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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# Yours Affectionately

## A Letter from Maharaj Charan Singh

Our lack of interest in meditation is due to the fact that we do not believe that this short human life is to come to an end soon and that God-realization is possible only in this short period of a few years. Our mind has not yet tasted the internal sweetness, but has enjoyed only the worldly pleasures, so it runs towards them speedily.

We need constant effort on our part to withdraw the consciousness from the lower centres, on which it has been dwelling for thousands of years. So if our mind wanders out at the time of meditation, we should not become dejected and disheartened. We should try again and again to stop it from going out.

Please do not get tired easily by the mind's tricks. Pursue in your efforts persistently. Great things are never accomplished in a hurry. By bringing in your mind again and again, though for a very short moment, your practice will become perfect and a time will come when you will be able to concentrate your attention immediately in the third eye and enjoy inner bliss.

No doubt in the beginning great and constant effort is needed, but it is nothing compared with the toil and trouble that we go through to gain worldly trash. Sit most regularly in meditation as your paramount duty to the Lord, not caring whether your mind cooperates or not, but keep on trying. And give some time daily to the study of Sant Mat literature also. This helps to keep up one's zeal and earnestness.

*Quest for Light*



# The Gift

Humanity has grappled with the meaning of life since the beginning of recorded history. Much ink has been spilled on answering questions such as: “Why are we here?” and “Is there anything beyond this life?” As Tolstoy once poignantly wrote, “Is there any meaning in my life that will not be destroyed by my inevitably approaching death?”

The saints come to this world not to ask philosophical questions but rather to lead us to the logical conclusions that arise from them. The one certainty we all have is that the vicissitudes of life will come and affect us. Even if we follow a spiritual path, even if we perceive ourselves to be ‘good’, even if we do our meditation – the one certainty in our life is that we have to go through our destiny and face our inevitable appointment with death.

Without getting into the free will versus destiny debate, the saints give us practical advice on how to approach life. They tell us we must make the effort to do our best and leave the results to the Lord. As Maharaj Charan Singh once said to a disciple:

*At this stage we can never know what is destiny and what is a future seed. So we should approach every event and every step of life as if we are taking a new step, sowing a new seed. But still, if in spite of our best effort something happens, then you can say it is your destiny.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

In this context, what matters is our reaction to unexpected events that arise in life and our ability to maintain balance in facing them. But we are only human. And while we may intellectually understand that

the events in our life are the result of our destiny or karma, it is still difficult to accept them and retain our balance.

In such difficult times, we would do well to remember the prayer of the medieval Christian mystic who said, “Tell me not why I must suffer. Assure me only that I suffer for Thy sake.”

We must learn to truly appreciate that the Lord knows what is in our best interest more than us. To keep our balance, we must remind ourselves that perhaps it is our concept of grace that is misplaced. Maharaj Charan Singh once said to a disciple:

*Our concept of his grace is something very different. We think that if he gives us a very good partner and a good house and a lot of money and a good reputation in this world, if we are worshipped by people, then the Father's grace is very much on us. But his grace may come in a different way. He may take your wife from you or your child or your friend. And you may become frustrated by this world and turn back to the Father. That may be his grace, to pull you out of all the attachments of the world and make you realize the reality, which you never would have thought about otherwise.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

Even in the depths of our despair, if we look at the bigger picture, we will realize that we have a lot to be thankful for in life. It is remembering this gratitude for what the Lord has given us – rather than what he has not – which will help us when we face periods of uncertainty in our life.

One is reminded of the prayer by the disciple who prayed not for delicious food, but for hunger; not for a car, but for strength in his legs; not for a comfortable bed, but for sleep. The point of the prayer

is that the most delicious food is of no use if we are not hungry; and we cannot benefit from the most luxurious mattress if we cannot fall asleep.

Eventually, our meditation is nothing but a quiet expression of our gratitude to the Lord for what he has given us. It is a sign of the gift of love that he has bestowed on us. A disciple once went to Hazur Maharaj Ji and said she did not have any question but she just wanted to thank him for his love. Hazur beautifully replied:

*To love is nothing but giving thanks. It is all his grace that he gives us his love, he gives us his devotion, and our words are too inadequate to express that feeling, that depth, that gratefulness to the Father.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

So in the end, the attitude we must cultivate is that of recognizing what happens in our life as the Lord's gift to us. If we truly believe that the Lord is giving us everything we need, then it leaves us little choice but to focus in the quiet solitude of our meditation and face our life smilingly. As the beautiful Urdu couplet goes:

*Far more than my destiny allows  
From your gracious hands I receive;  
Yet even my destiny  
Is but a gift from you to me.*

*Legacy of Love*



# Something to Think About

‘Unconditional surrender,’ to which you have referred, is a wonderful thing, but it is not an intellectual or a theoretical proposition. Before you can surrender yourself, you must be master of yourself; or how else can you surrender? You can make a gift only of what is your own and not what is claimed by others. In Sant Mat this is achieved by physical, mental and spiritual service to the Guru, and the spiritual service is no more than joining the spirit to the Shabd.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

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Mysticism is not a path for the weak minded. “Easier by far is to fight a battle than to seek union with the Lord,” says Paltu. It is not the path of the defeatist, of men and women who give up the world because they cannot face its difficulties. The highest form of mysticism requires the disciple to remain in the world, to discharge his worldly duties and practise the spiritual discipline in the midst of a hectic life. As Maharaj Jagat Singh says, “Enter the garden of the world. Take a walk in it. Enjoy the fragrance of the flowers. Eat fruit and behold the beauties of nature, but do not get entangled in thorns and prickly shrubs, lest you get abrasions and wounds.”

*Saint Paltu, His Life and Teachings*



# Letting Go

Imagine a hot sunny day, salty air, waves pounding the beach. A little boy is on his knees in the sand, scooping and packing sand with a plastic shovel into a bright red bucket. He then flips over the bucket on the surface and lifts it, creating a castle tower to the delight of the little architect.

All afternoon he works, spooning out the moat, packing the walls. Bottle tops will be sentries, popsicle sticks will be bridges. By mid-afternoon, a sand castle is built.

Now imagine a big city, busy streets and rumbling traffic.

A man is in his office at his desk, shuffling papers into stacks and delegating assignments. He cradles the phone on his shoulder and punches the keyboard with his fingers. Numbers juggled, contracts signed, and much to his delight, profit made.

All his life he will work like this, formulating plans and forecasting the future. Investments will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire built.

These two people are builders of two castles, and have much in common. They shape granules into grandeur. They see nothing and make something. They both are diligent and determined, and for both, the tide will rise and the end will come. Yet, that is where the similarities cease; for the boy sees the end, while the man ignores it.

Watch the boy as the sun starts to set. As the waves near, the wise child jumps to his feet and begins to clap. There is no sorrow. No fear or regret. He knew this would happen. He is not surprised, and when the great breaker crashes into his castle and his masterpiece melts into the sea, he smiles. He smiles, picks up his tools, takes his father's hand and goes home.

The grown-up, however, is not so wise. As the wave of time collapses on his castle, he is horrified. He hovers over the sandy monument to protect it. He tries to block the waves from the walls he has made. Soaked in salt-water and shivering, he shouts to the incoming tide.

“My castle!” he cries. But the ocean does not respond; both know to whom the sand belongs. Grown-ups don’t know much about sand castles, but children do. Watch them and learn to build, but build with a child’s heart. For when the sun sets and the tides of life come to take – accept and celebrate. Salute the process of life, let go and go home. In the often-quoted words of the Chinese mystic, Lao Tsu:

*When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.*

*When I let go of what I have, I receive what I need.*

*Pursuit of Passionate Purpose*

By letting go of the world and its transience, we receive from God of himself, and become one with everything.



*The very best and utmost of attainment in this life  
is to remain still and let God act and speak in thee.*

Meister Eckhart

# Pencil Points

*The Story of the Pencil* by Paulo Coelho helps us realize how much we can learn about having a positive approach towards life – by simply observing the use and functions of a pencil. A writing instrument that we take for granted on a daily basis, the pencil can bring us back down to earth and shows us the basics of life.

For a pencil to be of some use, in its primary function as a writing instrument, it has to be held in the hand of the writer. No matter how beautiful the draft looks or how meaningful the words on a piece of paper end up being, the credit always goes to the writer and not to the pencil. Therefore, this reminds us that we are capable of great things, but we must not forget that there is a hand guiding our steps. That hand is none other than God's hand, and he always guides us according to his will.

In *My Submission*, Maharaj Sawan Singh explains that a realistic person tries to achieve his objectives and at the same time understands that God is the prime mover and the cause behind all causes. Hence he is able to do his best and leaves the results in God's hands, as he knows that there are so many things beyond his capabilities.

Every now and then, we have to stop writing and use a sharpener. This makes the pencil suffer a little, but afterwards it is much sharper and is able to continue to perform its function once again. We, too, must learn to bear certain difficulties in life. Lord Krishna explained to Udho in *Bhagvat*:

*I make three rare gifts to my most beloved devotees.  
They are: poverty, illness and dishonour.*

The pain and suffering we go through turn us away from the world and lead us inward towards the Lord.

Another quality of the pencil is that it always allows us to use an eraser to rub out any mistakes. This means that we should correct whatever mistakes we have made, as this helps to keep us on the road to liberation. The Masters explain that true repentance is to be deeply sorry for what we have committed and to ask for sincere forgiveness. Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Thus Saith the Master*:

*In the spiritual sense, repentance is meditation. Meditation makes you really repent for what you have done in the past and helps you not to repeat those mistakes again. That in turn, helps you to obtain forgiveness from the Father. His grace helps you not to repeat those mistakes again which might pull us back to this world.*

What really matters in a pencil is not its wooden exterior, but the graphite inside. This point should urge us to pay attention to what goes on inside ourselves instead of giving thought to everything else in the world. In *The Science of the Soul* Maharaj Jagat Singh describes exactly what we should be wary of when observing ourselves:

*Our body is the temple of the living God. It must not be polluted with the intake of meat, eggs, alcoholic drinks, etc. Nor must falsehood, lust, anger, avarice, hatred, pride, vanity, egotism and worldly attachments be allowed to have their sway. They must be swept clear to make fit for his residence.*

The fifth quality is that it always leaves a mark. We should always keep in mind that everything we do in life leaves an impression.

Maharaj Jagat Singh continues to state that:

*One does not become a satsangi simply by being initiated. One must mould his life in accordance with the principles of satsang. Every thought, speech and action must conform to them. A satsangi's daily conduct must bear the hallmark of excellence and must reveal that he is a follower of a true Master.*

In other words, we should always leave a pleasant and lasting impression of ourselves on others, the way the Master leaves a beautiful and positive impression on us. We have to be vigilant and conscious of our every thought, speech and action. We should make our Master proud by conducting ourselves in accordance to the teachings and live in his will.

So the next time we pick up a pencil to scribble down something, we should perhaps spare a moment and remind ourselves of the basic and positive 'pencil points' of living a life where we are at peace with the world and with ourselves. This practice of introspection could help us attain a calligraphic legacy of our own.



*I am only a pencil in God's hand. God writes through us, and however imperfect instruments we may be, God writes beautifully.*

Mother Teresa, as quoted in *A Gentle Spirit*

# Did You Know?

That the four lives, the saints tell us about, may be on the earth plane or elsewhere, just as the Master thinks fit. Saints, as a rule, try to send up loving, eager devotees much sooner.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

\* \* \*

Impure thoughts are a great hindrance to spiritual uplift. They act as poison. Keep alert and immediately divert your mind from such thoughts. If you rub an itch, it will eventually become a malignant boil.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

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The soul that lives within the orders of the Master, and regularly engages in bhajan with love and faith, does a kind of service to him. The Master has taken upon himself the burden of carrying all the souls, to whom he has revealed the path, to the Father's abode. So if a soul earnestly tries to tread the path, it lessens the burden of the Master.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Dawn of Light*

# A Square Peg in a Round Hole

Sheikh Farid speaks of the nature of this world in one of his poems through a beautiful example. He says that during the month of *Katak* in the Punjabi calendar, which is equivalent to the months of autumn, the skies in Punjab are filled with migratory birds that come from Siberia. During *Chayt* or the months of spring, the flowers in the forests are in full bloom, the redness of which makes it seem that the forests are on fire. In *Saawan* or the rainy season, one gets to witness bright flashes of lightning and the roaring sound of thunder, and finally in *Siyale* or winter, the sceneries involve couples that are in love cuddling up to protect each other from the cold.

Sheikh Farid points out that this world is in a constant state of flux, just like seasons change, times change, sceneries change; similarly our bodies also undergo change and eventually will come to pass away.

Most of us in this world try to find happiness by seeking health, beauty, companionship, and just about anything that has a job description of satisfying the needs of our bodies. But more often than not, this strategy does not give us satisfactory long-term results. As we age, as our near and dear ones leave our side and sometimes even before all these triggers force us to re-evaluate our lives' direction, we start to feel a growing void within, a deep sense of dissatisfaction and a serious lack of purpose in this world.

Our dreams and hopes always point us towards eternal happiness and true love, and this is why we are like square pegs in a round hole, trying to desperately fit in a world that will never be able to accommodate our aspirations.

Our Master lovingly wakes us up to the reality that although we are in a body, we are not the body – we are our soul, undergoing the

experience of being human. The soul is the one that grants this body its consciousness, its energy and its life; without the soul, our bodies would be nothing more than a heap of ashes. Thus focusing on the body and ignoring the soul would be like admiring the frame and ignoring the painting or like eating the skin and throwing away the fruit!

*Any respect or honour that is due to this body, is deserved only so long as the soul resides in it.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. 1*

Now if I was a full-time mother, then my happiness would probably revolve around the welfare of my kids. If I were a struggling entrepreneur, then maybe my happiness would be dependent on the success of my business, but if I am soul, a part and parcel of the Lord, then what should I seek in order to be happy? Rumi explains this as he says:

*The mother seeks her child, principles seek out their derivatives.... Without doubt, every kind takes pleasure in its own kind. The part takes pleasure in its whole.*

*The Sufi Path of Love*

Mystics explain to us that our soul will only find peace, solace and true bliss once it returns to its true home; once it is reunited with the Lord, and once it merges in its whole.

A square peg does not fit in a round hole. This world is like a round hole and our lives are the square pegs. Perhaps some day soon, we will wake up to the reality that the 'square hole' into which we perfectly fit is God.



# From the Finite to the Infinite

One really does not have to look too far to find examples of incidents which can be viewed by many diverse perspectives. More often than not, it proves to be a pointless discussion trying to convince another to appreciate a particular point of view when the listener has pre-registered an explanation based on his conditioned perspective.

For example, consider the numerous cases that have been recorded where the same breed of dog has been known to protect and also attack infants entrusted in their company. Ask someone in the profession for insight, and they may question the mental state of some of the dogs. Perhaps some may have been insecure and felt threatened; hence prone to attacking, while others may be protective by nature. Talk to a learned or wise person, and the karma theory may be the likely explanation. Similarly, there are other different schools of thought. While each hypothesis may be valid in its own right, one cannot help but ask the question, is there one single answer that can be taken as the absolute truth in every instance?

“Thy will be done,” is the mystics’ universal answer. All that happens, happens according to the Lord’s will. The divine plan has been ordained for each soul in all of creation. But who understands it? Or, does it even need to be understood?

Man, positioned at the top rung of creation’s ladder, enjoys the unique privilege of intellect and sense of discrimination – both lacking in the lower species. Empowered with the ability to think, we go through life making all our decisions based on educated reasoning. Those who influence us – our parents, teachers, counsellors and even the governing bodies – have all placed a significant amount of importance on the power of choice in our life. However, when it becomes

obvious, we will realize that we are a blessed and yet powerless living paradox – equipped on the one hand with intellect, able to make choices that can impact us and those around, while on the other hand we stand weak, unable to even turn a leaf unless the Lord has willed it.

Hazur often said, “Potentially every soul is God.” Other saints have said that it is just a matter of realization. What is it then that makes us different from the god-men? Perspective. The mystics’ perspective is aligned with that of the Lord’s will, while that of others’ is clouded by the conditioning of the mind. Given the ability to rationalize, we have not only differentiated ourselves from the rest of the lower life-forms, but in the process also crafted a distinct self-identity by turning our social observations and experiences into a projection of the self. Having developed ‘character’ and individuality, we now identify with this proxy and its ‘conditioned’ perspective.

We continually ask questions like why a loved one is combating a terminal illness, or why the loss of so many lives in a natural calamity. If not aloud, then questions alike do reside somewhere deep in our inner most recesses. We forget that what we see is only a freeze-frame along a vast spectrum of time. With no recollection of the past, and no idea of the future, we judge and become victims of our own emotion.

Limited by our short-sighted perception and mental interpretation, our outlook too remains limited. It may not be important for us to understand the will of the Lord, for the mechanics of the God-will far exceed the capacity of the human brain. But, what is important is the awakening of consciousness. The spiritual path, the mystics tell us, does just that – eradicate the proxy self by shattering our tinted lenses to broaden our parameters that we may eventually mature from finite to infinite.

Perfect Masters are examples of the ultimate human being. They are above and beyond all limitations of time. Not bound by any mental or

social blocks, they love all of creation, judging no one, and they teach others to be the same. Through meditation under their guidance, one eventually learns to let go and gradually align with the divine will.

In surrender lies the secret. The moment of epiphany might just be in the uncovering of our paradox about choice – that we can actively choose to put aside the ordinary so that the extraordinary may surface. Then, in any given instance, we know it is not my will, but Thy will be done.



*In self-surrender to the Master's will  
And utterly contented with your lot,  
Remember the Master always, friend.  
Whatever he may do, consider it  
To be of truest benefit to you;  
And always treasure in your heart  
Whatever word he utters.*

Soami Ji, as quoted in *Divine Light*

# Point of View

## An Explanation

There are two ways of looking at this creation:

1. From the top, looking down – the Creator's point of view;
2. From the bottom, looking up – man's point of view.

From the top it looks as though the Creator is all in all. He is the only doer, and the individual seems like a puppet tossed right and left by the wire-puller. There seems to be no free will in the individual, and therefore no responsibility on his shoulder. It is the Lord's play. There is no why or wherefore. All the saints, when they look from the top, describe the creation as his manifestation. They see him working everywhere.

Looking from below, or the individual's viewpoint, we come across variety as opposed to oneness. Everybody appears to be working with a will, and is influenced by and is influencing others with whom he comes in contact. The individual thinks he is the doer and thereby becomes responsible for his actions and their consequences. All the actions are recorded in his mind and memory, and cause likes and dislikes which keep him pinned down to the material, astral or mental spheres, according to his actions in an earlier life in the cycle of transmigration. The individual in these regions cannot help doing actions and, having done them, cannot escape their influences. The individual acts as the doer and therefore bears the consequences of his actions.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



# Can We Be Good Again?

There is a story of a young man whose beloved Master came to stay with him, and he was given the privilege of serving him. With purity and goodness in his heart, he cooked his Master's food, prepared his room, scheduled his outings and did everything that he could think of to make his Master comfortable. When the Master would go out for some purpose, the young man would wait anxiously for his return, just to be in his presence once again. It was a wonderful time in life, to be young, full of love, and enjoying his Master's presence. But like all good things in life, the Master's visit had to come to an end. With tears and a very heavy heart, the young disciple prepared to say goodbye. The Master took him in his arms, thanked him dearly and said, "Always stay so good." Years went by and circumstances changed for this young man.

Time, life's ups and downs, our own disappointments and unrealistic expectations all have the inevitable effect of making us "grow up", so to say, in one form or another. But as we grow older, does that necessarily mean that we also grow bitter and skeptical? Is there a fountain of youth that we can drink from, one that does not necessarily reverse the signs of physical aging, erase our wrinkles or turn our white hair black again – but instead one that can reignite that spark within us? Can we ever be good again?

All fruits start out the same, as a seed, and ripen in the hot sun. The maturing process can either turn that fruit bitter or sweet. Just as all seeds need to experience the heat of the sun to mature, we too have our own load of karmas to go through in order to ripen. As life's experiences break our outer shell, we can either grow bitter with age, or sweeten in time.

The truth is that when we were young, we were blinded by idealism. But practical and harsh realities have opened our eyes. Viewing the world with a sense of realism and honesty, 'being good' perhaps doesn't come as naturally to many of us as it once did. When 'being good' requires so much effort on our part, we now have a conscious decision to make – do we want to put in that effort? Again, the choice is ours. Mother Teresa advises us on this point. She says:

*People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centred. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway. If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway. What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.*

Our Masters too have always chosen to 'give the world their best anyway'. Someone once asked Maharaj Charan Singh if it was correct to adopt an attitude of indifference towards those suffering for they were simply going through their karmas. He replied:

*If that had been our attitude, I would not have opened the eye camp at the Dera or taken on the very big hospital project. We are very much concerned with the suffering of humanity, and we want to do whatever we can.*

On another occasion, he elaborated by saying:

*We must help people in the world. We are born for that purpose.  
Only humans can be helpful to humans.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Of course, we may conceptually understand the importance of serving others, but it may not flow as naturally as it does from saints and mystics. How did they overlook the realities of this world and decide to be so good anyway? They were driven by the same force: love for the Lord. Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

*When the devotion of the Lord comes in us, we find that same devotion of the Lord in everyone. Then we actually want to help everybody. We feel like helping because we find the Lord within everyone. The Lord is our object of love, he is our beloved. So we want to do everything for others, just for the love of the Lord.... But that is possible only if we develop that devotion and love for the Lord within ourselves. As long as we do not succeed in doing that, I do not see how we can help others.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

As we look back at our lives, we will probably find that the times we were most sincere, helpful and compassionate were when our hearts were filled with love for our Beloved. We have no choice, our karmas will make us all 'grow up' – but if we anchor ourselves to the Lord, hopefully life's lessons will make us more determined in our resolve to 'be good'. Our Master knows every single one of our shortcomings, but in all his wisdom, he embraces optimism. He chooses to believe in us and loves us. Why can't we do the same? Because he chooses to believe in us, we too must believe in our own capacity to be good.

# Living in His Presence

With today's lifestyle, so many of us seem to be busier than ever. Between our careers, responsibilities, social activities and other commitments, we tend to be constantly pressed for time. "If only I had a few more hours in a day," we frequently hear ourselves saying. There are times when life demands so much of our attention that we become helpless and feel swayed more towards the world than the Lord. When the attention is primarily focused on the world, it only becomes natural to feel distant from the Master. As a result, our meditation is affected, and we feel dry and empty. So how does one live in this world so that one feels the Master's presence all the time? How do we attend to our worldly duties so that we do not create this distance? What is the perfect formula that we are all looking for?

The answer that is often given is 'balance' – to learn to live in the world with balance; but what exactly does that mean? Maharaj Charan Singh explains this very clearly:

*Christ said that you can't have two masters. Either mammon is your master or God is your master. When you are below the eye centre, your mind is your master; when you are above the eye centre, God is your master. To keep a balance in the world, you should hold your attention at the eye centre. If you do this and if you're attached to the spirit within, you will be able to keep your balance in this world; you will be able to discharge your worldly duties and achieve that goal for which you have taken this human form. That is keeping your balance. We have to go through the karmic accounts which we have collected in past lives; that is why we have taken this birth. But we should*



*not forget why we have been given the opportunity of being born in this human form. It is to go back to the Father. If you withdraw your consciousness to the eye centre and become one with that spirit, that holy light within yourself, you will be able to discharge your worldly duties better. Also, you will be able to go back to the Father. That is keeping a balance in this world.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

The Masters often urge us not to forget our true objective. We are here to build our relationship with the Lord. We can only look to our Master as the perfect example – his schedule is much more demanding than ours – yet, he is always calm, loving and keeps his commitments. In the same way, our responsibilities, duties, worries and work will never end. What is important is to learn to live in the constant presence of the Lord, whilst we attend to our worldly work. The only way we can do this is to make our spiritual work our priority – and by understanding that nothing is more important than fulfilling our commitment to the Master. If we attend to our duties while keeping our attention on the Lord, then we will be able to withstand anything that comes our way. The Masters have often said that if we do the Lord’s work, then the rest is taken care of. We only need to hold on to those words.

A seeker once asked a spiritual teacher, “How long will it take for me to feel the Lord’s presence? How much longer do I need to wait?” The teacher replied with a question: “It depends – how badly do you want Him?”

That is the question we need to ask ourselves. When we are separated from our loved ones, our thoughts constantly run towards them, in spite of how busy we may be. We start thinking what they might be doing at that time, and there are times when we spontaneously pick up the phone and call them. We do not need an excuse or

a specific time to think of them. In the same context, Maharaj Charan Singh asks us:

*Have we ever thought of our long, long separation from the Creator, the most beloved of all relatives? Have we ever shed a tear or heaved a sigh on not finding him near and not being able to behold him. Have we ever pined for him? Have we ever passed a single sleepless hour in grief over this great separation?*

*Light on Sant Mat*

The Masters tell us that if we truly and sincerely want to experience the Lord's presence, then nothing can stand in our way. Meister Eckhart, a Christian mystic, (as quoted by Eknath Easwaran in *Original Goodness*) explains this so beautifully:

*You need not seek God here or there: he is no farther off than the door of the heart. There he stands and waits and waits until he finds you ready to open and let him in. You need not call him from a distance. To wait until you open for him is harder for him than for you. He needs you a thousand times more than you need him. Your opening and his entering are but one moment.*

Imagine living this life with the awareness of his presence at all times – that he is always with us, going through every facet of our life. The Lord will become our companion, our true friend – and we will realize that there is no one else in this world who can give us as much love and happiness as he does. Our duties, our worldly pressures, the stress of life will remain – but life will take on new meaning – living in the world will be a joyful and pleasurable experience. Through the daily practice of our meditation, and through the constant practice of living in his presence, we will know without any uncertainty that he is always with us, and will always be.

# The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

**Q:** *At the time of meditation, what thoughts should we have?*

**A:** I think we should have no thoughts at all. The purpose of meditation is to get rid of all the worldly thoughts which are bothering us day and night. We have to withdraw ourselves from all these daily thoughts. But the first question is, what is meditation? Unless we know what meditation is, we cannot know on what we have to concentrate. Meditation means withdrawing our consciousness to the eye centre and holding our attention there, then attaching ourselves to the Shabd or Nam, the sound current, which is within every one of us, and with the help of that, detaching ourselves permanently, forever, from the lower senses. That is meditation.

*Die to Live*

\* \* \*

**Q:** *Does the Master sometimes communicate with his disciples in ways other than through his Radiant Form or verbally? You often hear of mystic stories where people get messages from their Master via other people.*

**A:** Why should the Master use other people to reach you? Why can't the Master reach you himself directly? If we can't reach the Master, the Master has no barrier preventing him from reaching us. Why should he use another medium to reach us? The relationship of the disciple with the Master is individual and direct, not through anyone at all.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

**Q:** *Maharaj Ji, you have said that Sardar Bahadur Ji always lived at the eye centre, and I wondered if you could comment on this. I guess a satsangi can reach the stage where he is always at the eye centre, even when he is walking around during the day.*

**A:** What is meant by being at the eye centre? It means you don't let your mind scatter into the world. You don't lose your balance. Your mind is absolutely still, and you're always contented and feel happiness, and radiate happiness. That will be the effect of stilling the mind: you're always happy, nothing bothers you.

*Die to Live*

\* \* \*

**Q:** *Maharaj Ji, how did you succeed in creating love for your own Master?*

**A:** How to create love for your Master? If one honestly thinks about it, I don't think you can succeed in this unless he gives you his love.... But we can make ourselves receptive by meditation. By living in the commands, leading our lives the way he wants us to lead them, and by attending to our meditation, we are just being receptive and provoking his love. But otherwise, it is all given as a gift by him.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

\* \* \*

**Q:** *Can you say something about the value of seva?*

**A:** Seva comes from the heart. It is not a compulsion for anybody – it's not that you have to do it, but you want to do it. It must come from within, and there must be love in doing seva. There should be no feeling of obligation that we have to do it.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*



*Maharaj Charan Singh visiting the Dera Eye Camp*

# Why Seva?

From a practical perspective, anyone who gives himself wholeheartedly to seva allows himself the exceptional opportunity to evolve and grow as a truly human being.

When we do seva, we learn to interact lovingly, to listen, to communicate, to understand, to be patient, and to put the needs of others ahead of our own. We learn to accept that we are not always right; that everyone's opinion matters, that obedience is a virtue (not a weakness) and that maintaining harmony is always more important than being right. Maharaj Sawan Singh once said:

*Masters are spiritual physicians and open one's spiritual eyes.*

*Love in Action*

Through seva, the Masters also open our minds, and when we are open-minded, seva can be the ultimate attitude-modifier. It takes us on a journey where we gradually depart from the self and make our way towards the selfless One. When we see how gifted everyone is, how unique and capable each individual is in their own way, we understand and accept our humble place in this creation. We realize that by ourselves what we can accomplish is limited, but when we work together, our potential is limitless thanks to the power of our beloved Creator.

We usually start doing seva because Sant Mat advocates that it is important to create an atmosphere in which we can build our meditation, and anyone who does seva will agree that it is indeed definitely an atmosphere enhancer. When people work together towards a common goal inspired by love for their Master, the feeling of

unity and camaraderie is indescribable and incomparable to any other experience. For the human mind, it is soothing and therapeutic – a welcome break from the demands of daily life.

We also do seva because it is an opportunity to reciprocate; a way to express our gratitude to the Lord for the many blessings he confers upon us; but most of all, to the Master for taking upon himself the colossal duty of liberating our tired and encumbered souls.

*Whatever service is possible for you to do with your hands for the Master, you should do it, because it is the Master who gives the protection of his hands and saves us from the fire of transmigration.*

Guru Arjan Dev, as quoted in *Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. 1*

Whatever our reason may be, at some point or another, we make a start. We take one step at a time. And gradually, grace permitting, the more we commit ourselves to seva the more it draws us in. And like a spider that weaves its own web, we find ourselves cocooned in a way of life that bestows a reward more precious than anything the material world has to offer – happiness.

Hazur used to say that nothing can compare with that pleasure you get by helping somebody or making somebody happy in life.

And therein lies the whole truth. We do seva because it makes us happy; because it gives us a sense of fulfilment that physical rewards do not. It cultivates in us an enduring feeling of confidence because we know we cannot fail in seva.

Even if our contribution is not of a magnificent value, even if we are not talented, or particularly good at anything, we know that as long as we are giving our time, doing our best and have the right attitude, we are definitely pleasing our Master. And that is a real source of comfort in this world of endless expectations.

But to prioritize seva ahead of our own needs requires enormous courage. It requires us to let go of our own desires and put the Lord's happiness ahead of our own. And the result of such a commitment is nothing less than the much-coveted, personal experience. Not necessarily light and sound experience, but definitely heart-stopping, faith-building experience.

We see with our own eyes, how everything in our lives effortlessly falls into place because while we were so busy doing his work, he was doing ours. We feel his guiding presence all the time, even in the most mundane of things. And no matter how difficult or impossible the task given to us may be, he gives us the strength and the presence of mind to do it, and to do it well.

*I am sure, if the Guru wants, he can make even the stones carry out his work.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Seva changes us. In achieving our goal of trying to please our Master, we learn to do things the way he likes it; the way he would do it, to please his own Master. That approach then spills over into everything else we do and before you know it, in everything we do, we remember him; we dedicate everything to him.

The Great Master once said that service has many rewards, but the unique one is that a person imbibes the qualities of the person whom he serves.

We might still have a long, long way to go before that could ever be, but the possibility alone is inspiring; that we could one day be like him, that we could someday love our Master as much as he loves his Master, and express this love with our every breath the way he does – that is the reason why we keep on going.



# An Ocean in a Tea Pot

## An Account by Daryai Lal Kapur

Sardar Bahadur Ji and I were old friends, and in the early days, we used to live in the same room when at the Dera. He treated me very kindly and affectionately. He had been told by others how I had taken to heart the passing away of the Great Master, so he took me to his room and spent a full hour trying to console me. In the end he said, “You used to take notes of the Great Master’s talks and discourses. Why not put them into shape and bring them out in book form? This will divert your attention from sorrow and grief, and will also be a great service to satsangis and seekers alike.”

“You know, Sir, that those were only rough notes in pencil, taken sometimes on the margins of newspapers or on the fly leaf of any book that I happened to have in my hand at the time. Sometimes even on the back of some letters I would scribble some beautiful words or quotations of the Great Master. They were never noted down with the intention of getting them printed and were never kept in one place. So I do not know whether I shall be able to find them and even if I do, I am not sure that I shall be able to make anything out of those scribbles,” I replied.

“Anything from the Great Master is extremely valuable. So do search for them,” he persisted.

I succeeded in tracing a number of soiled papers containing these short notes, but most of them were difficult to decipher. It took me more than two months to copy them in ink and give them some shape. Then I put them in a corner of my bookshelf, where they remained till one day they fell into the hands of Professor Jagmohan Lal.

The object of Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Ji assigning this task to me was fulfilled. My grief was considerably assuaged. He also continued to remind me that my grieving at the passing away of the Great

Master showed that I had not realized what the Great Master really was or what the word 'Guru' (Master) actually meant. "Was the Master just the body, over the loss of which you are crying?" he asked. "Remember, the Master never dies. He is always with you and within you. Just open the window and see him. He is waiting for you more earnestly and eagerly than you can ever desire to behold him."

The exact dates of these talks I do not remember, but my belief is that the notes, with the exception of a few later ones, must have remained in 'cold storage' for about ten or twelve years. About a year after the passing of Great Master in April 1948, my friend, Professor Jagmohan Lal, while ransacking my bookshelves one day, came upon these roughly penned notes of the talks. He took them away. The papers seem to have slept most comfortably under his bed pillow (which was, by the way, the most favourite of all his sitting places in his combined office, library and drawing room) for a full five years, until one morning, which happened to be my birthday, he brought them to me wrapped in a silk handkerchief.

"I have brought the most valuable birthday present for you," he said. "You will find in it 'an ocean confined in a tea pot.'"

"I don't take tea, so I don't need a tea pot," said I.

"Actually, I would be very happy if you didn't take it," he replied.

He seemed to like the talks very much and advised me – indeed pressed me – to bring them out in book form. I put them in their present form and again gave the manuscript to him to go through.

Once more the papers were sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in his solitary cell. But a fortnight before his death, in 1959, he handed them over to me saying, "I return to you this trust of yours. No, rather it is my trust now – don't misappropriate it." Then again he corrected himself and said, "This trust is neither yours nor mine. It is the Great Master's trust. Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Do not fail to do it." After that, we never met again.

*Call of the Great Master*

# The Plan

From a young age, we are conditioned to have a plan of action in our lives. Ask any young people, and they will tell you the career path they aspire to work towards, the dream home they wish to live in, the qualities they would like in a life partner, and the number of children they would like to have.

We all work towards the intended goal. However, we know all too well that life does not always turn out the way we plan it. When things do not go the way we expect them to, we begin to focus on how to make them right and how to get back on track. We wander down the road of frustration, anger and despair. The entire focus of our lives is directed towards making things go our way and before we know it, we become consumed with achieving our worldly pursuits.

For those on the path, we easily turn to the Master and question, “What is going on? Why aren’t things turning out the way I want them to?” We know the answer all too well – yet it does not stop us from asking. Maharaj Charan Singh explains beautifully:

*Summer has to come, winter has to come. You can never change the course of the weather. If you go on adjusting to the summer, you’ll be happy; if you go on adjusting to the winter, you’ll be happy. Nobody can change the events of life – we have to go through all that.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

The truth of the matter is that we have to go through whatever our destiny sets out for us. But being true to our nature as human beings, we question the Lord every time life takes an unexpected turn. We

understand that this turn of events is also a part of the Lord's will, but because it does not fit with our plans, we question and we complain.

So how can we follow Hazur's advice and learn to live in the will of the Lord? To begin with, we must learn to accept whatever life throws our way. Every day cannot be a sunny day and sometimes it takes a few rainy days for us to appreciate the sunshine. If we understand that certain situations occur in order to make us more grateful for what we do have, perhaps we can better face them.

We often complain that it is very difficult to wake up each day and fulfil our promise of sitting in meditation for two-and-a-half hours. We comment on how we don't feel as if our practice is getting us anywhere. It is only when we are facing a tough situation that we realize just how much we have gained by living up to our promise. It is our meditation that is able to give us the strength and the courage to face whatever comes our way in life, and it is our meditation that gives us the attitude of acceptance. We begin to understand that destiny is going to play its part out, irrespective of whether it fits into our plan or not.

So we ask ourselves, does that mean that we should not have a plan of action for the life we want to lead? Someone once asked Maharaj Charan Singh the following question (as quoted in *Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*): "How much capacity do we have to plan our future, Master?"

He replied, "We have only one future: to go back to the Father. There's no other future."

We are constantly reminded in satsangs that everything happens according to the will of the Lord. There is nothing in our hands except our efforts. By offering our very best efforts in our spiritual devotions, we are automatically planning for our soul's journey back home. If we simply focus on that plan, and are as dedicated to achieving it as we are with all our worldly activities, we will surely be successful.

# Getting Started Is the Hardest Part

“I can’t do this!” My seventeen-year-old flings her Advanced Maths book down in frustration. “I quit!”

I have seen her going through a frustrating time, as she is doing the advanced level of the subject for the first time, but I try to encourage her gently to persevere. For the umpteenth time, I sit her down, speak to her about the virtues of regular practice, about not giving up when results do not come as fast as we would like, about how any subject is difficult to master at first. I paint a dismal picture of her future without a sound education, and about the importance of setting small but realistic goals each day, and increasing the challenge level slowly. I can see her youthful features contorted into a light frown as she mulls over what I say.

As I watch her fondly, I begin to think how these basic tenets apply to everything in life. How easy it is to explain to another, and how difficult to put these principles in place for ourselves! Looking at the most important goal of my own life, my simran and bhajan, it hits me then that I need to take stock of what I am doing, pretty much like a student who sets goals for a subject that is both tedious and challenging.

The first step is already taken care of. As with any subject, we need a teacher who is a Master at the task. We are already blessed with the best of them, one who has been there and done that, one who walks the talk. And the beauty is that we did not even make any great effort to locate him – it was he who found us! Maharaj Sawan Singh has said in *Spiritual Gems*:

*Meeting the Master is a condition necessary and precedent to the working of his grace, and does not seem to imply any*

*limitation of opportunity.... The key is in the hands of the Master.*

Next comes the daunting application process. With the best universities in the world, we need to have certain prior qualifications, but in the case of Sant Mat, the prerequisite is quite the opposite. We need to shed our prior conditioning, give up practices that would burden us along the way, such as consuming non-vegetarian food and alcohol, and simplify our lifestyle. In other words, instead of being weighed down by more achievements, knowledge, wealth and prior beliefs, we need to simply let go, dispossess and lighten the load. We cleared this level too – our application was accepted, and our registration completed the day we got initiated.

Here is where the real challenge begins. The day to day demands of consistent practice, regularity of timing, diligence, and most of all, a conviction that we are getting somewhere with this hard work – this is what seems to be the most difficult phase of all.

As with any new job or course of study, the first baby steps are the hardest. This is a transition phase. Old habits must be kicked, specific goals and targets must be set and most of all, the utter conviction must be built that without this, I have no future.

Let us examine these one by one.

*The secret of getting ahead is getting started.*

Mark Twain as quoted in  
*The Key Journey to Success*

Often, we start by looking at the enormity of a task. We see the whole mountain, whereas Tensing Norgay, one of the first to have reached the summit of Mount Everest, initially saw a set of rocks, and figured out how to conquer them. As I tell my daughter that one seldom starts a new

project with an instant breakthrough: If we set mammoth goals, we are often too daunted to even start. So start small, and be prepared to falter. We can break up our meditation sessions into two, or even three sittings, but we must ensure that we do succeed in sitting through all of them, whether we do so with complete concentration or not.

*The perfect is the enemy of the good.*

*Voltaire*

What Voltaire meant was, if you try to be perfect right from the start, you have set an incredibly high, almost impossible goal. With meditation, too, a common complaint is that perhaps we are not cut out for it. Thoughts bother us; we cannot focus, so we give up. However, the very purpose of meditation is to slowly build towards the state of thoughtlessness – if we could start out so mentally peaceful already, most of us would be liberated souls by now! The idea is to achieve the state through consistent practice – the way we build our bodies at the gym, slowly, painfully, but surely and steadily over time. Concentration is the outcome of simran, not a prerequisite. Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

*I do not see why you should do less meditation under the impression that you are not pure enough to do it. In fact, it is meditation that makes us pure and washes away even the worst of our sins. The very purpose of meditation is to lighten our load of karmas and attach our soul to that divine sound that is ringing within each and every one of us. Please do not neglect meditation, but give it proper time every day, with the right attitude.*

*Quest for Light*

The road to any goal is long, and the loftier the ideal, the rockier is the path. The one thing that keeps us on it is discipline. My daughter often complains she finds higher Maths difficult, and I explain that it is all about drills – if you do even twenty minutes of practice daily, you will find results over a short period of time. With simran too, it requires the discipline of consistency and regularity. At a fixed time every single day, we need to set aside all else, and sit for the period of time we have set for ourselves, no matter what.

For most of us, we accept the gift of initiation with enthusiasm, but somewhere down the road, life takes over, we find excuses not to sit, and our zeal for spiritual practice fizzles out. The test lies in that critical moment where I am about to choose whether to do or *not* to do – the trick is not to allow the mind to decide, but, without exception, get the body *to do*.

*Faith is the bird that feels the light,  
and sings when the dawn is still dark.*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

Another reason why it is difficult to follow through with our meditation practice is that we cannot see what lies at the other end. Tangible rewards are often enough to drive us to persevere, but the abstract nature of a promise of eternal liberation is not potent enough to propel us towards it. Here is where our faith is ultimately tested. We know what we want – freedom from the great cycle of birth and death – but what is it that stops us from working towards it? Perhaps, we often think, if we only had a small glimpse of the bliss of Sach Khand, we would never falter in our spiritual duties. However, is the Master's word not enough? Why must we see to believe? It is because this pure faith is lacking somewhere deep down, that we do not take our duty



seriously. Like the bird in the quote above, we will only start to feel the 'light' once we embark with full faith on our journey of meditation, and 'sing' the divine Shabd in our hearts. As Maharaj Charan Singh writes in *Quest for Light*:

*The disciple's duty is to go on meditating as advised by the Master and not to bother about the results. That is not his concern. This is looked after by the Master.*

As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe explains:

*What is not started today is never finished tomorrow.*

My daughter sighs, hugs me and goes back to her books to try yet again. As should I. It is about making a new beginning – here and now.



*Remember, one day you'll be parted from everything on this earth,  
However great your fame and power may be.  
Why not awaken to this fact,  
And begin to remember the Merciful One?*

*Kabir, The Great Mystic*

# A Thankful Heart

There was once an old woman who desperately wanted to make an offering to the Lord. But she was terribly poor. Her large family lived in a tiny hut and barely had enough for their daily meals. She didn't have the heart to ask them for money.

Every day she went to the temple and watched as everyone made offerings at the altar. So one day she decided that she would go out and beg. Despite trying her level best, at the end of the day she only ended up with a few coins. She took whatever she had and went to a store to buy some oil but as expected, the merchant told her the money was not enough. But taking pity on her, he gave her the oil she needed.

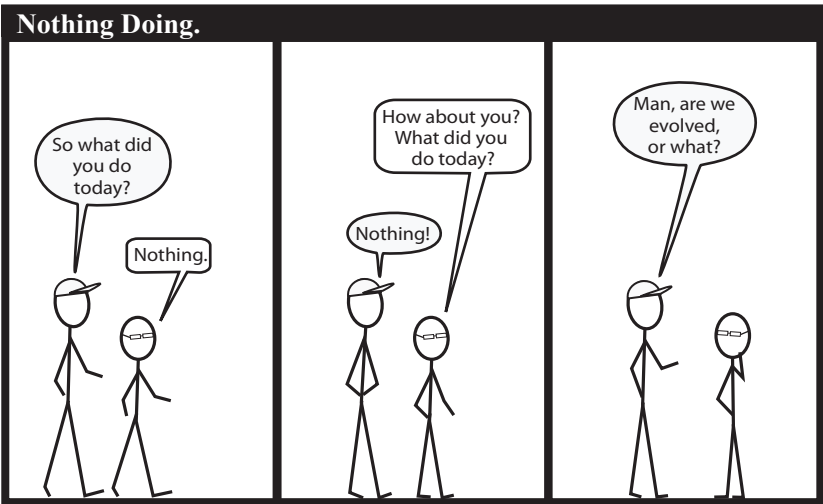
That night, the old woman made her way to the temple and taking the oil she had bought, lit a lamp, placed it at the altar and prayed, "O Lord, I am truly sorry that I have nothing to offer you but this tiny lamp. All my life you have given me everything. I have good health, I have a kind and loving husband, my children care for me, and till today, I have never gone to sleep hungry. You are truly great. Please accept this small offering. It is the only way I can thank you for your love and grace."

Having made her offering, the old woman got up and left. That night, the oil in all the other lamps went out but the old woman's lamp was still burning at dawn. When the monk came to collect all the lamps, he was surprised to see one that was burning brightly, full of oil and a fresh wick. He wondered how the lamp was still burning at daytime. He tried blowing it out but it kept on burning. He tried to snuff it out, smother it, he even poured water on it, but it still kept on burning.

His Master was watching from afar and called the monk. The Master said to him, “Don’t bother trying to put out that lamp because you cannot. All the water from all the oceans and lakes of this world could not put out that lamp because it was offered by a pure and thankful heart. It is the lamp of gratitude.”



## SPIRITUALISTICKS®



# Enjoy the Show

The movie of our life often resembles an epic trilogy without an ending. It has become so difficult to see beyond the present scene. We become so engrossed and focused on our current situation that we lose sight of the ending. We lose sight of the bigger picture.

As slaves of our minds, we feel the need to be in control. Like a drum raging without rhythm, the mind jumps from beat to beat, from thoughts to fears to the dramas, and it never tires of doing so. All we need to do is to make it stop! An actor in the midst of reading his script does not have the judgment to decipher the scene he is reading at present, because he has not come to the end of the script. Neither does a critic write a review about the movie he is watching during intermission. He knows he has to wait until the end of the show to form a more reasonable and fair opinion.

Whether one is an actor or in the audience, the focus is on the present moment. Worrying about where our careers, families, relationships will be a year from today and whether or not we will be happy a year from now, will not make any sense to us even if we had the answers to our worrisome questions.

There is a certain freedom in the realization that nothing more is expected of us than to just be in the now. Just as when a movie is being watched, the audience knows to shift their focus from one scene to the next. They are detached from the movie knowing that the tears as well as the laughter are but temporary. When we detach ourselves from the scenes transpiring in our lives, the hands of our Master become visible in every little detail that unfolds. When we resolve to stay in the present moment, a story carefully planned with the most minute details will become transparent to us. With the determination

to do so, along with unwavering faith, our Master's play does become evident. And then patiently, yet with bated breath we await the unfolding of the perfect, error-free ending; the "aha" moment which always takes one back, full circle. His symphony, if we can learn to focus on it, puts us in a trance that we will only be too happy to stay in. This state of mind eventually craves the wonder that is experienced at the arrival of very many "aha" moments, which will be gracefully granted if we allow their beauty into our life.

As disciples of a perfect Master, we are assured that our only requirement is to keep the Master's teachings in our lives at every moment. Nothing else. When we live in the present moment with our Master, it defies our limited understanding of the world. When we live in the present moment with only our Master, it intensifies our understanding of the script. When we watch a movie by an esteemed film director, we often anticipate a good story with a fulfilling ending. With that awareness, we are able to sit back, relax and fully enjoy the show.

In a letter written to his friend in the early 1970s, Maharaj Charan Singh remarked:

*Whatever has to happen has already happened, and we mortals are just helpless spectators. If we can just withdraw this 'self', then only can we enjoy this drama of life.*

*Legacy of Love*

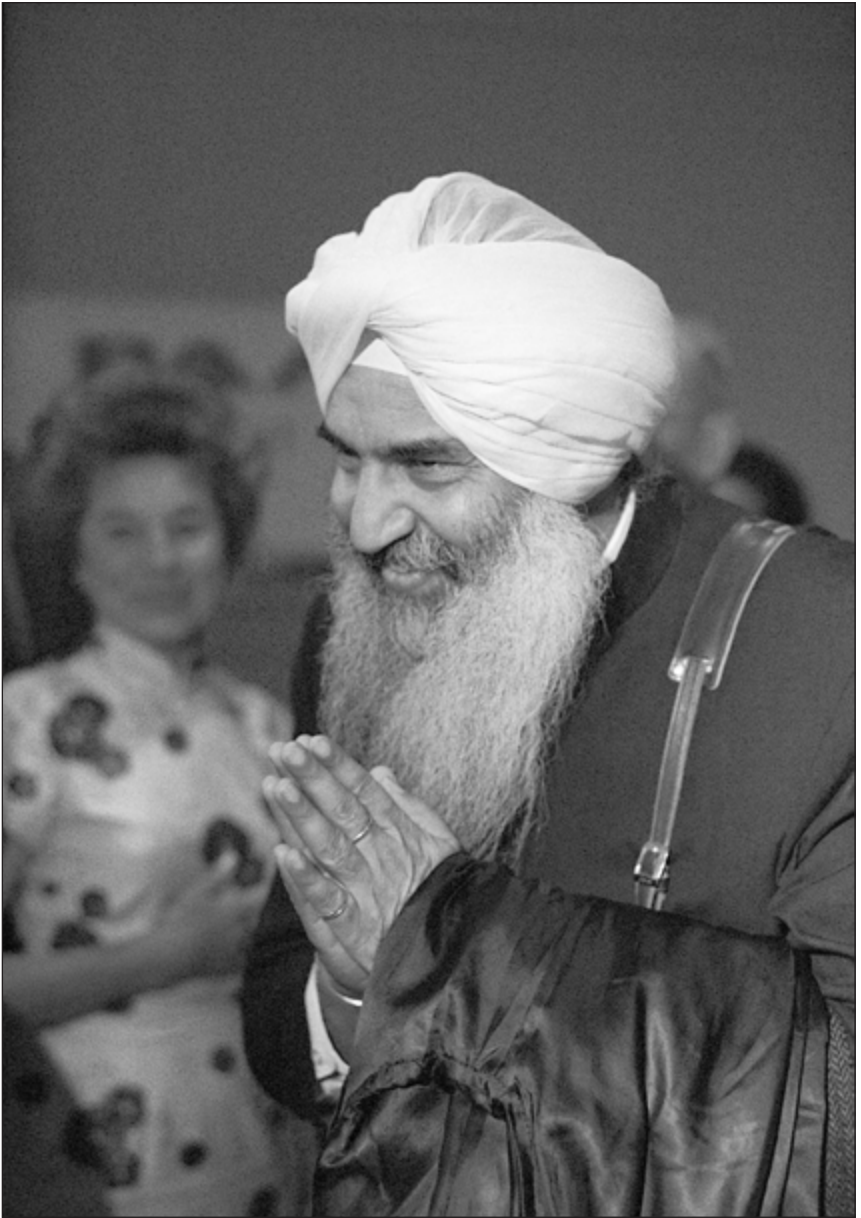
When we come to life's crossroads, and have absolutely no direction, all we have to do is reach out our hands to let the Lord lead us, and he absolutely will, hand in hand. We need to have faith that in every uncertain moment in our life, there is certainty; that there is a plan. In all that is evil and unfortunate, there is also some blessing.

The weaver of our story is carefully, meticulously and lovingly, adding the unavoidable heartaches along with all the joyous moments, to build up to the most perfect ending to our story – an ending that suits us best. When a story culminates, one often looks back with a renewed understanding that everything that did not come to be in our lives, played an equally important role as everything that did. And when everything falls into place in the end with the Lord's grace, it is then that we will realize the play of the Master's hand and the sheer genius of the master plan.



*Remember that you are an actor in a drama, of such a kind as the Author pleases to make it. If short, of a short one; if long, of a long one. If it be His pleasure you should act a poor man, a cripple, a governor, or a private person, see that you act it naturally. For this is your business to act well the character assigned you; to choose it is another's.*

Epicetetus, *Encheiridion*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# Heart to Heart

In a question and answer session, a disciple asked Hazur Maharaj Ji, “The time for departure from the Dera is rapidly approaching, and I want some reassurance that we can take all this love with us and that this is as easily accessible at home as it is here.”

Hazur replied, “You see, our Master is within every one of us. No matter how much we try to depart from there, we can’t. So if we are carrying him with us, the question of departure doesn’t arise. Being here at the Dera, if you don’t carry him with you, it is the same thing as being away and not carrying him with you. If you are here, he is with you if you are carrying him with you; it is the same even if you are a thousand miles away, if you are carrying him with you. He is within you. So we have to carry him with us always, within us. Then there’s no departure at all. A feeling of depression shouldn’t come then because we are carrying him with us – he is with us.”

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

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On Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1964, America was celebrating Father’s Day, and some of the satsangis were feeling very happy and fortunate that their Satguru, the true Father, was with them on this day. For like a father, he had herded them all into one fold of love, had given them a feeling of belonging – of belonging to the Master and his flock. With these feelings in his heart, one satsangi said to the Master, “Maharaj Ji, Happy Father’s Day!” Maharaj Ji looked at him and said with a soft, loving smile, “Are all days not the Father’s days?” In the words of a satsangi, they only later realized the true importance of what at first appeared to them as a light-hearted, casual reply: All days belong to the Lord, our Father; he has given them to us; we should spend them with our thoughts always on him, live them in his company, in his service, in his love.

*Die to Live*



# Book Review

## Hua Hu Ching: The Later Teachings of Lao Tzu

TRANSLATED BY HUA-CHING NI

PUBLISHER: BOSTON: SHAMBHALA, 1995.

ISBN 1-57062-079-2

The *Hua Hu Ching* is traditionally attributed to Lao Tzu, author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the single most important text of Taoism. It is said that after Lao Tzu wrote the *Tao Te Ching* (circa 500 BCE), he travelled to the west, and when he reached the western boundary of China, he composed the *Hua Hu Ching*. Then, it is believed, the eighty-one short chapters of the *Hua Hu Ching* were passed down orally for nearly a thousand years before being written down. Most modern scholars doubt this early and august origin for the text, believing it to be the work of a Taoist Master of the fourth or fifth century CE. Yet, whether written by Lao Tzu or another teacher, the work offers us a great treasure of spiritual wisdom.

The *Hua Hu Ching* opens with the following scene:

*There once was a great white-bearded Master who appeared at the boundary of the Central Territory [China] on his journey to the west. Followers came from everywhere to sit at his feet, for he was a model of universal harmony. His teaching was simple, yet profound. His instruction was neither religion nor worldly wisdom, yet it revealed the truth of every aspect of the universe. All his friends and followers ... maintained a peaceful, righteous way of life and enjoyed the abundance of their being. After their daily work ... they went to the garden where the old Master stayed and awaited his precious instruction.*

The rest of the book is a series of conversations between the old Master and the group of disciples. The Master's gentleness, humility and simplicity are evident in every scene. Many of the exchanges concern one follower who is a prince.

*The prince addressed the Master once again. “Venerable Teacher, according to the Universal Way, when one attains subtle awareness he should not label it an achievement. Is that correct?”*

*The Master kindly answered, “Yes, this is very true, dear prince.... If a person thinks in terms of attaining something, that means he believes there is something to obtain or achieve external to his own nature. It means that he fails to realize that his own true nature is the integral nature of the universe itself.”*

At one point the prince says he wants to leave his worldly responsibilities and practise meditation twenty-four hours a day, and the Master tells him that both the outward life of serving others and the inward work of focused meditation are necessary. Though they seem to pull in opposite directions, actually they support each other. To illustrate this point, he relates the following story:

*A blind man and a lame man shared the same dwelling, and one day a cinder flew out of the fireplace. Within a short time the entire house was in flames. Each man tried separately to escape, but neither could go out of the house. Finally the blind man said to the lame man, “You have eyes and I have legs. If you climb on my back, you can direct me to the door.” In a few moments they were safely outside.*

Strikingly, at the end of eighty chapters reporting his discussions with the circle of disciples, the old Master reveals that the words he has spoken during this extended conversation are not his real teaching:

*Kind prince, I have talked a lot. Did I really say anything since you have been with me? My dear disciples, since I started my journey to the west I have not said one thing. The subtle truth cannot be concluded in words. What all of you have listened to is the eternal breath of the Universal Truth which has been emanating through me and all of you.*

The sage urges his disciples to attune themselves to the Tao, translated here as “the subtle voice of the universal origin.”

*The subtle voice of the universal origin has been speaking since the beginning of the universe. To those whose energy can respond to it, this sound is very distinct. To those whose energy cannot respond to it, the sound is muffled and obscure. The subtle melody of universal life is eternal and constant, yet only those who are in consonance with it can perceive it.... My beloved disciples, ... the voice of the Universal One will always be with you! Always listen for the non-verbal voice and you will reach the Divine Origin. When all words are exhausted, the truth appears.*

In the final two chapters, the sage describes the nature of a true spiritual Master.

*They are the true father and mother, true brother and sister, and true friend of their disciples. Their grace always illuminates the dark corners of the disciples' minds. They share their divine energy with their disciples and are always aware of their problems. They dissolve their disciples' pain in the ocean of their compassion. The sadness, imperfection and false personalities of the disciples vanish before their eyes and they see only the disciples' true nature.*

Such a spiritual teacher, he says, “is not ambitious to be a leader unless the responsibility falls to him; he will make no scheme to take it. He fulfills the task that is assigned to him and then takes no credit and holds no attachment to it. He merely offers himself to serve.”

The sage proclaims that the Taoist sage and the Tao are one. (Note that here in Ni's translation, the sage or Taoist Master is translated as “Mentor” and the Tao is translated as “universal subtle truth” and “Universal Truth”.)

*Kind prince, true Mentors are the embodiment of heavenly energy. They are the direct expression of the universal subtle truth.... To be with them is to experience the living truth. Their minds are as deep and all-encompassing as the Universal Truth.... They are the revelation of the mystery of the great universal triad: Heaven, Earth and Man. Their smiles radiate light, wisdom and bliss.*

The *Tao Te Ching* has been translated into English more than fifty times, and anyone who compares these translations realizes the challenge of translating Taoist mystical texts, expressed in pictograms suggesting many possible meanings, into English. The *Hua Hu Ching*, in comparison, has been translated into English only twice. While Ni chose to translate the *Hua Hu Ching* into prose, the other translation, *The Hua Hu Ching: The Unknown Teachings of Lao Tzu* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992) by Brian Walker, renders the sage's words in a sparse poetic form close to the suggestive, sometimes elusive, original. For example,

*Do you imagine that the universe is agitated?  
Go into the desert at night and look out at the stars.  
This practice should answer your question.  
The superior person settles her mind as the universe settles the stars  
in the sky.  
By connecting her mind with the subtle origin, she calms it.  
Once calmed, it naturally expands, and ultimately her mind  
becomes as vast and immeasurable as the night sky.*

Ni's translation may be easier for the English reader to approach since it gives the text a more explicit meaning. But, given that Ni is a contemporary Taoist Master, and part of the centuries-old Union of Tao and Man lineage, his rendering of the *Hua Hu Ching* probably reflects the interpretation given the book by that lineage. Readers inspired to plumb the text still further may wish to read the two translations side by side.



