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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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# contents

- 4 Love Is a Human Virtue
- 6 A Simple Life
- 10 Now Is the Time
- 14 Begin to Live Light
- 16 Master's Faithful Agent
- 22 Love
- 24 Thou Shalt Not Worry
- 28 Grateful for the Pain
- 32 What Is Our Objective?
- 36 The Supreme Bargain
- 42 Five Gems of Advice
- 47 The Dance of Love
- 50 Book Review

## **Spiritual Link**

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# Love Is a Human Virtue

## Words of the Master

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 to him as his own. He heartens him, feels sympathy for and is attracted to him, and takes steps to remove his sufferings.

A man should feel for others and consider their sufferings as his own. Sheikh Sa'adi says that if there are no feelings of kindness, mercy or love, then there is no difference in such a man and the figure of a man on the wall. Both are useless.

*If there is no mercy or gratitude in a man,  
What is the difference between him and a figure on a wall?*

Kabir Sahib also says that the man who has no love is like a graveyard while living. He is like the bellows of the ironsmith which breathes even though lifeless.

*The heart without love is like a graveyard;  
Just like the bellows of an ironsmith  
Which breathes though lifeless.*

The fire of love being kindled, other virtues and gifts come of themselves.... God is Love and the world lives by Love. It is, therefore, the duty of a human being to love.

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



# A Simple Life

Life is simple. It is we who complicate it. As Maharaj Charan Singh puts it in *Treasure Beyond Measure*:

*Life is so simple but we people create so many problems and complications, that we spend the whole of our life in solving them. [I] do not know when we are going to learn to take simple things in a simple way.*

So, what are we to do, we people of such complex lives and busy minds? How are we to get back to a simple life without so many problems, complications, desires, anxieties, and cares? How are we to get back to a simple life based in love?

The Masters say everything comes from meditation. So, too, it is with simplifying our lives. Just what does this mean? The only way to really simplify our lives is to simplify our minds through spiritual practice – focused and concentrated spiritual practice. To be focused and concentrated is in fact to be simple. To be scattered is to create complications. Focus and concentration in meditation lead to simplicity of mind. Scattering of the attention leads to stress and tension, for it takes us away from our centre, away from God – away from peace and contentment. To be concentrated is to be relaxed, happy, and in love. What is love but total attentive concentration, focus, and immersion in the Beloved?

Thomas Kelly, an American Quaker educator of the nineteenth century, in *A Testament of Devotion*, writes about how to live our lives simply. He says:

*Life is meant to be lived from a centre – a divine centre. Each one of us can live such a life of amazing power and peace and serenity, of integration and confidence and simplified multiplicity.*

He then goes on to say that if we yield to this divine centre, we won't have to struggle, strain or renounce anything in order to achieve simplicity. If we yield to this centre, our lives will automatically become simple because we will have singleness of purpose. For us as disciples, our lives will be focused with one-pointed devotion on our Master and our meditation. When we yield to our Master, and let him direct our lives, we will let go and let God be at the helm. Then we can just relax and enjoy the ride, humbly walking in the presence, guidance, and will of God.

Thomas Kelly continues in the same book about people who have found this deep centre of living:

*Surrounding the trifles of their daily life is an aura of infinite peace and power and joy. We are so strained and tense, with our burdened lives; they are so poised and at peace.*

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, Hazur agrees:

*The more we run out to achieve happiness, the more frustrated and unhappy we are becoming.... If we just pursue that happiness within ourselves, we can become happy. And unless we find that happiness within ourselves, life is not worth living.*

So concentration and focus on the divine centre leads to simplicity of mind. Simplicity of mind leads to simple actions which lead to a simple life.

Once a novice monk went to his Zen master and asked him for the secret of realization. The Zen master replied: “When I walk, I just walk, when I eat I just eat, and when I meditate I just meditate.” No extraneous thinking, planning, reviewing, or worrying – just being in the moment, pure and simple.

The Masters tell us that for everything we do in life we need to have an objective. As satsangis, we are extremely fortunate to know exactly what our objective is in life, as well as how to attain it. It’s all laid out for us. All we have to do is to follow the directions given to us at the time of initiation. When we come to a choice point in our lives, we can ask, “Will this take me closer to God-realization, closer to the Master or further away?” On an even more intimate note, we can ask “Will this please the Master or not? Is this what the Master wants me to do?” The most important step in simplifying our lives is to become clear, stay clear on our objective, and consistently take the necessary actions to keep our spiritual compass on course, toward God-realization.

Hazur, as quoted in *Treasure Beyond Measure*, says, “Simplicity of nature is a sign of a saint.” Masters are very simple and focused. And the more we meditate, the more we become like them. However, as we all know, this is not so easy. We are so easily tempted. It’s like being late for our flight in a crowded, busy airport. As long as we are focusing on where we need to go – checking the monitors for our gate, following the signs along the way, asking for help when we need it – we are bound to make our flight. But if we get distracted by all the interesting people, or tempted by the many alluring shops along the way, we might easily lose our focus and end up missing our flight.



Our Shabd plane is waiting for us. Let's not get waylaid. We don't want to miss it! It would be really heartbreaking to have to come back and rebook on another flight next lifetime. So let's do our best to stay focused on the task at hand. Let's keep our eyes on our goal and not get distracted along the way.

If we focus on all the distracting thoughts that keep coming and going during meditation, and forget the simran, we become scattered and mentally exhausted. As Soami Ji says in *Sar Bachan Poetry*, "Why exhaust yourself over an illusion?" If on the other hand, we keep our mind focused on simran, thoughts may still be there, but we don't notice them as much. This process is similar to taking a photo using a zoom lens. We zoom in on what we want to focus on and highlight it, and the background becomes a blur. Similarly, we need to zoom in on our simran, and the many details and indulgences of our thinking mind will blur out automatically. Little by little we become focused and concentrated, leading to a deep state of inner peace and tranquility, which actually energizes us.

As Thomas Kelly concludes:

*Life from the centre is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.*

The Master assures us that once we are initiated, we can live from our spiritual centre while in this chaotic world. Simplicity comes from focusing our mind on simran and the object of our love.



# Now Is the Time

Death is one of the biggest illusions and mysteries of creation and it deceives most of us. There is nine months' notice before we are born, but there may not be even nine seconds' notice before we die. We have all suffered the loss of family or friends at some point or other. We have all seen people being carried to cremation grounds or placed in caskets and buried in the earth. Yet we ignore the reality of death. We feel that death is for someone else and not for us. We may feel that we will die when we die, so what is the point of worrying about it now? We fail to realize that our human life is the most precious gift that the Lord can give us. The mystic Mira Bai, in her poem, "A Rare Boon" in the book *Mira: The Divine Lover*, explains to us the importance and significance of the human birth. She begins by saying:

*This rare birth you may not get again.  
Through past acts of merit and worth  
You were granted the human birth.  
From day to day in age you gain,  
But with each moment life does wane.*

We don't know when death will come to take us. Moreover, we don't know what will happen to us once we are dead. We must realize that now we are in a human body, but we can't be certain that our next life will be that of a human being. We could be born as an animal, a plant or even an insect. While death is assured, another human birth is not. The Lord has shown mercy and blessed us with a human form. Now is the time to take full advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

The human form is not eternal; we have it for only a short period of time. With every passing moment, we are hurtling towards our death. Our transient life is like a soap bubble. After floating in the air for a second or two, the bubble bursts and there is nothing we can do to make the bubble last for another second. Mira says:

*When death comes nothing will stay;  
This precious chance will slip away.  
When once a leaf has broken free,  
It cannot then rejoin the tree.*

Once we are dead, nothing can bring us back to life. We have been given this human birth to realize God and, if we are not putting in the efforts to achieve that goal, we are wasting our precious opportunity. Hence, if we are serious about God-realization, then we have to do something now. We cannot say, “I will do it when the kids are big enough to take care of themselves.” We cannot say, “I will do it after I have ensured a comfortable future for the family.” We cannot say, “I will do it after I retire.” If we are serious about the path, then this is the moment. Mira Bai continues:

*The world's ocean does roar and rage;  
Vast and deep, it is hard to gauge.  
Board the ship of Nam, cross the sea,  
Reach the shore of bliss and be free.*

The world is like an ocean. If we travel on a ship and cross the seas, we will see huge waves, face strong winds, and may experience violent storms. We will not be able to see the shore even with a telescope, nor will we be able to gauge the depth of the ocean. Similarly, there will

never be an end to issues, situations, problems, and distractions in this world. Every day, every hour, nay, every moment is like a wave in the ocean of our lives. Some pass by calmly while others shake us more than a storm ever could. The only way out is to reach the shore of bliss and happiness by merging the soul back into the Lord. For this we have to board the ship of Nam. We have to merge into the Shabd. Mira continues:

*The vast world in its fourfold frame  
Is nothing but a chausar game.  
Deftly play the pawn of your soul,  
And you win the match, attain the goal.  
But if deceitfully you load the dice,  
With human birth you pay the price.*

Mira compares this world to a board game (“chausar”) that has four sides. Children throw the dice and move their pawns around the four sides till they reach their home in the centre. Mira tells us to play the game of life well. We do this by never forgetting our goal of God-realization; everything else in our lives must become a means to help us achieve our objective. We should try to avoid those actions and thought patterns that will hold us back or hamper our progress.

Mira hints at our lifestyle and tells us that we pay a big price if we lack honesty and sincerity. We deceive ourselves; we deceive our friends, relatives, and fellow travellers. We even try to deceive the Master. Mira warns us that if we are not honest, our life will have been wasted. Due to our deceitful ways, we will find that we have lost the unique opportunity to achieve awareness during this human life.

There is a way out. Saints don't just highlight our problems or faults; they also show us the way to overcome them. Indeed, they are ever ready to help us. Mira says:

*Saints and sages, Masters kind,  
Try to warn us, and remind  
That life is but a brief sunshine;  
Hence Mira longs for love divine.*

Mira tells us to find a Master. Masters are ever present in this world; they offer guidance and help at all times. Like Mira, they tell us that life is short, just like sunshine. Between our birth and death there are millions of things that we must do. If we wait for spiritually conducive moments to start our meditation, then we will surely meet our death before encountering one. The only time to do meditation is now. The only desire we should have is to find the Lord and be absorbed in divine love.

We should always remember the popular sentiment, "Yesterday is gone, tomorrow is not assured, only today is thine." When we look at ourselves in a mirror we know that with each passing day we are getting older. It is time we realize that we are just a bubble about to burst. It is time we make an attempt to follow the path. It is time we remind ourselves that we have a Master who is waiting anxiously for us at the eye-centre. It is time we go in and see the Radiant Form. It is time we enjoy the divine peace and bliss that saints talk about. It is time that we attend to our meditation before there is no time left.



# Begin to Live Light

let go ... begin to live light  
ready to leave at a moment's notice

clean out the closets of your mind  
fill them with radiance of holy names  
breathe bliss back into your being  
make yourself a sacred space  
where love wants to live

get rid of resentments stored in secret  
and stacks of boxes stuffed with desires  
all this clutter weighs on your heart  
and keeps your soul trapped  
in a bad marriage to your past

let go ... begin to live light  
stop crying and clinging  
to your baby blanket  
you know your mind by now  
it never stops whining  
for a little bit more than it has

why worry about the future  
set down that suitcase  
you carry around on your head  
trust you'll be given what you need

when you get there –  
hasn't it been that way so far?

listen dear friend  
you live life on a dirt clod  
hurtling through deep space  
stop hanging on for dear life  
spirit is the only security here  
it secretly rocks the cradle  
of this creation with loving care

remember who you are  
a radiant drop of eternity  
be the bliss flowing through you  
from the ocean of being inside

your thoughts have frozen the music  
filled your house with old furniture  
heavy and dark with history  
swing open the front door  
and throw it all out on the lawn

let go ... begin to live light  
be the music again  
make your house an empty space  
where your soul can dance  
with reckless abandon

*Original submission by a satsangi*



# Master's Faithful Agent

In *Spiritual Gems* Maharaj Sawan Singh says:

*You never will make a mistake, so long as you keep in mind to act simply as the Master's agent. Then let him take care of all results which may follow.*

What does it mean to act as the Master's agent? How can we become his faithful agent, and how does that affect the way we approach our life? If every new action is done in this spirit – in his name – our karmas will not bind us to the wheel of birth and death. So, how do we perform actions that do not bind us? In *The Dawn of Light*, Maharaj Sawan Singh says:

*The attitude of the devotee should be that of an agent and not a primary. Let the devotee do his work as an agent, doing it faithfully and vigorously for the Master, as he would if he were working for himself. Then the Master is responsible and not the agent.... The business of the agent is to do the best he can.*

What are some essential aspects of being the Master's agent? In *Spiritual Gems* Great Master provides a comprehensive explanation of how to act as the Master's agent:

*A faithful agent does not misuse the powers and the property entrusted to him. Suppose that we take the body, the mind, and the worldly properties we possess as a trust from the Master,*



*and work with them as his agents – then there is little possibility of our using them in ill ways. The new actions, therefore, will not be binding. The agent is responsible to the primary, and if he has done his work honestly and to the best of his ability, then for all his actions as agent, the primary is responsible.*

Great Master makes several important points in this rather rich statement. First, a faithful agent does not misuse the powers and the property given to him by the Master; instead he considers them as belonging to the Master. Second, the agent is expected to work honestly and to the best of his abilities. He cannot simply play a passive role saying that “Oh, everything is Master’s, I am just an agent, and I’ll do whatever I feel like.” No, he has to do his best, honestly and sincerely as per Master’s instructions. Third, an agent acts solely as a representative, a caretaker, or a go-between on behalf of the Master. When we sincerely act as our Master’s agent, we are assured that the consequences and the results will be taken care of by the Master as he is now responsible for our actions.

Baba Jaimal Singh Ji repeatedly asked his disciple, Maharaj Sawan Singh (who later became known as the Great Master), to work as the Master’s agent. In *Spiritual Letters* Baba Ji says:

*From the day the disciple meets the perfect Satguru, all work takes place with the Satguru’s permission.... From that day forth the disciple understands that “I am nothing. All that exists belongs to the Satguru – body, mind and wealth, all belong to the Satguru. I am nothing but an instrument.” That is why work performed with the body, mind and wealth will not do him any harm.*

Everything that happens is happening with our Master's knowledge and permission. We are just an instrument in his hands. We are, however, responsible for keeping watch over and endeavouring to control our thoughts, words, and deeds. We should not simply imagine that we are acting in the name of the Master and then go about our life following the dictates of our mind. That is not acting as Master's agent but as our own mind's agent. Maharaj Charan Singh provides a solution. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, he says:

*When you will withdraw yourself from the mind, then you will subdue your mind with the help of meditation and submit yourself unconditionally to the Master inside, and [then] whatever you will do will be in the name of the Master. As long as we are slaves of the mind, and the mind is a slave of the senses, and we are running about outside, how can we say we are doing it in the name of the Master?*

Thus, to truly become a faithful agent of our Master, our soul must be released from the clutches of the mind. Such freedom of our soul occurs only when, through regular meditation and the grace of the Master, we go beyond the region of mind. At that point, we will indeed act as our Master's faithful agent. Until we reach that point, there are some practical tips we can try to follow with the goal of becoming Master's faithful agent.

By treating everything we have as a trust from the Master – by using his gifts appropriately – we can free ourselves from attachments to those possessions and faculties. Baba Jaimal Singh Ji writes in *Spiritual Letters*:

*Instil it firmly in your mind ... that the body, mind, wealth, and the inner faculties, the eyes, mouth, nose, ears, hands, feet,*

*all, everything, each and every article that exists in the world, belongs to the Satguru: "I do not exist."*

In another letter he says:

*The work that you do ... is Satguru's work, and doing bhajan and simran is also Satguru's work.... Realize and understand that "I am merely the one who carries out his work." The self should be totally surrendered.*

All the work we do, worldly and spiritual, is Master's work. As long as we work within the Master's instructions, everything we do becomes his work and takes on a spiritual flavour. What a relief it is for us to know that even the worldly work we do is Master's work when we have the attitude that we are doing it as his agent! We are not to be concerned or worried about the outcome of the work. If we worry about anything at all, it should be about doing our meditation regularly as all our other worries and concerns belong to the Master.

To act as Master's agent, the self or ego must be removed. In *Spiritual Letters* Baba Jaimal Singh affirms this idea:

*Do not let the pride of anything enter the mind that it is yours. No! Even if you become the king of the universe, you must realize that "I have no share in it. I am merely a labourer. Whatever is there belongs to my Master. I am nothing." The Master's words should stay uppermost in the mind all the time: "I am nothing. I am nothing. I am nothing."*

By repeating "I am nothing" three times, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji underscores the importance of removing the self while performing

actions. It is not easy to lose one's ego – it is a lifelong struggle – one that is eventually accomplished by regular meditation.

At our level, since it is impossible to know whether we are creating new karma or undergoing the consequences of some past action, it is better to assume that everything we do may create new karma. Some people tend to use destiny as an excuse or justification to do whatever the mind dictates. However, our Masters implore us to act rightly and advise us to treat each action as though we were sowing a new seed.

The present Master frequently asks if our actions are taking us toward the Lord or away from the Lord. He emphasizes that as followers of Sant Mat we have a higher calling, a higher standard. He reminds us that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, and asks us to be good human beings. We know what is right and what is wrong. We should implicitly obey the Master's instructions no matter where our destiny takes us and learn to be sensitive to his guidance.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Light on Sant Mat*:

*Good actions should be performed disinterestedly, without any desire to secure and enjoy their fruit. If actions are done in this way, they will bear no fruit, even as roasted seeds do not sprout. If good actions are performed with longing for their fruit, rebirth is inevitable, to enjoy the fruit of such karma.*

Hazur's advice is simple to understand: When doing good deeds, do them without expecting any reward. We should remember that we are merely actors playing a part upon the stage of life assigned to us by the Lord. We should accept this part, play it to the best of our ability, and when it is over, forget about it.

As his faithful agent, we should live our lives according to the principles of Sant Mat and devote our time every day to meditation. Everything on this path begins and ends with our daily meditation: meditation that is done regularly and punctually with love and devotion. Ultimately, the mind will join its source and the soul will be free to rise to its true home. Only then can we truly act as Master's agent.



*When you are sitting in meditation, you should concentrate all your thoughts in meditation and not always be conscious of how much time you have been sitting, wondering when it is going to be one hour and when it is going to be two hours. You may not always be looking at your watch, but you are wondering whether or not you have sat more than your allotted time. When your mind is thinking of how much time you have to sit and how much time has already passed, then you are not concentrating. You are always thinking about that. Therefore, you should eliminate all thoughts of the world and just put your mind in simran.*

*It is the quality in the meditation that is important, not the quantity. If you are sitting with love and devotion and full concentration even for one hour, that is much better than sitting for five hours with your mind always wandering or running about, thinking about all the worldly problems or pleasures. So we should try to get into the habit of concentrating fully, eliminating all thoughts.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live

# Love

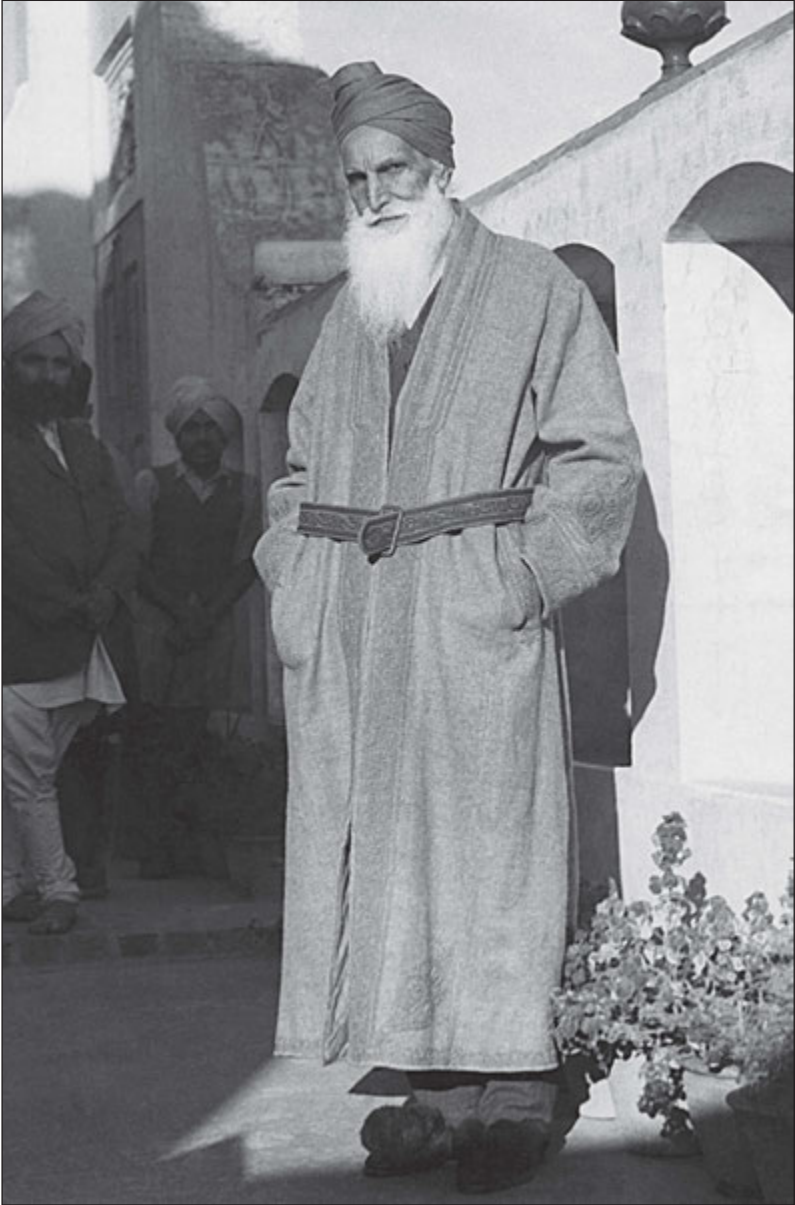
Love is the state of being consciously absorbed in the intimate and intense sweetness of the Beloved and is the ultimate objective of devotion. In this state the heart is saturated with the remembrance of the Beloved and the eye with the contemplation of his form. In this state every pore of the body becomes a tongue to sing his praises and the eyes overflow with tears of love.

With this kind of remembrance (*simran*) and contemplation (*dhyān*), one can quickly sail to the Ka'bah of one's heart – in the floodtide of one's own tears. The route of fasts, formal prayers and worship without tears is the dry and barren land route. Without love, all repetitions and austerities as well as knowledge and scholarship are but a hollow song...

Blessed is the eye that sheds tears in remembrance of the Lord. Blessed is the heart that burns in grief over its separation from the Beloved. Teardrops that fall on the soil of the heart make it fertile and impregnate it with divine mysteries. Just as showers of rain produce colourful flowers on earth, showers of teardrops shed in remembrance of the Lord cause the soil of the heart to blossom forth with divine fragrance.

Love is the greatest verity, as God himself is love. Love, therefore, is the fastest and most effective means of reaching him. All scriptures sing the praises of love; rishis, munis and other holy people are the worshippers of love.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *My Submission*



*Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji*

# Thou Shalt Not Worry

Worry is one of the most prevalent emotions that plagues many of us. Attachment to some preconceived idea about how our future might play out usually brings concern and disappointment. We anticipate good and bad events and worry about our past actions and an imagined future. Worry sidetracks us from being content in the moment. Like a nagging pain caused by a thorn in our foot, worry keeps us from completely enjoying our lives.

The saints tell us that worry is an indulgence. If we are preoccupied with worry about the past and the future, those thoughts tarnish our experience of the present and distract us during meditation. Not only do we lose appreciation of the moment, we also compromise our spiritual progress by allowing the mind to focus on needless worry. The mind thrives on this kind of drama. Left to its own devices the mind will always find something to worry about even when nothing exists. There is no enemy outside. The mind is our only enemy. This negative habit of the mind – to worry – is self-defeating and serves no useful purpose. If there is a problem, worry just makes the experience worse.

One reason we worry is due to fear. Yet fear seldom has anything to do with reality. Many reactions in life rooted in fear are based on events that never happen. Fear and worry show our lack of faith in the Master. Kabir, in *Kabir the Great Mystic*, says:

*I made a close and careful search  
And found that worry for the future is useless.  
My anxiety, Kabir, cannot change anything.  
The Lord looks after me  
So I am free from worries.*



We would be wise to follow the advice of Kabir and other mystics who repeatedly tell us not to worry. The events of this life come and go. The relevance lies in our reaction to the events that occur. If we understand this truth then we will never worry. Putting aside worry gives us the opportunity to make the right choice, to take the right action. That choice will determine our future destiny. We have the option and the tools to choose the course that takes us toward becoming a better, happier human being, free from worry.

Master has stressed over and over that we are all actors on the stage of life playing temporary parts. Our belief and attachment to the illusion of the play is a tool that the mind uses to foil our upward progress toward God-realization. We easily lose our balance. We laugh, we cry, we worry, we grieve, and at the end of the play of our lives, we will understand the truth and wonder and ask ourselves, “What was the purpose of all that worry?”

We have been taught, and perhaps have witnessed, that every event in the play of life is set up for our learning experience. From our narrow perspective, we see the events of our lives as good and bad. Do we think that we know better than the Master what is best for our progress toward our ultimate goal? On our own, we are groping around in the dark. Can we relax and enjoy the ride of our lives, knowing that every moment is perfectly orchestrated by the Lord himself for our benefit? Imagine a phone call from God. “Hello, this is God speaking. I will be handling all of your problems today. I will not be needing your help. Have a nice day.”

Throughout time the mystics have told us that nothing happens without a reason – nothing. Do we really believe this? If we have faith in the teachings of the saints, then worry need not be a part of our lives. Worry is a habit of the mind. That is why our meditation is so vital to our present happiness. Only through meditation can we learn

to tame the wild mind and interrupt its negative tendencies. Imagine life without worry. Just overcoming the mind's tendency to worry would make a huge difference in our lives.

Baba Jaimal Singh encourages us. He says in *Spiritual Letters*, "Please do not worry about anything except doing your bhajan and simran. Whatever else the Lord had to do has been done once and for all." Just as simran helps us to stay focused during meditation, the practice of simran throughout the day helps us to control the mind and keeps us focused in the present. If we are fully experiencing the here and now, whether in meditation or life, then worry will cease.

By his grace, we have been given the powerful weapon of meditation. Meditation is the key to stilling the mind and finding balance in life. Through meditation we can start to understand the reason for our existence. We can see the bigger picture.

By learning to control the mind through meditation, we learn to accept the events of this life with equanimity. No longer will we be dragged around by worry as we have been for aeons of time. We begin to understand that our destiny is set and we cannot change that destiny. Baba Jaimal Singh says in *Spiritual Letters*, "Throughout one's life only that will happen which is written on the forehead." Saints advise us to learn to adjust to the events of life and maintain a positive attitude. In order to solve any problem, we have to take a positive step. Let us put aside the habit of worry and focus on a solution.

Now we know that the purpose of our lives is spiritual growth. We have found a Master to guide us on our journey. As we progress in our spiritual work, we become able to accept the comedies and tragedies of our life as the Lord's will, and we will be content living within it. We will not feel worry or fear because we know that our lives are in the hands of the Lord, and this experience allows us to exist in a state of balance and peace of mind.

By following the Master's instructions and example, we will learn to overcome the mind and transcend death. Then we become fearless. We will not worry nor will we have regret. Contentment will be ours. As we realize perfection and love inside, we will increasingly see perfection and love in everything outside.

Our attitude will become "Thy will be done." Our success is assured by the Master. In *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh writes:

*The blessing conferred by the Satguru cannot be undone by anyone. So what is left now for you to worry about? You reached Sach Khand the very day you were initiated – that is the place for which you are destined.*

Masters have said that the Lord made a magnificent creation for all of us to enjoy. It is our attitude that makes the difference between contentment and suffering. We cannot change our destiny. That is set. What we can change is our attitude. We create our own heaven or hell. Moses gave us the Ten Commandments as guidelines to becoming better human beings and reaching a higher consciousness. Let us consider a worthy additional guideline that will take us ever closer to contentment in our lives and our ultimate goal of God-realization: "Thou shalt not worry."



# Grateful for the Pain

Life can be like riding a roller coaster. There are many ups and downs. One day we are on top of the world and the next we are scraping ourselves up from the floor. It's on the days when we face adversities that we begin to wonder, "What did I do to deserve this?" We might not want to know the answer to that question.

The positive thing about the harsher conditions of life is that it is human nature to want to make them stop, to get rid of them, to move on. The more misfortune we have, the more we want to alleviate it. Times like these make us so desperate that we turn towards the Lord and beg for his help and mercy. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*The Lord knows what is best for us. So he will only give us that which pulls us to him. The Master will not give us those things which make us forget the Lord and attach us to the creation. That is not his grace at all. Not that he wants us to suffer. He wants to save us from suffering.*

What looks like misfortune to us is actually the opposite if we begin to think of the Master, if we do more simran to just get through the day, if we meditate so we can survive. Perhaps we have a misconception of suffering in general.

The Masters don't come to this world to take away our pain and suffering during this lifetime. They come to take us away from pain and suffering forever. If we were to know how much suffering and anguish we've experienced lifetime after lifetime, for aeons and aeons, we would realize that the pain of this short span of life is minuscule.

It's like the blink of an eye from a spiritual perspective. The Master wants to save us from the continuation of suffering. He wants to put an end to it forever. He wants us to turn toward him – that is his grace. His grace is helping us detach from this perishable world, where things are in constant flux; he wants to attach us to the permanent: the one Lord. What looks and feels like the heaviest karma in the world is actually helping us to go back to our true home, to merge our soul back with God. Hazur explains about the Lord's grace when he tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol I:

*Our concept of grace is always what looks pleasant in the world. And it's no doubt good to think positively, but that may not be his grace at all. Anything which takes our mind away from the world and creates his love and devotion and yearning in our heart to go back to him, that is his grace. But they may not be pleasant incidents, pleasant events.*

When we ask for the Master's grace, do we realize what we are asking for? Can we endure more grace? The difficulties that we experience come from only one place: our own past actions, our karmas. It is God's grace that allows us to clear them so our soul – our true, everlasting self – can return to him and never come back to this wheel of eighty-four again. In *The Science of the Soul*, Maharaj Jagat Singh compassionately tells a disciple:

*I am sorry to know of the hard life you have had to lead, but adverse or easy circumstances in life depend upon past karma, which should be borne patiently and resignedly. In future, only good actions should be performed to avoid creating bad karma. And there is no better action than that of listening to the*

*Sound Current, for this cuts at the root of karma and frees us from the karmic tangle.*

Whether we experience the death of family members or friends, financial difficulties, humiliation or health problems, these misfortunes result from our own deeds, from our previous actions in prior lives. We cannot blame anyone else for our suffering, but we can do better this lifetime by not creating any more bad actions for which we will have to pay. Every karma is a heavy load on the soul because it keeps the soul from returning to the Lord. When our karmas are cleared or paid for, we are free to return to him. Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*Every little load on the soul is heavy. So some people feel that anything concerning health is heavy karma. Some people think anything which concerns the mind is heavy. Some people think, perhaps, that the poverty they have to face is a very heavy load. Some people are rejected in love, and they think this karma is very heavy. So it is an individual way of thinking. But from my point of view, every karma is heavy as long as it keeps the soul tied down to this creation – even to the last, last wrapping.*

In another answer, Hazur refers to this world as “a field of karmas.” We sow a seed in the field of our life, and we have to harvest or reap the fruit that grows from that seed. Whatever we sow, so shall we reap, either now or in the future. Every action we take results in a consequence to be dealt with in either this lifetime or in the next. We come back again and again to gather the rewards due us or to pay for the debts we owe – all the while sowing more seeds that we will have to harvest in some future life. According to the Masters, the predicament

of being caught in this karmic wheel is our true suffering. The Masters come to teach us how to get off this roller coaster, this joyless ride of life and to help us return home to the Father, to the true home of our soul, merging back into the source from where we came. For this we should be most grateful!

We can show our gratitude by giving back to him in the form of our meditation. He wants us to think of him, to remember him in everything we do, with every step we make, and with every breath we take. We should be thankful for any difficulties in life that turn us toward the loving arms of the Master, for those dilemmas remind us of him and how much he loves us.



*This real pain never comes unless love is there. With the mystics, their heart speaks. It is not the tongue that speaks, it is not the pen that writes; it is the heart that speaks, it is the heart that writes. And the mystics just express all that.*

*Without going through the pain, nobody knows the pain. And that pain can be experienced only with the Lord's grace. When he pulls from within, then this is what happens – what Mira has written. Unless he pulls from within, there is no pain.*

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

# What Is Our Objective?

Masters ask us to consider what our objective in life is. When we take time to ponder that question, our response might be: “Well my objective in this life is to achieve God-realization.” Or: “My objective is to work diligently at my meditation, so that I don’t have to return to this creation.” Or it might be: “I want to die while living. I want to reach that level of consciousness that will take me in and up before I shed this physical body.”

All of these seem like appropriate answers. But then the further question we have to ask ourselves is: “If I know what my objective is, how do I achieve it?” If we are really honest with ourselves, we realize that “we” don’t really achieve this objective. It is all in his hands. In setting our ego aside, all we can do is surrender to the possibility that this being – this soul in this body – can achieve nothing unless the Lord wills it. Baba Jaimal Singh, in *Spiritual Letters*, advises:

*He [the Satguru] is ever the loving friend of the individual. You should regard yourself as nothing. Let only the Satguru remain; leave it all to his will. Listen to the Shabd-dhun every day and hold fast to it.*

With great yearning, we can give him our willingness, our devotion, and our efforts in meditation, even when the objective seems all but unattainable. We know that when we attempt to clear out our attics or basements at home, we are often surprised at how much “stuff” we have. The same is true as we continue making our efforts in meditation. We don’t realize how much we have accumulated in the subconscious until we make the attempt to concentrate. But we can’t



let these distractions stop us from going forward. We can't let them distress us. We don't know how these challenges are making us grow stronger even though our mind seems dark and dull. There is no failure on our path as long as we are willing to continue to make an effort. Maharaj Charan Singh encourages us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III: "There are no failures if I am doing my best. One only loses a battle if one does not fight it."

We all admire people who practise a certain discipline to reach a goal in life, such as a pianist practising to achieve the ultimate goal of playing in the symphony or an ice skater relentlessly practising to reach the Olympics. Similarly, those who want to find God begin with dedicating everything they do every single day to God. However, the illusions of this world often keep us from remembering what our objective is. Sant Charandas, in the book *Sant Charandas*, counsels the seeker that although the world looks real, ultimately it is only an illusion. He writes:

*O Saints, this carnival will end in a short while;  
we will depart after watching this show.  
Never again will you meet those  
who have gathered here together.  
Many travellers from different directions  
cross the river in a boat – they meet  
only to go their separate ways a few moments later...  
The happiness from wife, children and property is fleeing,  
like dew drops on petals.  
They meet you here and leave you here –  
why then grieve over them?  
In this give and take, each action has its consequence,  
so do your real work.*

We see that when we identify ourselves with material things and relationships that do not last, we forget our real work – of merging back into our source. This is why we need to keep our eyes fixed on our objective in life.

We keep our eyes fixed on the Master. We follow his example and do what he has asked us to do. We remember that, as we go through life, we are to live so that no harm or pain is caused by our thoughts, words, or deeds to any other being. If we try to think of ourselves as servants of mankind, we will be ready to put ourselves at the disposal of those who need us while keeping our eyes focused on our destination.

Masters often remind us that we cannot understand spiritual truths by just reading books. They tell us that understanding will come only when we actually have the experience; and that our experience will come only through our continual daily practice of meditation.

The purpose of our daily spiritual practice is to gently and consistently move us from the place where we normally “hang out” in our day-to-day behaviour to a place of greater refinement. We never know what life will bring. But as we build our treasure within, through meditation, we will be better able to digest the results of his grace and find peace of mind. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Die to Live*:

*By meditating we are building a treasure in heaven.... The more you treasure and digest within yourself your wealth of meditation, the more he showers his grace upon you.... We do achieve results in meditation when we start honestly on the path, and if we are able to digest and treasure that bliss and peace within, we get more and more grace within.*

At initiation, all that was asked of us was to follow the directives given to us. The saints and Master call this practice “dying while living.” Is that not our objective in life? Let’s ask ourselves, “How do we maintain that focus to keep our objective before us?” Perhaps the answer is, if we can bring ourselves to live in his will and take life as it comes, we will not be disappointed. Whatever he wills is always for our good. We have to remember that the Lord is within every one of us and that he sees and hears everything we do. He knows those of us who want to reach our objective and he helps us. So when Master asks, “What is our objective?” what will our answer be?



*You see, brother, meditation makes us receptive, enables us to receive the Lord’s grace. Meditation is nothing but to make us receptive. He is always giving, always giving. He’s more anxious to give to us than we are prepared to take, and meditation makes us receptive to receive his grace. There’s no other way which can make you receptive to receive his grace, only meditation. If there’s heavy rain and your cup is upside down, it won’t catch even a single drop of water. If you put it in the upright position, it will be filled. So we have to become receptive, and it is always raining. His grace is always there.*

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

# The Supreme Bargain

In the book *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*The body is like a township, a beautiful township where the bargain of God's nectar may be struck.*

Here the human body is compared to a very beautiful town because, while living in it, we are able to strike the ultimate bargain with God. We are given these human bodies for the very purpose of God-realization. And only while living in the body can we take advantage of the bargain the Master has to offer. By following the teachings of the mystics and doing our meditation we can assist the Master in delivering us from the illusory world forever. Maharaj Charan Singh explains further:

*This human form has been bestowed on us by the Lord so that we can do our real work. And what is our real work? It is any activity that frees us from the prison of the body and reunites us with the Lord.... The one real bargain we can get in the human form is love and devotion for the Lord and union with him.*

So, what kind of bargain does Hazur mean? He shares with us that this bargain is love and devotion for the Lord and union with him. The bargain is substantial. In fact, this is one we cannot pass up. If we look up the definition of a bargain, we find that it is an agreement between two or more parties as to what each party will do for the other, and a thing bought or offered for sale more cheaply than is usual or expected.

It might be that Hazur is referring to both definitions. It's definitely an agreement of both parties and it is clear what each party is to do. We agree to follow certain teachings in this human life, and the Master promises to help us achieve union with the Lord. The second definition also applies because this is the kind of agreement in which we are offered something of great value for less than expected – in this case, the bargain for our salvation for the mere price of following the vows we agreed to at the time of initiation and, in turn, developing love and devotion for the Lord.

Hazur explains elsewhere in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. II:

*When we meditate on the Word according to the instructions of the Master, false love for this false world leaves us, and true love and longing for the true Lord develop within us. But until we go to a perfect Master and meditate on the Name, we cannot free ourselves from our attachment to this creation, nor can we develop love for the Lord.*

That which is untrue is constantly changing. It is false because it is in a constant state of flux. Things live and die, they come and go, they are not permanent. That which is true is permanent – the only thing that is permanent is the Creator. Therefore, anything other than the Creator is false, illusory, ephemeral. The saints teach us the importance of attaching to that which is permanent. Thus, the deal we have struck with the Master, the bargain we have made, is very lofty. We have agreed to exchange this transitory existence for a complete merger with the Lord. The Masters have so much faith in us that they say that there are no failures in Sant Mat. And this makes us feel that we have secured an excellent bargain!

We are constantly reminded by the saints of the priceless nature of the gifts of the Lord. Our trade with the Divine has no worldly price tag. Ours is not a deal of worldly value.

In *Tales of the Mystic East*, we find the story of Nizamuddin, who was a great saint. It is said that no one who ever approached him came away empty-handed. A poor man who had a daughter to marry off once came to Nizamuddin begging for his help. The saint told the man that whatever offerings came to him in the next three days, he would happily give to the man. Not one offering was given and thus the man was terribly distraught. Nizamuddin, out of compassion and wanting to help the man, offered his shoes to him, telling him that at least he might get some food for the shoes. Disappointed, but thankful, the man took the shoes and set out to return to his home. As the man slowly made his way, he watched Amir Khusro, who had served the king, return with a huge caravan and many possessions.

As Amir approached the man, he began to smell the fragrance of his beloved Satguru (Nizamuddin), and when he passed he noticed the fragrance was behind him. When Amir asked the man where he had come from, the man shared his story of needing money but instead was given the old and worn-out shoes of Nizamuddin. With the love of a devoted disciple, Amir asked if he might buy the shoes from the man for the price of his entire caravan and all but two camels. Overjoyed, the man agreed and rejoiced at his remarkable good fortune.

Within a short time Amir found his beloved Satguru and placed the pair of shoes at his feet. Nizamuddin, smiling, asked: "My son, how much did you pay for such an old pair of shoes?" Amir humbly admitted to giving his entire caravan, his worldly possessions, and all but the two camels. Nizamuddin, smiled and said: "Brother, you paid a very low price indeed ... they were truly a tremendous bargain ... and actually, you got them for practically nothing!"

Further, Nizamuddin said, “To find a saint of the beloved Lord is the highest good fortune that can come to any man; for the saints are the rarest of jewels in all the world. And the gift of Nam, the Divine Melody of the Word of God that takes one to God, which the saints bestow on their disciples, is a treasure beyond any price. Compared with it, the cost of a caravan and all your worldly possessions is as nothing.”

Over and over again, we are reminded of the boon of having a living saint to teach us the way home. In the bargain we get the perfect trifecta! The realized teacher, the perfect method, and the promise that we will be delivered to our home. Until we realize what this bargain really is, it can be confusing and at times we get discouraged. Until we realize that the Guru is doing whatever he can to help us reverse the flow from outward to inward, we don't always experience the journey as such a great bargain. As Hazur used to remind us: we can walk home with him hand in hand, or he can pull us by the ear! Sometimes the Guru has to get tough with us to get our attention.

Why do we need to make this “deal”? Why the need for such a bargain? It is because for lifetimes we have accumulated so many karmas that without the help of a Master we cannot remove the karmas, we cannot release the soul from the senses and the mind. Without the Master helping us to remove the karmas, we cannot let go of the illusion and remember that we are not really these bodies and minds that must die and be reborn, but rather we are pure soul. We have forgotten our origin. Our stories are all the same, like some strange science fiction film in which somehow we have become entrapped in an alien form and cannot access who we truly are. We are soul but cannot get free. Ours is a journey, one in which we don't know where we are starting from, nor do we remember our

destination. We don't even know how long it will take to free the soul or to clear our karmas.

The saints are constantly trying to explain to us how the process works and the importance of meditation. Without meditation, without the practice of stillness, without the effort, we are not pulled by the Master from this wreckage of duality and illusion. Sadly, many of us get discouraged because we are still under the dictates of the mind, and we still operate from the perspective of time and desire. We have read of the journey within and we desire that. We want that. And yet, many of us get impatient with our seeming lack of progress. That is why the Master repeats over and over again that the process of separating the mind from the senses is very slow. We are like small children who want something right now. When we are little we want to be big; we want to be able to talk; we want to ride a bike or drive a car or play an instrument, but attaining these skills takes practice and patience. It is only through our practice that the Master can help us. It is through that action of meditation that we get his attention. It is through that action of meditation that we begin to see his intervention in detaching us from the world and attaching us to Shabd. It is through the practice of meditation that we experience what an incredible bargain we have made.

When Masters say that it is up to us, they are basically pleading with us to make good on our agreement to get the most out of this holy bargain. We cannot haggle over the price; we have already been told that the price of salvation is living our lives according to the vows, especially our commitment to do our meditation for at least two and one-half hours each day. It is that time with our Master that gives us our freedom. Developing love and devotion for the saint through meditation that cleanses the mind and turns it toward home.



We have somehow been given this incredible opportunity to grab on to such a priceless treasure. In essence, we have been given the boon of the supreme bargain. When we do our real work, he gives us the priceless gift of love and devotion. As Hazur says in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. II: “The one real bargain we can get in the human form is love and devotion for the Lord and union with him.”



*Meditation strengthens that love. Meditation helps the love to grow, to grow to the extent that we become one with the Lord. It is all meditation. Meditation is nothing but love. What is love? What are the characteristics of love? To merge into another one, to become another being, to lose your own identity, to lose your own individuality and to become another being is love. And what is the purpose of meditation? To merge your soul back into the Father, to remove all the dross from the soul and to make it shine and to make it one with him. That is meditation. So that is why meditation itself is love. That is why we say that love is God and God is love, because God has the characteristics of love. Love of God is a characteristic of love. We become one with him.*

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

# Five Gems of Advice

We need to take stock of our life. We need to honestly figure out which way we are facing now – toward the world or toward the Lord? If we have a desire for spirituality but our focus is on the world, we need to make the changes necessary to commit ourselves to spirituality. In a letter to a disciple, Maharaj Sawan Singh, the Great Master, lists five essential points that will enable a disciple to make proper use of the gift of initiation on the spiritual path. The Great Master says in *Dawn of Light*:

*A hungry man is never satisfied simply by counting the names of various dishes that are before him. Though the teachings you have received are invaluable, yet they cannot be of any use unless you utilize them and daily engage in the spiritual exercises.... you must be careful about the following:*

- 1. control of mind,*
- 2. check on senses,*
- 3. resignation to his will,*
- 4. love for him,*
- 5. regularity and punctuality in the spiritual exercises.*

Let's take a look at these five suggestions from the Great Master and see how they may help us.

1. Control of mind: Easier said than done! This is definitely a big struggle for us on this path, because our mind is too often controlled by the senses. But we have help. When the Master initiates us, he gives us the practice of simran (repetition of five holy names during

meditation and throughout the day). Simran helps us to keep our mind under control. It keeps the mind occupied, so it can't run in a thousand directions creating more desires. We can turn to simran when we find our mind going places it shouldn't. And when we are sincere in our efforts, we feel the help of the Master. In *The Call of the Great Master*, someone asks: "How is one to check the entrance of evil thoughts into one's mind?" Great Master answers:

*This is a very good question, but its answer needs long satsangs.... Briefly, if an evil thought troubles one, it should be checked by meditating on its opposite. The study of good books also helps a good deal. Food goes a long way in influencing our mind.... But the greatest help always comes from the true Master, who takes upon himself the duty of saving his disciples from the cunning tricks of Satan.*

A key requirement for controlling our mind and thereby attuning ourselves to the inner sound and light is to follow a certain way of life. Before initiation we are asked to follow three vows – moral living, vegetarianism, and abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. These vows help to begin the process of curbing the mind and senses. They help to create the framework in which we can do the meditation practice. Ultimately, it is the sound current, the Shabd, that is the effective method for controlling the mind and turning it inward.

2. Check on senses: Masters give us practical advice. They tell us that our environment has an effect on us. Just as we protect our children from negative aspects of the world, we should protect ourselves. For example, parents often limit the amount of violence and sex that their children are exposed to on television, but these things influence us

also and can fan the fire of our senses if we aren't careful. The Great Master, in *The Dawn of Light* explains how we can keep a check on our mind and senses. He says:

*Again and again, the mind goes out and remains thinking of worldly matters. So keep a sharp eye over its working during the whole of the day and take care that it may not carry you away.... This is possible only by keeping your mind engaged in repeating the holy names. At all times, whether walking, eating, drinking or doing any work which does not require much attention, try to concentrate your attention on the holy names and never allow your senses to control you.*

3. Resignation to his will: This is a tricky subject. We have to take actions and make decisions and put in effort. Resignation to his will, entails accepting the results after we put in our effort. Great Master explains in *Call of the Great Master*: “This does not preclude effort to improve one's condition, but it is the feeling of dissatisfaction and discontent that is to be discarded.”

The saints tell us that we will get our fair share in this world – no one can keep it from us. Whatever we are supposed to get, we will get. But if something is not in our destiny, no matter how much we try, we won't get it.

Nothing in our life happens to us without the Lord's knowledge, and what we think of as a misfortune may actually be of benefit to us. Great Master explains in *Dawn of Light*:

*Never be disheartened if you are to pay some severe debt. It is all for your good....*

*Therefore, all events which appear to be misfortunes are not really so. They come to chasten us, to add to our power of resistance, and leave us better men in the end. What the Father does, he does for the best.*

4. Love for him: The Master alone is worthy of our deepest love. He advises us and helps us. We are lost in this creation, and he navigates our way home. We suffer from the ills of worldly attachment, and he is like the surgeon who can heal us. Great Master says in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. V:

*The disciple should rely implicitly on the Master and should give himself up to him in the same way as one confides in a surgeon and entrusts his life into his hands. Similarly, one follows the instructions of a guide when one is lost in a jungle, is sick and tired, and cannot himself find the way.*

Great Master explains the effect of loving the Master. He says in *The Dawn of Light*:

*The deeper the love for the Master takes root in you, the fainter will be the worldly love in you. His love will displace the love of earthly things. Then the mind and spirit will transcend the flesh and the curtains will rise before you, one by one. The dark mysteries of the universe will become revealed to you and you will find yourself in the loving lap of the Holy Father; in fact, you will be one with him.*

This is the beauty of the path of the Masters!

5. Regularity and punctuality in the spiritual exercises: Lastly and most importantly, Great Master advises us to be regular and punctual in our spiritual exercises. He is not saying that we must be perfect, sit absolutely still, be full of love, and hear the inner sound. He just says we should be regular and punctual. That is something that we can do. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II

*We find that the more we give our devotion to the Lord, the more it grows every day. The more love we have, the more it grows. But the only practical step that we can take is to be honest in our meditation, for then devotion and love come automatically.*

We all know what being honest in our meditation means – to be regular, to put in our best effort at stilling our bodies, and to be relentless in bringing the mind back to the eye centre when we catch it wandering. Not to give up or get up. We all have good days and bad days. Success depends on how firm our intentions are. It depends on how willing we are to take a stand and to keep our commitment to do what we say we believe in.

If we haven't been regular and punctual, it's not too late to start. Every day counts, every action counts, even every thought counts. Albert Camus says, "I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day."

It's never too late to turn our face towards God. It's never too late to become regular and punctual in our meditation. Following the suggestions of the Great Master will help us become successful on this journey. He is all love and all mercy and gladly welcomes us back into his loving arms when we turn towards him.



# The Dance of Love

When we first learn to dance as children, our father sometimes puts our small feet on top of his. We then can easily twirl and twirl. Dancing becomes more difficult when we are required to stand on our own two feet. Our focus is intense, yet we stumble frequently. Repetition of the movements to the music begins to bring us into harmony with our partner. Little by little our movements become one as we dance. Our focus shifts away from ourselves to our partner and then to the music.

In much the same way in our spiritual life, the dance of love is unfolding. We are learning to move with Master. We shift our focus from the world to our inner self, then to him, and finally to the music. We are here to become conscious, to dance with our partner. The Master-partner comes to teach us the dance of love – the dance that dissolves us into the One. Maharaj Sawan Singh, explains in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II:

*God is Love, and Love was in the beginning. The entire creation is the result of love. We have been sent down into this world through love, and the cause of our return will also be love.*

But what do we know of love? What do we know of God? We often think of love as the karmic love which binds us to other people. Even this limited love, based upon duty and obligation, is intensely attractive. This love can make life worthwhile, at least for some time. The people we love are always with us in our mind, coming and going through our thoughts, sometimes anxiously, sometimes sweetly, sometimes bitterly, sometimes sadly. But how enchanting it is to

begin to become aware that Master is also with us, never to leave. Sometimes, when the noise of the mind stops, in that peaceful quiet, we can remember his presence.

We may not know real love yet, but we can look to the Masters as examples of how to practise the dance of love. One element is following the teacher's lead. Maharaj Charan Singh advises us to live in the Lord's will, accept his commands and be receptive to his grace. It is a beautiful balance between action and acceptance, because in order to exist here, we must do our part.

We are inclined to obsess about fixing what we see as the cause of our feelings of disappointment. Our mind wants to blame others when our life is not what we expected. But Masters give us the example of acceptance. Hazur says in *Legacy of Love*, "The fact is, we do not see things as they are. Rather, we see things as we are." With Master's grace we begin to see things as they are, begin to become lovers, and start to taste devotion. The Master is full of laughter and humour. He doesn't take himself too seriously, so why not follow his lead?

The Master's love is the key to it all. We can win our way back to conscious contact with God through our Master's love for us and our love for him. He grants us love that we convert into effort, which he then slowly, slowly converts into devotion. Without his love, we would never think of bhajan and simran; we could never make an effort.

We do not see the reasons for others' actions or the outcome of those actions. They are hidden from us as surely as the karmic reasons for our actions and their real outcome. The mind's job is to justify karma, to make us believe we are the doer. However, when we seriously go into training with the Master, who administers our karmas, we truly begin to notice we are practising the steps of the dance of love. Every moment, every step, we are becoming love. How joyous to accept the occurrences of life and give all of the worry to



our Master. Master gives us a different focus. Our job is to do bhajan and simran and leave all else to him.

Leaving all else to Master is difficult. How do we leave all else? Love is conscious and so we must become conscious. No roaming around in our mind. Love transcends time and space. How can we do that? The only time we can be conscious is now. If our attention is in the future or the past, we cannot be with Master now. We can only be conscious here. We will miss the opportunity to be with Master if our attention is elsewhere.

When the soul goes beyond mind and maya, the result is that we become saturated by Master's love. If we do not want to suffer, meditate! If we want an easier time here, meditate! If we want to experience love, meditate! If we want to become love, meditate! Meditation is the real dance.

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• Articles should focus on the Sant Mat teachings and may also draw on the universal teachings of other mystics. • Articles should not be based on, or discuss, the personality of the Master or the writer. • Articles must be your own original work. If quotations from other sources are included, complete source references must be given. • Articles should be between 500 and 1500 words in length.

If accepted, your article will be edited according to the requirements of the magazine. You will be contacted only if your submission is accepted. Please include your name, age, postal address, and email address with your article.

# Book Review



## The Book of Privy Counseling

**Anonymous**

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*The Book of Privy Counseling*, written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is a guide into the practice of inner contemplation on the divine. The author, an anonymous English mystic who also wrote the classic work *The Cloud of Unknowing*, acts as a mentor to the reader, laying out the purpose of contemplation as well as advice on the joys and challenges encountered in its practice.

The special beauty of this book lies in its deeply personal nature, “My dear friend in God, this book is for you, personally...” and in the humility of the author, “I do not deserve to be his servant, yet in his mysterious designs, he may work through me if he so wishes, for he is free to do as he likes.”

Although the author has experienced the fruits of contemplation himself, he cannot express its value in words.

*Believe me, if a contemplative had the tongue and the language to express what he experiences, all the scholars ... would be struck dumb before his wisdom. Yes, for by comparison the entire compendium of human knowledge would appear as sheer ignorance. Do not be surprised, then, if my awkward, human tongue fails to explain its value adequately... Whatever we may say of it is not it, but only about it.*

He cautions that his words will result in the “confusion of all proud intellects, especially yours, which is the actual reason for my writing at this time.” God cannot be reached by taking action according to our intellect. This point is restated and re-emphasized throughout.

*I make this point on purpose to refute the ignorant presumption of certain people who insist that man is the principal worker in*

*everything, even in contemplation. Relying too much on their natural cleverness and speculative theology, they say that God is the one who passively consents, even in this work. But I want you to understand that in everything touching contemplation, the contrary is true. God alone is the chief worker here, and he will act in no one who has not laid aside all exercise of his natural intellect in clever speculation.*

The work of contemplation encompasses all others: "...all the virtues are clearly and completely contained in contemplation itself." The fruit of this work, if it is authentic, "is the cloud of unknowing, the secret love planted deep in an undivided heart." It is "luminous darkness ... unknown knowing ... what leads you to a silence beyond thought and words."

The objective is clear; it is union with God because, "He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is *your* cause and the deep centre of *your* being."

We are advised to put aside ideas, concepts, and expectations of who or what God is and to allow him to be what he is. "That which I am I offer to you, O Lord, without looking to any quality of your being but only to the fact that you are as you are; this, and nothing more." We are also asked to lay aside inquiry into our own nature as this is distracting and serves no useful purpose.

*Leave the awareness of your being unclothed of all thoughts about its attributes, and your mind quite empty of all particular details relating to your being or that of any other creature. For such thoughts will not satisfy your present need, further your growth, nor bring you and others closer to perfection. Let them alone.*

The benefit is clear, "For I want your thought of self to be as naked and as simple as your thought of God, so that you may be spiritually united to him without any fragmentation and scattering of your mind."

We don't have to be special or even without faults. Such a concern should not delay our work. "Take the good gracious God just as he is,

as plain as a common poultice, and lay him to your sick self, just as you are.”

Freed of our concepts of who God is and who we are, relieved of our burden of understanding others, we can focus on simply seeking his divine being, with and through our own divine self.

*When you go apart to be alone for prayer, put from your mind everything you have been doing or plan to do. Reject all thoughts, be they good or be they evil... See that nothing remains in your conscious mind save a naked intent stretching out toward God. Leave it stripped of every particular idea about God and keep only the simple awareness that he is as he is. Let him be thus, I pray you, and force him not to be otherwise. Search into him no further, but rest in this faith as on solid ground... It will feel as if your whole desire cried out to God...*

The need for a human guide or teacher is also emphasized. Using the word “porter” as meaning one who controls the door to a court, the author writes, “As God, he is the porter; as man, he is the door.” He explains the Lord’s words like this:

*As God, I am the all-powerful porter and therefore, it is up to me to determine who may enter and how. But I chose instead to make a common, clear way to the sheepfold, open to everyone who wanted to come. So I clothed myself in an ordinary human nature and made myself utterly available so that no one could excuse himself from coming because he did not know the way. In my humanity, I am the door and whoever comes in by way of me shall be safe.*

But this human guide is only the precursor to something greater. This is shown by the fact that, physically, guide and disciple must inevitably part.

*Had there been no higher perfection possible in this life beyond seeing and loving him in his humanity, I do not believe he would have ascended into heaven while time lasted, nor withdrawn his physical*

*presence from his friends on earth who loved him so dearly. But a higher perfection was possible to man in this life: the purely spiritual experience of loving him in his Godhead. And for this reason he told his disciples, who were loath to give up his physical presence, ... that for their own good he would withdraw his physical presence from them.*

By the end of his book, the author as mentor has advised us on the purpose and necessity of divine contemplation, explained its practice, warned how to avoid pitfalls, touched on the pain of physical separation, and extolled the glory of union. In closing he urges patience:

*Tell me now, if Christ is the door, what should a man do once he has found it? Should he stand there waiting and not go in? Answering in your place, I say: yes, this is exactly what he should do. He does well to go on standing at the door, for up till now he has lived a crude sort of existence according to the flesh, and his spirit is corroded with a great rust. It is fitting that he wait at the door until his conscience and his spiritual father agree that this rust has been largely rubbed away. But most of all, he must learn to be sensitive to the Spirit guiding him secretly in the depths of his heart and wait until the Spirit himself stirs and beckons him within.*

He calls on us for faith and courage, yet assures us of continued grace even when we are beset with dryness, bewilderment, and fear.

*Still, do not lose heart. I promise you he will return and soon. In his own time he will come. Mightily and more wonderfully than ever before he will come to your rescue and relieve your anguish... With your enthusiasm gone you will think you have lost him, too, but this is not so; it is only that he wishes to teach you patience. For make no mistake about this; God may at times withdraw sweet emotions, joyful enthusiasm, and burning desires but he never withdraws his grace from those he has chosen... Of this I am certain.*



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

