

August 2013

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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VOLUME 9 • ISSUE EIGHT • AUGUST 2013

Take Refuge in the Guru's Feet

*Be on your guard, O wayfarer –
robbers have come and set their trap for you.*

*Do not travel alone –
you won't make it without a Master.
They will snatch away everything you've gathered
and turn you into their slave.*

*These thugs hold up everyone without exception
and rob all those who are without a Master.*

*Listen to me, dear friend,
Abandon their company and stay aloof.*

*Time and again I repeat this to you:
The Master is the only protector.
Love the Master and be steadfast in your love,
then you will doubtless reach your destination.*

*Taking refuge in the Guru's feet
is the heart of the matter;
it will help you
to overcome your lust for sensual pleasures –
for these are the thugs that rob you on your journey.*

*Radha Soami is calling you:
Take refuge in me,
I offer you my protection,
Walk in the company of Nam and be liberated.*

Soami Ji, *Sar Bachan Poetry*



Wherever You Go, There You Are!

There's an old Irish saying: "Wherever you go, there you are!" This might be a statement of the obvious, but if you look at it from a satsangi's perspective it can have considerable significance. Consider, when you did your meditation this morning, you closed your eyes and sat in the darkness, doing your simran and imagining you were sitting in front of the Master. If you close your eyes right now, and concentrate your attention there; there you are – in the exact same place as you were earlier this morning when you sat to do your meditation. And every time you close your eyes and gather your attention there, you are always in the exact same place, regardless of time and space, regardless of when or where in the world your body is located – you are in the presence of your Master.

Is this not an amazing fact? Although we are constantly running around out in the world, when we do our meditation, we are always in the same place, doing the same thing, in the presence of the Divine. In fact, at any moment, at any time of day, whenever and wherever we can find the free time to internalize our attention, whenever we can do just a few rounds of simran, there we are again.

If only we could live like this always, with this perspective firmly established. Yet somehow we find it difficult to maintain this internal frame of reference. Instead of constantly functioning from that solid, centered part of ourselves, we are drawn into the maelstrom of worldly thinking and worldly values. We are sabotaged by our own mind, that enemy within. Sometimes, even when we know that it is not in our best interests, we find our mind heading down dark pathways that we know will lead to no good. It seems like a desperate battle against insuperable odds. We constantly feel defeated. Despite our best intentions, we do not seem to be improving, and we are at war with ourselves.

So why do we keep on finding ourselves in this unhappy condition? Have we not made a decision that we want to travel on the spiritual path? Have we not clearly understood that there is nothing in this world left for us any more, that all the worldly temptations and pleasures lead to nothing but increased bondage to the wheel of birth and death? We all know that, and yet we still find ourselves caught up in this web of illusion. It is time for us to take stock of the situation, and get a greater understanding of what is holding us back from achieving our life's objectives.

The mind is our enemy, and it has five agents, through which it works to keep us enslaved to the faces, places and things of this world. These 'infamous five' are lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. If we look at the world, and how it works, and if we look for the source of all our troubles, we need look no further than these five. No one is spared their attentions, and few have ever defeated them. In fact, until the world-weary soul finally comes into the company of a perfect Master it has absolutely no prospect of success against such relentless enemies.

The Masters see our situation clearly. We do not. Our perception is clouded by the infamous five, and we have no clear concept even of what is real or unreal. We allow ourselves to be lured into believing that the temptations of this world – sex, fame, fortune, and so on – will bring us happiness, believing that this is what it's all about, and that if we can satisfy our desire for these, then we'll live happily ever after.

We have obviously not thought this through clearly. Is there any real benefit in such goals? Even if we succeed beyond our wildest dreams, where will that leave us? Will we be happy? Even if we believe that to be true, for how long do we think we'll remain happy?

The sad truth is that, regardless of who we are or how much we achieve in this life, sooner or later we grow old. Will we then be able to take comfort from the fact that once we had the world at our feet?

Who now will look twice at our lined and haggard face, our grey, thinning hair, our weakened muscles and our tired eyes?

No matter how famous we once may have been, now we get shouldered out the way, like so much clutter in the road, while the world rushes to pay homage to the next hero of the day. Fame is a fickle lover that casts you aside the moment the next best thing comes along. And while you wait in the shadow of the Grim Reaper, who will be there with you? No one. Who can go with you beyond that grey veil of death? No one. And so, at the end of all things, you find that absolutely everything that the world held out to you as the answer to all your cravings was just illusion. Just so much dust in the wind. For this you sacrificed all that you might have been, and at the end of the day you pass from this world, empty-handed, friendless and alone.

So the Masters tell us: wise up! Consider whether chasing power, wealth and love is going to give you something worthwhile and lasting. The truth is that in our confused state we need someone who can guide us out of this maze of illusion and deception.

We have this advice from Soami Ji:

*Why not submit to the Master?
You have spent this human life in delusion. ...
Attach yourself to Nam, dear friend,
and patiently hold still within yourself.*

Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol. II

Now when the Masters talk about Nam, they are referring to that great power within that emanates from the Lord, and is actually the Lord in dynamic form. It is this power that created and sustains the creation. The Masters tell us that this power also provides the soul with the only method by which it can return to its source. In a sense, the Shabd has the soul on the one end and the Lord at the other. The Master's task is

to raise the soul's consciousness until it rises within to the level at which it comes in direct and conscious contact with this Shabd or Nam, from which point the soul's journey home begins in earnest.

Granted, this can be a long and difficult journey. The Master teaches us that the reason why this process seems so difficult is that our mind constantly creates a major disturbance in our consciousness, so that we cannot see clearly. So they teach us the technique of meditation, by which we are empowered to still this wandering mind to the point where the currents of our attention automatically rise up within.

The Master's mission is to teach us how to get out of this world and make our way back to our original and true home. He teaches us the technique of simran, by practising which we slowly and slowly concentrate our attention at the eye centre. To the extent that we succeed in this, we redirect our attention away from the things of this world. We weaken and dilute our attachments to the extent that one day, suddenly, we realize that the world has little attraction for us anymore.

Furthermore, the Master teaches us about the sound current, that power that is the dynamic form of the Lord himself. The Master says that by merging our consciousness in this sound current, all our attachments are finally broken. Our karmas too will be finally and totally accounted for, setting the soul free to pass beyond the bounds of mind.

We have his assurance that we are on the road that leads to the court of the Lord himself. All other paths lead to confusion and chaos, and end up with the soul continuing to wander through the maze of endless births and deaths, incarnating in all the different species. This is what the soul has been doing since time immemorial. For us now, what has changed is that the Master has come into our lives.

So the road to success, the path shown to us by our Master, lies before us. What we need is to fully grasp this opportunity. At the end of the day, there's this to remember: that wherever you go, there you are. And – so – is – he!

Lift Off

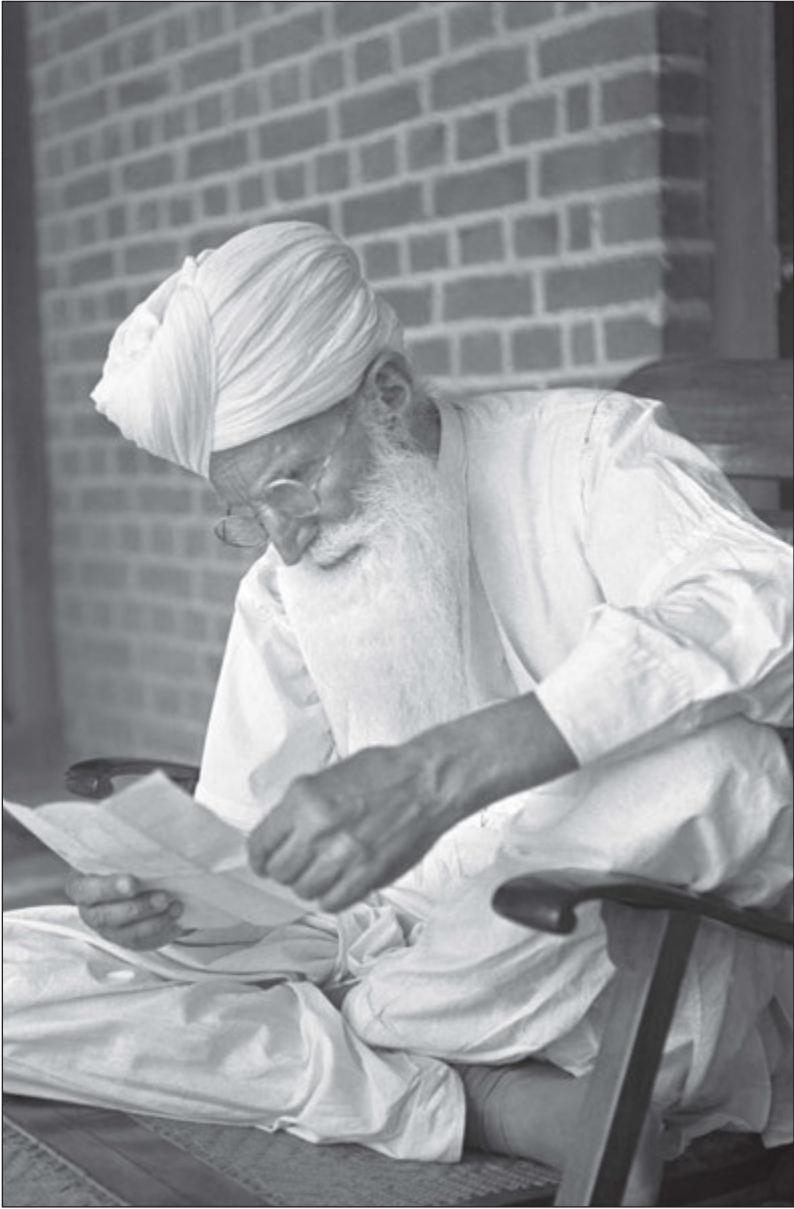
Masters of all ages and on all continents have advised their disciples to practise meditation in order to make contact with Shabd. This Shabd is that power by means of which the Creator caused the universe to come into existence, and is the means by which he sustains it even now. This power permeates every iota of the entire creation, and it can be contacted only by entering into the temple of the human body.

The Master tells us that it is only by going within that this living Word or Nam may be contacted. Once the soul comes into contact and merges with this power, it is truly on the road that leads permanently out of the realm of illusion and which ends finally in the court of the Creator himself.

The Master makes it plain that our single biggest task in this life is to get the better of our mind and train it to help us to achieve our objective of self- and God-realization. If we do not, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past and to continue in the seemingly endless round of birth and death. The purpose of meditation is to overcome the downward pull of the negative tendencies of the mind and to cultivate its finer or higher aspects.

Think of how an airplane works. How does a massive airliner manage to take off? It is carrying several tons of fuel, hundreds of passengers, and the plane itself also weighs several tons. How does this huge contraption manage to fly? The magic of flight is in the design of the wing. As the wing moves through the air, its shape generates upward lift. This upward force increases proportionately with the speed of the plane. So when the plane goes fast enough, the wings generate enough upward lift to overcome gravity, and the plane lifts off the ground and flies.

Our meditation, in its early stages, is a bit like this. We feel we are making no progress because we are not “lifting off”, so to speak, but we



Maharaj Sawan Singh

have to develop the speed, the momentum, that will provide the upward lift to overcome the downward drag of our negative tendencies, our attachments and our karmas. Therefore we need to concentrate on the spiritual practice, our meditation, in order to generate that upward force that will carry us up to where we will meet our Master on the higher planes of existence.

The Master gives us several techniques to achieve this. At initiation he gives us simran, the repetition of five names – and initially this repetition seems extremely dry and boring. It even causes us to wonder sometimes how this seemingly unrewarding activity is ever going to get us anywhere. The Master, however, knows what he is doing. By doing simran, as he explained it to us at the time of our initiation, we are withdrawing our attention from this world and focusing it inside at the eye centre. By doing this we are gathering our consciousness and focusing it at a point beyond the domain of the physical. When simran has been perfected, our attention rises up to the point where we encounter the Radiant Form of our Master inside. At this point the second technique of spiritual practice automatically comes into play, namely contemplation or dhyan. The soul is so entranced by the luminous vision of the Master that it is helpless to do anything but gaze in wonder at this incredible spectacle. The Master then places the soul in contact with the divine Shabd that is ringing at this point, and helps the soul to merge in it. And the third meditation technique is listening to the Shabd or Sound.

This Shabd practice then becomes the main method of the soul's further progress towards its divine destiny: ultimate union with the Lord. At the end of the day, our only resource is our focused attention during meditation, and our only friend is our Master. Only he is deserving of our undivided attention and loyalty. Only he will help us in the end, to achieve the dream of spiritual liberation and convert the dream into an eternal reality.

Honesty

In relation to a question about honesty Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh said:

Actually we have to be truthful and honest with ourselves, not with others, ... We must face facts, and we must understand the reality, and we must be honest with our own feelings, with our own self. And if you are honest with yourself, you'll be honest with others also. If you are deceitful to yourself, you'll be deceitful to others also.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

In the light of this instruction to be honest with ourselves we can examine the most common question which we always put to the Master. All our questions usually boil down to this one complaint in one way or another, namely, "Master, I have been on the path for so many years and I have not seen the light."

But what do we mean by "on the path"? For ourselves we mean the number of years since we have been initiated. But for others we have a different standard. We might say: "Well, he was initiated twenty years ago, but he has been off the path for so many years and he only recently came back." Surely this phrase means something more than just "time since initiation"? At the least we should honestly agree that the phrase means that we have obeyed the four principles and meditated for the full time. Applying that test, we will find that for much of the time we were not "on the path", just near the path, maybe able to see the path and even hear the traffic, but not actually on the path.

Applying honesty to our principles, we might even need new language to describe ourselves. If we are very strict vegetarians when

other satsangis are around, but perhaps flexible when we are alone or travelling, then we are maybe not vegetarians but “flexitarians”.

Concerning meditation, we might like to call ourselves meditators, but we constantly delay in getting down to meditation in earnest. We procrastinate about making meditation our highest priority. In that sense we are procrastinators, not meditators.

We are often unable to digest what we receive from the Master. Instead, we can't wait to tell others about anything which we feel might enhance our spiritual status. So we may think of ourselves as being a Shabd yogi, when in fact we simply want others to think that we are a yogi. The word for that is a “showgi”.

Combining these elements, our age-old question to the Master would now sound like this: “Master, I was initiated in 1975 and I have been on the path for 63 days. I am a flexitarian procrastinator and a showgi and I wonder why I have not seen the light?” Probably we would never ask that question because we would not want the sangat to hear the truth about ourselves!

Another area of honesty relates to the question of blame. In life it is always useful to find a scapegoat, the one on whom we can pin the blame. For example, the greedy banks were blamed for the 2008 global financial crisis, and so the greedy investors who were gambling that property prices would rise were off the hook, and the careless investors who bought products they did not understand were also off the hook. On the spiritual path we have our own special scapegoat. It is revealed in the two words: “my mind”. We say: “My mind refuses to diet; my mind won't meditate; my mind finds satsang boring” etc.

However, we use this term only for the bad things, for our weaknesses. When we do something good, no one says: “My mind does regular seva” or “my mind visited the elderly”. No. For the good things we take the credit and we always say “I”. “I have lost weight”; “I go to seva every week”. We like to speak of “my mind” as if it is separate from

ourselves, but the karmic law is not fooled. The karmic law says: “You did it and you must pay. In this affair you cannot blame the mind. For karmic purposes you and the mind are the same.” So we need to stop saying things like: “My mind suffers from lust,” as if we were saying, “My dog has a rash.” Honesty requires us to say: “I can’t control myself,” instead of “I can’t control my mind. Therefore I misbehaved; I am to blame: I lost my temper.” It is time to face the facts and the reality. It is time to stop trying to shift the blame.

Again on the question of how long it will take us to reach enlightenment, the problem is that advances in technology have created a mental “need for speed”. Facsimile transmission demands a faster reply than a letter. Emails demand faster replies than faxes. Text messaging demands an even faster response. In fact, when one sends a text message to anyone under the age of 20, the reply comes so quickly that they must have a magic thumb! When we order something online, we get a tracking code and we then track the parcel as it leaves the depot, boards the plane and so on. By the time the delivery van pulls into the driveway, we are already heading for the door to receive the parcel. Even when we order a pizza, we can track its progress.

What we want is for the Master to give us a tracking code for the Shabd when we get initiation, so that we can see how far away it is and track our progress. Unfortunately for us, spirituality is a long-term project. In her book *In Search of the Way* Flora Wood quotes Great Master as saying, “We need a medicine which will stop our feverish and aimless wandering in this world, and if there is anyone who can minister to our long drawn-out spiritual malady, it is the Satguru.” We have had the disease of the mind for so long that the treatment will also take some time.

Still, we beg for an answer to the question, “How long?” In fact, for almost every disciple, five years of meditation is quite enough. However, it takes fifty years to accumulate five years of meditation at the rate of

two and a half hours a day. So before we think we are doing so much, we should divide by ten! It is worthwhile to realize that what the saints ask of us is really not very much – a mere few years of meditation accumulated over a lifetime set against countless births in this realm.

Advances in science have helped us in two ways. Firstly, it is far easier for us to believe in the karmic law today than it must have been centuries ago. When we consider the vast amount of data which needs to be collected and stored and retrieved in order to operate the karmic law, it must have seemed impossible before the computer age. However, now man easily stores enormous quantities of data in cyberspace and retrieves it instantly. If man can do this in the digital dimension, then it is not hard to believe that God can do this in the astral dimension.

Secondly, advances in science demonstrate in a very specific way the need for a living Master. There is no point seeking guidance in the teachings of past Masters for all those things invented after the time of those Masters. Can a saint who lived a century ago have said anything at all about organ transplants and organ donation, or about life support systems in hospitals, or about in vitro fertilization or genetically modified foods? Of course not, because saints can only comment on matters in their own time, not on future inventions. Those without a living teacher are forced to try to work out what the past teacher might have thought or said. This process is conducted by committees and they often reach different views. We are privileged to have a living teacher who can guide us on all these things.

As disciples, we lead a blessed life because we can conduct the experiment of the science of the soul under the guidance and protection of the living Master. Hazur said in reply to a question about the Master taking charge of the disciple:

Well, brother, to be very frank, we become conscious that the Master has taken charge when we come to the eye centre; actually, Master takes charge right from birth. Those people who have come to the path, Master takes charge of them right from birth – he will never allow them to go so astray that he cannot pull them back to the path.

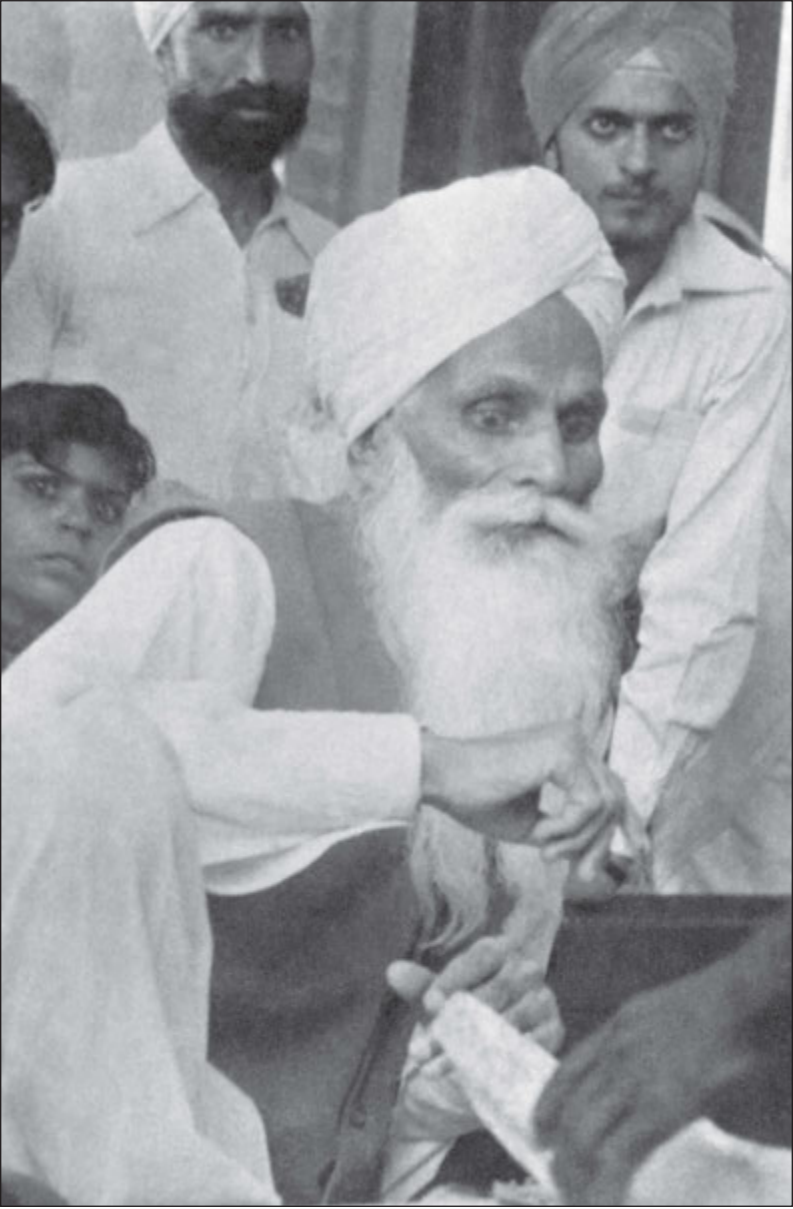
Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

What this means is that we can take no credit at all for coming on to the path. In fact, we should realize that all spiritual progress is due to the Master. We should not consider ourselves to have achieved anything at all. It is comparable to the account of the woodcarver who was asked to repair a famous religious statue. When the statue was repaired, he loaded it on to his donkey and led the donkey through the streets of the town to return the statue to the church. As they went along, people began to offer a prayer to the statue or to bow or fold their hands. The donkey began to think they were worshipping him! He began to pause and strike a pose and even smile. If we begin to give ourselves airs and graces for simply following the path, then we are just like that donkey!

The life of a disciple is intensely interesting. We enjoy a daily challenge to seek self-improvement. Under the guidance of the Master we can try and try again. We will never run out of opportunities to improve. Not only do we have that blessing but our future success is guaranteed. In this context we are living a wonderful life. As Hazur replied when asked whether our future is set for us when we are born:

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

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III



Maharaj Jagat Singh

The Inner Archway

Life and society constantly evolve and, as a result, many of our value sets have changed. Much of this change is due to the advances made by technology, which allow us to have a far better lifestyle than that of our parents and grandparents.

As the world changes, so do our needs. We have to exist in this world and we have to move forward with it. We no longer live in an agrarian world where we barter one sort of food for another. We live in the twenty-first century and most of us need access to the technology that is a part of this century – we need items such as cars, TVs, computers, perhaps even smartphones, iPads, iPods and Medical Aid. Many of these are necessary to be able to live reasonably comfortably in today's society. We need to keep abreast of the world we live in, and we must decide for ourselves the extent to which we want to be involved in the world. We all have different personal circumstances which direct that involvement.

Technology also constantly changes the way we spend our leisure time, and entertainment has become a dominating factor in many of our lives. The choices we have to occupy our minds with frivolity are truly mind-boggling. When we get bored with one thing, we immediately find a new and more interesting activity, as we constantly connect ourselves to some worldly interest via the Internet. It's so easy to move from obscurity to an Internet persona by putting our opinions on websites and blogs, and submitting videos to YouTube.

If we don't consider the effects of our thinking and actions as we go through our day – and probably many of us don't – are we likely to consider the ties of attraction and attachment that arise from our Internet action? Do we ever consider the impressions and effects we

are embedding in our subconscious when we get involved in social networking sites and Internet interactions?

The fact that we are not in a one-on-one situation with the person we are interacting with does not mean we are not creating subtle impressions on the mind. Many of these impressions are made with unknown people who read our posted opinions and respond to us, whether on blogs or via chat rooms. These all leave imprints on the mind that will have to be cleared at some time by our meditation. Here again we see the power of attraction, added to addiction, leading to attachment.

We must determine for ourselves where our needs stop and our wants begin, what is healthy entertainment and what is simply the ego expressing its opinions. It is not wrong to have the comforts of life and the material things that make this worldly life more pleasant – after all, it's more comfortable to sit and cry in a luxury car than on a bicycle. Nobody says we can't enjoy the ride, have fun and be entertained along the way. What is wrong is when our wants – or rather, our desires – become excessive, when greed takes over and we strut the ego on the stage provided by the Internet.

Regarding needs and desires, Maharaj Charan Singh responded to a questioner by saying:

You want to know the difference between necessity and desire? Well, you have to make up your own mind whether you can afford a Volkswagen or a Buick or a Lincoln. You have to make up your own mind, even whether you can do without all of them. It depends on you. If you are becoming so obsessed to possess one and it is bothering you, so have it. If you can afford it, buy one. If you can get rid of your desire and you can't afford the car, get rid of the desire. ... Certain desires can be fulfilled if

we have the economic means to satisfy them. It depends on one's circumstances. If you have a desire to possess a Lincoln but you have no money in the bank, you shouldn't commit a robbery to buy one. One has to look at one's economic circumstances. Otherwise, you have to withdraw your mind from such desires.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

This encapsulates what our approach to needs and wants should be. Through our desires we not only risk becoming indebted to Kal, but we continue to create debt. It's like shopping with a limitless credit card – it's easy, it's convenient and we enjoy doing it. Only at the end of the month, when we are presented with our account, do we realize the extent of our debt and the futility of the many unnecessary purchases we have made.

When Kal issues our 'Statement of Account' at the time of our death, what will the balance reflect? The Master may have accepted us into his own care, but the statement of our worldly purchasing will still be issued. Will we be embarrassed to see the extent of our excesses, our greed and our unrelenting involvement with the world, or will we be satisfied that we had put in our best effort to reduce our outstanding balance? We would do well to remember that after the euphoria that comes from joy we are left with the pain of suffering. This is the price we pay. As Maharaj Charan Singh says:

Everything is illusory; there is nothing real about it, for all of it will come to an end.

Spiritual Discourses, Vol. II

We may not know the original seed that sprouted any desire, but we are certainly aware of the effects that satisfying a desire has on

us, whether it is joy or suffering. It's a simple process: first attraction entices us and we begin to experience a desire for what has attracted us. Once desire is kindled, obsession grips us and leads to action, from which are formed the binding attachments that lock us into the creation. So, when attraction is pursued, it leads to attachment and attachment, as the Master tells us, leads to bondage. Attraction, desire, action, attachment, and suffering are like a wheel rotating endlessly.

When we understand the process of attraction, thought, desire and action, we can use this process positively to turn our attention away from the creation. And not only that, we also use the process to turn our attention to the inner world.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that at our forehead is the inner archway where the Supreme Lord gives his unending call. Within each person, this most beautiful and sweet call from the heavens surges forth from the Lord. This is what we should be attracted to, this is where our desire should be. In the beginning it may be that we are attracted only to the idea of finding that archway and hearing that sweet call from the heavens, but if we pursue that dream as the Master has instructed us, we can make it a reality. That dream is enough to begin the process of turning our attention away from the world to the journey within.

We may not be completely focused on getting out of this creation, but each one of us is on the path back to the Lord, and in our own way we are slowly moving forward. We also become aware that life is a tug-of-war between the attractions of the outer world and the sweet, in-drawing power and attraction of Shabd calling us from the inner archway.

The process of moving from a state of worldly attachment to that of detachment does not happen overnight. We do not go to bed on Saturday and wake up on Sunday having attained detachment.

Essentially it is a very slow process. It is something we have to work at, and Sant Mat teaches us how to do this.

The Masters prescribe a course of spiritual discipline and a certain way of life for us to follow. Together these cut down much of the seed formation of future karma. The Masters assure us that by practising our spiritual discipline we can experience that sweet call from the inner archway. The vast majority of us battle with our meditation. We also struggle just trying to focus more on our simran than on the world, let alone getting to the eye centre, but it is important to keep trying – to keep our dream alive.

But there's this for our comfort: Maharaj Charan Singh told a satsangi who doubted whether he could reach the eye centre by the time of death:

Meditation means that we are training our mind to go inward and upward. We are creating a tendency in the mind to go inward and upward, withdrawing it from outside and bringing it back to the eye centre. ... Often you may not see anything within, but you feel so happy, so contented, so at peace within yourself. You feel the effect of meditation within yourself – you feel detached from everything.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

The questioner then asked: “And that is enough at the time of death to take us up?” The Master replied: “That is more than enough – because now, your tendency is not towards the creation.”

What does this mean? Surely that we simply have to turn away from the darkness and face the inner light, and he will pull us to him in the inner archway.

At the End of the Day

What a rare privilege it is to sit in front of a perfect living Master and listen to his words of love, compassion and encouragement. Everyone who listens to the Master probably takes something different from his words, remembers something different and responds differently to him – the same words striking different chords within each one of us.

One remarkably reassuring phrase he often uses that strikes a particular chord is this: “At the end of the day, he will see you through.” This is often accompanied by either a look or a gesture upward, indicating that it is God our Father who will see us through at the end of the day.

“At the end of the day” can mean at the end of a 24-hour period or it can mean at the end of an episode of one’s life. It can also mean at the end of one’s whole life in this particular body. However we choose to interpret it, the promise made by a true Son of God is the same: The Lord will see us through everything, all the time. It reassures us that the Lord is with us at every step of our journey through life. It tells us that he knows exactly where we are and what we are encountering at any time; he is on our side; he will not allow us to flounder; he will help, guide and support us through every good and bad situation we may face. It means that he will personally lead us through the bad times, until we emerge from the darkness and enter into his glorious light.

This applies to every day and every situation in our lives – from the day of our initiation until the day we enter Sach Khand, the home of God, our heavenly Father. What comfort and reassurance is there to be found in this one sentence. We will go through nothing alone; no darkness will last forever and he will bring us home.

This is the Lord's promise. What is our response to his promise? If the Lord is actively going to see us through, then do we have any active part to play in the unfolding of our days, or can we just sit back and relax, watch them unfold and leave all the work to the Lord?

Although the Master did not qualify his statement by saying: "The Lord will see you through, provided you have first done this or that," he never fails to stress the need for our own effort. In the midst of his constant efforts to provide comfort to people asking questions based on deep anguish and real need, his replies always stress the importance of making our own effort. Our contribution must go hand in hand with the Lord's gracious promise.

So at the ending of the day, the Lord will see us through. But at the end of the day – of each and every day – where are we? Where was our effort and what was our contribution? Every day on this path offers us so many opportunities to help the Lord see us through, as long as we are clear about our priorities and our goal, and as long as we are acting upon these constantly and consistently.

Whatever our goal, there are going to be many things we can do to work towards making a contribution and, in so doing, become as active a partner as is allowed to us by the Lord. Our goal may be to please the Master – which is probably the best goal of all, because if he is pleased with us, then what else do we need to achieve? In *Living Meditation* we read: "To keep our priorities in perspective it is imperative that we choose to live the life of a true disciple."

The first thing we can do to live the life of a true disciple and make an active contribution is to follow the four vows we take at the time of initiation to the very best of our ability. No disciple should ever come to the end of the day without having done his or her absolute best with regard to fulfilling those vows. They are the cornerstone of our response to the Master's love; they are our reply

to his promise to see us through and take us home. Keeping these vows entails putting our best foot forward every day, no matter what the circumstances of that day may be.

There will be days, maybe even weeks or months that seem to flow by smoothly, with little drama or disturbance. But sometimes life seems like a series of hurricanes: no sooner have we survived one storm than the next one appears and smashes us around, playing havoc with our goals and priorities. It is, however, precisely the presence of these very goals and priorities that help us weather the storms. They become our anchors, and it is in the midst of these storms that we discover how strong or how weak our anchors are.

It is the storms of life that reveal to us the depth of our desire to please and obey the Master. They reveal to us how real our wish is to move in his direction and how firm our cornerstones are. The Lord will see us safely through all storms – of that there is absolutely no doubt – but we can also help ourselves in these times of trouble.

We can help ourselves by clinging ever harder to our vows, never neglecting our duty to do our meditation and by keeping our simran going throughout the day. This will help keep us pointed towards the Master and will please him, which means that we are still working towards our goal, even when conditions are least favourable.

The Lord's wishes need to become paramount in our lives. If his home is our desired destination, then pleasing our host and living in his will makes good sense, and needs to become our top priority and ultimate goal. It is the Supreme Being, God our Father, who is in charge of us and who will, at the end of the day, see us through.

Dancing with God

When we really look deeply into the kernel of this spiritual path, what we find at the centre of our way of life is our beloved Sat Guru, who embodies the Shabd, the light, love and blissful melody that emanates from our Father, Radha Soami.

It is through the Shabd – the creative sound or Word, which springs forth from the heart of the Supreme Lord's immeasurable being – that everything seen and unseen came into being. And it is only through our growing attachment to the homeward bound, returning stream of Shabd that those whom the Father has chosen to call back to him are able to return home. In order to do this he sends us a Master, a being in human form, who embodies all levels of consciousness – that of the Father, and that of this physical world, and everything in between as well. This is very important, as we can only access the Father with the help and guidance of our Master.

The Master is one with the source of all creation, Sat Purush, and so he embodies the living energy of all creation, in its constant ebb and flow. We, as physical beings, are in the process of returning to the Father.

Imagine that in the act of creation, Sat Purush had flung handfuls of energy out into space and that each handful had become a galaxy of whirling stars. Each galaxy would be full of light and sound, far beyond anything we could imagine. And at the centre of each galaxy would be a vast expanse of light and sound we can refer to as the central sun. All the stars in each galaxy would revolve around the core energy of their central sun.

All throughout the universe there are millions of galaxies, all swirling around in complete harmony with each other. As they spin, they each follow the rhythm and pulse of their own central sun – a

blaze of light so powerful and so bright that we can scarcely even look at it. Scientists liken the central sun to the conductor of an orchestra, as it sends out its pulse, or heartbeat, to regulate the evolution of all the stars and planets of which the galaxy is composed. The whole universe, and all its diverse galaxies, waltzes in harmony with each other, to the baton of their cosmic conductor.

This gigantic pageant, with so many cosmic dancers moving with such perfection, points to an overall power that holds these galaxies together in such breathtakingly beautiful, perfect harmony.

Sant Mat teaches us that the source of all this is Sat Purush and his emanation, the Shabd, the divine sound and light. It is to the baton of the Sat Purush, the Supreme Lord, that the whole creation moves. And that, of course, includes us.

As part of the creation we were sent away from our original spiritual home, farther and farther away, till we became hopelessly lost in time and space. And since then we have been searching in the creation for something to still our deep, inner longing for our true home, calling out to be found and rescued.

No cry goes unheard. The wheels began to turn and the process of preparation for our return was set in motion. Over countless lives now we have been going through a seemingly endless process of purification as we settle our karmas: sometimes happily and sometimes through many severe and often unbearably painful experiences – in order to balance our debts so that these may become light enough for us to be granted the immense gift of initiation by a Master.

Our Master, as the central sun of our own personal and individual galaxy, started pulling us inward towards himself. Slowly, slowly we now orbit closer and closer towards him, until we will be drawn right into him and become one with his blaze of light and sound, the Shabd.

To look to our Master for guidance regarding everything in our lives is to dance in total unison with the will of the Lord. This means following this path according to the prescribed principles and to doing our meditation, which is the very essence of this path.

Our total acceptance of and obedience to his will brings us a happiness that lies beyond words – an exhilaration of spirit, a deep feeling of love and joy, an ecstatic feeling of being swept up into his arms, our hearts aglow with bliss.

Being handsomely rewarded for living in his will is not only true for when things go well but also holds true in times of setbacks, loss, illness or disaster. If we turn within and ask him to point out the way, and if we seek only *his* will and submit to it, the nectar of his love will flow. When we go with our Master's flow and allow him to orchestrate and choreograph our lives, we too will fit into the divine pageant, swirling around the obstacles of life and spreading our light in all directions as we swirl inwardly into union with our Master, our central sun.



It is only when we begin to relate even the smallest happenings in our daily life to the Sound Current and the Master that true enlightenment dawns on us and we see everything by that inner illumination, and then what contentment, pleasure and joy we begin to experience. All life begins to have a richness of meaning we never supposed possible.

“Without Nam”, Maharaj Ji said, “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.

Flora Wood, *In Search of the Way*

For Our Own Good

All Masters have placed great emphasis on meditation and the need to attend to our simran with love and devotion. There is an old proverb that humorously sums up our need to put effort into our meditation: “You have got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.” We have to make the effort – no one else can do it for us – and in making the effort to do our meditation we incur the Lord’s grace, which brings more effort and then more grace.

The speed of meditation does not matter, but the amount of love and devotion does. Maharaj Charan Singh reassured us that if we cannot attend to meditation with love and devotion but only do so mechanically, love and devotion will develop slowly, as we go along. At first we have to fight with the mind, but in time love will develop automatically, as will faith. Through meditation a whole new world opens up for us. The Master tells us that if we do our meditation, he will help us, both inside and out.

For many of us our meditation appears to yield little obvious result. This may be because, for reasons of his own, our Master may withhold the fruit of our meditation from us, even till the crucial time of our death. Or else the results of our efforts may be subtle, taking the form of changes in our nature and in our attitudes.

We ourselves have to work for all the spiritual benefits we yearn for – by doing our meditation. There is no other way. We have to make sacrifices for everything we want. We have to make ourselves fit to earn these rewards. The Lord is holding in his hands all that we want, but we have to make ourselves fit to receive it.

Maharaj Charan Singh often stated that there can be no escape from bhajan and simran and that there is no other way to achieve our goal

of self- and God-realization – this path is the simplest and the quickest. And when asked if the soul was aware of the mind trying to meditate, he replied that when the mind starts to do simran, the soul relaxes and is happy. Doing our meditation is for our own good, as we will eventually gain entry through the doorway that leads us to the worlds of bliss, light and love within – the doorway that leads us to the Lord.



Whatever you may get in this world, you can never be happy. The inclination of the soul will always be towards its own source, and unless the soul merges in that source it can never be happy in this world.

Those people who, from a material point of view, are fortunate enough to have everything at their command, are not denied anything by the world, who have wealth, health, honour and fame, are still missing something. They have everything at their command, but no peace of mind within. They still feel lonely. This loneliness is the inclination of the soul towards its own source. Unless you let your soul go back to its own source, you will never be able to get peace of mind, nor will you ever overcome the feeling of loneliness. So if you go on trying to improve the lot of the world, you cannot be happy at all. You can only be happy when you're able to go back and merge into the Father.

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

The Soul and the Divine Beloved

The spiritual purpose of life is to love God and to find him within ourselves, with the help and guidance of the Divine Beloved, our Master. The self-discipline required of us if we wish to tread the path of God-realization, is not to be underestimated. Few who walk this way will find it easy. Our souls long for union with the Divine, but due to our human nature, our spiritual practice may often feel like trying to climb a slippery rock face behind a waterfall. Our material tendencies have been built up over so many past lives that it has become second nature for the mind to attach itself to the physical panorama presented to the senses. We become distracted, and with just one lapse in concentration we are back at the bottom of the waterfall again, washed away by the downward effusions of the mind.

Material habits have been ingrained in us from the beginning of our life on earth. To still the mind and withdraw the soul from the body and pass through the gates of death, while still living a normal life in the world and fulfilling all our responsibilities and duties, is no small task. In some respects it is the complete reverse of what we have understood so far. The world says that physical existence is everything; spirituality says that it is only a mirage. The world fears death; spirituality advocates dying daily. The world says we should build up our sense of identity; spirituality says we should focus far less on our own identity. The world seeks material gain and sensory pleasure; spirituality considers these distractions that could easily retard spiritual progress.

What does this spirituality entail? We are told that the soul is a part of God, a drop of his ocean and a spark from his fire. No union is closer than a drop merging into an ocean or a flame into a fire. Our soul can be seen as a bride who, once kissed by the Lord her Beloved,

is elevated above all things temporal and beholds only God's countenance. His kiss is simply a dissolving of love with Love. By love they are bound, for all eternity. Is this not what spirituality entails, what all souls are seeking – a way to make contact with the Lord, to return to him and to merge into him?

This eternal love story between the soul and her Beloved, the Lord, is well illustrated by the following verses from the ancient mystical poem "Song of Songs" of the Bible. The poem can be interpreted as a description of the greatness of the Master who, as an emissary of the Lord, comes to the desert of this world as a guiding beacon and a protector, to escort souls on their homeward journey back to God.

*The soul is a store of secret treasures.
Within herself, she is a fragrant garden
of colourful blossom and peaceful delight.
And although she may not know it,
the Living Water of the Word flows abundantly within her.*

The Song of Songs: The Soul and the Divine Beloved

The Beloved praises the beauty and virtues of the soul, likening her to a garden full of the rarest fruit and sweet-smelling herbs, all fed from a fountain of living water. But the garden is enclosed; its fruit and flowers are out of sight; the fountainhead is sealed, so that no water flows. This depicts the human soul, who is unaware of her hidden spiritual potential and inner treasure. The perfume which abounds in her "fragrant garden" refers to the Beloved, the Master, and the sublime atmosphere of love and peace that emanate from him and surround him. Fragrance and perfume were terms used for the Word of God as his essence, his emanation or his breath. The Word is the divine breath and fragrance that breathes life into everything.

Fragrant herbs and spices like myrrh and frankincense are known for their healing qualities, and there is no greater healer than the creative power, the eternal healer of the eternal soul.

Without water there can be no physical life. The Word is the living water that sustains all life. Without this living water there would be no creation. Without contact with the living water, the Word, there is no salvation for a soul sweltering in the heat of physical existence.

Masters, as the merchants of divine fragrance of living water – Shabd – sell it to their disciples. The only fee they charge is that of love – a commodity that is also their gift. Masters, who are intimately acquainted with the divine attributes of love, are dealers in this divine treasure. These masterly merchants of love come to remind each one of us that:

*Your soul, dear one,
veiled as it may be by mind and body,
is nonetheless pure spirit, and always retains its beauty.*

The soul in herself is perfect, but she fails to realize this. The Beloved therefore describes her hidden innate beauty to her, in order to awaken love and yearning in her heart. By reminding souls of their true beauty, Saints inspire them to seek the spiritual treasure within themselves; by expressing his love for his souls, the Beloved generates love for himself in their hearts. It is this love that draws the soul from the body towards him on the inner planes. The Beloved sees only the highest good in every soul and loves each soul unconditionally. Were it not for his deep and enduring love for his souls, he would not stay in this world to extricate them from the dilemma they are in. He urges the soul to make her way through the third eye – the narrow gateway – and out of the body, away from the physical creation, to find him within, and to escape from the world of the mind.

Inspired by the Beloved's outpouring of love, the soul immediately sits in meditation, wishing to traverse the inner realms.

*In the stillness of the night,
I will ascend in silent prayer to the blissful, healing,
heavenly regions of the soul to meet with my Beloved.*

The soul now prays that Spirit may breathe life into the garden of her soul; she is begging to hear the sound of the spirit, the song of life. In the peace of the night she will spend her time in contemplation, intoxicated, lost in bliss, traversing the inner heavens of light in the company of her divine Beloved. The soul's attention now revolves only around her Beloved, to the exclusion of all else, as it is only with one-pointed love that the soul can leave the body and meet the Beloved inside. The soul goes where her desire takes her. It is only when the mind has been purified of all worldliness and thoughts of self that the inner meeting with the Beloved can take place.

*Sweet and intoxicating is your love,
bearing the incomparable fragrance of the Divine Word.
Within your heart, seen on your face
and expressed in your words is the treasure of pure love.
The essence of Eternity permeates your being.*

The glories that await the soul when she begins to realize her own true heritage are beyond description. The most beautiful and enchanting sights and experiences of this world are only a dim reflection of what lies within. Ultimately the soul realizes that there is nothing other than this primal Word reverberating through everything. She is now intoxicated with bliss and the inner sweetness of conscious contact with the Word,

the water of life. The experience is far superior to anything we can imagine. There is nothing more desirable than divine love, than “the essence of eternity” permeating one’s being. Once one has achieved this, one has fulfilled the spiritual purpose of life.

*May your heart be full of divine love;
May you breathe the fragrance of the Breath of God;
May you be rapt in the ecstasy of the mystic Word.*



It is not easy to understand love because its true nature and greatness cannot be described in words. It is a pure and delicate feeling or emotion which can be experienced only by one who is in love. It is beyond the capacity of the tongue or the pen to describe it in any human language. Actually love is another name for God.

And just as it is not possible to reduce God’s greatness to mortal dimensions, so also is it not possible to describe adequately in any words known to man, the grandeur and sublimity of love.

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

The Master Puppeteer

One day, maybe only at the time of death, we will see the Master in his true form, realize who he really is – the son of God – and know through direct perception that he is in fact the doer of all. Until then this idea may remain more of an intellectual concept than anything else. Until we reach that exalted state, where complete surrender to his power and majesty will come automatically and completely, we must struggle with the mind and ego as we strive to accept his will in all things.

We must always do our best so that we can have a clear conscience, but we must also learn to step back, away from the results of our efforts, and allow the Lord to make of them exactly what he pleases. We need to cultivate an attitude of acceptance. Many of us may not have seen the Master's Radiant Form or reached that state of surrender yet, and therefore we must exercise our humanness – our sense of discrimination must be used throughout each day. We must think clearly and act responsibly, and be prepared to take responsibility for all of our carefully considered actions – for as we sow, so shall we reap. But in the end we must bow our minds and egos and accept that the outcome of our efforts has always been, and will always be, in the hands of the Lord.

Then, bowing and accepting his will, we must remain cheerful, grateful, positive and energized. If the outcome of our best effort is contrary to our wishes, it is not a reason to become frustrated, angry, depressed or irritated with ourselves, or anyone else, or with God. Times of trouble are not sent maliciously to punish us. We can choose our emotional responses to the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” because we can choose our thoughts. We can choose simran and happy, grateful thoughts. We can make up our minds to try ever

harder to keep focused on the path and not let our thoughts wander off. We can constantly remind ourselves of the goal, and we can consciously decide to be cheerful and grateful for everything that comes to us, knowing – even if only intellectually – that everything that comes to us comes directly from God, our loving Father, and is personally administered and supervised by his son, our Master.

If our clear thinking tells us that under no circumstances do we wish to return to this earth plane because we do not belong here, then that same clear thinking will tell us that we want to return to our real home, Sach Khand, the heavenly home of God our Father. Maharaj Jagat Singh spoke of clear thinking as a habit that satsangis should cultivate, as it forms a large part of spiritual practice. He called clear thinking a blessing, which can easily be obtained by a little effort.

Attitude, effort and acceptance all add up to the package that we can present to our Master at the end of every day, and hopefully it will be one that pleases him. Every episode – seemingly good or seemingly bad – that we live through, offers us an opportunity to help and to please, so that finally, at the very end of our last earthly day, all those little daily packages will have added up to the ultimate treasure – our Master's approval and his taking us out of this level of creation forever. We want our treasure to be in heaven not on earth. We need to make the most of every opportunity to add to our unseen heavenly treasure – the treasure of which he speaks when he says:

Your wildest dreams or imagining cannot picture the grandeur of what lies within. But the treasure is yours and is there for you. You can have it whenever you go there. Take it from me, and once and for all, that everything, including the Creator, is within you, and whosoever has attained it, has attained it by going inside the eye focus.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The Master wants us to put in consistent effort to lead a happy, balanced life. And he wants us to live in the will of the Lord. He wants us to try to face every decision, every situation that life may present to us with our spiritual priorities and goals in mind, using his precious gift of simran as our coping mechanism. He wants us to strive our hardest in every aspect of the path and to take path-oriented decisions, and to willingly accept responsibility for those decisions. But ultimately, he wants us to be able to let go of the results of our efforts, trusting that the results are not actually in our hands but in his. He is in charge, he is the Master Puppeteer – we are his puppets dancing at the end of his strings and moving to his tune. He wants us to be content with this divine arrangement.



We are all just like puppets who are dancing, and the strings are being pulled by him according to our karmas. The realized souls and the unrealized souls are all dancing in the same way. The only difference is that the realized souls know that he is pulling the strings and the unrealized souls think that they are dancing by their own effort. So we have to act in this world with detachment from our role in life, knowing that he is pulling the strings and whatever is to happen will happen, but all the same doing our best under the circumstances. Thus we become receptive and become good puppets in his hands.

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

On the Right Track

Maharaj Charan Singh said that potentially every soul is God. Several saints have confirmed that the soul is the essence of God. If we have the potential to become God, what are we doing about it and how can we realize this potential?

Mystics explain to us that the soul's brilliance and light is obscured by our mind, which covers the soul and its true essence, as if with layers of black wrappings. The dominance of the mind over the soul has led to the suppression of its God-like quality of unconditional love. And just as the soul is dominated by the mind, the mind is equally dominated by the senses. So the only way to unveil the brilliance of the soul is to reverse the domination of the mind over the soul. And this can only be accomplished by reversing the dominance of the senses over the mind. This sounds easy, but those who are undertaking the journey will testify that it is a life-long struggle.

We know the goal is to free the soul from the clutches of the mind and to free the mind from the clutches of the senses, and we also know that this can only be accomplished through meditation as taught by perfect living Masters who have themselves achieved this goal. So our responsibility is to apply the same technique to bring our mind under the control of the soul.

The meditation technique is absolutely natural and uses the attributes of the mind and body. There are no aids or apparatus for meditation. Neither are there any particular postures, breathing exercises, rituals or garments required. Anything physical is concerned with the body, whereas spiritual meditation is concerned only with the mind and soul.

The mind is constantly engaged in thoughts. It thinks of what has happened in the past or what may or may not happen in the future. It

often thinks of things that will never materialize. It thinks of solutions to problems and ways to save time, money and resources. Just as waves in the ocean are never still, thoughts generated by the mind go on forever. We might ask ourselves: if thoughts are incessant, why should we try to stop them? But the idea of meditation is not to stop our thoughts completely but to direct them inwards and upwards towards the Lord.

If we observe ourselves carefully, we will see that our emotional state is directly linked to our state of mind, and our state of mind is directly linked to our thoughts. When we watch a comedy, our thoughts are directed away from everything else and focused on the comedy. Even at a time of sadness watching the comedy and even just thinking about it afterwards can lighten our state of mind and make us laugh. The laughter doesn't take away the cause of our sadness, but for a while we can feel more cheerful. Meditation is a technique to focus our thoughts on something that is superior to the ephemeral states of mind here in the physical world.

The theory and practice of meditation is very simple. It involves replacing worldly thoughts with thoughts of the Lord. The technique used for this purpose is repetition of the five holy names given to us by the living Master who grants us the gift of initiation. By repeating these holy names, we shift the focus of our mind and thoughts from mundane issues to a superior state of spiritual awareness.

Shifting the focus from the mundane to the spiritual is not so easy. The Masters often remind us that the mind has created deep grooves with its existing thought processes, and we have to develop a new groove with meditation. This goal cannot be achieved overnight or in a matter of a few years. It is often a life-long struggle.

Nothing, not even light, travels as fast as thought. It moves so fast that we are not even able to measure it. In a fraction of a fraction of a second, we can be in another country across the globe, just by

thinking that we are there. In an instant we can also go back in time many years by merely thinking of the past. Of course we do not physically travel back in time or to another country, but the fact is that when our focus and thoughts take us there, we are there and not present in the now. We have often heard the expression that we are a million miles away. This does not mean we are literally a million miles away, but rather that our attention is far away. So if our thoughts travel at such great speed and are not on the right track, what chance do we have of controlling them?

Our current thoughts are no different from a high-speed train running on its track. Unless the train is on the right track, we will end up at the wrong destination. High-speed trains are kept on the right track to avoid collision with other trains by ensuring that the railroad switch on the tracks guides them onto the right track long before they reach the switch point. Similarly, we have to ensure that the switches in our mind keep our thoughts on the right track long before thoughts approach the switch points.

Put more simply, we have to ensure that our thoughts are wholesome and pure – devoid of malice, revenge, retribution and anger. Thoughts filled with fear, worry, egotism and impatience or those of lust, greed, violence, and attachment will pull us downward and outward, while our desired destination is inward and upward. Again, the only method of ensuring our thoughts are on the right track is through meditation. Just as the speed of thought can take us many years back or across the globe, meditation can take us instantly out of this quagmire, to taste the bliss and peace within us. All we have to do is keep it on the right track with the repetition of the five holy names.

In the Bible we read: “Be still and know that I am God.” This injunction is nothing but a call to perform the practice of meditation. In meditation we still the body and mind to such an extent that all the

soul currents withdraw from every pore of the body and concentrate at the eye centre, from where the inward journey begins. It is only by stilling the body and concentrating the mind that we are able to focus our attention and thoughts on the Lord within us.

The battle of concentrating our attention at the eye centre is no different from a tug-of-war, in which forces pull in opposite directions. The obvious winner is the stronger force. Applying this analogy to our predicament: the two forces are the mind and all the senses on the one hand and the concentration of attention at the eye centre on the other. When we meditate we deny the mind and the senses their power, and gradually we win the tug-of-war. But if we feed the mind and senses with worldly pleasures, we empower the mind and senses, and we lose the battle. Which force is winning our spiritual tug-of-war? Are we feeding the mind and senses more than we are feeding the soul? The choice is ours.

If we want our soul to win this battle, we have to use the ammunition of meditation. As in any war where the battle can be won only if the soldiers use all their ammunition, so too every spiritual seeker has to use the gift of Nam and fight, and not capitulate at every hurdle. The battle of controlling the mind and senses has to be fought and won. If we allow the mind and senses to win, we will remain their slaves forever. It is only through meditation for two and a half hours a day and living in the atmosphere of meditation all day that we can win this fight and liberate the soul from the mind and senses.

To succeed in meditation we have to practise it daily, and we have to use both faculties of the mind to fully occupy it. The thinking faculty of the mind is occupied with the repetition of the five holy names, while the faculty to visualize is occupied with dhyān or contemplation on the form of the Master or on the darkness within. If these two

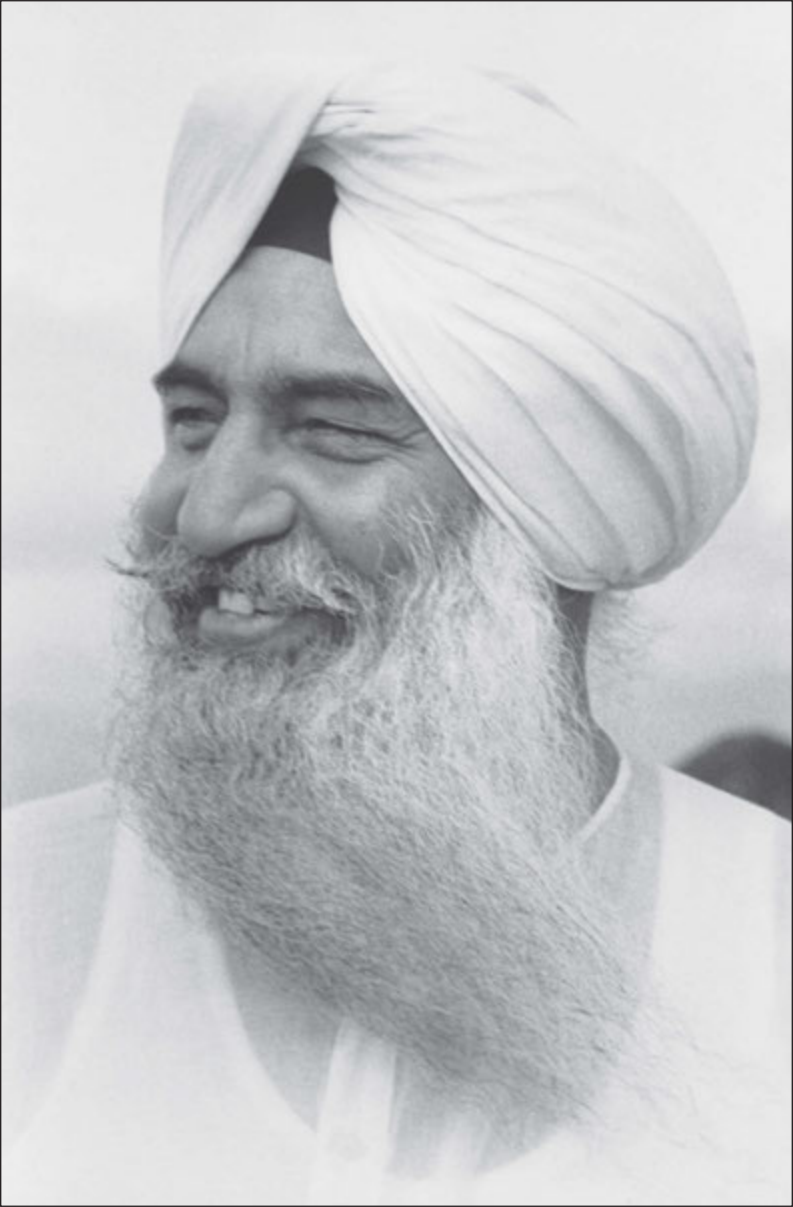
faculties are fully occupied when we meditate, the mind automatically is focused at the eye centre.

The established habit of the mind often causes the attention to wander from the repetition and contemplation to mundane matters. When this happens, like a dutiful soldier, we merely take up arms again and use the weapons of repetition and contemplation, and slowly but surely increase the periods of concentration, until we eventually dominate the mind and senses. In this way we will transcend both the happiness and misery of this world and enter the realm of eternal bliss and peace.



Leaving everything else aside, one must implicitly obey the Satguru of his own time, and faithfully follow his instructions. This will lead him to success. This is the long and short of everything.

Soami Ji, Sar Bachan



Maharaj Charan Singh

Finding the Treasure

When we were children we were enthralled by stories of treasure: perhaps the exciting pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, or the black pearl in the forehead of a temple idol. Even in adulthood, the movie hero Indiana Jones thrills us with his adventures, involving treasure chests, ancient tattered maps, jungles with wild beasts and evil forces protecting the hoard of precious jewels that an Indian Rajah might have owned. Exciting stuff.

In truth we have never lost our sense of excitement and challenge that the thought of seeking a treasure brought us as children. The only change now is in the nature and value of the treasure we seek. Our seeking is for the treasure of truth, and our search might even lead us through many old books and ancient texts, cryptic messages and notes written by persecuted monks or timeworn scrolls found in earthenware jars. Here a clue and there a clue, and there's great excitement in piecing all this together to try to make sense of it. And then, on an unforgettable day, we come across a Sant Mat book or someone tells us about a perfect living Master in India. 'When the chela is ready, the Guru appears,' is a common saying in India. At last we have found the map that leads to the treasure, and the first part of our search is over.

We all come to the path from different directions. Some of us almost fall into Sant Mat in spite of ourselves, while others, like Dr Julian Johnson, may have spent years searching. But we all relate to his feelings of elation at finding a true spiritual Master. Receiving the Master's initiation is the culmination of all the searching that has gone on before. It is the huge cross on the treasure map indicating the very spot where the treasure is buried. It now only remains for us to dig deep to uncover it.

But what is it that convinces us that our map is accurate and true? The effort we put in will bring the results we want – finding the ultimate truth which leads to God himself. And it is our association with the living Master, and the love that grows in us for him, that convinces us that we are on the right track.

In *Legacy of Love* there is a beautiful description of the Master:

No book can provide more than a sketch of who and what the Master really is. No photograph can show the nature of a glance from his eyes, the sweet sound of his voice, the power of his presence, the infectious quality of his laugh and smile.

Today, when Baba Ji is reaching out to us as a friend, perhaps we become a little familiar with him and forget his true identity. We see the man, taking part in worldly activities and fun, and perhaps, we sometimes forget to look past the man and remember his inner form, the Shabd.

Probably, most of us know very little about the Master, about who he truly is, for his real form is beyond our scope of experience. And all we know of his physical life are the snippets we glean from his trips around the world and our occasional visits to Dera.

We all have the same general idea, but small nuances that we pick up in the Master's talks, different items we read, little interactions we are sometimes lucky enough to have with him and, most importantly, our meditation open different doors in our understanding – which allow the rays of his light to pierce our hearts.

Irrespective of what form or action he chooses, he meets us at our own level so that he can interact with us at our degree of understanding. We should therefore never lose sight of who he really is or allow complacency and doubt to rob us of this most important thing in our lives – the Master and his spiritual path. Having found the Master and

accepted his teachings and initiation, it is now up to us to put in the effort to reach the X point on the map of truth and dig to uncover the inner treasure – divine love within our own self.

The Great Master tells us that the single most important factor in developing spirituality is the cultivation of love for the true Beloved. He says:

By the currents of love the entire atmosphere is charged with joy, and the spark of God's light is visible in love. Love, indeed, represents the very essence of God.

The Dawn of Light

Through our meditation we are undertaking an inward journey through successive planes of consciousness to hunt for the most precious treasure of all: a slow blossoming in our consciousness of the bliss and perfect joy that will come through our growing contact with the Shabd. This is a journey that will eventually bring us to the feet of our inner Master, whose form will dazzle us with a lustre and radiance greater than that of the most exquisite diamonds and pearls. As we sit, enraptured by his magnificence and drenched in his love, our souls will lose their desire for any earthly treasure because they will have found a spiritual wealth beyond all imagining.

Slowly, slowly, little by little as we keep digging, the wrappings of individuality will be removed until only the pristine kernel is left. When we unwrap that gem we experience the final and greatest of all treasures – the merging of our soul back into its source, and the restlessness in our hearts finally finds its rest in oneness with God himself.

What we search for is a treasure we already possess. The ultimate reality that God is within us, as is the radiant form of our Master who waits at the eye focus within. Could there be any greater treasure than this?

You Can't Stop the Waves

One way to envision how mindfulness works is to think of your mind as the surface of a lake or of the ocean. There are always waves on the water. Sometimes they are big, sometimes they are small, and sometimes they are almost imperceptible. The water's waves are churned up by the winds, which come and go and vary in direction and intensity, just as do the winds of stress and change in our lives, which stir up waves in our minds.

People who don't understand meditation think that it is some kind of special inner manipulation which will magically shut off these waves so that the surface will be flat, peaceful, and tranquil. But just as you can't put a glass plate on the water to calm the waves, so you can't artificially suppress the waves of your mind, and it is not too smart to try. It will only create more tension and inner struggle, not calmness. That doesn't mean that calmness is unattainable. It's just that it cannot be attained by misguided attempts to suppress the mind's natural activity.

It is possible through meditation to find shelter from much of the wind that agitates the mind. Over time, a good deal of the turbulence may die down from lack of continuous feeding. But ultimately the winds of life and of the mind will blow, do what we may. Meditation is about knowing something about this and how to work with it.

The spirit of mindfulness practice was nicely captured in a poster of a seventy-ish yogi, Swami Satchitananda, in full white beard and flowing robes atop a surfboard riding the waves off a Hawaiian beach. The caption read: "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Wherever You Go There You Are



Book Review

Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness

BY EVELYN UNDERHILL

PUBLISHER: NEW YORK: DUTTON, 1930

(12TH EDITION, OFTEN REPRINTED).

ISBN: 0525470735; 978-0525470731

(FREE ONLINE EDITIONS AT WWW.SACRED-TEXTS.COM AND
WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG)

Around 1905, Evelyn Underhill, a 29-year old English writer, unexpectedly had a mystical experience. She sought a mentor who could help her understand what she had experienced. When she failed to find anyone who could give her guidance, she turned to the writings of mystics. Her quest impelled her to delve into nearly a thousand different literary sources, many unpublished, some in non-English languages. In the process she completed a 500-page book on the subject, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, published in 1911.

This work remained the most widely read book on mysticism in the English language for 35 years. Not until the publication of Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* in 1946 did another work on the subject approach the significance of Underhill's classic. Her contribution to the understanding of mystical consciousness was lauded by many of the leading thinkers of the twentieth century, including Henri Bergson, T. S. Eliot, Thomas Merton, Alan Watts and Charles Williams. Indeed, an expert on the work observed in 2011 that "at the centennial of its publication, Underhill's *magnum opus* ... is still used in most courses that explore the experience of God called mysticism and still attracts contemporary spiritual seekers."

Mysticism is divided into two parts. In Part One, "The Mystic Fact," Underhill offers a basic description of mysticism, distinguishing it from psychology, theology, magic and occultism. She defines mysticism as "the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete

harmony with the transcendental order, whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood.” She writes,

“Come with us,” [mystics] say to the bewildered and entangled self, craving for finality and peace, “and we will show you a way out that shall not only be an issue from your prison, but also a pathway to your Home... At the apex of your spirit there is a little door, so high up that only by hard climbing can you reach it. There the Object of your craving stands and knocks; thence came those persistent messages – faint echoes from the Truth eternally hammering at your gates – which disturbed the comfortable life of sense. Come up then by this pathway, to those higher levels of reality to which, in virtue of the eternal spark in you, you belong.”

More simply, she asserts that “the business and method of Mysticism is Love.”

For Underhill, mysticism is a universal phenomenon; though she bases her work primarily on the writings of medieval European Catholic mystics, she also quotes Neo-Platonist, Protestant, and Sufi mystics – for example, Plotinus, Jacob Boehme, and ‘Attar.’ She would later write the Introduction to Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore’s 1915 translation *Songs of Kabir*.

In Part Two, “The Mystic Way,” Underhill attempts a portrait of the typical mystic experience, presenting it as composed of five progressive stages: (1) Awakening of the Self; (2) Purification of the Self; (3) Illumination of the Self, which includes stages of Introversion, Recollection, Contemplation, and Ecstasy; (4) the Dark Night of the Soul; and (5) the Unitive Life.

Awakening of the Self refers to the individual’s entry into the mystic way, when she or he realizes that there is a Reality beyond the everyday grind. Of the struggle this awakening sets in motion Saint Augustine wrote, “I was swept up to Thee by Thy Beauty, and torn away from Thee by my own weight.” Underhill says that some people experience this awakening but go no farther. For such a one, she says “The ‘heavenly door’ ... was ajar but not pushed wide. He peeped through it to the greater world beyond; but, unable to escape from the bonds of his selfhood, he did not

pass through to live upon the independent spiritual plane.”

For those going farther, Purification of the Self is necessary. Underhill quotes the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila: “The road on which we enter is a royal road which leads to heaven. Is it strange that the conquest of such a treasure should cost us dear?” And she quotes the eleventh-century Sufi al-Ghazzali:

[Mystics’] science has for its object the uprooting from the soul of all violent passions, the extirpation from it of vicious desires and evil qualities; so that the heart may become detached from all that is not God, and give itself for its only occupation meditation upon the Divine Being.

Underhill explains, “We ... live a sham life. We do not know ourselves; hence do not know the true character of our senses and instincts; hence attribute wrong values to their suggestions and declarations concerning our relation to the external world.”

Next comes the stage of Illumination of the Self. Underhill comments that countless mystics “have left us the record of their sojourn within.” Thirteenth-century Italian Jacopone da Todi sings, “Light without measure shines in my heart.” Thirteenth-century German Mechthild of Magdeburg speaks of “the flowing light of the Godhead.” And St. Teresa of Avila describes an “infused brightness, a light which knows no night; but rather, as it is always light, nothing ever disturbs it.” This stage of Illumination requires Introversion, Recollection and Quiet. As Meister Eckhart writes:

If a man will work an inward work, he must pour all his powers into himself as into a corner of the soul, and must hide himself from all images and forms, and then he can work. Then he must come into a forgetting and a not-knowing. He must be in a stillness and silence, where the Word may be heard.

Going deeper into contemplation is a matter of surrender. Jacob Boehme records a dialogue:

Disciple: *But how shall I comprehend it?*

Master: *If thou goest about to comprehend it, then it will fly away from thee; but if thou dost surrender thyself wholly up to it, then it will abide with thee, and become the Life of thy Life, and be natural to thee.*

Some mystics must pass through a fourth stage, the Dark Night of the Soul. Underhill writes, “Desolation and loneliness, abandonment by God and by man, a tendency of everything to ‘go wrong,’ a profusion of unsought trials and griefs – all are here.” St. John of the Cross explains:

The more clear the light, the more does it blind the eyes of the owl, and the more we try to look at the sun the feebler grows our sight and the more our weak eyes are darkened. So the divine light of contemplation, when it beats on the soul not yet perfectly purified, fills it with spiritual darkness... Such suffering is intense when the yet unpurified soul finds itself invaded by this cleansing light.

At last the pilgrim reaches the fifth stage of Unitive Life. Fourteenth-century German Henry Suso describes the soul that “has wholly renounced itself”:

He forgets himself, he is no longer conscious of his selfhood; he disappears and loses himself in God, and becomes one spirit with Him, as a drop of water which is drowned in a great quantity of wine. For even as such a drop disappears, taking the colour and the taste of wine, so it is with those who are in full possession of blessedness. All human desires are taken from them in an indescribable manner, they are rapt from themselves, and are immersed in the Divine Will.

Meister Eckhart says that God invites and challenges us to reach this state of union with Him: “Our Lord says to every living soul, ‘I became man for you. If you do not become God for me, you do me wrong.’”



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

