

June 2012

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 2 Yours Affectionately
- 4 A Matter of Trust
- 6 A Story of Love
- 11 Something to Think About
- 15 Did You Know?
- 16 Stormy Weather
- 20 Serving Endlessly
- 21 It Matters to Him
- 23 The Attitude of a Disciple
- 24 Bliss
- 26 The Master Answers
- 29 To See Him Again
- 32 Repartee of the Wise
- 33 In Abundance
- 37 Memorable Quotes
- 38 Paralysis of Analysis
- 40 Spiritualisticks
- 41 Empty Your Cup
- 42 All We Have Is This Moment
- 47 Heart to Heart
- 48 Book Review

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India
Copyright © 2012 Science of the Soul Research Centre®

Articles and poems that appear without sources have been written by the contributors to this magazine.

VOLUME 8 • ISSUE SIX • JUNE 2012

Yours Affectionately

A Letter from Maharaj Charan Singh

The very reason we are placed on this earth is to enable us to realize God within ourselves. Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in are due to previous karmas, and so long as we try to act in accordance with his will, whatever the results may be – whether pleasant or unpleasant – it helps us in our spiritual progress. To go back to our Father's house is the main purpose of this life. All other things we do simply to maintain ourselves in this world. But while doing so, we should not forget the Father who has given us all these things.

You are very lucky to have been given the way to realize the Master within yourself, so you should always devote as much time to simran and bhajan as possible, as that is the only way by which we can be cleansed so that we may be liberated. The more we attempt to do this, the more grace and blessings we receive from him within.

The Master is within us and so near, but the curtain of the mind stands in between. If we cleanse and vacate the chamber of the mind and wait lovingly and expectantly for him, surely he will permit us to see him within. The best way to cleanse the mind is to vacate the nine doors of the body through repetition of the five holy Names with love and devotion. Faith and despair are two contradictory things. Happiness lies in surrender and resignation to the Master within. Therefore, please continue with your spiritual practice with increased faith and love, and the Master within will take care of everything else. The results are all in his hands and whatever happens will be for your spiritual benefit.

Light on Sant Mat



A Matter of Trust

Critics often question the concept of obedience and surrendering one's will to a perfect Master. In fact, there are those who have even gone so far as to label this concept as a way of crushing a person's initiative and personal freedom.

But if one were to study the scriptures from various religions and spiritual paths, one would eventually conclude that when it comes to the pursuit of spiritual liberation, complete surrender to a perfect living Master is the most natural course of action.

Actually, the resistance is to the word 'surrender'. It is not the correct term for what the teachings of Sant Mat are trying to convey. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that one should fully and unconditionally *trust* the Master, much like the way a passenger who buys an airline ticket trusts that the pilot of the aircraft will take him to his destination.

From another perspective, imagine being lost in a dense forest without the slightest idea of the way out. You have been wandering around for weeks, you are weak from starvation and thirst, you are on the verge of collapse and death – the situation is completely hopeless. But then, along comes an expert trekker who knows the woods and offers to show you the way out. In fact, seeing how weak you are, he even volunteers to carry you to freedom.

In a case like this, would you worry about surrendering your will to his? And considering your pitiful state, would you question his authority or ask him why he was there and what his intentions were? Wouldn't you just grab on to your rescuer and never let him out of your sight?

The mystics explain that this is an exact parallel of the plight of the soul, which is lost in the maze of mind and matter and does not know how to make its way to spiritual freedom. Until along comes a compassionate and loving spiritual Master, who not only knows how to escape but who offers to help the soul realize its freedom. Considering the helplessness of our situation, why wouldn't we gratefully accept?

The fact is we surrender nothing to the Master. It is exactly as Julian Johnson said in *The Path of the Masters*, "It is merely a case of entrusting our higher interests into the hands of an expert."

It is a well-known fact that no true Master ever enforces his will upon any disciple. The perfect mystics teach by example. Like loving parents, they use logic, reason and love. They want their disciples to walk the path based on a conviction derived from their own understanding and personal experience.

But in order to reach that level of experience, what is needed first and foremost is trust in the Master. We need to trust him because we acknowledge that when it comes to the liberation of our soul, he is the expert and he knows best how to get us home.

It has been said that when one surrenders to a perfect Master, he gains the most perfect liberty. But, in fact, true freedom is in the act of surrender itself. For once we leave everything to him we have nothing to worry about. The Master will multiply even our smallest efforts. All we have to do is make the effort to sit and repeat the names at the eye centre ... and trust him.



Except for the Satguru, no one is going to get the individual liberated.

Baba Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*

A Story of Love

Baba Ji's satsang program in Agra – January 25 and 26, 2012

Agra satsang, January 2012 – an occasion to make us reflect. Hazur Maharaj Ji had given satsang in Agra in 1978, and now this occasion would be only the second time that a Beas master would give satsang in the place we all associate with the beginnings of Radha Soami Satsang.

From the time Baba Ji's plans to include Agra in his 2012 tour schedule were announced, it was made known that anyone from the Indian sangat would be welcome to attend. Normally the sangat is discouraged from moving with the master from one centre to another, since Baba Ji visits the main centres in India every year, to meet us near where we live, and moreover, the entire sangat is welcome to visit Beas. If the sangat were to follow him around on his tours, it would put unnecessary strain on local centres and their sevadars.

We were very excited – and not without good reason. The statistics tell their story. Approximately 320 acres of rural land, some seven miles to the north of Agra with access from the Delhi highway, were loaned to the sangat by 14 farmers and a developer to host the event. The farmers were compensated for any possible loss of income from crops they would not be able to grow for the season. There were 27,000 visiting sevadars who gave their time to prepare and manage the satsang program. It took 2 ½ months to level the land and build the road network, the langar, four canteens, toilet facilities, and so forth – all the arrangements needed for a temporary *dera*, or camp. It's hard to imagine: 2,200 buses, 9,000 cars, 10,000 two-wheelers, and numerous trains passing through Agra brought the sangat to the site. Almost 250,000 people attended the first satsang and 300,000 the

second, of whom 125,000 slept at the site overnight, under tenting. All were fed, and facilities were created for bathing and toilet needs. Records show that 168,000 people took lunch at the free langar on the second day, and the canteens and langar functioned round the clock. The scale of the occasion took our breath away.

Agra is not a large centre for the Radha Soami Satsang Beas satsang. It is 134 years since Soami Ji Maharaj first gave out the teachings in Agra, after spending 17 years in intense meditation. And it is more than a century since he sent Baba Jaimal Singh to spread the teachings in Punjab, thereby originating the Radha Soami Satsang Beas lineage of spiritual masters, with their unlimited love for the Lord's creation and their untiring service to humanity. Soami Ji taught his disciples to distinguish true from false to make their lives fruitful, and now once again Baba Ji is giving the teachings of the one truth for all, with people from all over India attending the satsang in their commitment to Soami Ji's message. No one could have imagined the power of the Lord's love as it was manifested through the sevadars who worked together to make the occasion possible. With their love for the one Lord reflected in their behaviour, and following the example and leadership of our master – obedient sevadar to the generous Lord – the sevadars had worked tirelessly to prepare for Baba Ji's visit. It was beyond belief.

Sevadars were all over the city. There were 2,500 of them along the various routes to the venue, covering 160 miles. Distinguished by the reflective strips on their jackets and by their courtesy and alertness, these traffic sevadars didn't get to see Baba Ji. They didn't get to hear the satsang. Another 1,500 of them directed the flow of the sangat within the site. They came mostly from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, sevadars young and old, men and women. They stood for hours and hours in the dusty environment, with all the craziness, noise and

fumes of India's traffic, and they guided, cajoled, and shepherded the sangat on their way to hear the Master speak.

Finally, the site! Vast, vast, vast, it stretched as far as the eye could see. Sangat everywhere, with tented walls and tented areas directing and controlling the spaces. Earth and sand had been flattened and packed hard by sevadars working through the winter weeks to make roads and designated spaces for all the activities. (Even a four-wheel-drive vehicle could not have crossed the land before preparations had begun). By the time we reached the *pandal* (satsang tent), thousands and thousands of cars had already been parked in an orderly fashion, parking lines numbered – was that line number 481 we just noted? Masses of people were moving on foot, without any crush, without any apparent difficulties, masses of them. Earth-moving machines had been parked in a side lot, some even now filling sand into places where the earthen roads need bolstering to support the arriving throngs. The signage everywhere was excellent; we never had to ask, as our every concern was anticipated. Even the temporary bathrooms were kept spotless by the sevadar army. We were requested to conserve water at all times. Sevadars greeted us with affection and respect at every step. We finally reached and were shown into the pandal.

Satsang. Pin-drop silence. Literally pin-drop! The pandal stretched back farther, it seemed, than even the largest covered area one sees in Dera Beas at the time of the biggest gatherings. This special place was created from a rural wilderness for a two-day program, where the living master has come to teach us, to share his message with all who will hear, to wake us to truth. Shabads were being sung. The sound system was flawless. The message was simple: “Listen, my loved one; this is a story of love. Millions and millions of blessings are with those upon whom the Satguru casts his merciful glance.”

Baba Ji himself spoke on both days. On the first day, he gave his satsang from a text by Guru Amar Das: “*Naamai hi te sabh kichh*

hoaa” (Everything has come from Nam). On the second day, he took a Soami Ji text – “*Dhun sun kar, man samjhaa’i*” (Listen to the melody of Shabd and bring your wayward mind into line.) Baba Ji’s choice of texts was totally consistent with his rigorous, focused approach to transmitting the message of the saints to us: Nam, Nam, Nam on the first day; bhajan, bhajan, bhajan on the second. Baba Ji is so consistent in his message because the teachings are always the same. He repeats the message over and over again because we are so dense. He leaves us no scope to get confused on account of varying texts or varying explanations of the saints’ one message. The message is simple: Nam is the only thing of true value. The only thing worth doing is Nam practice. Meditation alone is worth our unreserved commitment. Open your hearts to the music of the Shabd-dhun. Don’t compromise this one activity that is needed to make your life fruitful. Get on with it in a spirit of faith and love. Go within yourself. In the end, nothing will be left with us but this. Cultivate love within your heart through meditation. Do not leave the love. This practice will bring us everything. This is what we are here for. Act now. Do what the master asks us to do.

Baba Ji’s two satsangs were longer than they usually are. Several of us noted that he spoke with a certain authority. He explained, as he always does, how the only way out of this field of action and reaction, the sphere of karma, is to attach oneself to Nam, and this can only be done through the grace of the master, by going within through meditation, and by the practice of listening to the Word. He reminded us of how many years have passed since the masters who followed Soami Ji have been telling us the same truth and asking us to take action by going inside ourselves to experience it for ourselves. But do we do it? Have we done it?

At the end of the second day’s satsang, Baba Ji implored us – here, at this place where Soami Ji had first taught more than one hundred

years ago – he made a passionate plea as we had never heard before. He spoke quietly, deliberately, slowly, and with unbearable intensity. As he spoke, many of the sangat started crying. Many sobbed – men and women alike. How can it be, we asked ourselves, faced with the absolute selflessness of his service, that we do not fulfil this one simple request from Baba Ji to do our meditation daily? Who did not feel moved? He said an extraordinary thing: It is not for us to do anything but simply to sit. Whatever has to be done, he said, has already been done and completed by Soami Ji himself, by Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, by Great Master, by Sardar Bahadur Ji and by Hazur Maharaj Ji, in all the years they have put in for us in communion with the Lord. They have done the work. They have already done what is necessary. There is nothing left for us to do but to sit in meditation. Ours is simply to put ourselves where they can give us what they are already holding in trust for us. This is all that is required. That was how Baba Ji ended the Agra 2012 satsang program.

More than 300,000 people came to Agra for these satsangs. All gathered in the love of the divine. All were drawn to come and wait for hours and sleep in tents overnight in the cold of late January, to make their way in a disciplined and loving fashion to a place they themselves had prepared from a wilderness of fields, ravines and hillocks to accommodate his visit. What a miracle of supreme love on earth! How fortunate we are to experience this miracle for ourselves. It is love and love and love. And from this love, Baba Ji requests of us one thing: to act, to be “doers of the Word” – spiritual activists, *parmarthis* – to be true satsangis, companions of truth. This is our master’s one request.



Something to Think About

We are accustomed to pick out faults in other people. But this is not the way of spiritually inclined people. A satsangi or anyone keen on spiritual progress should try to find out his own faults and endeavour to give them up, one after the other, rather than find faults in other people. It is only a sense of superiority and of being above others that induces this habit in us, which is the very opposite of humility.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

* * *

The world is full of temptations, and a traveller on the higher path should expect them to cross his path and test him. Satsangis are warned to this effect. Not only is the path beset with temptations in this world but inside also. Maharaj Ji used to say that a person who succumbs to temptations here will not be able to stand the temptations inside. Temptations are tests and show where we really stand. Yet if a person fails once he should try again, for we fall but to rise. With faith and confidence strengthened by the memory of the fall, let him spur on and work with redoubled zeal and caution, and beware of the snares of the mind. The Master helps and guides and saves you at critical junctures if you turn to him.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

* * *

There is a window within you, which opens towards the Lord. To open it is as easy as to open any window of your house.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

An Attitude of Gratitude

For sixty years I have been forgetful, every minute, but not for a second has this flowing toward me stopped or slowed. I deserve nothing. Today I recognize that I am the guest the mystics talk about. I play this living Music for my host. Everything today is for the host.

Rumi, as quoted in *The Essential Rumi*
translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne

Rumi puts it perfectly. We are indeed guests in his beautiful creation, and our every breath should be one of gratitude to our host. In our day to day lives, when we are invited to someone's home or when we receive a gift, we are normally quick to express our gratitude with a note, a phone call or some other gesture. But somehow, when it comes to the Lord, we forget that he is indeed our most gracious host, and the abundant blessings that we are conferred with are often taken for granted.

The mystics explain to us that gratitude is an attitude of thankfulness and acceptance of our circumstances in life. It is the ability to accept and be grateful for whatever comes. It is opening oneself to the understanding that our life is a journey not a destination, and therefore each moment should be appreciated for what it is, a part of the beautiful 'big picture'.

As we try to cultivate this attitude of gratitude, we will naturally shift our focus from the mundane and the negative, and begin to view the world from a practical and positive perspective – one that is founded on love and respect for all that exists. When we channel our focus on our numerous blessings and the support we have been given,

we take our minds off issues that worry, frustrate and hinder us from moving forward in our evolution. When we are feeling grateful, the positive energy dispels negative emotions like fear, anger and hatred. It also provides us with an option to choose how we want to view our circumstances. We can focus on what we lack, end up miserable and negative, and perpetually see our glass as 'half empty'; or we can focus on all that we have, be inspired and develop a mindset that is in tandem with our destiny, go with the flow, and perceive our glass as 'half full'.

*Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues,
but the parent of all others.*

Cicero

*A grateful mind is a great mind which eventually
attracts to itself great things.*

Plato

It is said that spirituality is the seed, and gratitude is the water that helps it grow. Having a grateful attitude is actually very important for our spiritual maturity. The mystics have explained to us that whatever we are today is the result of our past actions. By the same rule of cause and effect, what we become in the future will be determined by what we think and do today. We can choose at every moment to make a difference now, in this life, not only for the rest of our lifetime but for all eternity. Being grateful also helps us to develop other positive virtues that are essential in the practice of spirituality. When we are able to develop and nourish a grateful heart, we find that we are able to feel our connection and closeness with our source. We are able to

relate to the notion of being one with him, instead of drowning in the illusion of separation, which our ego thrives upon.

We are truly fortunate, for the Master has given us both the opportunity and the method by which we can “play the living music for our host”, as Rumi has beautifully expressed this concept. When we sit for meditation each day, let us remember to do so with a grateful heart and a relaxed and happy attitude. The mystics tell us that this will make it much easier for us to collect and focus our attention. Maharaj Charan Singh in *Quest for Light* writes:

We can show our gratitude by attending to our meditation every day and by listening to the voice of the Lord with our entire attention.

He further states:

So our feeling of gratitude to him must never be lost. He alone knows what is best for us and it is for us to live within his will.



*The ocean of his mercy is boundless.
The tongue cannot be grateful enough,
and the heart is confounded.
Although my sins are grave, his mercy is greater.
In fact, we are swimming in the ocean of sins.*

Sarmad Shaheed, as quoted in *Sultan Bahu*

Did You Know?

Faith is the foundation on which the whole superstructure of religion and spiritual progress stands. It is the root of the tree of godliness. Without faith there can be no achievement in any worldly art or spiritual matter. Faith is the most precious of gifts that the Lord can confer on a devotee.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

* * *

We do achieve results in meditation when we start honestly on the path, and if we are able to digest and treasure that bliss and peace within, we get more and more grace within; but if we waste it, if we squander it, then he also withholds his hand of grace from us.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

* * *

Love for the Master comes by having darshan inside, that is, by seeing him inside. It is only then that the feeling of real love springs up. In the beginning we have to practise it more or less. If we carry out his wishes and commands and follow his instructions faithfully, a feeling of confidence and love springs up; and it also leads to darshan inside, which further promotes and strengthens this love.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

Stormy Weather

The winds continued to whistle as the rain came smattering down against the window pane. The typhoon was raging outside as a family remained safe in the shelter of their home. A little girl lay in her bed, afraid of the rolling roar of the thunder. She closed her eyes tightly, but this only helped fuel her imagination further – making her more fearful of the night and the storm. She prayed to God – and slowly felt the reassurance of her mother’s arms around her. “Don’t worry, it’s just a storm. It will pass.”

“But mommy, why does God make storms?”

The mother was about to spew the scientific explanation of how storm clouds are formed, but instead she answered tenderly, “To make us appreciate the sunny days.”

And so it is with all of us – we are all faced with storms, difficulties and depressing times in our lives. And we allow ourselves to be carried away by these storms, closing our eyes to the reality of our predicament. We forget that the storm will surely pass and give way to yet another bright, sunny day.

There is a reason for everything that takes place in our lives. Every action gives rise to an equal reaction. But more often than not, we are unaware of the action and are unprepared for the reactions that occur. At times like these, it is easy to lose our equilibrium and balance. We do not know how to react to the situation and we make terrible decisions that can bring about more pain and suffering.

We all carry around with us an extremely dangerous instrument – it causes chaos in our lives and plays havoc with our emotions. We were born with it, have to live with it, and have no idea how to control it. It

did not come with any instruction manual nor training session. It is our mind.

Our mind is the window to our perception of events. It dictates how we perceive and analyze the incidents that make up our lives. We can continue to look at things negatively and let ourselves be pulled into the vortex of the typhoon, or we can take a step back and think that something good will result from this storm, and realize that this too shall pass.

The Masters understand how difficult our lives can be and how strong of an opposition the mind can become. That is why the first step or hurdle in our meditation is to subdue the mind – to tame it, so to speak – so that it can help us achieve our true purpose, instead of hindering our progress.

The struggle with the mind is always there with everyone. And we must struggle. We should be bold enough to struggle and try to keep up that atmosphere in which we have to live. We must build up that atmosphere of love and devotion and live in that. We have to struggle to live in that, no doubt. It's not so easy. It's difficult, I know.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Make no mistake, this is a struggle from the first to the last moment, and it gets fiercer the longer we stay in the ring. But there is a tremendous consolation, not the least of which is that the longer we keep trying, the stronger we will become. Just as a runner gets a second wind, we get a stronger will.

Without Nam, the mind remains a wild horse that runs out of control at the slightest pretext or whim.... We have to comprehend for all time that what matters is the bringing of one's body consciousness into the orbit of the divine melody.

Maharaj Charan Singh, as quoted in *In Search of the Way*

The Master does not leave us to fight the mind alone. He stands behind us, ready to lift us up every time we fall back. He is always ready with an out-stretched hand; all we need to do is take hold of it. This is our meditation – constantly trying to overcome the mind – so that we can move forward and realize our true potential.

Sometimes the pain we feel at this level is almost unbearable – and we look for a way to escape the whole situation. Our mind drags us down into depression and we lose hope. The Master knows what is best for us, and as unbearable as the pain may feel to us today, he makes it better tomorrow and each day after that. We may have to go through that pain, but he helps us – even if we cannot realize his presence in our lives.

Hazur once related the story of Maulana Rum: A woman came to him crying, saying she was heartbroken and could not bear the loss of her only son, so he comforted her with an analogy: “Think a moment! If your son, when he was a child had been playing with his toys and you wanted him to come for his meal, and he refused because he was interested in his game and began to cry with frustration, how would you have dealt with the situation?”

She replied, “I would have taken the toys away from him even if he cried. He would soon have got over it; I would have reasoned that it was for his ultimate good to do so.”

“Yes,” he said, “that is what God is doing to you now. He has taken away your toy and presently he will give you the meal he has called you for, and then you will forget the sorrow that the loss of your son has caused.” In the words of Maharaj Jagat Singh:

The soul has nothing but frustration and misery as long as it is in the custody of the mind. When we entrust it to the Shabd, we escape the miseries of birth and death.

Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol. II

This world is full of misery – behind every calm is a storm waiting to brew. But the Masters have graced us with a way to weather the storms and to cope with our karmas. For the reality is that nothing in this world is real – not even the storm.



In the storm and stress of life, devotion to God proves a veritable rock where one's tempest-tossed boat finds refuge. Only in this haven of safety does one find shelter from the hurricanes and tempests that rage in the ocean of life.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

Serving Endlessly

Walking with the Great Master on the hilly tracks of Simla and Dalhousie was a challenging experience. He would climb so fast and with such agility that even young soldiers were reminded of their rigorous army routines. A short account of one of Great Master's tours will give an idea of his great capacity for endurance. He was just finishing a tour in Abbotabad and planned to return to Beas after delivering the morning satsang. His day began, of course, with meditation early in the morning. After giving satsang in Abbotabad, the Great Master went by car to Rawalpindi. He gave an unplanned two-hour satsang, and drove to Lyallpur, three hundred miles from Abbotabad. At Lyallpur, he gave his third satsang of the day and left immediately afterwards for Beas, driving through the night and arriving at 4:30 a.m. At 6:00 a.m., he was ready to proceed to Kapurthala to attend a marriage ceremony. From Kapurthala he went to Jalandhar, arriving there about 11:00 a.m. Dismissing the driver he had been given at Rawalpindi, the Master gave him a turban and some money as a gift. The driver, a hardy Pathan from Jalalabad (Afghanistan) said to the Great Master, "Sir, remember me again. Though I am only thirty years old, I am utterly exhausted from trying to keep up with you. You did not eat or sleep, yet you do not seem tired. You are not a human being. To look at you is to look at God himself." At that time, the Great Master was over eighty years old.

Heaven on Earth



It Matters to Him

Why does it matter? Why does it matter if we are rude, selfish, unkind and unforgiving? What difference does it make if we place our needs and desires above those of others? Why should we attempt at patience, generosity and kindness when we constantly find the world to be cruel and artificial? Why does any of it matter anyway?

A disciple once told her Master that she was not happy. She said it quite casually, almost in passing, and added that it did not really matter anyway. But her Master stopped her immediately and said firmly, “It matters to me.” He went on to tell her that if there was anything in his power that he could do to make her happy, he would gladly do it.

When our happiness matters so much to the Master, and when he does everything in his power to make us happy, shouldn't we also strive to make him happy? Shouldn't he at least matter to us? We all know deep down what makes the Master happy – when we fulfil our spiritual and worldly duties with an attitude of gratitude and love.

We can draw inspiration from the story of a young married girl who once confessed to her Master that her responsibilities – to her children, elderly parents, and physically ailing in-laws – were becoming burdensome. She was completely underappreciated, physically and mentally exhausted. “But,” she added, “I know that it's important to you that I care for them all, so I will do it.” Her Master smiled at her.

How wonderful it would be to have our Master be happy with us. The truth is, the Master was so happy with this particular disciple because she was acting as his instrument. The Lord needed to take care of all these ailing souls, and in her he found a true soldier – someone

who did the Master's work to the best of her ability, with true love and surrender.

When we bring happiness to others, we are acting as his instrument – because the happiness of his disciples matters to him. When we smile at one another, he smiles on us. When we embrace one another, he embraces us. When we spread love, he bestows on us the most precious gift of all – the gift of his love. So we should smile often, embrace tenderly and love always – because it all matters to him.

The truth is, his happiness should permeate our every thought and action – because our happiness permeates *his* every thought and action. Someone once cleverly asked the Master if he could describe himself in one word. The Master paused for a second and replied: “sevdar.” He is the ultimate sevdar. He serves tirelessly day in and day out. He travels continuously from country to country, city to city, and sangat to sangat, just to bring smiles to our faces and uplift our spirits. When our happiness matters so much to him, how could we possibly ignore what makes him happy?

So the next time we are impolite or rude, we should apologize, because it matters to him. Or the next time we think of speaking ill of anyone, we should hold our tongues, because that would make him proud. If we have hurt anyone, perhaps we should attempt to make things right, because that would please him. We should practise patience and generosity, because that would make him smile. We should serve our guests with hospitality and love, just as we would serve him. And even if we are exhausted and half asleep, we should still sit for our meditation, because most of all, that is what matters to him.



The Attitude of a Disciple

An Explanation by Maharaj Sawan Singh

One comes to satsang so that, attaining the wealth of *paramarth*, he should consider the world and worldly things of no value but should make use of them according to his needs. He should bear with contentment and gratitude all worldly shocks, sorrows and joys, health, sickness and trouble, and whatever comes his way. Rather, a satsangi should so behave that he should not be overjoyed if he is granted the kingdom of the whole world, nor should he be the least bit concerned if it is taken away from him.

The devotee who performs his spiritual practice has to navigate the whirlpools of pain and pleasure, honour and contempt, grief and joy in the ocean of existence. If he is lily-livered, he will not succeed. He should fortify his heart (by spiritual practice) and face the vicissitudes of life with grit and patience. Recognizing the Supreme Being as the prime mover in all affairs, he should acquiesce in his will. So do not be weak-hearted. Hold patience and contentment in your heart, and perform your worldly duties. Forget all worries and do your job according to routine.

Whatever comes to man from the Lord is the result of his own actions, and the Lord makes him go through them for his own betterment. On such occasions, although it is sometimes a bitter pill, he should acquiesce in the will of the Lord. If, on the impact of worldly events, he loses concentration and becomes conscious of joys and sorrows, then it is apparent that satsang has had no effect on him so far. Take courage and strengthen and elevate your mind, and perform your duties faithfully.

Spiritual Gems

Bliss

What is it that we really want? What is the one thing at the core of our consciousness that is the driving force which motivates us to do all that we do?

The perfect Master explains that the root of each desire and every aspiration lies in one simple concept – happiness.

The simplicity of this truth takes nothing away from its profoundness or beauty. It is self-evident and needs no authentication. Everyone wants to be happy, and this is what motivates our every action, whether we are aware of it or not. But within the Master's wisdom are two deeper messages that are often ignored or misunderstood.

First is that this simple concept called happiness, like so many other things in our lives, is still a concept.

What is a concept? It is a belief or a notion; an idea or a perception of something formed with limited or no actual experience of the real thing. In other words, what we have is just a notion of true happiness – an impression or theory of what it is, based on the short-lived happiness we have experienced in our physical lives. A quick review of our 'happy memories' verifies this – how long did any event that induced happiness last? A few days, a week, or a month? There will be a fortunate few who have perhaps experienced uninterrupted happiness for a year, but it would be a rare exception. Between illness, poverty, family and a myriad of other problems, the average human being feels short bouts of happiness at best, and that is the limited scope of our experience, which forms the basis of our concept of this thing we know as 'happiness'.

Real happiness, the saints tell us, is uninterrupted. It is a state of consciousness that is unaffected by external factors and circumstances:

one remains calm and serene in the midst of a thundering tempest, steady and composed in the midst of a stormy situation. There is neither excitement nor grief, neither up nor down – just the constant quiet ecstasy of stillness. And this is what the saints call ‘bliss’.

The second message hidden in the wisdom of the perfect Master relates to the actions we commit as a result of our motivation to obtain happiness. Everything is a game of cause and effect, and our desire for a specific outcome naturally induces us to take a specific course of action. If we believe that we will be happy with a better salary, we will work harder; if we feel we will be happier with more friends, we will be more sociable. Each action we take is the effect of our belief that a certain action will increase the happiness in our lives.

So it is that the Masters impel us to carefully consider our true goal, so that our actions will logically result in attainment of that goal. If we have outgrown our desire for short-lived, limited happiness, then a corresponding change in our actions needs to also take place – one that leads to the goal of an eternal, higher form of joy and contentment.

Through meditation of the sound current, as taught by the perfect Master, we are able to achieve that goal. It is a path of commitment and obedience that first engenders purity of heart and mind, which then slowly but inevitably, grows into a spiritual love. It is this that will carry the disciple one day, from the concept of worldly happiness to the reality of true eternal bliss.



The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *How are we brought to meditation?*

A: By the grace of the Lord. There is no other way. We may say that we have become devotees of the Lord because we have found the right teachings, we have found the path, we have found the Master. It would be quite wrong to think so. Actually, when he wants to put us on the path, when he wants to give us his devotion, he creates such circumstances that we have no option but to follow that path. We are ultimately drawn to the path. It is all in his hands. When he wishes it, everything becomes clear to us. First is his grace. With his grace, we will meet a Master. Through contact with the Master, we will be on the path, and with our efforts we invoke his grace to travel on that path until ultimately our practice will lead us to our home and we merge back into him. Everything is interconnected. Without the Lord's grace, nothing can happen.

* * *

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Q: *Maharaj Ji, sometimes we see our own imperfections and our own shortcomings, and we know that these are keeping us from being one with the Father. Yet is there a danger of us being too hard on ourselves for having weaknesses?*

A: There is no danger of being hard on ourselves at all. We have been too soft with ourselves all through – that is why we are part of the creation. If we had been a little hard or strong with ourselves, we would not be here today. We have been too soft. We always try to justify our weaknesses and then we become a slave of them. And then we find we are part of this creation. So we should try to be hard with ourselves.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Q: *Master, I've heard so much about determination on this path, and giving your priorities to the meditation and all of the things that are conducive to meditation. And there doesn't seem to be enough time in the day to really focus on ...*

A: No. For example, how much time does family take each day? You see, there are twenty-four hours in a day, and you have to give only two and a half hours to meditation. And then the whole day is before you. You can plan it. You have to go to a job, you have to do your housework, and you have to adjust your activities accordingly. You can't say that I will do everything and also attend to meditation. You have to adjust your schedule.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

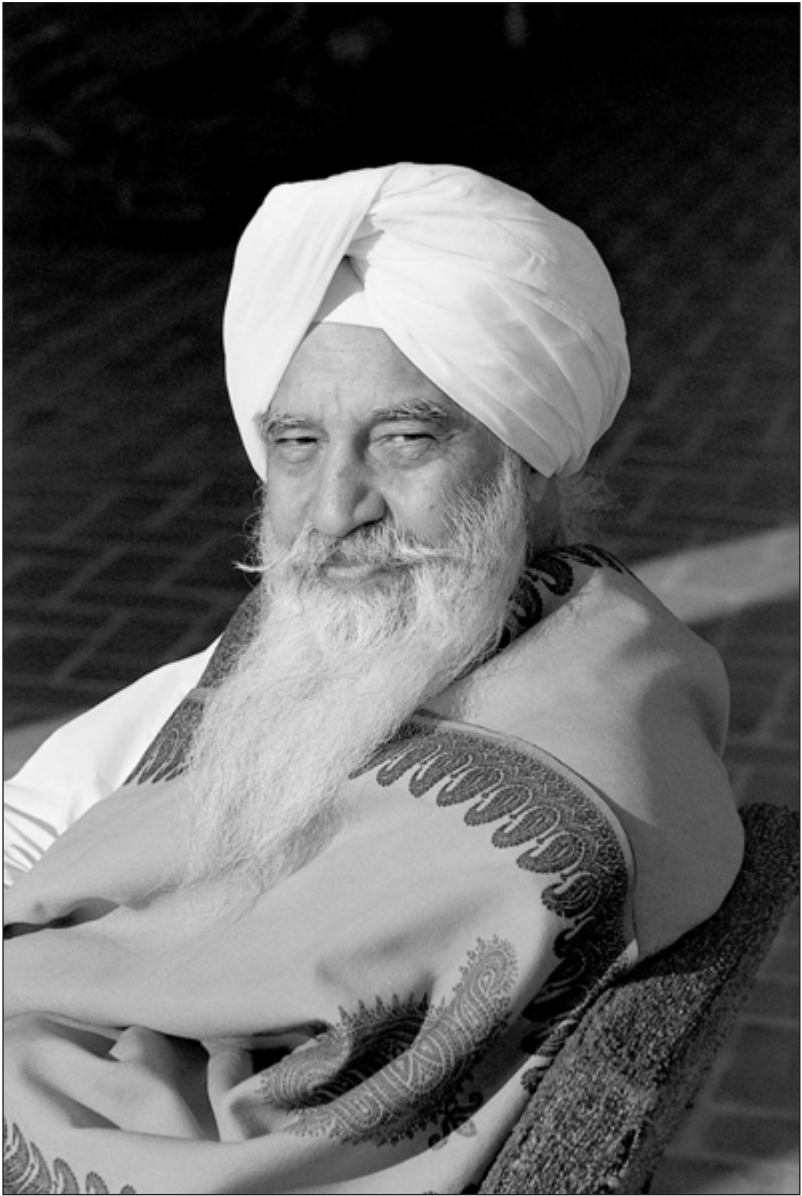
* * *

Q: *Maharaj Ji, what help can a satsangi give to another satsangi who is dying?*

A: We should all be a source of strength and help to each other. We can remind him about the teachings, about the path, we can fill him with love and devotion for the Master, for Shabd, for the Father. We can read Sant Mat literature to him and we can draw his attention to the Shabd and Nam within. And we can create an atmosphere around him so that he can attend to his meditation, and keep away from him whatever is distracting him towards the world. Everybody is not fortunate enough to have just devotees around him. Many people are non-satsangis, and he has dealings with so many people, both satsangis and non-satsangis.

It's always better if we can build a devotional atmosphere – an atmosphere of satsang – around that soul, so that the soul goes peacefully and is not attached to anything in the world. Anybody who is distracting him and pulling him out, we should try to keep that influence away from him, generally.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III



Maharaj Charan Singh

To See Him Again

Once, during an evening meeting Hazur Maharaj Ji spoke most lovingly about his own Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji. Tears welled up in his eyes as he recalled his relationship with his Beloved. “I would give my life to see him again in his human form,” he said.

He was unable to hold back his tears when asked about his relationship with his own Master, who had left this world decades before.

Adventure of Faith

Initially, this heartrending expression of emotion by the Master was quite perplexing. In Sant Mat, we have always been taught that the real Master is the Shabd - the Radiant Form. And yet, here was our own beloved Hazur longing for a glimpse of his Master in the human form. Why?

Eventually, it became clear. By this incident, the Master revealed to us that even though the Shabd Master is always with us in his spiritual form, as human beings it is only natural to feel great love for the physical form. On this coarse plane of material existence where the Shabd form is inaccessible to us, it is the physical Master who teaches us how to go within and get in touch with the inner Master; he is the one who guides us with infinite love, patience and understanding, and it is he who helps us develop our faith and understanding. In fact, it is only because of our love and trust in him that we are able to move forward and progress on the spiritual path.

But it was only after Hazur Maharaj Ji's sudden passing that we understood the pain and agony Hazur felt that evening. The shocking

news of his unexpected departure on the first of June 1990 turned our whole world upside down; it may as well have been doomsday. How could he leave us orphaned and alone? We were inconsolable.

And then it all made sense. Perhaps he had been giving us subtle hints all along, to value every precious moment we have with our Master while he is with us on this earth – a hint we unfortunately didn't get.

Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Bible

And then he explained that we would never be orphaned; that the inner Master, our eternal Comforter would always be with us guiding and consoling us every step of the way.

After initiation, the question of our Master's leaving us does not arise. As long as he has not seen us to our home and made us stand face to face with our Father, he does not leave us. He is not only with us in this life, but this companionship goes on even after death. He does not become carefree after initiating us, but has taken on the responsibility of taking us back to our original home.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

With the years gone by, as initiates of Hazur Maharaj Ji we still find ourselves in pain. Like Hazur, we too shed tears when we think of our Beloved; his beautiful, radiant face – if only we could see him again.

Knowing well the grief we would go through, Hazur made sure that we would not be left alone. He left us a precious gift – his most loving disciple, the one who would take over the guidance and care of all his souls and continue his spiritual work on this earth.

It is often said that everything happens for a purpose and perhaps there was an important lesson learned from the passing of our Master – that our attachment to the physical was making us complacent towards our spiritual duty. Hazur often quoted Christ in the Bible: “It is expedient for you that I go away ... when I leave you it will be in your interest.” He explained again and again that the disciple must connect with the Shabd within; that without the physical form, the disciple would have no choice but to seek him within. In the end, the message is clear, that meditation and more meditation is the only way to see him again.



The world will not see me when I leave this body, but you will still see me because I am not going to leave you. Where will you see me? Within yourself. I will always be with you in my Radiant Form so for you I do not die.... The Master never leaves, he never dies.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Saint John*

Repartee of the Wise

An eleventh century sufi, Abu Sahid, was addressing an assembly. With a great deal of confidence, he proclaimed, “Today, I am going to speak to you about astrology and what is going to happen in due course.”

The assembled crowd listened to him with great intent, eager to know what he was about to say. The mystic revealed, “Oh ignorant ones, this year whatever God wishes shall happen; just as last year, everything that happened was exactly as God wanted. He is exalted. All his wishes are manifested just as he pleases.”

* * *

There was once a peasant girl who was passing through a field where a group of monks were offering prayers. The law in those days was that no one was allowed to cross the area where the prayers were being held. After a little while, the girl returned back using the same way and one of the monks called out to her, “Young lady, you have committed a grave sin by walking this route. We were praying and thinking of God.”

The young girl apologized profusely and turned immediately to leave, but before doing so, she said, “Sir, may I ask you something?” When the monk nodded his head, she said, “I was going to meet my young man and I was thinking of him so I didn’t see you. If you were thinking of God, how did you see me?”

In Abundance

As we continue on our spiritual journey, we often hear of the importance of Master's grace. Many of us credit his grace when things go well in our lives, with our health, our success in business, or even our meditation. But when we feel the heavy weight of worldly problems, or when the spiritual journey becomes difficult, we begin to feel that we have lost his grace, or that it is absent. At times, we even personally ask the Master for his grace because we believe that it can remove all our worldly and spiritual problems. The word 'grace' has become so much a part of our daily vocabulary that it seems to have lost its true meaning and magnificence. So what exactly is the grace of the Lord? Is it something that we can ask for with words?

To the mystics, grace is the mercy of the Lord, a gift that he gives to each and every soul in equal measure. It is an expression of the Lord's love for his creation, and his compassion for us who are imprisoned in the wheel of eighty-four. Often these blessings come to us unnoticed, as silent whispers from the Lord. Such is his compassion that at times we feel his mercy most when we are truly undeserving.

The Masters point out that grace is the power which brings us closer to the Lord. It is the strength given to the helpless who are suffering in this creation, but who nonetheless keep their attention focused on the Beloved. Amidst our suffering, it is the Lord's grace that makes us remember him. For example, a person suffering physically from a terminal illness may be mentally at peace, in constant communion with the Lord; and the Lord alone relieves his pain – that is grace.

*Blessed is the leper who repeats the Name,
though his body wastes away;
Of what worth a golden body to the one
who is oblivious of the Name.*

Kabir, as quoted in *Divine Light*

The saints put it simply: anything that reminds us of the Lord and of our true home is grace. His grace does not confer on us something that might make us forget him; in fact, it diverts our heart and mind towards him and fills us with his love. It inspires and nurtures our devotion and enables us to undertake our spiritual journey.

The saints continually remind us that grace is everywhere and it flows in abundance. We need to recognize that life's gifts are due to his grace. They point out that it is only through the Lord's grace



Maharaj Charan Singh blessing prashad

that we have obtained this human form. In spite of the sins we have accumulated in previous births, the Lord, in his mercy and compassion, has given us this precious gift of a human body. Beyond that, his grace pulls us to attend satsangs and learn the teachings of the Masters. It is because of the Lord's grace that we are in touch with a perfect living Master, and that we learn to love and contact the divinity within. Through him we are given the divine secret of how to obtain release from this prison.

If we reflect on our lives, we will see that grace flows in abundance in numerous ways: the opportunity to do seva, the privilege of going to Dera, the time spent in meditation – these are all gifts from him. Grace is showered upon us constantly, and yet we still seem to feel it is lacking and we continually ask for more. Mystics say that asking for grace is like standing in the midst of an ocean yet crying for water.

In a question-and-answer session, Maharaj Charan Singh once illustrated this point with an impressive simile: The Niagara Falls carries water in abundance, yet the one who comes with a thimble will only receive a few drops. If someone comes with a cup or a big bowl, he will get proportionately more. But the one who puts a bucket under the falls, can draw water abundantly. It is therefore not a question of where the Master's grace is, but how much grace we want.

So what stands in our way of being receptive? First and foremost, the Masters point out that our worldly desires and attachments keep us entangled in this creation. The more our attention is scattered in the world, the less receptive we are. Our increasing desires, the lack of effort and attention in our spiritual practice, and our ego all contribute to our lack of receptivity. By giving too much attention to the world and less to our spiritual practice, we are in fact turning away from the Master.

The Lord is always there at the eye centre, giving us his grace with both hands, but the labourers are very few.... Very few people really work hard to come back to the eye centre.... Day and night he is waiting for us to give to us, but we never knock at that door where the grace is being bestowed.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Saint Matthew*

The mystics have told us that the only way we can be receptive to his grace is by cleansing our hearts through our spiritual practice, by being in contact with the Shabd. Grace will come when we ask for it through our actions – it is not something we need to ask for in words. When we make the effort to obey and please our Master, when our spiritual practice becomes our very life, we will experience his grace in abundance. Attending to our meditation sincerely is surrendering to him, believing that he will give what is right for us. The Master gives his love and grace to us at every step, as we journey back to our true home. We need only to open our hearts towards him to receive these blessings.



The more we strive on the path, the more help we receive from the Master. Those who do not make an effort of their own have no idea of the blessings that are being showered on us every day in our life. The rewards that are received by a disciple are far greater than one could ever expect or dream of, and this realization comes only when we are doing our part of the duty.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

Memorable Quotes

*Kind words can be short and easy to speak,
but their echoes are truly endless.*

Mother Teresa

No man ever gained spiritual freedom by the process of logic.

Maharaj Jagat Singh

*There is no mode of life in the world more pleasing and more full of
delight than continual conversation with God; only those who practise
and experience it can understand it.*

Brother Lawrence

*If one can concentrate his attention in the third eye, then he has done all
the pilgrimages, devotions, kindnesses and charities.*

Guru Nanak

*I will not keep silent nor cease from urgent prayer till your grace returns,
and my heart leaps at the sound of your voice.*

Thomas à Kempis

*When it is possible to hear the Beloved speak himself, why listen to
second-hand reports.*

Jami

*The value of life does not depend upon the place we occupy.
It depends upon the way we occupy the place.*

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

Paralysis of Analysis

Paralysis of analysis is a chronic ailment that generally affects striving disciples of all ages, and this usually results in a serious decline of the spiritual immune system. Unfortunately, its diagnosis is not as common as its occurrence – that is to say, we can be suffering from the disease without even knowing that we are affected.

If we constantly worry about the fact that we are not making any apparent progress on this path, if we keep tormenting ourselves over the idea that we are not able to control the mind or if we constantly agonize over our repeated blunders, then perhaps we should consider the possibility that we have become victims of this debilitating affliction.

When it comes to war with the mind, there are many more blows received than actually served, and in order to recuperate from these recurring falls, we can surely use all the care, encouragement and support that we can get. What we can certainly do without is the obsessive and compulsive analysis of each fall, which actually paralyzes us and prevents us from moving forward.

What we need are satsangs, books, seva and anything that can remind us and assure us of our Master's relentless grace and love; anything that can make us realize that even if it is a struggle, we need to make sacrifices on the spiritual path.

Actually, we all know very well how much Master cherishes our failures because as far as he is concerned, they are an indication of our efforts; those very efforts that he just cannot resist. Another thing, of course, is the fact that we also know we are capable of giving much more than we are currently putting out in terms of effort, and this does make us feel ashamed at times.

We assume that there must be a limit to Master's grace; after all how many times can we be forgiven for the same mistakes? But if it were limited, wouldn't we have exhausted it a long time ago?

Grace is not something that we earn or something that is showered on us for a specific reason. If it were so it would not be grace. Grace is a gift that our Master bestows on us unconditionally from the day he initiated us.

We need to clearly understand that the Lord's grace and mercy is limitless. In an answer to a sister who was complaining that so many satsangis felt that meditation seemed to become more difficult with the passage of time, Maharaj Charan Singh explained:

That is what they feel, that it is becoming increasingly difficult, because they become so anxious to achieve what they want to achieve, that when they don't achieve it, they think their meditation is becoming difficult. Actually, it is becoming easier and easier. The very fact that they feel it is becoming difficult is because of the longing, the desire in their heart and their mind to go back to the Lord. And that is his love.

Die to Live

Our disappointment is only an indication of the fact that we long to be with him. We may be frustrated with our meditation. It may seem dull and pointless, but it is also true that if we continue to sit, it is because the pain of not thinking of our Master, the pain of not feeling love for him, is far worse.

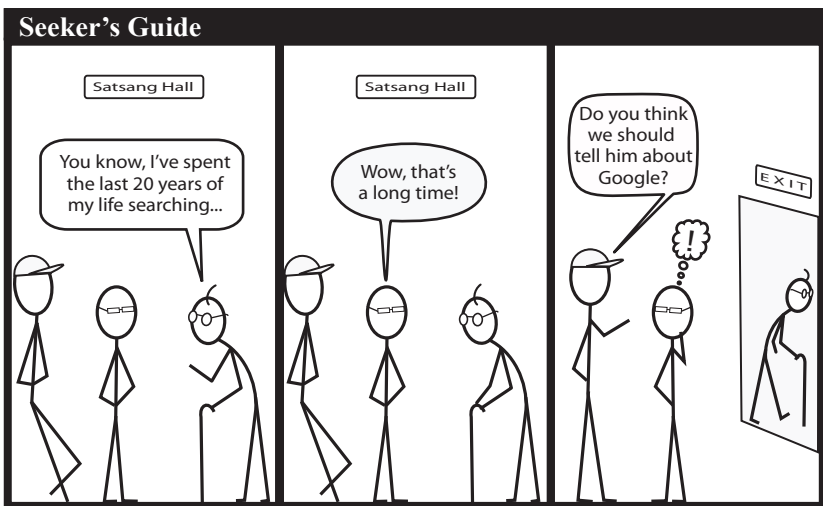
Shame, regret and exasperation should only encourage us to try harder. If we analyze why we feel the way we feel every time we sit down to meditate, then we will never be able to move forward. On the

contrary, we just make it worse for ourselves. It does not help to worry about those failures, which are in fact the very stepping-stones that will lead us to ultimate success.

Thus, rather than cursing the darkness of failure, we must try to learn from our mistakes and strengthen our resolve to light the candle of success.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®



Empty Your Cup

Once, there was a wise teacher. People from far and near would come and ask for his wisdom. They would ask him to teach them, enlighten them, and he seldom turned anyone away.

One day, a very important man came to visit the teacher and asked to be taught spirituality. This man was used to getting his way most of the time and expected the same from the master.

The teacher smiled and invited the man for a cup of tea. When the tea was served, the teacher poured his visitor a cup. He poured and he poured. The tea rose to the rim of the cup, spilled over the saucer and the table, and finally onto the robes of the wealthy man. The visitor, baffled and irritated, exclaimed, “Can’t you see the cup is full?”

At this, the teacher stopped pouring and smiled at his guest saying, “You are like this tea cup, so full that nothing more can be added. Come back to me when your cup is empty. Come back to me with an empty mind.”



I know that for the right practice of it the heart must be empty of all other things, because God will possess the heart alone; and as he cannot possess it alone, without emptying it of all besides, so neither can he act there, and do in it what he pleases, unless it be left vacant to him.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

All We Have Is This Moment

*Past and future veil God from our sight;
burn up both of them with fire.*

Rumi, *The Masnavi*

Rinzai, a great Zen Master, asked his students, “What is lacking at this instant?” Likewise, if we were to close our eyes and reflect on what is lacking at this present moment, our answer should be “nothing”. Simply being conscious of the moment makes everything perfect. The instant our thoughts stray, a lot of things seem to be missing; a lot of tasks are yet to be done.

This great Zen Master was trying to explain that in life, all that we really have is this moment. In this moment, there are no problems, no desires and consequently, no suffering. Outside this moment, the past reappears before our eyes and the future projects what lies ahead of us. This activity fuels our ambitions and desires. And as a result, our fears of possible obstacles constantly keep us on edge.

There is a saying in Buddhism: “The mind is everything. What you think you become.” Descartes distinctively put it, “I think, therefore I am.” If our thoughts make us who we are today, and if our mind tells us that we exist, then our existence is no less than our ego – the image we project of who we think we are – the ego of being this or that, or of having this or that.

By remembering the past and projecting into the future, by dwelling on our problems and desires through our habit of compulsive thinking, we feed and strengthen our ego.

Living Meditation

The mind is such that it constantly thinks of the past and worries about the future. It runs in all directions away from the present moment. The truth is that the past is gone and the future is uncertain. Only the present is our reality. If we were to stay in the present moment and observe our mind, what is the next thought that would come in? We would realize that there are no thoughts, and consequently there is no image of who we are. We would be left with simply being in the present. This is where our true happiness lies. The instant we go outside this moment, all our problems begin to surface and we start to suffer.

How often have we had a meal without savouring what we were eating, or sat down to talk to our children or spouse without listening to what they were saying, or even sat in satsang having told ourselves in advance that this time we would keep our eyes open and listen attentively, and still not really absorbed anything? Our thoughts are constantly elsewhere. And yet everything happens at the present moment. Nothing will ever happen in the past; nor will anything ever happen in the future; it will always happen now – in the present.

It is impossible for us to do or to think something outside the present moment. When we remember, it is always in the now. When we think about the future, it is always in the now. When the future catches up, it is always in the present moment.

Living Meditation

It is for this reason that the Masters encourage us to practise meditation every single day, regularly and punctually. Meditation trains us to be in the moment. It trains us to be conscious of being here and now. In this way, the mind cannot lure us into thinking

meaningless thoughts of the future and thus make our lives miserable. Maharaj Charan Singh used to say:

When you close your eyes, you are normally automatically here at the eye centre ... being there, you do the simran.... As long as your attention is there in the darkness, you are there, but when you start thinking about all the problems of the world, you are not there, whether you see the darkness or something else. When your attention is there, you are there. If your attention is not there, you are not there.

Die to Live

He is simply telling us that whenever we are not in the moment, when we are not 'there', we generally submit to problems in life. And this is because we are not in a state of being of who we truly are. When we are not there, in the moment, our ego takes over. In *Living Meditation*, the author explains that if we are attentive to the present moment, we become fully alive as our consciousness reaches out far beyond the limitations of our ego. The ego needs problems to exist. It needs the past and the future. So, if we stay in the present moment, the ego cannot survive, and we will naturally lead a happier life.

We don't want to make the best use of the present moment. If we make this moment happy, our past automatically becomes happy, and we have no time to worry about the future. So we must take life as it comes and spend it happily. Every moment should be spent happily. And simran helps.

Die to Live

It is not wrong to have goals in life or to plan for the future. As seekers on this path, to experience the Shabd in this life is our primary

goal. So rearranging our whole lifestyle to complement meditation is our foremost plan.

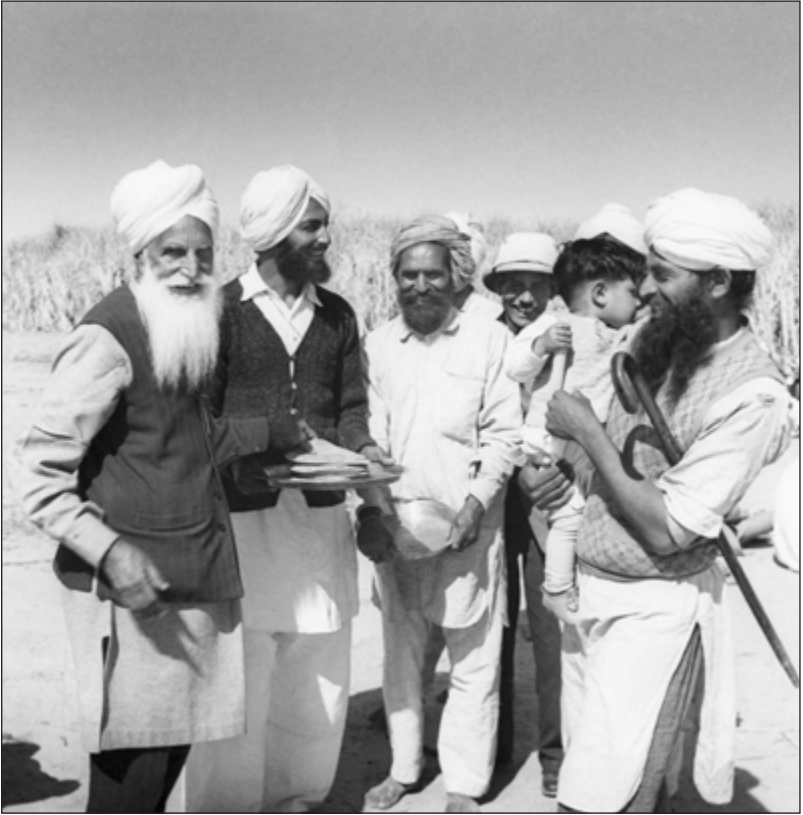
Being conscious of the moment teaches us to accept life as it comes. It teaches us to do our very best in every situation. It teaches us to be content. Gradually, we are moving out of the mind, and moving into our nature, our true being. The soul is pure consciousness. Therefore, being conscious is being who we truly are – the soul. Hence, in *One Being One* it is written: “The reality is, ‘I am, therefore I think.’”

So when we sit in meditation, we should try to be in the present, relish it and simply sit without any expectations. Submit to him and be with him. The idea here is to be so absorbed in the darkness that we become oblivious of our surroundings, but at the same time, conscious that Master is with us in that darkness.

A seeker once asked Maharaj Charan Singh, “What are the penalties when one misses a day of meditation?” And he replied: “We have missed the opportunity. What greater penalty can there be? When a lover misses the beloved, that in itself is a penalty; and to a real lover, it is the greatest penalty not to be able to be with the Beloved.”

Likewise, when love finally unlocks the door, would we want to miss this priceless opportunity and be elsewhere in our thoughts, somewhere around the globe, musing over our chat with a friend? Or would we want to be there, ready to be received by our Beloved? To experience an opportunity of a lifetime, all we have is this moment.





Maharaj Sawan Singh at his farm in Sirsa

Heart to Heart

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh combined a direct, forthright manner of expression.

He would clearly convey his thoughts in a few precise words. Once the pathi was reciting a hymn which has the refrain, “Even if there is gale or storm, hail or rain, I will go for my Satguru’s darshan.” The sangat was repeating the refrain with great fervour. It was the rainy season and suddenly it started to drizzle.

Everyone got up and scurried to the verandas for shelter. Sardar Bahadur, who had already arrived at satsang, continued sitting on the dais; he smiled and said, “A moment ago there was such a brave talk of love for the Guru. Now that love is drowned by a few drops of rain!”

Heaven on Earth

* * *

In a letter to a disciple, Maharaj Sawan Singh wrote:

When I address you as “Dear Daughter,” it is from the spiritual viewpoint. Our worldly relations, like husband and wife, son and father or brother, are temporary – at best till death, when we part not only from them but even from our own bodies (material, astral and causal); also from Pind and maya. Only Satguru remains with the soul and takes it to Sach Khand, the place of perpetual bliss. What better name than son or daughter can be given to a soul that accompanies so far?

Spiritual Gems

Book Review



Gurbani Selections 1 and Gurbani Selections 2

TRANSLATED BY SHIV SINGH DHATT

PUBLISHER: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS, 2011. 274 AND 370 PAGES.

ISBN: 978-81-8256-990-4 AND ISBN-978-81-8256-988-1.

Gurbani Selections 1 and *Gurbani Selections 2* are the first two volumes in a planned series of translations of selected hymns from the Adi Granth into modern English. These first two books include eight of the most popular writings from the Adi Granth.

The Adi Granth, the scripture of the Sikhs, is voluminous. It contains hymns by six of the ten Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak along with writings of thirty other mystics and saints from diverse backgrounds. This new series has the goal of making this otherwise daunting scripture more accessible. Each book in the series will contain a selection of hymns along with helpful explanatory notes, enabling the reader to approach this sublime and powerful exposition of pure spirituality by easy stages.

The series also renders the text more accessible to people who can understand the Punjabi language but cannot read its original Gurmukhi script. Each book includes, along with the original text of each hymn in Gurmukhi script and its English translation, a phonetic transliteration of the original using the Latin alphabet.

Gurbani Selections 1 includes four compositions, all by Guru Nanak Dev: *Jap Ji*, *Asa ki Var*, *Sidh Gost* and *Barah Maha*. The translation of each composition is preceded by a brief introduction, which is extremely helpful to the reader who is unfamiliar with the text's literary traditions and historical context. For example, the introduction to *Asa ki Var* explains: "A *var* is a popular genre of Punjabi poetry that generally depicts the exploits of a folk hero and showers praise on him. Guru Nanak composed this *var* in the musical measure *asa* in praise of God, Guru and Nam."

Asa ki Var begins with the praises of the Guru "who takes no more than a moment to transform humans into gods." The Guru is the one who leads the disciple from the darkness of ignorance into the light of spiritual knowledge and understanding. Without the Guru, all is darkness:

*Were a hundred moons to rise
together with a thousand suns,
it would be, with all that light,
utter darkness without the Guru.*

Sidh Gost is written in the form of a dialogue between Guru Nanak and a group of yogis known as *sidhas*. When the yogis ask Guru Nanak about the path he followed, he says:

*Through the Guru's teaching I have realized
that one's refuge lies only in the eternal Lord.
One who understands and realizes one's self by the Guru's grace
becomes the Truth and merges in the Truth.*

When they ask him how to cross the perilous ocean of existence, Guru Nanak explains the essence of his teachings:

*As the lotus growing in the water
and the duck swimming in the stream
remain untouched by water,
one crosses the ocean of existence, O Nanak,
by repeating God's Nam
and attuning one's consciousness to Shabd.*

Gurbani Selections 1 and 2 each contain a *Barah Maha*, one by Guru Nanak and the other by Guru Arjun Dev. This form of Indian folk poetry is framed around the twelve months of the year, with the changing patterns of nature reflected in the yearnings and fluctuating emotions of the human heart. While by tradition this type of poetry usually deals with a young bride separated from her husband, both Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan Dev use this poetic form eloquently to depict the yearnings of the soul separated from the Lord.

The other writings in *Gurbani Selections 2* are *Anand* by Guru Amar Das, *Sukhmani* by Guru Arjun Dev and *Slok Mahla 9* by Guru Tegh Bahadur. The literal meaning of *anand* is bliss or peace, and the composition by that name boldly proclaims that real bliss comes only from meeting a true Guru who can lead one to the Divine.

*Bliss supreme abounds, O mother,
now that I have found my true Guru.*

*With no effort on my part I have found the true Guru,
and songs of jubilation resound in my heart.
Bands of celestial musicians have come down
with gems of music to sing God's Word.
Only those who have absorbed it in their minds
truly sing God's Word.
Bliss supreme abounds, says Nanak,
now that I have found my true Guru.*

Sukhmani, the longest of the writings in these two volumes, covers the gamut of the teachings of the saints: the importance of spiritual discipline, attainment of salvation while living, the Lord's will, philosophy of karma, ego, the supreme importance of devotion and many other topics. Each section of this extended composition begins with a couplet which introduces the subject of the section, followed by eight stanzas which expand upon that subject. These stanzas often use a repeated phrase, which drives the point home:

*Simran of God is the highest form of devotion –
all those who meditate on God are liberated.
Simran of God quenches all thirst;
through meditation on God one knows all things.
Simran of God eliminates the fear of death;
through meditation on God hopes are fulfilled.
Simran of God removes impurities of the mind
and imbues the heart with the ambrosial Nam.
God abides on the tongue of saints.
Nanak deems himself the slave of his slaves.*

In *Slok Mahla 9*, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, focuses on the impermanence of life, the selfish nature of relationships in this world, and the need to look beyond this shadow-show to what is real and lasting.

*I looked upon the world as my own,
but found that no one here belongs to another.
Devotion to the Lord alone endures, O Nanak;
treasure it in your heart!*

The compositions in *Gurbani Selections 2* illustrate the practice followed by the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak of identifying themselves simply by the term *Mahla* and a number signifying their position in the order of succession. *Mahla* is probably derived from the Arabic term *mehlool*, meaning ‘absorbed’ or ‘dissolved’. Thus, when the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, identifies himself as *Mahla 9*, he indicates that he is the ninth one ‘absorbed’ in Guru Nanak within. It was also the common practice of the Gurus to give the name ‘Nanak’ as a pen name in the concluding lines of the verse, rather than their own name. As the translator points out:

Thus, by eliminating any self-reference in their writings, they presented themselves merely as vehicles of the spirit of Nanak to convey his eternal message to seekers after Truth. No discourse on humility and self-effacement could be more eloquent.

Sacrificing their all to their own Guru, who guided them to ultimate realization, the Gurus sang only of the glory of the Supreme Being. As Guru Amar Das wrote:

*Come, dear saints, let us discourse
on the indescribable One.
Let us discuss the glory of that indescribable Lord
and the way to the portal where he is found.
We find the Lord when we surrender
body, mind and wealth to the Guru and yield to his will.
Yield to the Guru's will and sing of the true Word.
Listen, O saints, says Nanak: let us describe
the glory of the indescribable Lord.*

Radha Soami Satsang Beas has recently published a full-volume work on the *Jap Ji*, with extensive commentary on the teachings embedded in this hymn. The publisher intends to bring out similar full-volume elaborations of other compositions published in *Gurbani Selections*.



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

