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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 4 Love Is a Gift from the Lord
- 6 Letter from a Brother
- 11 Simmering in the Stew of Love
- 15 More and Enough
- 19 True Wealth
- 21 Simran, The Daily Diligence
- 26 The Sweetness of Grief
- 27 Live, Laugh, Love
- 30 The Modern Disciple
- 32 And the Answer Is ...
- 36 Knock and It Will Be Opened
- 39 Generosity of Spirit
- 45 To Merge in His Love
- 49 Longing
- 50 Book Review

Spiritual Link

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Love Is a Gift from the Lord

The soul cannot help but love its own origin. So we have to lift the weight of the senses, of the mind, of karmas or sins, before we experience that love. And we feel real love when we go beyond the realm of mind and maya, when there are no coverings on the soul, when the soul shines, when it knows itself. Then it experiences the real love for its own Father, for its own origin. Love has the quality of merging into another being, becoming another being. Ultimately, we lose our own identity and individuality and become one with the Father. And that is why we say that love is God and God is love.

The more love you give, the more it grows.... And the only way to experience that love is to withdraw it from the senses by simran and dhyana and attach it to the divine melody within.... So the more the mind is attached to Shabd and Nam within, the more the soul starts shining within – what we call a higher consciousness. That is our concept of love....

Meditation creates love, it strengthens love, and by love it grows. The more you give, the more it grows. It grows to such an extent that we become one with the Father. That is love.

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





Letter from a Brother

My Dear Brother,

You have asked me to tell you the ‘secrets’ of this path now that I’ve reached fifty years of age and have been on the path almost half my life. You probably think that I know much more than you since you’ve been initiated for only a year.

The first secret I’ll tell you is this: that age or time on this path doesn’t mean as much as you might think. There are those lucky satsangis who see the Radiant Form as soon as they’re initiated. There are others who labour long and see nothing within for most of their lives. Wouldn’t we all like to see the Radiant Form right away? Of course. Should we be depressed if we’ve seen nothing for years? Absolutely not, and I’ll tell you why. I remember when I first tried playing golf. I hit par on my very first hole. With steady play I thought I’d be an expert in a few months. Only after playing for a while did I realize how difficult golf was and how much effort and training it would take to be merely average at the game. The same is true with this path. We have such zeal and enthusiasm in the beginning; we think nothing can stop us from reaching Sach Khand in a short time. But when we put in some effort we see how long the road is to our goal.

This isn’t to discourage you. Nothing great is ever accomplished without enthusiasm. But here’s another secret, one that Maharaj Charan Singh Ji used to tell us, that slow and steady wins the race. What does this really mean? It means don’t always just focus on the goal. Focus on the means to the goal and, for us, the means is our daily simran and bhajan. If we do this, then the goal will take care of itself.

I can just hear you saying: “How do we know we’re on the right track without measurable progress? At least with golf I can hit a good shot every once in a while!” How do you know you’re not making progress? If you are intent on measuring progress, then do it this way: Are you following the vows carefully? If you are, then this is progress. Are you regular and punctual in your meditation? That would be spectacular progress. Do you find yourself less whipsawed by the events of the world and in your daily life? Brother, that’s the soul slowly being disentangled from the thorny bush of the world.

I’ll tell you what the best progress is – this is one of my personal secrets: If you keep at your meditation, you will actually begin to enjoy it! You will look forward to entering the quiet refuge within yourself every morning. When I was a kid I used to hide in the coat closet when I wanted to escape from family upheavals. I loved the muffled quiet, the darkness, and the smell of mothballs. Meditation is my adult coat closet, and should be yours, too. As your mind settles down (it will, just give it time) you will enjoy moments of utter serenity. You will hear the pure sweet sound of the Shabd. And, most importantly, you will palpably feel the Master’s presence within.

You will also find it remarkable how much a sense of love and devotion will grow in you. It’s not a feeling you even want to talk about because it seems so personal. But it’s there and continues to grow, and you feel the utmost gratitude.

You have mentioned to me that you feel like you’re risking everything to follow the path and the Master. In a sense, you are. We’re gambling that this path will lead us to the Lord in exchange for our love of the world. This risk seems much greater than it really is. Will you really miss the drinks and the drugs, the empty excitement of lust, and the carrion most people call food? In the beginning you will, especially as giving up these poisons will make you seem

somewhat ‘finicky’ and ‘aloof’ to worldly people. But what is the worth of these pleasures compared to the pleasure of the Master’s company? I can tell you, not much. The so-called pleasures of this world lead to a circle of pain, a circle because they create pain for all those who are involved in them. The path leads to a circle of love. Love goes from the Master to the disciple and then back to the Master. The reward of this love is too great to pass up.

You have said that you like to talk to me because you think I have it ‘figured out’. This path is too subtle, too deep, and too long for anyone to think that they’ve figured it out. Besides that, each of us is walking through a karmic maze of our own creation. We never know from one moment to the next whether we will laugh or cry, or act the sinner or saint. The only one we should look up to is the Master. He is our rock. As Soami Ji says in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*I am a slave at my Master’s feet;
I have now fulfilled the purpose of my life.*

Here is my last secret: This path requires constant application. What do I mean by that? It means you have to weigh everything you think, say, or do on the Sant Mat scales. In the beginning, this takes a lot of effort, as you might expect. Eventually, the Master will inculcate in you such a refined sense of conscience that anything you do outside the boundaries of the path will bother you. So, you will have no choice but to constantly apply the principles of the path to your life. Ah, but what a sense of freedom this will give you!

That’s enough for now. I hope these thoughts have been helpful to you. I’m sure by his grace you will be in my position one day, advising a newcomer on the path. And where will I be? My hope is another day closer to him.



*There is a place where words are born of silence,
A place where the whispers of the heart arise.*

*There is a place where voices sing your beauty,
A place where every breath
carves your image
in my soul.*

Rumi, *In the Arms of the Beloved*

*No other method in this age of darkness
for crossing the ocean of existence –
day and night just sing the Name divine,
jewel of the light in the crown of religions.*

*Following the rules of religion
through life's four stages –
student, householder, recluse, renunciate –
it doesn't work in these times.*

*Not all can manage the practices,
pilgrimages, discourses
or knowledge of scriptures.*

*But if you sing God's Name, says Namdev,
Liberation walks right in to your home.*

Sant Namdev, as quoted in *Many Voices, One Song*



Simmering in the Stew of Love

*When I am with you, we stay up all night.
When you're not here, I can't go to sleep.
Praise God for these two insomnias!
And the difference between them.*

Rumi, *The Essential Rumi*,
Rendered by Coleman Barks

When we were children, the privilege to stay up all night was considered a very special treat. There was something mysterious and tantalizing about being allowed to watch the twinkling of the stars, to listen to the adults talk of things unknown, and feel that we were not going to miss out on anything. The wonder associated with staying up till dawn faded away as we matured. As children, perhaps we felt an innate connection with the “time of elixir” – the wee hours of the morning – when the stillness felt like a magic blanket wrapping us in the love of the universe. When did we lose that awe, that wonder, that desire to hold vigil?

Clearly, as adults, how we spend our time and how our routines are scheduled is moulded by the responsibilities of family and work. Getting enough sleep to power through the next day becomes much more important than when we were young and carefree. Still, meditation time is of paramount importance. Many people find it difficult to wake up early in order to meditate, and those who do sometimes find themselves nodding off during meditation as their attention slips down to the throat centre.

While sleep requirements vary slightly from person to person, the medical community states that most healthy adults need between

seven-and-a-half to nine hours of sleep per night to function at their best. Maharaj Charan Singh advises us in *Die to Live*:

The body needs a certain amount of rest. It varies with the individual's type of work, but everybody needs not less than six hours in any way – sleeping hours, not lying hours.

Many of us find ourselves in the position of juggling our need to sleep with our commitment to our spiritual practice. It seems that the choice is to sacrifice the quality of one for the other, something Maharaj Charan Singh says we must not do:

We should never try to sit in meditation at the cost of sleep. We don't want to cut down our other activities for sleep, but we try to cut down our sleep and sit in meditation, and naturally the body needs a certain amount of rest.

Die to Live

However, Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh explains in *Science of the Soul*, that for a satsangi, the normal amount of sleep may not be as necessary as for others since “wakefulness” is one of the four walls of our spiritual fortress. He says:

The less we sleep, the more spiritual progress we can make. We do not need so much sleep as we usually have. A few hours sleep every night is quite sufficient. It leads to inner progress.

The point, though, is not to just sleep less and stay awake thinking about or doing worldly things, but to spend this time in devotion to the Lord. Have we ever attempted to stay awake throughout the

night in meditation? Maharaj Sawan Singh says in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I:

We spend hundreds of nights in pursuit of sensual gratification or in acquisition of wealth. Have we ever spent a single night in remembrance of the Lord? To keep awake at night or to sleep less is natural with all saints, because whatever they have gained was realized by them during the night. You too should keep awake in God's remembrance at night and put yourself in the practice of simran, dhyan and bhajan.

If we ever suffer bouts of insomnia, perhaps we can take it as a special blessing. We can lie in bed doing simran or sit and do meditation. If we can stay focused in simran, we are at least getting the benefit of our wakefulness and of cultivating the habit of concentration at the eye centre while conditioning the mind to simran.

I have a name for this condition – I call it simmering. Just like a rich stew of vegetables and dal, which must simmer on the stove for hours until the flavours have infused every morsel to perfection, we must simmer on the stove of Nam being cleansed, purified, and transformed; being infused with Shabd.

It really does take the fullness of time for us to be fit for spiritual transport. We must develop the receptivity to benefit from the Master's grace, to be ready for the Master to lift us up to spiritual realms.

We should consider those nights when we cannot sleep as a special time for communion with the Master. Like Rumi says, "When I am with you, we stay up all night." We can visualize the Master sitting there with us attending to our every thought, our every question, showering us with his love. This is an excellent use of the imagination, and we might be surprised at how soothing and comforting the time

becomes. Not a moment spent in remembrance of the Lord is wasted. Every round of simran is to our credit. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Light on Sant Mat*:

The Master is always within and ready to help; in fact, he waits every moment for his disciples to turn to him.... Satguru is within you and it is he who will answer all your questions and problems if by concentration and simran you withdraw your consciousness and reach the centre behind the eyes.

So if we are not able to fall to sleep, we should keep our thoughts focused on the Master and engaged in simran – turning insomnia into simmering.

While we may not be able to recapture our youthful desire to hold onto the mysterious night, with Master's grace, we can turn those restless nights into precious opportunities to focus on simran, to rest the mind while "simmering", as Master makes us fit to meet him within.



The beloved Lord yields to the love of his devotees.

Jap Ji

More and Enough

Robert Bly, a poet and translator of Rumi, Hafiz, and Mirabai, while leading a workshop on spiritual poetry, told the story of meeting with his teacher in England. They had been discussing ‘*nafs*’, the technical term in Sufism for the “hungry mind, the wanting soul, the ravenous appetite for more”. Bly said that he had told his teacher that he imagined his wife’s *nafs* as a Volkswagon Beetle and his own as a Volvo station wagon. His teacher replied, “No, Robert, your *nafs* are more like an 18-wheeler truck.”

Many of us can identify with wanting more. Even when we know that our consumption is environmentally unsustainable, we continue to find new toys and gadgets to buy and consume, even as Maharaj Charan Singh warned us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, “The more you desire these worldly things, the more hungry and thirsty you become for them.”

All of our personal materialism doesn’t begin to describe the immensity of the ‘wanting’ of the individual ego. We want more attention, more recognition, more invitations. We want personalities that are more attractive and easier to live with. Tevye, a character in the musical play *Fiddler on the Roof*, asked the plaintive question, “Would it hurt some vast, eternal plan, if I were a rich man?” We might revise that question to ask, “What would be so terrible if I were to wake up one day with a cheerful disposition, a deep sense of serenity that would allow me to focus in meditation, have expansive energy with which to serve my fellow human beings, and a profound capacity to forgive others?” We have fierce desires to be better than we are now. We want more fairness in the world. We want more information. We want to be ahead of the curve.

All of this wanting can be a force for good. When we want something badly, we are more likely to be willing to work hard for it. In our wanting we express our vision, our dreams, our hopes, and the direction we wish our lives to take.

But what happens when all this worldly wanting becomes excessive? Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

It [the mind] cannot be satisfied with whatever it gets in this world. It shifts from place to place, from person to person, from thing to thing. It is always shifting, for nothing here is able to hold our minds permanently.

We may have observed that when enough is not enough, more won't really be better. The aspect of the mind that is rapacious and greedy doesn't pause to offer thanksgiving or gratitude for the wealth already in our possession. Its focus is on what we do not have, on what is not yet achieved. It doesn't pay much attention to what we have right now.

In *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh explains how our desires keep us trapped in disappointment:

Like a bee, our mind is running from one object to another and is never at rest. It finds momentary pleasures but is soon disappointed. The transitory nature of worldly objects, no matter how near and dear, gives it no lasting peace. When the objects are gone, the mind feels uneasy.

Thus, Rumi described the *nafs* as a thief, who has stolen something very important from a blind man – his capacity for sight.

Without sight – or insight – we run after everything and anything that we think will give us pleasure and deliver us from pain. Hafiz describes our predicament:

*The stuff produced in the factories of space and time
Is not all that great....
The sweet things of this world are not all that great.*

*Heart and soul are born for ecstatic conversation
With the Soul of Souls.*

Robert Bly, ed., *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door*

But because we are blind and ravenously hungry, we usually don't move towards the "Soul of Souls", towards what is ultimately good for us. It is our hunger that moves us away from what benefits us most. Robert Bly listed ten *nafs* as interesting variations on the seven deadly sins: ignorance, anger, rancour, tyranny, arrogance, spite, envy, avarice, hypocrisy, and infidelity. He noted that most human beings don't even recognize these lower tendencies of the mind as problematic – most people are willing to follow the *nafs* blindly, wherever they may lead.

But for those who are frustrated and stymied by the *nafs*, there is a path of release. It begins with sorrow, an inner regret and genuine repentance for our endless desires. We become woefully aware that these desires don't take us where we want to go.

The next step of liberation from the *nafs*, according to the Sufi tradition, is startling. Bly called it being "touched" by *nafs*. Here the knowledge and the awareness of the ravenous mind is understood to be a blessing, a kind of grace. In this state we are actually happy to encounter our greed, our blindness, our profound doubt in the

goodness of creation, our fear and anger, and judgment. We are happy to discover our own confusion and limitations.

Ironically, this awareness is the beginning of wisdom and discrimination. Our confusion wakes us up – we begin to realize that we have no control over our own appetites and drives, and we begin to let go of the fantasy that if we only had a little more strength, virtue, and talent, then life would go smoothly. We become aware that we need help – help from God and help from our fellow human beings.

With *nafs*, the first stage is recognition, the second stage is repentance, and the last stage is called peace. Not the peace of non-violence, or the end of conflict, but “the peace that passeth all understanding”. (Bible, Phillipians 4:7) This peace of God can only be fully realized with the Shabd, the Radiant Form of the Master, and release from the ego. But even outside of the eye centre we can still get some glimpses of God’s peace. We can stop fighting, we can let go of some of our personal preferences. In other words, we can accept God’s will for us. On our best days we will be able to say, “ I want what you want for me. I want to stay in these circumstances, in this place, facing these limitations and challenges, for as long as you deem it necessary for me to undergo this karma.”

This small peace can offer us the contentment of a disciple who, while undergoing the difficulties of the journey, has faith and trust both in the guide and in the destination. As the Great Master writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

If you have placed your destiny in the hands of the Guru, he will and must take care of you until the day of your complete and perfect deliverance.



True Wealth

I ask my Friend,
In this temporary life
what could true wealth be?

And he says,
One who senses life's fleeting nature
and keeps his composure
is here to search for that permanence
that this impermanence hides,
for when one's heart is cleared
of the storm that rages there
this very chaos points one Home
to the still centre where all answers are found.

I want to tell him that I know what he means.
I want to tell him that it was in his presence
that I first realized what a heart cleared of rage feels like.
But his eyes invite me to silence
and remind me of his command,
“One can never say enough about one's Master –
the less said the better.”
And I become silent
for I have learnt that he is always right.

And I hear my heart quietly whisper,
True wealth is realized, not publicized.

Original poem by a satsangi



Simran, The Daily Diligence

All who are reading this have minds that are much the same, beyond our control. Even for disciples, the empire of our mind can be a confusion of conflicting thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, a witch's brew of dark and light that in one instant can lift us to the heights of quiet nobility, and in the next, crash us into the depths of pettiness and ill-humour.

The great irony of our situation is that we are not smart enough to win the struggle with our mind. We are not strong enough. We can't analyze our way back to the Lord any more than we can overcome the desires of our mind with our good intentions and resolute willpower.

Yet the saints challenge us to take up the war with our mind, knowing full well that by ourselves we cannot win. And they tell us as much. They tell us that it is impossible to unravel the mysteries of the Lord, to find his essence through our intellect and our learning.

Neither can we win the war through even the most forceful exertion of our will. Various saints have said that they would never believe anyone who claimed to have subdued their mind, were they a sadhu or sinner. We know from our own experiences that the more we suppress the mind the more it revolts.

We can adopt all kinds of physical and mental disciplines of all degrees of difficulty to try and bully the mind into obedience. But for most of us, nothing works for very long – our mind still continues to bounce from one desire to another, endlessly free-falling at the end of a bungee cord.

What a dilemma! The mind, which is our great friend in so many ways, is also our biggest enemy. We couldn't exist in this creation without the mind and its ability to sort through the billions of pieces

of data streaming through the senses every second. So what are we to do? How can we use and appreciate the mind without being a slave to its habits? Living saints who come to this creation to collect souls have the solution. They know from experience and report to us that to disengage our mind from the world's illusions, we must offer our mind the taste of something that is sweeter and eternally more satisfying than the paltry trinkets of the physical plane.

That something which can steady our mind and keep it as a friend while minimizing it as an enemy is the primal music of the Lord, the Shabd. It is described by the saints as so sweet and so transcendent that, on tasting it, our mind becomes completely satisfied and calm.

To attain that Shabd, the saints teach us the practice of simran, remembrance of the Lord through repetition. The power of the five names comes from the power of the giver of the names – our living Master, a Sant Satguru. The names are charged with his spiritual power and bear his authority.

It is repetition of the holy names that is at the core of our search for the inner sound. While the Shabd is the ultimate power that captivates our mind and carries us home, it is our daily attention to simran that prepares us to become attentive to that sweet melody. Shabd purifies us and burns away our layers of stored-up karmas.

Our spiritual journey is a magical mixing together of our daily labour and the Master's irrepressible love and grace. Although the saints don't tell us the proportions of the ingredients in this mystical recipe – how much is our effort, how much is our Master – we do know that without his compassion and grace, we go nowhere. But despite how vital the Master's role is in our quest, our labour in simran is absolutely necessary. Meditation is the work we do that pleases him the most. It is our day-in and day-out efforts at devotion that attract Master's grace.

As fortunate as disciples of a living saint are, the reality of our spiritual quest can be very different from what we hoped and expected. Not long after we begin our meditation practice we can be taken aback by the continuing dryness of the time we spend in inner darkness. We may find it desolate – no perceptible inward and upward movement, certainly nothing tantalizing to capture our wayward mind, not even anything that feels like the cleansing and scrubbing away of karmas.

We may have expected to cross the stars, the sun and the moon, and be met by the Radiant Form of the Master in no time at all. But instead, months turn into years, and we may find that the path was not the quick fix we hoped it would be. We may discover that our expectations are grounded in a superficial understanding of the Master's grace and that we grossly underestimate the breadth and depth of the foundation in simran we need for the road we are travelling upon.

If we desire to travel the spiritual path, it behooves us to pay close attention to the words of the saints. When Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that simran cannot be overemphasized, and when Great Master says that the way to find the Shabd is through simran, they aren't just speaking of possibilities or probabilities. They mean what they say. When we listen carefully to the mystics, we can come to understand that in order to be prepared to catch hold of the celestial melody which is our own divine essence, simran has to become our constant companion.

In the mystical mixture of our labour in simran and Master's grace, the only ingredient we have to offer is our continuous repetition. And luckily for us that is enough because it is the Master who adds substance and meaning to the recipe by bringing all of his qualities to the effort we give. When we consistently make

repetition of the five names our constant companion, the Master draws ever closer to us. So boundless is the Master's grace and so great the power of the five names that we are slowly changed every day by each round of simran that we complete. Over time, the small miracles that occur in our life bear witness to our slow but automatic transformation. And as we experience this divine joyousness, we naturally discharge our worldly obligations in a much better way – we become a better parent, a better spouse, a better associate. At the same time, we are cultivating the proper atmosphere for meditation.

Eventually, we begin to fall in love with the simple process of simran itself, to the extent that we forget to worry about what our mind calls 'progress'. Instead, we start feeling the Master's presence.

There is no doubt about it – all inward spiritual milestones will come to us. Our mind *will* get a taste of the sweet and transcendent celestial melody. Repetition is the key. Since the 'when' of our journey is beyond our comprehension, it is the 'how', the process of repetition, that we should be focusing on.

So let us give up thinking, analyzing, calculating; let us instead give ourselves over to action, to the incomparable process of simran that sweeps us clean, draws the Master close, and allows us to catch hold of reality and the truth of our journey.

We know nothing about the inner consequences of the ongoing mixing together of our baby-step efforts and the Master's unlimited compassion. And we won't know that until we devote ourselves to performing the simple act of simran that leads us to the Shabd, the source of all knowledge, omnipotent and eternal.

Therefore, let us, as Kabir Sahib suggests:

*Day and night, over and again
Repeat, repeat his Name....
While sleeping or awake, relish,
Relish the ambrosia of simran....
Without it you'll not find freedom*

Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name



The most holy and powerful is your level of consciousness which you achieve by doing simran. It is the level that you achieve with the help of simran that is most powerful. No matter how powerful the words may be, if the concentration is not there, you're not able to achieve that level of consciousness.... In meditation we're calling the Master at every stage, all the time, even to the last moment. For a disciple, meditation is nothing but the Master at every level.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

The Sweetness of Grief

From the beginning of time, people have been praying, chanting, drumming, dancing, lighting candles, writing words of prayer, sitting alone, and crying out in silence. But what is it that compels us to pray? It is the losses, the being lost, the griefs, the sorrows of life that bring us to cry out for help. Blessed are the mourners, it has been said.

*There is a brokenness
out of which comes the unbroken,
a shatteredness
out of which blooms the unshatterable.
There is a sorrow
beyond all grief which leads to joy
and a fragility
out of whose depths emerges strength.*

Rashani Rea, Contemporary Poet

Grief is the friend who brings us to our knees. The relationship with the divine becomes our focus. Some deep knowing, some inborn instinct is awakened within us. We cry, “I beg you, God – spirit, Power, holy Father, holy Mother – I beg you, help me; I cannot go on without your help.” And help comes, always help comes with real begging.

And this begging becomes our meditation. Simply begging. And simply thanking. Simran forms the circle of please and thank you that spirals upward to our Friend. Grief becomes the cup that fills with joy and becomes our portal to God.



Live, Laugh, Love

His laughter was spontaneous, vibrant, joyful and infectious. He would catch his lower lip in his teeth as though this were the only way he could stop himself laughing too much. Were he not himself to limit it, one felt his merriment might shake the whole world.

Legacy of Love

“Live, Laugh, Love.” This popular saying originated from a poem by Bessie Anderson Stanley titled “Success”, where she begins with, “He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much.” While most people have forgotten or are unaware of the origin of this famous quote, it remains so well liked that the Internet is filled with thousands of different variations and explanations of it.

Recently, I came across a particular variation of the quote that said, “Live every moment, laugh every day, love beyond words.” This seems like a good piece of advice for all of us.

Live every moment: As they say, “life is short.” We don’t know what tomorrow or even the next second will bring. Therefore, we should aim to live the Sant Mat way of life twenty-four hours a day. With the help of our simran, we should remember our main objective in life. We cannot be part-time satsangis. Baba Ji has often said that our meditation is not just two-and-a-half hours; we have to live in the atmosphere of meditation twenty-four hours a day. Similarly, in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

Every moment that we spend in his memory, in his love, in devotion and meditation, is accounted for and credited to

us, and we get its benefits. So, whatever time we can give, we should try to give it. And this is not only the mechanical meditation of giving two hours and thirty minutes and then forgetting it the rest of the time. Our whole day, every day, should be lived in Sant Mat.

We must make a conscious effort to follow this path every moment while also remembering that we cannot change the past, and there is no guarantee of the future. Therefore, we must learn to live in the moment, every moment.

Laugh every day: Laughter is undoubtedly good for us. In fact, many studies have shown that laughter benefits our physical and mental health because it relaxes the body, boosts the immune system, releases endorphins, and protects the heart. This world is imperfect and each one of us has to deal with our own unique set of problems, but the Masters remind us that we shouldn't lose our sense of humour. In *Legacy of Love* Maharaj Charan Singh says:

Except humans, nobody laughs. I don't think you would have ever seen a bird laughing, or a dog laughing, or an animal laughing! They may smile, but you have not seen them laughing. This privilege is only given to humans. If we want to remain humans, humour has to be there just to relax.

All the Masters have a wonderful sense of humour. How many times has Baba Ji made us laugh? And how wonderful is it to see him laugh! So let us try to accept our circumstances and not take life too seriously because as we are often reminded, we'll never get out of it alive!

Love beyond words: Many people have tried and continue to try to express what love is through the use of words. However, words are a poor expression of love, we have to experience love to know what it is. In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II, Maharaj Sawan Singh explains it so well when he says:

It is not easy to understand love because its true nature and greatness cannot be described in words. It is a pure and delicate feeling or emotion which can be experienced only by one who is in love. It is beyond the capacity of the tongue or the pen to describe it in any human language. Actually, love is another name for God. And just as it is not possible to reduce God's greatness to mortal dimensions, so also is it not possible to describe adequately in any words known to man, the grandeur and sublimity of love.

In order to experience love for the Lord and his creation, we have to follow our Master's instructions. That is why the Masters tell us that Sant Mat is not a path of words, but a path of action. It is with the action of meditation that we can experience this love.

So however we choose to live, laugh and love, we can look to our Master for guidance because he is the perfect example. Let us aim to be like him.



We have to forget; we have to forgive; we have to train our mind to take things easily, lightly, to laugh them away, ignore them. This is all training the mind.

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

The Modern Disciple

As disciples of a living Master, can we pick and choose the requests we want to obey? Can we do only those things that are easy or pleasurable or quick? Can we follow the teachings half-heartedly and still feel deep love and devotion for our Master? There is a story that answers some of these questions.

The story about a modern disciple who lived in a forest with his Master. One cold night, it was storming and the roof began to leak, so the Master asked the disciple to climb up on the roof and stop the leak. The disciple wanted to follow his Masters instructions, but he thought to himself, “It is cold and dark and I will get wet and may slip and fall and may break my leg,” so he said, “Master, if I go up on the roof, I will have to go higher than you. I couldn’t possibly do that, as it would be disrespectful.” The Master went and fixed the leak.

When he came down from the roof, the Master noticed that they had run out of firewood, so he asked the disciple to go into the forest and collect some wood.

Again, the disciple wanted to follow his Master’s wishes, but thinking of the forest, he felt afraid. “It is so dark and there are wild animals out there. I could easily get hurt or be eaten alive.” So he thought quickly and said, “Master, to leave you and go out, I would have to turn my back on you. I couldn’t possibly do that, for it would be most disrespectful.” Again the Master said nothing, but went to collect the wood in the forest.

When the Master returned with the wood, it was time to prepare dinner. He cooked it and when it was ready he called to his disciple, “My son, dinner is ready, come now and eat.”

At this, the disciple came running and threw himself at his Master's feet, saying, "O my Master, please forgive me! Twice I have disobeyed you. I could not possibly disobey you a third time. This time I will certainly do as you desire."

Adapted from *Tales of the Mystic East*



*Blessed are those who dance through life
loving God, singing his Name.
Merciful towards all, they feel
happiness and sadness as one.
Fountains of wisdom, love and devotion,
they've forgotten the senses....
They've dropped the baggage
of intelligence and skill,
and walk through the world as tourists.
Awake or asleep, says Eknath,
they sing the Name,
always attuned to the One within.*

Ekhnath, as quoted in *Many Voices, One Song*

And the Answer Is ...

It was 1991 in San Francisco and Baba Ji was making his first appearance in the USA as the Master. It was the first thing we heard him say. It could have been the last. Just before the questions started flying, just before he was about to spend the rest of his life answering all our questions, he tried to give us the only piece of advice that we would ever really need. It was simple: The answer to all of your questions is meditation.

For most of us, it takes a little while to get to that realization. The human intellect is such that the straight truth often simply just won't do. Oh no, not for *homo sapiens*; thinking man must have the *why*, *what* and *how* questions satisfied, and once the mind comprehends these concepts and has satisfied the intellect, then perhaps it will get down to the business at hand – which then leads us right back where we started in the first place: meditation.

No wonder the Masters tell us that the reason the path is long is because it goes through us. It seems that's just how we're wired. So, perhaps we should take a look at the why, how, and what of it.

Why is it that, having found a perfect Master, who has revealed the truth of our circumstance, we are not completely committed to practising our meditation as often as we possibly can? We understand the transitory nature of physical life. The graying head, lined face and sagging physique that stares back at us in the mirror is enough to convince us of that. We know that this physical plane is little better than a hunting ground where death stalks and devours every living thing. We know that the flesh of these bodies is heir to disease, pain, cruelty, and all manner of unspeakable acts. We've only to pick up a newspaper for that to be abundantly clear.

As a matter of fact, if we honestly consider man's horrifying inhumanity to his fellow man and to the animal species, we would almost have to be crazy to neglect the meditation that frees us from imprisonment here in this physical plane. Yet we make ourselves volunteer slaves to the material world. Why would we do such a thing?

In *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Great Master tells us precisely the why of our plight here and why we do little or nothing to save ourselves:

Without Nam life is no better than a curse , and the soul keeps wandering aimlessly from one body to another. The wheel of birth and death keeps turning endlessly.... At the instigation of the mind he leads a life of sin and wastes this priceless gift of human life.

That brings us to the what of it. What is this Nam, this simran (repetition), this bhajan that frees us from the illusion of the sensory mind? In *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh writes:

Simran's current links up with the Dhun, and the current of the Dhun links one with the Shabd – and the Shabd is the very essence of the Anami Lord himself. For this reason, if simran is done with love and devotion ... it brings great joy and bliss. Grace and mercy then descend in full measure.

And that's what Baba Ji said once in satsang in Northern California, and as usual, he said it in the fewest possible words: Meditation is your lifeline. That's only one word more than, "Just do it."

Which brings us to the how question. How do we "just do it"? Great Master writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

You also ask for the method I worked out for myself during my own early experiences. In regard to that, I may say that I never worked out any method for myself. I took instructions from my own Guru and he gave me the exact method. That method is the same as all saints use, which is simply the concentrated attention held firmly at the given centre. What else can we say? It is all a matter of unwavering attention.... It may be said safely that if any earnest student should hold his attention fully upon the given centre for three hours, without wavering, he must go inside. But that is not so easy without long practice. However, by and by, the mind becomes accustomed to staying in the centre. It rebels less and less, and finally yields to the demand to hold to the centre. Then your victory is won.... This was the method by which I won my way inside and it is the method by which you must win your way.

Can it possibly be as simple as that, just putting one foot in front of the other, unquestioningly following the Guru's instructions, forging ahead with faith in the words of the Master? It is rather like "The Fool" in a deck of tarot cards: the young man marching along his path, with his bundle of karmas slung over his shoulder on a hobo stick. There's a little dog yapping distractingly at his feet. But the fool looks neither right nor left as he steps off the edge of the cliff into mid-air, certain that he will be supported and sustained.

We are like that fool, or at least we want to be. Unquestioning, unafraid, undeterred as we step into the void – into the utter darkness from which comes the Light, into the profound silence from which comes the Sound, into the solitary morning embrace from which comes all that we've ever hoped for – to that place where the Beloved assures us he awaits us, is waiting there even now.

Baba Ji once said that if we ask him our questions on the outside, he will answer on the outside. But if we ask our questions on the inside, he will answer on the inside.

The answer is meditation. Now, what are your questions?



*Other than you, no one exists –
the whole creation is your theatre for the drama of life.*

*All living beings are created by you
and tasks are assigned to them according to your will.*

*Everything happens as you will;
nothing is in our power.*

*Through meditation on Nam I attained great bliss,
and by singing the praises of God my mind was pacified.*

*By the perfect Guru's grace, celebrations are held
as Nanak emerges victorious in the tough battlefield of life.*

Guru Arjan Dev, as quoted in *Voice of the Heart*

Knock and It Will Be Opened

Whatever you do in life, always remember that meditation should never be sacrificed for anything in this world. The wealth of meditation is permanent and lasting and is yours, whereas everything of this world is perishable and transitory.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

It will be time well spent if we remember the words of the Master and act upon them. Masters do not speak idly; they don't waste words, and they don't speak anything but absolute truth. Hazur's advice here is urgent and essential. However, since we have heard this advice so often and for so many years, we may have become jaded; the precious message may fall on deaf ears and not have as great an effect as it should have upon the mind.

When we are first initiated we are like small fires that Master has kindled – flaming brightly and enthusiastically by his grace, love, and mercy. After a few years Master seems to step back and say, “Okay, now let's see you put in some good, hard work on your own.” The honeymoon is over, but he promises to be near, watching and helping us along the way. We might work feverishly for some time, but sooner or later our enthusiasm may start to wane. In some cases, the fire may burn down to mere glowing coals. The mind with its worldly concerns covers these coals with the ashes of distraction, discouragement, or even indifference. However, if we approach satsang with the right attitude, it may encourage and help motivate us by blowing away a few of those ashes, so that the coals may burn a little brighter. Satsang may even figuratively toss a few dry twigs onto our embers, causing them to become little fires again. One day, Master will pile on more dry

twigs, then small branches, then heavier logs until we become blazing infernos of all-consuming love for him.

One who achieved this state was saint Mirabai, who sings in *Mira: The Divine Lover*:

*O Lord of the forlorn, open your eyes;
For long have I stood
Awaiting your one loving look.
Friends and family have turned into enemies;
They shun me like poison.
Except you, in this world,
Dear Lord, I have no friend;
My boat is tossing in the sea.
Restlessly I pass my days;
Without sleep I pass my nights.
I wither as I stand and stand
Awaiting you, dear Lord.
Like an arrow the pangs of separation
Rankle within my heart;
Never for a moment can I forget you.*

Mira was ablaze with the fire of love. We, perhaps, are not yet in this condition, owing to our karma and attachments to the creation. We are not yet eloquent in our cries of love, but are perhaps more like the inarticulate, helpless babes who can only cry and plead dumbly for the Master's grace and mercy.

The Masters have indicated that the characteristic of love is to become another being. We do not become the Master or the Lord until we first become devoted to him to the exclusion of all else. It is said that complete devotion to the Master becomes love and love of the

Master becomes consecrated love. This is what Sant Mat is all about: Undiluted, undistracted, one-pointed, no-nonsense love!

How do we get this kind of love? First of all, we don't get it. It is purely his gift.

Maharaj Charan Singh writes here to a struggling disciple:

It is inconceivable to think of progress on the path without the grace of the Supreme Father. It was that grace that brought us on the path and it is grace that will enable us to advance. When and where, and how much, are all in the hands of the Supreme Father. Whenever he is pleased to bestow that grace, we move along the path....

Unpublished letter to a satsangi

What, if anything, can we poor struggling ones do to invoke it, to provoke his grace, so to say? His response is always the same: we should put in the effort to do our meditation. He promises that he will do the rest. We need to make the effort to please him, to obey him by following the four vows taken at initiation, and to never neglect our meditation. We need to 'knock at his door,' so that someday it will be opened by the Lord himself.

We know why we should knock, we know where we should knock, and we know how we should knock. Nothing remains except for us to just do it. Our job is to do our spiritual practice with as much dedication, love and devotion, patience, and perseverance as we can muster. He does the rest.



Generosity of Spirit

A short movie is often shown at the Dera on the weekends in the mand pandal before the satsang begins. It is the simple, touching story of a man who donates a kidney to one of his employees. I've seen the movie several times, and it always brings tears to my eyes. It offers a profound example of what it means to be a good human being.

The plot is straightforward. The boss discovers that his clerk, the man who brings him tea, is in the hospital as a result of kidney failure. The clerk's wife and children are crying; there are no kidneys available for him to receive a life-saving transplant. The boss, who is a good and kind man, explains to his wife that he has decided to donate his own kidney. He goes to the doctor. He finds out that he is a good match, a compatible donor. And then he makes the decision to go forward, under one condition: that his employee is never to know who donated the kidney. The transplant goes smoothly. The employee and the employer have a full recovery. Even the initially worried wife of the boss decides that she, too, will donate a kidney to save the life of a stranger.

The newly healthy employee, who has returned to work, then brings tea to his employer. The boss invites him to sit down and to tell him how he is getting along. The man replies that he has one great regret – he does not know who gave him his kidney. The boss just smiles and keeps his gift anonymous.

There are five virtues that this story illustrates that have the power to inspire us towards becoming better human beings. These virtues are: humility, compassion, charity, effort, and standing in the presence of God. There are, of course, many virtues. These five are not a definitive list, but they are a place to begin. They can provide a

foundation to our lives, to our meditation practice, and to reaching our ultimate goal of God-realization.

Let's begin with humility. The most astonishing thing about the man who donated his kidney was his humility. He didn't want credit for his noble action. He didn't parade his generosity, his gift, or his sacrifice. He just quietly gave what he could. He saw an opportunity to be of service, and he took it. He saved a man's life, but he did so with no egotism, no fanfare, wanting no attention for himself.

Today, and possibly in all times, the world teaches us to claim whatever we do, know, or accomplish as ours – as our individual success. This claim can lead to what has been called a kind of “moral narcissism”. The egotist hopes to make a parade of virtue, accompanied by brass bands and loud trumpets. That is not the path of the saints.

Maharaj Sawan Singh cautions us:

If we do not take a humble and meek attitude before doing a good deed, do not retain it while doing and do not consider it a gift by the grace of the Lord and the Master after it is done, it is snatched from our hands by pride amidst our rejoicings. The way to God is firstly humility, secondly humility, and thirdly humility. Again, unless humility precedes, accompanies and follows every good action we perform, pride wrests wholly from our hands any good work on which we are congratulating ourselves.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. III

There are many ways to learn humility: growing up in the school of hard knocks, being a parent, moving to a new place where we don't know how to even find the grocery stores, hospitals, or recreational facilities. Then there are the indignities of aging, whereby we are rendered increasingly invisible and irrelevant. Life can teach us to

be humble in many, many ways. But the best way to learn our own limitations and our own need for forgiveness and grace is to meditate. Meditation is the humbler of everyone who tries! If we desire to become a better human being through increasing our humility, meditation will do it. It is an ego-crushing activity. As Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “The more we meditate, the more we are driving out ego.”

An important virtue emerges as our humility increases. We begin to see that we are not the only ones in the world: we are not the only ones with problems to solve, with suffering to face, with responsibilities to fulfil, or with significant challenges to overcome. When we stop focusing so much on ourselves and our own needs, desires, and failings we become much more aware of others.

The second virtue is compassion. As we become more aware of others’ challenges and suffering, we naturally become more compassionate – we feel empathy for our brothers and sisters. The man who donated his kidney clearly saw the suffering of his employee. It mattered to him that the clerk’s children were about to lose their father, and that his wife was about to lose her husband.

Maharaj Sawan Singh gives a beautiful description of compassion:

Humanity simply means love for the Lord and his creation. Its other name is sympathy or compassion, fellow-feeling, or heart-felt attraction. Its proof is that one’s heart melts like wax on seeing the suffering of another. The other man’s suffering appears as his own. He heartens him, feels sympathy for and is attracted to him, and takes steps to remove his suffering.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. III

Hazur Maharaj Ji is very clear about compassion when he says:

If we can do anything to help anybody, we should. That is our duty – we are meant to help each other. Humans are meant to help humans. Who else will help? Birds and plants won't come to help you – you have to help each other. We should be a source of strength to each other.... Your heart should be very, very soft to other people and you should be very compassionate, very kind.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

As we become more humble, and our hearts become softer, then we can become more generous, more giving.

The third virtue is charity. Our hands open in offering towards our neighbours. The gift of a kidney that the boss in the film gave was the gift of life. Baba Ji encourages all of us to become organ donors, if only at death. But charity, our capacity to give and be generous, can be a daily gift. We can offer a smile to a cashier at the store, a welcome to a friend, a word of encouragement to someone who is exhausted, or an email to someone who feels isolated and lonely. The practice of generosity is important. It embodies the understanding that we are here to serve. It is the basis for seva.

Maharaj Sawan Singh states the situation succinctly:

We are all children of the one Supreme Father. Everybody has a claim on what he [God] is bestowing. Share the gifts with the poor, the orphaned and the helpless. We are all partners. Bestowing gifts on others is possible only through the feeling of mercy. Mercy always resides in the heart of the charitable.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. III

Becoming humble, compassionate, and more generous sounds good. But how does this transformation actually happen in our lives?

It should be obvious that it is not sufficient to merely think about becoming a better human being, to contemplate the possibility, to listen to satsangs on the subject, or to admire the concept.

The fourth virtue is hard work. We can understand that donating a kidney is a fine and noble ideal. Doing it requires the sacrifice, the work and pain of surgery, and recovery. Hard work begins with good intentions, but must be followed through with action.

Becoming a better human being takes effort, practice, and persistence. It is our assignment every morning. It can be our aspiration in every interaction with someone, in every service we perform. One thing that Baba Ji seems to emphasize is that it *all* matters – whether it is the simplest act of recycling or the smallest kindness we extend. Picking up a piece of trash on the sidewalk matters. Offering a compliment to a co-worker matters. Smiling instead of frowning matters. The Masters say we are only on this earth for two purposes: for God-realization and to help one another. And in some mysterious way, these two central passions of our lives are intertwined.

A tender moment in the kidney transplant film occurs when the clerk, not knowing that he is in the presence of his life-giving donor, says, “I wish I could see the face of the person who gave me this kidney, for then I would be able to see the face of God.” That brings us to the fifth virtue, and one of the most extraordinary ways we can become better human beings. This happens when we begin to be aware that we are always in the presence of God.

The Lord is present within us, closer than our own breathing. When can we experience this? We will know that we are living in the presence of the Master, the One who is truly virtuous, when we take refuge in him, when we remember him, when we seek his companionship. Of course, it’s true that we can turn in his direction only when he pulls us. But look at all the hundreds of ways he is pulling us:

whenever we do our meditation, with every round of simran, in satsang, whenever we recognize our fellow travellers as being God's children, whenever we experience the kindness of a stranger, and in every moment of seva. And there is no better way to see generosity than in an enlightened human being – in a saint who personifies humility, compassion, charity, and endless effort on behalf of the sangat; who manifests an absolute focus on God.

Every initiate, every day, is invited to become aware that he or she is standing in the presence of the Master. We discover that we are not alone in this work of becoming a better human being. He is determined to make us like him. One day we might even discover that the path of God-realization and the path of becoming a better human being are indistinguishable.



Love for the Master will create love for your other fellow human beings, because then you will see the Master in every disciple.... The more you love the Lord, the more you love his creation, the more you're loving and helpful and kind to this creation.

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

To Merge in His Love

When we ask the Master what attribute he values most in a disciple, the answer is love. We can live without everything else, but not without love. On this path, our goal is not wealth or achievements or recognition, but only love – to be immersed in love, to be lost in love. The saints want us to dive so deeply into our meditation that we ultimately drown in that ocean of love.

That is our destiny, to merge into his love until there is nothing left of our mind, our ego, our weaknesses, our doubts. The real Master is the Shabd and the real disciple is the soul. The ultimate aim of the path of the Masters is to merge the soul into that Shabd. Maharaj Charan Singh used to define that kind of love as losing your own identity and becoming another being.

We want that kind of love, but when it comes to drowning in it, losing ourselves in it, we hesitate. The mind is attached to its individual identity; to the body, health, wealth, and relationships; to possessions, plans, desires and ambitions. It wants to experience that supreme love without drowning in it, while retaining its own identity. But saints say this is impossible. Hence, the spiritual path involves a struggle between the soul that longs to merge into something transcendent and pure and the mind that is addicted to sensual pleasures and worldly pursuits.

Because our own mind can be our worst enemy, saints and mystics emphasize the importance of keeping our spiritual ideal clearly in focus. The mind is constantly making us forget the true purpose of human life and is secreting a continuous stream of worldly thoughts that distract us from the Masters' lofty teachings.



The Master often says that the saints present to us the ideal. We are inspired by that goal, we want to achieve it, but it is very difficult to reach in a short time. So we constantly need to remind ourselves of our ideal and at the same time seek practical advice on how to achieve it. Our ideal is to prepare ourselves for that day when the Master will drown us in his love till there is nothing left of us.

Kabir explains in *Kabir, The Great Mystic*:

*He is a great devotee
Who is absorbed
In devotion for the Lord;
He alone will obtain
The Immaculate One.*

This one-pointed absorption in the object of contemplation is the key to successful meditation. To achieve this state, all thoughts must cease except the repetition of the Beloved's names. To succeed at this, our whole life has to be re-oriented so that the spiritual practice and discipline is our highest priority. Our action is crucial; however, one-pointed focus can never be achieved by effort alone, as the grace of the Master is supreme on the path of devotion.

Therefore, Kabir gives us this very practical advice on how to conquer the mind and remain in a state of spiritual balance and equipoise. He says:

*With arms raised Kabir calls:
Repeat,
Repeat the Lord's Name
Each day, with each breath,*

*For Nam alone will be your saviour
At the perilous hour of death.*

All day long we should contemplate on the Satguru and live in the atmosphere of our meditation through repetition of our simran. It is through our simran that we rise above the world and are not affected by its affairs. We should be like the elephant that, even though dogs are nipping at his leg, continues to walk unperturbed. Constant simran develops such will power in us that we can remain on the edge of life. It creates an environment within the mind where love of the Master flourishes, the senses come under control, and meditation becomes much easier. However, because of the nature and power of the mind, the depths of our attachments, and our heavy burden of karmas, this may take a very long time. Patience and perseverance are required.

In the end, though, as Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Light on Sant Mat*:

When the inner contact is fully established with the Shabd form of the Satguru, the spirit floats in his grace as the fish in water and even momentary interruptions become unbearable. This is a very advanced stage, and represents an ideal for the average satsangi.

For us average satsangis, who are working slowly and steadily towards this ideal by doing our daily meditation and remembering our simran throughout the day as much as possible, there is nothing to be concerned about; the Lord will shower his grace upon us and fill us with the necessary love and devotion to reach our goal. He will drown us in that Ocean of Love as our soul merges into him.



Longing

*Rise, O moon, spread your light across the heavens;
the stars remember you in silent prayer.
Those who were once merchants of rubies in their homeland
now roam the alleyways of earthly life like beggars...
Already predisposed are we
to fly back to our long-lost home.*

*A glimpse of the Master, says Bahu,
is better than millions of pilgrimages.*

*My heart is ablaze with the love of my Beloved –
who could extinguish this flame?
How could I have known the nature of this love,
which has made me bow my head at every doorstep? ...
O Bahu, I would sacrifice my life for the one
who would unite me with my long-lost Beloved.*

*Beautiful is my Beloved and ugly am I –
how can I ever win his heart?
Despite my countless efforts
he has not entered the courtyard of my heart...
Says Bahu: I am always tormented by the thought
that I might die crying in anguish for my Beloved.
Hazrat Sultan Bahu, as quoted in *Voice of the Heart**



Book Review



Gitanjali

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE. TRANSLATED BY AUTHOR
FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1913.

Gitanjali, a book of poems of love and longing for the divine, is the best known work of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Tagore wrote prolifically in Bengali. But only in 1913, with the publication of *Gitanjali* in Tagore's own English version, did the entire world come to know of this remarkable voice. That year Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Many of the poems of *Gitanjali* have as their theme Tagore's effort to understand the relationship between his talents as a poet and the God whom he wishes to serve and please.

*My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress
and decoration.*

*Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between
thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.*

*My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I
have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple
and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.*

He acknowledges that his poetic gift is a gift from God, and vows to await the divine inspiration patiently.

*If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure
it. I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil and
its head bent low with patience.*

*The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy
voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.
Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds'*

nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

Many poems express Tagore's pain at separation from the divine:

*The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.
I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.
The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set;
only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.
The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.
I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have
heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.
The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but
the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.
I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.*

Yet he lives constantly in anticipation of God's presence:

*Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.
Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes,
comes, ever comes.
Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their
notes have always proclaimed, 'He comes, comes, ever comes.'
In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he
comes, comes, ever comes.
In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of
clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.
In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and
it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine.*

Tagore revels in the beauties of nature, but in praising them he explicitly or implicitly is praising God. For example, when speaking ecstatically of light, the light of the sun is also the light of God:

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!
Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.
The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.
The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.
Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

For Tagore, the divinity is intensely personal yet without a specific form. His connection to God is intimate, yet deeply reverent. He says, "Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord."

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.
I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed – let this be my parting word.
In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.
My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come – let this be my parting word.

Another recurrent theme is the struggle to overcome pride, which for Tagore is an impediment to devotion.

I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?

*I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger; he adds
his loud voice to every word that I utter.
He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame; but I am
ashamed to come to thy door in his company.*

Tagore returns again and again to prayers for surrender, expressing his longing to dissolve in the divine.

*Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.
Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on
every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee
my love every moment.
Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.
Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with
thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life –
and that is the fetter of thy love.*

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