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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# The Master's Philanthropy

Tulsi Sahib enumerates here the gifts that the Master bestows on his disciple. Not only does he guide the disciple in his daily conduct; he also gives him inestimable help in the spiritual journey within.

*Oh think thou deeply and deliberate;  
Without the guidance of a Master  
The way cannot ever be found.  
He will dye thee in satsang's colour,  
Take thy soul to regions celestial,  
And reveal the firmament within.  
If thou desirest to revel  
In realms spiritual within thine own self,  
None will help thee except the Saints.  
In a short moment wilt thou depart,  
And thy body be reduced to dust.  
Thy Master alone, O Tulsi, will show  
The entrance back to thy Home.*

*Tulsi Sahib, Saint of Hathras*





# Who Is He?

If I ask, who is the Master? you will say, Baba Ji. And if I say, yes but who is Baba Ji? you will say, he is the present Master at Dera in Beas. And if I say, yes but who is that person really? what will you tell me then? Here are just a handful of the hundreds of answers you could give to that question:

## **A Perfect Father**

Master is our father. Master comes from our father in heaven, from Sach Khand. Master is our father on earth. From the moment that we were born it was destined that we should become the Master's children. Master is the perfect father. He loves us like no other father could possibly love us. Even when we are disobedient he still goes on loving us with the same perfect love. And he loves us equally, with no special favourites in his vast family. The naughtiest, dirtiest child in the family gets just as much love from the father as the prettiest, purest and most pious child. Sometimes our father has to scold us, but the ticking off is always administered with kindness and compassion.

He is invariably aware of what is going on in our life and responds immediately and generously to any suffering that his children may be undergoing. Moreover, our spiritual father remains our father, even when his material body dies. Master never leaves us.

## **A Loving Mother**

Master is not only our father but also our mother in so many lovely ways. He mothers us all the time, and most of the time we are unconscious of his motherly attention. Master takes us into his arms and embraces us as soon as we are initiated. He then looks after us,

cares for us and brings us up to be good children – and eventually good spiritual adults. Master feeds us, clothes us and trains us. Master feeds us with the milk of Nam, which is the sweetest, strongest milk any child was ever given. “Nectar-sweet is the Guru’s Word,” says Tulsi Sahib, “but rare is the one who tastes it. Into him comes light, and he drinks the ambrosia. And he hears the Melody at the door of the Lord.”

Master’s milk is the sound current, that beautiful music which resounds day and night inside every single one of us. Like the good mother that he is, Master knows that the milk of Nam will make us grow spiritually strong and able to conquer all our ugly and infantile weaknesses. Master is a very wise and well-informed mother. He knows we are weak and feeble and shivering with fright, so he clothes us with the warmth of satsang. Without satsang we grow cold about the path, we become indifferent to meditation; we can even cool off about the Master. Master knows this. So he advises us to wear satsang in this world.

At satsang we are kept warm by our brothers and sisters, and we in turn keep our brothers and sisters warm. At satsang we can ask questions and have our doubts dispelled. At satsang we can hear Baba Ji talking to his children. Yes, we are his children; let us never forget that. And like every responsible mother, Baba Ji trains his children in ways of the spiritual world and educates them and tries very gently to get us to grow up. Everyone can understand our Master’s teachings. You don’t have to be a university don or doctor of theology to understand his teachings. In a nutshell, Master teaches us to leave this world while still living in it, to vacate the body and visit that secret place inside our head, to repeat the holy names, to see the light and hear the sound, to meet the Radiant Master and to go through our karmas in a happy carefree manner. What more is there to say? That’s all there is to Sant Mat. You go inside, go up, meet the Master and go

home. It's easy, isn't it? So easy that mind cannot accept the simplicity of it and attempts to complicate it. Master knows this. Master is the all-knowing, all-seeing mother. So he keeps reminding us of his teachings. Master gives us his teachings on CDs and DVDs, in the books, in magazines and – most important of all – he gives us his teachings at satsang. That is why we must never miss satsang. When we miss satsang, we miss the teachings and our wild mind forgets the path and starts wandering all over the place.

### **Our Brother**

Master is not only our father and mother; he is also our brother. Although the Master has unlimited knowledge and unlimited power, he deliberately chooses to limit himself by coming to his family in an ordinary human body. The Master could come as a king, as a president, or as a universally known TV personality and thereby command instant attention and respect. But he chooses not to. Instead, Master comes to his family as a brother, wearing the same sort of body as others and liable therefore to the same sort of diseases and discomforts as other brothers and sisters on the path. This is the great humility of our beloved Master. He conceals his greatness in an ordinary human body. He hides his divinity in assuming similarity and familiarity. So that we can become like him, he comes to us looking like us. This is most necessary. If God came to us as God, we would not recognize him, could not recognize him. We would be utterly blinded and totally deafened. We would be consumed in a split second, burnt to a cinder, like a dry leaf on a tree struck by lightning. So Master comes as a brother, with two arms and two legs, speaking the language of mortals. He calls us brother and sister, and by calling us brother and sister he is saying, as it were: "Look, you can approach me without feeling anxious. Come to me and tell me your problems. Let's

sit down together and talk things over. There's no need to be afraid and overawed. I'm here to help you – here to help you get out of here and into There. So come to me as I come to you: as a brother, and let's talk as brother and sister, sincerely, frankly and with brotherly affection.” Master doesn't want us to stand on ceremony and be stiff and formal. He wishes us to be relaxed and informal in our relationship with him, and with each other.

### **Our Friend, and More**

Master is not only our father, our mother, and our brother. He is also our friend. Master is the only true friend we have. Master will never let us down or leave us in the lurch. He is closer to us than our best friend. If we feel lonely and left out of this world, we should not be concerned. Our friend is not only in Beas, not only in Radha Soami books; he is right here inside us. Wherever we are, our friend is there with us, wanting to meet us. Wherever we go, our friend travels with us, wishing all the time that we would share our life with him. We have the best friend in the universe, yet we ignore him. How often do we think of this beautiful, faithful friend of ours? How often do we visit the Master? How often do we talk to the Master?

Master is Master and there's no one like him, except all other perfect Masters. Our Master is ours: ours to see, ours to hear, ours to use, ours to love. Yes, our Master is living here today to be loved by us here and now. So let us love him, as our father, as our mother, as our brother, as our friend, and above all, as our Beloved.





# The Blessed

Saint Aelred of Rievaulx (1109 – 1167), termed ‘saint’ by the Christian church, was born in Northumberland, England, and became Abbot of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, an abbey belonging to the Cistercian order of monks. The following is an extract from his book *The Mirror of Love*, originally written in Latin. Its beautiful subject matter discusses the natural attraction of the soul towards God. Although Aelred describes “memory of eternity”, knowledge and love as attributes of the human mind, we would understand these as being qualities of the soul. That humans are “blessed” is a subject that is dear to many mystics and it appears in our own literature, for instance in a poem by Dariya Sahib where he writes, “Blessed is he who recognizes the Satguru... Blessed is he who realizes the Beloved.” We are blessed not only in our origin (we have been made by a loving Creator, say the saints) but in being given the capacity to seek him.

Chapter 3: That man was made in the image of his Creator,  
that he might be capable of blessedness:

So, therefore, it was given to man at the creation of the universe not only to be created, nor yet, like the rest of created beings, merely to be good: not only to be beautiful or to be ordered, but, much more than this, to be blessed. But since no created thing exists by its own creating, nor has beauty or goodness of itself, but from him who is everything, who is wholly good and wholly beautiful, it follows that the goodness of all good things, the beauty of all beautiful things must derive from him who is the cause of all existence, and

therefore also that man's blessedness is not from man's self but from him who is wholly blessed and who thus is the blessedness of all the blessed.

Reasonable creatures alone are capable of this blessedness. Because they were made in the image of their Creator, it is seemly that they should cleave to him in whose image they are made.... This "cleaving" or "clinging" plainly is nothing to do with the body, but with the mind, into which its Creator has put three powers of nature, which make it able to partake of God's eternity, to share in his wisdom, to taste of his sweetness.

These three I call memory, knowledge and love, or will. Memory can comprehend eternity, knowledge can comprehend wisdom, and love can comprehend sweetness. Man was made with these three powers in the likeness of the Trinity, of God whom his memory keeps without forgetting, his knowledge knows without deceit, his love embraces without desire of anything else. And in this is man blessed.

Eric Colledge, *The Medieval Mystics of England*



*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness:  
for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

Bible, Matthew 5:3-10

# His Help Will Transform Us

Many of us ask ourselves, “Why are we in this physical world? Why are we suffering?” The Masters compassionately explain: We suffer because of our karmas or actions that have caused pain to ourselves and others. We are here because of our shortcomings, whether these be carelessness, apathy, ruthlessness or a thousand other weaknesses. Our poor mind is ignorant and blind; the senses tempt it and make it vulnerable. Because the mind is in the driving seat, we (soul) have taken wrong turnings, so ending up at a potentially dead end.

Rather than letting this fact depress us, or indulging in low self-esteem that causes us to carry on in the same way – “Well, that’s what I’m like, I can’t change” – we can actually turn ourselves around by calling on our Master’s help. He will advise us what to do and how to use our mistakes as an opportunity to grow towards love and freedom, and he will also supply endless support.

Some years ago someone told the Master that they were unhappy because they were living in a country that was full of problems. Their fellow citizens were being treated badly and it seemed a hopeless and negative environment in which to live. The question posed was whether they should run away and start a new life elsewhere so that they could find peace and contentment. The answer to this specific person drew on a striking image: *out of the compost heap grows a flower.*

Now, this beautiful answer applies to most of us personally as well as socially. Out of negativity, positivity can spring. When things get bad, it is often the time when there is an opportunity to change them for the better. If we become aware of our bad habits, and this stirs us into action, they can be seen as compost creating fresh growth and

transforming negative into positive. But if we dwell on our negative ways and drop our head in shame, or carry on as before, we will just become stranded in a pile of waste.

When we truly want to change and transform ourselves, the Master plants the seed of a beautiful flower in our hearts and minds, and he will give us the power to water the seed so that eventually our soul flowers and fruits most beautifully. Also, if we seriously concern ourselves with the task our own compost heap presents (the chance to grow and develop), we will cease to worry about the ills of the world, as our time and energy will be given to changing ourselves rather than others or the environment.

When we humbly cry to our Master for help and, through his grace, take him as our mentor and guide, we do eventually reach the final step to true positivity and freedom, which is to forget about ourselves and just remember him. Then all we see is transformed into positivity and all we experience is perfect.



*Our most precious wealth is Nam. This is the one kind of wealth we should accumulate.... We should, therefore, carry on Nam Bhakti with abiding love, implicit faith and unswerving devotion. Then we will break asunder the chains that bind us tightly to the wheel of incarnation and death. Then we will end the recurring misery of endless lives and attain everlasting peace and bliss. Then the long separated drop will merge in the ocean and become the ocean. Then our soul will meet the Lord and gain liberation from the pairs of opposites forever.*

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

# New Birth

Every death is a perfect culmination and finish for a particular life. Although we have created our own circumstances through the actions and reactions of millions of lives, it is so ordained that at the time of birth, we forget our previous lives and it appears as if this life is the only one we've ever had. Prior to birth, we hang upside down in our mother's womb, with our new physical body being literally forged in a furnace of fire. Imagine the heat that is necessary to bake our bones into being!

At that time, and maybe for the last time for a long while, we remember the Lord; we are aware of ourselves as souls and we hear the sound current, that creative, conscious power of God, reverberating and sustaining all creation. And, indeed, how meditative a baby in the womb appears, abstracted and actually in another world. Attention at that time is at the tenth gate, the soul using its own faculty of seeing. Apart from hearing, there are yet no sensory outlets for the attention to dissipate outwards. Even in the womb, a baby can pick out its mother's voice and show preference for different types of music. Our conditioning for the life to come begins before we are even born!

We could imagine that the embryonic process of growth, development and birth might continue through our life with an inevitable mental, physical and spiritual maturation, but this is not the case. Within the passage of one normal lifetime, the three conditions of existence – the three *gunas* of *rajas*, *satwa* and *tamas* – must appear: powerful growth, state of steadiness and, lastly, waning. This deterioration or waning applies not only to our mental and physical apparatus, but also to our moral sense. That too decays with age as we become more fixed and habituated to this world. With age it becomes

more difficult to concentrate our attention at the eye centre, which, having run out for yet another life, is harder to collect. Except for our ego, everything gets weaker as we get older unless we have taken measures to transform our consciousness before death. If we talk to older satsangis, we hear them say: do your meditation now. Later on, if we have not become experienced in sitting in meditation, the body and mind will protest.

Part of the process of dying must be a huge realization of the sheer trivia that has gone before, enormous regret for things done and undone, and the sense of loss as we are torn from our attachments. The Masters say death is terrible, and of course it's terrible, because it's part of the unnatural condition of being in the world – of having our attention habitually below the eye centre and outside the body. A metaphor Maharaj Charan Singh sometimes used was of a fine muslin cloth being torn from a thorny bush. The sound current, which gives us life, withdraws, and if we have not practised removing that delicate fibre, our attention, from where it has been caught in the 'thorny bush' of our body, we will experience pain. As Hazur Maharaj Ji said so many times, we will go where our treasure is; as our desires have been, thus will we become.

So much for body and mind. The soul, however, is always yearning to go back to the Father, to the Lord:

*When a soul (child) comes in the world we say he is born. In reality the soul has been entombed in the grave of the physical frame, so it is more appropriate to say that it has died. When it comes in contact with the saints and gets initiation, it is attached to Nam and is getting out of the grave of the physical frame. So it is appropriate to say that it is born, or reborn.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

At the moment of initiation we are born, as it were, into the Master's family. It is sometimes said that we are then already in our real home, Sach Khand; it is just that we have no consciousness of it. We see everything through a distorting lense, our abnormal construction of events crystallized by our ego over myriads of lives. We tell ourselves that reality is 'out there' and that in order to be in touch with what is 'going on' we must be out there too. This is the false consciousness of the roving and unhappy mind, which mistakes pleasure for joy. Like fishes in a net, the more we struggle and seek diversion from the pain of existence, the more enmeshed we become.

Nothing has the power to overcome the strong negative gravitational pull of mind and matter except the greatest power of all, Shabd, and our Master who is Shabd incarnate. The relationship between our soul, the Master, the Lord and the Shabd is explained with dazzling clarity by the Great Master in *Spiritual Gems*:

*The audible life stream which we call Shabd is the everlasting form of the Lord and is always within every one of us. At the eye focus it assumes the Astral Form of the Master and in this physical world it assumes the physical form of the Master. The function of Shabd is to lift the soul up; but it cannot perform this function until the mind and soul concentrate at the focus of the eyes. It is by means of repetition of the five holy names – while keeping the attention between the eyes – that the currents of the soul gradually leave the body and collect behind the eyes. When the concentration is complete and the entire body has become numb, then it is easy for the sound current to pull up the soul.*

This is the process of dying while living, completely taking the sting out of physical death, and fulfilling the purpose of the new birth given to us at initiation.

The destruction of the karmas cannot really begin until we collect our consciousness at the eye centre. Therefore we cannot begin to realize our birthright – that we are already in Sach Khand – without following the Master's instruction to do our meditation regularly and punctually for the prescribed time. Meditation is the only way to clear the results of our good and bad deeds which have the potential to keep us here. Meditation is true repentance.

As our consciousness changes with meditation, everything about us changes too. The whole process is about losing our own identity to become the being we love best, to achieve our proper condition with the soul rightly controlling the mind and senses. This new birth into our spiritual heritage is a far cry from the unhappy squalling creature arriving in this world upside down and bewildered. If we attend faithfully to our meditation, with repetition and contemplation as our bricks and mortar, we will catch the sound current and do our bit in the reconstruction of our true selves:

*The attention will then be uninfluenced by worldly happenings, because it has detached itself from the material world, and will then be able to catch the current without interruption.... There are no failures in Sant Mat. Sooner or later, the soul that is keeping its contact with the sound current will reach its home. When the way to the home is known, and one keeps the way, where is the room for doubt that home will be reached?*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*





# He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven

*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

W. B. Yeats

This poem expresses the human desire to give, to share the wonders of this creation. The poet wonders what he actually possesses of it that he can give. His answer is that all he possesses are his own dreams – his perceptions, ideas, beliefs and hopes. Therefore he gives of these, hoping that they will be received kindly.

The Masters tell us not to invest our dreams in this world. They question whether it is possible for us to invest our love and hope in this world without getting hurt. When focused below the eye centre, we live in the realm of change, loss and eventual decay. If we spread our dreams in the world we are setting ourselves up for disappointment.

The Masters advise us to concentrate our attention in and above the eye centre. Here we can attain eternal satisfaction. If we spread our dreams under our inner Master's feet, he gradually replaces them with prospects of an achievable, blissful reality.

We are not poor. We are rich. We have simran, dhyan and bhajan. These are the heavens' embroidered cloths, "enwrought with golden and silver light." We can spread these cloths under Baba Ji's feet, every day, in meditation.

## The Interior Castle

Let us imagine our soul as a castle, one made out of a single diamond or translucent crystal, and there are many rooms in this castle.... Think carefully over this and realize that the soul of a good person is nothing less than paradise, in which, as God tells us himself, he finds delight. Imagine how beautiful that dwelling must be to delight a King so mighty, so wise, so pure and abounding in goodness.

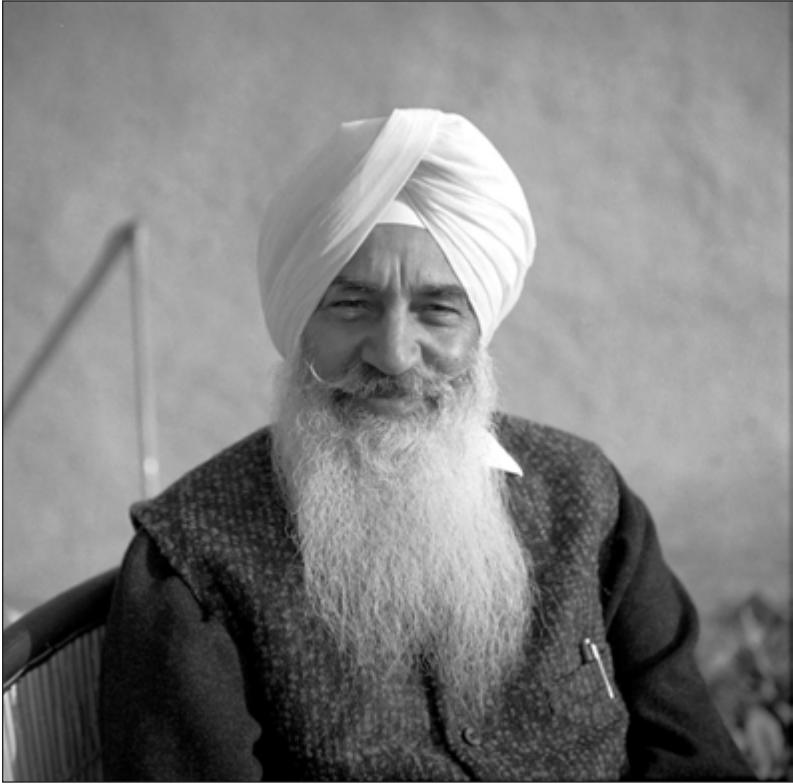
I can find nothing whatever to compare in beauty with the human soul in its vast capacity. No matter how powerful our intellect may be, we can no more comprehend this than we can comprehend God Himself; for according to his own word, he made us in his image and likeness ...

The human soul is a creature, of course, and there is therefore as much difference between it and God as between creature and Creator, but the fact that His Majesty says it is made in his own image means that we can hardly form any idea of its great dignity and beauty.... This castle, as I have said, is made up of many rooms; some above, some below and others at either side; and in the midst of them is that chamber which is the inmost heart of the castle where secret intimacies are exchanged between God and the soul.

Saint Teresa, *The Wisdom of Saint Teresa of Avila*, compiled by Ruth Burrows



# Try to Understand



Do not unnecessarily be led away by the mind. Sant Mat does not tell of any new path, nor does it consist of rituals and ceremonies. It merely points out the way that lies within every human being to return to the Lord, and this way or path has been made by the Lord himself. It is not an established religion that we can discard one day and follow another time. Try to understand what Sant Mat is and the deep significance that lies at its foundation.

The mind is the only opponent we have to control, and it is not a question of days or even of years. “It takes a lifetime to be able to hold the Beloved in one’s arms,” says a Sufi mystic. Just think for how long the mind has been enjoying the pleasures of the senses in this world – ever since creation. And you can see for yourself how long it will take and what effort will be required to change the habit of the mind.

Sant Mat does not interfere with the life that we are leading in the material world; that is being governed by our destiny. This path is meant only for God-realization. How can we postpone the time for meditation for the future when it is so uncertain and over which we have absolutely no control. Man proposes, but God disposes. Every breath that we take without thinking of the Lord is time wasted. Time is short and so much has to be done. Please do not follow the voice of the mind, which is always ready to take us away from the path.

Give Sant Mat a trial and give all the time you can to meditation, without expecting any visible signs of progress. That is not in our hands, but in the hands of a higher power. Our duty is to remain at the door of the Lord, like a beggar, and pray for his mercy and grace. I hope you will not listen to what your mind has to say, but will remain on the diet and will continue giving whatever time you can to your meditation every day with faith and devotion.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



*Nature loves leisure and bodily rest, but grace cannot be unoccupied,  
but gladly embraces toil.*

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

# Touched by Magic

If satsangis were asked to write their autobiography, we might find that, except for some idiosyncratic differences, we all share a pattern to our lives. After all, we found out about the path, we were initiated and here we are trying to put the teachings into practice.

The main purpose of saints incarnating on this earth is to make us aware that this is not our true home. We are so entangled in the cycle of transmigration that we think that what we see is the reality, that it is the truth. Yet all that we see with the physical eyes is subject to change. If something is subject to change then it is not the truth, because one of truth's attributes is that it is unchangeable.

Maharaj Sawan Singh has used the example of a lion cub that starts playing with sheep. His constant association with sheep makes him think he is one of them and he forgets that he is a cub with the potential to be a lion, the king of the jungle. There comes a moment of realization when he understands he is a lion, not a sheep. It is the same for us. When we start realizing the illusory nature of the world, we look for something eternal, an everlasting relationship. That is when we get attracted to the spiritual path of the saints. Before this awareness we just think we're common human beings. First we are born, then as we grow up we study, get jobs, get married, have children and the cycle continues. Bombarded by these outward events, it's too easy to regard our spiritual inclination as a one-off feeling with no real substance.

Rather like a spiritual seeker, Harry Potter, the fictional character created by J.K.Rowling, thought he was an ordinary human being. He lived with his aunty, uncle and cousin. But at the age of eleven he discovered his parents' true identity and that he too was a wizard by

inheritance. That is similar to what happens to us. We realize our true kinship with a spiritual Father – whether we call him God or Creator or Lord. And the amazing truth is that he can be found within us at that perfect level of consciousness that exists beyond the physical and mental worlds. Soami Ji, reminding us of this reality, writes in one of his poems, “Let us turn homewards, friend – why linger in this alien land?”

### **Going Homewards**

Once we’ve realized that we’re spiritual beings, we have to start going homewards. How are we going to do that? In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh has explained this when he says:

*The Creator has determined how we are to go back to him, and we cannot take any short cut or any other route. He has ordained that we must seek a perfect Master, and be initiated by him while both the Master and the disciple are living. Then through meditation we must please the Master, we must eliminate our ego, and merge with the Father, become one with the Creator.*

We’re lucky to be on this path, to have found a perfect living Master and to be initiated. However, that is just the start. At the time the fictional Harry finds out that his parents are from a magical world, he also gains admission to the school of magic and wizardry. Like Harry, once we’ve gained admission to Sant Mat’s university of the spirit, our incredible journey begins. Baba Ji has said that initiation is merely the expression of the desire to obtain salvation. That is, initiation is only the beginning; once we’re initiated we cannot remain static and wait for things to happen to us. We have to be proactive and put in

our level best to tread this path of God-realization. When Harry starts attending his classes at school, he starts studying, doing homework and sitting for exams. His adventures depict him putting into action what he learns. He studies, but he is not obsessed with gaining endless knowledge; instead he puts into action the simple concepts he has learned and wins his battles. Mystics, too, explain the limitation of intellect and stress the importance of practice to convert concepts into understanding. In support of this, Maharaj Sawan Singh says in *Spiritual Gems*:

*The point is that intellectually, man thinks and argues only up to a certain stage; but it is only when he goes in that he has perfect knowledge.*

So through our meditation we have to go within to discover our true potential.

### **Simran – Importance of the Five Holy Words**

Once we're initiated we're given the gift of meditation. What is meditation and what does it consist of? At the time of initiation we're given five holy names which we have to repeat. We sit in a quiet place each day and practise repetition whilst focusing our attention into the darkness we see in our forehead when we close our eyes. This is known as simran. After dedicating about three quarters of the time to this practice, we spend the remaining time in bhajan, which is listening to the Shabd, the audible life stream. The Shabd can be heard in every human being once the mind is brought under control and a state of concentration achieved. Until then we try to listen.

The five holy names have been empowered by the association they have with the living Master who has given them to us. We have to use

these five words with great care, as if we were handling five precious jewels. These names have the power to elevate us, to get us out of this cycle of life and death. It is only the practice of simran which is in our hands, so our effort has to be put into this. Everything else in our spiritual progress is the result of simran.

In the world of J. K. Rowling's books, everything is made possible by reciting some words. There are different sets of words known as spells which are used to bring about different things. Numerous spells exist for almost everything. One of the most powerful and dangerous spells has the power to extinguish life. Our simran's ultimate purpose is to extinguish our ego so that we can unite with the divine. Our simran defeats the negative tendencies in us and gives life to the positive. Along the way, simran has the positive effect of helping us to calm down, and aiding us in coping with our circumstances. More powerfully than any spell, it gradually eradicates the obstacles in our way to God-realization.

### **Final Destination – Through Death to Life**

Through our daily meditation we're preparing for death and making a start on our true life. For that is what meditation is; as Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Die to Live*, "Meditation is a daily rehearsal to die."

Death often is viewed in a negative way. Yet because we're on this path, we should actually prepare for it because that is when the real journey begins. At one point in the Harry Potter stories, Harry's headmaster comments, "To a well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure." So death is only scary for those who are not prepared. It causes anxiety for those who do not have a living Master because they do not know what to expect. We are always scared of the unknown. Our meditation is that practice in which we can experience



dying while still being alive. Then, at the time of death we will not be experiencing an unknown feeling. Kabir says:

*If one dies while living  
For him death is sweet.  
His rank and honour are dead,  
So too is his I-ness.  
Those who while living die  
By merging into the Lord  
Become immortal, O Kabir.*

Kabir The Weaver of God's Name

It has been said that once we are initiated, our place in Sach Khand is assured. We just have to put in our effort and we'll get there one day. We know what the effort is – meditation. However, there is something that we can do to ease our journey towards our destination. One of the skills Harry learned was how to disappear from one place and appear in other place. The technique involved in this task was known as the three Ds. The first D was to fix one's mind firmly on the desired *Destination*. The second D was to summon up one's *Determination* to get to there. Finally the last D was to feel that one is going into nothingness, moving with *Deliberation*. We also have to remember our spiritual destination. Secondly we have to arm ourselves with the solid determination that we're going to get there. Lastly, we have to let go, surrender to the Lord's will and simply put in our effort with deliberation. By our limited effort and his tremendous grace, we will disappear from this world and appear in our true home at last.



# The Benefits of Taking Refuge

The Mahabharat has a story about a goat. She was a sick, feeble creature who had strayed from her home and got lost in a vast, seemingly endless forest. She had no choice but to try to fend for herself, finding what she could to eat when she wasn't looking over her shoulder in terror of the many dangers in the forest.

The tiger, the king of the Indian forest, took pity on the little goat and decided to free her from this dreadful destiny. He told the elephants to take her in their care. Whenever they went to drink water, she would ride on one of their backs on the way to the river and return in the same way when her thirst was satisfied. In this way she soon became fit and well and settled happily into the life of the forest, looked after always by the elephants.

Such is the benefit of taking refuge. By taking refuge with the Saints, even the humble human can become a Saint.

*Tales of the Mystic East*

\* \* \*

When the good karmas (actions) have secured for the seeker the benefit of contacting a Master, he should surrender himself to the Master and follow his instructions. Through surrender the satsangi throws the burden of his karmas on the Master. Then through meditation the mind is subdued, goes beyond the region of Kal and Maya, and the satsangi develops love.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

# Loneliness

Sometimes the feeling of loneliness comes with such intensity that even amongst family and friends we cannot escape it, and we seek a remedy by throwing ourselves ever more deeply into the social whirl. Still the feeling persists and, not knowing its real cause, we desperately seek out further relationships. One of our basic misunderstandings is the notion that family and friends, our life companions, are a source of happiness. We find it hard to accept when the Masters explain that, in reality, we do not even have one real friend in the whole world. However, the lessons of life dawn on us slowly, and we learn the hard way when cherished relationships go sour, and the objects of the world that we chased and hankered after lose their lustre.

The mystics tell us that this feeling of loneliness is God-sent and natural. We are of divine origin and our soul is a part of the Lord. Peace and happiness can only be found when the part merges in its source. Just as the mind comes to experience peace when it merges itself in the universal mind, in the same way the soul finds ultimate liberation and perfect happiness in the lap of its heavenly Father.

Our existence away from our source, the Lord, is the root cause of all unhappiness. When this realization dawns on us, it is an auspicious occasion in our life. As Maharaj Charan Singh has written in *Divine Light*:

*This feeling is to be welcomed, and if the situation is understood correctly, a suitable remedy can be found. If a person takes advantage of these moments (which come rarely in one's life), studies the situation rightly and puts his soul on the way of*

*devotion to God, he eventually reaches his goal and obtains his object in life for all eternity.*

We are a combination of body, mind and soul and it is unfortunate that our modern physical sciences have focused entirely on making our bodily life comfortable. The consequence of neglecting the welfare of the mind and the soul is the primary cause of constant crisis in our life. Thankfully, the Lord has kept open an avenue of spirituality through which our soul can travel back to its source. This is the timeless and exact science of the soul. All perfect spiritual Masters, past or present, have taught this method in which daily meditation under the instructions of a living Master gradually collects the scattered mind and brings it into contact with the Shabd.

In *Divine Light*, Maharaj Charan Singh gives advice that is timeless and an answer to our prayers:

*Please take advantage of this blessed feeling [of loneliness] and turn your mind to him who never leaves us. All true happiness, peace and satisfaction proceed from devotion to God alone.*

And in *Quest for Light* he writes:

*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 purposely put in the heart of man. If this natural inclination of the soul towards its Lord had not been there, then perhaps none would have turned to the Creator for solace and peace.*

# Our Soldiers Need Better Preparation for Life after Death

The title of this article comes from a speech about leadership made in 2007 by General Sir Richard Dannatt, then head of the British Army. Death is not the end, and soldiers going into war should receive better spiritual support, he proposed. Good leadership should encourage awareness of the spiritual dimension of life and the reality of life after death.

Sir Richard's view on our need for spirituality is in accord with that of the mystics; moreover saints inform us that life itself on this plane is a war. They explain that life beyond death is the reality and that this life is the illusion.

## The War of Life

The saints clearly present the truth that we live in a sphere of karma, of suffering. Rumi explains:

*When you consider it, this world is in continuous war,  
atom with atom, like faith against infidelity.  
One atom flies to the left, another to the right,  
one atom up, another down, seeking each other:  
In this tendency, behold a war manifest.*

*This manifest war is the result of a hidden war:  
Know that this discord springs from that....  
War in nature, war in deeds, war in words –  
there is a terrible war between all the parts.*

*The world is maintained by means of this war:  
look at the elements and you will understand it.  
The four elements are four sturdy pillars  
by which the roof of the present world is held in place.  
Yet each pillar is a destroyer of the other:  
the pillar of water is a destroyer of fire, and so on.*

Rumi, as quoted in *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*

Rumi explains the whole world is in a state of warfare, starting with polaric repulsion at the atomic level. He says that open conflict between religious groups, conflicts in nature and in our individual lives are simply a reflection of the underlying antagonism within matter.

He explains that this state of conflict is obvious considering that this world is made of four physical elements: earth, water, fire and air. Each element is capable of attacking the other, for instance fire is extinguished by water and water is evaporated by air.

Nature is at war with itself in that all the life-forms on our planet are warlike: their first instinct is survival – to get food and shelter. Getting their food means killing another species whilst they will be killed for food in their turn. This state of nature, as well as the terrible wars between nations and all the horrible suffering involved, is an outward manifestation of inner turmoil. Rumi's poignant verse infers that peace is beyond human ability. But in the last verse of his commentary he provides the solution:

*Since the essence, the spirit, is beyond these oppositions,  
its nature is not contrary like this; it is divine ...  
When the spirit sets its face towards the divine Beloved,  
it lays down its baggage and passes into life eternal.*

Rumi explains that when the spirit within us starts to make its way homewards to God, all its baggage of body, mind and emotions, with the resulting accumulated karmas, are laid down and discarded. The divine reality within us doesn't have these attributes of the physical, it is not made of elements that mutually repel, it is pure love, pure Shabd.

## Life

So what is this life we are enduring? Here are three poets powerfully offering their views:

*Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Shakespeare observes that if we look at our life span carefully, we will realize that it's over before we know it. And when we shuffle off this mortal coil, perhaps we might think people would be sad and miss us dreadfully but, he suggests, think again. Our spouse or children might shed a tear at our passing but what about the wider world? It didn't even know we existed, let alone care that we are gone.

He says we are just poor actors in a short little play – that is the sum of our lifespan, ... *it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.* If we analyze these words carefully we will realize how true they are in describing the lot of mankind. All the hectic activity that we hurl ourselves into: the frantic worrying, the plotting, the scheming, in the end are just that – *a tale told by an idiot.*

Bob Dylan, in a song called *Idiot Wind* sings:

*Idiot wind, blowing through the buttons of our coats,  
Blowing through the letters that we wrote.  
Idiot wind, blowing through the dust upon our shelves,  
We're idiots babe,  
It's a wonder we can even feed ourselves.*

Dylan is making a similar point to Shakespeare's: look at our lifestyle, it is idiotic and self-destructive. We worldly people go frantically through life chasing after the illusion of pleasure through possessions, status, family or sensual enjoyment and then merely burn out; we die and are forgotten. Dylan uses the image of a wind to suggest our karmic environment, encircling us, making us so idiotic that *it's a wonder we can even feed ourselves*.

The next famous quotation looks at our life beyond the physical:

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home ...*

William Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality*

Wordsworth explains that when we take birth we forget our divine origin. His inspiring words inform us that our soul is the eternal reality, and though we fall into the deep sleep of this life, our soul



remembers and tries to nudge us out of our slumber. The great poets give a hint of the truth but perfect Masters provide the complete truth.

### **Death and Life after Death**

So what is the nature of death? Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Quest for Light*:

*You ask me why your friend had to die. The answer is very simple. Every one has to leave this world one day. Only death is certain. Nothing else in this world is certain. And death does not take into consideration our age, wisdom, youth, love, wealth, dignity or devotion, nor does it wait for permission from anyone. It does not care whether you love its victim or hate him. Such happenings come to us as a warning – to set us thinking as to the transitory nature of our existence here; that we also shall have to leave it one day. We never think seriously about this matter. If we would, we would certainly not forget our meditation as we do.*

Maharaj Charan Singh patiently explains that death is the only certain thing about life. We should not be complacent, thinking we have youth and a healthy body, or that our karmas have given us time and money to pamper our body. Death is a fact, so when it takes a son or daughter, spouse or parent, why do we question it? Do we not hear what the Master is saying? Death is the reality and life is the illusion. Hazur Maharaj Ji states that if we could only remember this, there would be no question of ever missing meditation. If we are initiated, meditation comes first in our lives and everything else can wait.

So we can understand that it is not just soldiers who need better preparation for life after death: we do too.

## **Preparation for Life and Death**

How can we humans best prepare for life after death? As Hazur Maharaj Ji often used to say, we need to take a positive approach.

Most of us have had direct contact with Maharaj Charan Singh or Baba Gurinder Singh and have heard them seemingly endlessly, patiently, lovingly suggest that it is living according to the four principles of Sant Mat that can both help us to live life to the full and prepare us to die. When a soul is brought into the orbit and influence of the saints, into their aura of protection, she is encouraged to change the self-destructive behaviour in which she is trapped like a fly in a web into positive, soul-supporting behaviour through adopting these four principles.

A human can be awe-struck and freeze at the cosmic vastness of this undertaking: How can a wretch like me go from puny human to being one with God? But Baba Ji reassures us that every smallest step makes a difference.

The Sant Mat way of life takes us from being part of the war-zone to being part of a place where eternal peace reigns. The four principles of vegetarianism, avoidance of mind-altering intoxicants, moral living and daily meditation are truly a fortress. And the Master who initiated us is our general, sent by the Creator on a mission to save souls and lead them out of this battle-torn wilderness. When we have such love, grace and protection all around us, how can we fail?

*Our soldiers need better preparation for life after death*, proposed a very enlightened military commander. The Master concurs – all souls are his little soldiers.



# Feeling Funny



# Mind Out!

The cosmos, so the sages say, has been created by the One Being as an emanation of himself. It has been projected out of and within himself, as successive worlds or levels of creation, as a hierarchy of being.

According to some, in the course of this emanative process, mind first appears high up in this hierarchy as the primal architect of the duality that leads to the multiplicity in which we now find ourselves. At that high level in creation, we can call it the universal mind. And from that point onwards, every little being as it descends further into the creation has – so to speak – a little bit of this greater mind attached, through which it views creation.

Practically all traditions say that there are a host of heavens or worlds (“many mansions”, “all the worlds”) in the creation, of ever-increasing subtlety. These realms are levels or stages in the hierarchy of creation. And as the little beings descend, they are equipped with minds (and bodies) suitable for functioning in those realms. It’s an automatic process. And right down at the bottom of this hierarchy, there’s our familiar, physical world.

We would certainly agree that where we find ourselves right now, we have a mind and body. No denying that. But in the process of communicating with the physical world, we have become so increasingly identified first with our mind, and then with our body, that we have forgotten our innermost essence, our innermost secret. We have forgotten that we are all little beings dwelling in his big Being. Some folk have called this forgetfulness, the Fall. First, we were all cosy, living in the blissful, eternal garden of the One Being. Then we got involved with mind and duality, and now look at us! No wonder they cast the mind as a deceiving serpent.

The human mind, being a part of the greater mind from which all this duality and activity originates, is attracted by multiplicity and diversity. This, however, makes it very unhappy, and to fill the vacuum of its own unhappiness, it seeks further diversity. It tries to find happiness in all the changing things around it – pleasures, possessions, and attractions of every conceivable kind. Of course, things that change can't bring any lasting happiness, and so the mind gets even more frustrated, restless and miserable.

In this manner, entangled in its own illusions, the mind further develops its sense of a separate identity, which it believes to be real. It identifies completely with its own thoughts, feelings, and bodily experiences. It even starts to think that it is nothing but the body itself. Thus, the apparent isolation of the little beings from the one big Being is complete. And in their distress, the little beings create mayhem and suffer even more as a consequence. And that is what we call human existence.

John Davidson, *One Being One*

\* \* \*

*As I have often repeated, the soul and the mind are knotted together in the human body and it is only when the mind is controlled by the soul that the mind can return to its source, which is the second spiritual stage. From that point onward the soul is free to return to its own original home. But as long as the mind is dominated by the senses, it does not realize that the world is not its home and keeps the soul bound here along with it.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



# Something to Think About

## A Pure Heart

Once your heart becomes pure and clear, it will become a mirror on which pictures will appear from beyond the realm of earth and water. Not only will such pictures appear, but also the image of the one who painted them.

Rumi, *Rumi in a Nutshell*, Robert van de Wever

\* \* \*

I am glad to know that you do not have much trouble with meditation and you get wonderful results and lovely experiences every time you sit for meditation. This shows the purity of your heart and very great grace of the Lord. Such a soul is sure to make very great and early spiritual progress.

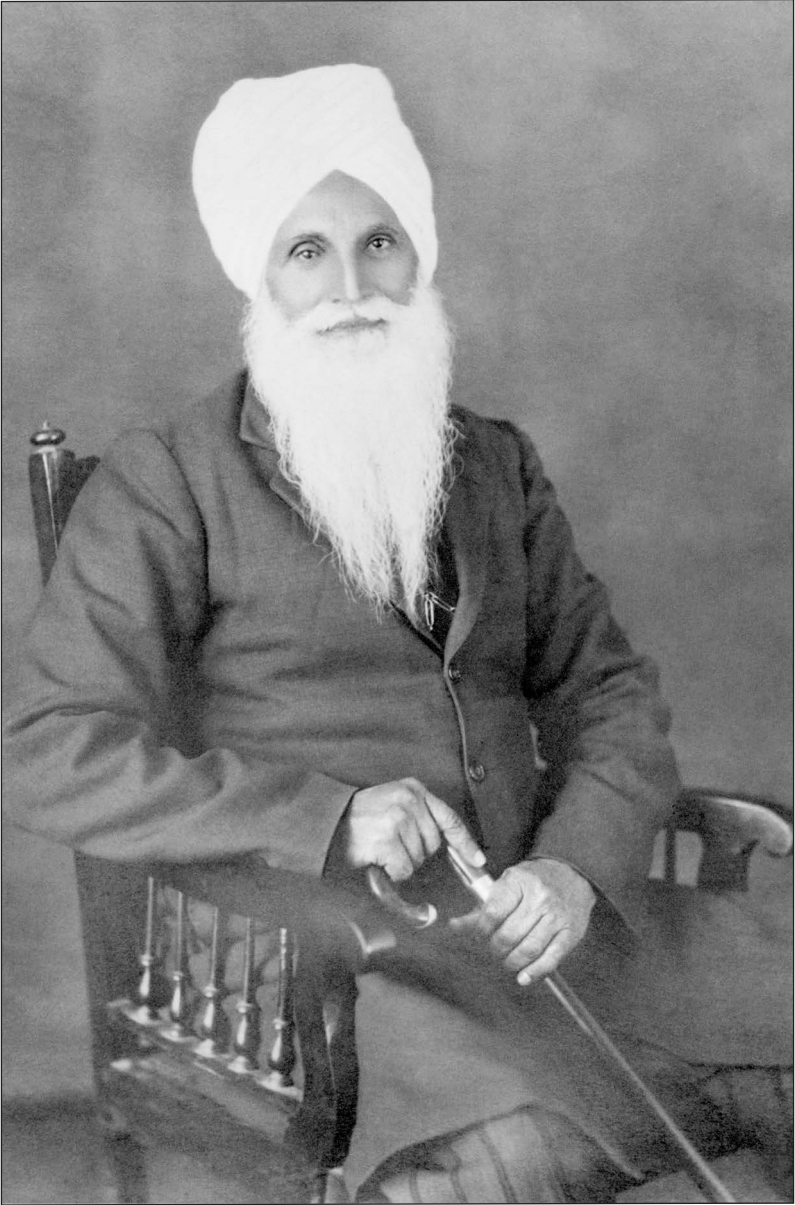
Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

\* \* \*

Your experiences of being lifted up into the beautiful light at the time of your operation are signs of the purity of your heart and your great love for the Lord. During anaesthesia our attention is automatically withdrawn from our five senses and is concentrated inside. Please try to bring about this condition by your meditation, now that the Lord has given you just a glimpse of what light and love is placed within you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*





# Forgiveness

Forgiveness is fundamental for spiritual growth. Without it there could be no progress and no attainable goal. Through the teachings of the saints we know that we have been incarcerated in this creation, reincarnating life after life into different forms and that all these forms are on the road to death as soon as they are born.

We are currently trapped in the human form, which will last for a short while until we die and the soul moves on. In this continuous process, because we act and then react to the situations we find ourselves in, we create a mass of karma, which is the balance sheet of our debts and credits at any time. Life after life we engineer our future through the actions we take in the present, and in this way are wholly responsible for our destiny – no one else is to blame. Unfortunately, our balance sheets hold a large mass of creditors and we will have to give account to them all in some way. Alone, we are destitute and in irredeemable debt, and it is here that forgiveness plays its part. Maharaj Sawan Singh used to say that the law of karma is universally applicable, while forgiveness is the speciality of the saints.

That statement sheds the most revealing light on God's plan for human redemption. If there were no forgiveness, or in other words, no divine intervention capable of releasing us from our debts, then there would be no possibility of the soul finding its way back to the Creator from whom it came so long ago. The well-known saying "To err is human, to forgive is divine", also reveals the unique link between the soul erring or turning away from the Creator and the Creator providing a way to redemption through divine forgiveness. When we talk about the love of the Master or the love of the Lord, the very fact



that we can do so and are now in contact with our home is a prime demonstration of that forgiveness.

So forgiveness is the essence of our relationship with the Lord and our Master, and whilst we are unable to experience the immensity of true divine love at this stage, we can see loving compassion at work in the living Master – in everything he says and does. The Master accepts us as his responsibility, complete with all our karmas and wayward characteristics. In essence, we were forgiven when the Master accepted us in the first place. We should now follow the example of his love and express our gratitude to him through our daily actions.

If we wish to experience the full effect of the love and forgiveness of the Creator, we must invoke that forgiveness, when initiated, by attending to our meditation – two and a half hours every day, without fail. The reason for the meditation is first to keep the mind from wandering out into the creation by use of the repetition of the five holy names, or simran. By this means, we focus our whole attention at the eye centre and collect it there. In time, this will allow the concentrated mind to catch the sound current, the Shabd within. The second part of the meditation period is listening for that sound.

When discussing prayer, the Masters say that meditation is automatically a prayer for forgiveness and is wholly acceptable to the Lord. Our meditation has the practical effect of making us receptive to the forgiveness of the Lord and is the way that he himself has established for us to seek forgiveness, as opposed to the mere repetition of words. Meditation is the daily active proof that we are serious about achieving our goal and that we wish to please the Master. It demonstrates our true feeling in a much better way than chasing after the physical Master and all the other outward things that can so easily become rituals. There is no need to heap praise on the Master and beseech him to save us. Why not demonstrate to him that

we are sincere by attending to our meditation in private as he asks us to do?

The physical Master is the signpost to the true Master within, the Shabd. If we do not digest this fact and act accordingly, then we are not helping the Master in his work. His work is to see us home, and for that to happen, the soul's load of karmas must be eradicated through contact, at a higher level, with the Shabd. No wonder the Master urges us to attend to meditation – we must reach that point where the Shabd can wash us clean. We must allow ourselves to be fully forgiven.

As we continue on the path, year after year, attending to all our duties, so our conduct in the world should change to reflect our progress. We will become more genuinely loving, more contented, more placid, more responsible, more forgiving to others. We can accelerate this process by understanding and practising some of these attributes so that they start to become part of our nature.

Practising forgiveness by attending to small issues with compassion and understanding will encourage this characteristic to grow in us to the level where we feel compassion for the condition of all souls caught in this trap of illusion. All are struggling souls like us, all seeking happiness and peace – most looking in the wrong direction and seeking it in the creation, when all the time it is within. What greater tragedy, what greater cause of sorrow and misunderstanding can there be? Knowing this, we can hardly criticize others – but we still do, and are diminished by doing so. Why are we so lacking in compassion for others and why do we fail in our duty to render loving help when we have received so much kindness from the Master? He has accepted us and loves us even though we are besmirched with all our negative features. This should prompt us to find just an iota of the love we have received and dispense it to others by way of understanding, compassion and practical help.

So forgiveness and compassion go hand in hand and are a divine blessing to all. As these characteristics develop in us so we will become more detached and merciful.

“The person of a forgiving nature is calm, humble, patient and forbearing,” explains Maharaj Sawan Singh in *Philosophy of the Masters Vol. III*. These characteristics are beloved of the Master, so we can quietly try to practise them. There, within the inner sanctum of our hearts, the Master will see our sincere efforts and the desire to change, and he will be pleased.



*This is the highest knowledge and the most useful lesson – to have true understanding and small opinion of oneself. To hold no high opinion of oneself, and always to judge well and highly of others, is great wisdom and high perfection. If you should see another openly do wrong, or commit some grievous sins, you should not reckon yourself better than he, because you do not know how long you may be able to continue in integrity. We are all frail, but you must not count anyone more frail than yourself.*

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

# Occupy the Crease

Cricket, glorious cricket! Those of us who love this intriguing old game (the Laws were written in 1788) find it totally absorbing and seriously addictive to watch or play. But have we ever thought that cricket, with all its minute detail, can also be a highly revealing metaphor for a satsangi's life on the path? Looking at the game this way might change not only how we look at cricket but how we, as satsangis, play this innings of our life.

Let's play our life like a true batsman: let us stay in to win the game by patiently building a long, structured innings. The batting crease, the space in front of the wicket, is the batsman's ground, his personal space, and the first thing he must do is to 'take guard' here. He scrapes a line to mark the optimum position from which to defend his wicket. We, as satsangis, have to do the same. For us the crease is our chosen place for meditation. If we keep to the same time and place for meditation, it is an anchor in our life, our place of safety. We too have to take guard to prepare for the monumental struggle with the mind.

Just as the batsman must face the bowler's attack, the satsangi has to confront the mind. The sole aim of the bowler is to tempt the batsman into making a mistake and so take his wicket, and the sole aim of the batsman is to protect his wicket, just as the satsangi has to protect his soul from the devious weapons of the mind.

In order to do this the batsman (satsangi) needs to exhibit intense concentration, discrimination, resilience and courage in the face of attack. To develop these many qualities he needs to have had years (in our case it may be many lifetimes) of repetitive practice with the bat. For the bat, read "meditation". The bat is the only single thing that will

ensure protection of his wicket, but only if he uses it with the skilful technique taught by his coach.

So, as opening batsman we will face the bowler with a brave heart and the intention to 'carry our bat' (not get bowled out) to the close, make the opposition follow-on and win by an innings so that we will not have to bat again. In other words, do our meditation and reach Sach Khand in this life. But as we can all testify, this is not easy. Being initiated, or being a chosen opening batsman, is not for the faint-hearted. Like an innings, our life as a satsangi becomes a long, personal battle of constant vigilance toward the cunning of the mind.

### **The Bowler is Relentless**

The bowler (mind), to achieve his aim, is ruthless and passionate in his attack and he bombards the batsman relentlessly with pace, bounce and swing, keeping him under constant pressure to force an error. He charges in, hurtling and leaping towards him and explosively releases the ball (the senses) towards him. If the batsman has not done his practice with the bat (his meditation), there is no hope for him in the face of this onslaught. The bowler can also change his attack to one which is so full of deceit and guile that the batsman has to use all his resources to withstand it. The bowler will sometimes just walk menacingly towards the batsman and pitch the ball on the biggest cracks and lumps so that it spits up at the batsman, alarming him. And, always sensing vulnerability, he will deliberately tempt him further and further out of his crease so that eventually the batsman will dance down the pitch in a flamboyant and frustrated attempt to hit the ball and go too far and get stumped – he has fatally abandoned his only refuge, the crease, losing his wicket and being dismissed from the scene of play. (In our analogy, he will have to come back for another life to do more practice to control his ego.)

As if all this is not difficult enough for us to deal with, the bowler also has numerous allies in the field to help him eject the batsman from the crease. These are his dedicated and vigilant friends all around the arena – the fielders. (For the satsangi, the fielders represent friends and relations in the world.) And the bowler’s best allies, whom he places closest to the batsman – the wicket keeper and the slips – are for the satsangi, his most unremitting karmic attachments, his nearest and dearest, his spouse and his children. If the batsman doesn’t ‘find the gaps’ (time for spiritual practice every day), they can insidiously rob him of his spiritual wealth because of their emotional needs and the time they demand. They are lined up waiting for the batsman to be drawn into a fatal mistake (too much attachment). Even a little indulgence in this, a tentative nibble at a wide ball, can result in disastrous consequences. *Desires and attachments in this world, small or large, will ensure rebirth here more than anything else.*

### **A Satsangi’s Only Friend**

So with all this going on around him, the batsman satsangi can be forgiven if he feels isolated and threatened in this arena of life. But he should not despair! He has even more powerful weapons than the bowler (mind) does, if only he can recognize and accept the help that is there for him. Firstly, he has been given protection against the bowler’s attack with his pads, gloves and helmet. These are the simran we have been given, which is the antidote to the onslaught of the mind. If we wear these – that is, if we practise simran at every opportunity – we will be protected and not feel the blows.

Secondly and most important for the batsman is that he has to remember that he too has a powerful and vigilant ally – the non-striker batsman, who is his only friend on the field. This, for the

satsangi, is of course the Master. He always lovingly guides and encourages the batsman. He will constantly come towards him and touch gloves, urging him to continue to occupy the crease, to use his bat (meditation) effectively, and reassure him that he is his friend and that they are in the battle together. However, in order to score runs, a trusting partnership must be forged between them and they must stay in together until they have won. Similarly, a satsangi must regard his Master as his only friend in the world, and develop an enduring partnership with him until they win together, and the Master takes the batsman to his real home in Sach Khand.

So, if the batsman, through steely concentration (total faith in his Master) produces fine shots with a straight bat (meditation every day), if he keeps his game simple and makes a big hundred not out, the whole arena will rise to their feet and give him a deafening ovation (total spiritual bliss). His partner will rush to embrace him and he will then raise his bat (meditation triumphant), kiss his helmet (remember simran at all times), grab a stump (ensuring no rebirth on this plane) and together they will run in ecstasy towards his coach (Sat Purush). His coach, who has seemed to be in the background but, in fact, has been watching the scene of play intently, is well pleased. He will greet the batsman with euphoric joy and welcome him in to the pavilion (Sach Khand), his true home.

So always remember you are in it to win it. And when the final stumps are drawn, would we not want to be able to say that we always occupied the crease, and kept a still head and a straight bat under pressure? And, most of all see the greatest batsman of all, our beloved Master, smile and hear from him the words which every batsman wants to hear at close of play – WELL PLAYED!



# The One Thing

There is one thing in this world which you must never forget to do. If you forget everything else and not this, there's nothing to worry about, but if you remember everything else and forget this, then you will have done nothing in your life.

It's as if a king has sent you to some country to do a task, and you perform a hundred other services, but not the one he sent you to do. So human beings come to this world to do *particular work*. If you don't do it, it's as though a knife of the finest tempering were nailed into a wall to hang things on.

You say, "But look, I'm using the dagger. It's not lying idle."

Do you hear how ludicrous that sounds? For a penny an iron nail could be bought to serve for that. You say, "But I spend my energies on lofty enterprises. I study philosophy and logic and astronomy and medicine and all the rest." But consider why you do those things. They are all branches of yourself.

Remember the deep root of your being, the presence of your lord. Give your life to the one who already owns your breath and your moments. If you don't, you will be exactly like the man who takes a precious dagger and hammers it into his kitchen wall for a peg. You'll be foolishly ignoring your purpose.

Rumi, as rendered by Moyne and Barks in *Say I Am You*





# Book Review



## *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*

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Madame Guyon (also called Jeanne-Marie Bouvier) was a French mystic who lived from 1648 to 1717. She is associated with the movement of Quietism, which held that God can be found within through stillness and surrender under the direction of a spiritual guide. Her writings enjoyed great popularity among both Catholics and Protestants of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. During her lifetime, however, Quietism was declared heretical by the Catholic Church, and Madame Guyon herself was imprisoned in the Bastille.

Born into a pious upper-class family, from her youth Guyon felt a profound desire to commune with God and struggled to achieve a state of unceasing prayer and adoration. Facing utter failure, she told “a very religious person, of the order of Saint Francis” about her problems. He was silent a long while, then said: “It is, madame, because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will there find Him.”

*Having said these words, he left me. They were to me like the stroke of a dart, which penetrated through my heart. I felt a very deep wound, a wound so delightful that I desired not to be cured ...  
O my Lord, Thou wast in my heart, and demanded only a simple turning of my mind inward, to make me perceive Thy presence.  
O, Infinite Goodness! How was I running hither and thither to seek Thee ... O Beauty, ancient and new; why have I known Thee*

*so late? Alas! I sought Thee where Thou wert not, and did not seek  
Thee where thou wert.*

For the next eight years she enjoyed the constant and intense feeling of God's presence. Then she entered a period in which she lost the sense of grace, found no savour in anything spiritual, and was gripped by fear of her own great evil. She endured seven years of this desolation, which she called "mystical death," before she felt resurrected into a state in which she did not possess God, as she had felt in the first stage, but God possessed her so completely that she became a tool of his will. She did not act, but God acted within her, and she was moved by God to write automatically, without reflection. In this state she began her apostolic work, spreading her method of attaining the inner presence of God, most famously in a small book translated into English in 1876 as *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*.

Guyon begins her book with this message: "We are all called to prayer, as we are all called to salvation. Prayer is nothing but the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love." She offers twenty-four short chapters, on subjects such as making the soul active by stilling the self, interior silence, aridities to be borne in love, and the prayer of simplicity, quoting frequently from the Bible throughout.

Guyon understands prayer as "recollection," meaning "inward recollection, by which the soul is turned wholly and altogether inward, to possess a present God." Again and again, she emphasizes the efficacy of this form of prayer:

*When the soul is in its central tendency, or in other words, is returned through recollection into itself, from that moment, the central attraction becomes a most potent activity, infinitely surpassing in energy every other species. Nothing, indeed, can equal the swiftness of this tendency to the centre; and though an activity, yet it is so noble, so peaceful, so full of tranquility, so natural, and so spontaneous, that it appears to the soul as if it were none at all.*

While acknowledging that recollection is difficult in the beginning, Guyon asserts that it becomes “perfectly easy,” partly from habit, and partly from the abundant grace of God, “whose one will towards His creatures is to communicate Himself to them.” She compares the first efforts of gathering the soul inward to the efforts oarsmen must make to move a large sailing vessel from port. But once the soul departs from thinking and outer works and spreads its sails, the oars can be set aside, and all the pilot needs to do is hold the rudder, to

*restrain our heart from wandering from the true course, recalling it gently, and guiding it steadily by the dictates of the Spirit of God, which gradually gains possession of the heart, just as the breeze by degrees fills the sails and impels the vessel.*

According to Guyon, this interior course will “advance us by the divine impulsion farther than many reiterated acts of self-exertion. Whoever will try this path will find it the easiest in the world.”

Guyon advises that we should begin interior prayer by reading just a few words of something inspiring, pausing often to “taste and digest it,” trying to keep the mind in the feeling it engenders. We should read not to analyze, but to fix the mind on the presence of God, letting the lively faith of the presence of God in our inmost soul “produce an eager sinking into ourselves, restraining all our senses from wandering abroad.” This extricates us from distractions and draws us toward God within.

Guyon also describes a second degree of prayer, the “prayer of simplicity.” In this state of contemplation, we find ourselves in the presence of God, and we remain there in “respectful silence,” not troubling ourselves to meditate on any particular subject. We should pray with courage, with pure and disinterested love, not for any spiritual delights, but just to please Him. Steadiness is essential: comparing the soul to a canvas and God to a painter, she says that when a canvas is unsteady, the painter cannot produce a correct picture, as it “interrupts the work and defeats the design of this adorable Painter.”

Guyon stresses the need for stillness and silence within, in order to hear God's voice:

*“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” (Bible, Habakuk, 2:20). The reason why inward silence is so indispensable is, because the Word is essential and eternal.... Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting, but not communicating sensation; and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose. Christ, the eternal Word, who must be communicated to the soul to give it new life, requires the most intense attention to his voice, when He would speak within us ... we must forget ourselves, and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to God; these two simple actions, or rather passive dispositions, produce the love of that beauty, which He himself communicates.... When, through weakness, we become as it were uncentred, we must immediately turn again inward; and this process we must repeat as often as our distractions recur.*

For those facing periods of dryness and lack of faith, Guyon offers reassurance that succour will come. She explains that, if winds should blow foul and stormy seas should be encountered, we must only cast our anchor in trust of God and hope in his goodness, “waiting patiently the calming of the tempest and the return of a favourable gale.” That this waiting could take years or even a lifetime should not discourage us; we should not seek him by an exertion of will, but should wait peacefully “with silence full of veneration.” As she says, “thus only can you demonstrate that it is HIMSELF alone, and his good pleasure, that you seek; and not the selfish delights of your own sensations in loving Him.”



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