

August 2015

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India
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VOLUME 11 • ISSUE EIGHT • AUGUST 2015

Light into Light

*When I see him, I sing his praises,
and I, his humble servant, become patient.
Meeting the true guru divine,
I merge into the current of Sound.
Where the dazzling white light is seen,
there the unstruck sound of Shabd resounds.
One's light merges in the Light –
by the grace of the guru, I know this.
Jewels in the treasure chamber of the heart
glitter and flash like lightning.
The Lord is near, not far –
he permeates and pervades my soul.
Where the light of the undying sun shines,
the light of burning lamps seems as nothing –
by the grace of the guru, I know this.
The servant Namdev is absorbed in the celestial Lord.*

Namdev, as included in *Many Voices, One Song*



Come What May

Generally people are heard to remark that there are only two certainties in life – taxes and death. However, it is possible that there is a third certainty – namely uncertainty or change. That everything and everybody will change, that nothing is absolutely cast in stone, is as dependable and certain a fact as death and taxation.

Let us consider these three things. As far as taxation is concerned, there is the business of rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. If we don't settle this lifetime's accounts with Caesar now, we may have to come back in a future life to repay our worldly debts. What a disaster that would be! Imagine having to come back because we dodged our taxes or were not upfront in our dealings with the world. In this world everything has a price and every price must be paid, either now or later. Ultimately, of course, we understand that all of this balancing of accounts is in our Master's hands. Maharaj Charan Singh said:

How he accounts for what is due to Caesar is for him to decide. There is no hard and fast rule about it. But Caesar must get his due. Whatever we owe to this creation, we have to pay that, but the Master stands as our ransom to Kal and then takes us back to the Father.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

For initiates there is more to this because paying taxes is merely the tip of the moral iceberg. Our attitude towards taxes and similar issues shows our commitment to keeping our third vow. The Masters ask us to lead pure, clean, honest and moral lives. The implications, and hopefully the results of this, are that we will gradually become

kinder, more humble and more patient with everyone, and less willing to cheat or deceive anyone. The huge submerged part of the iceberg is attending wholeheartedly to our third vow, and it is not always easy. As Maharaj Jagat Singh puts it:

One does not become a satsangi simply by being initiated. One must mould one's life in accordance with the principles of satsang. Every thought, word and deed must conform to them. Actions speak louder than words. Thoughts are even more potent. A satsangi's daily conduct must bear the hallmark of excellence and must reveal that he is the follower of a Satguru, a true Master.

The Science of the Soul

This wonderful goal to aim towards is something of a challenge. We must never forget that, once initiated, we become representatives of our Master and of the path of Sant Mat. We need to have that thought uppermost in our minds at all times. We need to be asking ourselves on an ongoing basis if our conduct – in thought, word and deed – would please our Master. Fortunately for us, help is always at hand. The Master understands our frailties and is with us all the time, guiding us and nudging us in the right direction. However, he tells us plainly that it is through meditation that we will develop the qualities we seek, and find the courage we need to follow his example in all things. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

If with the help of meditation we are filled with love and devotion for the Father, all other qualities will just come like cream on milk in us. Automatically we'll be filled with those qualities also – we'll be very soft-hearted; we will not injure

anybody; we will not deceive anybody; we will not cheat anybody; we will not like to hurt anybody. All these qualities automatically will come in us, if we are attending to our meditation.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

What about the next certainty? What about uncertainty or change? Change is a peculiar thing because sometimes we can see it happen and sometimes we can't. We can watch the wind blow dead leaves off a tree and see the appearance of the tree change in front of our eyes. But we cannot see the constant and continuous changes that are taking place right here and now in our bodies, at the cellular and molecular level. And we may feel that we did not set the changes in motion, yet it is we who must deal with their effects and consequences daily, often minute by minute.

Everything in us and around us is changing and indeed must change. It is the nature of the Lord's creation at this level that change is not negotiable – it is a certainty. Everything must change; everything must decay; everything must die. All of this can add up to fear and insecurity. When our plans and endeavours are changed or come to nought, what is our response? Do we seek more and more complicated worldly solutions in an effort to feel more secure? Do we become obsessed as we try to seek guarantees and certainties? Do we not understand that every worldly solution will, of necessity, be subject to change? No matter what we try or where we go in this world, there can never be any guarantees.

This may sound rather bleak and hopeless, particularly for those of us who may be prone to fear of change – fear of the unknown and the unpredictable. It is, however, not a bleak picture at all, but a glorious one for those who recognize it as intrinsic to this level of creation,

and who seek the solution beyond this world. For there is someone and somewhere that is true, lasting and permanent – the Lord and his abode, Sach Khand.

In order for us to access the Lord and reach Sach Khand, the Lord sends his earthly representative, the Master, into the lives of those who long for something true and lasting and who have recognized that they will not find it here. It is the Master who can bring certainty, security, peace, love and truth into our lives because he is the embodiment of all those things. When we attach ourselves to him, we attach ourselves to truth and security.

Our Master has taken charge of our destiny, so things will continue to change, seemingly unpredictably in our lives, but in fact only in accordance with his wishes. After initiation we are no longer solely bound by the laws of this level of creation. We belong to our Master. Nothing can happen to us that is not for our own good. Nothing can happen to us or come to us that is not sent by love and is not for our own good. There is such comfort to be found in this knowledge; knowing that we can find such security, even in the face of change and unpredictability, because we have been claimed by a perfect living Master and he is in charge.

Our Master is with us all the time – a source of never-ending consistency, strength, security and love. Meditation is how we learn to become receptive to him and all he offers. Meditation is how we begin to absorb his qualities and feel their influences in our lives. It is through meditation that he can pour his love and strength into us. It is our meditation that connects us to his perfect love and strength. How foolish we would be if we were not accessing all of that which is available to us!

The more we meditate and follow his example, the more we will learn to love him, trust him and have full faith in him. Whenever and

however we may find ourselves as we journey towards death, we can know with absolute certainty that it is all happening as he wills and is therefore for our own good. He will send us only what we need to cleanse us and prepare us for what he has in store.

We can help him and ourselves for the remainder of our journey by trying to lessen our attachment to the world and strengthening attachment to him – through meditation and constant simran. Meditation and doing simran during the day will not only help as we draw closer to death, but may also help us after death. These are our spiritual treasures that the Master is storing for us, and after death they may make it possible for us to avoid having to come back here for another human birth.

Nothing that the Master does can be arbitrary, haphazard or accidental. Nothing can be undeserved or negative. He is guiding us slowly but surely towards that moment of ecstatic union. Everything, absolutely everything, is in his hands, and anything to do with the Master is certain.



Don't feel worried, have faith in him. All times are not the same; if good days have passed away, bad ones will also pass away in due course. Meditation is the only source of consolation in adversity. ... Satguru is always with you, and is guiding you in every way. See what will happen next, and do not feel perturbed. One should accept all adversities as the Master's will and bear them gratefully, with fortitude.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *In the Footsteps of the Master*

Increase your Need

We have an abiding need, a continuing and lasting need, to receive and to give love. It is this profound need that takes us to a perfect loving Being or Shabd Master while we are alive on earth, so that with him and by his grace we can reach a level of flawless unconditional love. From the Master's side he brings pure unconditional love to the table, and from our side, from our human level, what we bring is our sincere effort and enduring patience. These surely are the signs of our care and our love.

We come from the boundless ocean of love, but once touched by the power of illusion, of maya, we become tainted. Our capacity for effort and patience becomes impaired and eventually eroded. To work towards fulfilling our most profound and most basic need – to reunite with the ocean of love – we need to put in sincere effort.

In one of the poems in the *Masnavi* Rumi writes, “Increase your need, for without need, the All-Powerful does not give anything to anyone.” He explains that need acts like a net for all things that exist. Nothing exists for which there is not a need, he says. Wherever there is a need, the very need becomes the mould or receptacle into which nature pours that which is needed.

If your sincere need is for this world and its gifts, actions and attractions, then that need will be fulfilled. If your sincere need is for the spiritual world, for its understanding, wisdom and love, then that need will be fulfilled. If the need is great, much will be given. If the need is small, little will be poured into that human vessel.

Rumi explains that along with every need the All-Powerful gives tools to his creatures. These tools are given in proportion to their needs. So everyone receives the tools he requires so that he may fulfil

his own needs. Rumi makes it clear that this fact applies right across the stage of evolution.

He uses three examples, starting with a small underground creature, the mole. The mole, he reminds us, digs tunnels underground. He lives in darkness and performs his work in darkness. He has no eyes. For the mole, eyes would be redundant tools. Next comes the mouse, who is a nibbler. His need is to nibble and he goes after satisfying this need, and no more. To the mouse, Rumi explains, a mind is given that is proportionate to his need. Man, however, wanders far and wide in search of fulfilling his need for happiness. His search is limitless. He needs to be happy and this need takes him through the most dangerous terrain and the riskiest experiments. He may try to experience every bit of happiness that the body can provide. He may enter the vastness of the mind worlds where his questions and enquiries know no end, or where his desire for personal gain and recognition keeps growing. Or after many such lifetimes he may enter the spirit world, to have his needs fulfilled there.

We are the spiritually needy ones, we who feel persistently that something is missing – that something important is lacking in our lives and we must find it. When our Master called us to him he explained this all to us and we began to realize how very important this unfulfilled and persistent sense of need is. And also how it will accompany us all along our way on the path of divine love.

It is our need, our thirst for the Holy Spirit or Shabd, that keeps us on the path. Masters warn us that this need passes through many stages. Sometimes we feel the need surging, like a raging fire in us, becoming a deep longing. At other times it almost dies down, it dwindles and smoulders as if close to extinction. But in spite of its ups and downs, the need remains. As Soami Ji says to the Lord in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*You are the moon
I am subject to your power
On you depends
The ebb and tide of my soul.*

Our need will never end, not until it is satisfied. It is deeply rooted and is most precious. In *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, a translation by Rabindranath Tagore, this need is referred to as “the spirit of the quest” and we’re told that it helps us in our search. Bulleh Shah tells us that we need to have this need because we are climbing mountains of love. We are climbing a mountain so high that it reaches the source of all and everything. In the Masnavi Rumi tells us to “increase the need, oh needy one”. And we heed these words, because we now belong to our Master. We no longer need the world or belong to it. We are merely fulfilling our worldly duties to mark time while we fulfil our spiritual ones.

Kabir entreats us to do our spiritual work now. He says:

*O friend, hope for him now while you live.
Know him whilst you live.
Understand whilst you live
for it is in this life that you will find deliverance
from this low human self and its many bonds.
If your bonds are not broken whilst living
What hope do you have of deliverance in death?*

Rabindranath Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*

Our Master asks us to do the same. Meditate now, he says. And it is when the Shabd Master touches the soul of the initiate that it becomes possible for the questing soul to do its real work and fulfil the profound need for self-realization and God-realization.

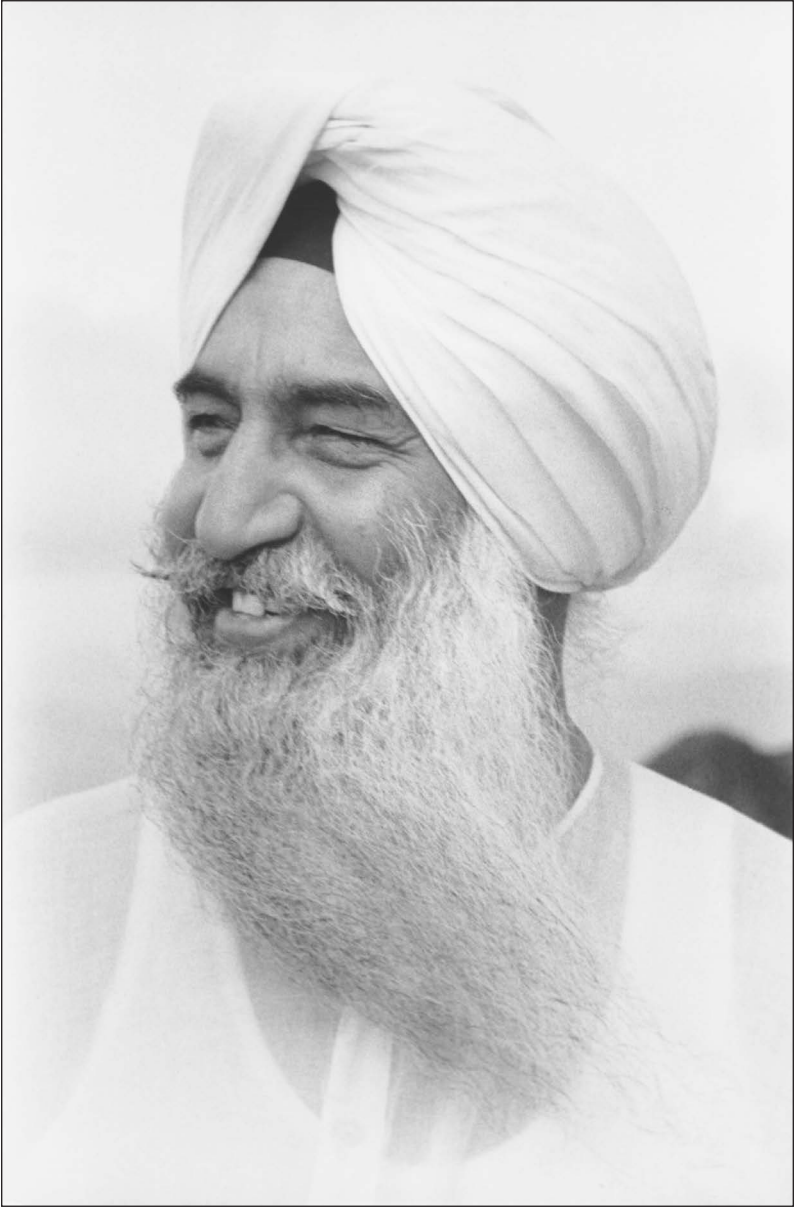
The Alpha and the Omega

Scientists tell us that the human species has existed for more than fifty thousand years. However, the recorded history of humankind is brief – a mere seven thousand years. But for as long as we have been able to trace the story of human beings, wherever they left evidence of their habitation, we find sacred places, tombs and temples, symbols and shrines, indications that humanity has always searched for meaning beyond the realm of the senses, beyond ordinary daily living.

This confirms what the Masters teach: that the soul, though trapped in the body and enslaved by the mind, never forgets its Creator and a longing for him is always there, albeit hidden under layers of dross accumulated through the aeons of creation. The soul may not even be aware of what it longs for, but that restlessness, that yearning, has constantly been there.

However, the mind and senses have managed to block and obscure it by becoming intensely engrossed in the pleasures and happenings on this material plane. This has resulted in endless births and deaths, in different forms, places and circumstances, due to the law of karma that came into effect from the moment of creation. We went on sowing through our actions and then reaping what we had sown, even as we were reaping the previously sown crop. It is only after many ages, when we become disillusioned with what the world has to offer, that our soul's longing starts to become insistent. We become restless and unfulfilled; and a strange yearning, loneliness and dissatisfaction begin to fill us. In *Divine Light* Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

The feeling of loneliness and depression that we sometimes feel is due to the natural inclination of the soul towards its home. You



Maharaj Charan Singh

may give to your mind whatsoever it desires and try to satisfy its habit of flitting from one pretty object to another, but there comes a moment when you feel that all this world is nothing but a mirage and there is no one in the world that you can call your own.

When this happens, when the soul's longing becomes dominant and we realize more and more the futility of everything that has kept us busy for so long, our divine Father, in his wisdom and grace, allocates us to one of his perfect saints, who puts us in contact with the teachings and will guide our souls home. This is the Lord's answer to the longing of the soul. Our souls were crying for help and the Lord sent us his son, a perfect living Master.

So the wise thing to do is to listen to his advice and do our very best to follow it. Most especially we must do our meditation, our bhajan and our simran. This is not a minor thing. It is vital for the well-being of our soul, and we do not know how much time we have to do this work.

The Roman emperor and mystic Marcus Aurelius wrote:

Think often of how swiftly all things pass away and are no more – the works of Nature and the works of man. The substance of the Universe, matter, is like unto a river that flows on forever. All things are not only in a constant state of change, but they are the cause of constant and infinite change in other things. Upon a narrow ledge thou standest! Behind thee, the bottomless abyss of the Past! In front of thee, the Future that will swallow up all things that are now! Over what things, then, in this present life wilt thou, O foolish man, be disquieted or exalted – making

thyself wretched; seeing that they can vex thee only for a time – a brief, brief time!

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

The Masters tell us that our destiny for this life was mapped out before we were born, formed by our karma and desires. They explain that there are three types of karma: our stored karma that will eventually all have to be cleared, our karma for this life, and the new karma we may sow in this life. About new karma Maharaj Charan Singh tells us:

Every day when you are meditating, you remind yourself of your destination. You are trying to travel that path. You are trying firmly to remain on the principles while travelling on that path. Then, naturally, you will not be sowing any seed for the future, so you are making no new or kriyaman karmas.

So we learn, in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, that the way to avoid creating new karma is to meditate. And about this life's karma he says:

So we have to face this destiny as the will of the Lord. When you devote proper time to spiritual practice, you will become so strong that you can smilingly and calmly face your destiny. You will not feel much of the ups and downs of the world, and you will be able to account for everything quite gracefully.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Here we're told that the way to deal with this current life's karma is to meditate. Then, about our store of old karmas, he says: "The sinchit, store or residue of karmas can be burned only by meditation."

So the way to eventually get rid of the stored karma is – how else? – by meditation. The answer to just about everything, the alpha and the omega of this path, is meditation.

The Master's only reason for being here is to rescue us from the world and to take us back to our real home in Sach Khand. He gives us four principles to live by and, importantly, he gives us simran, repetition of five holy names, to help us keep the mind under control. The more we can keep our thoughts in simran, the less we will be turning the things and affairs of the world over and over in our minds.

We really just have to put into practice our Master's instructions. He has no hidden agenda or secret motive. He asks for no payment, no worldly return. What he asks us to do is entirely for our own benefit. He is all-wise and all-powerful and he can show us the way out of here, where we have been enslaved and imprisoned for so long. He knows the way and he will help and guide us along it, but we have to listen to his advice – the advice he gives out of love for us, a love that goes beyond our understanding.

We may perhaps be forgiven for thinking that always to live up to our Master's standard is beyond our power. But he assures us that we would not have been initiated if we were not able to succeed in this great quest. Under his guidance, with his help and through his grace and mercy, we can ultimately become like him, become one with him.

In *Call of the Great Master*, the Great Master is quoted as saying:

Satguru's grace is needed at every step. ... But have no worry. The seed of Nam sown in the heart of a disciple must grow one day. No power on earth can destroy it. A soul initiated by a true Master must one day reach Sach Khand without fail.

We can't help feeling unworthy of this great grace. But no matter how insignificant we may feel, no matter how small a dot in this vast

universe, the fact is that he has sent his son to collect us, to initiate us on to the path leading home – and now, what we have to work on and spend our time and effort on, is the growth and enlarging of this little dot.

So often in life we have the purest and best of intentions. We really try, and sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. We know when we have slipped up – perhaps neglected our chores or our responsibilities towards spouse, family or parents. We may have missed a deadline at work through our own fault, or be in a financial pinch because we overspent on something unnecessary. Or, worst scenario for a satsangi, we may have not been giving proper time and attention to our daily meditation. But in the end we know right from wrong, we know when we are not doing our best, we know when we can do more and better. And if we ever want to define ourselves through our actions as our Master's disciples, we must listen to what he tells us and follow his instructions to the letter. Simran and meditation are the tools we have been given and their importance has been stressed by all the Masters.

Master Charan Singh says in *Die to Live*:

The more we concentrate at the eye centre and the more our attention is upward, the more peaceful we become. ... In order to get tranquillity and peace, the only method is meditation.

We must never forget that we are waging a continuous battle with the mind and the five passions and we have to strive daily to triumph over them. There will be failures but there will also be successes. And we can always be sure of our Master's love and forgiveness. The Master is prepared to forgive us again and again, as long as we come back and try again. In a short poem attributed to Rumi, this is made abundantly clear:

*Come, come, whoever you are,
wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.
This is not a caravan of despair.
It doesn't matter that you've broken your vow
a thousand times.
Still come,
and yet again, come.*



We are all knocking at the Lord's door to forgive us for all the sins we have committed, all the karmas we have committed, right from the beginning of the creation. Since we have been part of it, we have collected a lot of karmas. Unless we are forgiven for all that we have done, the soul can never go back to the Father. Meditation is nothing but seeking his forgiveness, nothing else. "Whatever we have done or we are too weak to do every day, please forgive us." Meditation is nothing else. It is not vain words to say to him, but practically we pray to him for forgiveness by attending to meditation. It is the same as repentance. ... So repentance and forgiveness go together. Unless we repent, unless we realize what we have done, we will never ask for forgiveness.

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

He Is Everything

Time after time in question and answer sessions with Baba Ji we hear satsangis expressing their distress over their lack of love for him. They sometimes go on to say that they really battle with their meditation and are doing this only out of a sense of duty – not out of love and devotion for him. One can sense the feeling of absolute helplessness in the disciples making such an admission. They want to love the Master but they find themselves unable to do so – and they know deep inside that they do not feel the pangs of love, separation and longing that the saints speak of.

This condition is similar to the plight of Sant Namdev when he asks, “Without love, how to practise devotion?” And this devotion seems to elude him.

*For now, my mind still chases whatever I happen to see.
I'm so tired of this place, says Namdev,
with the enemy Kal always before me,
trying his best to harass me.*

Many Voices, One Song

Baba Ji's answer to the question always boils down to advising the disciple to just attend to his meditation, even if it's just out of a sense of duty. Love and devotion, he says, will grow out of attending to the practice of meditation.

In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh Ji also says:

Love is something which you can't help; it is just there. It's not something which you are calculating to have or you are

contemplating or you are trying to have. ... If love is there, it is there. If it comes, it just comes. But by meditation everybody can grow that love. If the Lord has given certain grace to somebody, that's a different thing. ... If somebody inherits riches, that is the grace of the donor, but everybody can become rich by hard work. Everybody can grow that feeling, that love, that intensity, by meditation.

Somebody once asked Hazur if it was true that God brought this creation into existence so that he could experience himself through his creation. Hazur answered that yes, this was true. He also said something to this effect: that the Lord is the one pulling, he is the one being pulled and he is the one preparing us to be pulled.

So if he is everything – if he is the ultimate doer – then how can we be at fault for feeling no love for him? Is this love really in our hands? Surely love must first exist in the heart of the Beloved before we can feel drawn to him? Then, why do we need to put in effort in the form of meditation to increase our love and devotion?

Baba Ji has explained that at our present state of consciousness, our acknowledgement that he is in control of everything is just lip service. We say this because it is what we have read in books and heard in satsangs. When we go within and are in touch with the inner sound and the inner form of the Master, Baba Ji says, then we will *know* that he is in control of everything. This will be true knowledge based on our own experience. So our purpose, and the effort we are expected to put in, is really to elevate our state of consciousness so that we can experience for ourselves what at present are just concepts to us.

Another disciple once confessed to her Master that at one point in her life she had loved him intensely, but with the passing of time she no longer felt that way. Tears filled her eyes as she further questioned

whether she had ever truly loved him at all, because she knew that real love is supposed to be everlasting. With much compassion the Master explained to her that she had not stopped loving her Master, but that 'life' had simply got in the way.

It happens to us all. Certain life-altering events hit us like a powerful storm and shake us to our very core. Marriage, the birth of a child, moving to a new city, or even that crucial project at work, are examples of circumstances that can bring major changes in our daily lives. No matter how joyous or fulfilling, such life-altering events often have the effect of disrupting our daily meditation practice.

A new mother who gets up every few hours to nurse her baby, or a young associate who works through the night to close a deal, may find it practically impossible to adhere to regular meditation schedules. When faced with such challenges, some disciples may resort to shortening their allotted meditation time, while others may stop meditating altogether. The demands of life affect even very disciplined souls.

The author of *Adventure of Faith* explained how – while still a nun in a convent – she had become completely consumed by a task assigned to her:

The execution of this project demanded an effort that absorbed all my time and energy for about a year and a half, and I was literally unable to think of anything else. I followed the communal prayers mechanically and I practically gave up my personal prayer, so that the inner contact with God loosened more and more. The divine horizon in my life had vanished and the world of faith hardly touched me anymore.

Many of us can relate to the sentiments expressed by the author. Eventually life settles down, but having neglected our meditation

practice for so long, we find that turning towards God again may feel like a difficult task. For many of us it took years to build up our meditation practice, and now it seems that we have to train our mind and body all over again. This author also expressed such sentiments once her project was finally completed:

In the summer of 1962, the project was completed and I found myself facing the ruins of my spiritual life. Filled with horror, I stared into the burnt-out place that once had been a God-loving heart. ... I was paralyzed and knew that a new beginning was impossible. I had neglected Him too much. ... At that time I found myself incapable of a single thought that might bring me close to God again. ... My reckless ambition had destroyed everything that had developed in all those years since my first encounter with God.

At times, when we find ourselves at the same place as the author, we get disheartened and feel helpless. However, the tears of regret that flow from our eyes at having wasted such precious time, that could have been spent with our Beloved, are acceptable in the court of the Lord. These tears of heartfelt remorse nurture the seeds of love again, as we call out to the Lord for his mercy and grace through meditation.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

God's grace is always there, but, brother, we have to become receptive to his grace. ... There is no limit to his grace, which is everywhere, but we have to be receptive.

If meditation is the means whereby we transform our consciousness and become receptive, then giving just one tenth of our daily time to

its practice is the least we must do. Regular meditation is our lifeline to the Master. When we grow lax in this area, it doesn't take long for our connection to be strained. If we neglect meditation, it actually compounds the sense of distance from the Master. So it's not the Master abandoning us: it's we who are drifting away from him.

We need to make an effort to meditate even if we don't always feel like it. In the end it all boils down to us showing the Master that we value our end goal, that we value a closeness with him and that we are willing to put in the effort to prove that to him. Then automatically love will grow and we will succeed in invoking his grace.

So what precisely does the Master want from us? He wants our time, our attention and our obedience. He knows that in the beginning of our journey we may not be very clear about what we are doing on the path. We might not even know for certain that going home is in fact our heart's desire. But in spite of all this, he asks us to put in our very best effort – because this will allow him to shower us with grace and with his love.

During a recent satsang at the Dera, Baba Ji told the gathering that we all need to make a little effort and reach the eye centre. Then, he said, the Lord will do the rest. He will fill us with such longing and pangs of separation and he will shower such grace upon us that the soul will have no choice but to be pulled by the Lord's grace.



In the Divine Presence

It's a rare soul who finds itself in the divine presence spontaneously and without effort. Mindfulness or remembrance of the Divine requires constant vigilance to keep the attention focused on the innermost essence of being, to retain awareness of our own essential being. Not to be continuously carried away on the current of thought and emotion, but to remain conscious and aware. This is the soul's response to the divine call, and He is forever waiting for us to turn to Him. Indeed, He is the one who prompts us from within, and makes us turn.

We already have everything that we need, here and now, in the sacred present, in the eternal now, within our own being. The One Being is always with us, never far. "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

The divine Beloved is our guide, drawing us ever on. Our effort is simply a response to His call. "If we take one step towards Him, He takes a hundred steps towards us." And He is the one who makes us take that one step. His grace is inestimable, His love incalculable. We live in it, could not exist without it. If our attention is distracted and we turn away from it, we may think he has gone away. But He is always present. There is nowhere else for him to go. He is helpless in His love for us, united by the bond of shared and indistinguishable being.

One Being One



Doubt, the Ruthless Hunter

Let's think back to the time when we first discovered the path and were flooded with excitement because we knew that this was what we'd been seeking for so long. We just knew this, beyond any doubt or question. We couldn't have explained how or why we were so certain. That knowledge was there and we just knew.

That knowledge may have carried us along for a long time, on a wave of happy conviction – on a wave of such exultation and joy that we could have danced down the street. That such a wondrous thing could have happened to us!

But the chances are that at some time along the road we may have come to doubt the truth of the path. And this is a terrible thing to happen to any satsangi. All our foundations start to crumble and we may even be brought to a point of bleak despair.

In one of his poems Kabir calls doubt 'the ruthless hunter':

*Doubt, the ruthless hunter,
Lurks within your body;
His arrow has pierced
The flawless diamond of your soul.*

Kabir, the Weaver of God's Name

Doubt is a cruel, destructive thing. It eats away at the very foundations of our faith, at our confidence in ourselves and at our very trust in our Master. When we fall victim to doubt and lose our faith, what do we have left to hold on to? Our faith is the anchor which holds us steady – through the good times and especially through the bad times. When we lose our faith we're in deep trouble.

Where do our doubts come from? They come from the intellect. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II Maharaj Ji tells us that the intellect is a great barrier on the path, and we should satisfy our intellect before following the teachings. Even if we spend our whole life satisfying the intellect, he says, that's not time lost; it's time gained.

Something that can certainly set us up for doubting the truth of the path is that we may have come to it with unrealistic expectations. We expect things to happen quickly. Perhaps a real handicap imposed on us by our modern-day conditioning is that we work to achieve. We put in the effort and we expect to get the rewards. Then, when we don't see those results, we get disillusioned. Subconsciously, or even consciously, we might feel we've been conned – this was all too good to be true. Or maybe we even feel ashamed that even though we're working hard, we can't bring to our Master the results of our effort.

What a complete reorientation there has to be in our approach to meditation – a complete about-face! We have to learn that there's no responsibility on our part to produce results. Our Master doesn't ask for this, neither does he expect it. All he wants is our effort, and he will do the rest. He really is doing it all. Over time we start to realize that there's really not all that much we *can* do – except try, and keep on trying. One might even say that in all things, even our worldly work, he is doing the work.

At first we have no understanding of this. Spiritual realizations come to us very slowly. And except in exceptional cases there has to be a great deal of preparation for any real advance on the path.

Remember when we first came to the path, we heard and we read about the glory of Shabd, that great rolling music that was going to sweep us up and carry us up to the heights, to the sublime region from which we came. And we wanted that. We eagerly sat and did our meditation and tried our best to do our bhajan. And what happened?

Nothing. Or perhaps disappointingly little. Did we have any idea what we were asking for? Getting access to the Shabd is not child's play. In *Light on Sant Mat* Maharaj Ji gives this warning:

In the beginning it is not always easy to stand the force of the Shabd or Sound, which is not always gentle or soothing but may also be terrific in its strength. It is then that the difficulty comes. The physical frame is attuned only by and by to enable it to stand that Divine Energy. In the course of time the Sound or Shabd itself brings about a quiet but useful change in the physical body and makes it more fit and adaptable to receive the Divine Message.

And we think we're ready for this? Sant Mat necessarily has to be a slow path. Slow and steady wins the race.

Still, there's one question or complaint that comes up every single time we meet the Master: "I've been meditating for so many years and nothing's happening – it's just not working." Anyone who's posed this question has probably not taken into account the matter of karma. In *Die to Live* somebody asks Maharaj Ji: Why does meditation take so long? And he gives a clear answer:

Sister, the reason is very clear. Can you know when this creation came into being? ... Since then, we have been here in this creation. We can't even extend our imagination to grasp how long we have been here in this world and how many karmas we have been collecting in every life and how much of a load of that dirt we have collected – and we want to burn it just in a second, comparatively? Naturally it has to take time.

One of the goals of this path is to clear every single karma that we've committed over all those countless lifetimes – in this life and the past, so that we can be lifted to the very top to merge back into the Creator. And that inevitably takes time.

What's more, Hazur Maharaj Ji has told us that it's precisely at those times when we really struggle with our meditation that he is using our effort to clear our karmas. And how grateful we should be that our Master is allowing us to get rid of karmas in this way, instead of making us go through them physically. How foolish we are to get depressed over what appears to be failed meditation. No meditation is ever a failure. How often has the Master not told us to stop analysing, to stop judging our meditation according to our own concepts of success or failure? We simply don't know what the Master is doing with our effort. All he wants from us is our effort, and he will do the rest.

Great Master was the first of the Radha Soami Masters to have to contend with the questioning, doubting Western mind. And in several of his letters he made the point that worldly learning scatters the mind – makes it difficult to achieve concentration: Something that may well come far more easily to people with little education and simple minds. Great Master specifically said that what is required on this path is simplicity of mind, faith and love. If we could apply these qualities to our meditation, no doubt we would be better at it. Then it would simply be a matter of: 'My Master has given me a job to do, and I'll just do it.'

In *Die to Live* Maharaj Ji tells us that not a moment of meditation ever goes to waste. It is being used to take care of thousands and thousands of karmas committed in our past lives. We can't see that happening of course. And as a result there are times when we do get

discouraged and so very tired. But Maharaj Jagat Singh, who could be so incredibly kind and compassionate, said something wonderful:

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

We should never underestimate the scope and power of the Master's grace. With his help and grace there's absolutely nothing that can't be achieved. With his grace this battle to reach the supreme heights of God-realization can and will be won – in time. How can we not achieve our goal – in time? In *Die to Live* there are many promises that if we just try our best to meditate, the Lord's grace will be there for us in abundance. Maharaj Ji tells us:

He is more anxious to give than we are anxious to receive, but we should attend to our meditation. He doesn't withhold what we want if we are attending to meditation, because he has created that desire in us to meditate. He wouldn't create that desire in us to meditate if he were not anxious to give to

us... That shows he is very desirous to pull us to his own level. Otherwise he wouldn't put that instinct in us to meditate.

And ironically, even though he insists on our effort, our meditation itself is quite insignificant. Even though our Master wants it, he certainly doesn't need it. In *Die to Live* somebody asks Maharaj Ji: why doesn't the Master just take us up? Why do we have to go through all this meditation? And he gives a very emphatic answer:

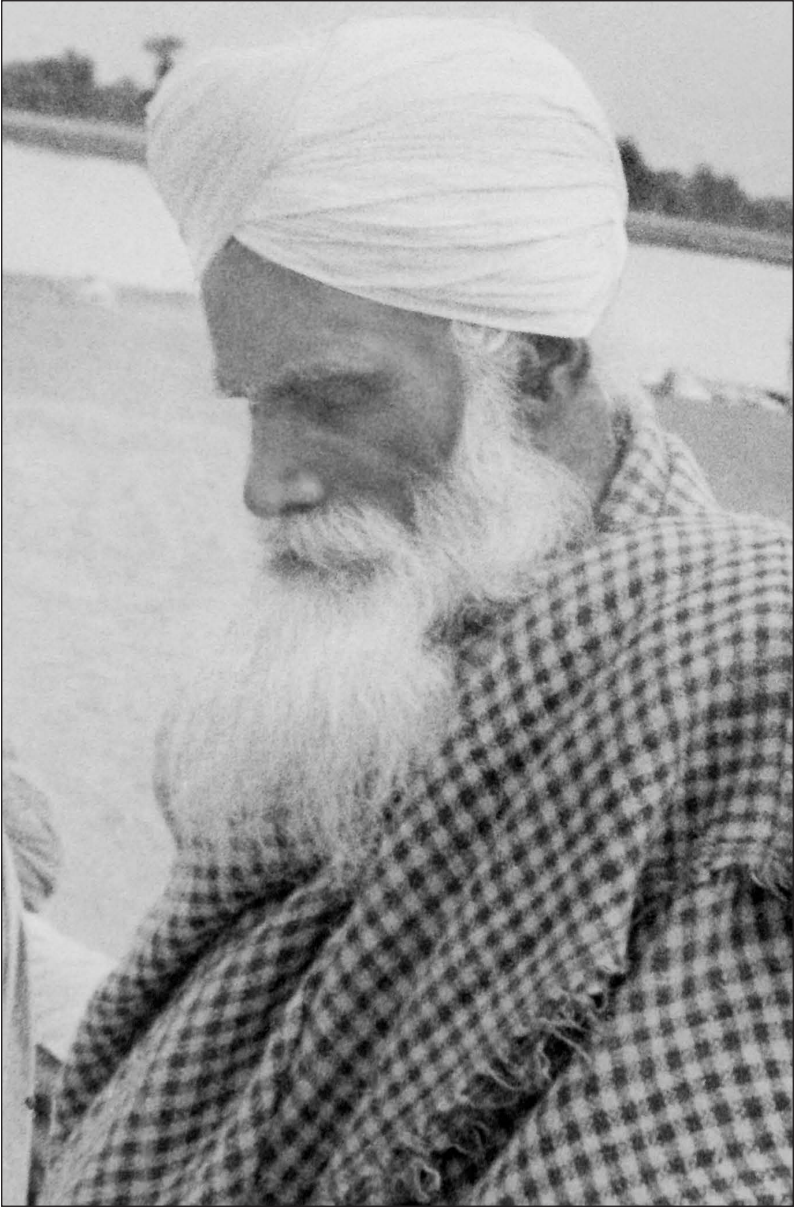
How do you know the Master is not taking you up? Do you think your meditation is taking you up? Nobody's meditation is taking him up to the Father. ... Everything the Lord is doing himself. What are we doing? Leaving all these things to one's own effort, one could never go back to the Father. The question of going back wouldn't ever arise. One could never even think about the Father. So it is not the meditation which is taking us back to the Father. It is the Father himself, through the Master, who is taking us back to the Father.

We are on our journey home and we will get there. In time.



*I am a thousand times thankful
that my Beloved is pleased with me –
Present in every breath,
in every moment he showers his bounty.
Never did I lose by loving him,
the bargain that my heart struck is pure gain.*

Sarmad, Martyr to Love Divine



Maharaj Jagat Singh

The Role of the Master

On this path of Sant Mat we turn our eyes towards two great beings: the Lord Radha Soami and our own Master. But what do we ordinary mortals know of either? When we talk of God, do we really know what we are talking about?

We turn to God, typically, when we are in trouble, and we don't know what to do. We want God to extricate us from whatever difficult situation we find ourselves in, and we hope that he can do something extraordinary to make our suffering come to an end. It seems, though, that for us God is someone whom we have no way of approaching, nor do we have any means by which we can communicate with him.

The Master, on the other hand, appears to be a normal human being, just like us. But what do we mean when we refer to someone as a Master? We say that he is someone who, through rigorous spiritual practice, has raised his consciousness to the highest possible level, and merged his being into that great light we call God. In this respect, at this level we can hardly distinguish where the Master ends and God begins.

Yet, the great advantage that we get from the Master is that he also exists at our level, can speak our language, and understands what challenges we face in this world. He can talk to us, and we can talk to him. The Master explains to us how to reverse the downward and outward tendencies of the mind and travel back to the Lord. Not only does he teach us the path that leads us to our true home, but he guides and assists us at every step of the way.

The sad truth is that, unless we have the guidance of a spiritually advanced soul, one who has made the journey to the seat of the living God, we have no guarantee that we are getting the Truth. All the

other information that we have access to has been filtered through the limited understanding of people who are themselves ignorant of the truth and are merely exercising their intellect and ego.

This is not a good basis on which to make the critical decisions of our life. So we need a perfect living Master. God is completely beyond our understanding, and remains a mystery for us, but the Master is real for us in the sense that he comes before us in a human body, just like ours, and he can speak to us and show us the way in a manner that we can grasp. He speaks to us in terms that make sense in the modern world, in the climate and culture that we live in.

What is our actual situation? The sad truth is that so far we have lived our lives immersed in this world, believing it to be real and acting accordingly. In the process we have, in our ignorance, considered things to be important which are actually temporary and thus unreal in nature. We commit ourselves to things like family, job or country in the firm belief that these things are real and important and will provide us with the security and happiness in life which we so passionately seek. In fact they do exactly the opposite!

By our attachment to these things we bind ourselves to return again and again to this world in order to continue relationships to which we have given ourselves so completely. In addition, in the pursuit of these worldly desires we have committed many acts, not all of them entirely noble and selfless. In this manner we have bound ourselves to the faces, places and things of this world and the often painful reactions that follow from our actions.

It is the nature of the mind to be taken in by the deceptive nature of this apparent reality. Left to our own devices, we would have absolutely no chance whatsoever of escaping it. Many have tried. Sincere and devoted souls have done their utmost, but ultimately all were defeated, exhausted and crushed under the wheel

of birth and death; still bound to the cycle of coming and going. The bottom line is that we need help, and we need it in the form of a perfect living Master, the embodiment of truth on earth, without whom our best efforts would merely further entrench us in the endless cycle of misery in which we have been trapped for untold ages.

So what does the Master tell us to do? He tells us that our attention is our one true resource, and that currently our entire attention is focused and directed downwards and outwards into the material world. We need the Master to help us to change our whole way of thinking – to change our perceptions of what is real and what is not. To start turning our attention away from the things of this world, to become aware of a higher reality, the Master asks us to follow a different lifestyle. The Master also tells us that there are certain facts which, pending the experiential proof that we will eventually have of a higher reality, we should take on faith in the meantime.

So what are these facts? First, that there is a God. He created all of this and sustains it even now. Second, we are neither this body nor this mind; what we really are is soul, which is divine in nature, a drop from the divine ocean of the Lord. Third, our true home is not in this world, but with the Lord in his own home, which we call Sach Khand. Using these as postulates, the Master asks us to do the spiritual practice in order to raise our consciousness out of the morass of this world and up to that level where we can witness the truth and experience reality for ourselves.

The Masters of all ages have advised their disciples to practise meditation. The purpose of this meditation is to overcome the downward pull of the negative tendencies of the mind and to cultivate its finer or higher aspects. The Master gives us three techniques to achieve this. First he gives us simran, the repetition of the names that he reveals to us at initiation. By doing simran we withdraw our attention from

this world and focus it inside at the eye centre. By doing this we are gathering our consciousness and directing it to a point beyond the domain of the physical. This is the method by which we can detach ourselves from the concerns of this world and shift the centre of our attention to the domain of our Master.

Along with our simran we're asked to do dhyān – to try to visualize the face of our Master and then fix our attention on that form. In time, when our simran has been perfected, our attention will rise up to the point where we encounter the Radiant Form of our Master inside. This landmark event cannot be described in words. The soul is so entranced by the luminous vision of the Master that it is helpless to do anything but gaze in helpless wonder at this incredible spectacle.

The third part of our meditation practice is to try to listen to inner sound, probably quite indistinct at first. But in time, as our concentration grows, we will begin to hear the glorious sound of the Shabd – that power by means of which the Creator caused the universe to come into existence and by which he sustains it. Listening to the Shabd then becomes the main method of the soul's further progress towards its ultimate union with the Lord.

So what is our situation now? We need to always bear in mind why we are on this path: we realized that nothing in this world could fill that emptiness that we felt inside, or could give us lasting happiness and peace. We need to continuously keep this in mind, because the downward tendencies of the mind will constantly try to lure us into giving our attention to the false glamour and glitz of materiality, and in so doing, pull us back into the domain of mind and maya, the grand illusion of the material world.

We also need to hold ourselves accountable for our actions and our attitudes. We are accountable only to ourselves and to our Master. The regard and approval of the entire planet will not help us

progress one iota on the spiritual path, nor will its disapproval hold us back. We need to be true to ourselves and look only for our Master's approval, no one else's.

At the end of the day, our only resource is our attention, and our only friend is our Master. Only he is deserving of our undivided attention and loyalty. Only he will help us to achieve the dream of spiritual liberation and convert it into an eternal reality.



*Thanks to my Master's blessings
My heart is overflowing with joy.
My Master knew what my heart longed for
And he spoke to me fondly and cheerfully.
When my Master spoke to me in his infinite grace,
My mind and my heart were filled with bliss, says Tuka.*

Tukaram, The Ceaseless Song of Devotion

Why Linger in This Alien Land?

In one of his last satsangs, Maharaj Charan Singh used one of Soami Ji's poems to remind us that we do not belong here. This begins with the lines:

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

Why indeed are we lingering in an alien land, in a world that is not our home, when we have the means to return to the Lord in whom we had our origin? We have available to us everything we need to start our journey back: as our guide we have a perfect living Master, and as our map we have a set of instructions. And yet we linger on foreign soil, collecting more and more unnecessary baggage to drag along, delaying our return.

We are all of God, that name we give to the love and life force from which we have sprung and to which we want to return. There is a legend that at the time of creation, some souls were ready to go into the creation, while others wanted to remain in their heavenly abode. However, all souls were sent forth into the creation: both those who wanted to go and those who were reluctant to leave. At any one time now a certain number of these souls who unwillingly left their heavenly home and who have never stopped longing for it, are ready to return. They have had their fill of the transient pleasures and pains of the creation and are ready to start their journey back .

The first step on this mystic path is coming into contact with a perfect living Master. We find, or rather we are found by, one who leads the way and shows us how to reach a level of consciousness

where we can transcend mind and matter, go beyond pain and pleasure and the endless cycle of transmigration from one life to the next. We joyfully pay heed when he teaches us that an all-knowing supreme God exists and that our soul is part of that God, in the same way that a drop is part of the ocean or a flame part of the fire. He teaches us that the Holy Spirit, the Shabd or Word, is the true transcendental essence or Name of God. In the Bible, in John 1:1, we read about this concept of the Word when we're told that: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

We read further that all things were made by him and nothing that was created came into being without the agency of the Word. The Word is therefore nothing but the current of divine energy, the eternal power of the Creator through which the universe was created, is sustained, and will eventually be destroyed at the time of dissolution.

Our Master also teaches us to be aware of the law of karma, the universal law of action and reaction or cause and effect, which makes the soul face the consequences of all its actions, whether performed in this life or in previous lives. It is the law of karma that keeps the soul imprisoned in this creation, as the soul has to continue taking birth after birth in different life forms to account for its actions. Under this law all our actions have good or bad consequences. By our choices and actions we therefore create our own reality – we are not mere victims of fate or circumstance and we cannot blame others for what we are going through today.

Through the Lord's grace and our good karma we have been given the means of creating a new conscious awareness for ourselves. We are indeed fortunate if we have been born into circumstances in which we are able to come into contact with the Word and the bearer of the Word, to whom we can extend our love. It is from him and through

his love for us that we are able to receive guidance and support on our path of spiritual realization.

How do we allow the pure love-energy of the Shabd to take over our lives and displace the mind or ego – which is keeping us in recurring patterns of failure on the path to self- and God-realization? We do this by becoming still and trying to learn who God is – by practising our meditation, by focusing for a predetermined time each day on being in his presence. In order to turn our attention inward, one has to work to stop one's mind from wandering out and direct it towards the Shabd, the Holy Spirit. “Sit still and you reach your destination,” says Soami Ji in one of his poems. It is up to us to arrange our lives indeed, each day in such a way that we make time for the single most important task of our lives.

Acceptance of our lot and contentment are fundamental to the teachings of the Masters. This cannot be achieved through wishful thinking but is the natural outcome of a tranquil mind that is grounded in meditation. It can only be attained through meditation, by doing the Lord's work and placing our focus where it should be – in the presence of the all-loving, all-knowing and all-powerful Lord.

In order to live with love and have compassion for ourselves and for others, we need to practise calm acceptance of our karma as being of our own making. We need to align our focus with the knowledge that divine grace is always present to help us overcome these difficulties of our own making. Unless we meditate, our minds will forever be thrashing around, caught up in worldly thoughts, worries and anxieties, in power struggles and control issues – unaware of the quiet blissful space of meditation where it can enjoy peace and bliss and prepare for its onward journey home.

We need to examine our lives and ask ourselves some difficult questions: How often and how regularly do we sit in meditation? How

often during the day do we push away all worldly thoughts in order to attend to the only One worthy of our time and attention? How disciplined are we in doing what our Master requests of us? Do we waste our emotional energy on greed, anger, lust, pride or attachment – and on things that are transient and which take us away from the Lord instead of taking closer to him?

If we are not satisfied with our answers to these questions, we should make some changes now while we can and invest our energy where the dividends are assured.

What else is required of us if we no longer want to linger in this ‘alien land’? After finding a true living Master, sitting at his feet, imbibing his wisdom and serving him with all our heart, body and mind by doing our meditation, we also need to serve our fellow human beings, our fellow travellers on the mystic path, by being good human beings, as so often requested by our Master in his satsangs.

To have our souls unite with the Shabd we need not only to turn our lives around – facing our attention upwards and inwards – but also inside out and back to front. By turning inside out we mean showing the world our soft, inner, God-loving self, and by turning our lives around we mean turning our backs on the world and facing the Lord. We need to make a 180 degree turn, turning about-face and no longer tarrying in a foreign land – moving steadily and swiftly Godward. Let us pay serious attention to the words of Soami Ji when he asks, in another of his poems in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*Why do you tarry in this world, brother!
What will you gain stumbling around here?
Nurture longing in your heart
and seek God in the company of the Saints.*

Who's the Boss?

I wonder if we ever stop to ask ourselves “Who’s the boss in my life”?

For many of us the idea of somebody being our “boss” is anathema and we run as far from it as possible. Yet, throughout our lives we have, in fact, been submitting to someone else’s authority and our lives revolve around chains of command. A child submits to parental authority (sometimes!), and then to his teacher’s authority. The teacher accepts the authority of the headmaster, who bows to the Minister of Education, who in turn accepts the President’s overall authority. The President, in his turn, must toe the party line.

As individuals we often complain about having to take orders. Reluctance to fulfil the subservient role seems to be a characteristic of human nature, and we may try our best to avoid or redefine orders to make them suit our own agenda. As natural as it is to find a boss – for want of a better word – in every situation, so it would also appear natural to find rebelliousness or laziness in every situation. Nobody really wants to take orders from anybody else, but if we want the salary at the end of the day, then, inevitably, we have to get on with the job and hang in there until payday.

So where are we in our own personal lives? Who is calling the shots? For a disciple there can only be one answer to that question: our own Master. The Master who initiated us should be in charge and we should be submitting to his orders in every situation. The operative words here being “should be”!

It is perhaps important to understand that this is all about the roles we play in our lives. Maybe you or I play the ‘boss’ role at work, but not at home, and mostly we move quite easily in and out of our roles. However, our relationship with Master is not like that at all. As far as we are concerned he is, and must always be, the boss. Our role as

initiates is equally clear. We are the disciples – we are not the directors of this show; we are merely the actors reading the lines given to us by the director.

If we can accept this fact, then the very nature of this relationship can afford us an amazing sense of security and protection, provided that we acknowledge the Master in his role and trust him implicitly to fulfil it. This is a relationship based on love, trust, faith, effort and obedience, with an ultimate reward beyond our wildest dreams.

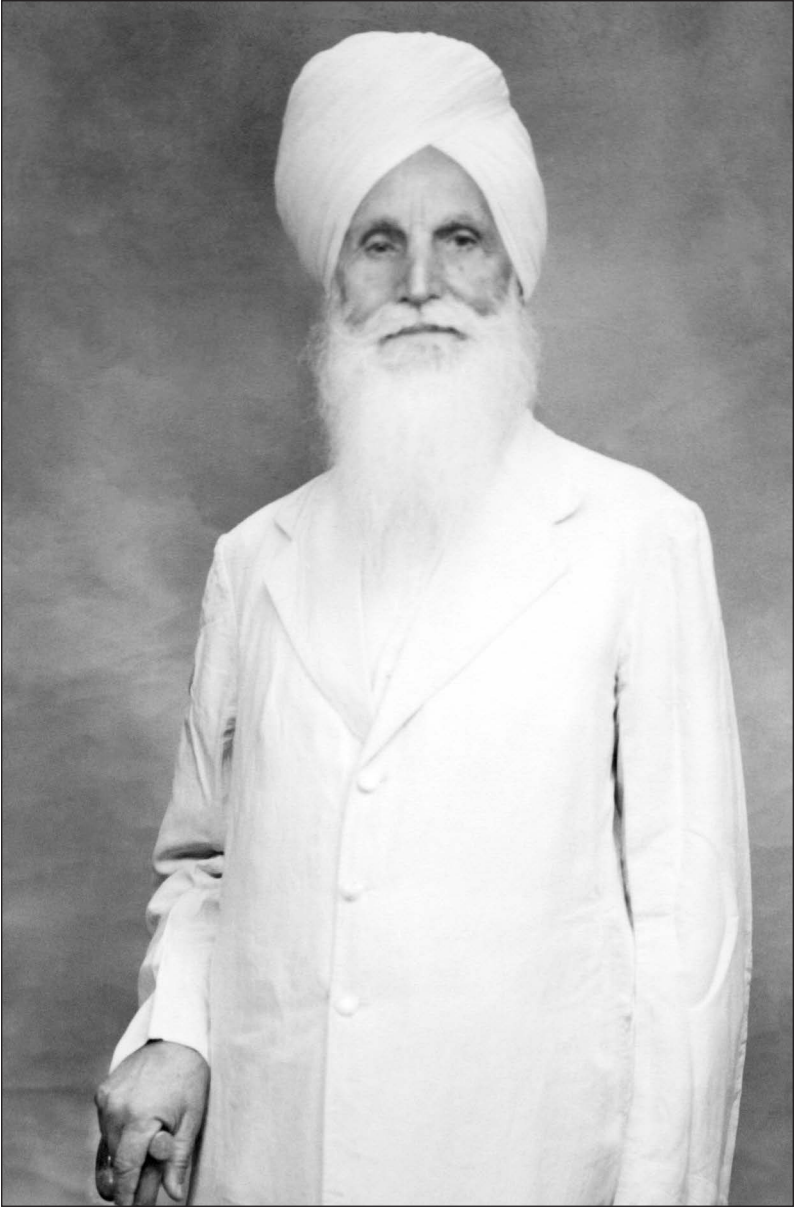
Why should we trust the Master and obey his every command? The mystics tell us that the Lord projects himself into and through his creation in the form of light and sound, generally referred to as the Shabd or the Sound Current. This is the Lord in dynamic form. It is also the true form of the Master. Maharaj Charan Singh states:

There is no difference between the Master and the Sound Current inside. The Sound Current is your Master.

The Master Answers

Our Master is the embodiment of the ultimate power we call God, and obviously there can be nobody more powerful or more loving. It would seem to make good sense to accept the authority of such a figure. Not only is the Master powerful, but he loves us – perhaps quite inexplicably – irrespective of our personal failings. When we serve or obey the Master, we are, in fact, serving God – who sees us as we really are, in our human limitations, as well as in our unlimited soul-magnificence, and he loves us.

If we accept, even if only intellectually at first, that the Master is God's representative of power and love, then we can serve or obey him with absolute confidence. He will never let us down, and he will always fulfil his promises.



Maharaj Sawan Singh

Which brings us to the role of the Master and our need for such a person in our lives. Many of us have begun to feel weary of the world and long to find a place of true peace, joy and security. There is no such place on earth. It can only be found with the One who is all truth and love, in other words, the Lord. But how to get to him is our greatest challenge and is impossible without the intervention of the Lord's representative, the Master.

Before the journey back to the Lord can begin, the Master must initiate his marked souls into the mysteries of the Shabd. He must reconnect the disciple's soul to the Sound Current. He must give us the technique that will allow us to know we are reconnected and that will allow the Current to pull us home. He must then guide the soul, step by painfully slow step, as the soul tries to walk the path home. This is an inner, spiritual path, where everything is new, outside of our worldly experience, and only the Master, who has been up and down this road since time began, can be our guide.

It is Master's job to open our inner spiritual ears and eyes so that we can hear and see the Sound Current and follow its magnetic beauty. It is his job to shake us out of our worldly sleep and see us home. This is his role, and without his intervention in our lives we would remain in this world of duality forever.

Does this not all paint an overwhelmingly attractive picture of someone we should happily serve and obey? And indeed, this is our role: to serve and obey our Master with absolute love, faith, devotion and obedience. If we don't think we feel the love, faith and devotion, then we must at least find the obedience.

This is the role we must play if we hope to leave this level of creation behind us, and we must play it with the utmost conviction. Our Master wants us to turn to him wholeheartedly. He wants us to depend on him, with childlike simplicity, for everything in our lives.

This is the role he wants us to grow into and adopt with every fibre of our being.

How are we to do this? How are we to learn the lines of this important role? First and foremost, of course, are the four vows we take at the time of initiation. This is our foundation. And our Master assures us that love will come and will grow if we are true to our promises. We must never hesitate to carry out his orders without question, with simple love and obedience. We must do exactly what he tells us. Full stop and end of story.

No doubt, in our hearts we want to be obedient and trust our Master absolutely. The relationship we want with our Master is precisely one of handing over and letting him be in charge of everything. But how wholeheartedly are we playing our roles? We know he is doing his perfect part with the utmost love and devotion. But what about us?

Well, the thing is that we are not yet perfect. We have not yet shed the burden of our minds. We are still the servants of the mind and senses and not yet the servants of the Lord. Our minds, our egos, are still the bosses in our lives, as they have been in countless previous incarnations. They are not going to hand over control without a fight. The mind doesn't want to be demoted to the status of a servant. And the ego is at the centre of it all. It is the ego that says: "I am in charge. I am the boss. I am in control of my life."

So this is our difficulty: The mind follows the worldly whims of the senses, and the ego deludes us into thinking that we, as individuals, are in charge of every aspect of our lives. If it is indeed our goal to return home and leave this cycle of birth and death forever, then we have to tackle the mind and the ego head on. And the Master tells us that if we do our practice faithfully, and implicitly obey his every command, then, little bit by every little bit, we will start to come to grips with the mind and the ego.

If we try to do all this – sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing – then subtle changes will begin to take place in our lives. In our minds and eventually our hearts, we will begin to see that everything is part of the Lord's play and that we are merely reading the lines given us by the Lord. This shift may start with just the words in our head, but, through diligent application and following his commands exactly, it will eventually become a real and true attitude.

We will recognize that the Master is the boss and we will be happy and grateful for this knowledge. Devotion to the Lord comes about through true discipleship – through faithful, conscientious practice, through doing exactly what he tells us to do.

Obedience is the key to our relationship with our Master. We know he is playing his role to perfection. How hard are we trying to play ours? Everything we are so desperately seeking in our lives – peace, joy, security – will automatically take root if we acknowledge our Master as the boss and allow him to be in charge. He loves us and has our best interests at heart. So let's come to grips with the greatest role we have ever been given. Let's be true disciples in thought, word and deed, and do exactly what he tells us.



When Master initiates us, puts us on the path, he tells us to devote time to meditation. If we really love him, we will obey him. We cannot say we love him and, at the same time, not obey his instructions, not live the life he tells us to live. That is not love for the Master. If we really have faith in him, if we really love him, we will want to do what he wants us to do.

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

A Little Grain of Corn

*I had gone begging from door to door in the village path
When thy golden chariot appeared in the distance
like a gorgeous dream
And I wondered who was this King of all kings!*

*My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end,
And I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked
And for wealth to be scattered on all sides in the dust.*

*The chariot stopped where I stood.
Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile.
I felt that the luck of my life had come at last.
Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say,
“What hast thou to give to me?”*

*Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg!
I was confused and stood undecided,
Then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn
And gave it to thee.*

*But how great my surprise when at the day's end
I emptied my bag on the floor to find
A least little gramme of gold among the poor heap.
I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart
To give thee my all.*

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*

Book Review



Mystics at Prayer

BY MANY CIHLAR

PUBLISHER: WHITEFISH, MT: KESSINGER PUBLISHING, 2004.

ISBN: 978-1417-949878

This book is a reprint of a 1931 publication from the Rosicrucian Press. The term Rosicrucian (the Rose Cross) refers to a secret society of mystics formed in late medieval Germany. The compiler of this eclectic anthology of prayers, Many Cihlar (1888-1967), served as Grand Master of the Ancient Mystical Order Rose Croix, the modern organization of the Rosicrucian Order. From his home base in Vienna, Austria, Cihlar worked to spread the Rosicrucian teachings throughout central and western Europe after World War II. He also traveled to India where he became a devotee of Sri Bhola Nathji, an Indian guru and the founder of the World Prayer Day for Peace.

After a deep study of the prayers from a wide range of cultural traditions, Cihlar selected over one hundred prayers to highlight the characteristics of the prayers of mystics and show how prayer relates to mystical attunement and spiritual development. Some of the prayers in this book come from the personal and private writings of well-known figures in history, from ancient, medieval and modern times. Other prayers come from the liturgy or the scriptures of various religious movements. But Cihlar also chooses prayers from lesser-known figures of the 19th and 20th centuries. The book has an index and references to the sources of these prayers.

To give a sense of the breadth of this highly diverse selection, Cihlar's anthology includes prayers from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, from St. Bernadine, a medieval Christian mystic, and from the modern Rabindranath Tagore. From the ancient Athenian philosopher, Socrates, we read:

*Grant me to be beautiful within,
and all I have of outward things
to be at peace with those within.*

From the Vedas, we read:

*Out of the unreal, lead me to the Real.
Out of the Darkness, lead me into the Light.
Out of Death, lead me to Deathlessness.*

The introduction by H. Spencer Lewis explains the purpose of Cihlar's compilation, which is to show the similarities in the nature of and approach to prayer among those who aspire to mystical attainment, regardless of cultural differences. As Lewis points out, to the mystic, prayer is based on the conviction that God is present everywhere, aware of each individual's inner state, and is merciful. He describes mystical prayer as a "meeting of the minds" and "the most intimate, personal contact that human beings can make with their Father, the Creator of all beings."

This mystical approach to prayer can be found both in the writings of individual mystics and also in the liturgies used in some traditions. For example, from the Syrian Clementine liturgy, we read:

O God, who art the unsearchable abyss of peace, the ineffable sea of love, the fountain of blessings and bestower of affection, Who sendest peace to those who receive it. Open to us the sea of Thy love and water us with the plenteous streams of Thy riches of grace. Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace. Enkindle in us the fire of Thy love; sow in us Thy fear; strengthen our weakness by Thy power; and bind us closely to Thee and to each in one firm bond of unity.

Lewis contrasts the mystical approach to prayer with that of the average person, whose wrong assumptions lead him astray. Of the average person he says:

He assumes that the Lord is not only omnipotent in power, omnipresent and merciful, but that with all of His power, with all of His intelligence, with all of His mastership and control throughout the world, and with all of His attunement with the beings which He created, He is nevertheless ignorant of our wants and needs,

and completely unacquainted with what we require in life to live abundantly and secure our everyday necessities.

The prayers in this book, on the other hand, point toward a different approach to prayer, as an occasion “not for personal petitioning, but for spiritual communion.”

By examining the prayers we will find that the Mystics always assumed that whatever might be their lot in life, and however the state of their health or the condition of the circumstances surrounding them, be they ill or fortunate, all things proceeded from God and were ordained by Him and, therefore, were just and in accordance with some law or principle that was merciful and necessary to human experience.

Of course, mystics do petition, but for mystic nearness to God. They pray for submission to his will: the medieval German mystic and Rosicrucian Jacob Boehme prays simply, “In Thee would we lose ourselves utterly; do in us what Thou wilt,” and Charles How, an American author, beseeches the Lord “to make the stream of my will perpetually to flow a cheerful and impetuous course, bearing down pleasure, interest, afflictions, death, and all other obstacles and impediments whatsoever before it, till it plunge itself joyfully into the unfathomable ocean of Thy Divine Will.” Mystics pray that they might please God: in the words of Psalm 19: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” Or they beg for guidance, as when the Emperor Julian prayed, “Point me in the way that leadeth upward to Thee,” and Zoroaster prays to the “Invisible, Benevolent Spirit” that he might act with righteousness and wisdom, “that I may thereby bring joy to the Soul of Creation.”

But above all, for mystics prayer is an opportunity to draw close to the Lord in communion. John Scotus Erigena, the 9th-century Scottish philosopher, termed this seeking “feeling after Thee”:

O Thou who art the everlasting essence of things beyond space and

time and yet within them; Thou who transcendest yet pervadest all things; manifest Thyself to us, feeling after Thee, seeking Thee in the shades of ignorance, yet seeking nothing but Thee.

Lewis writes in the introduction that the mystic approaches prayer humbly and not with any sense of having the right to demand anything. Mystical prayer is “approached with thankfulness in every sense.” The mystic often recognizes that he is the recipient of divine love far beyond his deserving, or even his capacity to appreciate. Oliver Wendell Holmes, a 19th-century American physician and poet, prayed, “Lord, what am I, that with unceasing care Thou didst seek after me?” It was with this same sense of overwhelming gratitude that the 11th-century philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol prayed:

*In the flood of Thy love I have rapture eternal
And prayer is but an occasion for praise.*



