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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Amazing Grace

Grace is the greatest gift the Lord gives to us. Through his grace we are blessed with the opportunity to know him and worship him, to feel close to him. He is guiding us; he has come for us. He is showering us with grace all the time, whether we realize it or not.

There is an old Christian hymn about grace that says:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found.
Was blind, but now I see.*

The Lord in his mercy guides yearning souls back to him. We think we are trudging alone in darkness, but the Lord is within each and every one of us and provides the light to guide us back to him. As we travel home to the Lord, we are undertaking the journey of our lives in a race to free our soul. In doing so we need to remember it is a race against time, because death comes to everyone. We only have so many allotted years here to devote to this spiritual journey. Aside from limited time, we may exercise poor judgment leading to bad choices that hold us back. If we can shake ourselves awake and begin the race, we can take advantage of this opportunity the Lord has given us.

Many days it may seem like we are in a wrestling match with the world. And our opponent – all the temptations this world offers – is impressively strong and alluring. Lacking the tools to effectively fight our opponent, we may make choices that keep us here.

Until someone more knowledgeable and enlightened comes along to share a secret with us, we remain bound here. What is that secret? It's really very simple. We don't belong here. This world is not our true home. If that secret rings true to us, then the next question is, where do we belong?

In *Sar Bachan Poetry*, we are told how to make that journey to our true home where we really belong.

*Establish your base at the third eye
and have darshan of the inner Master.
Always listen to the voice of the Shabd Guru,
burn to ashes the low cravings of your mind
and merge into him.
This form of the Master is of unsurpassed beauty –
it will light up your inner being
like the radiant glow of the sun.*

Until we are at the eye centre, we live in ignorance and merely bumble along in our day-to-day existence. To experience the Shabd, we have to take our place at the third eye. Yet we wonder: where and what is that third eye? We can't see it or feel it. The doctor won't find it in an autopsy. Typically people use their outer senses to try and understand the teachings of the saints. We hear with these two ears and we see with these two eyes in order to hear and read the teachings or see the physical form of the Master. But it is only through the third eye – that unseen inner eye – that we can truly know the teachings of the saints.

To open that third eye we need a Master. Only by the Master's grace can we reach it. His guiding hand is always there. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I: "His grace is what pulls you back to him." His grace is what attaches us to him.

Just as he pulls us to him through grace, there are many worldly influences that attempt to pull us away from him. This puts us in a tug of war between the world and the Lord. While the Lord will always win, we still must overcome so many temptations. The world reaches out to grab us through the senses and the five passions of lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego.

When we are driven by these five passions, we become trapped here. Through the help of the Master all of these can be overcome. Over time lust can become compassion; anger can become kindness; greed can become generosity; attachment can become detachment; and ego can become humility. Through his grace, higher qualities start to shape us and transform our lives. As these qualities are manifested in our thoughts and actions, we are guided toward the Lord.

As we go through the events of life, the Master is always watching over and protecting us. He serves as a bail bondsman sent to get us out of the jail of this world. Through meditation the ties to this world are loosened and we become detached from everything binding us here. By loosening those bonds we free ourselves and become attached to the Lord.

The Master tells us repeatedly that if we put the Lord first, then he will take care of everything for us. But how often do we put everything else first, and put the Lord last? When that happens, we lose our way and things get turned upside down. Eventually, we may desperately call upon the Lord for his help and our focus will shift from worldly endeavours to worship of the Lord.

Through grace, we are being prepared for our ultimate destination. Each and every day we travel a little closer toward that spiritual goal. On this journey the Lord reveals many things to us. He does not keep secrets from us. In fact, through the Master, he reveals everything. He tells us the truth.

First, through the Master, he tells us that we no longer have to stay in this world. Second, he explains that the role of the Master is to guide us home, to free us from the chains of this worldly existence. Third, he explains, the way to open our inner eye is simple and done through our meditation, even though it may seem impossible. However, nothing is impossible if we trust and believe in the Lord. The Master tells us repeatedly, we are destined to merge back into the Lord. Hazur says in *Quest for Light*:

When by the grace of the perfect Master one is put in touch with the magnetic Word, one's eyes are opened and blindness is cured. The inner light shines forth and the darkness of ignorance melts away.

Every day we are showered with amazing grace that will cure us of our blindness and open our heart to the Lord. Let us commit ourselves to the journey home.



Focusing at the Eye Centre

One day a Zen master wanted to show his students a new technique of shooting an arrow. He told his students to cover his eyes with a cloth and then he shot his arrow. When he opened his eyes, he saw the target with no arrow in it, and when he looked at his students, they looked embarrassed because their teacher had missed.

The Zen master asked them, “What lesson do you think I intend to teach you all today?” They answered, “We thought you would show us how to shoot at the target without looking.” The Zen master said, “No, I taught you that if you want to be successful, don’t forget the target. You have to keep an eye on the target; otherwise you may miss.” They looked at each other, impressed with the lesson.

In many ways we are like the students of this blindfolded Zen master. We journey through life failing to remember our life’s purpose in this creation – to reach the eye centre and attain God-realization. We can expect no substantive progress in meditation if we have not learned how to still the mind at the eye focus. Saints have used various analogies to describe the nature of our restless minds. They have likened it to a rogue elephant, a mischievous monkey, and a stubborn mule. Nonetheless, to control the mind is our responsibility; no one is going to do this work for us. Three major obstacles that keep us from focusing our attention at the eye centre are: worry, desires, and uncontrolled thinking. When we worry, our focus is generally on regrets of the past or uncertainties of the future.

Worrying about either of these is quite simply a waste of precious mental and emotional energy. In the first instance, the past is over, and no amount of effort can undo what has already been done. In the second instance, none of us knows what the future holds – not even the next second. Worry results when we fail to live in the present. If we are attentive to this moment everything is fine because there is no past and no future. We fail to remember this reality particularly at the time of meditation. Rather than being present with our simran and bhajan, we allow the mind to pull us in an infinite number of directions that involve worrying about the past or fretting about the future. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh comments to a disciple on the causes of worry:

What makes you worry? Uncertainty about the future and repentance for the past. So if everything is destined, then why worry? Whatsoever we have done in the past, we're not going to solve the problem by worrying about it. We'll be able to get rid of our worries with a practical approach. So attend to meditation. When your mind is attached to the Shabd and Nam within, then you don't think about the past or worry about the future.... Meditation trains you to accept what is in your destiny, if not cheerfully, then at least with a smile. That is the purpose of meditation. Unnecessarily brooding over the past and worrying about the future is not going to solve any problem at all.

The second reason we experience difficulty focusing our attention at the eye centre is because of our desires. If we do not get what we desire or lose that which we already have, we are miserable. On the other hand, if we get what we desire, we live with the fear that what we have obtained will be taken away from us – whether it be the loss of a loved one, wealth, health or possessions. With a turbulent mind that is full of desires we cannot concentrate sufficiently to contact the Shabd.

From our own experience we know of the numerous desires we have entertained. And we know how short-lived the pleasures and satisfaction those fulfilled desires gave us. We continually move from one desire to another in a never-ending cycle. Because we will receive only what is in our destiny and nothing more, it is best to leave our lives entirely in his hands knowing that he will give us what is in our best interest. And to work diligently on our spiritual goal. Hazur says in *Die to Live*:

We can never find permanent peace in worldly objects and sensual pleasures. They are short-lived, these so-called pleasures, and the reaction to them sometimes makes us more miserable, more unhappy. So the only way to obtain everlasting peace is to go back to the Father and become one with him.

The third obstacle of the mind that keeps us from focusing at the eye centre is uncontrolled thinking. In an article entitled, “Change Your Thoughts, Change Your World,” the motivational speaker, Jennifer Read Hawthorne says, “We humans, it seems, have anywhere from 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts per day. But according to some research, as many as 98

percent of them are exactly the same as we had the day before. Talk about creatures of habit! Even more significant, 80 percent of our thoughts are negative.” The Masters place great emphasis on remaining positive, regardless of our life circumstances. We simply cannot sustain a positive attitude by allowing our mind to run in whatever direction it pleases. Doing so makes our challenge to focus at the eye centre even more difficult when we sit for our daily meditation.

In *Living Meditation*, the author writes about this habit of uncontrolled thinking and its effect on our spiritual practice:

We generate thousands of thoughts every day. From the spiritual perspective this means that thousands of times a day our mind bypasses the eye centre as we run from one thought to the next without rest or pause. No wonder we feel restless and anxious! How could it be otherwise, with all that activity going on within our head? When we indulge in wanton thinking, we waste many opportunities to centre ourselves through spiritual repetition (simran). We miss the benefit that is available to us – the well-being that comes from repeating the words the Master gave us at the time of initiation, through which we create that much-needed focus at the eye-centre.

The saints remind us that even our failed attempts to still the mind at the eye focus are taking us nearer to our goal. For this very reason, Maharaj Sawan Singh (the Great Master), has encouraged disciples to bring their failures to the Master because failures mean we have at least been trying. Ultimately, our efforts, along with his grace, will turn this wild, distracted mind into a friend to aid us in our spiritual quest.



Surrender and Salvation

Surrender to the Lord seems to be the opposite of what we are told to do in this world. We are encouraged to be independent, stand up for our rights, and do whatever it takes to get ahead so we can be the master of our own destiny. Yet surrender to the Lord is the only thing that can lead to our salvation so we can be released from returning to this world over and over.

In the Bible there is a well-known prayer that pleads for the Lord's help:

*Our father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

Matthew 6:9-13

If we take this message – “Thy will be done” – to heart, what will we gain? We can relax and let someone else take over. When we are going on a long journey by car, it is much easier if we have a co-driver. Let's think of the Master as our co-driver who has come to help us navigate our way on this worldly journey.

In fact, he has already taken over and is guiding our life, but we are slow to realize it. It's like a driver's education class, where we drive with an instructor who has a dual wheel and brake so that he can take over if we are about to hit something. As novice drivers we gladly give up the wheel and let our co-driver take over to avoid an accident. Similarly, to get out of this world we must surrender to the Lord and follow the instructions of a Master.

Let's think a minute about why people surrender. Some of us may surrender to the will of others because we are afraid of the consequences if we don't. If we've been a naughty child, we surrender to the will of our mother. Otherwise she might punish us in some way – by taking away our allowance or, worse yet, our cell phone. We surrender to the will of our boss, even if we don't want to do our assignments at work, because

otherwise the boss might threaten to fire us. If we are mean or unkind to friends and family, they might ignore us. When we're threatened by a robber, we turn over our money to avoid being harmed. Any one of these fearful situations might prompt us to surrender.

From a spiritual perspective, however, surrender is prompted by a very different motivation. We surrender out of love and longing for the Lord. The Master tells us that he comes with unconditional love. And if we really want to experience that love, we need to surrender to him, to let him guide us.

Surrender is difficult for most of us. We humans don't seem to be wired to surrender. We fight; we resist; we rationalize our actions to suit our needs. We tend to put ourselves rather than the Lord at the centre of the universe. However, surrender is essential if we want to meet the Lord within.

The Lord sent us here and we have been separated from him for lifetimes. Over those lifetimes we have carried out deeds from virtuous to evil, and now we have a karmic account that ties us to this world. We are attached to people, places, and possessions that hold us captive. But when the Lord calls us back, our worldly attachments start to fade over time. Our only permanent relationship is with the Lord. We belong to him, and he belongs to us. He has an unbreakable bond with us. As we strengthen our bond with him through meditation, we gradually clear our karmic debt.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

Whatever our store of karma is, good or bad, we have to go through it. But I can assure you that by meditation our will becomes so strong that these good and bad karmas do not affect us at all. We rise above the effects of good and bad karmas, and we easily and happily account for all these karmic debts with the help of meditation.

In the early days of our spiritual surrender, we may not fully realize the value of what we have been given as we continue with our day-to-day lives and the struggles we may encounter. But over time we can see what a great gift it is to place our lives in the hands of the Lord and put our trust in him. Trust is vital to surrender.

Every day we see how easily small children put their trust in their parents. When a parent and child are crossing the street the parent will automatically reach his or her hand down and the child will reach his

hand up, so they can safely cross. The parent is protecting the child, and the child puts not only his hand but his trust in the parent to cross only when it is safe. As the child gets older, he wants to cross on his own, and the parent eventually lets him, but not before the child learns to look both ways before crossing the street to be sure it is safe.

The Lord has sent the Master to the world to put out his hand and take ours to help us cross this world. But we have to lift our hand up just like the child and put our trust in the Master. Through trust we learn that he has our best interest at heart and is helping us constantly. One of the greatest gifts the Master gives us is the confidence that we can go home to the Lord.

Through meditation, we are automatically surrendering. It takes courage to surrender. Ironically, from a worldly perspective, we may think of surrender as cowardice. But from the spiritual standpoint it is exactly the opposite. It takes courage to trust someone, to let him take over and guide us. Through surrender, we get everything. Every Master tells us to just lean into him.

Maharaj Jagat Singh says in *The Science of the Soul*: “So long as we lean on others, he lets us do so, but when after repeated disappointments, we surrender to him completely, regarding him as our only sheet-anchor, he comes to our succour instantly.”

We are very fortunate that the Master has been sent to help us navigate our way back home. Even so we are constantly faced with making choices every day. We need to ask ourselves, should I follow the dictates of the mind and dig myself deeper into this worldly existence, or should I follow the guidance of the Master and work at digging myself out of this world of illusion? Making the right choices would seem obvious; but the world is strong and pulls us in different directions all the time.

Our daily meditation is our effort to help us make the right choices, so that our karmic account is eventually cleared and we no longer have any need for this human body. Then we are ready to give ourselves over to the Lord. We surrender completely.

We have to put our whole being into it, as difficult as it may seem. In doing so, we have everything to gain and nothing, absolutely nothing,

to lose. In fact, through surrender, we are rewarded with salvation from the woes of this world.

Such salvation means being pulled out of this life of misery, pain, and separation by our one true Friend, the Master. Imagine that we are the cargo of a sunken ship. Just like those hunting for buried treasure, the Master comes to dredge us up from the deep sea, to polish the rust off of us, and save the treasure that is inside of us by freeing us from the mind and our passions so the light of our soul can shine through.

Maharaj Charan Singh advises in *Die to Live*:

Just give yourself to him. To love somebody means to give yourself without expecting anything in return. To give yourself, to submit yourself, to resign to him is all meditation. We are losing our own identity and our individuality and just merging into another being. We have no expectation then.... In love you don't exist. You just lose yourself, you just submit yourself, you just resign to his will.... The more we give, the more it grows, the more we lose ourselves, the more we become another being.

Surrender comes gradually, bringing with it our salvation. Let's embrace and follow the advice "Thy will be done" from the Lord's Prayer. Now is the time to surrender so that we may go back home to the Lord.



What Do We Really Want?

Every day we should ask ourselves: What do we really want?

We think we want the things of this world but that isn't really true. If someone were to say to you that you could have everything you want in this life, but in return you have to give up any chance for permanent happiness and love – would you take the deal?

If not, why are we focusing so much of our attention on running after the things of this world for transient gratifications that inevitably result in suffering and which steal away our inherent peace and love? Haven't we spent enough time seeking satisfaction by trying to get, keep, and fix things outside of us? Haven't we realized that this is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic – a sinking ship?

Saints teach that there is a sacred, divine essence underlying everything. Our true self is already one with divine love, but our mental habits prevent us from realizing this truth. Some of the obstructions originating in the mind are: remorse about the past, fear of the future, dissatisfaction with the present, grasping to hold on to what we have and get more, and resisting what threatens us.

We spend our entire lives struggling to make something happen, get somewhere, accomplish something, fix things, and become someone special – often at great cost. Usually, it's only after repeated losses, traumas, and difficulties that we realize that we have actually created a prison of misery for ourselves and that we are disconnected from the very love and peace we so badly crave.

In the book *Nobody, Son of Nobody* the Sufi mystic, Shaikh Abu-Saeed Abil-Kheir, writes:

*That which blocks your path
is your boring self.
How long will you worry about this vicious world?
How long will you fret about your body?
The worst this world can do
is to take away this cesspool of
a prison your soul is trapped in.
Is that why you are worried?*

Our dilemma is that from birth we use our sense perceptions to focus on things outside of ourselves to build our identity. This leads us to spend our whole life trying to be ‘somebody.’ However, when we awaken spiritually, we discover that this “I” is an obstacle to complete awareness and is just an illusory self, built by our mind so we can function on this material plane.

If we really want lasting happiness, love, and joy we have to change the direction of our attention. A profound shift of awareness is possible when we understand that the same attention we use to focus on outward things can be withdrawn inward to illuminate our own consciousness. We complain that we are helpless, but in truth we have the potential to move our attention at will. When we get frustrated about why we don’t experience the presence of the inner light or holy sound, it’s because we aren’t paying enough attention inwardly.

Instead, our attention is streaming outwards in countless directions, adhering to thoughts and problems of the world and leaving a residual imprint on our mind that creates more desires, emotions, and expectations. Our choice of where we focus our attention will determine whether we stay stuck in this cycle of reincarnation or evolve to higher consciousness.

Saints teach us to direct our attention inward, through meditation, so that we can start to abide in our own stillness. Meditation has the power to disrupt our habit of letting our attention run out into the world and gives us the awareness to stay present, stop our conceptual thinking, and surrender to what is. It provides us with the opportunity to drop our resistance and judgments and become receptive to God’s presence and his will.

The more we turn our attention inward, the greater our conscious connection with the Shabd, the sound current that emanates from the Lord. Maharaj Sawan Singh writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

The [Shabd] current acts like a magnet on the spirit.... If the spirit were not covered by the rust of mind and matter, it would go up like a shot.

After we practise meditation for some time, we begin to notice this rust more and more, and then we may become disgusted and sometimes

discouraged, believing we've become worse, not better. We may find it easier to rush out to collect more trinkets in the world rather than face the truth that meditation is revealing our lower tendencies, which prevent us from soaring back to God.

The saints understand this and assure us that while this is a slow process, with the Lord's grace and our diligent practice we will rise above our lower tendencies and achieve the goal of bringing our attention to the inner Shabd guru. We just have to turn our attention away from our mind's restless thinking by using meditation to focus our attention at the eye centre and by listening for any sound.

The Masters teach that meditation is practice in surrendering. We are not directing the show. All we can do is to follow the instructions and accept what we experience as God's will. Letting go is so easy to talk about but it's hard to do. To let go and allow everything to unfold takes maturity and faith in the Divine. Letting go is difficult. According to a character in David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest*, "Everything I've ever let go of has claw marks on it."

Sometimes we struggle because we have concepts and opinions about what constitutes good or bad meditation. We need to learn to let everything be as it is, allowing everything to unfold in its own time, without trying to make things happen according to our will. It brings about a freedom to remain in his will – to just do our meditation, without judgment.

Hafiz reminds us of our state in the book *I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy*:

*Your whole mind and body have been tied to the foot of the divine
elephant
With a thousand golden chains.
Now, begin to rain intelligence and compassion upon all your tender
wounded cells
And realize the profound absurdity of thinking
That you can go anywhere or do anything without God's will.*

Let's return to our original question: What do we really want? There comes a point in our lives when we have experienced so much and grown tired of the whole game. This helps us focus on what we really want. We understand that we have to act on the Master's teachings so that we can break free from our self-imposed prisons. When we experience the presence of God first hand, we realize that we have what we really want within us and gain confidence that we are on the right path with the Shabd as our guide, salvation, and lifeline.



If I Must Play a Part in Your Show

If I must play a part in your show
I will sing and dance upon your stage
and hide my soul's secret sorrow behind my smile.
I will visit your shops full of shiny treasures
and walk along your streets with beautiful people,
but please forgive me
if nothing there catches my eye
and no one captures my heart
for I can't bear to breathe the air
of a world without you in it.

This is all I ask of you –

If I must play a part in your show
let me be the infant you send into the arms of strangers
who cries all day and night for a reason no one understands
and searches every face, looking for your smile.

If I must play a part in your show
let me be the little child who throws the toys across the room
then crawls his lonely confines searching every corner
for something missing from his world.

If I must play a part in your show
let me be the troubled youth, who feels alone with friends,
whose would-be lovers wonder why they can never be enough
to win a heart that hides the wound that never heals.

If I must play a part in your show
in my prime let me still stare off, seeing nothing of the world.
Let me live my life obsessed with longing and leaving
from the moment I fall into your drama of desires.

If I must play a part in your show
let me be the beggar, ever standing at your door
grateful to grow old, holding out my begging bowl
with trembling hands and eyes streaming tears
begging you to grace me with a morsel of your mercy,
the only food on which souls survive
exile's endless rainy night
of separation from your smile
and isolation from your light

If I must play a part in your show
let me leave this world still listening for your voice
echoing through lonely corridors of space and time,
calling me on the welcoming winds of home.

O let my final days trail off –
as I trek the secret skies in search of you.
Let me die of longing to see you again
standing there at last in the starry lane.



Peace of Mind

A young man once put together a list of all the good things he had in life – beauty, health, wealth, power, fame, talent – and showed it to a wise man. The wise man agreed that these were valuable indeed, but he had missed one critical thing: “peace of mind,” which is essential, because all the other things we have in life can become a burden without it. The wise man then told the young man that peace of mind is a gift from God, reserved for his special disciples. He may give talent, beauty, wealth or fame to many. But peace of mind is the dearest sign of his love. Most people never get such a blessing.

The search for inner peace is constant and universal. Peace of mind is not something that can be purchased or obtained easily. Where then can we turn in our endless quest? Master tells us that peace of mind can only be found within ourselves, through meditation.

Meditation has always been the gateway to peace. We are like sick people who know we are ill but will not accept the medicine that is prescribed to make us well. Yet, until we do, there can be no hope of recovery.

What we need is spiritual stability. If we have peace of mind, it will enable us to accept the pummeling of our karmas with balance – even sometimes with eagerness – because we know that when the karmas are fully paid off, this cycle of birth, death, and rebirth will also end.

Everyone wants peace, but how many among us are prepared to surrender to our Master’s wishes and undergo the necessary spiritual discipline that will provide it? Instead, we may go off in continual pursuit of objects, in our desire for more and more material things.

What is desire? It is that attraction the mind holds for things and sensations of this world. It doesn’t let a person rest, day or night. It follows us into our thoughts and torments us in the midst of our meditation. When desire rears its head, we very soon forget all our promises to Master and our promises to ourselves. These desires are the robbers of our inner peace, for nothing outside of ourselves in our material world will continuously satisfy us.

Greed, fueled by our endless desires for more and more, keeps us away from the eye centre and from inner peace. Greed binds us to material things. Our god becomes wealth and we become a slave to it.

A story, loosely based on Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need," depicts the essence of greed. There was a small village in Russia ruled by a kind king. One day the king had the unusual thought of donating his land to the people of his kingdom. He announced that he would give away the land to each individual based on how much land each one could cover on foot during the course of the day, returning by sunset.

A crowd of people showed up in the morning to start their quest. One man started running as hard as he could to cover as much land as possible. As he was approaching the time to turn around, he started thinking that if he could cover a little more area he would have slightly more land than anybody else. His greed kept him going farther and farther. Suddenly he realized that he had gone too far away from the starting point and might not have enough time to return by the end of the day. He started running back as fast he possibly could and reached the starting point just as the sun was going down. But he had been running so fast that he was completely exhausted. When he reached the finish line he collapsed in front of the king and died.

Our whole life we run trying to get as much as we can so that we can get ahead of others. Are we ever going to achieve that? We keep complaining that we do not get time to do our meditation because we are too busy trying to make our lives better and better by pursuing material desires – a bigger house, a higher paying job, a better car. But these will never allow us to achieve the peace of mind that we are truly looking for.

Negative emotions also rob us of our peace and keep us away from the eye centre. Among these are anger and hatred. Anger causes confusion and scatters the mind so that we cannot concentrate. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

If you're angry with somebody, if you have a spirit of revenge against somebody, or if you have malice towards somebody, you can't live with yourself at all.... If you are loving to another person, good and kind to

*another person, actually you are being good and kind to your own self...
The peace and happiness we get by being good and noble to others is the
greatest reward one can get.*

Dr. Julian Johnson advises in *The Path of the Masters*:

Never criticize, never find fault, never abuse.

Never even blame anyone, either to his face or behind his back.

Never hurt the feelings of anyone, man or animal.

Never let a harsh or unkind word escape your lips.

Speak always words of love, truth, and of kindness.

Love, truth, and kindness are the antidotes to anger, hatred, and malice. As initiates we all have the power to direct our minds to replace the feelings of being angry, depressed or fearful. The source of our power is simran. We must learn to replace all our negative emotions with simran – repetition and remembrance of the Lord within.

Happiness does not lie in wealth and property but in contentment. With the help of the Master it is possible to follow the path. We have to remember that this life is short, and it will be over before we can turn around.

Only Master will stay by our side. Let us remind ourselves that time is precious and our meditation is priceless. Any enquiry, any question we ask the Master, his answer is always: “Do your meditation.”

Meditation alone can give us the peace we are looking for. There is a peaceful and simple way to go through life, and it depends on our willingness to change our attitude, our way of life. It means being detached if someone has mistreated us. It means holding no grievances and totally accepting everyone just as they are and making no exceptions. It means remembering that our life is not meant to be focused on material gain. Daily practice of meditation will bring us to spiritual stability, which allows us to accept whatever our destiny brings.

To have peace of mind in this world we have to work for it, and each day the challenge must be renewed. If we are really sincere in our efforts to do our daily spiritual practice, then Master will grant us the priceless gift of a peaceful mind.



Help Yourself

We all long for personal time with our Master, an invitation to his house for dinner perhaps. We might imagine being ushered into his dining room where – with a spread of delicious food placed in front of us – we would be invited to “help ourselves,” to take whichever dishes we wanted to assuage our hunger, while enjoying the presence and repartee of our host. Once, when a disciple expressed this very desire to Master, he answered that we can have breakfast with him every morning at the eye centre.

This is what he offers us. He says, in effect: I have told you where I am – inside you at the eye centre; I have told you how to find me – meditate. Now help yourself to the spiritual food within, help your ‘self.’ Help your real self. Our real self is not this body, not this mind; our self is the soul. If we want to help our self, then we must free our soul from captivity, let it rise from the bondage of the body and the mind, and go back to its source. Achieve self-realization. Help our self by choosing to do whatever it takes to liberate our soul.

Samarth Ramdas’s poem “A Liberated Soul,” included in the book *Many Voices, One Song*:

*You’ve heard of spiritual awakening,
but now you have experienced your Self –
you’ve seen for yourself the truth of spirituality.
Your mind has merged in the Supreme Being –
recognizing your Self, you recognized God,
and now you know fulfilment.*

That “fulfilment” is the satisfaction of our hunger for him. How hungry are we for that spiritual food? Hungry enough to be there every morning for breakfast with our Master at the eye centre?

What does that hunger feel like? Would we recognize it if we had it? Even in a worldly sense we may not realize that we are hungry. We may just feel out of sorts, have a headache, be a bit grumpy and then realize that we have been working so hard that we have missed lunch. Then we eat and we feel instantly better. Similarly, we may not realize we are spiritually hungry, we just know we are not happy in this life. We need the

Master to help us understand. Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

The urge is always in every soul towards its own source.... That is why nobody has peace of mind in this world, and we all feel lonely.... Sometimes, in order to overcome that feeling of loneliness, we give ourselves over to the senses. We think possibly that by running to the sensual pleasures we will be able to overcome the feeling of loneliness. Other people, realizing that they will not derive anything from the senses, turn to the Father, by his grace. But unless you miss something, you don't try to achieve it.

Spiritual hunger, he is saying, is the soul's longing to return to its source, but we may not realize it and keep trying to fill the emptiness, the loneliness, with sensual pleasures. But with the Lord's grace, we are made aware that the sensual pleasures are not working for us; that no matter what we do in life, there is always something missing. We feel an emptiness within that cannot be filled by anything or anyone of this world.

With the Lord's grace, we are given the opportunity to satisfy this hunger and thirst of the soul to go back to its source, to go home. We are brought to the feet of a true living Master who explains how to satisfy this spiritual hunger through meditation. And then he initiates us and gives the directions on how to live the Sant Mat way of life and how to meditate – in other words, how to help our self. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II: “When the Lord wants you to follow him, to know him, to go back to him, he will give you the understanding and the urge.” That urge is hunger, a hunger that grows and grows. In *Die to Live*, Hazur explains:

The Lord gives us hunger; the more we attend to meditation, the more hungry we become. When we become hungry, he provides us with food. As Christ said, the harvest is ready. The harvest is always ready, but we have to lift our consciousness to that level where we can collect that harvest.

Meditation grows our hunger. Master satisfies our hunger with spiritual food. Our role is to keep reaching for that food and to keep helping ourselves. We must also keep fighting the mind whose role is to distract us from our spiritual goal and make us forget why we asked for initiation.

Do we remember how we felt when we were waiting to be initiated – anxious about whether we would be accepted? How much we wanted to sit in meditation! Remember the longing that built up in us? The hunger, the thirst was intense. And then the wonderful day came when we were initiated, and our Master gave us the five holy names, and he said, in effect, “Here, help yourself, eat of the blessed food I am offering you, use the five names, do your simran, sit in meditation every day for two and one-half hours minimum.” And we began our new life, focusing on meditation with enthusiasm, paying attention to the soul’s urge, sitting every day for at least two and one-half hours. We were feeling the hunger and working to satisfy it.

Hazur, in a letter to a new initiate, says in *Quest for Light*:

I am glad to know that the new satsangi way of life suits you very well and that the vegetarian diet and abstention from alcoholic drinks have been no problem. The next step should be to create a love for meditation and a thirst for God-realization. Meditation should no longer be a drudgery or boring. It should become a habit, like hunger for food.

So, the alarm goes off at our meditation time and we help ourselves – we get up without fail, not as a drudgery and not as a chore. No, we get up because we cannot *not* get up. There is something inside of us that can be satisfied only by meditation, by coming closer to him inside. It’s the longing of our true self to go home. And that cannot be satisfied by anything of this world. More sleep may rest the body to some degree, but meditation rests the soul. Hazur says in *Quest for Light*:

To take out the consciousness from the old ruts in which it has been running for a very long time needs full effort and a thorough change of heart. The help and grace of the Lord also come when we try to help ourselves. Please have no worry. The Master is always with you to help, guide and protect you at every step. Just turn to him and realize his constant presence. Attend most regularly to your meditation with faith, love and humility.

Breakfast at the eye centre, anyone? With his help and grace, we can be there with him every day.



Seeking

Seek and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Matthew 7:7

What does it mean to be a seeker? Where does this seeking come from? How and when will we find what we are seeking? Most important, what are we seeking?

Our soul is seeking God, its source. The door we are knocking on, the door we need to knock on – is within. Although we spend lifetimes looking outside, what we are seeking is inside of us. That urge to seek within is created by God, the source of all. Seeking is created by that which is sought.

Seeking has many stages and aspects. It's similar to a puzzle – a puzzle of life, or lifetimes, that starts with an urge to seek something more, something higher, which takes us round and round until we give up trying to make sense of it all through our intellect, and turn to the wisdom of our spirit. The urge that activates spiritual seeking leads us to question why we are here and to bravely acknowledge and explore the loneliness that creates a deep void within. We are pulled and pushed to seek and be open to answers.

Maharaj Charan Singh discusses this urge as quoted in *Living Meditation*:

This constant feeling of loneliness and missing something is in reality the hidden unquenched thirst and craving of the soul for its Lord. It will always persist as long as the soul does not return to its ancient original home and meet its Lord. Only then will it get true contentment and eternal peace. This feeling has been purposefully put in the heart of man.

There is a hunger in every human heart which nothing can satisfy or appease – a hunger for something more. The well-known head of the Theosophical Society in the 20th century, Mr. G. de Purucker, wrote in his *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*: “It is a nostalgia of the soul, of the spirit-soul of man. The source of this longing is the homesickness brought about by the soul-memory of our spiritual abode from whence we came and towards that which we are now on our return journey.”

Seeking consists of both longing and intuition. From deep within ourselves, we are searching for something, while at the same time, something within ourselves is guiding us, and knows where we are headed. Through our seeking, we discover that our calling for him is really his calling for us. He places the desire within us. Kabir is quoted as saying:

*The musk
Is held in its pod,
Yet oblivious
Of the source
Of fragrance,
The deer wanders
All over the forest
In its search!
O seeker
The Holy One too
Dwells within.
How unaware
We are of Him!*

*The Vision of Kabir:
Love Poems of a 15th Century Weaver*

We try to fill the deep feeling of loneliness inside of us through various worldly means. We use our intellect to seek answers, but it doesn't work. We must go beyond the mind and the intellect to reach the Lord. The spiritual journey starts at the eye centre, above the mind. When we truly surrender, that's when we cry out for God. Then from the depths of our being, we are ready to relinquish our illusion of control and surrender to the Lord.

Saints long to share the love of the Lord. In *Tales of the Mystic East* we are told that Shams-i-Tabriz, the great Persian saint, prayed earnestly to the Lord, "O Lord, please bring me some dear friend of yours to be my companion, to whom I may recite the tale of love, and with whom I may share the agonies of divine separation and the joys of union." The Lord answered his prayer and led him to Konya, the home of a renowned and celebrated scholar called Maulvi Rum, known today throughout the world

as the mystic Rumi. Shams met Rumi when he was studying priceless manuscripts that supposedly held divine mysteries, which Rumi said were far beyond Sham's comprehension. Shams simply smiled and said nothing. He then stepped forward, took the manuscripts from Rumi's hands and threw them into a nearby lake. Although Rumi was shocked and horrified at the loss of his beloved manuscripts, he did not get angry. Instead he asked Shams why he threw the manuscripts into the water. Shams merely smiled, put his hands in the water, and brought out the manuscripts undamaged. Rumi immediately realized that what he was seeking would not be found in books and quickly became Sham's steadfast companion and eventually experienced the joy of union with the Divine.

Saints come to lead us away from the illusion of this world. But just like Rumi before he met Shams-i-Tabriz, most of us have very little or no experience with a reality beyond this illusion. We hold on to preconceived notions and concepts that ensnare us in this external illusion. It is only when we seek and find a living Master and follow his guidance that our soul will be released and return to its true home.



Passion and Perseverance

Passion and perseverance are two characteristics that seem to distinguish the highly skilled from the mediocre. We often think of passion as a trait that inspires people to reach difficult goals and perseverance as the fortitude to apply the necessary effort.

Passion can direct our spiritual course when we are clear about what it is we really want in life. *Living Meditation* addresses the importance of this clarity:

Our true being is boundless. It has no limitations. But we have shifted our attention from that boundless absolute nature to the limited, relative, ordinary condition of our personalities. As long as we keep our attention away from our true nature, we will continue to live in duality, ignorant of the bliss that is within our reach. We waste our lives distracted by the world and its objects. Again and again, we fall under the material world's illusions and spells.

Many of us can likely remember the days and months after our initiation when zeal was high and hopeful anticipation of our success was in the forefront. But that euphoria may have waned all too quickly. Years and even decades later, we can find ourselves simply going through the motions mindlessly – such is the enticement of the world and the distractions of our own minds. In doing so, we can easily lose our ability to prioritize the essential from the non-essential.

Meditation is essential. If we remember this one essential thing, then everything will be fine in our life. Meditation should be our passion in this life. Baba Jaimal Singh in *Spiritual Letters* advises, “Do not waste time uselessly. Be concerned about time spent in vain, and regret why so many breaths were wasted, since they were utilized neither in worldly affairs nor in spiritual pursuit.”

While we must fulfil our worldly obligations – which typically involves earning a living, supporting our family, being a good citizen – none of our worldly endeavours address our deepest yearning to be one with the Lord. No matter how many accomplishments and accolades one may achieve, often a sense of emptiness and loneliness creeps in. This feeling

of loneliness can act as a catalyst to inspire passion in us to reach our spiritual goal. In *Living Meditation*, the author says:

Feeling lonely is the cry of the soul for its true home. It is the cry of our true self to be given the space, the environment, the atmosphere in which it can feel at home. No amount of going places, keeping busy, entering new relationships, climbing the social ladder or buying more things is going to silence that cry. The only remedy is to give the soul what it craves by developing the habit of sitting daily for meditation.

Like the skilled athlete or artist who needs the help of a good coach or teacher to make headway, we have a living Master who has provided us with resources that support us in our spiritual work. We have the Sant Mat literature, fellow brothers and sisters, and most important satsang. While it seems that we often hear different versions of the same advice in satsang, we need to be reminded continually of where our passion in life must remain – doing our meditation so that we can be freed from the cycle of transmigration. The distractions of the world and of our own mind are so strong that these constant reminders are essential to keep us on course. The inspiration we derive from satsang lifts our spirits when we feel discouraged, strengthens our resolve to continue onward when karmas are difficult, and gives us hope that the end result will be worth all of the effort. We need to regularly remind ourselves of what we truly want to achieve in this precious human life. Then we need to support that passion with whatever means we can. Although success in both worldly and spiritual endeavours starts with the passion we have for a goal, passion alone is not enough. That passion must be accompanied with practice – steps we take to make the attainment of that passion a reality. Research shows, however, that not just any kind of practice will do. We can mindlessly go through the process of practising a particular task year after year and still see little improvement.

For example, if you were a runner, you might get up every morning and run two miles for ten consecutive years but still not see any improvement in the amount of time it takes to go that distance. The lack of improvement may cause you to feel discouraged and give up running altogether. This phenomenon can happen with our meditation as well.

We might say to ourselves, “I’ve been doing my meditation regularly for years, and I’m still not farther ahead than when I first started. What’s the point of continuing?” In response to this question, we have to remind ourselves first that worldly achievements cannot be compared to spiritual achievements. The Masters tell us that every time we sit for meditation we are making progress even though that progress may not be apparent to us. Failures are part of the process. For this very reason, Maharaj Sawan Singh encourages disciples to bring him their failures. Failures were at least an indication that one had been practising.

What can help us, however, is to engage in our meditation by means of what is called “deliberate practice.” Four basic principles in this type of practice include having a clearly defined goal that stretches our abilities, applying ourselves to that goal with concentrated effort, repeating those efforts as long as necessary until the efforts become second nature to us, and suspending judgment on the quality of our efforts. We can use these same principles of deliberate practice in our meditation just as easily as can an athlete, artist, or entrepreneur.

Maharaj Charan Singh confirms the benefits of this kind of deliberate practice in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II. When a questioner asks, “Master, what is the practical use of doing simran all day?”

Hazur replies:

The practical use is that when we sit in meditation after having done simran during the day, we are able to concentrate much better, sooner. Otherwise, if we let our thoughts spread into the whole creation for the other twenty-two hours, it becomes difficult to concentrate in just one and a half or two hours. So when we don’t let our thoughts go out in the world and keep our mind in simran, at the time of sitting, it becomes easier to concentrate and we concentrate sooner. We get concentration very soon then.

Once we establish a goal for our meditation, we continue practising until the efforts we are applying become easier. Then we can establish another goal for ourselves. Gradually practising these smaller goals adds up to the attainment of our ultimate goal. It is important that we avoid unnecessary judgments about our meditation. While we

should periodically take stock of our efforts and make any adjustments necessary to reinforce our initiative, we should not feel guilty or discouraged, as that would breed negativity. Instead we should maintain a positive outlook about our spiritual practice. The Master always encourages us to just keep trying, no matter how inadequate our efforts may appear. It is not for us to judge.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Ji tells us, “We have so many pitfalls in life which we have to face, very unpleasant things. But if we keep our destination before us, the path before us, and the determination to follow it and reach the destination, then you are able to do it.” These encouraging words assure us that we can be successful – provided we just keep getting up each time we fall.

Coupled with the passion to return home to the Lord, perseverance keeps us going. We are destined to reach our true home. Maharaj Charan Singh assures us of that when he tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

There are no failures on the path. One who does not make a start at all has no chance of falling, but then he is not getting anywhere. One who runs has a chance of falling, but he only falls to get up and run again. Pitfalls here and there do pull us back, but as long as we try to overcome those weaknesses, we again get up and again go ahead. We have to do our best under the circumstances. When we are sincere, the Lord comes to our aid and nature also helps us in our environment, in our atmosphere, in our circumstances. The Lord's guiding hand is always there whether we are conscious of it or not. We should never lose heart when we have pitfalls or when we have fallen or think that we are being driven from the path. He never leaves us.

We are on our way home. The Lord has marked us to be released from the wheel of birth and death. The journey itself can become one of joy and hope if we fuel it with our passion and perseverance. We have the blessed assurance that Master's grace will give us the strength, courage, and endurance to continue on until we are reunited with our Father, the supreme source of light, love, and peace.



Attention

We live our lives at a hectic pace. There are so many demands on our time – our families, jobs, friends, hobbies – the list seems endless. We crave stimulation, and therefore, the joys of the simple life elude us.

When people are born in this world, no one knows what kind of life they will have, who they will meet, and what they might do. The only sure thing is that one day all who are born will die. So what preparation are we making? We are desperate to fill the aching void within us, but will the things we do be of any help to us in the hereafter – will they go with us after death?

As children, we used to play a chasing game that we called “You’re It.” If you were chosen to be “It,” you would have to chase after your playmates and try and catch them. In chasing them you would rush around and try anything to get hold of them – you didn’t care what it took. Then to your relief and after a lot of effort you would eventually catch someone, and you would be happy. But that happiness was short-lived, because now they were the chaser and you their quarry. In that brief moment your happiness had instantly become something else – the fear of being caught. That which you had chased after was now trying to catch hold of you!

Similarly, we chase after many things and sometimes we ruin our life in pursuit of them, only to become their slaves in return. The acquisition of things outside of ourselves can never bring us the peace and happiness we long for – that peace can only be found within.

So what is the purpose of human life if not the pursuit of the world? In one of Soami Ji’s poems in *Discourses on Sant Mat*, he explains:

*Thou hast with human form been blessed;
To task of salvation be thou addressed.*

We have been blessed by the Lord with the human form. The saints have called human beings the top of creation. The human body is referred to as the “temple of the living God.” The saints say that in this creation there are 8.4 million species in which we might incarnate. In some forms we only live for a day or two; in other forms, such as trees, we might live for many hundreds of years. Can we imagine how long it might have taken

us to get this much-prized human form? To attain this precious birth it perhaps took hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of years. Through what ordeals and difficulties have we struggled to get here and then to what depths could we sink? Further in his poem Soami Ji says:

*Be not bewildered in this maze
The world's a dream of mighty haze.*

He calls this world a maze. How do we find our way out of a maze? The walls are high, and we can't see over them. It is dark and we can't see ahead. We can only find the way out of this vast and bewildering maze of the world with the help of one who knows the way. The Master is the guide, he can take us through its twists and turns and save us from its many dead ends. He has passed this way countless times and knows the surest and safest route.

The Master is trying to awaken us from this dream we call our life. He even walks with us in our dream world; yet he is beyond the dream – he is fully awake. He tells us how we can wake up, by teaching us how to raise our consciousness and save ourselves from the terrifying shadows and the nightmare of this dark world.

So where is our attention? Is it distracted by the shadow-play of the world? In which direction are we focused? Attention is the major currency of this world. Everyone and everything wants it. But it's a limited resource; we only have so much to give. The more we allow our attention to pour out into the world, the more scattered we become, and the harder it will be to focus it within. We need to seriously evaluate where we are spending this precious wealth of our attention. Christ says:

Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:19–21

The mind is fond of pleasure and seeks it in the world. Our Master knows this and so attaches us to the greatest pleasure – the Shabd

reverberating within us, the eternal source of happiness and bliss. This is where we should place our treasure – our attention, our love and devotion.

All human beings have the capacity to become one with the Creator – to return to the source. The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson is often quoted as having said, “Humanity is our actuality, but divinity is our potentiality.”



We Are One

The saints tell us there is no separation between the soul and the Lord. Our true self is the soul, and the soul is one with the Lord. We have never been separated. We are one. It is the ego and the mind that create this illusion of separation. When our karmas are cleared and the mind is under control, we will realize the “I” or individual does not exist and the soul will be freed.

Maharaj Sawan Singh explains this relationship so clearly in *Spiritual Gems*:

The Creator is existence, knowledge and bliss – or power, wisdom, and love. An atom or a spark of this essence of existence is the soul which, encased in its coverings of mind and matter, forms the individual man. If the coverings were removed from the individual, the soul would be naked and would be qualified to know its Creator. The individual will know itself – attain self-realization – and will in turn, be able to know its Creator. Wrapped in its coverings, the soul merely hears of its source from others or reads about the Creator in books, makes guesses and draws imaginary pictures to satisfy its intellectual curiosity.

At our core we are bliss, power, wisdom and love. But lacking that realization we identify as John or Mary, Ashok or Meera. We think we are smart or stupid, tall or short, rich or poor, lucky or unlucky. When we see beyond these limitations, we know that we are one with the Shabd – that divine current that animates and sustains each and every one of us.

Seemingly trapped in the darkness of the world, salvation comes to us when saints are sent by God to wake us up, present the facts of our existence, and show us a way out of the chaos and darkness of intellect, instinct, and duality. Why are saints so essential to ending this separation of the soul from the Lord?

Maharaj Sawan Singh helps us understand the role of a saint when he tells us in *Spiritual Gems*:

The individual, as he is constituted now, is incapable of understanding what happened or is happening at the source. The saints who come from

that end and have access to that end at will, know what is going on at that end; but, by the very nature of things they are handicapped in trying to convey information to the individual at this end. They attempt, in various ways, to satisfy their audiences. Some are convinced, and some are not. No matter what answer is given to these questions, we can always find fault with it and even if reason and intellect are satisfied for the time being, the necessity for converting theory into facts and experience and personal realization still remains.

But the point is that saints do not wish to satisfy their audiences by empty words. They offer to take the inquirer to the other end and thus give him firsthand knowledge. One beauty of it is that, at that end, these questions do not arise. So if the curious questioner would exercise a little patience and faith, most of his questions would be answered automatically as his experiences increase.

Mystics tell us that we are trapped in this creation, as if we're at the bottom of a deep well. It's dark and damp down there, and we're lonely and uncomfortable. But someone comes along – in our case, the Master – and drops a rope down the well. He tells us to grab hold of the rope and he'll pull us out. The little bit of faith and patience required of us is to grab hold of the rope and keep holding on while the Master pulls us up out of the well – pulls our consciousness inward and upward so that we can become fully conscious of the love, the Shabd, at the core of our being.

Taking the rope and holding on to it is what we do when we apply for initiation, get initiated, and then follow the teachings. Once we are initiated, the process begins – of moving from intellect, instinct, and duality to the experience of oneness that we all crave. We do this by orienting our entire lives toward our spiritual objective, by following the vows we take at initiation, including doing two and one-half hours of meditation each day. Day in and day out we have to stick to the vows taken at the time of initiation, all the while living a balanced life.

Although the guidance of a living master is essential to the journey home, the relationship between Master and disciple is not physical, and the physical form of the Master is not the be-all and end-all of our spiritual relationship with him. Moving beyond the physical, we have to dive deep within ourselves through our meditation to find the real Master,

the true divinity that is the core of our being. The Master is our outer gateway to the inner experience of our true selves, the Shabd. He is our guide, but not our ultimate destination. Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Legacy of Love*, “May your love of the form culminate in the love of the Formless.”

Through simran and bhajan we hold on to the rope of Shabd, hold onto the Master’s hand. It is that very effort of holding on to the Shabd that allows us to let go of all that keeps us bound to this world – our attachments, our desires, our fears, our karmas. The saints tell us that the effect of meditation is to destroy our karmas, to clear them, to enable us to rise above them. By attaching our mind to the Shabd through meditation, we purify it. It is only then that our soul can be released from the mind and rise above it, and we can be cleansed of our karmas and our attachments.

We don’t have to worry about what these karmas are; we don’t have to examine them or analyze them. When we take our garbage to the dumpster, we don’t pick through it to see what’s in there – we just throw it out. We don’t think about it. We just let go of it. First it’s in our hands – we’ve collected it, put it in a bag, and then we toss it and it’s gone. Our meditation is like that. We’re taking out our trash and burning it. Then we can feel light.

All we need is a little patience and faith, to hold on to the rope and attune ourselves with the real Master, the Shabd within, as he pulls us out of the dark well of this world. Then we are truly one.



Swimming Along the Waves of Detachment

In *A Lamp in the Darkness: Illuminating the Path Through Difficult Times*, Jack Kornfield, an American Buddhist teacher and author, writes:

*Like a sandcastle, all is temporary.
Build it, tend it, enjoy it.
And when the time comes
let it go.*

The lives we have so carefully crafted for ourselves are akin to a flimsy sandcastle that can be knocked down in an instant. Nevertheless, we must attend to our duties and build our lives, careers, families, and relationships in this world. We enjoy the fruits of them and suffer pain from them. But, most of all, we must be ready to detach and give them up at the blink of an eye.

Kornfield's description of detachment is at the heart of Sant Mat's teachings: to live in this world and not be of it. That is, we must be ready to let go of the life we have toiled for after we "build it, tend it, enjoy it." But, how is it possible to live in this world and not quite be of it? How is it possible to toil to create a life, career and family and be ready to give it all up without even a moment's notice?

To get a clearer picture on how to detach, let's turn to Maharaj Charan Singh's words on surrender in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III. He tells us:

We must accept the events of life. You cannot change the course of the events of life, but you can always adjust to them. Adjusting to the events of life will always make you happy and relaxed. If you swim against the waves, you will drown. If you swim along with the waves, you will get to the shore easily.

Hazur is describing the act of letting go as swimming "along with the waves" rather than against them. He's emphasizing that if we go with the flow and keep fulfilling our duties one by one as they arise, we will never become over-involved or attached to outcomes.

Detachment is ultimately a form of acceptance. This acceptance of life's events allows us to adjust our sails to the winds of this life. And eventually, our ability to adjust leads to a deep surrender to the Lord's will. This process thus becomes the life cycle of detachment: without a deep-rooted acceptance for our circumstances, we can never fully acclimate to the ebbs and flows of this life or surrender at the feet of the Lord to ultimately escape the clutches of this world.

It is our willingness to surrender that eventually aids us in detaching from this creation and rising above the worldly plane to unite with the Lord. By utilizing these tools of accepting, adjusting, and surrendering, we can loosen our attachment to our loved ones while still fulfilling our karmic duty to them.

But how can the ultimate form of detachment from the creation finally occur? In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Hazur explains:

Our main attention should be towards the Father... Only attachment [to the Lord] will create detachment in us. When we are attached to something higher within, then automatically we are detached from this creation. Then we will mix with people as a matter of duty.

The idea that Hazur is relaying is that if we focus on the Father at all times through our simran and bhajan, our attention will pull away from this world on its own. Then, we will attend to our worldly obligations as we “swim along with the waves.” In other words, we will wade through the ups and the downs of this life fully aware that our effort in meditation trumps all aspects of this material plane.

With our eyes on salvation, we come to realize that detachment is a necessary and ongoing aspect in our lives as disciples. Even though we must “build it, tend it, enjoy it,” we must always be prepared to let all of our material attachments go without notice. As we begin to attach ourselves via simran and bhajan to our higher purpose – God-realization – we gradually accept our plight, adjust the sails of our expectation, and surrender our attachments to the material world.



Always Remember

Advice from Baba Jaimal Singh Ji in Spiritual Letters

With love and devotion, keep the inner faculties and the higher mind always attached to the Shabd-dhun, and remain content at whichever place he keeps you. All work is his work; remain happy wherever he keeps you, and take on whatever work you do as the Satguru's work – do not keep yourself in it. Instill it firmly in your mind – this idea should never leave the mind – that the body, mind, wealth, and the inner faculties, the eyes, mouth, nose, ears, hands, feet, all, everything, each and every article that exists in the world, belongs to the Satguru: "I do not exist." Look upon everything you do as the Satguru's work; do only that which is appropriate.

This advice, the directive I have written above, should never leave your mind at any time. Keep these words firmly in the mind while doing your work, and also during simran and while listening to the Shabd-dhun. You will then certainly receive the bliss of the Shabd-dhun. Always remember these three points: Do not feel elated even if you receive the kingship of fourteen realms, because it would be false and transitory – if you love false things, you will be deceived. If such a sovereignty is taken away, do not feel depressed, because he who gave it took it away. It belonged to him and it was unreal. However much respect or criticism someone may offer, neither be pleased with the respect and praise nor offended by the criticism. Always remain happy and content wherever the Lord is pleased to place you. When our attachments do not touch the mind, and the mind always remains in balance, then the boon of entering Sach Khand by way of the Shabd-dhun comes daily through the Satguru's Word. Grace and mercy especially are upon you all the time. Keep listening to the Shabd-dhun every day with the inner faculties of surat and nirat.



BOOK REVIEW

The Bhagavad Gita: Message Divine

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A fresh translation with commentary on the ancient Bhagavad Gita is now available in the Radha Soami Satsang Beas series “Mysticism in World Religions.” It offers a welcome invitation to read and re-read this classic of spiritual literature. A scripture such as the Bhagavad Gita survives over 2400 years because it speaks to something eternally true in the human condition. In all times and cultures, people have struggled to understand what our purpose is on this earth, how we can resolve difficult choices, and how we can choose the best path to truth, reality, and God realization.

Arjuna, a famous warrior, is the hero of the story. He has fought valiantly and well in past conflicts. But now when he faces his enemies, he recognizes family members, friends, and former teachers among them. He knows well that these very people have behaved badly and betrayed his own family. Nevertheless, he is willing to die himself rather than hurt them. Torn by conflicting values, Arjuna asks his Guru, Krishna, for advice. Krishna urges him to fight, yet Arjuna resists.

Krishna offers many logical arguments about duty, caste obligations, and the illusionary nature of all activities in the world. When none of these convince Arjuna, Krishna takes him into the spiritual planes, shows him his radiant form and just a fragment of the power, majesty, and splendour that is at the heart of the creation.

Interpreters have understood the Gita as a metaphor for the battle that must be fought between the disciple and all the familiar, yet dangerous, aspects of the mind. The battle is to be won by meditation.

3-41-43: Therefore, O Arjuna, controlling first the senses, slay [desire,] this sinful destroyer of wisdom and discrimination.... Thus, knowing Him (the Self), who is superior to the intellect, control the [sensual] self by the Self (soul), and slay, O mighty-armed Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire, so hard to conquer.

In the Gita, Krishna is a living human being who serves as charioteer and guru to Arjuna. Krishna is also, however, the Lord himself, the divine in human form. Speaking with the voice of the Lord, Krishna says,

7:9-10: I am the pure fragrance in earth and brightness in fire. I am the life in all beings and the austerity in ascetics.... I am the intelligence of the intelligent and the splendour of the splendid.

9:17-18: I am the father, the mother, the sustainer and the grandsire of the universe. I am the knowable, the purifier, the sacred syllable.... I am the goal, the support, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend. I am the origin and the dissolution, the foundation, the storehouse and the imperishable seed.

In traditional Hindu culture spirituality has often been associated with physical renunciation of the world (leaving home, family and community to live alone in the forest) or with emotional renunciation (hating the world). But the Bhagavad Gita offers a different solution – to enter freely and boldly on to the path of action (where one enters fully into one's responsibilities) yet surrendering all the results of one's work. To do that one must leave behind selfishness, ego, and illusions of control. This is only possible if one constantly remembers God.

8:7-8: Therefore, at all times remember Me and fight. With your mind and understanding absorbed in Me, you will surely come to Me. Engaged in the yoga (discipline) of constant repetition, not allowing the mind to wander away to anything else, one who meditates on the supreme resplendent Puruṣa reaches Him, O Arjuna.

Krishna urges Arjuna to exert every effort in the practice of meditation:

5:27-28: Shutting out all external objects, fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, equalizing the outgoing and incoming breaths moving within the nostrils, controlling the senses, mind and intellect, the sage (meditator) who is intent on liberation, being free from desire, fear and anger, is indeed ever liberated.

2:40: In this discipline, no effort is ever lost and no harm is ever done. Even a little practice of this righteous discipline saves one from great fear.

Arjuna is concerned what will become of him if, after he has attempted meditation, he fails to still the mind:

6:37-40: Arjuna said: He who has been unable to control himself, though he has faith, and whose mind has wandered away from meditation, what end, O Kṛṣṇa, does he meet, having failed to attain perfection in meditation? Does he not perish like a dissolving cloud, O Kṛṣṇa, fallen from both [this life and the life Divine]? ... The Blessed Lord said: O Arjuna, neither in this life nor hereafter is there destruction for him, for never does anyone who practices good, O beloved, ever come to grief.

Three paths to God are described in detail in the Bhagavad Gita. First, the path of *karma* yoga, where actions are performed without concern for their results or fruits. Second, *gyan* yoga or the path of wisdom, where the higher mind is engaged to seek God. And third, *bhakti* yoga or the path of devotion, which the Gita presents as the highest path. Yet the Gita also tells us that these three can work in harmony. Being a good person and practising discernment and clear thinking help lead one to love for God.

Like any scripture that has survived for millennia, the Bhagavad Gita contains many truths, a wide expanse of human experience, and a broad choice of interpretations. But no matter what you are searching for in the Gita, the focus on the centrality of meditation and devotion is inspiring.

12:8: Fix your mind in Me alone, let your thoughts be absorbed in Me. In Me alone you will live hereafter. Of this there is no doubt.

2:53: When your intellect, which is perplexed by the Vedic texts, stays steady and unshaken in deep meditation, then you will attain the insight of yoga.

The promises that Krishna offers Arjuna still have the power to comfort seekers today.

9:26-27: Whosoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, that offering of love, of the pure of heart, I accept.

4:11: In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I accept them to My love, for it is My path, O Arjuna, that men follow in all ways.

18:64-66: Listen again to My supreme word, the most secret of all. You are dearly beloved to Me; therefore I will tell you what is good for you. Fix your heart on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and bow down to Me. Thus, you shall come to Me. I truly promise you, for you are indeed dear to Me. Abandoning all [considerations of] duties, come to Me alone for shelter. I will release you from all sins; do not grieve.

Perhaps like Arjuna, having spent time in the field of action, and having gotten just a glimpse of the splendour that supports us and calls us home, we can say,

18:73: Destroyed is my delusion and I have gained realization through Your grace, O infallible One (Kṛṣṇa). With my doubts dispelled, I now stand firm. I will act according to Your word.



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