens by our choice. This is the Lord pulling us to him. And it happens through the enormous grace of being drawn to a true Master, receiving initiation from him and then doing the meditation that he teaches us to do. And over a period of time – perhaps this whole lifetime or even longer – the miracle of God-realization eventually takes place.

In *Die to Live* we read:

*The disciple only feels he loves the Master. Actually it is the Master who creates that love in him. We only think we worship the Father. Actually he is the one who is pulling us from within to worship him. He is the one behind the screen and the string is absolutely in his hand. He makes us dance in his love and devotion, and we are just puppets.*

And while this is certainly a dance of love, it is not always a dance of joy. For some reason the Lord decided that his souls should wake up through a course of suffering. And in a way this makes sense. Who would want to change their present condition if it brought only peace and happiness and comfort? Great Master told us that a course of

suffering is necessary to make souls realize that this material creation is not where they want to be. We read in *The Dawn of Light*:

*Spirit entities were in a comatose condition at the time of creation. The object of the Creator was that they too should attain full consciousness and join the region of pure bliss. Therefore, in order to develop their consciousness and create in them a longing to reach the region of pure spirit, it was necessary to subject them to a course of suffering, without which they would not have cared to make their condition better. The soul that is satisfied in this world does not feel the necessity for joining the Creator.*

And so, this waking of the soul from its sleep of unconsciousness inevitably involves some pain to make the soul start to become aware of what it has lost. The soul which once knew nothing but the bliss of divine love and union with the supreme being, starts to realize its separation and its present degradation. Hence the lament of the flute as it sings its song of longing to return to its original home.

Since our very first stirrings into wakefulness our souls have been yearning to go home. Of course we didn't recognize this for what it was. We somehow knew that we were just not happy. Now we have a sense that we don't fit in here anymore. Even in our own families we sometimes feel like strangers. In one of his best-known poems Soami Ji says it all:

*Let us turn homewards, friend –  
why linger in this alien land?*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*



In one of his very last satsangs Hazur Maharaj Ji chose this poem as his theme. And he emphasized that for the awakened soul there can be no happiness while still at this level. He described our plight exactly:

*If you wish to attain happiness, if you wish to find peace, you must return to your real home. This land is not your land, this race is not your race, this religion is not your religion. Your native land is Sach Khand, the true realm; your race is Satnam, the true Name; your religion is love for the Lord. You have come into this world as a foreigner, and now you are wandering around restlessly, never feeling quite at home.*

*Spiritual Discourses, Vol. II*

When we do finally attain the human form and start consciously searching for what we have lost, we are given a focus for our soul's yearning. We are directed to a living Master. This is of course the very reason why we have to have a living Master – so that we can see him in all his magnificence and fall in love with him; and then perhaps, through that love, come to yearn for him when we can't have access to that beautiful physical form.

Then we will mourn for him, Maharaj Ji says, and we'll be the *fortunate* ones who mourn for him. This is feeling the separation from the Father, which becomes a real longing to go back to the Father. And in the meantime the practical effect of this mourning, this feeling that we miss our Master, is that it forces the disciple to meditate – to keep trying in the face of constant struggle to climb the steep slope to him. We are repeatedly told, of course, that there is no separation – that the Master is always with us, inside us, closer than our breath. But still the feeling of separation may frequently well up in us. And it seems that the Master *wants* us to feel separation from him. It seems that this may

be necessary for the disciple. It can create a yearning in him that is a more powerful incentive than anything else to make us work to find him.

And paradoxically, the more we yearn for him in our seeming separation, the closer we are getting to him. In reply to someone who said he would miss the Master when he had to part from him, Maharaj Ji said this:

*Brother, the more we miss someone, the nearer we are to the one we are missing. We only depart to meet. We are never separated.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

What does this tell us? That it is only we who feel the separation, through our own lack of perception. But this heightens our longing for him, the longing that is in fact pulling us closer and closer to him, even though we can't see this happening. Even if we feel isolated from him, he is not isolated from us. But perhaps he does not let us know this because he wants us to long for him. He says in *Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*:

*The blessed ones are the ones who are yearning for him, who are in love with him, who are consumed in his love. When gold is made, the fire burns out all the residue and gold comes out. The metal has to go through the heat of that fire to become gold. So it's not essential that there has to be union in love. Separation also has its part to play.*

This longing is cleaning us, getting rid of lifetimes of old karmas. If we need to get rid of all our karmas so that we can go back to our Beloved, then this might be the quickest way. And this longing for

him may well be more important even than being with him in his physical presence. Elsewhere Maharaj Ji tells us:

*The more time given to meditation, the more pain of separation you feel. And the more pain of separation you feel, the more progress you make within.*

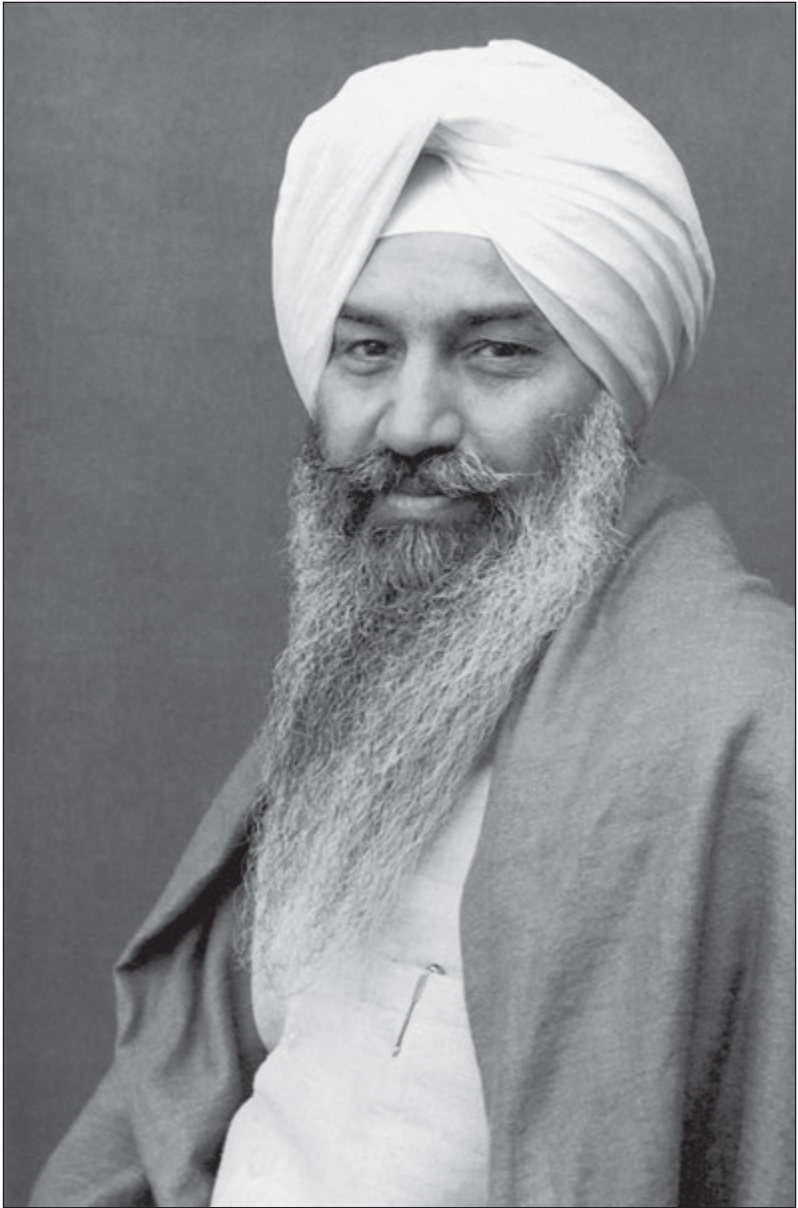
Is it not strange? We meditate because we want to get close to him. But still the feeling of separation persists. And so we feel we're failing in our meditation. But according to what Maharaj Ji has just told us, the very pain we feel from what we see as our failure is in fact proof that we are making progress within. This may be confusing. But then, he doesn't expect us to understand what he is doing. He just wants us to love him. Maharaj Ji also tells us:

*Ultimately what counts is the love. ... You may have a very deep longing and desire to be with him even when you are a thousand miles away from him – that may have much more value. So it is the love that counts. ... And what is love? Losing your own identity and merging into another being is love. You don't exist anymore. Only the Beloved exists.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III.*

And what more could we want than this – to lose ourselves in him? Is this not our deepest desire? This is the very reason that we were drawn to the path in the first place: so that the drop could lose its separate identity and become one again with the blissful, glorious, divine ocean.





*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# Managing Our Mind-stuff

We have a physical body, but we are enveloped by, and exist in, mind.

The mind is not the brain. It is subtle matter of a finer vibration than physical matter. It is mind that mediates between our experience of the physical world and spirit. It may be invisible, but it is the single most powerful force or energy that we have to deal with, and it must be treated very carefully.

There are ways of living in the world that agitate it and make it an impenetrable barrier, and there are modes of living that settle the mind and help it to experience truth. Learning to manage our mind-stuff through right living creates the ideal conditions of mind that enable a connection to be made with spirit in the midst of turbulence.

Let us look at four ways to help manage this mind. First, in order for mind to be useful, under control and able to connect with the Real, it must be centered. Before a potter can shape a heavy lump of clay it must first be centered on the wheel, otherwise it is impossible to form anything of value or beauty. Initially this takes a lot of effort and technique (but never force). The currents of mind must be brought to stillness and harmony. The centre is a very real place in the mind and each of us must find it, make it a reality, and function from here.

We have to slip from the rim of the wheel to the axis where there is stillness amidst turbulence and activity. And this we do through the practice of simran, the repetition of words which help to focus the mind currents in this place of stillness, our invisible home in the world. When scattered and overstretched, we lose touch with the inner spring which feeds us with life energy, and we suffer pain and confusion.

To lose some money or your health is irritating, but to lose your centre is devastating. The centre, the axis, becomes a portal that opens

and connects us to the Real. Only here can we exist in the divine presence; outside of here we are simply lost in the world. An agitated and exhausted mind can never find the stillness required to catch that divine note of spirit vibrating in our being – the Shabd, which not only created and sustains all that exists, but is also that essential part of us which is connected to divinity itself.

Second: mind loves the extremes, because at the extremes there is maximum stimulation. Only in the middle does the mind stand still. Stillness is the death of the mind, and it avoids it at all costs. All the ancient sages spoke of the ‘golden mean’ and the ‘great middle way’, and for good reason. Avoiding the extremes soothes the mind. It may be exciting as we swing through the senses, but it is also agitating and unsettling. Happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain are born of emotions at the extremes. Joy is of our deeper being and is found only in the middle.

It should become a new habit for us to adopt a moderation in all things. Initially the starving mind screams for stimulation and action, but in time it discovers that in the middle there is an indescribable sweetness – a taste so subtle and sublime that the mind gradually starts to avoid the crude stimulation of the extremes. Lives that have balance, ordinariness and moderation may be unspectacular, but they facilitate the condition of mind necessary to tune into and ultimately merge with the One.

Then, we should cultivate simplicity – keep life simple. The mind, in a word, is complexity. Anything over and above *needs* veers toward *wants*, and adds a layer of complexity, action and reaction which we have to deal with. The mind also loves to turn simple problems and issues into complex ones: molehills into mountains. Complexity is mind-food, which it craves.

Simplicity pulls the carpet out from under the complex mind, giving it little to hook on to and get entangled with. Complexity is

like walking through creation with a coat encrusted with fish hooks, while simplicity is a smooth velvet coat. Being un-simple in one's living and dealings bleeds precious life energy from where we need it most – centering, meditation and service. Being around un-simple people is physically and emotionally draining. The truly simple souls carry an aura of fullness and completeness, as if nothing in the world can stick to them. They also seem connected to an abundant reservoir of invisible energy. Simplicity is close to divinity.

A fourth key would be to awaken our witness consciousness, which has its deeper roots in our supreme self. This silent observer is able to separate itself from its vehicle – the body and mind. It watches the performance of our imagined self, our ego, as well as our thoughts and emotions. It knows: 'I am not that. I am the deep flowing river of being, not the sprightly bubbles on the surface.' In this state we can respond but not react. We don't take ourselves too seriously (the ego's favourite pastime).

The witness is able to open up small spaces between itself and the world around us, which makes life's journey that little less painful. The detachment of the witness ushers in a lightness of being, as opposed to heaviness when attached to everything that pertains to 'me' and 'mine.' A watchful consciousness enables clear thinking: 'I am not my thoughts and don't let them take me over.' Instead we learn (through our meditation) to first observe, and then control our thoughts and put them to work efficiently. Ease and simplicity come to replace tension and confusion.

With the help of these four keys our mind stuff can reach peace. Our mind then becomes open to Truth.



# Perspectives on Sound

The mystics can see with perfect clarity. The rest of us live with concepts – which at best contain only a small part of the truth. This is one of the qualities of a mind that is spread downward and outward. So the mystics explain that what we experience in this life is constantly changing, in the sense that it is only a projection.

What does this actually mean? Let us do a thought experiment that brings together a little clear thinking with what we know of physics. To do this we will take a short journey into the realm of the physics of sound. What we will examine is the following statement: When someone speaks to you, the sound of the voice that you are listening to exists only in your own mind.

Perhaps this seems a bit weird. The implication is that the sound you think you are hearing may not exist at all. But let us examine it a little closer.

We know from the physics of air that what we refer to as sound is in fact very small pressure waves travelling in the air, waves that travel like ripples formed on a surface of a pond due to some disturbance. In the case of sound, this disturbance is the vocal cords of the speaker causing very small ripples of pressure waves in the air. These pressure waves spread out to the listener and cause your eardrum to vibrate. These vibrations are then sensed by nerves in the inner ear, which are then interpreted by the brain as sound. Just as the small ripples travelling over the surface of a pond make no sound, the space around you is completely quiet.

Likewise, the air around us is quiet, and all we are really hearing are sounds in our own heads. This does not mean that the message being conveyed by the speaker is not real; simply that the sound



you think you are hearing is no more than an electrical signal interpreted by your brain.

What has this to do with spirituality? First, it tells us that the world that we perceive around us is not what we think it is. In truth it is an experience we have within our own bodies. Nothing in fact comes from the outside, it is all within our brains interpreting various stimuli. Beauty, it turns out, truly is in the eye of the beholder.

If one can accept that all we experience is in fact within our own bodies – that what we think the outer universe sounds or looks like is simply a projection of reality on our own brain – a startling realization dawns. What we are experiencing is nothing more than a projection onto our senses, nothing more than a show.

If this is true, then what is reality? The intellect can only discern what it experiences through the senses, which in truth is simply a projection. Therefore, most of us are in utter darkness, as far as reality or truth is concerned. Great Master explains in *Spiritual Gems* why this has become the lot of the human being:

*He was soul at one time when he was in intimate touch with the Word. But that was a long, long time ago when he was in the spiritual regions. When the soul lost touch with the Word and associated with the mind in the mental planes, the jewel was thrown away and the imitation grasped. The debased coin can pass as genuine on the mental planes only, but is not acceptable in the spiritual planes. The access to the spiritual planes was therefore debarred.*

And so the door banged closed on him. But the degeneration did not end here. Great Master says further:

*The coin was further debased when mind and soul left the mind planes and associated with gross matter in the physical plane. Here the jewel is no longer traceable, man has no knowledge of soul and a very poor knowledge of mind. The coin has become spurious and has no purchasing power in the markets of the mental and spiritual planes. Soul has been materialised, and human nature has become very weak.*

So with our weak faculties, which include the intellect, we have no real answers. We cannot find the way to truth and reality. The much-revered science of matter has no answer, and one has to turn to what the science of the soul has to impart.

From the science of the soul we learn that our soul or consciousness at this level is so mixed with mind and matter that we are unable to differentiate even between mind and soul. In fact, it is mind which dominates. And this mind has only two main states. Either it is being pulled downward and outward or upward and inward.

The state in which we all start in this life is downward and outward. This is in the interest of our own survival, where we have to be totally focused on the material world in order to learn to speak, walk and function. Our survival depends on it.

But when the mind's dominant tendency is downward and outward, all that we experience is a lie fabricated by the senses. What is more, all that we experience is within our own body and is powered by the soul. Each nerve which is being excited needs life energy. Even each thought of the mind requires life energy. And all this comes from the soul. So whatever pleasure we experience through the senses, is in fact a charade which is causing us to literally haemorrhage life force.

In contrast, if the mind's tendency starts changing to turn upward and inward, a completely different experience unfolds. In contrast

to when the mind is scattered, the consciousness becomes more focused and there is a sense of being replenished. The more upward and inward the mind's tendency is, the more focused it will be. It is only when we experience this that we can start to see this material world for what it is: an inert shadow-land that is little more than – in Maharaj Ji's words – a vale of tears.

It is only once we learn to appreciate meditation that we are driven to put in more and more effort to turn our attention upward and inward. But after countless ages of being caged by the mind, we have become so accustomed to our cage that any change of the status quo is perceived as strange to the point of discomfort, especially in the beginning. This is why regular and punctual meditation year in and year out is so essential. It literally takes years and years for many of us to even start to appreciate what we receive in meditation. But this change definitely happens.

Once an initiate complained to Maharaj Ji that simran is very boring. Maharaj Ji quickly responded by saying this was only in the beginning – after some time, the dry stone would become sweet. What changes is our state of mind, a mind that is becoming pure as it withdraws upward and inward.

Stilling the mind and reaching the inner form of the Master right now is not only difficult for most of us, it is impossible. But what is not hard at all, and is within the power of each one of us, is to develop a growing appreciation for the peace that results from turning the mind within. To develop that appreciation, all we need to do is show up for our simran and meditation.

We do, however, get discouraged due to slow progress after years of meditation. About this Great Master says in *Spiritual Gems*:

*It is true ... that in the preliminary stages the progress is slow. To give up worldly pleasures, to control the senses, and bring the attention in one centre by controlling the wild runs of the mind while still alive and kicking, is not an easy task. But what is it that with love and faith man cannot accomplish? You strengthen your will power and go ahead. Success is sure.*

So these downward and outward habits that we have accrued over so many lives do hamper our progress, especially in the beginning. But creating another habit is also possible.

People may say that doing simran and meditation is hard. It is not. Although doing *perfect* simran and meditation is not just hard for most of us but seemingly impossible, doing simran and meditation with whatever focus we are capable of *is* possible. It is actually simple. Our expectations may make meditation feel difficult. But if one expects nothing and does meditation out of love and devotion or even just duty, then it is not difficult.

Over time our meditation will change the mind's perspective from downward and outward to upward and inward. What keeps the mind pulled downward and outward is love for sense objects. What pulls the same mind upward and inward is more captivating, more satisfying and more beautiful than any love in this material world.

This is more obvious if we remember that love for sense objects is actually love for a mirage. How much depth can really be in this type of love? Now compare this with the love for the divine.

The same goes for our experience of sound. How much we enjoy listening to a favourite piece of music! But remember: this is simply little pressure waves causing electrical signals in our brains; there is no real sound as we experience it. Now compare this to that inner sound which is not only real; it comes with an energizing power of its own.

The outer sound cannot in truth really be compared to it at all. This real inner sound is so incredibly beautiful and captivating that even with poor concentration, one may hear and enjoy it. Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us in *Die to Live*:

*Without proper concentration, proper withdrawal, you do hear the Sound.... You will enjoy the Sound, you will hear the Sound, you will relish it, and your mind will be absorbed in it. You will be very happy and feel quite peaceful and blissful.*

One cannot imagine what that Sound must be like once perfect concentration has been achieved. But one thing is sure: if there is anything worth striving for, this is it.



*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 is manifested from Shabd cannot be anything but Shabd. Shabd is our creator. Shabd is our sustainer and Shabd is ours.*

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

# Multitasking and Focus

Multitasking – doing two or more activities at once – has become part of our way of doing things. Work and play blur. Our friends can reach us on our work email address at ten o'clock in the morning, while our boss can reach us on our mobile phone at ten o'clock at night. We can do our weekly shopping sitting at our desk and we can handle a work query in the queue at the supermarket.

Sometimes we begin to feel like our life is one long to-do list with work that we will never complete. We worry that between our family, our work, our home, our spiritual practice and our endless commitments, we are defined by our inability to get all of it done. To fight this feeling we often react by trying to do multiple things at once, with the result that we do not do anything well and are too easily swept up in waves of anxiety and worry.

There is no easy way to completely avoid multitasking, but we must guard against too much of it. The reason is simple: it is difficult for a person to do two things at the same time equally well. Our brains are designed to focus on one thing at a time, and bombarding them with too much information at one time only slows them down.

Why is multitasking relevant to spirituality? Because focus is important in our spiritual life. To be truly spiritually alive, to have spiritual vitality, we need to have a laser-like focus. If we are not focused, we are not getting done what truly needs to get done.

Meditation requires focus, but perhaps we are in the habit of doing “lazy” meditation. We just go through the motions, without focus and without love. We resent getting up early in the morning. We watch the clock, waiting for our shift to end. Oftentimes our two and a half hours come to an end and we can honestly not recall having

done even five consistent rounds of simran. So achieving that focus is very hard. Great Master is clear about the best way to reach and to hold the attention at the eye centre. He writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

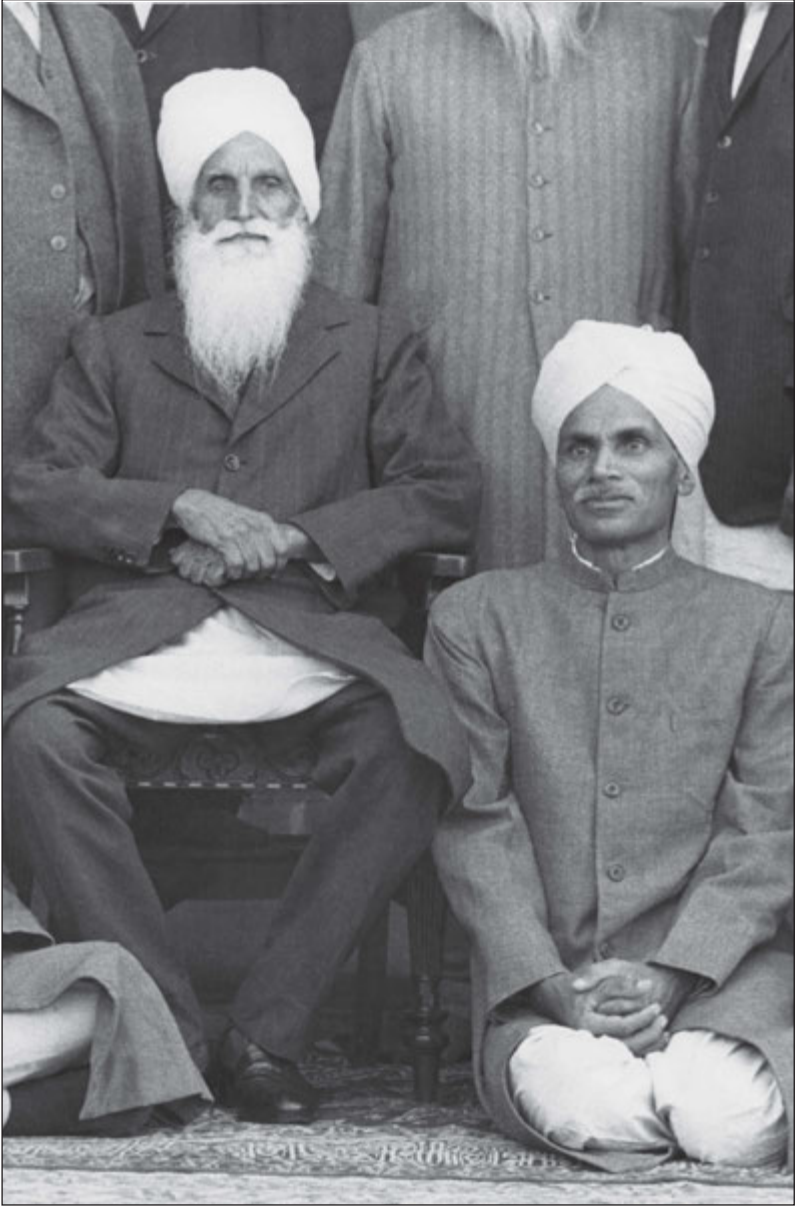
*That method is the same as all the saints use, which is simply the concentrated attention held firmly at the given centre. What else can we say? It is all a matter of unwavering attention. ... Every ray of attention must be centred there and held there. If one strays away for a time, one has lost the advantage. It may be said safely that if any earnest student should hold his attention fully upon the given centre for three hours, without wavering, he must go inside.*

So there we have it – just three hours of focusing the attention at the eye centre will allow us to go inside. Just three hours. But Great Master goes on to admit that this can be difficult:

*But that is not so easy without long practice. However, by and by, the mind becomes accustomed to staying in the centre. It rebels less and less, and finally yields to the demand to hold the centre. Then your victory is won. ... It is a matter of will to hold to the centre, also not to forget nor allow the attention to go off after some other thought or experiences. Make the spirit, instead of the mind, the commander of the situation.*

And this brings us to the heart of the difficulty. The trouble, Great Master says, lies with the mind:

*The mind is tricky and will run out if permitted. Conquer it. But to conquer it is not easy, of course, and it takes time.*



*Maharaj Sawan Singh*



*The problem is not complicated at all. The whole thing is just attention, and then unbroken attention, at the eye centre, allowing no other thought to intrude itself into the consciousness and lead you away from the centre. ... This was the method by which I won my way inside and it is the method by which you must win your way.*

We do find that in our daily lives there are various external triggers which force us to focus, which prove that the mind is capable of a high degree of concentration when necessary. For instance, we may be faced with a life-threatening situation, an emergency that demands all our attention; or we may miss a deadline at work or an assignment due at university or school, which will result in us failing if it is not handed in on time. But when it comes to meditation, there is nothing external that is forcing this focus upon us.

Given the difficulty of achieving a high level of concentration and focus in meditation, what is required to attain success is persistence and perseverance, which stem from obedience, love, devotion and the desire to please our Master. If we are devoted and we really long to please him, we will try all the harder to focus at the eye centre.

On the spiritual path, we sometimes get hung up on the idea of success or failure, and we allow our lack of understanding to get in the way of persistence. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh Ji defines “failure”, and in doing so he shows us its value:

*Failure means that I have done my best to attend to meditation, but I couldn't succeed. Failure doesn't mean that I never attended to meditation. That is not failure – that is not even attempting. Failure means I have done my best, I have given my time, I have lived the way of life while I have been trying to*

*build my treasure. From every point of view I have been keeping myself clean, but I have not achieved anything within myself. ... Our attempt is there, our efforts are there, but the results are not in our hands. From that point of view we can say that we have failed, but that is no failure.*

Even from a worldly perspective, perseverance in the face of so-called failure is essential. Success can be achieved only through repeated failure and introspection. In fact, success represents perhaps one percent of our work, while 99 percent we call failure. When we are committed to accomplishing a goal, we naturally make continual effort, even when we do not achieve immediate success. That one percent and that 99 percent are both valuable, and we cannot have one without the other. We should not confuse perseverance and effort with success or failure. The persistent effort to meditate should never cease.

We tend to avoid confronting the obvious truth that the clock is ticking for all of us. We do not have much time left. We have to make every day count. Each day, we have to choose how to spend our time. We cannot put time into a box and save it to use later. There is no 'undo' button that lets us start a day again, so that we can delete the thoughtless errors of our previous attempt. Our time is not properly spent unless we attend to our real work: the two and a half hours of daily meditation, which we promised at the time of our initiation.

In *The Science of the Soul* Maharaj Jagat Singh Ji reminds us of the importance of using our limited time for our real work:

*Life is short. Time is fleeting. Take full advantage of it, and if you have not done 'your own work' already, start doing it now.*

“Our own work” is meditation, which hones our concentration. It focuses our mind and takes it away from the thousands of distractions that haunt us every day. Meditation requires us to sit alone in silence and stillness for two and a half hours each day. It is that focused stillness and silence that leads the disciple to the transcendent Light and Sound. This requires a lot of discipline and steadfast commitment.

Many of us love to multitask and consider it a great skill, but in the realm of spirituality, it is as useless as it is destructive. It only serves to fritter away our concentration, thereby lessening our focus and the amount of time we can sit in meditation. The more we entertain activities that scatter our consciousness into the world, the longer it will take to focus our mind in meditation and the longer it will take to make progress.

After all is said and done, longing and love are the only qualities that will help us achieve the focus we are after. Obedience and the desire to please our Master lead us to persistent effort. And, the Masters tell us, it is our longing and our persistent effort that will help us win the battle to hold the attention at the eye centre.



*To have success in meditation, the aspirant must enter upon it with the determination to explore its possibilities. He must not start with reservations, but should be willing to go where he is led but without expectations. The essence of meditation is one-pointedness to merge in the Shabad to the exclusion of all other thoughts even when they are enticing.*

*Legacy of Love*

# Consciousness

The third volume of the six volumes of *A Dictionary of Mystic Terms* – all 480 pages – is dedicated totally to the Supreme Lord, the creative power. By looking at different religions and mystics, contributing authors have investigated names and descriptions for this power of God, dating as far back as 6,000 years.

Over the course of time this power has been given thousands of names in different languages, many of which reflect its audibility and also the captivating sweetness of its music. Names such as: the music of the spheres, the life stream, Shabd, Nam, celestial music, the breath of God, divine whisper and the Word. These are only a few of the names ascribed to this godly power.

This power, or Shabd, is conscious energy. It is the life and basis of everything that has been created. The Great Master writes in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV:

*The Lord is the great storehouse of consciousness. He is the embodiment of reason and the treasure-house of intelligence. He is the repository of love and compassion.*

*We are parts of Him. He is the whole. The essence of which our souls are made, its fountain source is called the Lord. If we are a drop of consciousness, He is the ocean of consciousness.*

Following on the same theme is this extract from *One Being One*:

*The One Being is the ultimate energy source, the central powerhouse. And He is conscious energy, too. Don't forget that.*

*His energy is imbued with an intelligence and wisdom way beyond human capacity to grasp.*

*So he projects himself as a series of energy levels. His one energy dances outwards into a multiplicity of forms – of forms that we perceive, since we are a part of this projected energy dance. And the bottom end of this beam of energy is what we call the material world. It's nothing but a dance of energy in which we are intimately involved as participating beings.*

The essence of life that both sustains us and fills all space around us – it is in us and we are in it – is this conscious energy that dances through the universe. Whether we refer to it as God, Shabd, the Word, Logos, ultimate reality or by any other name, it is all the same thing: consciousness. It vibrates throughout the universe in waves at different levels of frequency – the higher the frequency, the higher the energy – and if we could learn to vibrate in its range of frequencies, we could dance with it throughout the universe.

Maharaj Ji writes in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, that we see thousands of candles lit in the first stage and our soul dances when it sees that light. And in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, we read:

*You yourself will know that you are going up. You have a certain bliss, certain contentment, certain happiness in those situations. You feel a certain joy and you dance within yourself in happiness. When you are on those planes, you radiate happiness.*

It is this consciousness, or Shabd, that is our inner core – that gives us life. And it is in the greater consciousness that our own awareness will dance as it rises from one level to the next.

A disciple asked Maharaj Ji, “Is the real form of the disciple the same as the real form of the Master?” And Maharaj Ji responded by asking and answering his own questions. He asked:

*What is the real form of the Master? Shabd. And what is the real form of the disciple? Soul. Is there a difference between Shabd and soul? Yes. The difference between the soul and Shabd? It is the level of consciousness.*

So the spiritual difference between us and the Master is only the level of consciousness. Consciousness is one, it is indivisible, but it operates on a scale of energy levels or consciousness levels: from being dormant and unaware to super awareness in ultimate consciousness.

We are conscious that we have made some progress, if only evolutionary. And now the whole object of following this path, of asking for initiation and of having been initiated, is simply to dance up the scale of consciousness. It is not only to have greater awareness, but to actually comprehend ultimate consciousness – to know and to be everything, to merge our drop back into the ocean.

The Great Master has told us that in the physical creation this upward growth of the soul is tediously slow and agonizingly painful. Consciousness is very intimately associated with the body, and severing this long and intimate connection is naturally slow and painful. But with practice it becomes easy and natural.

This lifting of our consciousness can come about only through the practice of meditation, as taught to us by our Master when we are initiated. But achieving this high goal of full consciousness is a challenge. It takes courage to follow this path; it takes courage to be a disciple of a true Master because we are moving against the main stream of life. The spiritual path follows a course directly opposite to

worldly ways. It means doing what comes unnaturally: shutting down the senses, turning away from thoughts, distancing ourselves from desires, and ignoring 'I-ness,' or the demands of our ego.

The process is neither easy, nor is it fast, but with patience and practice we can all do it. What is required is that we cast aside the anchor of matter and catch hold of the omnipresent current of consciousness. With practice our own consciousness will lead us to the divine happiness that we so desperately seek.

The Masters say that energy is consciousness and intelligence. Sometimes, when the day is clear and bright and our hearts are filled with joy, we get a sense of the divine magic that surrounds us. But even more than that, saints tell us that the creative process can be experienced within our own being as cosmic music, its beauty and melody far surpassing anything created by human actions. As children of the divine, this is our inheritance and our ultimate destiny.



*He is never apart from His creation. He is always there, within every little being, every soul.*

*It can never be said enough, never recalled enough, never lived enough. He is in the present moment, right now. He is within. He is without. Whenever the mind is quiet, we will find Him in our being. He is the "wind beneath our wings". He is not what we think; He is what we are.*

*One Being One*

# The Real You

Who, or what, is the real you? When we look in the mirror we see our physical bodies. But this physical form is but the tip of the iceberg. This body is only maybe one percent of who we really are – or perhaps even less than that. And we spend just about all our time here looking after this tiny one percent. But what about the other 99 percent?

In *The Path of the Masters* Dr Julian Johnson writes that not only does man possess a physical body – inside that is one much finer, called the astral body, which appears to be made of light. And then, inside that is yet another body which is finer still, called the causal body, because in it is stored the cause or seed of all that is to happen in an individual's lifetime. This causal body stores all our karmas. It holds a perfect record of every experience of the soul and its companion mind, running through all of the countless ages of their existence. Out of all of these experiences character is formed, and from that character all actions flow.

It is through the causal body that the soul contacts all the lower levels of life, working through the lower bodies, as mentioned above. Both the astral and the causal bodies belong to and are derived from universal mind – and must eventually return to universal mind. Both are of extremely high vibration and are full of light and endowed with great power. That power comes from the soul.

The physical, astral and causal bodies cannot operate without the mind. So long as we are in the physical, astral or causal regions we must retain the mind. When the soul descended from the higher regions, it picked up the mind as its equipment for use on the lower planes. The mind, however, is simply a machine, powered by spirit. All



its intelligence, light and power come from the soul, just as a light bulb draws power from an electric current to allow it to shine.

Our mind can be our greatest friend or worst enemy. All too often satsangis let their mind imprint on them negative attitudes regarding their own spiritual progress. And unfortunately, what one believes affects a person's attitude towards life. So when we tell ourselves: "I can't meditate for two and a half hours; I can't still the mind". Or: "I don't deserve initiation; I'm not good enough," then those beliefs will form our attitude. The Masters tell us, though, that the only thing we can control is our attitude, so let us try to change those negative thoughts to: "I can easily meditate for two and a half hours or more; my Master knew that I deserved initiation, therefore, I am good enough for my Master."

Let us be aware of this trick of the mind and get our attitude right. We need to do a mental house cleaning. It is time to toss out all those old limiting, self-defeating beliefs, and replace them with positivity. And let us try to focus our attention more on the soul.

We are told that the soul is like a droplet of the divine ocean that is God. It is something that cannot be destroyed. All else – the physical, astral, causal planes – can, and one day will, all be destroyed. What will remain then is our soul – our true self, now striving to return to what it once was.

In *The Science of the Soul* Maharaj Jagat Singh describes the descent of the soul from its source in Sat Nam:

*The souls of the entire universe descended into the domain of the mind. ... Treading the path of mind, it [the soul] strayed further and further away from the path of Nam till, at last, all its light and glory got totally masked. It even forgot that it was 'soul' – immortal and everlasting – and began to identify itself*

*with its various coverings, with which it had enveloped itself during its descent. It began to call itself “body”.*

*First it took on the causal body, after descending to the Causal Region. When it came down to the Astral Region, which is the world of potent illusion, it was covered with the astral body. And when it dropped down to the phenomenal world, it was covered with the physical body, in addition to all the previous coverings. The lower the soul sank, the dimmer grew its light.*

So now we identify with our physical bodies. On an intellectual level we all know that these will die some day. But the author of *Living Meditation* asks: “Is it not strange then, that even though we know we will not be in the world permanently, we act as if we were to be here forever?” He points out:

*When we stay at a hotel, we don't try to fix the problems we face. This is because we are guests at the hotel, not attached to it, and we know we will soon be on our way.*

He reminds us of something Soami Ji said: that we are so attached to the creation and love it so much that we have forgotten the Lord. We have forgotten our true home, and even forgotten who we really are. We are trapped in this world of illusion and take everything that we see to be real.

We also read in *Living Meditation*:

*Science tells us that at the subatomic or quantum level, nothing of the material world is left intact. There are only energy fields with no solidity at all, nothing for the senses to see or touch.... All the suns, stars and galaxies in the whole cosmos are a*

*quantum mirage, winking in and out of existence millions of times per second. The whole universe is like a blinking light.*

We need to wake up, because to indulge in this spiritual lethargy is what brings us back here, life after life. Through meditation, as taught by a living Master, we can wake up from the dream-like existence that characterizes lower planes of consciousness.

We do need the physical body, however, because it is a key to obtaining God-realization. Even gods and other spiritual beings envy humans, because it is only while in the human form that we can get initiated by a perfect Master and learn from him how to meditate and allow our souls to return to our original home. Meditation is the only way that we can ever realize the hidden potential of our divine spirit. It is only during meditation that we can get to experience our real selves.

We often hear that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, but we do not really appreciate what that means. We could say that we are physical bodies and technically we would be right. But after realizing that we are much more than just the physical body, we would immediately see how much more there is to us. Isn't it about time that we started listening to the Masters – the spiritual experts – when they tell us that we have an astral, causal and spiritual body as well? Isn't it about time that we started paying more attention to our real selves – that hidden, unexplored greater part of us that is eternal?



# The Power of Attitude

Why is attitude so important? Why does it even matter? As long as we ultimately do or say the right thing, who cares what the attitude is? The answer is, God does.

Suppose you tell your son or daughter to empty the dishwasher. They grumble and complain, and slam cabinets and rattle dishes. Their brow is furrowed and they're mumbling under their breath the whole time. When they're done, they storm past you and say: "There... the stupid dishwasher is empty!" Is your response to thank them for a job well done? Or is your reaction more likely to warn them to change their attitude?

Now we see more clearly why attitude is important. And it is for God, too. In fact, it is more important to God than it is to us. Our attitude is much deeper than just a few thoughts we might think or not think. Our attitude comes out of the core of our being. It represents our disposition, our outlook, our very character. What is within will come to the fore, as our attitude always manifests itself in actions or reactions. We don't have a bad attitude just because we had a bad day. The reason is simply that we have a bad attitude.

We all have attitudes – sometimes good, sometimes not so good, and other times just plain nasty. Nine times out of ten, when we begin to feel that things in life are just too difficult, the problem is not with the world or with others, but with ourselves. The problem is that our attitude has become negative. If we change our negative attitudes to positive ones, then we can change our world.

It's an interesting fact that when asked the reason for their success many wealthy business-men put it down to their attitude. The inventor Thomas Jefferson said:

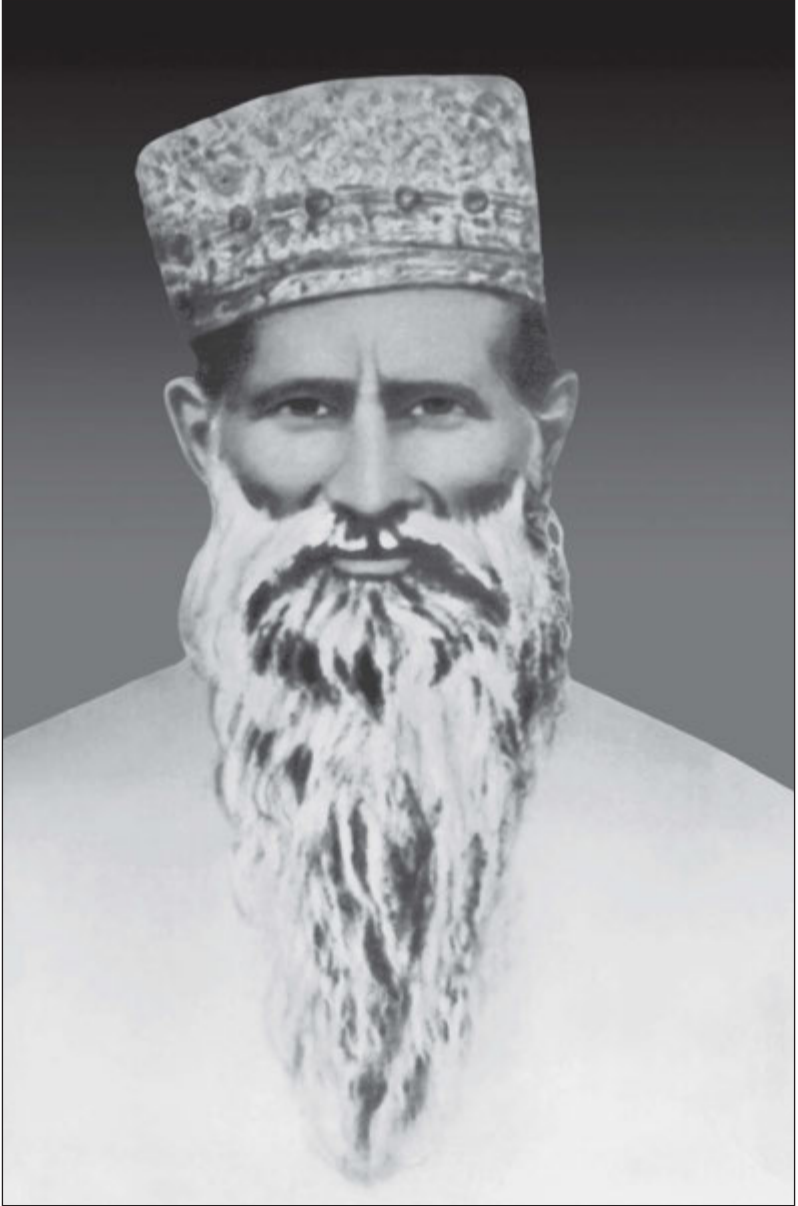
*Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.*

If we want to live a happier, healthier life then we need to develop and maintain a positive attitude. People who have a positive attitude are significantly less likely to show signs of aging, they are less likely to become frail and are more likely to be stronger and healthier than those who have a negative attitude. If we have a doom and gloom attitude at the very least our negative attitude is making us weaker.

The Master always tells us to be positive. So what impact does our attitude have on our spiritual lives? For one thing, our attitude to meditation is a determining factor in the way our meditation will unfold. When we sit in meditation we are training ourselves to operate from a perspective of accepting, letting go and being free. It is an attitude of obedience to a power we have accepted as greater than 'me'. It would be detrimental for us to bring yesterday's perceived meditation failures into today's meditation. Our attitude in meditation should be to present ourselves to the inner Master, naked of purpose and agendas, with no expectations of results or inner visions. We should put aside all worries and desires, and release all preconceptions.

With single-minded and gentle attention to simran or to the Sound we are to become receptive to the way of the Shabd. In time the patience, devotion, acceptance and surrender that we acquire in meditation will be transferred to our daily life. Attitude is the point of view we apply to life.

For a disciple the challenge is to cultivate an attitude of mind wherein we attend to all things of the world with a light heart, as a



*Soami Ji Maharaj*

matter of duty, and no more. Met with a positive attitude, this world can become a source of joy, inspiring us to see the divine will in everything and to worship the Lord through his creation. A positive attitude gives us the ability to accept our condition and the inspiration to renew our commitment to meditation. With the right attitude we look for the positive in everything and learn to identify ourselves with the Shabd that is in us, and is in all life forms. But most importantly, when doing meditation we keep focused on the effort. Then whatever happens, we remain in balance and unaffected by the storms that are an inescapable part of the experience of being human.

Meditation helps our attitude by giving us the perspective to see the big dramas of life as small or insignificant, rather than as gigantic unsolvable problems. It transfigures us – it is a gradual change on the inside that produces a total transformation on the outside – so that we become what God always intended us to be.

When the sculptor Michaelangelo was questioned about how he made the statue of David – one of the greatest works of art ever produced, he said:

*In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.*

Now let's apply this to the spiritual life. All of us are works-in-progress. We're not finished, not glorified, not perfected, not completed. We're all under construction. While the hammering and sawing continue, it's hard to imagine what the final result will be. But if we are steadfast in our meditation, God never stops working on us and our attitudes. He chips away at our attitudes and transforms

the blocks of marble that we are into the beautiful creations he has always envisioned.

One of the bad attitudes that we human beings are slaves to is an attitude of entitlement and expectation. On an external level we expect the Master to create circumstances where we can have his darshan, we expect to get as close to him as we possibly can, we expect his drishti, we expect his love, we expect his grace. When we go to the Dera we expect comfortable accommodation, we expect to be seated in front, we expect the sevadars to treat us with respect and love, we expect question and answer sessions with the Master, we expect the Master not to miss a day of satsang when we are there. Then on an internal level, as soon as we are initiated, we expect to hear the sound and see the light and have all the experiences that the books talk about – perhaps even on the first day we sit for meditation! We do not have an attitude of gratitude, we only have an attitude of entitlement.

Then along comes our Master, and he turns this base metal of no value into gold. Shabd is the most precious thing the Master has to give away and he reserves it for his devotees. If he gave one drop of this Shabd to Kal, all our accounts would be paid for. Yet we, his devotees, believe that we are entitled to his grace, we are entitled to his love and we don't even have to put in the two and a half hours of effort that he asks of us. We forget about the huge load that he has forgiven and is not even asking us to account for. We don't deserve any of this. An attitude of gratitude for what the Master does for us will only begin when the sense of entitlement ends.

In *The Science of the Soul* Maharaj Jagat Singh Ji explains how changing our attitude to life and adjusting to situations will bring us closer to happiness. It will make us better able to deal with the paradoxes of life – those difficult ups and downs we encounter:



*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.*

All the Masters talk about adjusting our attitudes to accept happily everything that the Lord sends our way and to accept it as his will.

A change in attitude is not enough unless it's backed up by effort. What we are trying to accomplish on the path of Sant Mat is not easy. It requires a lot of effort. Controlling the mind and senses is the most difficult thing on earth to achieve. But we can make it less complicated, or very difficult – it depends on us. It is less complicated if we adapt the rest of our activities to it, if we make it our life's work. But if we try somehow to squeeze Sant Mat into a lifestyle that's not compatible with it, we run into trouble. Then we become frustrated and discouraged. It is hard work, but we should never see ourselves as failures and give up, rather we should pray to the Master to help us in adopting a positive attitude, so that we can go through our karmas and our destiny with love, humility and acceptance.



*How can I say enough about the generosity of saints?  
They are the ones who keep me ever vigilant.  
How can I repay them for the blessings they bestow?  
Even the offering of my life is not enough.  
Their every utterance is made to help us;  
They spare no pains to make us understand.  
As the mother cow fondly cherishes her calf,  
So do the saints forever protect me, says Tuka,*

*Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion*

# My Law

The following is a poem attributed to the 18th century Maori poet Tieme Ranapiri from New Zealand. It was translated into English by Kere Graham.

*The sun may be clouded, but ever the sun  
Will sweep on its course till the cycle is run.  
And when into chaos the system is hurled,  
Again shall the Builder rebuild a new world.*

*Your path may be clouded, uncertain your goal;  
Move on, for your orbit is fixed to your soul.  
And although it may lead you through darkness of night,  
The torch of the Builder shall give it new light.*

*You were, you will be, know this while you are,  
Your spirit has travelled both long and afar.  
It rose from the source, to the source it returns.  
The spark which was lighted eternally burns.*

*It slept in a jewel, it leapt in a wave,  
It roamed in the forest, it rose from the grave.  
It took on strange garbs for long eons of years,  
And now in the soul of yourself it appears.*

*From body to body your spirit speeds on.  
It seeks a new form when the old one is gone.  
And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought  
On the loom of the mind from the fibre of thought.*

*As dew is drawn upwards in rain to descend,  
Your thoughts drift away and in destiny blend.  
You cannot escape them for, petty or great  
Or evil or noble, they fashion your fate.*

*Somewhere on this planet, somewhere or somehow,  
Your life is reflecting your thoughts of your NOW!  
My law is unerring, no blood an atone,  
The structure you built you will live in alone.*

*From cycle to cycle, through time and through space,  
Your lives with your longings will ever keep pace.  
And all that you ask and all you desire  
Must come at your bidding, as flame out of fire.*

*Once list' to that voice and all tumult is done,  
Your life is the life of the infinite One.  
In the hurrying race you are conscious of pause,  
With love of the purpose and love for the cause.*

*You are your own devil, you are your own God,  
You fashioned the paths that your footsteps have trod,  
And nothing will save you from error or sin  
Until you have harked to the spirit within.*



# Looking for God

Most of us would agree that a Creator does exist, because common sense tells us that the magnificent creation that we see around us – the vast universe with all its stars and galaxies, our own world with its myriad life forms – could not have just happened by itself. There must have been a power, a force, an energy, which brought about this creation.

Just think: If you look at a beautiful painting, you know that there must have been a gifted artist who painted it. Likewise, if one looks at the magnificent creation – so orderly, so perfectly balanced and so majestic in its scope – it makes sense that someone must have created it. It could not have come into being just as some random occurrence.

We cannot help being aware that this master designer of the creation, this master craftsman, possesses an incredible intelligence – far beyond anything we can conceive of. If we look around us there are innumerable miracles in operation. There is a perfect, logical and rational sequence and design throughout the creation.

We see the splendour of flowers that bloom in their seasons, the symmetry of the snowflake – each one different from its neighbour. We ask how a tiny seed can develop into a giant tree. How do birds navigate across vast oceans to a remote island to nest? How are the planets kept in their orbits? There are countless miracles around us that testify to this great intelligence. We just have to open our eyes and look. You cannot fail to be amazed at the wonder of it all. But for us, the greatest miracle of all must be the human body. And here we are referring not only to the physical nature of the body.

In *Sarmad, Martyr to Love Divine*, the author Isaac Ezekiel has this to say:

*The human body is a miracle of divine creation. It is such that through it one can find the entire creation and the vast spiritual regions. The higher the region, the vaster its size, the greater its splendour, the more joyous its bliss. ... A disciple can ... while still in this body, find the truth regarding past prophets and saints, gods and goddesses, paradises, hells and heavens for himself.*

So within this body are the faculties to consciously transport the soul to higher realms of existence, to unfold the divine mysteries, and to experience the Creator himself. It is all here in this vessel of clay.

Our potential, while in this human body, is enormous. But here we also have the cause of our unconscious state. And this is how we have come to see ourselves: only as this body – this body in this particular incarnation has become our “I”, the identity that we think we are. The word “I” embodies the biggest stumbling block in our way to self-realization and God-realization. But in reality when we use the word “I” we are referring to something that doesn’t really exist.

We identify with the body. When we say something is “mine”, we invest in that something a sense of “I”. We also add other things to the “I”: nationality, race, religion, profession. And we add to this identity roles that we play: mother, father, husband or wife. We add the filters that we see the world through: our likes and dislikes, our thoughts, emotions, our prejudices, our possessions, wealth and status. So we have created this artificial structure of who we think we are. But when we die the bubble of the “I” bursts. The ego implodes. Then we realize we identified with an illusion. And because of this we never found out who we really are.

While we remain ego-obsessed we never look at the bigger picture and take into account that we have been around a very long time. We

tend to forget that this lifetime is merely a few lines in the book of our existence. It doesn't even constitute a page. Our time here is a nano second compared to the length of time we have been in this creation. The mystics tell us that we have been here since the creation started. We have been through all the species: plant, animal, bird; we have been kings, beggars, killers; we have been male and female. And the sad news is that all this time we were oblivious of our true essence, our true nature. All this time we have been asleep.

When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he was asked: "Who are you? Are you a god, a prophet, a sage?" Buddha's reply was simple: "I am one who has awakened." By that he meant that he had awakened to his true identity. He had reached that level of consciousness where he saw that his real essence was not the body, the mind, the senses, the intellect, but soul.

And this is the message that the saints have tried to convey to mankind since the dawn of time: We are living in a state of unconsciousness, entirely dominated by ignorance. The mystics tell us we are unaware of our true nature. And therefore, by ourselves, we are not only incapable of knowing our true nature; we are incapable of seeking and finding God.

In the Bible's Gospel of Matthew we read that the first of the great commandments is: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

But there are so many conflicting opinions about the nature of God that we don't know who or what to believe. We hear of this vague, abstract entity, this theoretical, conceptual being that we are supposed to love. How do we get to know this being or have a relationship or communion with this entity? How can we love God?

There is only one way. We need to come into contact with him in a form like our own. We need to find, or be found by, a living Master – who is one with that Creator whom we are seeking. We can only love

someone at our level, because we are still in the domain of the senses. We are still operating with the lower mind. The Master represents God on earth. He is his emissary, his viceroy. He has merged his consciousness with that of the Lord. He has been authorized by God to help those who are seeking the Creator.

In practical terms, why do we need a Master? Because following a spiritual path is the most challenging, demanding task we will ever undertake. It will take us into higher worlds that are vast and where we could easily lose our way. Even on this physical realm we may have difficulty coping. Perhaps we have trouble even finding our car in the parking lot after doing our shopping at the supermarket! How can we possibly travel on the higher planes without a guide? Or even live our lives well, while here in the world?

When we come to a Master he helps us to wake up. He teaches us about our true nature. He teaches us that we are more than just these bodies. We are souls – lost for long ages in the creation and yearning to find our way back to our Creator. Our Master shows us how to meditate and how to live in order to grow the small seed of consciousness inside us and, most important of all, to become fit to contact the great stream of consciousness which is God – who sustains the entire creation through his life force, which is called the sound current or Shabd.

Consider for a moment what is keeping us alive. A doctor or physician will give some medical explanation. He will say it is your heart, your central nervous system, food or oxygen. Yes, admittedly these are all necessary, but what is keeping this body alive is the sound current, that God-part of us, the soul. This is the life force that quickens us. It is our spiritual dynamo, our divine battery. Disconnect this life force and the body dies.

We are always connected to this life force. But at the time of initiation the Master energizes this connection. He injects a new

charge into it so that we can begin our spiritual journey. And this is our means of conveyance out of here, transporting the soul through the higher spiritual realms. This is what brought us here and this is the conveyance which, with the vital assistance of the Master, will get us out of here.

The Shabd can be compared to the current of a powerful river. If you float on a river, the current will pull you along. Similarly, when our connection with the sound current is recharged, this stream of consciousness will propel us through the different levels of consciousness. It will eventually carry us back to our source, our original home. When we finally attain the level of super-consciousness we are eligible to merge back into the source. Then union takes place. Then our search is over and we find God – and we become one with God.



*To lose your own identity, that is the characteristic of love. ...  
Love makes us want to become like another one. In love there is  
submission, there is merging. So that is why they say that love is  
God and God is love.*

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



# A Real Saint

*A real saint is one who befriends  
Those tormented by sorrow and suffering,  
And he is the one in whom the Lord lives.  
A saint's heart is like butter, soft inside and out.  
He holds close to his heart those with no other support  
And is as merciful and kind to his servants  
As to his own children.  
How can I adequately describe such a One,  
Who is the very image of the Lord himself, says Tuka.*

*Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion*

## INFORMATION ON ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

If you wish to submit an article for publication to *Spiritual Link*, please mail a printed, typed version by post to one of the following addresses. *Emailed submissions will not be accepted.*

Science of the Soul Study Center  
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Billion Centre, 1 Wang Kwong Road  
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- Articles should focus on the Sant Mat teachings and may also draw on the universal teachings of other mystics.
- Articles should not be based on, or discuss, the personality of the Master or the writer.
- Articles must be your own original work. If quotations from other sources are included, complete source references must be given.
- Articles should be between 500 and 1500 words in length.

If accepted, your article will be edited according to the requirements of the magazine. You will be contacted only if your submission is accepted. Please include your name, age, postal address, and email address with your article.

## Book Review



### Letters from the Desert: Barsanuphius and John

TRANSLATED BY JOHN CHRYSOAVGIS

PUBLISHER: CRESTWOOD, NY: ST. VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS.

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Barsanuphius and John were Christian monks who lived in the southern region of Palestine in the early sixth century. Though these two spiritual elders lived as recluses, both monks and laypersons were drawn to their presence, and eventually the community that formed around them included two guest houses, a hospital, a large church, as well as the cells for the monks. Barsanuphius and John, known affectionately as the “Two Old Men,” communicated with their followers through letters carried back and forth by an appointed monk. Letters from the Desert is a compilation of these letters.

The letters reflect the intimate encounter between master and disciple, and reveal the course of spiritual development as it is – with ups and downs, doubts, frustrations, and struggles. The reader observes the spiritual life in all of its stages as it unfolds slowly and sometimes erratically in the lives of seekers. Barsanuphius and John consistently insisted that each individual assume responsibility for his or her actions. They understood that people differ from one another, and also that an individual's inner and outer circumstances vary at various points in the spiritual life. Rather than lay down rigid rules, they advocated applying spiritual principles with balance and discretion. They inculcated a conscience that is more intuitive than analytical.

But above all, they pointed to “inner work,” to the central importance of prayer, continual vigilance, and heavenly joy. Responding to a monk who felt that he was not living a disciplined enough life, Barsanuphius replied:

*Inner work with labour of heart brings purity, and purity brings true quiet of heart, and such quiet brings humility, and humility renders a person the dwelling place of God... Then, that person is found to be a temple of God, sanctified, illumined, purified, graceful, filled with every fragrance, goodness and gladness; and that person is found to*

*be a God-bearer, or rather is even found to be a god, according to the one who said: 'I have said, that you are gods, and all children of the Most High' (Psalms 81:6 and John 10:34).*

One monk asked Barsanuphius how a person can become worthy of the pure spiritual life. He responded:

*Beloved brother in the Lord, God has given us to walk easily in the way of his will, which leads to eternal life. Let me tell you what this is and how we are able to achieve this in order thus to acquire all of the eternal goods. Since our Lord Jesus Christ has said: 'Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened for you' (Matthew 7:7), then pray to this good God in order that he might send his Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to us. When this comes, it shall teach us about everything and reveal all of the mysteries to us. Seek to be guided by this Spirit. It will not allow deceit or distraction in the heart. It will not permit despondency or melancholy in the mind. It illumines the eyes, supports the heart, and uplifts the intellect. Cleave to this, trust it, and love it. For it renders the foolish wise and bestows, teaches and grants strength and modesty, joy and righteousness, long-suffering and meekness, love and peace. Therefore, you possess a sure rock.*

A monk asked of John: "Which is the way to salvation? Is it through labour, or through humility?" John replied, "True labour, brother, does not come without humility." He went on to explain the importance of humility in the spiritual life. "And if someone wants to possess genuine humility, that person should not reckon himself as being anything; for this is true humility." At the end of the letter, John circled back to the original question about labour and said, "Brother, unless your heart labours in everything in search for the Lord, you cannot progress. If you spend time on these matters, you will arrive at them. For it is said, 'Be still' (Psalms 45:11)."

When another monk wrote that he could do nothing on his own and begged for help and strength from Barsanuphius in order to carry out his duties, the reply he received was:

*Do not become despondent. When you fall, arise; when you err, blame yourself until the Lord shows you the mercy you desire. Simply do not be neglectful. Take courage in the fact that the Lord who established you in this work will also direct it... The one who assigned you to this charge is the same one who said to his disciples: 'Behold, I am sending you out' (Matthew 10:16); and again: 'Behold, I am with you' (Matthew 28:20)... You only need to pay attention to yourself as much as you can, and God will come to your assistance. Fare well in the Lord, taking strength with him.*

Some of the letters are written to laypersons, people who were living a householder's life. These visitors had journeyed from near and far to receive guidance from the Two Old Men. One asked: "How is it possible to give thanks to God worthily?" Noting how ordinary humans proclaim their gratitude to others even for small favours, Barsanuphius replied:

*How much more so, then, should we give thanks, who receive benefits from God in every way! With what words can we thank him, who before all else created us, then offered us assistance against our enemies by giving us prudence of heart, health of body, light in our eyes, breath of life, and, above all, a place of repentance and the possibility to receive his Body and Blood for forgiveness of sins and the establishment of our heart.*

Visitors asked many practical questions about dealing with distracting thoughts, whether to believe in dreams, struggles with meditation and prayer, dealing with difficult people, when to speak and when to be silent, temptation, illness, and healing. Each question was answered with advice grounded in experience as well as with references to the scriptures. When asked about negative thoughts, Barsanuphius replied, "When the thoughts enter our intellect, it is like seed being sown, and this is not to our condemnation. However, when we consent to these thoughts, that is when we are handling them badly, and this is certainly to our condemnation." When Barsanuphius was asked for mercy, he answered, "If you truly want to be saved listen to my words and put them into practice. Raise your feet

from the ground (arise from your slothfulness) and lift your intellect up toward heaven; and let your meditation stay there day and night.” A man who was ill confided some of his secret faults to Barsanuphius, and the reply he received was:

*If you truly believe that it is actually God who has brought you to this place, then entrust him with your cares and cast on him all your concerns; and he will dispose your affairs as he wills... The person who gives oneself to God must do so unto death and with one's whole heart. God knows, far more than we do, what is good for our soul and body. And to the degree that he allows you to be afflicted in the body, he accordingly lightens the burden of your sins. God, then, demands nothing from you but thanksgiving and patience and prayer for the forgiveness of sins.*

A layman who was a professor of secular wisdom asked whether he should accept a promotion. Barsanuphius seemingly sidestepped the question, advising him not to feel arrogant. When the man asked him about it again, the answer came back, “God has always chosen the humble. Have humility, and God will assist you quickly.”

Throughout the letters, the Two Old Men remain positive, identifying with the sorrows of those who wrote to them but always lifting up their spirits.

*Be vigilant, awaken from the stupor of your heavy sleep, rise up with Peter and the rest of the apostles to cry out to the Saviour of all, Christ, and with a loud voice: ‘Master, save us, for we are drowning’ (Luke 8:24). And he will surely come to you as well, rebuking the winds and the sea, calming the storm that surrounds your boat, namely the winter of your soul.*



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