

# Spiritual Link



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# Good News and Difficult Truths

We often fail to realize how deeply we are ensnared in this world. Our actions reflect this as we run harder and faster after wealth, fame, relationships, and possessions. We become obsessed with the people, places, and things of this world. Yet in the end we have nothing.

Sometimes we are confronted with the undeniable and difficult truth that we do not belong here. When we are given an inkling of the truth that the world is not our true home, we feel restless and adrift. We begin to ask: Where is our true home, and how do we get from the world, with all its attractions, to that quiet inner peace where the Lord awaits us? Where do we find directions for going home? Is there a road map we can use? We may try different ways to go beyond this world in our search, only to find that we can't seem to get there on our own. We need help. If we are fortunate, we meet a living Master who can provide the grace and the means to begin this journey home.

The Masters give us the tools to take this journey with instructions at our initiation for how to meditate. They tell us that it is important that we devote sincere effort to meditation. Maharaj Jagat Singh says in *The Science of the Soul*: "On this path, it is most essential to toil hard. Unless one puts in all the effort and labour that lies in one's power, and pushes hard, the door will not open." We often assume that progress will be forthcoming as a result of our efforts. Perhaps we believe that we will be able to easily sit still, concentrate, and keep our attention at the eye centre and that before too long, we'll see and talk to the inner Master.

This hope for quick and easy progress is an intoxicating idea. Who doesn't like quick results? But typically the journey home to the Lord is slow and steady as we finish off our karmas of many lifetimes.

So now we are grappling not only with the truth that we don't belong in this world but that it will also likely take us some time to complete the journey home. However, the good news is that we are on the right road heading in the right direction with the right guide. Few are given this rare opportunity of a human birth and the blessing of meeting a Master who is able to guide them home.

After receiving this blessing, what's next? The Master tells us to turn our attention inward, to put in an effort to quiet the mind. So not only does he tell us the truth, he gives us operating instructions for the journey. The key to starting and sustaining this journey is meditation and moulding our lives to support this effort. As we make use of the treasure of meditation, we are also given one more inconvenient truth. We hate to admit it, but our effort, our progress, and everything else in our lives are not under our control. Yet our effort is all we can offer – it is a plea for his forgiveness.

How do we deal with these difficult truths? We don't belong here. The journey home requires great effort and time, and we control nothing. These truths are both harsh and uplifting. Alone we would never be able to go home, but with the Master anything is possible. The bottom line is that the Master tells us to get down to business if we are seriously committed to going home. The Master's instructions are simple and straightforward. We just need to follow them. In *Spiritual Gems* we are told:

*I took instructions from my own Guru and he gave me the exact method. That method ... is simply the concentrated attention held firmly at the given centre.... It is all a matter of unwavering*

*attention.... If one strays away for a time, one has lost the advantage.... If any earnest student should hold his attention fully upon the given centre for three hours, without wavering, he must go inside.... Before that, the mind ... jumps around like a monkey. But after a time it will give in and settle down. It is a matter of will to hold the centre, also not to forget nor allow the attention to go off after some other thought or experiences.... The whole thing is just attention.*

In following the Master's instructions we need to let go and live in the will of the Lord. This is contrary to the ways of the world where we are taught to try and influence the outcome in our favour. Then we are disappointed when events are not to our liking. In our ignorance and limited view of the world we seldom know what is good for us. We cannot see behind the veil of illusion of this world. Many times what we wish for is the opposite of what would be in our best interest. Luckily for us, the Master is pulling the strings to direct our lives so that we can finish our karma and keep travelling on the journey home.

We need not worry. The Master is with us every second of our lives. The good news is the promise the Master makes at the time of initiation. It is all done; he has initiated us to Sach Khand. We are destined to return home to the Lord. All we must do is our meditation practice. All we must do is try, again and again. Baba Jaimal Singh in *Spiritual Letters* says:

*Whatever is to be done has already been done, and that is what will happen – man does not do anything by himself.... Man does nothing – only the means for doing appears to come through him.... Whatever is to happen has already happened.*

We may have meditated for decades and feel we have not achieved anything. The Master suggests that what counts is not the perfection of our work (meditation) but the grace and forgiveness of the Master.

We should focus not on what we have done, but on what he has done for us. We are told that the Master's grace is overflowing. His gift is that he never leaves us. Thomas Merton, as quoted in *Cries from the Heart*, says, "Whether you understand it or not, God loves you, is present in you, lives in you, dwells in you, calls you, saves you, and offers you understanding and light which are like nothing you ever read in books or heard in sermons."



*God-realization is the main purpose of human life and we should take full advantage of it. Please do not worry if you do not seem to be making as much progress as you desire. No effort on our part goes unrewarded. Every moment that we put in on the Lord's way is credited to our account. Our personal effort is most essential for spiritual progress, though also a great deal depends upon our past karmas and the tendencies and inclinations created by them.... Then again, love, faith, and devotion play a great part in making spiritual progress, though effort takes first place.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

# Our Lost Soul

*Soul, who are you?*

*Where have you come from?*

*The mind has created worldly entanglements –  
why have you strayed into this net?*

*You are a child of Sat Purush, the true Lord,  
and once you were a resident of the eternal home.*

*But Kal has put his noose around your neck.*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*

Our soul has strayed into the net of worldly entanglements. You could say it has become lost. What is a lost soul? Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*I think we are all lost souls. By lost souls, I mean the souls who have forgotten the Lord. From what I understand, probably the lost soul means that soul which has forgotten its origin. We have just given ourselves to the world, have forgotten our real home, have forgotten our own real Father. We are all lost souls and we are all struggling souls.*

Once we acknowledge this struggle, it becomes our responsibility, our mission, our purpose to return our lost soul to its origin. We have to release it from Kal's noose and this world of illusion.

Even while our lost soul wanders, we are under the protection of the Lord. The Masters have told us that even without our asking, the Lord knows what to give us. He is not waiting for us to ask him

to give to us. He knows what we need, whether we ask him or not. The Lord provides us with the company of the Master to support our longing for God, to encourage us to bring our lost soul home to him, to prod us to satisfy our longing through meditation, through being obedient disciples, through growing tolerance and compassion for ourselves and others.

Many of our difficulties on the path come from incorrect expectations and attitudes. One misconception we have is that pain and suffering are bad and that being initiated and having a Master will protect us from suffering. Ultimately meditation does help us to rise above suffering, but in the meantime we need to understand that suffering has a purpose. If there were no suffering and pain in this world, none of us would ever turn to God for peace and solace.

In *Divine Light*, Maharaj Charan Singh wrote:

*All pleasure, pain, poverty, and disease are parts of our life due to our past actions. Disease, poverty, and pain are for our own good. They turn our face to the Lord and create humility, meekness, and devotion in us. They are essential parts of the economy of creation and are as necessary as health, wealth, and pleasure.*

So our entire experience is the soil in which our love for the Lord can grow. Everything that grows needs both sunshine and rain. Understanding this can help us better accept the ups and downs of life as we travel the path. We then can accept that everything the Lord gives us is grace.

Simran and bhajan are the goal and objective of our life. That's what will evoke the Lord's grace. We are encouraged to live in the will of the Lord – that is, accepting our circumstances and doing our



meditation. In doing so, we feel the presence and grace of the Master. In fact, our only objective should be to obtain his pleasure. If we have that, we have everything. Without the pleasure of the Master, we have nothing.

The Masters tell us that only by following a true Master, alive at the same time that we are alive – a God-realized soul – and meditating according to his instructions and following the lifestyle that he prescribes, can we wake up from this dream and experience the world and ourselves as we truly are.

Because we have forgotten our true home, saints somehow have to convince us of the inner reality and encourage us to persevere in our efforts to pursue it. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I: “The Lord himself gives his devotion within us. He gives his own concept. He himself is within us. I do not think we can explain that with words, but intuitively we know it is the Lord.”

He explains that we have come from him and we are trying hard to merge back with him, which is the natural inclination of the soul to go back to its source. That natural inclination compels us to seek him, to work our way toward him, toward the reality. Hazur continues: “He himself implants in us his devotion or his yearning or his longing for himself.”

Unless we actually practise these teachings, all these words we throw around – God, reality, soul, union with the Lord – they remain concepts. The saints often say how impossible it is for someone who is mute to describe the sweetness of molasses. When we meditate, we will be able to experience the reality of the teachings but this experience is beyond description.

We hear and read about the Shabd, which, we are told, manifests as sound and light. But this sound and light may not be what we think it is. In a very interesting passage, Hazur talks about what

happens in meditation, after someone asks him how to keep negative impressions from coming into the mind during that time. He says that if we try to eliminate the pressure of the world by negative means, for example, by trying not to think certain thoughts – we won't succeed. He says when we try to create better impressions in our mind, that pushes out the negative impressions. He says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, that the mind must form impressions; it must think about something; it can never remain still. But:

*If you create the impression of light and sound within – in the mind – the other impressions automatically fade out.... Your object should be to create in the mind the positive impressions of Shabd and light within.*

Hazur beautifully explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, that “the purpose of meditation is to prepare us to accept what the Lord gives, to prepare us not to expect. In prayer we always expect, but in meditation we always accept.”

We need to keep a positive attitude, because if we get discouraged in our meditation, there is a danger we will give it up all together. St. Francis de Sales, a 16th century French priest, wrote that for meditation, “what we need is a cup of understanding, a barrel of love, and an ocean of patience.”

So all we need to do is bring our attention back to the focus over and over, with an ocean of patience for the process. Though the process is very slow and can be very frustrating, we can take joy in knowing that this is all our Master wants from us; that in this simple process we are pleasing him and fulfilling our purpose – bringing our lost souls home to their Father.



# Purpose

*The Lord has granted us the human form so that we may do our real work. Our real work is to labour to return to our true home. This is true devotion to the Lord. This world is like an immense dream. Actually, it has no permanent reality, substance or existence.... Even our body is fragile and short-lived.... Neither the body nor anything else will accompany us when we leave this world. The saints therefore say with great emphasis that we should not fail to make the best use of this wonderful opportunity of having a human body. Family and children, eating and drinking, we have had in all our lives. The one thing that we did not have the opportunity of doing was to practise devotion to the Lord. This, indeed, is the sole purpose of human life. This is our true work.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

*Unless the soul merges back into the Lord, we can never have that sense of security or of happiness; we can never get release from birth and death. And as long as we are separated from him, we are in this world, we are very unhappy and miserable. Our lot is despicable.... That is why he is our objective; he is our destination. And this human form, ... is bestowed upon us, is given to us for that very purpose. That is the only duty of the human form because only in the human body can we travel on that path to reach our destination, to achieve our goal.... That is why the human form is known as the top of the creation, the temple of the living God.*

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



## If You Fall in Love with a King

*If you fall in love with a King, he will take possession of your heart, mind and soul.*

*If you should catch a gleam of his love, you will become his subject....*

*If your eyes should rest in his eyes, then for the rest of your life you will be searching every face for his light.*

*If you should fall in love with a King, then he can only wave to you from his palace, and draw you toward his court....*

*No matter how high a station you might have held in your own country, compared to the brilliance of his majesty, you are dressed in ignorance, and surrounded by fools.*

*All your coins must be left behind.*

*You can bring no gifts or talents.*

*Rather such vanities only increase the distance between you and your Beloved.*

*From his balcony, he gathers his beggars.*

*He will give you clear instructions on how to enter his realm.*

*You must wait to become what he knows you have been created to be.*

*You will be sent back to your world, and it may seem like you are living in exile.*

*The separation may appear to be long and hard.*

*Some of your neighbours will think you are mad: they will even deny the existence of such a King.*

*But the King will always be closer to you than you can possibly  
imagine.*

*And you, the King's beggar, will finally offer him the only things  
you can: your helplessness, your need, and your pleas for  
forgiveness.*

*When you fall in love with a King, he will show you how to love  
him.*

*He will, himself, bring you into his palace.*

*He will keep his promises.*

*You will have him as your dearest companion, for all eternity.*

*Original poem by a satsangi*



# Have Patience!

If we don't have patience at the start of our spiritual journey – and no one truly does – we will certainly have it by the end. Patience is perhaps our biggest challenge because patience is related to surrender, something that everyone struggles to attain.

Saints remind us that just as worldly success takes time to manifest, the same is true for spiritual realization. With spirituality, sometimes we think that since God is in charge, progress should happen immediately. But just being initiated doesn't give us the experience of God. We must travel the path and slowly come to realize the truth. Dnyaneshwar says in *Many Voices, One Song*:

*One might make all the intellectual preparation for the realization of God and meet a Guru who imparts the knowledge of the true path, but is one able to attain one's original health as soon as one has taken some medicine? ... To experience a life in union with God is a matter of only gradual attainment. Even though various kinds of dishes may be placed before a hungry man, still he attains satisfaction only by eating morsel after morsel.*

We're like square pegs that are trying to fit into a round hole. This reshaping happens only gradually. We may put in years of effort and still feel that we haven't experienced God. Patience comes from controlling our mind, a process that doesn't happen overnight. In *Many Voices, One Song*, the author comments that "the mind can be brought under control only by unrelenting effort like that which is

required to empty an ocean drop by drop with the help of a blade of grass.”

Longing and impatience created by a seeming lack of visible progress is a common element in the lives of those who follow a spiritual path. It's not just a new disciple who has these feelings. We find this sense of frustration in the writings of many saints who ask in different ways why the Lord doesn't speak to them or come to them. Surely these saints have put in a tremendous amount of effort and time, yet they also feel frustration which produces a powerful sense of longing for a connection with the Divine. Tukaram is quoted in *Many Voices, One Song*:

*O Lord, why don't you speak to me?  
With my life in my throat,  
I'm awaiting your words,  
but you're so indifferent!*

All disciples go through ups and downs and face big and small frustrations as part of following a spiritual path that leads one back to the Lord. Many of us find that this path seems slow. But success is sure because we have the Lord and our Master at our back. Master has taken the responsibility on his shoulders for our safe travel home. Getting accepted for initiation lets us know that we have enough love to travel this path; that we can do it. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*Master's helping hand is always there for our spiritual development. We could never spiritually develop at all without his guidance, whether outside or inside. His helping hand is always there with the disciple, for his spiritual development.*

It's up to us to respond to the trust and love our Master has given us. Success on this path is assured but requires our efforts as well. Definitely we all stumble and fall, but if we see getting back up as part of our job or duty, we'll get through the hard parts more easily and quickly. Our progress depends on our effort and his grace. Hazur tells us in *Quest for Light* that "Sincere effort is always repaid in terms of more pleasure in meditation."

Patience is required in all aspects of life – whether physical or spiritual. We have no other option but to do our best in all sincerity and then to wait patiently at the door for the Lord to let us in. We are being taught patience. Let us never lose heart. We are in his hands. With patience and effort we move forward.

The certainty of our spiritual union with the Lord is beautifully expressed in *The Book of Privy Counseling*, written by the 14th-century English mystic who also wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing*:

*Still, do not lose heart. I promise you he will return and soon. In his own time he will come. Mightily and more wonderfully than ever before he will come to your rescue and relieve your anguish.... With your enthusiasm gone you will think you have lost him, too, but this is not so; it is only that he wishes to teach you patience. For make no mistake about this; God may at times withdraw sweet emotions, joyful enthusiasm, and burning desires but he never withdraws his grace from those he has chosen.... Of this I am certain.*





# Preparing for the Final

Most of us, at some point in our lives, have gone to school and faced final examinations. These exams test us on everything the teacher has covered during the year and determine whether we pass the course or repeat it. Similarly, mystics tell us that every human being faces a sort of “final exam” at the end of life, in the sense that we are called to account for the sum total of our actions during that life. How we have lived our life, how we have prepared for the “final” determines the outcome: either rebirth in a potentially endless chain of reincarnations in human, animal, bird, and plant species, or escape from the cycle of births and deaths and advancement toward our ultimate goal of union with God. Our preparation for the final can result in different degrees of success depending on the methods we adopt. Let’s compare some of the approaches taken in school and in spirituality to prepare for a final exam.

In a school or university, some students take a “wishful thinking” approach to preparing for their final exam. These students enroll in the class but do almost no work and show up for the final without having prepared for it at all. They hope to bluff their way through and pass just by showing up. In a course of spirituality, this approach takes the form of hoping for salvation after death. Maharaj Jagat Singh says in *The Science of the Soul*:

*Reliance on salvation after death is the finest form of self-deception man practises on himself. If there is no salvation while a man is alive, it will not come after death. He who is illiterate*

*when alive cannot be a scholar after death.... So try to get salvation now.*

Another approach involves trying to pass an exam while putting in minimal effort. This type of student buys the textbook but only reads the table of contents and chapter headings. In the university of the spirit, this approach is similar to focusing on the surface aspects of religion. This means looking only to rituals and ceremonies and the social aspects of a religion or philosophy and ignoring the underlying spiritual teachings. Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I and II:

*The saints never bind us to any ritual and ceremony. They are concerned only with the real teachings of spirituality.*

*You have to be one-pointed towards meditation and towards this path, towards the sound or melody within. No ritual is required; no ceremony is required.*

Still another approach is exemplified by the student who does all the reading, but never goes to class. This student has the benefit of the textbook but misses the teacher's influence. In spirituality, this type of person looks only to books and scriptures for the answers to salvation and does not seek the help of a spiritual teacher. Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*You see, we start by reading the books. We try to do it. But there's nobody to guide us when some complication arises, and the book doesn't say anything about that.... For whatever we learn in this world we always need some teacher, someone who has the*

*knowledge of that subject.... And spirituality is the most difficult subject. For this we need a Master, a teacher in spirituality.*

Next there is the “teacher’s pet.” This person bets everything on the teacher’s good graces. This kind of student is always in class but never does any work, yet hopes for the teacher’s favour. In the university of the spirit, some disciples may similarly hope that just being in the Master’s presence will save them, without their having first done the work that he asks of all students on the path. We take this approach when we feel that we don’t need to seriously attend to meditation because our Master is so kind and his grace will save us. But as Maharaj Sawan Singh points out in *Spiritual Gems*, this is not the reality.

*The Master teaches and the disciple learns. The progress of the disciple depends upon how fast he learns the lessons. The efforts of the disciple and the grace of the Master go hand in hand. Effort is rewarded with grace, and grace brings more effort.*

Finally, we have the procrastinator. This student has good intentions, thinks often about the impending examination, but never gets around to doing the reading or studying, believing that “cramming” as much of the material as possible the night before will be enough to pass the exam. Similarly, in the university of the spirit, there are those who never seem to find time for their spiritual obligations. They aim to focus on their spiritual duties in the future. However, they find that one thing or another always claims their time and attention – duties at home, raising children, job responsibilities, health problems, and social activities. Hazur reminds us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*We have certain responsibilities and duties which we must do in this world. At the same time, we should not get so involved ... in the means that we forget the end. The end should always be kept in view, and we should try to achieve that end.*

Perhaps one or more of these approaches may have worked for us at some point. We may even have actually passed an exam despite these flawed techniques. But the same approach cannot work for spiritual realization. In spirituality, we need a different method. Great Master writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

*You are going to study the self and its relation to the grand truth. You are to isolate the self from the mind and matter, and then trace it to the source of all. It is comparatively a difficult subject. Implicit faith in the guide or teacher, and longing, as of a lover when he is out to meet his Beloved, are prerequisites on this path.*

The prerequisites for success in this course of spirituality depend on the student's love for the Master, his longing to meet him, and therefore his motivation to obey the Master and follow his directions. If we sincerely follow the program designed for us by our Master, we can cross the gates of death while still alive and know what lies beyond. Then we will be fully prepared for what will be our last "final." As Great Master writes encouragingly to a disciple in *Spiritual Gems*:

*Now it is due you to reach the highest degree in the university of the spirit. Your face is toward the light. Let nothing hinder or discourage you. You shall drink of the living waters and be thirsty no more.*

Let's look at how the saints would advise us to prepare for the final day of our course in spirituality.

Just as a university student accepts certain rules set by his teacher, the spiritual seeker who requests initiation – or enrollment in the university of the spirit – knows that it requires effort and commitment, and determines to devote at least ten percent of each day to meditation practice as taught by his or her living Master. This meditation is the core of the disciple's work at this spiritual university, for it develops that all-important love for the Master. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II: "The purpose of meditation is to create that love and devotion for the Father within, because the relationship of the soul and the Father is that of love."

Once a disciple is enrolled (initiated) in this university of the spirit, the true Master is always available to help the student. There is an unending and unbreakable bond between the spiritual teacher and the disciple. This is one of the great secrets of the path. Hazur says in *Light on Sant Mat*:

*The Master is always within and ready to help; in fact, he waits every moment for his disciples to turn to him. The more you develop this attitude and at the same time do your worldly duties to the best of your ability, the more will the help be forthcoming.*

The Master provides the disciple with clear instructions on what to focus on and how to prepare for the final exam, the time of death. On the spiritual path, preparation for the final takes a different form from that of a university student. This is a path not of external information, but of inner transformation. The disciple doesn't focus on books and written material but goes to the laboratory of his own body to search for and connect with truth under the guidance of his

living teacher. And in this way, through personal experience, true faith develops, which motivates the disciple to keep going.

The next step of a good student is to take practice tests. This is very important in preparing for a final exam, especially for a difficult course. For a disciple on this path, daily meditation is our practice for the final at the time of our death. Hazur tells us in *Die to Live*:

*Meditation is nothing but a preparation to leave the body. That is the real purpose of meditation. Before you play your part on a stage, you rehearse the part so many times, just to be perfect. Similarly, this meditation is a daily rehearsal to die so that we become perfect at how to die and when to die.*

Daily meditation is a preparation for the moment of death. If the student develops the ability to “die” every day during meditation, then his or her attention at the time of death will certainly be pointed inside towards that divine spirit.

If we sincerely follow this program, designed for us by our true living Master, we can cross the gates of death while we are still alive and know what lies beyond. Then we will be fully prepared for what will be our last final.

Great Master writes to a disciple in *Spiritual Gems*:

*No matter what may be your difficulties and deficiencies, they shall all be overcome, and the divine Shabd whose music never ceases within you shall sooner or later bear you upon its loving waves back to your original home.*



# Practising Joy

Real joy is more than common everyday happiness, which is based merely on satisfaction of the senses or some worldly pleasure or relationship. There is nothing wrong with that kind of happiness. Life's simple pleasures, such as happiness at the birth of a child, satisfaction from a job well done or the purchase of some new gadget or toy brings some happiness. It's all good – until it's not. Then we are off looking for something more to lift our spirits.

Deep down inside, we all know there is something more. That something more is always pulling at our hearts and is always leaving us with a sense of emptiness. Oddly enough, there can be a sweet melancholy in that emptiness because that nagging feeling is designed to remind us that God wants us to come home.

Real joy comes from within. We will experience it when we reach the eye centre. This joy manifests as light and sound. The sound, the Shabd, is the voice of God and it is always calling us, always ringing within us. It is the divine energy that permeates all existence. When we connect with this sound, we will experience true love and absolute joy.

This joy is our destiny, and can be realized with practice. What kind of practice? We know that the Master tells us to practise our meditation. The practice of meditation stands above all else and will lead to real and lasting joy. But we can't spend every moment in meditation. There are places to go, things that must be done. So what practices can we put in place during the rest of the day? What attitudes can we work to develop that will support our meditation?

First, we can practise the way of life prescribed by the Masters to enable us to better succeed on the spiritual path. This means being steadfast in our adherence to the first three vows: keeping a vegetarian diet, abstaining from all addictive and mind-altering substances, and living a moral and honest life. These three commitments help prepare us for the fourth vow – which is a commitment of time and attention to God: two and one-half hours of daily meditation. Meditation is the path to joy. And along that path we can develop habits to support our meditation, because we improve with practice.

Practising joy is an antidote to worry and negativity. Maharaj Jagat Singh tells us in *The Science of the Soul*:

*Life is not worth worrying over too much. It begins in folly and ends in smoke. It has to come to an end one day whether you like it or not. And its middle portion also passes away. The best policy is to laugh its worries away.*

Let's face it, many of us have already reached or passed the middle portion of life. We can certainly testify that everything quickly passes by or fades away. If that is the case, there is not much reason to take life too seriously. Why fret and worry if it is all going to end up in smoke? We should practise being more light-hearted. We must attend to our duties, but we don't have to do it in misery or take life so seriously.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh talks about the relationship between meditation and acceptance:



*Meditation is the solution to all our problems. Instead of putting up your list of demands, put up your meditation.... Events will never change.... happiness lies in adjusting to the events.*

Happiness comes with adjusting to the events of life, accepting what comes our way. Instead of the more typical human tendency to pray with a list of demands, just sit quietly and trust God. Just meditate and try to adjust to life's events as they come, not worrying about what is to come, not fretting over what is already done. This can be done only through meditation.

In *Legacy of Love*, Hazur further explains: "If we live in his will and if we are grateful to him for whatever he has given us, then we feel extremely happy and light."

Acceptance of whatever he has given us lays the foundation for contentment. Acceptance and gratitude help us to be lighter and live in positivity. This positivity will also support our meditation. And likewise the peace we get from regular meditation practice will support our positive outlook in life. They go hand in hand.

The longer we are on the path, the more we begin to see the subtle changes in our attitude and approach to life. Perhaps things just don't get to us the way they used to. Or we find we are more easily able to suspend negative judgment of situations and other people. We at least are more aware of the need to work toward these attitudes.

Hazur, in *Quest for Light* says, "A slight change in one's angle of vision makes all the difference." Can we make it our goal to practise making a slight change? How do we do it?

Hazur continues:

*If you keep the simran all the time with you, you will see how it changes your life and your general makeup of the mind. A slight change in one's angle of vision makes all the difference.*

If we practise simran regularly, both in formal meditation and in our day-to-day lives, it will change the direction of our mind and help us let go of negativity. When we repeat those names, we take our minds out of the hubbub of the world and the chaos of our own minds and put it into a place of calm.

Simran throughout the day helps us deal with the world with calmness and grace. It trains our mind to return to the centre and be still. If we can catch moments of stillness throughout the day, it will help us find our focus and remain in the stillness for longer periods in meditation.

It is in stillness that we will find joy. Simran creates love in our hearts and desire to be with the inner Master. It is that which will pull us up to the eye centre. Hazur continues to remind us:

*The eye centre becomes our haven where we can retire for rest and quiet whenever we like. Simran and bhajan with faith and devotion is the method by which this attitude can be attained.*

Simran is the antidote for complaining, worry, and anger, but we have to train the mind to turn to it. In times of trouble and times of peace, we need to make simran our constant companion.

Turning to simran will bring us into the present, into the now, and into our Master's presence. Because he is always with us, we only need to turn our attention to him. Hazur says in *Quest for Light*: "Forget the past. Live and meditate in the present, and do not worry about the future."

Live and meditate in the present. Be here now, do our simran, remember the Master's love. And be grateful.

We are fortunate to have been given a great treasure. Practising meditation will lead to a more relaxed life and to joy. Meditation will, in time, reverse our negative habits; it is the game changer.

Now is our time to practise with as much love, faith, and devotion as we can muster. Step by step, with persistence and perseverance, the unattainable becomes attainable. With practice, we will know the truth. With practice, we will know the love and joy that awaits us within.



*Love does not care for caste or creed;  
Love is the foe of orthodox canon.  
The land of the Beloved is across the river,  
And the waves of avarice have engulfed me.  
The Master is holding the boat.  
Why do you tarry, why this delay?*

*Bulleh Shah*

# Hidden Reality

Every human being is born to have a relationship with the Lord. The Lord is in our lives every minute of every day, but often we become absorbed in the day-to-day demands of our life and do not realize this. We are told that not a leaf moves or a breath taken without his will. But do we really believe that? Have we shifted our thoughts and deeds to be aligned with and experience that relationship with the Lord?

Until that relationship becomes known, Rumi, as quoted in *Mysticism, the Spiritual Path* tells us:

*Our reality is hidden from us.  
Poor man knoweth not himself;  
From greatness doth he come,  
But alas, he hath become small!*

Even though we have come from the greatness of the Lord, we may feel small and inconsequential. Though we may achieve some of our worldly goals and desires, we still often feel restless. We start to wonder about our purpose in life. The question emerges, why am I here? In asking this question we sense that there is a reality that is hidden from us. How do we find that which is hidden?

Do we travel to a far-away place exploring the unknown, or do we look within the recesses of our heart to get in touch with our deepest thoughts and feelings? Essential to the search for spirituality is a guide – a living Master who has made that inner journey back to the Lord. If we find a Master to entrust ourselves to, then we have the

opportunity to appreciate, strengthen, and commit to a relationship with the Lord. To build that special bond, we need to become familiar with God. Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century Christian monk, tells us: “I made it my business to be in the Lord’s presence.” In doing so, the Lord “begets in us a holy freedom and a familiarity with God.”

We need to turn our attention and energy toward that quest – to make it our business and our priority. To achieve that familiarity and closeness with the Lord, we need a living Master to help us realize that hidden treasure within. To awaken spiritually we go through a process of transformation. One of the greatest tools we have to assist us in that transformation is to constantly think of the Lord. The tool we can use to think of him throughout the day is our simran. In thinking of the Lord, we are seeking his grace and we are making a habit of remembrance. Maharaj Charan Singh, quoting the *Adi Granth*, says in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. II:

*When, after coming into contact with a saint, people meditate on the unutterable Love, the Word, the Name, they reach such a high degree of consciousness that “between them and the Lord, now no difference remains.” By worshipping the Lord, they go back and become the Lord.*

However, we often feel unworthy to meet the Lord. We may need to be shaken up and awakened to loosen our worldly attachments. The Master gives us courage to look within, to question, to challenge and to eventually accept and surrender. A great part of our journey is to just surrender and accept his will. To break with the ties of this world, the Master takes us on a journey. Sometimes we may feel like we have no idea where he is taking us. But he is our spiritual travel

companion and guide. So let's feel confident that he knows the entire route, and step on the plane with him. It is the Lord that gives us the power and the desire to turn away from the world and direct our efforts inward. We need the power of Shabd – the sound and light – to realize our soul's connection to the Lord.

Rumi captures this feeling when he tells us:

*My soul is screaming in ecstasy  
Every fiber of my being  
is in love with you...  
My arrow of love  
has arrived at the target  
I am in the house of mercy  
and my heart  
is a place of prayer.*

Rumi, as quoted in *The Love Poems of Rumi*

Through that inner connection of love, our heart becomes a place of prayer. Only the Lord is important and critical to our salvation. With him, we have everything. Without him, we are lost and afraid. We feel empty. Which would we rather feel – the love of the Lord or alone and lost in this universe?

Too often we feel the Lord is separate from us. Yet the Lord is always with us. Saints advise us to let the Lord be the only love of our life. To do this we need to take action. Action translates to meditation and right living. It is not merely thinking about these things and vowing to get to them tomorrow. We don't know if tomorrow will come. The beauty of action is that it slowly begins to create awareness in us of who we really are – soul, with an inborn connection to Shabd. As awareness grows, so does our awakening

and transformation. In practising his presence it becomes natural to us. What a wonderful state to be in – to feel familiar and natural with the Lord.

Living in the world and making effort to achieve a spiritual life is not easy. Many of us struggle. Our mind, our associations, our attachments, they all pull us down. We go through cycles where we may feel devoted and other times when we feel dry. We have to subdue the mind, and the only way to do that is through meditation. Only then will the sting of the world, our attachments, our relationships, our desires be controlled. The mystics admit that this struggle to control the mind is constant. It is not an effort of a year or two but that of a lifetime.

We have been given the greatest gift and promise from the Lord – that he loves us and wants us home again. He does whatever is needed to pull us out of this world. We are not meant to be lost and wandering. He makes us receptive to his love. We are meant to escape, to be free. It is in his hands to reveal that which is hidden.

Every human being is born to have a relationship with the Lord. We need to nurture and build that relationship. We have been sent a living Master who knows the way back to the Lord, and who will lead us there. We need to practise living in his presence. Building that relationship requires effort and dedication. He showers endless grace on us. Once we are initiated our destiny is sealed. Bliss awaits us.



# The Joy of Laughter

Whenever we are in the Master's presence, he injects our jaded spirits with his divine love and reassures us that through Shabd we will ultimately return to our Creator. All that is required of us is to give our effort and time to living a spiritual life and the practice of meditation daily. However, this does not mean that we lock ourselves in a room and break all ties with this world. In fact, we are told by the mystics that we must learn to live a balanced life. In the book *Legacy of Love*, Maharaj Charan Singh reiterates this message:

*We should be serious about following Sant Mat, but that doesn't mean that we should disregard the cheerful side of life altogether. Rather, we should feel more relaxed because we are following the path.*

Let's ask ourselves: Have we forgotten how to be cheerful? Do we take ourselves too seriously? No doubt, life is full of difficulties, but we have to learn to smile and laugh. Joy, humour, and laughter should be at the heart of spiritual life.

“God is a comedian playing to an audience that is too afraid to laugh,” said the French writer Voltaire. If the Lord is the show-runner and he has put up this play, then why are we afraid of walking happily with him? Why are we too caught up in differences and so many worries? If the Lord created human beings in his own image and if he himself is full of joy, then what stops us from laughing?



Rather, let's take the opportunity to lighten up. The choice is in our hands – we can choose to laugh or choose to mourn.

Humour is both God's gift and a life-saving medicine. So, as satsangis why are we afraid to laugh? If the Lord is all-compassionate, surely he has a sense of humour.

Mystics are known for their extraordinary expressions of love for God and souls. The more we learn about their lives, the more we want to be with them and see the lighter side of life from a spiritual perspective. Who wouldn't love a Master who has a keen sense of humour, who is so comfortable about himself that he constantly makes jokes about his life and even his own appearance? The Master's humorous outlook instantly binds us to him. When we see him, we see a reflection of what we could be, of what God wants us to be even in the midst of our accomplishments: simple, humble, aware of our own limitations and, of course, joyful.

The very foundation of his humour is the ability to see things from a spiritual perspective. One such example can be found in Dr. Julian Johnson's book *With a Great Master in India*, where he describes Great Master's keen sense of humour. He writes:

*The next day as we rode along in the jostling old car, the Master told a story of some foolish weavers who had a rickety, noisy old cart. One day when it ceased to make as much noise as usual, they concluded that it must be dead. So, they stopped by the roadside and actually cremated the old cart, throwing the iron parts, as bones, into the river.... In fact, he is always jolly and full of fun. He never fails to see the humorous side of things. He and his closest disciples laugh and joke much and there is seldom a dull moment. All are happy and all have a good time. There is no long face in the crowd.*

Similarly, how many times did Maharaj Charan Singh make us laugh? And what a joy it was to see him laugh. Hazur enjoyed good-natured jokes, and always had a unique way of looking on the bright side of life, no matter what the circumstances. His pictures often show him laughing. In the book *Legacy of Love*, there is a picture taken during Hazur's son's wedding. Looking at him, one can imagine his earth-shaking laughter. The author writes, "His laughter was spontaneous, vibrant, joyful, and infectious. He would catch his lower lip in his teeth as though this were the only way he could stop himself laughing too much. Were he not himself to limit it, one felt his merriment might shake the whole world."

Our present Master is certainly a master of wit. A satsangi brother once said that during one of Master's official visits, everyone laughed so much during the Q&A's that Master said he'd better change the name from Science of the Soul to "The laughing all the way back to God society!"

Regardless of our difficulties in meditation and in life, we should not lose our sense of humour. We can always look to the spiritual Masters as perfect examples. They teach us how to live, behave, and walk on this path. Additionally, we should not fall prey to the tricks of mind, as it always comes up with a list of questions, which later keep howling in our head.

Let us try to imbibe Hazur's perspective on humour by looking at a series of exchanges between Hazur and Diwan Sahib, author of *Call of the Great Master*, as presented in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

Q. Is it true that a truly repentant sinner can't have a sense of humour?

*A. I think a sense of humour is a God-given gift. He may give it to a sinner, or he may give to a pious man – that is for him to decide.*

Q. If the person recognizes that he is full of sin, wouldn't it mean that he couldn't laugh?

*A. If the weight of his guilt is always on his conscience, then of course it may be difficult for him to laugh. But a man who is always happy within is always happy everywhere.*

Q. I sometimes wonder how can we laugh?

*A. Then try to learn how to laugh. You must relax from within. Where there is a weight on your conscience, when something is always weighing on your heart within, you can't laugh, you can't relax. You can only be humorous when you're relaxed within. If you are miserable within yourself, you can't smile and relax and be humorous.*

Q. Is it desirable to be humorous? What does it mean to be humorous? Is it like a joke?

*A. No, I'll tell you. It's not a joke. Everybody wants to be happy in this world. When you have happiness within, you want to share it with others.... And when you are happy within, you can't help radiating happiness and sharing it with others.... You go to a happy person, he will automatically make you happy. He will relax you in two minutes.*

Q: Meditation leads to seriousness.

*A. Seriousness in what way? Doesn't it lead to happiness?*

Q: It is withdrawing the mind from everything that is frivolous, everything that is worldly.

*A. No. I don't agree. If meditation makes you sad and morose and miserable-looking, I don't think that is what meditation means. Meditation should make you absolutely light. Christ said, blessed are the peacemakers. Peacemakers aren't those who go running about trying to create peace between warring countries. They are not peacemakers. Peacemakers are those who have attained peace within themselves and are sharing peace with others. Mystics are the peacemakers. If you have bliss and peace within, then naturally you will radiate peace and bliss wherever you go. Seriousness means that you are not taking life very lightly. You are serious about your destination, your path, your principles – of course you are serious about them.*

So, let us attend to our meditation with a smile on our face. Regardless of our failures or weaknesses, we are still in his company; we are so fortunate to have a Master from whom we can learn how to live a light-hearted spiritual life while living in the world. Therefore, let us reconnect with the humorous side of life and remember to laugh, as this is one way that we can strive to be like our Lord.



# Walking Hand in Hand

We are all looking for security in life – the kind of security that a baby feels when sitting in the lap of its mother. A baby trusts that all its needs will be fulfilled while feeling secure in its mother's lap. There is no desire but to be with its mother. There is no other feeling than all is well. We long for that kind of contentment – for a state of mind where we desire nothing and are contented with everything we have. We find a sense of peace in such an aim. We find peace when we feel secure.

There is an innate desire within us to be loved and to love someone who will reciprocate that love. We feel secure when we have someone whom we think will look out for us – a companion, a friend who is always watching and protecting us, someone who will guide us through our troubles, and someone on whom we can rely. We eventually realize that we can never achieve that kind of security from the world.

We spend our lives trying to find that kind of security in worldly attachments. Sometimes we think that if we have possessions, wealth, beauty or power we will have security and nothing will harm us. We work like mules to have big houses, bigger cars, even bigger businesses or jobs – all of this, so that we can have a sense of security. We try to hold on to our material possessions, relationships, our sense of self-importance, and our illusions. And we worry about losing everything we have obtained. We do all of this to find a sense of peace and security. In the meantime, we lose ourselves and we don't even realize it. It's when we are introduced to the path of the saints that we begin to find true security.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to give the example of a child who goes to a fair holding his father's hand. He finds all the attractions of the fair so fascinating. He wants to have it all – the different-coloured lights, various types of toys, so many types of delicacies. He thinks that he is finding pleasure and happiness from all of the things of the fair. But if he loses the grip of his father's hand, he suffers from the excruciating pain of fear and insecurity. Then all the objects of the fair that were giving him so much pleasure become a source of misery.

Just like that child, we realize that if we have the protection of our Father's company we can enjoy the fair of this world. We can wade through situations that arise – no matter how hard or difficult they may be. All we need to do is to be aware of the presence of the Divine in our lives and to hold on to our Master's hand. Then we become aware of a strange yet familiar force. We come to recognize that we have a companion in whose company we are blissfully secure. He is constantly with us, helping and encouraging us to march on without fear, to conquer whatever is in front of us. When we look to our Father for guidance, we realize that he is always with us and is eager to guide and protect us.

But how do we hold the hand of our Father? Masters encourage us to establish our own relationship with our Father through meditation and living a certain way of life. Cultivating the habit of remembrance of the Divine aids us in feeling secure. We have been given tools at the time of initiation for doing this. Simran throughout the day assists us in holding on to the Divine, helps us to stay in the present moment, and improves our focus and objectivity. Simran helps us to be detached from emotional constraints and to look at situations more objectively. Simran helps us to redirect our mind away from negative thoughts toward positive energy.

To be thankful for every situation and to accept whatever comes our way helps us to keep him in our thoughts. An attitude of gratitude fills us with positive remembrance. A habit of looking up to him in every situation brings back memories of him. Doing the simran that he has given us is a way of sharing every moment with him and makes us appreciate his guiding hand. We will find that the more we reach for his hand by doing simran, the more we feel the presence of the Divine in our lives.

Building reflective moments into our daily routine provides a mental space where we can turn to him and remember him. Instead, we too often hold on to our illusions, like the child who is focused on the dancing lights of the fair but unconscious that he is holding his father's hand. As we go through the fair of the world, our gentle Father is nudging us, reminding us that it is getting dark, and it's time to go home. If we can pause for just a moment to feel that nudge – to feel that pull to go home – we will see how securely our heavenly Father is holding our hand. We will feel his hand safely guiding us through our life. This feeling helps us to go through life cheerfully with equanimity and to face anything and everything. We no longer have a feeling of being on the edge, worrying about what's next. We become like a calm river flowing peacefully through life.

We make a habit of living in the shelter of our Master, with our hand in his, when we follow his advice to devote ourselves to meditation. Then we can spend our lives in peace and happiness, and when we die, we can go with him without a backward glance. Isn't this the purpose of our life?



## Let's Get Going

There is a wonderful story in *Tales of the Mystic East* entitled “How the Bengali Babu Won the War with His Mind.” It reads:

*In the days when Great Master was working in Rawalpindi he came across a kind and devoted Bengali gentleman. One day he asked him the following question: “Have you been able to control your mind? Has it been attached to the sound current inside?” “Yes, but only after a great struggle,” he replied. “How did you do it?” the Master enquired. He said, “When I used to return from the office, I would have a bath and sit in meditation until I had tasted the spiritual bliss within me. I would not even get up to eat. I would tell the servant to leave the dinner for me and go to bed. Sometimes I had to sit till three o'clock in the morning before my restless mind would come around. Only after my mind had withdrawn inside and enjoyed the inner bliss would I get up to eat. Otherwise, I would stay hungry.”*

From this story we are made aware of how our mind will not allow us to do our meditation if we listen to its biddings – but it can be overcome and made to do our bidding if we engage in the struggle. The danger is that we may use the excuse that it is just too challenging and then avoid doing our meditation or attend to it only half-heartedly because we want to get on with our “real” life.

The truth of the matter is that meditation is our real life. Returning to the Lord is the real reason for which we have been blessed with this human form, and thus meditation is our real job.



Everything else in creation, in our life, is simply an illusion and will end one day – perhaps sooner than we think. So what are we waiting for? For days, months, years, decades – indeed for most of our life and previous lives – we’ve made the faulty assumption that we have all the time in the world.

We may have convinced ourselves that we will attend properly to our meditation when we resolve the problems in our lives, the internal issues we struggle with or the obsessions we entertain. But we actually don’t have all the time in the world. Each day our lives are ebbing slowly away. Are we content to let the mind distract us in such a way that we forget why we are here? Are we comfortable with the prospect of having to come back again for another birth or two or three? We would not have been initiated if we couldn’t do our meditation. So let’s drop the excuses, whatever they may be.

The Masters advise us to leave our worries and cares to them and attend to our real work – meditation. If we can do that much, we have the assurance that they will take care of the rest. As Maharaj Sawan Singh advises in *Spiritual Gems*, “Your worries and cares are Master’s worries and cares. Leave them to him to deal with. Having become carefree, your business is to cultivate his love.”

The Master is protecting us every step of the way. Leaving our worries and concerns in his capable hands, we can engage in the struggle with the mind and attend to our meditation, no matter how long it takes. It is a fact that progress on the path is slow. But we must not use this slowness as an excuse not to get going!

In fact, Great Master reminds us in *Spiritual Gems*:

*Stilling the wild mind and withdrawing the attention from the body and concentrating it in the eye focus is a slow affair. A Sufi says, “A life period is required to win and hold the beloved in*

*one's arms." Concentrating the attention in the eye focus is like the crawl of an ant on a wall. It climbs to fall and falls to rise and to climb again. With perseverance it ... does not fall again.*

We can't lose heart just because our meditation challenges us. We need to understand that the battle to fight the mind is ongoing. At initiation we were given the tools – simran and bhajan – to help us engage the mind and ultimately win our way. If we choose simran to focus our mind and brush away the extraneous thoughts we have throughout the day, we begin to win the battle. We will eventually cut at the root of our desires, dilute the downward tendencies of the mind, and win a victory for our soul.

Finally, Soami Ji is quoted in the book *Sultan Bahu*: “With every breath, be vigilant and attentive. Let not a moment pass without simran of the Name.”

It's time to get our priorities in order and show our gratitude to our Master for his priceless gift of simran. Let's not have any more delays, any more excuses, any more putting-off until tomorrow. Let's get going now!



# The True Purpose of Separation

When a visit with the Master comes to a close, whether we are attending the Master's satsangs in Dera, Haynes Park or anywhere across the globe, we feel an inner sadness when he leaves. The realization that we will not be in his presence for much longer consumes us. What we often don't remember in that moment, is that his presence is always shining brilliantly within us and that he wants us to look within and find his Radiant Form. As such, the purpose of being with the physical Master is to kindle the fire of longing within us so that we may transfer the intensity of that longing into our daily practice – the practice of meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, that our physical separation from the Master does serve a purpose, one that helps to create a true taste of intense longing to merge into the Radiant Form of our Master. He says, "The object of the body Master is to fill us with love and devotion for the Father, to put us on the path, to create that deep longing to become one with the Master." The physical form of the Master helps to engender love for the Lord within us, which ultimately transforms into spiritual love. This spiritual love creates longing and devotion, Nam bhakti, that is grown by the practice of our meditation on the path to God-realization.

In many ways it may be beneficial for us to be physically separated from the Master because this separation creates a greater desire and longing to be with him. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Hazur explains, "It is in the interest of the disciple that the Master should leave him." This way, "When he [the disciple] wants to be with

the Master, he has no option but to turn within and find him there.” Physical separation serves to create longing to turn to him within. The idea behind Hazur’s words is that when we want to be with the Master, but don’t have his physical presence, we may automatically turn within in the hopes of seeing his Radiant Form. This intense longing for the physical form, which we are unable to fulfil in a worldly sense, leads us to do our meditation without fail.

This inward turning, by doing our meditation, is a great blessing in that it deepens our already burning desire to know God. Steadfastness in our meditation intensifies our longing to find the inner Radiant Form of the Master. Our desire and devotion create a ‘virtuous circle’ – Master’s love awakens our longing and that longing propels us to meditate to meet the inner form of the Master. As a result of our persistent meditation, Master bestows upon us the most immense grace of keeping the longing for inner darshan alive within us. It is this longing which perpetuates the ‘virtuous circle’ by motivating us to meditate even more fervently in order to experience him within.

As Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “Real darshan is when you see the Radiant Form of the Master, because then you get real faith, then you get real devotion, and then that real love develops.” When we experience inner darshan there is no thought, no desire, no expectation – just love. That love consumes the heart of the lover, leaving in its wake a deep yearning for union with the Lord.

This physical separation between us and the Lord, therefore, serves a very important purpose in driving the magnitude of our longing. A major function of a living Master is to bring about longing and devotion for the Lord within us. In his visits across the world, he does exactly that by creating an atmosphere of unconditional love, support, and kindness. Our mandate is to transfer that devotion into

our daily practice of meditation so we can feel a deep yearning to be with the Lord at all times.



*Listen, O innocent devotees,  
repeat your simran without a break  
and all of your bad deeds will be burnt.*

*If you can serve the guru  
this age of darkness won't harm you  
and you'll come to know liberation.*

*The guru –  
treasure-house of knowledge,  
mountain of courage –  
he will ferry your boat to freedom  
if you practise his simran.  
He is the force of life at the core of creation.*

*Where he is, there is liberation.  
If you practise his simran  
all the gods and goddesses will be yours.  
Glory to my guru – my father and mother –  
who helps me quit this coming and going.  
this living and dying in countless forms.  
Concentrating in the innermost heart,  
Bodhla has come to see his own Being.*

*Mankoji Bodhla, in Many Voices, One Song*



## Book Review

### **Falling into Grace: Insights on the End of Suffering**

BY ADHYASHANTI

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Adhyashanti trained under a Zen master for fourteen years; then, at his teacher's request, he began teaching spiritual seekers. Though his training was in Zen Buddhism, he says, "If you filter my words through any tradition or '-ism,' you will miss altogether what I am saying." His teachings are a spontaneous expression based in his experience. He writes, "The liberating truth is not static; it is alive.... The truth lies beyond all forms of conceptual fundamentalism."

He teaches that "What you are is the beyond – awake and present, here and now already. I am simply helping you to realize that." The most any spiritual teacher can do is to give you some tips and tell you that spiritual realization is possible; the teacher cannot walk the path for you. "To think that you're going to ride on the coattails of some spiritual teacher to enlightenment is a great delusion." He goes further: "One way to evaluate whether a spiritual teaching is a skilful one or not is by seeing if it helps you listen to your own inner wisdom." It is your own inner wisdom that will "tell you if you're getting a little off balance, a little too far left or a little too far right off the path. A true spiritual teaching will never take away anyone's autonomy; it won't require us to give away our good sense." Therefore, "A true teacher will always be trying to give your authority back to you as fast as you can receive it – and without becoming egoically self-centred again."

He says that the purpose of any spiritual path, no matter how it is conceptualized, is to free us from suffering. The root cause of all the suffering and confusion that beset us is the “egoic state of consciousness.” According to Adhyashanti, it is our own stream of thought that generates egoic consciousness. This stream of thought narrates, explains, interprets, and evaluates all of life, giving us the sense that we are separate from all that is, that we are its judge. With just a little observation of our own minds we will see that believing our own thoughts is a form of insanity. Thoughts arise out of nowhere and disappear into nothingness. Yet, rather than observing the mind’s movements, we go into what he calls a “trance,” following our thoughts as if they were truth itself. This unconscious, trance-like state is the root cause of all suffering, keeping us in a state of conflict.

*The greatest generator of conflict, both internal and external, is our addiction to interpreting and evaluating each and every moment of our experience. When we continually judge and evaluate, we separate from what’s happening. We feel a certain distance from our experience, because now we have become the evaluator of the moment and we’re no longer in unity with the flow of existence and of life.*

When we disagree with what is happening, or feel unhappy about past events or worry about the future, Adhyashanti calls it “arguing with life.” Life simply unfolds as it does, without regard to our mental construct. “When we argue with life, we lose every single time – and suffering wins.”

*Any way that we make a construct out of life, any way that we come to conclusions in our mind about what is or what was or what will*

*be, we are narrowing our experience of life. They are all ways that we argue with what is. Any time you argue with what was, what is, or what will be, you limit your ability to experience the vastness of who you are.*

If we resist the urge to believe our mind's explanations and judgments, we will face the challenge of not-knowing, of facing the unknown.

*In order to see through the mind and the deeply ingrained sense of separation that continues to generate so much confusion and suffering in our lives, we must take a chance; we must leave what we know and enter that mysterious reality of the unknown.... You may feel very exposed when you open yourself to this inner space of unknowing, but really, the unknown is our only doorway.*

We will realize we don't know even who we are. If we dare to enter this state of unknowing, we become aware of a presence:

*If you stop in this place of not knowing who you are, if you resist the temptation to conceptualize an identity, you'll begin to touch a lived sense of an inner presence. You'll open to what I call an "alive, pregnant nothingness." This is not a "nothingness" that is blank or absent of any qualities, but rather one that is extraordinarily vital and rich with potential.*

Unknowing offers us the invitation to listen to the silence within:

*When we begin to see that our mind is just a storyteller, ... we begin to listen – not for more thoughts or more complicated*



*understandings, but for the silence. It is when you listen in this way that you can see that it is only your mind that has the capacity to make you suffer.... Only the mind, nothing else. It's all an inside job.*

For Adhyashanti, this inner silence is the key to awakening. He equates the silence itself with listening: “Because isn’t that what silence is? It’s a listening. It’s a deep, wordless listening.” Adhyashanti clarifies that the inner stillness he is speaking of does not come from shutting out all the activity and turmoil of the world. Rather, “it’s a stillness of inclusion, a kind of stillness that embraces everything.” Through giving attention to the silence within:

*We find a capacity to open to a new state of consciousness. At first, it's just experienced as a state of stillness, the foretaste of awakened consciousness, where a presence begins to reveal itself. If you allow yourself to relax into this stillness... you can awaken out of the belief and experience of separation. You start to see ... a mysterious grace that permeates everything.... By that I mean that a certain mysterious quality reveals itself and cradles us within an intimacy with all of existence. This is something that many people are looking for without even knowing it. Almost everyone is looking for intimacy – a closeness, a sense of union with God or whatever their concept of higher reality is.*

We come to “know in the core of our hearts that everything really is one in essence, that there really is that which connects us all as a single whole,” to “realize that what we have always yearned for is the very thing, in our deepest source, that we have always been.”

Adyashanti talks of “falling into grace” when we stop holding ourselves separate and aloof from it.

*We begin to fall into the grace of a different dimension of being.... It is as if this new way of looking at things has always been there, but we weren't ever quite able to access it. This newfound perception is grace, where we receive and experience something that arrives from beyond the way we normally perceive life.*

According to Adhyashanti, “The most essential aspect of meditation, what meditation really is or can be, is a relinquishing of control.”

*Meditation, in this sense, is really a state of discovery. Sitting in quiet and stillness and just being in a state of openness.... We can begin to let go of our conflict with what is.... Through resting in this way, we enter a state of non-resistance, where we'll be able to have a taste of what is it like to live for a moment without judgment or conflict. With this as a foundation, it then becomes easier to access these moments of stillness and to let go of the illusion that we have of control in our lives.*



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