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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# Yours Affectionately

There is nothing to feel disheartened about. We are up against the mind, the mind that keeps all souls out of the focus. Kings, dictators, presidents, the commoners, and all are running outside the focus. Yogis, sanyasis, ascetics, and philosophers fail to catch it. War is the outcome of the mind running wild. Mind prevents the soul from rising up. It is the veil that hangs between our soul and our Creator. Now we have found it out, its true nature. It is our enemy. We are at war with it and we are to capture it. Guru, the experienced warrior and veteran, is guiding and supporting us. He has armed us with Nam – the sound current, the current that is finer than the mind current. So long as our attention holds the sound current, the mind is still; and as our hold on it gets firmer, the soul gets stronger and gains supremacy over the mind. In time the position is reversed – the mind becomes a faithful servant of the soul.

In our ignorance and weakness we strengthen the lower mind. The Master awakens the slumbering soul – develops in us our latent strength, through the practice of simran and Nam current, and makes us fight our weaknesses and overcome them here, thereby making us fit to enter the eye focus and go beyond. Step by step he brings us to the pitch that with the exception of the Guru and the Nam, everything else becomes a superficiality and ceases to have a hold on us.

When we are away from the Master and the satsang, the world imperceptibly impresses itself on us so much that, in spite of our regularly giving time to simran and Nam, we often begin to feel discouraged, dry, and desolate. In such a state faith and love are our support; and if faith is firm, the Master responds. He is always with us – within us – watches as a mother watches her child. So long as we are on this side of the focus, we do not see him working. But he is doing his duty.

Your worries and cares are Master's worries and cares. Leave them to him to deal with. Having become carefree, your business is to cultivate his love. He is not going to let you drift. You will go up.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



# Not From This World

There was once a pastor giving an impassioned sermon on death and final judgement. At one point, he forcefully said, “Each member of this church is going to die and face judgement.”

He glanced at the first row and among the attentive faces, he noticed a man with a big smile on his face. Pounding the table, he repeated his point even louder, “None of us in this church can escape death and final judgement!”

By now, almost everyone else in the congregation was looking sombre, but the man in front continued to smile. This really frustrated the preacher because he wasn’t getting the desired reaction from this gentleman. So he stepped off the platform, stood in front of the man and said, “I said each member of this church is going to die and here you are, grinning from ear to ear. Don’t you get it?”

The man, cool as a cucumber, replied with an even bigger smile, “It’s okay. You see, I’m not a member of this church.”

Whether or not we find the incident amusing, saints tell us that we are too engrossed in this world. We take our physical selves and what happens around us so seriously that invariably, we end up in a vicious cycle of compulsive worrying and over-thinking. They remind us that we are spiritual beings going through a human experience, not human beings aspiring to a spiritual experience.

It is true that constant stream of negative news doesn’t help our composure, as our computers and smart phones buzz with the latest updates of war thousands of miles away, or on the latest opinion poll on the political issue of the hour.

It is easy in this environment to forget that everything that happens around us and in our lives is the Lord’s will and that not a leaf stirs without his command.

The reality is that divine will is like a mighty river and we are like fish swimming in that river. The stubborn fish think they can control the flow of the river; that if they keep swimming in the direction they want to go, the river will change its course. But the river will flow the way it’s going

to flow. So the fish that choose to swim against the current remains in a state of perpetual struggle.

One would think these fish eventually learn their lesson and give in. But modern disciples are a unique species. We pretend to give up and go downstream with the river while complaining and being miserable. In the process, we blame the river and ask: “Why is this happening to me?”

Saints tell us that this is the story of every human being. We have a tendency to resist the will of the Lord and as long as we resist, we suffer. The river, on the other hand, loses nothing. Maharaj Charan Singh used to say that winter has to come and summer also has to come. If we do not prepare ourselves for the change of seasons, we will be the ones to suffer.

Perhaps our goal as disciples should be to develop spiritual stamina for the marathon of life, through our meditation, so that when a problem occurs we don't react out of emotion but respond with spiritual maturity.

At a practical level, all we can really do is to live in his will and to please him, which we can do only by practising surrender and gratitude by attending to our meditation.

A disciple once shared her feelings with her Master and he gave her the sweetest and simplest answer: “Sister, you think too much. Stop thinking so much. Just do your simran; meditate and take life as it comes.”

Meditation brings about positive change in our lives. Hazur Maharaj Ji used to say that by regularly attending to our simran and bhajan day after day, month after month, year after year, these positive human qualities appear in us automatically, like cream on milk.

Masaru Emoto, a Japanese author, once conducted an interesting experiment to see the effect of thoughts, words, vibrations and surroundings on the molecular structure of water. He exposed a glass of water to different words, pictures and music and then froze the water and examined the resulting crystals under a microscope. He saw that water exposed to a positive environment would result in visually pleasing crystals that looked like beautiful snowflakes. The water exposed to negative energy would yield ugly frozen crystal formations. With our body comprising 65% of water, we can see how thoughts, energy, reactions, and behaviour can affect our physical body and well-being. What would we like to be? A snowflake of gratitude, like the man in the front row of the

church who didn't react, or a messy blob trying to cope furiously with our web of karmas, unable to look past our own needs and desires?

“Fake it until you make it” is a popular saying that suggests that by emulating positive qualities, at some point, one genuinely imbibes the attributes required to achieve success. As seekers of spirituality, the next time we are caught in a river going downstream, we could say to ourselves: “Faith it until you make it.” Like the man in the front row, we can relax, smile from ear to ear and say: “It's okay, because I'm not from this world.”



*It is your effort that will change your mind from the negative to the positive. With effort and determination we can achieve many things in life. Our meditation is nothing but an attempt to acquire the positive gifts and get rid of the negative evils. Meditation gives mental strength and spiritual bliss, and enables us to face life with great hope and courage. We then know that we have a goal before us which we have to achieve and which will give us that bliss which nothing in this world can give us.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest For Light*



# Something to Think About

Of our companions – husband, wife, sons, daughters, other relatives and friends – none are good or bad. In fact, nothing in this world is bad. It is mankind's misuse or abuse and our own attitude towards things that make us miserable. Try to develop contentment and indifference. Be happy in what the Lord sends, do your duty with love and devotion, and take life as it comes. Pray to the Lord. He will help you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

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Although it is our bodies that make us human, it is our conduct that should exemplify the glory of humanity. According to Kabir, our souls are of the divine essence. Knowing that, we should radiate spirituality and preserve our heritage as spiritual beings. God is within us and we are in him. Human beings are hidden repositories of all the secrets of God's splendour, mirrors that reflect the light of God's perfection because our souls have their origin in God himself.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *My Submission*

\* \* \*

Work hard on the path shown by the Master. When the mind finds little apparent progress despite its labour, it grows restless and begins to feel pangs of separation from the Master. This develops into an intense longing and ardent love for him, which actually burns up all worldly desires, frees the soul from its shackles and makes it fit for mystic transport. This fervent love is the essence of all spiritual discipline and it is attained by faithfully carrying out the devout practices as explained by the Master at the time of initiation.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*



# Bhul Bhulaiya

In the ancient city of Lucknow, Northern India, there is a famous maze called Bhul Bhulaiya. It was built in the late 1700s by a generous Nawab who wanted to give employment to the hungry and the poor during an ill-fated famine. An architectural marvel, it has about 500 identical doors and staircases and about a thousand corridors connected to these doors – all indistinguishable from each other. It is an extremely challenging maze to explore on one's own without a guide.

Fascinating facts and trivia have been recorded in numerous travel and adventure books about Bhul Bhulaiya. One such fact is the illusions created by this structure. For example, there are stairs which seem to go up but actually go down. Another illusion is the way sound travels through the maze. Speak softly or whisper, and at some distance away, your voice is heard as if it were close by. At almost every turn of the maze, there is some optical or aural deception.

Maharaj Charan Singh would often take the example of this famous maze in his satsangs to emphasize the plight of our soul trapped in the cycle of transmigration, reincarnating from one body to another in an endless cycle of birth and death, unable to exit and find liberation. We are lost in one big maze of illusion.

The Masters have said that there is nothing more painful than being trapped in this cycle.

*To pass the entire round of 8,400,000 different forms of species would take the soul many yugas (aeons) to complete....*

*Actually, no words can describe the agony experienced by the unliberated souls as they travel, life after life, through the round of eighty-four. Thousands of them in animal bodies, are butchered every day. They keep crying out in anguish, but who pays any heed to their shrieks? What court is there to grant them justice?*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol. I

In *Tales of the Mystic East*, there is a story about a blind, bald man who was given a life sentence for a crime he committed. He was put in a specially built prison designed like a maze.



This prison had many false doors and only one real door that opened to freedom. As per the king's order, any criminal who found this real door could step through it and immediately gain liberation.

For days on end, the prisoner would carefully feel his way around the enclosed walls searching for the door to open up. But every time he would come in front of the exit door, he was distracted by an itch on his bald head. Every time he scratched his head, he missed the door to freedom.

*We are all prisoners in the vast prison of this world because of our karmas. We can escape from it only when our soul realizes the Lord. The gift of human life has been granted to us to enable us to escape from the cycle of recurring births and deaths. It is only in the human form that one has the unique distinction and honour of meeting the Lord.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *The Path*

Just as it is almost impossible to find the way out of Bhul Bhulaiya without a guide, it is impossible to escape the wheel of transmigration without a spiritual guide. A maze contains labyrinth-like passages, zigzag paths, blind alleys with dead-ends and plenty of traps. Similarly, saints and mystics have compared the inner path to an intricate and dangerous maze, and they teach us that the only way out is to go within the human body.

It would be amazing if we had a GPS app installed inside us like we have on our cell phones. The red icon would indicate our exact location in time and space. The system would lead us to a destination of our choice. The saints tell us we have something even better – a spiritual GPS – called the Guru Positioning System.

Just like an outer GPS that requires a strong signal to remain connected, we too need to connect with the Shabd so it can lead us to the realm of the spirit. After concentrated simran, when we turn to bhajan and start listening to the inner Sound, it gives us a sense of direction.

As we follow the Sound, we slowly disentangle ourselves from our body consciousness until we pierce the veil of darkness and are led to the inner Master. This marks the beginning of our escape from the maze of this never-ending existence of life and death. And this can only happen with the grace and guidance of our beloved spiritual guide.



# One Move

There was a boy who lost his left arm in a tragic accident. The boy struggled with depression and rarely left his house. One day the boy told his father that he would like to take judo lessons because he heard it was possible to learn judo with only one arm. The father, eager to do anything to cheer up his son, quickly agreed, and found a sensei to train him. While the boy learned some basic judo movements, most of the time his training sessions focused on one specific move which the judo teacher insisted that the boy learn perfectly.

After a couple of months, the judo teacher told the boy that he was going to be entered into a tournament. The boy responded with surprise. “Sensei, I don’t think I’m ready for a tournament.” But the sensei insisted. The day of the tournament came, and to the young man’s surprise he passed the first round and then the second. He passed the third round and couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t believe he made it to the finals and was about to face the state champion. At this point, he was sure that with only one arm and one move, he was going to be defeated, but again, to his surprise, he won! The boy turned to his instructor and said, “I don’t understand, Sensei; I have only been learning judo for a couple of months. I only know one move, and I only have one arm. Yet I beat the state champion. I won the tournament! Sensei, how is this possible?” The sensei turned and looked at the boy and said, “You won because of two reasons. First, the one move that you perfected is the most effective move in all of judo. The second reason is the only defence against that move is to grab the opponent’s left arm.”

In our spiritual training, the equivalent of our one-arm handicap is our karmic account. Our other basic movements such as seva and satsang can support us in our journey, but mastering our meditation practice is that single indefensible move that can help us reduce our karmic burden.

*The object of meditation is to destroy those karmas, to clear those karmas. Kabir says that if you have a big stack of hay, it takes only one match to burn the whole lot. Similarly, one little portion of Nam or Shabd, an atom of it, burns thousands and millions of our karmas. We actually burn or*

*destroy and rise above them, and do not make new ones in the process. These old karmas have relations with our mind. When, with the help of Nam or Shabd, our mind goes back to its origin, these karmas just drop down.*

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

Human life has many ups and downs, and every phase has its own challenges and difficulties. At our current level of consciousness, we employ physical and mental strength to navigate every challenge. Yet true Masters offer us a single-move solution to weather any storm by inviting us to rise above the limitations of mind and matter. The Masters explain that by meditating our mind becomes refined, matured, and we advance spiritually.

How long it takes to master that one move of meditation depends on our effort, which is determined by regularity and focus in our practice. The Masters remind us that we wouldn't have received the gift of initiation if we didn't have the capacity to engage in spiritual practice. Even if it's a lifelong struggle, our time horizon is the culmination of countless lifetimes. Given that we need to prioritize only that one move of meditation in our spiritual training and that we will receive the Lord's grace in proportion to our effort, if we persist in our practice, our success is assured.

*When a child starts running, how many times does he fall? How many times does he get bruises? But he rises again, gets up again, again starts running. We have all passed through that same phase, and now walking or running is no problem for us. So in the same way, we are tempted, and we do fall, we do become a victim of human failings. But that doesn't mean that we have to submit to the mind, that we have to lose the battle. We have to carry on. Ultimately, success is ours if we just struggle, just carry on.*

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

Like the judo student, we can surrender to our Master who teaches from his own experience that meditation is the only move required to progress and achieve success in our spiritual life. He knows from his own experience that this is the winning strategy for the tournament of life.

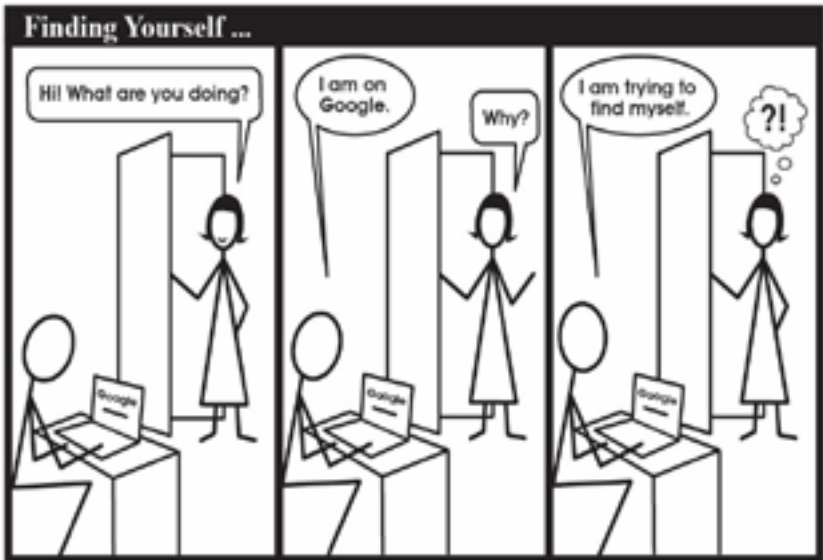
The mind may convince us otherwise and keep us busy in overthinking, but there's no other way to conquer the mind. As our soul is slowly released from the influence of the mind, it unlocks its greatest source of strength – love.

*There is one very special process. And that is the very special process. That is meditation. You see, meditation creates love. It strengthens love. It deepens love. It grows love. Ultimately, it illuminates you and it makes you God. That's all meditation. I can't suggest to you any bypass. There is no short cut or bypass. That is the only way.*

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



## SPIRITUALISTICKS®



# Did You Know?

The impediments in the way of spiritual progress are the worldly attachments and allurements. The soul is bound tight with the fetters of lust and greed, and the mind continually runs after one illusion or another. Soami Ji has enumerated the different kinds of chains that tie the soul to this world, prevent it from concentration at the Master's Feet within and from rising above its earthly abode. The first chain is that of body itself, the second of spouse, the third of children, the fourth of grandchildren, the fifth of great grandchildren, the sixth of wealth and possessions, the seventh of vanity and self-righteousness and the eighth of social customs, rites, rituals and the like. They all lead the soul astray, debase it and make it completely forgetful of the Creator. These strong chains can be cut asunder only by devotedly following the course outlined by a perfect adept. There is and can be no other way of escape.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

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No period can be fixed as to when the attention of any person will begin to stay within the focus. It depends upon the longing, faith, perseverance, and his past record. In this system, there are no rituals or customs to be observed. It is an inward path, and everyone has to go within himself, independent of others.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

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Whenever we are free, we should always be doing simran, whenever we can. The words are, even in a dream you should not forget the Lord which means that under no circumstances should you forget the Lord. In your daily activities you should not forget the Lord, you should not forget the teachings, you should not forget your simran and bhajan. In your daily activities with the world, under any circumstances, under any direction that you're working, you should not forget the teachings.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*



# The Experience of Faith

*Real faith you will be able to build up only by experience, and you get that real faith not with the whole experience, but with glimpses of experiences.*

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

Faith – complete trust and confidence – is crucial in our journey on the path of Sant Mat. It helps us to practise meditation regardless of what is going on in this turbulent world. We can face the most difficult tasks in life with the power of faith.

To escape the cycle of birth and death, the Masters have told us meditation is the only way. Meditation is what we just need to keep doing, whether our mind cooperates or not. We've been told that all we need to do is put in the effort and leave the results to him. On this path, we are asked to live an honest and moral life, to follow a vegetarian diet, abstain from alcohol, tobacco, mind-altering drugs and to sit in meditation for at least two and a half hours a day. All we need to do is obey these instructions and live in his will.

But how do we know that all this will help us? Is there proof or evidence of the Master's teachings? Do we have faith in what they tell us?

There's a story of a village that was suffering from a terrible drought. All the fields and rivers had completely dried up. To survive, villagers had to walk five miles a day to fetch water from the next village. It was such a painstaking journey that some even chose to pack their bags and move away.

One day, a prophet came and told all the villagers that he would make it rain so that everyone would have easy access to water. He told them to meet him the next morning in the open fields, where he would make it rain. The next day, the villagers gathered, eager to witness the miraculous rain. When they met the prophet in the field, he looked at all of them with a disappointed face and told them to go home and to come back the next day. Many were confused and started to wonder if the prophet was deceiving them.

Still, many villagers returned the next day, hoping to see rain from God. Again, the prophet looked at all the residents and then asked them to return home and to come back the next day. The villagers became annoyed. Some even cursed the prophet.

On the third day, villagers gathered in the field still hoping that they would get to see rain fall from the sky. This time the prophet looked sad and disappointed. He told the villagers: You have not come prepared for rainfall; that is why I have not made it rain. The crowds were confused. The prophet told the villagers, if you had faith that it was going to rain, you would have come here with buckets and umbrellas! The villagers wanted help but did not believe that they would actually get it. They wanted to see it rain before they believed.

We go on journeys by planes, trains, buses and cars, entrusting our lives in the hands of pilots and drivers we don't know and often never even see. We eat food at restaurants, trusting that the chefs are serving food that will not be harmful to us. This does not mean we have blind faith in them. We do our due diligence. We ride vehicles driven by qualified drivers, we seek out reputable restaurants. But still, even with all that due diligence, an element of faith is involved.

This intellectual faith is based on our experience traveling and trying out various restaurants. In life, we take one step at a time until we gain personal experience.

The Masters' teachings are based on their experience. We have to put their teachings into practice to gain our own experience. This is the only way to discover the truth that they speak of for ourselves. Unless we take that step daily and diligently to do our meditation, how can we know for sure? Through the practice of meditation, we will be able to transform our intellectual faith into glimpses of experiences.

Whether we realize it or not, meditation has a profound impact on us. It softens the blow of our karmas so many of the difficulties we experience in this world feel like pinpricks. We can't escape our karmas, but meditation helps us get through them. It changes our attitude and perspective towards life. It helps us to deal with all the ups and downs in this world without losing our balance too much. And in turn, our faith grows stronger. The ultimate grace of the Master is that he helps with our meditation. The Master is always by our side. All we have to do is put in the effort and leave the results to him.



# O My Master, Who Are You?

O my Master, who are you?  
From what exalted region do you come?  
From what endless waves of ecstasy?  
What luminous fields of bliss do you leave behind  
to enter the prison house of this dark plane,  
where one being eats another to stay alive,  
where every smile soon knows sorrow,  
and every light must have a shadow?

O my Master, what kind of love is this?  
You give up your freedom to soar infinity.  
You cage your boundless spirit  
in this heavy human form,  
so you can sit beside me on the curb  
in the city of my despair  
and tell me the story of a soul  
sent out so long ago  
from the Ocean of the One.

O my Master, what have you done?  
What sacrifices have you made?  
What treasures did you trade?  
What dreadful bargain did you strike  
on my behalf, to take me back?

O my Master, what kind of mercy is this?  
You give up your freedom to give me mine.  
You trade the heaven you have found,  
to set my soul in the Holy Sound.  
You ask nothing for your pain  
to lead me home to the One  
who ends my suffering.



O my Master, what can I do?  
How can I show my gratitude  
for the grace you shower on me?  
Let me follow perfectly  
the teachings that flow from your life,  
in an endless river of living light.

Let me listen with all my love  
to the Ringing Radiance within,  
that calls me back to where I was  
before this all began.



*You are quite right when you say that the Master rewards disciples according to the amount of effort they put in with the proper attitude. The more we strive on the path, the more help we receive from the Master. Those who do not make an effort of their own have no idea of the blessings that are being showered on us every day of our life. The rewards that are received by a disciple are far greater than one could ever expect or even dream of, and this realization comes only when we are doing our part of the duty. Then our heart is full of gratitude to the Master. Those who do not do their best in the spiritual practice and in living the life according to the high principles of Sant Mat belong to a class of sluggards who keep on expecting everything from the other party. Sloth has never achieved anything in any field of life. All good wishes for you in your sincere pursuit of the path.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



# The Deeper You Go

We all lead busy lives. There are hundreds of books published on how to enhance productivity. Due to increased exposure to technology, our attention span has deteriorated and the inner chatter of our mind together with our shortened attention span and other distractions hinder our focus.

How often, in the middle of a task, do we feel the urge to pick up our phone to see the latest text message or news update? Little do we realize that the information we are consuming is adding to the background noise in our mind. To be successful, it is essential to be laser-focused on what we are doing.

In a world full of distractions, deep focus, or being engrossed in a certain task, can help us achieve success. We're able to perform daily activities with full concentration thereby enhancing our productivity. With deep focus and attention, not only do we become more skilled, we start enjoying even mundane tasks. By practising deep focus, we enhance our ability to learn new skills and improve those skills.

This principle also applies to our meditation. Initially, there is a lot of noise and inner chatter in our mind, which prevents us from focusing during simran. When we sit for meditation, our mind starts to rebel. Or when we try to achieve deep concentration the mind gets distracted. This is natural because the mind's tendency is to run outwards.

The Masters explain the reason why we struggle with the mind. Our soul was originally pure but because of our desires and association with the mind, it has become impure and unclean. The mind in turn is ruled by the senses, and its attachments and consequent desires pull us down and keep us away from our true home. Hazur Maharaj Ji explains:

*You see, there is water in the clouds in the sky, but when it rains the water comes onto the ground. It merges into the dirt. It stagnates; it gives off a foul smell. It has forgotten its identity. It is thinking itself part and parcel of the dirt. But when a hot wind touches that water, it evaporates. Then it realizes: The dirt is something different from me; unnecessarily I was thinking of myself as part and parcel of this dirt. It realizes its own origin*

*– it is a cloud in the sky. It goes back and merges into the sky, the clouds.  
That is the condition of everybody's soul.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

We are like that water in the dirt, which has forgotten its identity and origin. The soul has forgotten its true home but we can take it back to its true source by deep meditation. So how do we do this deep meditation? It can't just happen in a split second; we need to adopt a different strategy. We need to dig deeper and with practice make focus our default mode.

*O heart, didn't the beloved tell you in all that was happening,  
"As much as you are emptying yourself, I am filling you with myself?"*

*Jalal al-Din Rumi*

With our practice of simran and bhajan, little by little, our meditation deepens and we gain some control of the mind, as we go through our karmas and become more detached from the world, with the help of the Master's grace and our obedience to his instructions. Eventually, he will reveal himself to us and make us realize that we are already one with him.

*Do not for a moment feel that you are once again back to where you were fifteen or twenty years ago. Meditation once done can never be lost, even though for some reason or other further progress is temporarily obstructed. Your efforts and achievements are there in reserve with the Master to be given to you manifoldly when the proper time arrives. Do your simran while sitting, walking, eating, resting and at any other time when you have no special work that needs concentration. Keep your simran during the day as just mentioned and also before going to and rising from bed. This way of simran would mean absolutely no strain, and then watch the effect.*

*Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light*



# Physical Separation from the Master

## An Explanation by Maharaj Charan Singh

When you are absolutely in love with the Master and there is physical separation, then probably your pain becomes more intense. But if that longing has not taken root and you go out of the Master's presence, you forget him.

We must have love and devotion for the Master. How it is created – whether by being in his company or by being separated – he knows best. The main idea is to create love and devotion in us. In some people it is created by constant company; in others a little separation is essential. How the Master creates that feeling of love and devotion in us depends upon the individual, but he has to fill us with love and devotion.

Christ also says, near his end, it is expedient for you that I leave, it is in your own interest that I leave now (16:7), because my physical body has created that love and devotion in you, but you are still running after me and do not try to seek me within yourself. When you don't find me outside, you will have no option but to turn within, because now you cannot live without me. So that may have been his way of creating love for the Father in them.

Bulleh Shah (Bullah) was forced to stay away from his Master for many years. His Master refused to see him. He said, you cannot see me, you cannot enter my abode. Bullah was deeply in love with his Master, and his Master wanted to purify him. He knew Bullah was to succeed him. He wanted to make Bullah like himself, so in this case the separation was the best way to do that. He knew best; ultimately Bullah became the Master. Bullah was the most beloved disciple of his Master, but he was forbidden to enter his Master's courtyard for many years prior to that.

Until the union, there is always separation in love, and that separation makes us miserable. Even if we meet the Beloved, there is always the fear of separation. That fear makes one still more miserable. So until there is complete union, it is very difficult to escape from the misery of separation.

*Light on Saint John*



# Waiting

Waiting or being patient is a virtue that is difficult to cultivate and understandably so. Today, with email, we don't have to wait for the mail to arrive when we want to hear from a loved one. We don't wait in line to pay our bills anymore because we can pay them online, we don't wait several hours for the laundry to dry, and we don't have to wait for stores to open to shop for our needs. But while the need to wait to complete our daily tasks has significantly reduced, when it comes to human development there is no instant solution. The process of our physical, mental and spiritual growth has to take its due course and being impatient doesn't make our development unfold any faster.

Never is this frustration so apparent as when we sit for meditation without getting any visible results. As practitioners on this path sometimes we feel like nomads; we live in the world but no longer find solace in it. On the other hand, we find comfort with our Master but do not know how to live in his presence. Learning to live in his presence requires practice and a lifetime of patience and perseverance. As we grow fonder of our Master, we also become more restless to be with him. We feel that by going to see him, by speaking with him or having his darshan, we will appease our longing and settle that impatience. But this is not the case. Seeing him only increases that yearning – it only fuels the fire of love.

The Master's grace is always flowing but we can fill ourselves with it only according to the capacity of our vessel. More often than not, our vessels are inadequate and cannot contain all that he gives us and we end up dissatisfied and restless.

The most important thing to remember is that it is only through spiritual practice that we can expand the vessel of our hearts. This expansion will grant us the capacity to contain this love. Love is painful and demanding; staying away from the Beloved can be very painful while being with him demands sacrifice. It is only through meditation that we learn to channelize our emotions and use them to strengthen our practice, otherwise it is easy to get disheartened and give up in frustration.

Our Master's love, however, is not something that one can easily give up – once tasted, it urges us forward to seek it in its entirety, no matter what price we may have to pay for it.

*Farid, the path is muddy and the house of my Beloved is so far away. If I go out, my blanket will get soaked, but if I remain at home, my heart will be broken.*

*Sheikh Farid*

The game of love is one of practice and waiting. It takes time for the heart to be able to withstand the presence of the Beloved. As Farid says:

*What intellect can dare to dream of Your perfection? Where is there an eye worthy of beholding Your beauty? Suppose You removed the veil, where is there a soul to bear Your glory?*

It is said that when visitors or disciples came to Sheikh Farid for a blessing, he often blessed them with the words: “May God grant you pain.” For some visitors, this must have seemed like a strange blessing, but it is this pain of love, the pain of longing and waiting for the Beloved, that has the power to push us forward on this path.

We may complain, wail and moan, but we have to remember that it is our practice that will grant us the power to understand this pain of longing and see it through to its culmination. Even if it requires an entire lifetime of waiting, it is well worth it.

The Master will fulfil his promise of uniting us with himself. He knows how to tug and pull at our hearts and keep us moving forward – we just have to submit to the Lord’s will and give it time. He has already given himself to us wholeheartedly and nothing can change that – it is time we do the same and dedicate this last leg of our journey to living, and dying while living, in order to attain him.

*I wish to turn into dust  
and find my abode under Your feet;  
I wish to live in union with You.  
I am weary of both worlds  
and my sole purpose here is You –  
to live for You and die for You.*

*Sheikh Farid*



# Our Altitude

*This, then, we must realize: The human body is an extremely precious possession. Each breath that comes and goes is so invaluable that the wealth of seven continents and treasures of the seven seas fail to buy it. He who barter away his life in the human body in exchange for the dross, the sense pleasures and other worldly objects, is the most pathetic of fools.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol. I

The saints urge us to seek self-realization while in this human body. Even the angels cannot unite with the Lord. Self-realization is not to be confused with self-improvement. When we visit a bookstore and go to the self-improvement section, there are hundreds of books advising us on how to become richer and more powerful and how to influence people and achieve better performance, including worldly name and fame. This is all guidance to make the mind stronger and more influential.

The self in self-improvement refers to the mind but the self in self-realization is the soul. No matter how worthwhile and encouraging self-improvement books seem, when people say that this stuff is pure Sant Mat, they could not be more wrong.

Sant Mat requires us to control and subdue the mind and withdraw it from the world. Self-realization aims to end the dominance of the mind by bringing it in touch with the divine sound current and awakening the soul. Self-improvement is about making the monkey mind a more powerful monkey.

The saints say that we should think that we are nothing, that we do not exist. Self-improvement gurus want us to tell ourselves we are great; we can achieve anything.

We are trying to raise the seat of our consciousness from throughout our entire bodies to one single point, to the eye centre. This is the supreme task of changing our *altitude* and has nothing to do with adjusting our attitude.



# The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with  
Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *How can we tell the difference between love that comes from the soul and love that comes from the mind in regard to spirituality?*

A: Well, first, the mind will feel love. Actually, it is that love of the mind which is the love and devotion you feel for the Lord in the beginning. It comes in the mind and ultimately, when the soul leaves the mind, then it is the real love of soul for the Lord. So when you are able to withdraw your consciousness to the eye centre and be in touch with the spirit, then your mind will be filled with love and devotion for the Father. And that love and devotion for the Father, in the mind, helps the soul to get released from the mind, and that will be the real love and the real devotion of the soul. Real love and devotion of the soul means that the soul is able to merge back into the Creator. The characteristic of love is to lose one's own identity and to become one with the being that is loved. So the soul merges into the Father, becomes one with the Father. That is the real love of the soul. But it has to start with the mind.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

Q: *Can we visibly ascertain whether we're ready or not for initiation? Some of us seem to be in such terrible disrepair when we come to the Master.*

A: Nobody is initiated unless he has to be initiated. Neither the disciple has any choice, nor the Master has any choice. All souls belong to the Father, and the Master is engaged only to collect those souls, to bring them back to the Father. They don't belong to the Master. They belong to him who has marked them for a particular shepherd. So when the shepherd whistles, all who are marked for him automatically flock around him.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*



Q: *I want myself to surrender absolutely and unconditionally to the Master, but I do not know how to develop this absolute love and devotion for the Master, because I find that sometimes I am not as much devoted to the Master as I ought to be, although I want to be exclusively devoted to the Master. What should I do for that?*

A: Well, brother, the main question is: how to strengthen our love. The only way to strengthen love is by meditation. There's no other way, because the love which we get by experience cannot be compared to any other type of love. Intellectual love is all right. Emotional love, which is influenced by other people, is all right. Any type of love is all right, but nothing can surpass the love of your own experience; and for that experience, meditation is necessary. You can build love and devotion only through meditation, not otherwise. Meditation builds everlasting love, and that is building on a rock, and not on sand.

*Die to Live*

Q: *If a disciple has made very little progress but has definite faith that his Master is perfect...*

A: Well, brother, this faith does not come without meditation. If you are trying to find a solution, that without meditation you can get all these things, it is impossible. Real faith you can never build without meditation. This intellectual faith many times you build, and many times it is destroyed. But once you see the Radiant Form of the Master within and you make spiritual progress, then even if the whole world tries to dissuade you from the path, you will not leave the path. That is faith. Faith does not mean the intellectual faith that we generally try to build and think that there is no need for meditation. Without meditation you cannot get real faith. Intellectual faith can be deceptive. Faith gained from experience is the main thing. Then if the whole world is against you, you are not shaken. You do not bother about public opinion. This faith you can get only through experience, not through the intellect.

*Light on Saint John*



# Adjusting Our Sails

The sea is vast and seemingly endless. Anyone who has been on a ship or looked at the horizon from a beach can relate to this perception. Imagine the time when sea routes from one continent to another were not yet discovered. Explorers set out on voyages to discover unknown lands. Many of these attempts failed. Some had mishaps and some ended up in unexpected places. As an example, Christopher Columbus sought a western sea passage from Europe to India and instead came to West Indies. It was another explorer, Vasco Da Gama, who discovered the correct sea route to India, linking Europe to Asia through a sea route.

The spiritual path is a similar one; vast and seemingly endless. Not everyone is able to navigate its vastness and get to the right port. A true living master is like a captain who has travelled the seas and has a map to the port of our final destination, our true home. Fortunately, we, as seekers, do not have to discover the route, as someone whom we can place our faith in already knows the way. Instead, we have to find this someone – a Master, and become a sailor on his ship.

*There are so many obstacles in the way. There are so many temptations to lead us astray. Unless there is somebody to guide us and keep us straight on that path, we can never travel on it. This is what we know outside. Internally, it is even more difficult to travel without a right guide, without a proper teacher. There are so many temptations inside. We find so many stumbling blocks when we concentrate and come here, at the eye centre, to follow our spiritual journey inside. Without a guide we will be lost.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. 1

Many of us do not know of the existence of a spiritual path much less a Master. We are born unaware and spiritually blind. It is the Lord who draws us to himself through a Master – we do not choose him. Each of us recognizes our own Master at the right time through our own individual circumstances.

*When we are really sincere within ourselves – we want to follow the path but are worshipping the Lord by a wrong method, not the right sort of meditation – it is for the Lord to put us on the right path. What we need is*

*a real yearning and devotion for him. Then it is his responsibility to work out how to put us on the path. He has his own ways and means of bringing people to the path, whatever country they belong to, or in whatever country they take their birth. He knows how to draw those souls.*

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

The Master takes us on-board by initiating us and teaching us the method of meditation, just as a captain teaches a sailor how to navigate the seas. In the course of a voyage, the vessel may encounter powerful winds and turbulent tides. A sailor cannot control the direction of the wind, but he can adjust the sails. When a sailor stops doing this and gives up, he is at the mercy of the sea and can end up anywhere. In our everyday lives we experience many such forces. Letting ourselves get carried away takes us farther away from our true destination or even leads us to an unknown, unintended destination. In response to these pulls of the world, we have two choices. The first is to go with the flow and let the tides take us where they may; the second is to obey our Master and adjust our sails until we reach our true destination.

*You see, that obedience will lead to concentration. The Sant Mat way of life will lead you to concentration and your progress. That is the foundation on which you have to build. The way of life is the foundation on which you have to build your meditation.*

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

Once we are sailors on the ship, we do as the captain instructs. Similarly, we place our faith in the Master's navigation by doing our meditation. Just as one can never reach port without sailing, we cannot reach our true home without doing our meditation. Meditation is the steam, the force that powers and steers the ship of Nam. The sea can be rough, the tides high, and the winds stormy but a high-powered ship can cruise along and reach its destination.

Every moment we spend in meditation takes us closer to our true home. Just as tides and winds can carry away a drifting ship, the ways of the world can lead us astray. To be successful in this voyage, we must have faith in the Master's navigation, adjust our sails and practise meditation sincerely and faithfully.



# Open Your Heart

*His grace is always there, but we do not open our heart to receive it.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

William Holman Hunt's famous painting "The Light of the World" depicts Jesus Christ holding a glowing lantern and knocking on an old wooden door. The lack of an exterior door handle shows that the door can be opened only from the inside.

The door represents our hearts. Saints and mystics say that our hearts have been closed to the Lord since creation. Those of us who follow a spiritual path may find this difficult to believe. After all, what else do our efforts in adhering to the Sant Mat principles, attending satsang and engaging in seva signify but our attempt to open our hearts to the creator?

Maharaj Charan Singh once gave the following example: The Niagara Falls carries water in abundance, yet the one who comes with a thimble will receive only a few drops. If someone comes with a cup or a big bowl, he will get proportionately more. But the one who puts a bucket under the falls, can draw water abundantly. It is not a question of whether the Lord's grace exists, but rather our receptivity to it.

Each spiritual practitioner comes to the Master with a different level of receptivity or spiritual preparedness. Seekers who are more receptive are able to more easily imbibe the teachings and spiritual guidance of their Master.

Once a Sufi saint, Bahaullah, visited another saint, Fariduddin, to receive spiritual guidance. Bahaullah gained the wisdom imparted to him in a very short span of time. This resulted in jealousy among some of Fariduddin's disciples, who even accused their Master of favouritism. Fariduddin then told his disciples that Bahaullah was like dry wood – ready for ignition and highly combustible, while the rest of them were like wet wood – slow to catch fire.

While some of us are able to make the necessary sacrifices and follow the discipline of a spiritual path right away, others need to be slowly weaned away from their previous habits. How do we improve our receptivity as disciples?

Between the Master and disciple, there is a channel of giving and receiving. The channel of giving which constitutes the Master's teachings, guidance and constant flow of grace, is always open. We have to ensure that the channel of receiving is not blocked. We do this by listening intently to the Master's teachings, following his instructions for how to do daily meditation faithfully and remaining in complete obedience to him.

*Meditation makes us receptive, enables us to receive the Lord's grace. Meditation is nothing but to make us receptive. He is always giving, always giving. He's more anxious to give to us than we are prepared to take, and meditation makes us receptive to receive his grace. There's no other way which can make you receptive to receive his grace, only meditation.*

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

Saints and mystics have come to awaken in us the desire for God-realization. They have been continually knocking on the door of our hearts, urging us to fulfil our singular purpose of coming to this world, which is union with the Lord. But we do not pay heed to their teachings. We close our hearts to them but remain open to the world with its riches, attractions and attachments.

At times, we may feel dry and empty during our meditation. We find it difficult to focus and feel we are going nowhere. We are advised not to analyze our meditation. That dryness does not mean that we have no love; rather it shows that we are trying to be receptive to his love by being obedient to him. All that is asked of us is that we show up regularly and punctually and sit in meditation, whether the mind cooperates or not.

In worldly relationships, when we open our hearts to each other, it means we don't hold anything back. We are vulnerable and responsive. Similarly, opening our hearts to the Master means that we become receptive to the Lord's grace, which is considered the basis of all spiritual attainment on the path of devotion. It is through his grace that the blessed moment will arrive when we open our hearts to the Master and allow us to walk through the door and behold his Radiant Form.



# No Room for Intellect

Growing up, as we learned and gained knowledge about this world, we were encouraged to ask questions. We developed curiosity and our questions were rewarded with more knowledge. In school, at work, in all our worldly dealings, asking the right questions almost always led to finding answers that helped us grow.

Being conditioned as curious beings, we naturally carry over our habit of questioning as we walk on the spiritual path. We read books, attend satsangs and hear the words of the Master to help quench our thirst for knowledge. We try our level best to understand what the path is about and the commitment that we would have to make should we choose to walk down this road. We are told that the truth can be found – all we have to do is follow one simple instruction: meditate.

Our doubting mind finds this answer difficult to accept. It cannot be that simple. How can all the answers of the universe be found in meditation? How can we possibly end the age-old debates that plague us? In an attempt to find some solace, we take our doubts and questions to the Master. We quote the books we've read, the satsangs we've heard and the answers he has shared with other seekers, and we beg him to shed some more light on the concepts that we find difficult to understand. Sometimes, we receive replies that satisfy us. Sometimes, we're left with more questions.

The Masters have never discouraged us from asking questions. They welcome our curiosity. They've pushed us to ask all that we must to satisfy our intellect before we make any decisions. But do we ever consider that maybe spirituality is a path where the mind and intellect have to take a back seat?

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna explains: “The senses are superior to the gross body, and superior to the senses is the mind. Beyond the mind is the intellect, and even beyond the intellect is the soul.” In this verse, it is clearly stated that we need to rise above the body, the senses, the mind and even the intellect. The soul, which is the subject of spirituality, is above all the other faculties. It is part of the infinite ocean of love and energy and therefore can never be explained by the finite. How can our minds grasp spirituality when spirituality dictates that we leave the mind behind?

We need to come to a point where we surrender our mind and intellect to the Lord and allow him to lead our soul back home. The more we analyze and struggle to understand, the less we will grasp. Lord Krishna imparts this knowledge to Arjuna when he explains:

*Fix your mind on me alone and surrender your intellect to me. There upon, you will always live in me. Of this, there is no doubt.*

The function of the intellect is to think, analyze and discriminate. The goal of spirituality is to learn how to surrender. In the book *Concepts and Illusions*, the author beautifully explains how the Master teaches us to surrender.

*He (the Master) anchors us through confusion. While the others say, anchor yourself to remove the confusion, the Master says the opposite: get confused and then you will be anchored. He confuses us to a point where we finally, through sheer exhaustion, drop this mind and say, "Okay, have it your way! I give up." And that is precisely the moment he is waiting for, for us to give in. That's why he encourages us to question. He wants us to reach a point of surrender.*

So long as we rely on our intellect to understand the spiritual path, the mind will be in turmoil trying to make sense of things. There comes a point when a disciple gives in and surrenders. When he sincerely begins to follow the path, there are no more questions. When the mind surrenders to the Master in absolute faith, there is only calmness and serenity.



# True Happiness

The saints say that we are spiritual beings going through a human experience. In short, we have in us a divine spark that seeks its source, like a drop seeking to return to the ocean.

This explains why we are restless and constantly pursuing happiness in different ways. But happiness that is derived from worldly pursuits is fleeting and temporary. We may have a desire; we pursue it, obtain it and are happy for a while. But after some time, we find ourselves going after something else. We soon discover that worldly pleasures are short lived, and that most physical desires come with complications that eventually bring some form of misery.

*If we could be truly happy in this world nobody would ever even think about the Lord. You know the Lord may give us anything in this world. Go to the richest people in the world, go to the healthiest man in the world, go to these politicians who command the whole world – are they happy? Perhaps they are more miserable than we are. We often sleep six or seven hours or more at night, but they have to depend upon pills, tranquilizers. No one can ever be really happy without meeting the Lord, without merging back into him. Unless our soul goes back, merges back into the Lord, we will never get that peace of mind, that happiness, nor can we be carefree or save ourselves from the cycle of birth and death. But for that, nobody would search for him; and that is why we seek him, our source.*

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

The saints therefore advise us to look for happiness beyond what the world offers. The process of searching will elevate our minds. It will force us to think about the meaning of our existence and how we relate to the Supreme Being. It will make us reflect on our soul, our purpose in life and the validity of the religious beliefs we may have held since childhood.

If our search for the Lord is sincere and our quest to seek the truth earnest, we will be led to a spiritual path. When we feel an ardent desire to know the truth, when we sincerely yearn to meet the Lord, we will be led towards a teacher who will guide us to our true home. When the disciple is ready, the Master appears.



*Having now found the Master, what next? Follow him with unwavering faith and determination. In other words, after you have once accepted a man as a Master, accept his formula also and work it out with absolute fidelity. If you run up against many problems which cause your boat to rock, hold a steady hand upon the oars of self-mastery and wait while you work. At first there will be puzzling questions. At times you may be inclined to say outright, "I cannot believe it." But just hold such things in reserve and wait. Do not jump at conclusions. Let them come to you. Wait and work. By and by, your questions will answer themselves; you will be surprised how very easily. When the light becomes strong, the darkness vanishes.*

*The Path of the Masters*

Through the guidance of the Master, the disciple learns the technique of withdrawing his consciousness from his body up to the eye centre where he comes in contact with the sound current. When a disciple practises this meditation sincerely and regularly, he begins his journey back to his true home.

Through his spiritual practice the disciple realizes that the only way the divine drop can find its home in the ocean is through meditation. There is no other way. While it is a simple process, progress is naturally slow, though steady. The Masters explain that turning the attention from the world and its objects to the eye centre takes time as our attention has been running outward for several lifetimes, so one must be patient and continue to persevere. Hazur Maharaj Ji explains the importance of meditation and how it detaches us from the temporary pleasures of the world:

*In order to go back to the Father, we have to withdraw our consciousness back to the eye centre. The more we concentrate at the eye centre, the more we will be in touch with that divine light and divine melody within. The more we enjoy that divine light and divine melody within, the more we start withdrawing from the attachments of the creation. Attachment to the divine melody automatically creates the feeling of detachment from the senses, detachment from the creation. Only attachment can create detachment in us. Detachment can never create attachment in anyone.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

It is in this slow and seemingly difficult practice of meditation that we find the true and lasting happiness that we seek. As we sit in the darkness, stilling our mind and deepening our concentration, the Lord's grace enables our transformation. Like cream coming off heated milk, we develop inner strength and positive qualities such as patience, equanimity and contentment. Our disposition then becomes more peaceful, harmonious and balanced, allowing us to meditate with consistency and depth.

*But definitely meditation helps us to get that peace, bliss and contentment from within. We don't get easily upset. We take life easier and accept God's will as life comes.*

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

Over time, as we persevere in our effort, our love and devotion for the Lord grows. We are no longer restless; we learn to be content with whatever comes our way. With full trust in the almighty, we continue with our meditation despite the karmic challenges that arise knowing that ultimate bliss awaits us and it is only a matter of time until the drop merges with its beloved ocean.

*The time has now come for single-minded devotion to your spiritual practice and living your life according to Sant Mat principles. Continue your simran and bhajan regularly and as you move on the inner path you will see much more beautiful things within you. You will attain true happiness and bliss through meditation only and will have experiences which will be beyond description.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



# Kintsugi

A Japanese legend traceable to the 15th century tells the story of a shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimasa, who sent a broken vessel (often described as a tea bowl) away for repairs to China. When he received it back, the bowl was held together by unsightly metal staples. Although he could still use it, the shogun was disappointed. Still hoping to restore his beloved bowl to its former beauty, he asked a craftsman to find a more elegant solution.

The craftsman, inspired to find a more elegant solution, mended every crack in the bowl with a lacquer resin mixed with gold. When the tea bowl was returned to the shogun, there were streaks of gold running through it, telling its story, and adding to its value and beauty. This method of repair became known as kintsugi, where kin means gold and tsugi means joinery.

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold. It is built on the idea that in embracing flaws and imperfections, you can create an even stronger, more beautiful piece of art. Every crack on a piece of pottery is unique; the 400-year-old technique highlights the cracks as a part of the design. By adding gold, the worth of the pottery increases. Kintsugi, therefore, is a metaphor for the beauty that lies in imperfection. Kintsugi turns a broken piece of pottery into something unique, beautiful, and resilient.

Similarly, this human birth is a culmination of our karmas, the consequences of our past actions, in which we go through the trials and tribulations of life. Even if we live a life of privilege, we are not immune to pain, loss or sickness. Our life is filled with imperfections, and there is a need for kintsugi to add value to this human birth. How do we embrace our life with its difficulties and problems? How do we make our life beautiful and unique?

*All these trials that come to us in life, if taken in the proper spirit, as a satsangi should take them, will develop strength of character and make one throw himself absolutely at the feet of the Satguru within. On the other hand, they may also discourage us and make us unhappy, which reveals to us our own weakness.*

*I am sorry I do not appreciate your attitude of being fed up with life and having no interest in it. Life was given to us for a definite purpose and that,*

*as a satsangi, you know well. It was given to us in order that, by complete surrender to the Satguru and daily spiritual exercises, we might be joined to Shabd and rise above this valley of tears. That is a privilege which nobody can take from you unless you yourself, in a fit of petulance or despondency, give it up or cease to make use of it. Even then, no satsangi's life is hopeless. But the road is much easier for us if we do our bit.*

*You have to take care of your worldly duties and give as much time to bhajan and simran as you possibly can, and then leave the other matters to the Satguru. When one has thus surrendered himself to the Satguru, why should he worry? For by heeding his advice, the adverse karmas which stand in the way will also be mitigated to a great extent, and their force will be lessened.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

As followers on the spiritual path, the kintsugi in our karma-loaded imperfect lives is our meditation. Meditation illuminates us and despite the hard knocks we go through, over time we become resilient. With meditation, it becomes easier for us to accept change. Like the gold that increases the strength of the cup, meditation gives us courage to face the ups and downs of life.

Kintsugi also relates to the Japanese philosophy of Mushin (no mind), which encompasses the concepts of non-attachment, acceptance of change, and fate as aspects of human life.

The concept of mushin, of non-attachment and accepting change, is very similar to the teachings of the saints, which instruct us to live in the present and not become obsessed with worldly relations and possessions, as these are temporary. Change is a part of the karmic cycle that we must learn to accept. Through meditation, we attune our consciousness to the Shabd so that we can rise above the changes of life and accept them in a positive spirit.

Meditation like kintsugi adds purpose to our human life, making it beautiful, as we understand the reason of our existence and are able to identify with our inner self. Just as kintsugi makes a broken piece of pottery valuable, so does our meditation add immense value to this human birth as we embark on the journey to our true home, with the guidance of a true living Master.



# Heart to Heart

One book that Maharaj Ji has particularly close association with is *Spiritual Letters*, a collection of inspiring letters written by Baba Ji Maharaj to Maharaj Sawan Singh. These were the letters which the Great Master said he cherished as his only scripture. Maharaj Ji sometimes relates how the letters came into book form. A day or two before the Great Master made his will, he handed over a beautiful jewel chest lined with velvet to Maharaj Charan Singh Ji. Before parting with the box, he raised it to his forehead and kissed it with reverence.

The Great Master's eyes were moist and he said to Maharaj Ji, "My son, this is my rarest and most precious treasure. Today I am handing it over to you – treasure it with love and care." This casket contained the letters written by Baba Ji Maharaj to the Great Master during the days he was a disciple and are of great spiritual and historical value.

Maharaj Ji said: "I little realized at that time how precious the gift was and what a fund of esoteric knowledge of Sant Mat it contained. But as I went through the letters in later years, I was deeply impressed with their profundity and practical character and felt that this great gift must be shared with as many satsangi brothers and sisters as possible, not only in our country but also abroad."

During the Great Master's time, on the persuasion of Dr. Johnson and a few satsangis at the Dera, the Great Master released eleven of Baba Ji's letters and they were printed in Punjabi and Hindi. They were also translated into English and circulated among Western satsangis. In 1952/53, Miss Louise Hilger, during her long stay at the Dera, heard about the letters and took Maharaj Ji's permission to have them read out and translated to her. With the Master's permission, Prof. Jagmohan Lal Bhatnagar translated the letters to Miss Hilger and she noted them down in shorthand. Later, in response to her keen desire to share the letters with the growing number of English-speaking satsangis, the Master permitted them to be printed. He also allowed them to be printed in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and other Indian languages.

*Heaven on Earth*



# BOOK REVIEW

## Essential Sufism

EDITED BY JAMES FADIMAN AND ROBERT FRAGER. FOREWORD BY HUSTON SMITH

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In his foreword to this volume the late Huston Smith, a renowned scholar of comparative religion, describes Sufis, the mystics of Islam, as “the impatient ones. They want God now – moment by moment, day by day, in this very life. And they are willing to undergo the disciplines that make that possible.” He explains that there are three modes of finding union with God across all religious traditions – ecstasy, intellection or sobriety, and love. Sufis are known for and honour all three – but mostly practice the third. For him love for God is the main theme of the book.

The book itself begins with a 31-page introduction to Sufism through the eyes of Sheikh Raghib Robert Frager Al-Jerrahi, a modern sheikh (spiritual master) and one of the editors. He explains how Sufis progress through four stages – shariah (religious law), tariqah (the mystical path), haqiqah (Truth), and marifah (Gnosis). Sufism teaches how to develop a “heart that can pray” and thus gain the three great blessings given those who love God – islam (submission), iman (faith), and ihsan (beneficence, doing good, awareness of God, worshipping God as if you see him). This progress requires constant effort, but the results lie in God’s hands.

*This is true both spiritually and materially. Many people work diligently, but not everyone who works becomes a millionaire. But some do, if God wills. By the same token, some people do become successful on the spiritual path and reach the level of constant awareness of God.... Some people reach this final spiritual state in forty days, others in forty years. And for some, a whole lifetime of effort is not enough. The best path is to let go and surrender to God’s will.*

The remainder of the book is an anthology of sayings, prayers, fables, and parables from Sufi teachers, from medieval to modern, including Ibn Arabi, al-Ghazzali, Hafiz, Attar, and Rumi. The editors assembled these, often with their own rewordings, from published translations.

The twenty-three chapters of the book are arranged in eight parts, each part addressing a fundamental aspect of the Sufi path: The Many Faces of Sufism, Living in the World, Love and an Open Heart, Sufi Teachers, Sufism in Action, In Touch with the Divine, Faces of the One, Transformation. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction by the editors.

In the first chapter, The Sufi Way, a quote from al-Ghazzali explains that Way:

*The Sufis do not abandon this world, nor do they hold that human appetites must be done away with. They only discipline those desires that are in discordance with the religious life and the dictates of sound reason.... They know the true value and function of everything upon the earth. They nourish their bodies and simultaneously set their hearts free. God becomes the focal point toward which their whole being leans. God becomes the object of their continual adoration and contemplation.*

The chapter The World, Mirror of the Divine quotes Jami:

*When you see beauty and perfection in this world, it is nothing but a sign of Him. A beautiful creature is merely a single blossom from the vast garden of God. But remember that a picture fades, a flower dies, and the reflection in the mirror is eclipsed by the real Light. It is God who is real and remains so forever. So, why waste your time over something that is here today and gone tomorrow? Go directly to the Source without delay.*

The chapter Lower Self is especially rich in insights. Nafs in Arabic, translated as “self,” “ego,” “essence,” or “breath,” is generally used in the sense of “that which incites to wrongdoing,” or “Commanding Self.” The nafs, however, can evolve through seven stages from complete self-centeredness to pure spirituality: the Commanding Self, the Regretful Self, the Inspired Self, the Contented Self, the Pleased Self, the Self Pleasing to God, and the Pure Self. A favoured metaphor among the Sufis for the lower self is the feet of the peacock. A peacock feels great joy on spreading out its beautiful feathers. “But as soon as it looks down at its own feet, it becomes embarrassed.” For human beings the peacock’s foot is our lower self, the “black spot of ignorance that always stays” with us. Awareness of this lower self is beneficial for the Sufi practitioner, as Samani points out:

*I saw my lower self in the form of a rat. I asked, “Who are you?” It replied, “I am the destruction of the heedless, for I incite them to wickedness. I am the salvation of the friends-of-God, for if it were not for me, they would be proud of their purity and their actions. When they see me in themselves, all their pride disappears.*

In the chapter Love, a quotation from Muzaffar links love and gratitude: “Love is to see what is good and beautiful in everything. It is to learn from everything, to see the gifts of God and the generosity of God in everything. It is to be thankful for all God’s bounties.” The all-consuming quality of

love manifests in Rabi'a's answers to two questions. When asked, "Do you love God?," she answered, "Yes." When asked, "Do you hate the devil?," her answer was, "No, my love of God leaves me no time to hate the devil."

A precious quote from Rumi starts out the chapter Teachers and Students: "The true teacher knocks down the idol that the student makes of him." Another quotation makes a point well-known among Sufis, that mercy is often disguised as cruelty – just as physicians of the body often use painful methods to cure disease, so do the physicians of the soul, the mystic teachers. And it shows how we readily mistake painful treatments as not cures but afflictions.

*An ailing king summoned a physician-sage to treat his illness. The sage refused to come. The king had his soldiers seize the physician and bring him to the palace.*

*The king said, "I have brought you here because I am suffering from a strange paralysis. If you cure me, I will reward you. If not, I will kill you."*

*The physician said, "In order to treat you, I need complete privacy." So the king sent everyone out of the room. Then the physician took out a knife and said, "Now I shall take my revenge for your threatening me." He advanced on the king. Terrified, the king jumped up and ran around the room, forgetting his paralysis in his need to escape the seemingly crazed physician.*

*The sage fled the palace one step ahead of the guards. The king never realized that he had been cured by the only method that could have been effective.*

The disciplines and practices of Sufism are aimed at self-knowledge, as is evident from a quote by Reshad Feild in the chapter Practices:

*You cannot wake up by reading books that tell you you are asleep. You may not even wake up just because a teacher tells you that you are asleep. You can only wake up if you want to, and begin the work on yourself to cut away all the rubbish in order to come upon the nature of who and what you are.*

The essence of the Sufi path is the cultivation of love for God, as beautifully expressed by Sheikh Badruddin in the chapter How to Know God:

*God said, "I loved to be known, so I created creation." This is reflected in the ones whom God loves. The qualities of loving, knowing, hearing, seeing, will, power, and talking are all God's gifts to humanity. But God's greatest gift is love, the manifestation of His love of knowing Himself. Love is the primary sustenance for human beings. They cannot live without it, and mankind learned to love from God.*



The introduction to the chapter Remembrance of God explains the meaning of dhikr or remembrance:

*In Arabic, repetition and remembrance are the same word. It is said that remembrance of God begins with the repetition of God's Names by the tongue. Then, the repetition of the tongue descends and becomes the remembrance of the heart. Finally, the remembrance of the heart deepens and becomes the remembrance of the soul. At first, you chant the Divine Names, then they chant themselves, then God chants through you.*

The end goal of the Sufi path is the opening of the heart. In the chapter Opening the Heart we read the famous saying of the Prophet Muhammad, "The heart of the believer is the sanctuary of God, and nothing but God is allowed access there." We learn in this chapter that repetition of the divine Names helps engender the purity required for the opening of the heart. Muhammad said, "There is a polish for everything that takes away rust; and the polish of the heart is dhikr, the invocation of God."

A chapter is devoted to service as a core component of the Sufi path. In its introduction we read:

*Service is a form of worship – and also a powerful method of self-transformation. Most service that we offer is selfish; it is service for the sake of reward: money, praise, or fame. By service, the Sufis meant service "for God's sake," without any thought of reward. This kind of service comes when we remember that we are a part of God's creation, and that by serving creation we are serving our Creator – not for a heavenly reward, but out of love and gratitude. An old sheikh once said, "Service without love is like a beautiful corpse. The outer form is lovely, but it is lifeless."*

In the chapter Virtues, faith, humility, gratitude, poverty, patience, and generosity are discussed. Al-Ghazzali offers insight into true faith, himself quoting Ibrahim Adham: "Faith in God will be firmly established if three veils are cast aside: feeling pleasure in possessing anything, lamenting over the loss of anything, enjoying self-praise." Jami offers us great encouragement and hope: "No one ever suffered on the path of faith who did not find the remedy for his or her pain."



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