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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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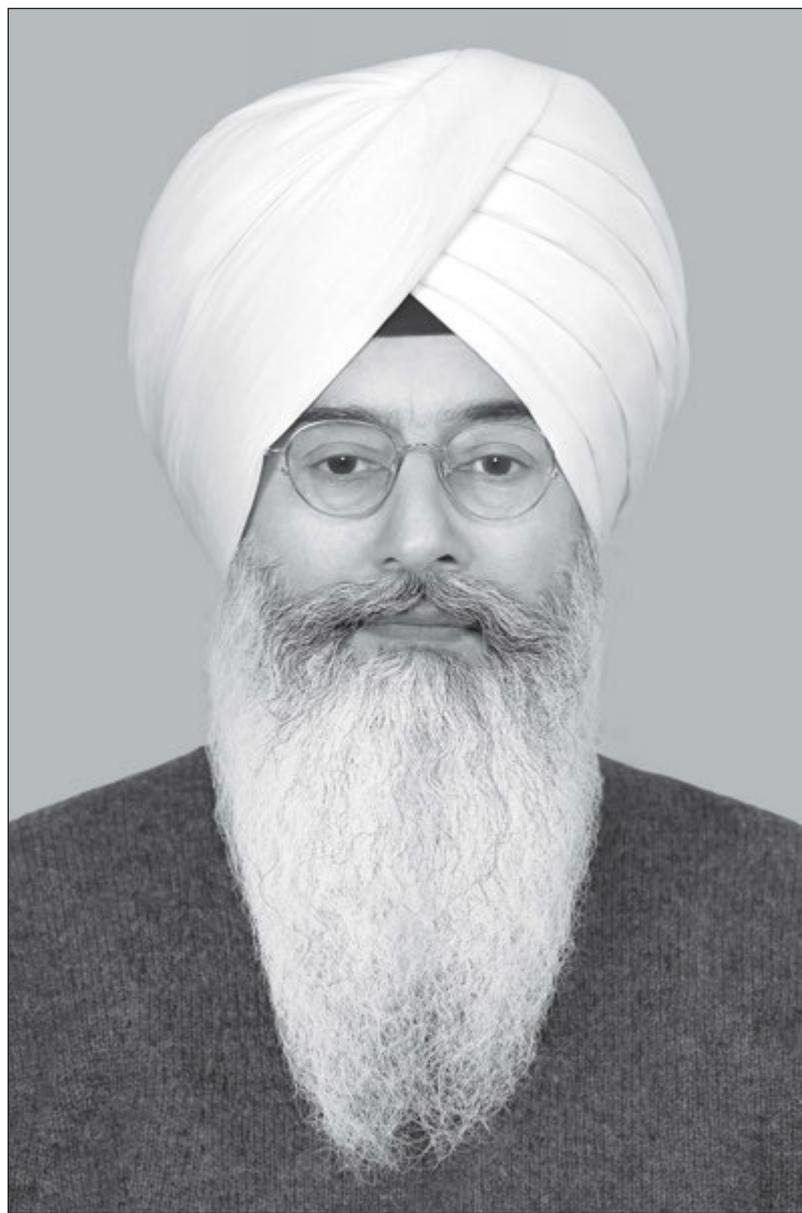
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# There Is No End

There is no end to his qualities,  
no end to the ways of describing them –  
no end to his works, no end to his gifts.  
There seems to be no end  
to what he sees and hears,  
and no one knows the scope of his will.  
No end appears to his created worlds –  
neither is this side visible nor the far end.  
Many strive hard to know his limit,  
but no one has found it –  
indeed, no one knows the limit.  
The more we try to describe it,  
the more it eludes description.  
Mighty is the Lord, high is his abode;  
higher and higher still is his Name.  
Only on becoming as high as he  
can one know that exalted Being.  
How great he is!  
He alone knows himself, O Nanak,  
and all gifts come through his merciful glance.

*Jap Ji – A Perspective*





# Becoming Receptive

Mystics come here with a message of love; a message that is for the whole of humanity irrespective of race, religion or country. They tell us that the creation we see before us has a Creator and he is our Father. As Guru Nanak says, “There is one Father and we are all children of that One.” Our spiritual DNA and that of the divine is the same. Essentially, we are particles of the divine, and the relationship between us is pure love. But how can we develop love for the Father whom we cannot see, hear or experience.

## **Our current state**

Having created strong identities for our material selves, in our present state we remain unaware of the Creator. We, who are mere specks on this tiny planet Earth, have little knowledge of where we have come from and where we are going. When someone talks to us about the Creator – our Father, the Lord or God – most of us believe that he exists. Yet, as we have not seen him or experienced his presence, he remains a concept to us – an entity, a power we try to imagine.

Currently, our primary instinct is to survive, to protect the fragile self we have manufactured. We turn life into a constant struggle of pleasure-seeking, wish fulfilment and the avoidance of pain. We are under the misconception that peace and happiness will be found in the material world, whether from our relationships, wealth, fame or art. Yet, we know all too well that our desires are never satisfied; when one is met, another is created.

Our preoccupation with satisfying physical desires stems from a need to quench a deep-seated longing in us. We do not immediately understand the nature or source of this longing, indeed we mistakenly

believe that indulging in more of the same behaviours and activities will eventually fill this hole. Yet, as long as we continue to search for happiness in the material world, our struggle will remain.

Eventually, there comes a time in our lives when we are no longer able to ignore the feeling of loneliness tugging away at us and we begin to acknowledge the futility of satisfying it through physical means. So, we start to search, to look for answers about the meaning of life. We read books, scriptures and attend satsang, all of which provide us with theoretical answers about our existence. To gain absolute knowledge and understanding, however, we are urged to look within ourselves. The mystics inform us that truth cannot be attained through the physical senses or understood through the written or spoken word; it has to be experienced. They make clear that we can only attain permanent peace and happiness by merging with the Lord, and that the Lord is residing within us. As Bulleh Shah said, the beloved is not separate from us, and without the beloved there is nothing else, but as we have not developed the sight to see him, we suffer these pangs of separation.

The mystics inform us that our suffering will be alleviated if we are able to realize the Lord. This realization occurs naturally as our consciousness is slowly transformed by practising the meditation taught by a God-realized Master. In the Adi Granth, Guru Arjun Dev says:

*Why would anyone cry in separation, O Lord,  
if he could find you by his own efforts?  
Those who have found you through the company of the Saints,  
O Nanak, enjoy supreme bliss.*

*Jap Ji – An Introduction*

So, we need to associate with a Master to begin our spiritual journey. Such a Master is the catalyst for our inner transformation.

The Lord showers his love and grace throughout the creation, constantly. A sign of that grace is recognizing that the loneliness we feel is a yearning for him, a desire to return home. Another is guiding us to the path of God-realization. Thankfully, the Lord's grace does not end there; it is ceaseless. Yet, the degree to which we benefit from his unconditional compassion and mercy depends upon how receptive we are. If the sun is shining and one is sitting inside, it is impossible to feel the full warmth of the sun's rays. Likewise, if our mind is full of attachments and desires, our capacity to experience the Lord's love is greatly diminished. So how can we become more receptive?

### **Enhancing our receptivity**

We can start by being kind and loving to the Lord's creation, to all our fellow human beings and the lower species. As we evolve spiritually, this becomes automatic because we start to realize that the essence of everything is the same as God; in effect, we see him in everything.

We can also make an effort to attend satsang regularly because this helps us to remember him and his teachings. In this way, our attendance is not only an expression of love for him, it helps deepen our love. This is why the Masters place great emphasis on satsang because without it, we are swept away by the tide of worldly desires and impressions. Regular attendance helps us regain our focus and strengthens our resolve. Seva is another positive action we can take. Any form of selfless service, undertaken with a loving attitude is very conducive to creating love within us. We should strive to be a source of strength and comfort to all around us. There is so much the Lord has given to each of us – not wealth necessarily, but talents and strengths that we can draw upon to help the less fortunate. The Masters are living examples of selfless service.

Needless to say, the most important action we can take to become more receptive to the Lord's love and grace is meditation. Meditation encompasses simran, dhyān and bhajan. By practising simran and dhyān, we learn to focus our attention at the eye centre. In fact, the simran given to us by the Master can be seen as the ABC of learning the language of love. Through this practice, we are turning our face towards the Lord and slowly start to realize our link to him. Essentially, the repetition of the five holy names is an expression of love on our part; it is the means through which we seek, and become receptive to, the Lord's grace. As our concentration increases, we begin to withdraw our consciousness from our body and, eventually, enter a higher level of consciousness.

The Lord is a treasury of infinite goodness and each of us has been given the gift of love. However, it is up to us as to where we channel it. Nature is not unjust; we get what we desire, what we work towards. The choice is ours: we can focus on the world or we can turn our attention to the Lord through our meditation. In the end, whatever we focus on, that is what we will get.



*Do you think you have searched for and found the path by your own efforts?  
Do not be impatient. There is a time for everything. Can a babe talk and walk  
immediately at birth? Can a tree bear fruit when it is still a seedling or sapling?  
The Lord knows best when it is safe and fit to increase his love in our hearts.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

# Something to Think About

There never was a time when I, you, and all these warriors here did not exist, and there never will be a time when any of us shall cease to be. As the self travels in this body from childhood to youth to old age, so the self moves into another body at death. The wise are not confused by this change.

The soul exists forever in the present, having no birth or death. The soul is the oldest, without beginning or end, and is not killed when the body is killed.

As a person exchanges old clothes for new, so the soul abandons old bodies to enter new ones.

This soul cannot be pierced, burned, wet or dried. For the soul is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable and immovable, staying eternally the same.

*Bhagavad Gita*

The soul never dies. The body in which the soul resides, that body changes from one form to another form, but the soul never dies. The soul is eternal...

Our soul is that divine spark of that creator, that divine light which is giving us life. The moment that is withdrawn, we cease to exist. This body is made up of five elements and that soul is holding the five elements and has given life to the five elements. The moment that soul is withdrawn from the body, the five elements are there but we cease to exist, we perish. So that soul gives us life, and that soul is the drop of the divine ocean.

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

# Love and Fear

Sometimes one reads a book that, on the face of it, is far removed from Sant Mat, yet, on reflection, is found to be dealing with the same issues and saying the same things but in a different way. One such book was written over 30 years ago by an American psychiatrist, G. G. Jampolsky, called *Love Is Letting go of Fear*.

In this book, Jampolsky talks about the importance of having a positive attitude to life and living in the present moment. He urges us to realize that peace of mind is within our grasp if we pursue it with determination. Jampolsky argues that love and the process of letting go of fear are two sides of the same coin. Unless fear diminishes, love cannot grow; until love takes over, fear moulds our thinking and drives our actions whether we are aware of this or not. He states:

*Fear always distorts our perception and confuses us as to what is going on. Love is the total absence of fear.... Its natural state is one of extension and expansion, not comparison and measurement.*

It would be an understatement to say that love has a prominent place in Sant Mat – it is at the very heart of the teachings. About fear, Maharaj Charan Singh remarked that it is all pervasive. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II somebody asks him, “I don’t understand when the verse says we are never happy here. It seems that we are definitely happy sometimes.” Master replies:

*There’s always a fear at the bottom of that pleasure.... Unless that fear is removed, there can be no permanent happiness ...*

*we can only get happiness when we are filled with love and devotion for the Father, not otherwise.*

This means that as we go through life trying to calculate what to do in order to maximize pleasure and minimize pain we are, in effect, missing the point. When our efforts fail, we tend to attribute it to bad luck, a lack of determination, a mistake in our calculations or letting our emotions get the better of us. From a spiritual point of view, adopting such an approach to life is a futile exercise that flies in the face of reality; the universe cannot be manipulated in this way, however clever or well-meaning we may be. Maharaj Charan Singh makes this point when responding to a question about worry. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III he says:

*You can't try to be happy. If you stop worrying, you automatically become happy – it is a positive approach, not a negative approach.... By nature, man is happy and contented. What makes us miserable is our wishes, our demands, our ambitions, our desires ... and all our desires can't be fulfilled. Whatever is in your destiny will be fulfilled; what is not in your destiny – your worry will not be able to fulfil that desire.*

Consider now these three statements: The mind is extremely powerful. Everybody wants to be happy. Nobody is happy.

Can they all be true? We can ask ourselves, “If my mind is so powerful and my mind wants to be happy, then why am I not happy?” This question becomes even more baffling if, as Maharaj Charan Singh says, by nature we are happy and contented. How can this be? If we are, by nature, happy and contented, it would seem that something must have gone terribly wrong for us no longer to be in our natural state. The

“nature” referred to by the Master must be very different from human nature as it commonly manifests itself. If we reflect, we will perhaps realize that he is referring to our underlying nature, to how we are in the core of our being when all the outer trappings of name, nationality, race, religion, career and so on have been stripped away.

Thus, the fear to which Maharaj Charan Singh refers would be part and parcel of our strong sense of individual identity. It can come in many forms: fear of loss, fear of pain, fear of poverty, fear of old age, loneliness, illness, death – the list goes on. All these fears arise from what the Master described as the “negative approach”. Jampolsky says something similar:

*When we have a desire to get something from another person or the world and we are not successful, the result is stress expressed in the form of frustration, depression, perceptions of pain, illness and death.*

Jampolsky emphasizes that the problem of fear arises from within our own minds:

*The mind is actually the director, producer, script writer, film editor, cast, projectionist, audience and critic. The mind, being limitless, has the capacity of changing the movie and everything about it at any time. The mind has the power of making all decisions.*

Then he asks:

*What would happen if we believed that what we see is determined by the thoughts in our mind? Perhaps we could*

*entertain an idea that at the moment seems unnatural and foreign to us; namely, that our thoughts are the cause and what we see is the effect.*

This may sound strange. It is certainly contrary to our normal way of thinking. However, it is a key element of many spiritual teachings. The great Buddhist text known as the *Dhammapada* has, as one of its key refrains, “Our life is the creation of our mind.” Normally we might understand this in the context of reincarnation – in other words, it could mean that what we think in this life helps to mould the course of our future lives. But Jampolsky is saying more than this, urging us to take this teaching in a much more ‘here and now’ way. Not only can our thoughts change, they can change *now*, in this lifetime, this year, this day, this moment. How? He says:

*It may be helpful to question our need to attempt to control the external world. We can, instead, control our inner world by consistently choosing what thoughts we want to have in our mind.*

In other words, we should not rely on our clumsy ways of trying to influence or control the world around us; instead, we should put the emphasis on controlling our own thoughts. However, as Jampolsky explains, this is hard because even though we want to get rid of our pain and frustration, we insist on holding on to our self-concepts and belief systems. We don’t want to let go of them because they are so intimately intertwined with our sense of who we are and of our place in the world. And yet, in clinging to them, we are, in effect, retaining a fearful way of seeing the world.

To address this problem, Jampolsky advises us to retrain the mind. In Sant Mat, we retrain the mind through satsang, seva and simran,

which will ultimately lead to the transformative power of the Shabd. Jampolsky also points out that an important aspect of training the mind is to become forgiving:

*We can learn to retrain our minds to have the single goal of peace of mind and the single function of practising forgiveness. Forgiveness is the vehicle used for correcting our misperceptions and for helping us to let go of fear.*

Forgiveness, as defined here, is not simply a decision to tolerate behaviour that we do not like. Here, forgiveness means correcting our misperception that another person has harmed us. Jampolsky writes, “We could choose to see the world through the window of love rather than the window of fear.” This would enable us to focus on seeing all that is positive, such as beauty and love, as well as people’s strengths rather than their weaknesses.

If we can truly forgive people in this sense, then we will no longer react emotionally to perceived problems, insults and setbacks. As Jampolsky makes clear, “Attack is really a form of defence and, as with all defences that are designed to keep guilt and fear from our awareness, attack actually preserves the problem.” So, instead of feeling aggrieved and living in fear of further mistreatment, we can choose a more positive approach. “The moment we put our attention on helping someone, we cease to perceive ourselves as ill or in pain, and we will find meaning in the statement, “To give is to receive.” Giving means extending one’s love with no conditions, no expectations and no boundaries.

All of this is beautifully summed up by Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives* Vol. III:

*We generally do forgive, but sometimes it becomes difficult to forget. It still weighs a little on our conscience. We should even forget that we have forgiven. If you forget that you have forgiven, then you will forget the original incident. If it is always weighing on your mind that “I have forgiven, I have forgiven,” it means you’ve not forgotten at all. It shouldn’t weigh on your mind.... If you forget the whole incident, if you don’t even recollect it, then you’ve really forgiven.*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# Got Floss? Use It!

“Got floss? Use it!” read the dental appointment card. Obviously my new dentist knew me well, despite our not having yet met. For just as the card implied, a box of floss stood ready on my bathroom shelf, alert for the moment it would be called upon – which was (almost) never. Intervals of flossing did occur, usually in the week before and the one after a visit to the dentist. Otherwise, it was all just good intentions and nothing in the way of action.

Always I would tell myself I was definitely going to floss tomorrow. Today there just wasn't time to do it properly, and what difference would one day's delay make? In the meantime, the mere presence of the floss signified my intention to do the responsible, sensible thing for my teeth, and this provided the necessary reassurance (even a little smugness) that I was on the right track. There was no way that my gums were going to recede and my teeth fall out. I knew that I was one of the enlightened when it came to flossing. I had understood the message and committed to taking the necessary action. I just hadn't actually done anything yet.

That this action had not yet been taken seemed the least important fact, and yet in truth it was the only important fact. This is what the message on the dental appointment card had succinctly pointed out. It was glaringly obvious, once I thought about it. Equally obvious was the spiritual parallel: don't we sometimes kid ourselves that having understood the importance of meditation and obtained the means to practise it, we feel we have done most of what is necessary? In reality, we have done nothing if we just stop there.

Well, we may kid ourselves, but we can't kid the Master. He knows what is in our hearts. Similarly, it was no puzzle that the dentist I had

not yet met had guessed this apparently private fact about the contents of my bathroom cabinet. The difference, though, is that the dentist knew this not by knowing me but by acquaintance with wider human nature. Clearly, my approach to dental hygiene was shared. Almost everybody buys floss, but they don't necessarily use it.

Glimpsing a box of floss in a friend's bathroom, we might reasonably conclude that he or she flosses. Why would we not think so? Only the friend's dentist (and the friend) could know the falsity of this assumption. We see the floss on the shelf of so many bathrooms and assume that we ourselves are the only ones who aren't really using it. We wallow in guilt and fear of peritonitis; we think we are the only ones. But the perfect white smile we see on the face of another could be a set of dentures, which only their dentist really knows. Equally, we should never assume we know anything about the inner spiritual state of any other person from what we see on the outside. We cannot judge anyone, least of all ourselves.

Periodically, we visit the dentist and sincerely swear that everything will change from this day forth, that flossing is now to begin in earnest. Then we go home and later that day, at bedtime, we're rather tired and just want to get into bed – after all, we have to get up early – so we decide that one more day won't make a difference. We can floss tomorrow! And we will floss tomorrow; or at least, our intention to do so is genuine.

As indeed it will be the next day, when we make ourselves the same promise – and the next day, and the next. And sometimes we may make a similar promise about our meditation: that we will do it tomorrow if not today, or perhaps that we will do it today but in a cursory way; tomorrow, when we are less tired, we will do it with real attention and focus.

Having made ourselves this promise, we feel instantly better; committed to a right way forward and cleansed of past error. But intention is not the same as action. Floss perched inertly on the shelf is an entirely different matter from floss sliding between your teeth. One cleanses and the other does not. Equally, the words of simran that we have obtained from the Master, which are ready and waiting for us to use to clean our souls, will not perform this essential role if we fail to apply them.

And tomorrow will not do, because tomorrow never comes. The only day that counts is today. Tomorrow, when it comes, will look after itself – so long as we look after today. We have been given the knowledge of what we need to do, and the conviction that we want to do it; we have been given the tools to do it, too. So let's just do it – today.



*The quieter the mind, the more powerful, the worthier, the deeper, the more telling and more perfect the prayer is. To the quiet mind all things are possible. What is a quiet mind? A quiet mind is one which nothing weighs on, nothing worries, which, free from ties and from all self-seeking, is wholly merged into the will of God and dead to its own. Such a one can do no deed, however small, that is not clothed with something of God's power and authority.*

David O' Neal, *Meister Eckhart, From Whom God Hid Nothing*

# The Master's Reassurance

## A letter from one disciple to another

*Dear Brother,*

Recently, I found myself reminiscing about our time at the Dera – what an intense experience it was. Many people who have been on the path for decades came together and we all felt so close to one another – there was a deep companionship amongst us all even though we came from different parts of the world. One would often meet a stranger and immediately feel that one had known them for ages.

I also remember the day we talked about our shared sense of despair at having spent so many years regularly doing meditation but feeling that we had made little progress and worrying that, in spite of our best efforts, we had been unable to go in. Something was said at an evening meeting, which really brought this concern to a head and gave us both a great deal of soul searching. You may remember that, as you were leaving, I promised to ask Baba Ji about our concerns. This I managed to do and I am writing to share his response with you. Actually, it seemed that his answer was meant not just for us, but for many other people too.

I began by explaining that, though my question was personal to me, I also felt that it would be relevant to other people, as many of us have not experienced the inner sound and light even though we have tried our best. I went on to say that I have genuinely tried to live in his will, not demanding, asking or expecting, and that I felt especially anxious on hearing him speak of the importance of concentrated simran during meditation as I have struggled with this for over forty years. I explained that, over this period, I have tried all sorts of approaches to no avail. For instance, I tried the 'big stick' approach to the mind to try

and force myself to concentrate, but this failed to work. Then there was the 'let go and let the simran do itself' approach, which also achieved little. I also tried focusing intently at the eye centre, but again, did not manage to sustain the repetition. "You name it and I've tried it", I said.

I mentioned that somehow simran goes on quite happily during my daily tasks, especially when I am driving and *not* supposed to be doing it. Clearly, this illustrates just how contrary the mind can be! But, as soon as I try to bring simran to the forefront of my mind during meditation, all my efforts are in vain, no matter how many hours I might sit. What has kept me going is the belief, rightly or wrongly, that one's *intention* as well as attention counts for something.

I finished by asking whether Baba Ji could reassure us that our efforts *are* being held in our account or whether we are just kidding ourselves, which I would hate to believe. My closing statement was: "You have asked if we are confused enough yet and, for me, the answer is, Yes!"

Well, the reply that came back was truly wonderful – a little satsang in itself – which I share with you here as it will be of great support during those times when we are feeling dry and inadequate. Baba Ji started by saying that anyone can go to a disco if they want to hear sounds and see some flashing lights. He explained that experiencing the inner light and sound is definitely not a measure of one's progress in meditation. The Master may grant such experiences to satsangis when they are not strong and need this reassurance in order to keep going or to build their confidence. He then went on to explain that, in order to maintain their yearning and effort, the Master may withhold inner experiences from those who would get over-confident from them or whose faith is stronger. We receive what is right for us at the right time.

Baba Ji reiterated that *intention* is as important as *attention* and said that the main reason we practise meditation is to please the Master rather than to experience the inner light and sound. This is such an important thing to remember as we sit each day. We are simply to do our meditation to please the Master and with no other desire or expectation. Then, in no uncertain terms, Baba Ji went on to reassure us by saying that no meditation is ever wasted but is gaining interest in our personal accounts and is being saved for us.

Baba Ji reminded us that it is important to do our meditation in order to fulfil the will of the Master and not out of calculation (*i.e.*, with the thought, “What do I get out of my meditation?”). We are to do our meditation because our Master asked us to do it. We are then his responsibility. The attitude with which we sit is as important as the meditation itself. Once more he emphasized that meditation is not measured by sound and light; essentially there is no measurement, only practice. If we sit on a daily basis with the the right intention, faith and perseverance, nothing else matters.

As Baba Ji drew his answer to a conclusion, he reassured us even further in the most wonderful way when he reminded us that all Masters have had to go through the process of discipleship with all the ups and downs, the longing and perseverance it entails. Therefore, they know exactly what we are going through.

Well, dear friend, I don't think there is anything more to say. Baba Ji has given us the most wonderful support and advice that we could hope to have. All we have to do is to try to live up to it. In the end it is all his grace and that certainly flows in abundance. Simran is our opportunity to say thank you.

*Love and Radha Soami*

# The Hunger of the Soul

An inner life at this stage, after six years of intense and honest struggle, is something like this – there will be three or four days, or a week, when God and rapture are immediately available. All you have to do is hold thought steady for an instant and relax any physical or mental tensions that might serve as obstructions, and the current of bliss surges through you and spreads out like a delicious fire to the very smallest capillary. Your mind, your spirit, stands spellbound with awe and gratitude. And these moments are not always calculated....

But then there will come a period when, after being caught up and held by joy, you feel as though the same hand threw you down pitilessly for some ruthless, unavoidable purpose. No physical pain of being hurled to the ground can compare with the mental anguish of being deprived of a bliss that you thought was yours now to keep. No frustration can equal the frustration of those moments set aside for contemplation, now so empty of any results of any kind. If it is not deliberately a part of a plan to humble you, nevertheless it serves that purpose. You search and wonder and think what you did wrong to turn you off the path that was so clear and sure a few days ago. And you pray. You who have never really prayed before, you pray with all humility. And then wait. There's nothing else to do.

Then this strange phenomenon – sometimes you get up from the most frustrating session of silence to find joy welling up in you as soon as you start some activity. You sit down for meditation – nothing. You get up to work and there it is again, like someone playing a joke on you.

N. Mayorga, *The Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary*

# The Tale of the Sands

Sufism is the mystical tradition in Islam. Put simply, it can be defined as a practical path leading to God, learned from and practised under the supervision of a spiritual teacher called a *Murshid* or *Shaykh*. The Sufis produced many works of poetry and storytelling to convey their spiritual messages and wisdom. One such story, short, but charming nonetheless, is the tale of the sands:

A stream, happily tumbling down from its source in the mountains, gushing forth with great energy first this way and then that, suddenly came to a halt. It had reached a desert. Having crossed many barriers on its long journey from the mountain top, the stream was confident that it would be able to cross the sands without much difficulty. Yet, try as it might, it could not find a way. It was stuck. As the stream wondered what to do next, it became aware of a sound, which if truth be known, it found rather startling at first.

The stream stopped dashing itself on the sand and listened. The sound, or rather the voice, whispered, “The wind crosses the desert...”

Somewhat puzzled, the stream thought, “The wind can fly. Of course it can cross the desert.”

The voice continued, “You’ll disappear if you carry on dashing yourself upon the sands. Allow the wind to carry you.”

“Carry me?” thought the stream. “How can the wind carry me?”

The voice of the sands insisted, “The wind performs this function all the time. It lifts the water up, carries it across the desert, and then drops it down on the other side.”

“How can this be?” thought the stream.

“It is simply so. If you don’t let the wind carry you, put simply, you will be absorbed by the sands until there is not a single drop of you left. Why else is this known as the desert?”

“But if I listen to you, I don’t know what will happen. There is no guarantee that what you are telling me is true.”

“True,” said the voice. “Your problem stems from the fact that you are unaware of your essential nature. If you knew that, you would happily rise up into the arms of the wind. So you have a choice, you can either take a leap of faith and believe that what I am telling you is true, or you can carry on as you are, in which case, I am sorry to say, you will cease to exist.”

As the stream heard this, memories began to surface, accompanied by a strange yet not unfamiliar sensation and, eventually, a realization that, yes, it had indeed once before been held in the arms of the wind.

And so, the stream, slowly at first, began to stop thrashing and writhing about in its attempt to cross the sands. Eventually, it became still and waited. Waited for the wind to lift it into the skies and carry it across to safety. Its patience was rewarded and just as the voice had said, the stream turned into vapour and was carried many, many miles across the desert. Finally reaching a mountain range at the far side of the desert, it began to turn to rain, fall to the ground and to run back towards the ocean.

In abandoning itself to the wind, the stream was able to acknowledge its true nature: a vapour from the great ocean which it was now able to rejoin. The sands meanwhile ruminated on how it was given to them to witness this transformation every day – and thus it is said that the way in which the stream of life fulfils its destiny is “written in the sands”.

Retold from P. Hemenway, *The Little Book of Eastern Wisdom*

# Shabd and Disciple

At satsang we often hear that the only way to realize the Lord and find true peace is through a perfect living Master.

Perfect living Masters are realized beings who come to the world to help those of us fortunate enough to be yearning for the Lord. They come in every age, taking us back with them to merge into that ocean of divinity which is their – and our – true home.

True Masters reflect a unique kind of love, understanding and compassion, which flows from their inner divinity. Their love encompasses a purity and humility that is an example for all. It has no selfish motives – they give their love freely to those who seek the truth. Reading the history of past masters right up to the present age, we find that their whole life is a sacrifice of selfless service. In fact, the mystics' legacy of love and compassion is without parallel in this world. A perfect mystic is one who has walked the path of God-realization, whose understanding is not derived from reading or external learning, but comes from direct spiritual experience of the divine. Other than that, the mystics are no different from us.

So, how do we find such a Master? If we began by searching the Internet, typing in the phrase 'Spiritual Master', we would find that this generates around eighteen million responses! With so many philosophies, religions, and spiritual teachings at our fingertips, how can we make a choice? The truth is that we cannot and do not find a perfect living Master – he finds us. It is a divine law that anyone who is a sincere seeker of the truth is brought into the company of a perfect mystic. Like the mother who cannot ignore the cry of her child, when we are genuine in our search for him, the Lord responds to our call by placing us in an environment where we are sure to not only meet the

Master of the time but in which we will be receptive to his message. What is more, sincere seekers are never on their own. Though our journey can seem long and lonely, our every step is being guided. Maharaj Charan Singh used to say that when we take a single step towards the Lord, he takes a hundred steps towards us. All we can do is deepen our longing to be with him – the rest he will take care of. As the old saying goes, “When the disciple is ready, the Guru will appear.”

### **The gift of initiation**

What happens when we go to a Master? He gives us the greatest gift of all: a gift, which once unwrapped, enables us to experience the presence of God within ourselves and realize our spiritual heritage. This gift takes the form of initiation, during which the Master teaches us the practice of meditation to awaken the spiritual core that is latent within us.

The first two stages of our meditation practice – simran and dhyān – lead to the third, bhajan or listening to the inner sound. By practising bhajan we contact the Shabd, which is when the ultimate love story unfolds between Master and disciple. Our love for the physical Master is a priceless treasure because it leads to love for the Shabd. Essentially, meditation is not about asking, it is about giving and, in due course, meditation becomes submission. Through meditation we offer ourselves to the divine and there is no greater service than this. When we surrender ourselves completely, when there is no more self left, we receive everything – the very Father himself. In the beautiful photo album, *Legacy of Love*, the final message from Maharaj Charan Singh reads, “May your love for the form culminate in the love of the formless.” Essentially, his wish for us was that the love he gave to us for forty years through his physical presence, should grow into love for the Shabd, which has a reality beyond form, shape or colour.

## **The Master and disciple love story**

Having created us, the Creator has not forgotten us. He has given each of us a method through which we can contact him anytime, any place and, ultimately, use it to return home. This method, which is actually our direct link to him, has been given different names by different mystics over time. Some have referred to this link as the Shabd, whilst others have called it the Word or Logos, *Akaash Vani* (Voice of the Skies), *Raam Nam* (Name of God) or *Kalaam Eh Ilahee* (the Word of God). The important point is that such a connection exists rather than what it is called.

The Shabd can both be seen and heard, in the form of uplifting sound and dazzling light. However, we cannot do so through the outer eyes and ears, but must, through meditation, draw upon the hearing and seeing faculties of our soul. The attraction of the soul to the sound and light of the Shabd is so great, it is impossible to describe; the soul yearns to merge with the Shabd and become one with it. It is just as impossible to describe the caring and loving way in which the Shabd looks after the soul, not resting until it has reunited the soul with the Lord. Indeed, pure love is the only way to describe the magnetism that exists between the soul and the Shabd. There is no higher love because the soul and the Shabd are both manifestations of the Lord, who is love itself.

There is a beautiful poem by the Sufi mystic Rumi in which he tries to describe the power of the Shabd. Even though no words can ever describe it, mystics use language to encourage us to take the actions necessary to experience it. Using the image of a bird and its flight, Rumi asks:

*How could the soul not take flight  
When from the glorious presence*

*A soft call flows sweet as honey, comes right up to her  
And whispers, 'Rise up now, come away'.*

Quoted in Andrew Harvey, *The Way of Passion*

The Shabd is ringing within us constantly – it is the sound of our Father calling us back to him. Rumi compares this to honey, as there is nothing sweeter. Upon hearing the Shabd, the soul cannot resist:

*How could the hawk not fly away  
Forgetful of all hunting to the wrist of the King  
As soon as he hears the drum,  
The king's baton hits again and again,  
Drumming out the signal of return.*

Quoted in Andrew Harvey, *The Way of Passion*

Rumi was brought up in the Sufi tradition where the soul is thought of as a royal hawk lost in a dark wilderness. Naturally, the hawk is frightened and misses the comforts of the palace and the love of the king. The king is also fond of the hawk and wants it to return to the palace, so he beats a drum, again and again. The hawk, familiar with the sound of the drumbeat, follows the sound straight to the wrist of the king.

Likewise our Father is also calling us home. It is as a result of his grace that the drumbeat is constantly beating within us. Once we hear it, we are hooked forever. Every cell of our being longs to return to the source of this divine music, the home of our Father.

Rumi concludes the poem by urging the soul to become free and return to its source:

*Fly away, fly away bird to your native home  
You have leapt free of the cage*

*Your wings are flung back in the wind of God  
Leave behind the stagnant and marshy waters  
Hurry, hurry, hurry, O Bird, to the source of life.*

Quoted in Andrew Harvey, *The Way of Passion*

It is love for, and our union with, the Shabd that breaks the chains of our worldly attachments, taking us beyond the realm of mind and matter. When a drop of the ocean merges with the ocean, even though its separate identity is lost, it is not destroyed. In fact, the drop takes on the characteristics of the ocean and becomes the ocean. Similarly, when our soul becomes one with the Shabd and becomes indistinguishable from the Lord, we gain our liberty.

No spoken words are needed, only practice with sincerity, love and devotion. Through this practice, we become aware of the spiritual being that we are: that we are not separate from the divine but are part and parcel of him. It is only a question of realization. And with this realization comes true peace, joy and love.



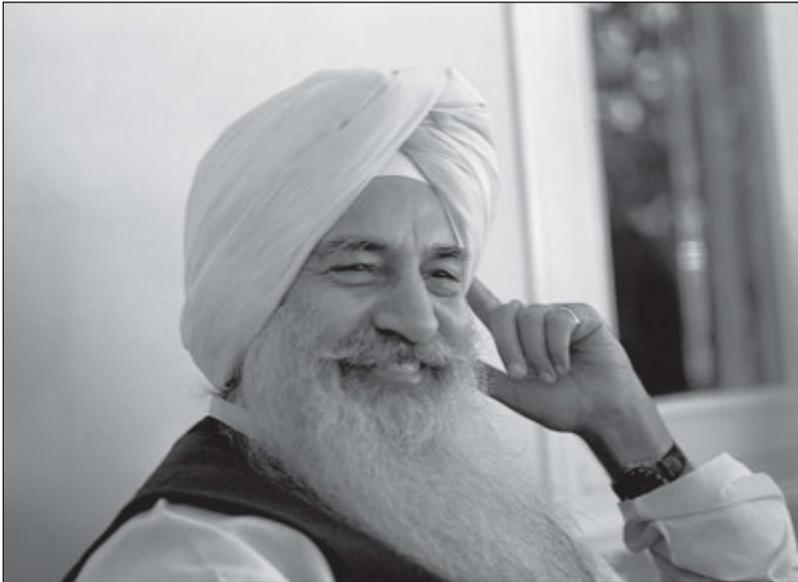
# Forever Dance

*I am happy even before I have a reason.  
I am full of Light even before the sky  
Can greet the sun or the moon.*

*Dear companions,  
We have been in love with God  
For so very, very long.*

*What can Hafiz now do but Forever Dance.*

*D. Ladinsky, I Heard God Laughing – Renderings of Hafiz*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# Why God Said He Loved Moses

One day God said to Moses, “My chosen one, I love you.”

Moses asked, “Bountiful One, tell me what in me is the cause of your love for me, so that I may make it grow?”

God replied, “You are like the child in the presence of its mother. When she chastises the child it still wraps its arms about her and loves her. The child knows of no one in the world but her, and finds all sorrow and joy from her presence. If she should be angry with the child it still comes to her, for it never seeks any help from anywhere else.

You are like this child, Moses, for your heart never turns from Me to anyone else.”

\* \* \*

*We long for You in worship,  
In trouble we ask from You alone.  
We worship You for the purpose of love,  
In trouble we ask exclusively.  
We perform the worship to You alone.  
We have hope of help from You alone.*

\* \* \*

*A soul not cloaked with inner love is cold from shame.  
Be warmed with love, for only love exists.  
Where is intimacy except in giving and receiving?*

*The Illustrated Rumi*

# The Joy of Service

Hasidism is the great mystical movement that swept through Eastern Europe in the late eighteenth century and captured the hearts and minds of nearly half the Jewish population in a matter of decades.

Its spiritual founder, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, often referred to as the *Besht*, was a great scholar and mystic. He preached a message of hope and inspiration, calling on Jews of different social and educational backgrounds to come closer to God through mystical contemplation and by retaining an awareness of him throughout the day.

There is a genre of Hasidic literature known as *hanhagot*, which are short lists of spiritual practices or instructions created by the masters for their disciples. Practical in tone, they are designed to enable the devotee to apply the Hasidic ideals to daily life. In fact, the Hasidic masters would often advise their disciples to copy these instructions, carry them in their pockets, and to read them throughout the day whenever they required spiritual guidance or balance. An example of this, taking the form of a poem, can be found at the end of this article.

A defining feature of early Hasidism is the importance it placed upon joyful religious service, not unlike the positive approach Baba Ji encourages us to adopt. High ideals – something to look up to and work towards – are very necessary on the path of spirituality, yet they can sometimes lead an introspective disciple to measure himself too frequently, or perhaps too harshly, against the ideal and thereby perceive himself to be failing. Disciples may also castigate themselves when they acknowledge that they could, in fact, make more effort than they do or that they have compromised on a promise that was too sacred to treat casually. Whatever the cause, Hasidic masters insisted that excessive guilt depletes spiritual energy and has a considerable

negative impact on those trying to follow a religious path. They advised their disciples to focus on the present moment and to show repentance by serving God according to the very best of their abilities.

Today, when we turn to advice from Baba Ji or the writings of Maharaj Charan Singh about dealing with feelings of guilt and overcoming our weaknesses, we find they provide similar counsel. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, for example, Maharaj Charan Singh explains that guilt is not a solution to whatever misdeeds have been committed; instead one should focus on improving oneself:

*One must look ahead and make best use of the present so that we don't repeat such mistakes again.... carrying guilt on your conscience doesn't solve any problem at all.*

Even though a guilty conscience is not to be encouraged, it does signify that one is aware of weaknesses that need to be overcome and, as the embodiment of perfection, grace and generosity, Maharaj Ji focuses on our capacity for transformation:

*Satsangis probably try to analyse themselves too much, thinking that they have too many bad qualities in them.... I always say that when we are conscious of our faults, half the battle is won because then we begin to do something about them. But when we are unaware of our faults, we delude ourselves into thinking that what we are doing is right, which causes us to travel still further in the opposite direction. We should therefore be grateful that the Lord's grace is enabling us to avoid these pitfalls and travel straight on the path leading back to him.*

So, when we think we are failing, going backwards rather than forwards, we would do well to follow the advice of the Masters, focusing on the joy associated with our search for the Shabd and grateful that we are on this journey at all. The following verse is a rendering of Hasidic teaching from the Hanhagot:

*Always be joyous,  
for sadness is a great obstacle to serving God.*

*Even if you sin, heaven forbid,  
do not let it stop you from serving God.*

*Limit your feelings of sadness and regret  
to the particular transgression you have committed,  
and then return to rejoice in the blessed Creator.*

*After all, you have repented  
and you have no intention of returning to this foolishness again.*

*And even if you know that you are not fulfilling  
every aspect of a particular mitzvah [commandment],  
do not let this upset you;  
rather, think of the blessed Creator  
– He who judges hearts and intentions–  
for he knows that you want to serve him in the best possible way.*

*Strengthen yourself in the Creator,  
for Scripture states:  
“It is time to act for the Lord”.*

As rendered by Or Rose with Ebn Leader in *God in All Moments*

# Plotinus: The Mystic of the Late Roman Empire

Plotinus, a major philosopher of the ancient world, was born in Alexandria in CE 205. He died in Rome in CE 270, forty-odd years before the Emperor Constantine's Edict of Toleration first allowed Christians to worship freely throughout the Roman Empire. He therefore lived in a time of intense religious and philosophical debate.

At first, Plotinus wrote nothing, following the precept of his master Ammonius Saccas, but, after persuasion by his disciple and biographer Porphyry (CE 233-305), he eventually put his thoughts into a book, *The Enneads*. His line of thought is not always easy to follow, but his meticulous narrative is enlivened by his vivid use of metaphor and the depth of his spiritual insight.

Plotinus describes the various levels of reality: at the highest level of Being is the One, the Good, beyond Being where all is peace. From here there is an outgoing, downward movement of creation through various levels of being until generation stops at the material world, the final limit of its unfolding and the last trace of the higher reality from which the creative energy originally came. Here all is multiplicity and change. The task of the philosopher is the return to the One and unification with the Good, which, with great effort, is attainable in this life. The following extracts from *The Enneads* reflect Plotinus' deep spirituality.

## **The yearning of the soul**

So we must ascend again towards the Good, which every soul yearns for. Anyone who has seen it knows what I mean when I say that it is beautiful. They will attain it who make their way up to the higher world and focus on it intently and strip off all we have put on in our descent.

And as he goes up he passes all that is alien to God and alone sees the One, alone, unified, pure, on which all things depend and to which all look and are and live and know; for it is the cause of all being, life and knowledge. And anyone who sees this vision will be seized by such love and joy and longing to be united with it. Whoever has not yet seen it will yearn for its goodness, but he who has seen it delights in its beauty and is full of wonder and pleasure, struck by a vision that brings no pain, loving with a real love and pierced with longing. He laughs at all other loves and shuns all that he once thought beautiful.

### **Look at the beauty inside yourself**

Withdraw into yourself and look. If you do not see yourself as beautiful then do as a sculptor does with a statue he wants to make beautiful: he cuts away here, polishes there, makes one part smooth and clears another until he has given his statue a beautiful face. Like him, cut away all that is superfluous, straighten what is crooked, bring light to all that is dark and never stop sculpting your own statue until the godlike glory of goodness shines on you, until you see goodness enthroned on its holy shrine.

### **The nature of the soul**

Soul is certainly beautiful, the most beautiful of all, lying in pure light and clear radiance; in it lies the nature of real beings. This beautiful universe is but a shadow and an image of it. The soul lies in full glory and lives a blessed life: it overwhelms with awe all who see it and enter into it, as they must, and become one with it.

Often I have woken up out of the body into myself, and, beyond all other things I have gone into myself. I have seen a most wonderful beauty and felt more than ever assured of communion with a higher order, experiencing the best life and becoming one with the divine.

I have stationed myself in it and once I reached this supreme state I established myself above everything else in the spiritual realm. After being in the divine, I came back down from the spiritual to the mental. I am puzzled that I can now be coming down and how my soul ever came to be in the body, after she has revealed what she really is.

### **The descent of the soul**

In the spiritual world souls remain with the All Soul and are free from care and trouble ... but there comes a stage when they descend from the universal to become a part and self-absorbed; and as if they were tired of being together they each go to a place of their own. When a soul does this for a long time, flying from the All Soul and standing apart, it no longer is turned to the spiritual; it has become a part and is isolated, weak and full of care. Severed from the whole it settles on one single being.

With this comes the shedding of the wings, the enchaining in the body. It has fallen and now operates through the senses, debarred from the spiritual. It is a captive; this is the burial, the encavement, of the soul. Yet, in spite of all this, it always possesses something divine. Souls then necessarily become amphibious, as it were, compelled to live the life up above and the life here down below. Those which are able to associate more with the spiritual live more the life there, but those with little association, by nature or chance, live more the life here.

### **See the light and hear the voice from within**

We must believe what we have seen when the soul suddenly is filled with light. For this light is from Him and is Him.... The light comes from nowhere, and it goes nowhere, now it is seen, now it is not seen. We must not run after it, but prepare ourselves for the vision and then wait quietly for it to appear as the eye waits for the rising of the sun.

Then the sun appears over the horizon, 'coming out of the ocean' as the poets say, and allows the eye to look at it.... It is a wonder that He is present without having come; He is nowhere, yet there is nowhere in which He is not. One can be surprised at this at first, but one who knows would more likely be surprised at the opposite.

The centre of a circle exists by itself, but every one of the radii in the circle has its point in the centre and the lines bring their individuality to it. Some centre like this is within ourselves by which we are touched, are linked and dependent; and those of us who converge there are firmly held by Him.

We must turn our power of listening inwards and hold it to attention there. It is as if we hope to hear a long-desired voice and let all other sounds pass and are alert for that best of all sounds. So we must let go what we hear with the senses, other than what we have to, and keep the soul's understanding pure and ready to hear the voice from above.

### **The soul becomes as happy as she was long ago**

There the soul would not exchange this union for anything, not even if someone handed her the whole universe, because there is nothing still better, nothing more good. For there is no going any higher; all else, however high, lies on the downward path. Now it can judge well and know that this is what it desired, and establish that there is nothing better than this. For there is no deceit there; where could she find anything truer than the Truth? So it acknowledges that this is it, says so later, but is silent now; it knows that its happiness is not a delusion. It does not say this because its body is tingling with joy, but because it has become as happy as it was long ago. It says that all those things which delighted it before – high offices, power, wealth, beauty, knowledge – it now scorns, as it has now found better things than

these.... If all other things around it were destroyed it would be happy that it was alone in its union. Such great happiness has it reached.

### **A chorus filled with God**

We are always around Him, but don't always look towards Him. Like a choir, although it may be singing in order around the conductor, may turn and look away, but whenever it turns back again it sings beautifully being in tune with Him. So we are always around Him - there would be a total dissolution without him, we would no longer exist - but we are not always turned to Him. But when we do look at Him our goal and purpose is achieved; we are at rest. We no longer sing badly but sing a chorus filled with God.

### **Hurry to embrace Him**

Whoever has seen knows what I am saying. The soul takes another life as it approaches God and becomes part of Him, and when she is in this state she knows that the master of true life is present and nothing else is needed. On the contrary she must put aside everything else and rest in Him alone and become Him alone, cutting away everything that we are immersed in. And so we must hurry to escape from here and be impatient with what binds us, so that we embrace Him totally and leave no part of us that is not in contact with Him.

Extracts from Anthony Pitman, *Know Thyself*.



# Feeling Funny

## Still Dormant



\* \* \*

*At time's beginning  
That beauty  
Which polished creation's mirror  
Caressed every atom  
With a hundred thousand suns  
But this glory  
Was never witnessed.*

*When the human eye emerged,  
Only then was he known.*

Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bidil, *Love's Alchemy*

# If You Were to Experience

*If you were to experience the supreme Lord  
You would transcend all desire.  
If with devotion you would constantly remember the Lord  
You would be free from all care.*

*How will you ever cross the ocean of the world –  
It is filled with poison.  
Seeing this world of lies and illusion,  
You have gone astray.*

*Regardless of my birth in a cloth printer's house  
I have been blessed with the Guru's instruction.  
Through the grace of the saints  
Nama has been granted the gift of union with the Lord.*

Saint Namdev

The writings of Saint Namdev are some of the earliest explanations of Sant Mat available to us. Although this poem is some eight hundred years old, it has a surprising relevance to our present condition. That's because the human condition remains unchanged. Perfect mystics throughout history all identify the same route back to our Father – a route made accessible to us by the grace of a perfect living Master.

In the first verse Saint Namdev says that if we were to experience the Lord, it would be the sweetest, most wonderful of all experiences. We would realize that the Lord is the embodiment of pure love and compassion, the treasury of infinite goodness. Essentially, our experience would be so perfect, so sweet and blissful that no sensual

or worldly desire could possibly remain. Our obsession with the trials and tribulations of daily life would vanish. These would become mere trifles in comparison to our union with the Lord.

In the second verse, using some fairly strong imagery, Saint Namdev explains what is preventing us from experiencing the Supreme Lord. He says that, having become lost in a world full of “poison”, “lies and illusion”, we have forgotten the Lord, our Father. Namdev paints a fairly harsh and miserable picture of our condition and several hundred years later, Maharaj Sawan Singh does the same in *Spiritual Gems*:

*The world is a thick forest, thickly populated, where all have lost their way and are ceaselessly and aimlessly running about, life after life, harassed by the great dacoits: lust, greed, anger, attachment and pride. The remarkable thing about these dacoits is that people associate with them joyfully and, knowing that the result of their association is suffering, have not the courage to dissociate themselves from them. They eat the poison, cry, and eat the poison again.*

Both saints are trying to explain that the worldly activities to which we devote so much of our energy will, eventually, all result in misery and sorrow. Whilst we derive some satisfaction from them, this is not only temporary and superficial, ultimately, such satisfaction becomes a source of our suffering. This is the great illusion that the mystics are trying so hard to shatter – the belief that through the fulfilment of worldly desires, we will find peace and contentment. They want to open our eyes to the suffering that we’re inflicting upon ourselves when our attention is geared towards satisfying the “great dacoits” – that of remaining entangled in the cycle of birth and death.

We, who are fortunate enough to be at least thinking about spirituality, may instinctively realize that the pleasure associated with securing wealth and fame, prestige and power is fairly shallow and, therefore, we may not be wholly consumed by such pursuits. But who amongst us does not turn to our family and friends for some form of fulfilment and meaning in life? In fact not doing so would contravene our nature. Given that our essence is Shabd, it is natural for us to want to give and receive as much love as possible. In the hope of satisfying a deep, underlying yearning, we devote the best part of our entire lives trying to give our best performances in the various roles that have been cast for us: mother, father, daughter, son, husband, wife and so on. Perhaps this is the greatest illusion of all.

As Maharaj Charan Singh used to explain in his satsangs, it is karma that binds our relationships together – nothing more and nothing less. Like logs of wood floating in a river that are brought together by currents and then parted by other currents, we meet our loved ones to pay our debts and then part when these are cleared. And yet, until the Lord showers his grace on us, we persist in trying to make them our own. In *Divine Light*, Maharaj Charan Singh explains our tendency of mind and its natural result.

*We only try to deceive ourselves by thinking that such and such a person is ours.... In the life of every person there comes a time when Nature makes him realize that he is all alone in the world and there is no one whom he can call his own. Please take advantage of this blessed feeling and turn your mind to him who never leaves us.*

The one “who never leaves us” is the Master. He is the one who is helping us cross the ocean of existence. He is our true friend. Soami Ji Maharaj makes this point clear in *Sar Bachan*:

*Other than the Guru, no one really belongs to us  
And no one else can tear open this trap.*

So, with regard to our families and friends, the Masters advise us to discharge our obligations to them, but they emphasize that we should never forget the Lord in doing so. Clearly this is a difficult balancing act, but one that we will be able to better manage if we remember that the route to real happiness is through our meditation and that Shabd is our only real friend.

In the final verse, Saint Namdev draws attention to his good fortune. Despite taking birth in a humble family, he has received the priceless gift of initiation and attained union with the Lord. In a similar way, we should be joyous that as a result of the Lord's grace, in Baba Ji we have a perfect living Master in our lives. We can meet him, ask him questions and he, in his infinite patience and love, continues to advise and guide us.

Our Master has also given us the priceless gift of initiation. This is a gift that nobody else can give us – no matter how rich they are or how much power they hold. Moreover, by initiating us, the Master makes us his own. It is now for us to try and make ourselves worthy of him. Rather than doing so through words and placing him on a pedestal, we need to live the life of a true satsangi by practising our meditation daily. This is also the best way that we can show our gratitude to the Lord for conferring upon us the highest of all privileges – the shelter of a perfect living Master.





*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

# A Master's Dedication

*Daryai Lal Kapur was a devoted disciple of Maharaj Sawan Singh, known affectionately as the Great Master. Daryai Lal wrote two books, including Heaven on Earth, which is a narrative account of the development of the Dera and the three Masters he served.*

*Below is an extract relating the Great Master's love and dedication to the sangat.*

Maharaj Ji's (Maharaj Sawan Singh) entire life was now dedicated to spirituality, and seva of the sangat. His own comfort, well-being, convenience, and even health became secondary for him. Endowed with an extraordinary willpower, Hazur had great capacity for hard work. He would endure any amount of physical discomfort and hardship while carrying out his duties. He would completely disregard extremes of weather – heat, cold, heavy rains; nothing could deter him from his mission of satsang, initiation and seva. He would stand in the summer sun – sometimes it is 120 degrees Fahrenheit in June – without an umbrella, for hours at a time, supervising the harvesting. Once when I put an umbrella over his head, he said, “No son, I do not need it. Don't you see the sangat is doing seva in the sun?” With Hazur looking on, seva that would normally take two days to finish was done in half a day.

Another time, after blessing the langar food, Maharaj Ji went to give darshan to the women baking chapatis over the pits of burning wood. In order to be visible to the ladies, he had to stand in the thick smoke coming from the damp fuel in the ovens. I myself was hardly able to breathe or see for the smoke, and I requested that Hazur move to one side, away from it. He refused, saying, “The smoke doesn't bother me.”

The Masters are always more concerned about the needs of their disciples than their own. I remember once Maharaj Ji had a cold and a high fever; some of us begged him to rest and not to go to satsang that afternoon. He said he was all right and must go to satsang. Bibi Ralli and a few close satsangis knew that he was far from well and was in great discomfort. They almost insisted that Maharaj Ji stay in his room and rest. But he replied, “The more this body is utilized in seva the better. After all, it will be consigned to flames one day. I should never neglect the duty entrusted to me by Baba Ji (Baba Jaimal Singh).” At satsang his face was radiant and his voice so powerful that the sangat did not suspect that he was ill.

Maharaj Ji was extremely compassionate and loving. When people came to him and confessed their failings, he would graciously forgive them. At the same time he would remind them that the mind is a powerful enemy and a disciple should always be alert to its deceptive stratagems. He would tell them not to repeat their transgressions, but to do bhajan and simran with love and devotion, and the Lord would forgive them. Although our karmas were as clear to him as the contents of a glass jar, he would never speak of our shortcomings, even indirectly. He took care not to hurt anyone’s feelings. I never heard him speak ironically or cynically, nor say anything critical of others. He used to say, “Saints never look at our failings. If they did, who would come to them?” Like all great saints, he would see only our virtues. He would say, “Every soul is virtuous. Our eyes and heart are at fault if we fail to see a person’s worth, for God himself sits in every human heart.”

*Heaven on Earth*



# What Happens

*What happens when your soul  
Begins to awaken  
Your eyes  
And your heart  
And the cells of your body  
To the great Journey of Love?  
  
First there is wonderful laughter  
And probably precious tears  
  
And a hundred sweet promises  
And those heroic vows  
No one can ever keep.*

*But still God is delighted and amused  
You once tried to be a saint.*

*What happens when your soul  
Begins to awake in this world  
  
To our deep need to love  
And serve the Friend?*

*O the Beloved  
Will send you  
One of His wonderful, wild companions—  
Like Hafiz.*

D. Ladinsky, *I Heard God Laughing* – Renderings of Hafiz



# Book Review

## The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther

ANONYMOUS; TRANSLATION, INTRODUCTION, AND  
COMMENTARY BY BENGT HOFFMAN

PUBLISHER: MAHWAH, NJ: PAULIST PRESS, 1990.

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The *Theologia Germanica* (also known as *Theologia Deutsch* and *The Book of the Perfect Life*) is a mystical pamphlet written in about 1350 by an anonymous author. Martin Luther first brought it to light, publishing the version that is the source of this translation in 1518. Other versions of *The Theologia Germanica* were discovered later, and so the phrase “of Martin Luther” is meant to distinguish this particular version.

The author is believed to have belonged to a movement called the Friends of God, a group dedicated to living a godly life in close personal relationship with God. Their members included priests, monks, nuns, and laypeople, without distinction of rank or sex. By emphasizing the “inner man” they hoped to attain an intimate union with God while in this very life. The high value they placed on humility might explain the anonymity of this and other works by the Friends, and also why the *Theologia* was written in colloquial German rather than Latin, the accepted language for theological subjects at that time. Among those considered to be Friends of God are the Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck and the German mystics Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and Heinrich Suso.

The *Theologia* addresses a basic question: how can the imperfect become the Perfect.

*Saint Paul says that, when that which is perfect comes, then that which is imperfect and partial is done away with.... Note now what the perfect and the partial are. The Perfect is a Being who has comprised and embraced in Himself and in His Being all that is. Without this Being and outside of it there is no true being and in it all things have their being since it is the core of all things. This ultimate*

*Being is in Himself unchangeable and immovable, yet changes and moves everything else.*

The *Theologia* might be described as a meditation on Saint Paul's words. But of course, as the author points out, the Perfect cannot be described in words:

*Creatures that are partial and imperfect can be comprehended, known, and described in words. But the Creator, the Perfect, cannot be comprehended, known, and described in the same manner by creatures, on account of their creatureliness. The Perfect must consequently be nameless because it is not any created thing.*

Similarly,

*Someone may ask: What is the state of a person who follows the true Light to the best of his ability? I must tell you frankly that it can never be fully described. For he who is not on this path is unable to put it in words. And he who is on the path and knows is equally unable to voice it. Whoever wants to know must wait until he becomes what he knows.*

Therefore, the *Theologia* stresses that it is not enough to read about God and about saintly persons. One must experience the Perfect for himself, and this requires delving deeply into one's self:

*It may be commendable to ask, hear about, and gather information concerning good and holy persons, what they have done and suffered, or how they have lived and how God has worked and willed in and through them. But it is a hundredfold better that man deeply within himself learns and understands the what and the how of his life, what God is working and doing in him, and how God wishes to use him and not to use him.*

*Thus the saying is still true: No outgoing was ever so good that a remaining within was not better.*

This inward turning is not theoretical; it is an experience to be “tasted.”

*But if our inner being would make a leap into the Perfect, one would find and taste that the Perfect is limitlessly, endlessly, insuperably nobler and better than all imperfect and incomplete things.... By this experience we would lose our taste for the imperfect and partial; it would become as nothing.*

The author poses the question whether “while still in the body the soul could possibly attain some insight into eternity and thereby have a foretaste of eternal life and eternal bliss”? He quotes Saint Dionysius (a sixth-century Christian mystic) to show that it is possible:

*As far as beholding a divine mystery is concerned, you have to be detached from the sensual and from sensuality and all that the senses can grasp and reason may comprehend and know, including both created and uncreated things. Then you rise in a going-out of yourself, unconscious of the sense-bound and the reason-founded and move into union with that which is above all human existence and knowledge.*

Indeed, the author says, this experience “may well occur so often in a person’s life that he becomes accustomed to looking into and seeing eternity whenever he so desires. And the glance is like no other. It is nobler, dearer to God, and worthier than anything that the creature can do as creature.”

The book describes again and again that Perfection lies in knowing God and forgetting the self. After all, the perfect, the Good, comes not from us, but from God.

*For when the illusion and the ignorance turn into a realization of the Truth, the assumption that the Good comes from us will disappear of*

*its own. Man will then say, "Look, I poor fool imagined that it was I but, in truth, it is and was God!"*

Pride is to think that one's worship, love and praise of God is done by, or comes from, the self, "as though God would otherwise remain unpraised, unloved, unhonored, and unknown." Similarly, obedience to God is nothing but selflessness.

*What, then, is true obedience?*

*I answer: Man should take little account of himself as though he were not. He should view all created things from the same point of view.*

*What is real, then, and what should one hold on to?*

*I answer: one thing alone, namely that which we call God. Therein is verily true obedience.*

*Now it becomes clear what disobedience is: Man considers himself to be something and believes that he knows and is capable of something, seeks his own interest in the things around himself, is filled with self-love and the like. Man was and is created for true obedience and owes that obedience to God.*

Humility also is simply to recognize that God is all and one's self is as nothing.

*Humility stems from the inner recognition made in the true Light that being, life, knowledge, wisdom, and power are truly rooted in God, not in the created world. The creature is of itself and has from itself nothing.*

Indeed, the author makes loss of self the touchstone for becoming Perfect.

*My many words on the subject can be summed up by a few: Cut off your self, cleanly and utterly.*



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