

# Spiritual Link



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# Pray Merge Me with You

Merge me with You, O my Beloved!  
Merge me with You.

At first You loved me with much cheer;  
Whether I loved You or You loved me,  
Pray keep this love steady forever.  
I am waylaid by bands of robbers;  
Evil spirits confront me in fearsome jungles.  
Cheetahs, leopards and wolves strut on my path;  
The customs officer is demanding;  
Countless imps are stalking the riverbank.  
Terror grips my heart.  
Pray take my boat to safety.  
I pray to the true Lord,  
And may my prayer be granted:  
Unveil your kingly face to Bullah, O Lord.

Merge me with You, O my Beloved!  
Merge me with You.

*Bulleh Shah*

# Carrying Him in Our Heart

When Master is on tour to various countries, what an amazing experience it is. For two hours we are in his presence: basking in his love and light, laughing at his humour, and marvelling at the simplicity and enormous spiritual significance of his answers.

And then it is over. He leaves the building. As we mingle with old friends outside, perhaps drinking tea and chatting about what we have just heard, we are hoping that he will come back to the satsang hall again, walk around among us as we have heard he does in some centres, give us darshan, maybe even play soccer with some of the young ones. But it is not to be. He leaves.

“Leaves” implies that there is one of us going away and one left behind. It implies duality and separation, but who is leaving whom? What is actually happening in our minds when we think about the Master leaving us? Do we see him in our mind’s eye climbing into a car and being driven away down the street, watching as the car appears smaller and smaller until it zips around the corner out of sight, leaving us behind? Perhaps we visualize him boarding a flight, winging off to give satsang somewhere else. How do we feel then? How do we feel when he has gone? Abandoned? Bereft? Empty?

Addressing a question about a disciple’s fear of losing the atmosphere of being with the Master when the Master and the disciple are no longer physically together, Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, says something very startling, “Don’t send me away.”

What? Don’t send him away? This sounds like he is asking us to not let him leave, to keep him captive, maybe to lie down in front of his car and refuse to let him drive off. But he didn’t say, “Stop me from leaving.” He said,

“Don’t send me away” – as though it is we who are causing the perceived separation, not him.

But we would never send him away, would we? We would never say, “Master, go away, I don’t want to see you in satsang. Go away, I have no time for you now.” We certainly would not say that to the physical form of our Master. Then Hazur continues, “Are you sure that I am not here when I am not here?”

Note that Hazur says don’t send me away, and how do you know I am not here when I am not here. This is personal. This is about our Master, not the concept of a Master. He continues:

*If we can just know and understand that we are never alone, that our Master is always with us, we are never without him, then the atmosphere would always be the same. We try to tell ourselves that he is not here when actually he is here. So we have to know that he is always with us.*

Hazur is telling us that our Master is always with us – and not just as a memory or in our imagination. He is literally with us all the time because our real Master is Shabd. Hazur explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “It’s not the body which is the Master. It is the Shabd, that creative power, which is the Master. Our real Master is Shabd, which is within every one of us.”

This is how our Master never leaves us. So when Hazur says, “Don’t send me away,” he is referring to the inner Shabd Master. Sometimes we don’t feel the presence of the Master. But the Master doesn’t go anywhere. When we face him we can see him, but if we turn around and look behind we cannot see him; however, he is still there. We cannot see him if we are not looking in his direction.

This explanation makes perfect sense from a physical standpoint. Clearly, we can see the physical form of our Master when we face him, and when we look behind us we can't see him. But when the Master uses this example, he is referring to something much more than the physical.

The Master tells us that we have a choice of where to put our attention – inwards and upwards towards our Shabd Master, who is always with us, or downwards and outwards into the world, where we feel his absence when he is not physically with us.

If we want to feel our Master's presence, if we want to feel his love, we have to hold on to him at the eye centre and not send him away, not allow the mind to distract us by visualizing his driving away and abandoning us, but instead remember that he is inside waiting for us to join him at the eye centre.

Hazur explains a little more about the importance of keeping him with us when he answers the following question. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, a disciple says, "The time for departure from the Dera is rapidly approaching, and I want some reassurance that we can take all this love with us and that this is as easily accessible at home as it is here."

We might ask our Master a similar question when he visits us on tour in our country: Can you give us some reassurance that when you leave, we will continue to feel the love we feel right now coming from you and in our own hearts?

Hazur tells us very logically, "You see, the Master is within every one of us. No matter how much we try to depart from there, we can't. So if we are carrying him with us, the question of departure doesn't arise."

He says that since the Master is inside of us, and since we cannot leave our own selves – logically there can be no separation from him. Then the Master continues, "Being here at Dera, if you don't carry him with you, it is the same thing as being away and not carrying him with you. If you are here, he is with you if you are carrying him with you."

If we want to feel him with us all the time, if we don't want to feel the separation caused by our departure from the physical Master, we have to "carry him with us" all the time and not just think of him when we are doing our two and one-half hours of meditation. And this is true no matter in what country or satsang centre we are, whether he is with us physically or not.

Carrying him with us is an action. In fact, the verb "to carry" means "to support the weight of and move something or someone" (Oxford English Dictionary), and this implies conscious involvement and effort. We consciously take our Master with us everywhere we go, never forgetting for an instant that he is there, turning to him again and again during the day to speak a few private words of simran.

Hazur comforts us by saying, "We have to carry him with us, always within us. Then there is no departure at all."

So our Master may have driven away from visiting one of our centres after two wonderful hours with us, but he did not go anywhere in that car. Our Master did not leave us. He is always in our hearts. We think of the time we spent with our Master, we relish the memory of how we felt when he sat before us, and we call to him within because he is always with us.

*i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart)*

*i am never without it (anywhere i go, you go, my dear)*

*E.E. Cummings*



# Thoughts on Meditation

The daily news seems to be filled with political drama, war and its casualties, terror attacks, human distress, natural disasters, and many other disturbing events. When we hear or read such stories, we may experience anger or fear, and yet we continue to switch from one TV channel to another, or surf the web for more news. We feed this anxiety.

Perhaps it is time to reassess how quickly our balance can be upset by events that are either tragic or go against our values.

Losing our balance, our centeredness, our calm – is that what we want as satsangis? More than ever we need to turn to our objective: to free ourselves from the world and not get caught in its dramas, its traps, its never-ending struggles.

After the tragic events in New York City on September 11, 2001, the Master offered a message in a letter to the USA sangat, which resonates deeply. He wrote:

*Such catastrophic events can test us to the extremes of our humanity. They demand that we go to the deepest levels of faith, trust and generosity of spirit if we are to endure them without losing our balance.... We are called upon ... to show fortitude in the face of unpredictability and fear, to rebuild not to avenge, and to understand that only a response of love can help us beyond the fears we experience.... We have to go to a higher level. God's greatness and love are far greater than anything we can see.*

It is during times of turmoil, more than ever, that we must turn towards him. We must turn to our meditation. That is the only thing that matters.

Nothing can be achieved if we lose our balance. The Masters offer us much to help us keep our balance. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Light on Sant Mat*:

*I cannot send you a better message than to remind you of what the Master told you at the time of initiation: Life is precious and it is only after thousands of years that you got your turn to be born as a human being. This opportunity should not be lost, and every minute that you can spare from your duties should be devoted to simran and bhajan so that you may soon go in and thus finish your round of births and deaths.*

This is the framework within which we, as satsangis, make all of our daily decisions. Whether our objective is kept in mind or it is forgotten, the decisions we make will affect our spiritual life accordingly.

The Masters explain that God is love and that love is God. They urge us to create an atmosphere of meditation that is uplifting, light, and loving. We might ask how we can do that if we allow ourselves to get upset and angry about the world.

Masters say that meditation is easy. Sit, repeat like you always do in the world, but repeat the names of God rather than the words and images of the world. Let go of thoughts, let go of worries. Fill our minds with simran. That is the objective.

In *My Submission*, Maharaj Sawan Singh says, talking about prayer, but referring to meditation in this context: “As long as a disciple has not reached God he needs prayer in order to meet his personal, religious, social, national, and other needs.”

He does not deny that we have personal and other needs, but meditation is where we get the strength, the clarity of mind, and the fortitude to go back to the world with a different perspective. He continues:

“Prayer helps overcome the lower tendencies of the mind and senses and acts as a bond between the soul and God.”

We have to develop a higher view, a deeper vision, which we can have only through meditation. Then we can go out and play the game of life to the best of our ability.

The Master’s command is: Meditate, whatever the circumstances around you are. He doesn’t want excuses. He just wants action.

In *My Submission*, Great Master explains that the path of the saints starts at the eye centre. Saints advise us to plug the three main external outlets of energy, which pull the attention down, and “to do simran with the tongue of the soul, to contemplate on the form of the Master with the eye of the soul, and to listen to Shabd with the ear of the soul.”

“The first essential thing,” he says in *Spiritual Gems*, “is to enter this laboratory within ourselves, by bringing our scattered attention inside of the eye focus. This is a slow process. But we are not justified in saying that we cannot do it.”

Simran is the key tool that takes us to the eye centre where we become absorbed and transported by the Sound. Great Master says in *My Submission*:

*When simran of the Lord is carried out incessantly and with every breath of one’s life, it awakens one’s consciousness in the Lord. Simran of the name or names given by someone whose consciousness is awakened in God is highly beneficial because, through the medium of thought transference between master and disciple, fast success is assured.*

And, very practically, he continues in the same book:

*After assuming an easy posture, simran should be done by concentrating one’s attention between the eyebrows (which is the seat of the soul) and*

*repeating the names with the tongue of the soul with an all-consuming absorption. Simran done in this manner overcomes the restlessness of the mind and results in a high degree of concentration.*

The Masters ask us to find a comfortable position, to sit regularly and punctually for two and one-half hours every day, and to repeat the words with attention, without moving. We are advised not to worry about the results, not to even think about results. Although we read and have been told in detail during our initiation about the inner lights, the sounds, and the Radiant Form of the Master awaiting us at the third eye, the Master tells us not to expect results, for if we have expectations, we are trying to control a process which is not in our hands. “If light and sound is all you want, go to the discotheque!” the Master has famously said, thus destroying our ideas about what we think these inner experiences are.

So we sit. And what happens? For most of us, after four, five or six rounds of simran, the concentration evaporates. Masters know this. They know that sometimes when we meditate we fall asleep, we see all black – not the sun, moon, and stars – we see nothing, we hear nothing.

Masters know. So they say bring back the attention and start over, and they do not seem to care how often we have to do this. Just bring back the attention into the next round of simran. And leave the results to him.

And results there will be. Meditation gives peace of mind, for meditation is a process of concentration, and the agitation, tension, depression that we feel is the result of an agitated, scattered mind. This peace of mind, says Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, is felt before we even make progress within.

*You'll be mentally at rest, at peace, you'll feel the bliss, you will feel that atmosphere within yourself, and there is some sort of contentment.  
Your attitude towards the events of the world is also changing. You are*

*developing a detached outlook on everything by meditation, though you may not have experienced any progress within at all.*

There is no substitute for meditation. We can't do more seva and think we can make up for missing our meditation. We can't read more books and think we can make up for it. We can't come to satsang and think we can make up for it. We can't go to the Dera and think we can make up for it. Meditation is essential.

Master knows what is happening between him and the disciple during those precious two and one-half hours of dialogue, so there is absolutely no need for us to worry about what we see or hear or don't see or hear; we just close our eyes, and we are automatically where we are supposed to be. Just focus on the darkness and let go. Stillness of the mind will come in due time. In due time, nothing in the whole world will exist for us except the Shabd and our love for our Master.



# Unbroken Attention

There is a story in *The Little Zen Companion* about a Japanese Zen master, Ikkyu Sojun, of the 15th century. One day, a man approached him and asked him to write “a maxim of the highest wisdom” for him. The story goes as follows:

*Ikkyu took his brush and wrote: “Attention.”*

*“Is that all?” asked the man.*

*Ikkyu then wrote: “Attention, Attention.”*

*“Well,” said the man, “I really don’t see much depth in what you have written.”*

*Then Ikkyu wrote the same word three times: “Attention, Attention, Attention.”*

*Half-angered, the man demanded, “What does that word ‘Attention’ mean, anyway?”*

*Ikkyu gently responded, “Attention means attention.”*

Our Master urges us to concentrate our attention at the eye centre and we say, “Yes but would it be better for us to sit in meditation after taking a bath or a shower?” Master gently advises us not to worry about these things. He urges us to just do our meditation, do our bhajan and simran, concentrate our attention. So we ask, “Yes, but should we do our meditation in the morning or the evening? Should we sit on the floor or on a chair? Should we ...? Should we ...?” And the Master responds again and again with supreme patience that it doesn’t matter, just sit, just attend to meditation.

All these questions that our mind keeps coming up with just keep us confused, keep us away from doing the one thing that our Master is asking us to do: just sit, close our eyes, look into the darkness, do our simran, and try to concentrate our attention at the eye centre. Attention is, in fact, the “maxim of the highest wisdom” that the man in the story was looking for. Attention at the eye centre takes our mind and soul inside to the spiritual realms where we contact the Shabd and begin our journey home. Maharaj Sawan Singh says in *Spiritual Gems*, “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.”

Great Master is not talking about the kind of attention that rises and falls as our mind runs out after some stray thought. The level of concentration that we need is three hours of unwavering attention! That is the kind of concentration that a Master has. Is this possible for us? Three hours of concentrated attention? Yes, but we have some work to do. Another Zen story adapted from *Zen Stories to Tell Your Neighbours* illustrates the challenge we have ahead of us when we take up this path in earnest.

A skillful archer challenges a Zen master who is also skilled in archery to prove which of them is the better. The young archer goes first and hits a bullseye on a far-away target with his very first arrow and then splits his first arrow with his second. “See if you can match that!” he says to the Zen master.

In response, the master silently motions to the young man to follow him up the mountain to a deep gorge spanned by a flimsy, shaky log of wood. Stepping out onto this “bridge” the Zen master aims at a far-away tree and fires a clean direct shot into it. “Now it is your turn,” he says.

Peering down into the seemingly bottomless ravine, the young archer, terrified, cannot bring himself to step onto the log, never mind shoot an arrow from it.

Understanding his opponent's dilemma, the Zen master turns to him and says: "You have much skill with your bow, but you have little skill with mind that lets loose the shot."

Like the archer in this story who has great skill and accuracy, we may be experts in leading the Sant Mat way of life: keeping the vows, doing seva, attending satsang, reading the books, and doing simran as much as possible during the day. But if we have not concentrated our mind during meditation, we are in the same position as the young archer who has learned the mechanical skills of archery but is terrified to stand on the log over the deep ravine. Without a focused mind, neither of us can achieve our goal.

Masters don't whitewash the path. They tell us it will take effort to achieve our goal. It will take time. But they also say it is possible. Great Master continues the quote above in *Spiritual Gems*:

*But [holding our attention at the eye centre] 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.*

If we keep practising our meditation and doing our simran throughout the day, the mind will become accustomed to being at the eye centre. Then we will have won the battle. Everything we do in life should be directed towards achieving this goal.



# Intention and Attention

*We can be happy only when the purpose of our coming into this body can be achieved. And the purpose of our coming into this body can be achieved only when we invert our attention within this body and try to search for him there. Unless we meet him, we can never be happy and we can never be saved from birth and death.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

We need to choose if liberation from this karmic wheel of life and death is our intention. If this is the case, then our attention needs to be focused on that intention. In the book *The Magic of Intention*, the author writes:

*You are what your deepest desire is. As your desire, so is your intention. As your intention, so is your will. As your will, so is your deed. As your deed, so is your destiny.*

Attention and intention go hand in hand. They are powerful tools that we can use, both in and out of meditation, to become more self-aware about the choices we make. They enable us to break old habits and get what we really want out of life.

Every moment holds a seed of infinite possibilities. That seed has the potential to be anything we want when we bring our intention to that moment. When we learn to pay close attention to our immediate experiences, we can use our attention purposefully (or intentionally). To become masters of attention and intention, we need to be more aware of

what's happening in the present moment, and not get stuck in the stories of the past or fears about the future. Get in the habit of asking yourself, "What's happening right now?" or "How do I feel about this moment?"

Our intention informs the direction of our attention. A good beginning is to practise noticing where we are consistently placing our attention. Transformational change requires our attention aligning with our intention. When attention and intention align, a powerful, life-changing force of awareness is unleashed that keeps us mindful and in the "now." Mindful attention allows us to make moment-by-moment choices that support our intention to change and to grow. Change and transformation occur when we think and act from our true nature, which has no habits or addictions, likes or dislikes. Then, when we express a quality, such as love, it is unencumbered by an expectation of gaining something in return.

If we are living with our attention focused on our intention we will notice that our reaction to praise or criticism is neither inflated nor deflated. We don't take things personally – whether positive or negative. Praise and blame do not affect us as they once did.

Another good indicator of progress is our ability to quickly forgive others and ourselves. We begin to be grateful to those who may have wronged us in the past because they help us to become aware of those areas of stubbornness that we cling to when going through the process of transformational change. This awareness allows us to create space for others to be themselves without the need to control them. We let go of the notion that others have been created to make us happy because we understand that the only person responsible for our happiness is ourselves.

Real happiness comes as a result of meditation. Simran is an essential part of that meditation. We can practise simran at any time as an unceasing prayer of the heart. We can learn to keep the simran rolling throughout the day. This is not difficult if we sincerely practise it. Simran can become incessant during the day and then non-stop in our subconscious all night,

so that when we roll over in our sleep, or surface to consciousness, we become aware of the words turning in the axis of our mind. With the practice of simran, the mind will become more docile; we will know tremendous peace and our attention will more easily focus at the eye centre during meditation. The method of meditation taught by the Masters turns our attention away from the world and we begin to see the Lord in every moment of our lives.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. I:

*Everything takes its flavour from God and turns divine; everything that happens reveals God. When a man's mind works in that way, things all have this one taste, and therefore God is the same to this man, alike in life's bitterest moments and its sweetest pleasures.*



*Contemplation on Nam leads to honour;  
singing God's praises is the real thread.  
Such a sacred thread will not snap,  
but will endure in the divine court.*

*Gurbani Selections, Vol. I*

# I Did That Already

On one occasion Maharaj Sawan Singh, the Great Master, asked Maharaj Charan Singh what he would like to be when he grew up: would he want to be an ordinary son, a bad son, or a good son? When Hazur asked what the difference among the three was, Great Master explained that an ordinary son neither increases nor decreases his inheritance, a bad son squanders his inheritance, whereas a good son puts his inheritance to proper use, increases it and uses it to help others. Hazur, then in his teens, replied that while everyone wants to be a good son, since everything was in Great Master's hands, it was entirely up to him to mould him in whichever way he pleased. This was the trust and faith of a young disciple in his Master.

For many lives we also have been a good son or daughter, even a bad son or daughter, or a good or bad spouse, a good or bad parent. Now is the time for us to stop being something and become something – to become the Master, who is everything. We need to remind ourselves that we have done everything in our past births except meditate. The proof of our lack of meditation and effort is we are still here discussing what needs to be done to attain the ultimate purpose of human birth.

There is a story about a famous opera singer who was in her prime. The owners of a big New York opera house hired her as the manager of their opera house. When the prestigious position was offered to her, she accepted it – although it meant that she wouldn't be focusing on her own singing any more. When she started to work as a manager, rather than as a singer, she started wearing a bracelet saying IDTA. Somebody asked what those letters stood for. She replied, "The bracelet is to remind myself that I DID THAT ALREADY."

This is exactly what we need to remind ourselves as satsangis, as seekers of spirituality: we have done it all already. So, whenever we are tempted to

compromise our number-one seva of meditation, we need to remember our Master and, keeping our trust and faith in him, walk away from whatever it is that distracts us, reminding ourselves: “IDTA – I did that already.”

There is nothing new that needs to be done in this life; there is nothing remaining that needs to be done. We did everything already; the only thing that needs to be accomplished in this life is God-realization.

A poem by Guru Arjan Dev in the Guru Granth Sahib reminds us of what we have already been.

*In so many incarnations, you were a worm and an insect;  
in so many incarnations, you were an elephant, a fish and a deer.  
In so many incarnations, you were a bird and a snake.  
In so many incarnations, you were yoked as an ox and a horse.  
Meet the Lord of the Universe – now is the time to meet Him.  
After so very long, this human body was fashioned for you...  
Through ... the company of the Holy, you obtained this human life.  
Do seva – selfless service; follow the Guru’s teachings and repeat the  
Lord’s Name.*

We have done and been many things before; now is the time for us to turn towards the Lord and become one with him. It is not easy. In our lives, the people we love and are loved by look so real; the things we possess and we want to possess look so real; the homes look real; the health problems look so real. How can we think of them as being unreal? How can we put all of this aside and turn to that which is real – our meditation?

Our transformation lies within the will of the Father. The moment we are touched by Master, it is as though he is picking us up from muddy, dirty waters, placing us on the bank of the river and rinsing us with pure water. As the water drains off into the muddy river, we start to see the reality that

we were not dirty after all; the water we were swimming in was dirty. And when we look at our cleaner self, the truth becomes more real.

However, for this to happen we need to accept what comes our way. We need to accept his will and stop hankering after things that will not take us closer to our spiritual goal.

In 1947, Great Master became very ill and had to be taken to Amritsar for treatment. From October of that year, Maharaj Charan Singh remained with him, serving him constantly until he passed away on April 2, 1948. While he was in Amritsar attending the Great Master, news came that Hazur had been officially selected for a post in the judiciary. Great Master responded by asking him what purpose it would serve for him to become a judge. Rather, he said, he should wait and see what Baba Jaimal Singh's order for him was. Great Master then said that, since Hazur's father's health was failing, Hazur should give up practising law and help his father with the family farm. Hazur accepted the Great Master's guidance without question and gave up his practice and independent life in Sirsa. With no idea of what lay in store for him only a few years ahead, he left the active life of a young lawyer and became a farmer in the village. Three years later, he was appointed Master by Maharaj Jagat Singh.

We all may have been lawyers, doctors, artists, scientists, farmers, mechanics – you name it. But this is the time for us to become one with Master himself by following the teachings of our Satguru, our Master. This does not mean that we should run away from our professions; it means that we should give the right amount of importance to everything in our lives. Shabd, simran, seva, satsang should be the four pillars of our life, and everything else should revolve around them. We need to make our meditation our foundation, and everything else should become mere detail. This should be our attitude to get through our life.

Whatever “important” thing we are doing right now, in all our previous lifetimes we have done it a million times, and it did not change the world

or its outcome. If we are worried about raising our children right, we need to remember that we have given birth many times. Why worry this time also? Let us take care of our responsibilities the right way, leave the rest to him, and focus on our meditation. We cannot afford to spoil our meditation because of a bad relationship, parental problems, health upheavals, or financial losses. If we worry about property or money, we need to remind ourselves that we have been rich many times before, and it does not matter.

All these things are the toys that have been placed in front of us so that we can learn, grow, give and take, and pay our karmic debts. But they should not distract us from our prime responsibility of realizing God during this human birth.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, Maharaj Sawan Singh says, “Shabd is the life, the essence, the root and the quintessence of every created thing.”

For initiates, the door to this kingdom of Shabd has already been opened. The secret has been revealed to us. If we are unable to realize that, it is because of our lack of effort and commitment. Being a disciple on this path requires a lot more sacrifice than we think. The sacrifice is not only in our actions but in our attention too. We need to empty our mind of all worries and plans and let them go. We have done all of that already! All those things do not matter as long as we do our real duty – meditation.



# Restoring Trust

Masters assure us there is no counting the innumerable spins we have taken on the wheel of life and death. First we didn't want to come here at all, and now, it seems, we seldom want to leave this physical plane. We have had so many lifetimes here and all have stolen precious remembrance of our higher selves. We have forgotten our origin and our place as true lovers of the Lord.

The Persian mystic, Sultan Bahu captures our spiritual condition:

*Unknown to me now are the mysteries of my Lord –  
my origin I have all but forgotten!  
The temptation to eat the forbidden fruit  
put the noose of destiny around my neck.  
Once I sang like a nightingale in my Lord's garden –  
trapped in this mortal cage, I now flutter with pain.  
Discard love for everything else from your heart,  
and pray only for his grace to call you back, O Bahu.*

*Sultan Bahu*

To better understand how our comings here have robbed us of our true identities, Baba Jaimal Singh says in *Spiritual Letters*:

*The day the individual being, ... that is, the soul, separated from Sach Khand, and the Shabd-dhun, that very day its trust in the True Lord ... was also severed. The Shabd-dhun looks after it all the time, but it does not realize this because its love and loyalties are deeply entrenched in mind and maya.... But what kind of a love is this that has made it unable to understand its own loss? That loss it considers to be a gain.*

The Master is telling us the spiritual quality of inherent trust is crippled in every soul here in creation. We all lack trust in the Lord. Therefore, our source of strength, and our overall capacity to trust and to love have been greatly compromised. Without trust in the Lord, we can't trust anything in life – not others, not ourselves, and certainly not our own minds.

We are fortunate because there is nothing our Beloved does not know about us. He knows and accepts our strengths and our weaknesses. After all, we are only living out our scripts; every factor of our lives has been endorsed by him. He is not bothered by any of our mental prattle. This is why he reminds us that we are not the mind. Rather, to our Master, we are only love. In fact, the only sin we can ever commit against the Father is to not attend to our daily meditation.

Anger, greed, attachment, lust, and pride – each of these has played a significant role in forcing us to be born again on the wheel of eighty-four species. We have come to this world in all shapes, sizes, and species. We have been all forms of animals, fish and fowl, and while in human bodies we have been every nationality and gender. We have been brilliant scholars and full-fledged imbeciles. We have ruled as benevolent kings and queens and we have died to be reborn as thieves, coming back to rob the very kingdoms we once ruled.

Throughout all these incarnations, our mind has always been the dictator, judge, and juror who ultimately sealed our fate to return again. Adding insult to injury, this very mind that we claim as an intimate part of ourselves is, at best, fickle. Repeatedly, it proves it has no loyalty to or love for us.

Our actions determined what our own fate would be; we willingly wrote it with our own handwriting in our book of karmic destiny. Thankfully, through the grace and love of the Lord, nothing can permanently tie us to this world. We are slated by the Lord to return home. We can hasten or delay our progress; it's up to us.

We will never get past the sights and sounds of this world until we consistently make every effort to still the mind and control the senses. It is the mind's job to be chaotic and so we must surpass the mind's efforts and gain mastery over it and our senses.

Only our Master can help us transform this ocean of karmic tears into an ocean of spiritual bliss. By the Lord's personal invitation we were sent into this creation, and now, by his personal invitation, we are being invited to return back to him. Our daily meditation honours our Master's wishes.

Baba Jaimal Singh reassures us with the following words:

*The Satguru, attaching the disciple again to the same Shabd-dhun, will guide him back to Sach Khand. So the disciple's trust that remained broken in life after life has been restored by the Satguru.*

*Spiritual Letters*



## From Ignorance to Experience

There is a story in the book *A Wake Up Call* about a wise man who was invited to speak to a group of students. He arrived and asked the assembled students whether they knew what he was going to talk about. They all said, “Yes.” And the wise man said, “Well, if you already know what I’m going to talk about, then there’s no point in my saying it.” And he left.

The students again invited him to speak. Before starting his talk he he asked, “Do you know what I’m going to talk about?” They all said, “No.” And he responded, “If you don’t know what I’m going to talk about, then why am I here?” And he left.

The students invited him to speak yet again. This time when he asked whether they knew what he was going to talk about, they were prepared. Half of them said, “Yes” and half of them said, “No.” The wise man said, “Then those who know can explain it to those who don’t know, and there’s no point in my staying here.” And he left.

Once more the students invited the wise man to speak to them. This time when he asked whether they knew what he was going to talk about they were all silent. This was the moment he had been waiting for, and he began to share his teachings with them.

This story illustrates that it’s only when we drop our preconceptions, our assumptions, our opinions, our expectations, our fantasies about the path – our ideas about what we think we know – that we become receptive to what the Masters are trying to teach us. When we realize our ignorance, we become open to learning what the saints want to impart to us. We also become open to their love for us. When we accept our ignorance, we can begin to follow this path in all sincerity and humility.

When we first come to the path, many of us read the Sant Mat literature religiously. We want to understand everything we possibly can about this mystic path. This is good because we're told to satisfy our intellect before asking for initiation by reading the books and attending satsang.

So we do. And we may get a solid intellectual understanding of the path. But a funny thing happens: the longer we are on the path, the more we begin to realize – if we're honest with ourselves – that we don't really understand any of it.

Our real-life experience starts bumping up against what we've read in the books. We begin to see what look to us like paradoxes and contradictions, and they often confuse us. At times, we might even question our faith. The best-case scenario is that slowly and slowly, if we're doing our part – living the Sant Mat way of life and doing our meditation – we begin to realize that the path is ultimately a mystery, and that we don't have a clue about anything. For many of us, this is a shock, a rude awakening.

The Masters do all they can to disabuse us of our cherished concepts about spirituality. They help puncture our false beliefs about what we think we know and what we think meditation should be like. They turn us to the experience of truth that we can only discover through our meditation.

When someone asked Maharaj Charan Singh about the saying attributed to Socrates that the wise man is one who knows that he knows nothing, Hazur said (as quoted in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I):

*I think the wisest person is he who realizes that he knows nothing. Christ himself said: O Father, you have hid these things from the prudent and from the wise, and you have revealed them to the babes. You see, this ego, this intellect, makes us think we know everything. When we eliminate that ego, we realize we know nothing.*

Hazur went on to say that the Lord has given us intellect so that we can find him and realize him. But he said if we don't use it in the right way, then it's useless.

*It is absolutely useless to have all the knowledge of the world if we do not know the Creator, who is within every part of his creation. When we know the Creator, then we realize that we know absolutely nothing. It is the Creator who knows everything.*

Understanding the truth is not about being smart or reading scriptures or analyzing. It's been said that the true devotees are not those who know the most but those who love the most. Hazur said:

*If a simple man can understand the straight teachings of a mystic, he doesn't need to refer to any book at all. He doesn't have to look at any other mystic at all. All books and literature are just to satisfy our intellect. All meetings [satsangs] are just to satisfy our intellect, convince us and then to create an atmosphere for meditation, that's all. Ultimately they will lead you to meditation. These are all the means, but if we don't attend to the end, the means are useless to us.*

The Masters tell us that we can't satisfy our hunger by watching someone else eat. Master's spiritual understanding and spiritual experience will not satisfy our spiritual hunger. He became a mystic through the will and direction of his own Master and his own spiritual practice, his own obedience and love for his Master, his dedication to his own meditation, which was taught to him by his Master. Similarly, we will gain our own spiritual understanding only through our own experience, which will come from our own spiritual practice and our own meditation, guided by our own Master.

The mystics come to guide us spiritually. They show us how to release our soul from its enslavement to the mind and senses so that it can merge back into its source, the Shabd – that divine power of love that sustains every living thing, which people also call God.

Someone once asked Hazur to define God, and asked if God could be seen inside. The Master says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol I:

*You have to experience him. He is a being. When you cannot see yourself, how can you see the Creator? Seeing is what you see with these outside eyes. Hearing is what you can hear with your outside ears.... That is why Christ said, having eyes you see not, having ears you hear not. And yet we are supposed to see him; we are supposed to hear him. There is another faculty which sees him, which hears him. We can't call it even a faculty. But these things have to be described, have to be explained. When we cannot explain the faculties of the soul, how can we explain the faculties of the Lord, the Creator?*

And then Hazur said that our relationship with the Lord is that of love, and that some people call the Lord love. But, he then said that even love can't be described with words. It has to be experienced. The Masters constantly emphasize the limits of intellectual knowledge and the benefits of actual experience.

The application of knowledge is practice. Meditation. The Masters tell us that everything we are to receive on this path will be through our meditation. So, in fact, being aware of our own ignorance is a tremendous blessing; it's vital if we are to continue searching for the truth. As soon as we think we know what this path is all about, we settle into a comfortable religious mindset, feeling both saved and safe. This will get us nowhere.

On the other hand, if we are conscious of our own ignorance, we will strive to achieve experience and not settle for mere knowledge. We have the

experience of vegetarianism, not just knowledge about it; we should desire the same actual experience of Shabd instead of mere knowledge.

God, love, the Shabd – these things can't be understood with the mind, can't be described with words. We have to go within and experience them for ourselves, and this is the purpose of a Master: he gives us the tools that will help us turn away from the world of the senses; the world of material wealth, status, possessions, and relationships, and go within ourselves to find God, through a specific method of meditation. That is the only way we can experience God, or love, or truth and end our ceaseless wandering in the world of phenomena.



# The Eye Focus

Great Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh, gives clear-cut directives for disciples of Sant Mat on how to acquire the power to focus at the eye centre. He says in *Spiritual Gems*:

*You develop the power to withdraw your attention, at will, from the outward objects and from the physical body, and concentrate it in the eye focus.... Make contact with the astral form of the Master, become very intimate with him, make him your companion, catch the Sound Current, cross the mind planes ... so that your wanderings in the worlds of mind and matter may end. Do it now, while alive. This is the purpose of human life....*

*It is not difficult to acquire worldly fame, wealth, kingdom, and miraculous power, but it is difficult to turn away one's attention from these and go inside to catch the Sound Current. Love, faith, and perseverance make the path easy and possible to attain the unattainable.*

Great Master tells us that our first objective is to hold the attention steady in the eye focus. What is the eye focus? We typically point to a place between the brows and call that the focus, but when we are actually involved in the process of meditation, what does it mean to “be in the focus” or “inside,” as we call it? Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Die to Live*, “Whenever you close your eyes, you are where you should be.” Whatever the attention sees behind the eyes, that is what is meant by “inside” or “in the focus.”

When we close our eyes there is darkness. We don't understand how significant this darkness is and are inclined to complain that we see nothing. However, that darkness is not "nothing" – it is actually something real. The soul starts travelling on the spiritual journey from the very moment we close our eyes and look into that darkness with the attention. The more we hold our attention steady in the eye focus, the more it becomes absorbed in what is happening there, until we reach a degree of absorption where our total awareness is working in the focus. None of the attention or soul is left to be aware of the outside world or body – we become numb and dead to the world. At that point we say, "the soul has gone within." It has entered the eye focus or third eye.

Great Master tells us that our first objective on the path is to concentrate the attention in the eye focus. We have only to sit in meditation and try to do this to find how very difficult it is – and this is merely the first rung of the ladder in our ascent upwards. Yet, entering the eye focus or going within, can be a very easy, natural process. When we close our eyes, we know our mind's continuous activity in worldly matters does not cease. Sometimes we never come to the focus. Great Master gives the reason in *Spiritual Gems*: "It is not difficult to acquire worldly fame, wealth, kingdom, and miraculous power, but it is difficult to turn away one's attention from these and go inside to catch the Sound Current."

Our attention flows out through the senses and makes contact with objects. Then our thoughts reflect on these objects, both verbally and visually. This leads us to do ceaseless repetition and contemplation on material objects, even while asleep. The mind is so constructed that it takes on the attributes of what it contemplates.

We've heard the story many times about the saint who wished to demonstrate the meaning of contemplation to a peasant. He asked the peasant who he loved most in life. He answered his buffalo. The saint told him to contemplate on his buffalo. When the peasant was called to come

out of his house, he replied he couldn't because his horns were too wide. This is the essence of contemplation. We become so absorbed by the object of our contemplation that we become that object and identify ourselves with it.

Thomas Merton, in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, tells us: "No matter how distracted you may be, pray by peaceful, even perhaps inarticulate, efforts to centre your heart upon God, who is present to you in spite of all that may be going through your mind. His presence does not depend on your thoughts of him. He is unfailingly there." The Master is such a being already because he comes from the highest spiritual plane. Concentration on him will draw us inward and upward back to the Lord.

This is how our meditation works. We really do not need to alter the nature of the mind, which is to do ceaseless repetition and contemplation. We simply substitute our worldly impressions with spiritual impressions. When we sit down for meditation, instead of allowing the mind to reflect on the impressions of the outside world, we make it repeat the Master's names and contemplate on his form. By constant practice, our ability to meditate on spiritual impressions instead of worldly ones grows, until finally one's whole consciousness is saturated only with the practices of simran, dhyan or listening to the Sound at all times.

In *Sultan Bahu* we read:

*Contemplation is born out of a profound state of simran. In such a state, contemplation occurs automatically, and the luminous form of the Murshid [Master] manifests itself in the disciple. He then sees his Murshid everywhere, inside as well as outside.*

In *Tales of the Mystic East*, there is a story about a saint who "was travelling through the countryside on his horse. At the same time one of his disciples was meditating in the wilderness nearby and yearning for his Master.

The horse refused to go where the saint wanted. The saint tried his best, but the horse was stubborn. The saint wondered why the horse was being so difficult. Finally, he gave in and said, "All right, go wherever you like." The horse headed straight for the wilderness and stopped after some time. There, in front of them, sat the disciple. On seeing his Master, the disciple's heart was filled with joy. "What is all this?" asked the saint. "Today my heart was pining for you," the disciple replied. "This is how strongly the disciple's love should pull."

Anyone who sits regularly and sincerely for meditation, and honestly observes how and where his mind is running and keeping him away from the eye focus, will soon find out what harms his meditation and what helps him.

The earnest devotee then realizes that if he is to succeed at meditation or this battle with the mind, he is going to have to reform himself drastically. The devotee starts trimming away at his life. First, the obvious things go. Then later, as he grows increasingly earnest in his efforts to control the mind, he discovers that sometimes even the little things – which look like the harmless, small pleasures of everyday life – are affecting his mind. The list of activities that the devotee may allow himself, which do not undermine his battle with the mind, becomes shorter and shorter. The path becomes increasingly narrow. Until, finally, he finds himself walking on a sharp razor's edge. He knows there can be no deviation, no compromises. A simple, pure, humble life is essential for spiritual progress – and this is not achieved without personal sacrifice.

We have been given a certain number of years as we pass through this dream called life. At the time of death, we will realize that the value of the time spent in this illusion is the opportunity it gave us to remove ourselves from the prisons of matter and mind and take the soul back to its true home. This is the purpose of our life.

Every minute we spend in devotion to the Lord is credited to us and goes with us after death – it is our real and imperishable wealth. When our attention spreads down and out into this world in the pursuit of pleasure and possessions, we are draining the reservoir of our soul's strength. We cannot put any price on the value of this soul force. It has to be collected together, drop by drop like precious nectar.

However, we also have to remember that spirituality is not achieved by running away from life and its problems and responsibilities. Wherever we hide ourselves, we take the mind, with all its cravings and weaknesses, along with us. True renunciation and asceticism consists in learning to control the mind wherever we are, in whatever circumstances we may be placed. The saints tell us we must live in this world while learning to withdraw our attention at will and concentrate at the eye focus. No one else can fight this battle for us. Even the Master, who is teaching, guiding, and protecting us spiritually, is not going to control our minds for us. Only when the mind is detached from the world and the attention is brought up to the eye focus, are we pulled within. Until then, he will not lift us, because it would be like trying to raise up a man bound down by heavy chains. We have first to loosen those chains to withdraw our attention from physical matter so we may become light and free.

One of the hardest tasks saints have is to convince us of the wonders that are within, and that no price is too high to pay, no sacrifice too great to make, to earn this rare privilege of reaching the eye centre.

Great Master reassures us in *Spiritual Gems*:

*Your wildest dreams or imaginings cannot picture the grandeur of what lies within. But the treasure is yours and is there for you. You can have it whenever you go there.*



*Within this earthen vessel of the body  
Are gardens and groves,  
And within it is also the Lord...  
Within the body is the touchstone  
On which is tested your spiritual worth,  
And within it is also the appraiser,  
The Lord who tests you.  
Within the body the ceaseless  
Sound reverberates,  
And within it the spring wells up.  
Kabir says: Listen, my friend,  
Your Beloved is within you.  
Kabir the Great Mystic*

# Why Not Be Happy?

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “Everybody wants to be happy in this world. Nobody wants to be miserable. So why not be happy?”

All of us go through periods of happiness and misery. Each of us adopts our own means to try to avoid pain and misery and achieve happiness. Yet all those ways do not seem to be enough and we still realize that something is missing. Perhaps that is because real happiness is very different from the momentary feelings of joy that we often experience. A questioner asks Hazur in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “Master the word ‘happiness’ is sometimes defined as inner peace or calm or contentment. Is that what the Masters mean when they say we should be happy?” Hazur answers:

*Happiness means perpetual happiness, perpetual bliss and peace within, not short-lived happiness or so-called sensual pleasures.... Happiness means that happiness which has no reverse reaction afterwards. That is perpetual peace and happiness.*

By this definition, since the world is perishable, any happiness derived from the world is not sustainable and so it cannot be perpetual. Hazur says that happiness should have no reverse reaction afterwards. Does worldly happiness cause reactions? Yes it can. For example, if we go to a party and eat a lot of tasty food, we may feel happy but the next day we become lethargic and sleepy. Or we love someone or something very dearly and we are happy. However, the time surely comes when we are separated from the object of our love, and then the same object which gave us so much happiness eventually may become the source of our misery.

Saints tell us that lasting happiness is possible. Hazur explains in the same book, “The true and eternal happiness, bliss, peace, and contentment we can feel only when the soul is merged back into the Lord.” The soul, the life source within our body, is in love with its source, the Lord, but being separated from its source the soul is naturally unhappy. The soul wants to go back to its true home, to its Beloved where it will find peace and bliss. We can somewhat identify with this situation when we travel somewhere. It is fun and exciting, but it’s always a good feeling to come back home. It is said that “there is no place like home,” and this applies to the soul as well.

Hazur talks of this in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*When you are coming towards your home from a long distance, as you get nearer to your home you begin to have a little more sense of security within you. A sense of happiness starts coming within you as you come nearer and a feeling that you will soon be there.... Similarly, the nearer we are to the Lord, the nearer we are to our destination, the more contentment we feel within; the more bliss, the more peace, the more happiness we feel within.*

Most of us are clueless as to how near or far we are to our destination. The path may seem long and we may start feeling unhappy when we seem to be making no apparent progress. Yet, don’t we feel a sense of happiness and lightness when we are focused on Master and our meditation – whether we see any results or not? Hazur tells us in *Quest for Light*, “The mere fact that God, in his mercy, has selected us to be put on the path should make us very happy.” What a great blessing and privilege to be initiated and be able to go back to the Lord. We may not grasp how great this blessing is, but by and by as we meditate, we begin to realize how lucky we are.

We have to put in our effort to meditate and leave the results to him. Hazur explains in *Labour of Love*, “If we live in his will and if we are

grateful to him for whatever he has given us, then we feel extremely happy and light.” Acceptance of whatever he has given us lays the foundation for contentment.

We have a choice to either cry over our destiny and question the Lord or go through life with calmness and courage. Acceptance of whatever comes our way as the will of the Lord is possible when we have no expectations or desires. Similarly, if he or she completely surrenders to the will of the Lord, he or she can become carefree and happy. In *Quest for Light* Hazur says: “Forget the past. Live and meditate in the present, and do not worry about the future.”

We know this is not easy. Our past has such a firm hold on us that even when we sleep we dream of it; our mind contains a storehouse of memories that are so strong that they can move us to tears or laughter. And, of course, most of us are familiar with worrying about the future. The future is something of which we have no knowledge. However, the mind is such that many times it expects the worst in any situation, taking the negative outlook rather than the positive. If our destiny has already been written and we cannot change it, isn't it better to wait for the future to unfold and take whatever happens as a gift from him? As Hazur explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*What makes you worry? Uncertainty about the future and repentance for the past. So if everything is destined, then why worry? Whatever we have done in the past, we're not going to solve the problem by worrying about it. We'll be able to get rid of our worries with a practical approach. So attend to meditation. When your mind is attached to the Shabd and Nam within, then you don't think about the past or worry about the future.... We must live in the present. Every day has to be lived. So we should plan for a day and then live it thoroughly and happily, and attend to our meditation. That is the only way one can get*

*out of these worldly worries and worldly problems. And learn to accept rather than to demand.*

Accept rather than demand – our mind is so conditioned to wanting, that most of us make endless requests, if not demands, for what we want. Many times we pray for something instead of accepting what comes our way. In the same book he explains:

*Instead of asking the Father to give us the boons in life, we should ask him to give us that heart which is full of gratitude for what he has given to us. We need that understanding to thank him for what he has given, but we are always protesting what he has not given. We must believe that what he has not given is not meant for us, is not good for us, is not to our advantage. And for whatever he has given us in life, we should be grateful to him, we should be thankful to him.*

Happiness will be ours when we have a sense of gratitude in our hearts. Hazur says in *Quest for Light*, “Please have no worry. God is always with you to help, guide, and protect. Go through your life with laughter and always have a happy approach towards it.”

Why not be happy?



# What Matters

The work we have to do in this lifetime is the greatest challenge we have ever faced in all our incarnations. Each of us in our own specifically designed, mind-made world can hold on to only so many things, which are all constantly struggling for our attention. Each thought is saying, “I matter the most.” Which comes first? Which objects and thoughts do I need the most at this moment? What do I focus on next? What problem am I going to give my attention to? Will it be the demands that are placed upon us by our family, our work, our own internal desires and fears? Or the flood of things that our attention is being drawn to by advertising, friends, books, the internet, and movies? These all cause our mind to become so very scattered. These numerous demands force us to move through life in a state of emotional strain because so much matters to us in our life.

If I am sick and in pain – it matters. If I fall in or out of love – it matters. If I lose my job – it matters. If someone attacks my thoughts or feelings – it matters. If I do not get what I want – it matters. Giving our attention to all these things that cause stress diminishes our health and often makes us miserable. They all derive from that aspect of our mind that in Sant Mat we call ego.

Dr. Johnson writes in *The Path of the Masters*:

*The normal ego is all right, but when it begins to swell up out of all proportion, then it takes on the nature of a disease. So vanity is an overgrown ego. Ahankar is a malignant enlargement of the ‘I.’ That faculty, which is quite necessary for the preservation of the individual in this life and for the proper placement of that person in relation to all*

*others, becomes so overgrown that the normal self becomes for him the centre of the universe.*

Our egos are dysfunctional and our minds have identified with this dysfunctional ego to the extent that we are motivated fundamentally by our senses and the desires of our mind, which have overtaken the interests of our soul. From a spiritual perspective, this is a sickness. In many countries of the world there is an organization called Alcoholics Anonymous to help people with the disease of alcoholism. At the beginning of each of their weekly meetings every person in attendance, one by one, stands up and says, "Hello my name is so-and-so and I am an alcoholic." For us, the organization should be Ego-centrics Anonymous and the statement, "Hello my name is so-and-so and I have an overgrown ego. I believe I am the centre of the universe."

Our dysfunctional egos are constantly forcing us to pay attention to what they want. To make things worse, what matters to us at any moment constantly keeps changing. Karmas from past lives, which the ego labels as good or bad, are constantly arising. The ego goes into action to mobilize thoughts, words, money or actions to protect what matters to it and keeps us distracted.

This life-dominating ego, which wants to control things, thinks it can bring about what really matters to it, and at the same time it resists so many things that the Master sends us that would benefit it. What is the solution? To learn to see the ego the way the Master does: as a small illusory spot in relation to our entire spiritual being.

In an evening meeting at Dera, a brother told the Master: "I have such a big ego. Everything is me, me, me, me. I have little compassion and think I am so important. How can I ever make progress on this path with such a big ego?"

The Master started to laugh. He looked directly at this man and told him that he was wrong, that his ego was actually very, very small; it was nothing.

The Master can say that the ego is miniscule because he is looking at who we really are, at the soul. The reason he loves us is because he is not looking at our ego, he is not judging our ego. To him it is nothing, a tiny illusory spot. He is looking at what we cannot see, and that is our soul. He so often asks if we think he would have initiated us if he thought we could not do this work. Our lives can be transformed if only we prioritize and let go of all these things that we think matter so much and concentrate on the one big thing. The one big thing that the Master tells us does matter most is our meditation. This alone will release the soul from the mind and ego that bind us to the creation.



*What matters most is that we strengthen our will-power and experience the fact that we can do it. There is power in keeping a commitment, in knowing that our word is worth something. There is great value in just making the commitment to meditate...*

*Through repeated action, we become stronger at what we do. Even a small spark of determination will be enough to burn to ashes all the limitations put on us by a mindset that refuses to sit in meditation. Practice makes perfect.*

*Living Meditation*

# Truth Is Stranger than Science Fiction

In many science fiction stories, there are people living light-years away from their true home who come from a galaxy far, far away and have been lost for eons. As they explore space and meet others like themselves, they come to realize they have lived as strangers in a strange land.

Spiritual teachers throughout time have told us a similar story about our state here on earth: this world is not our true home and we have been lost and wandering for countless lifetimes. We have been given a human body and a mind to function in this world, just as an astronaut is provided a space suit so he can walk on the moon. But we are not this body nor are we this mind, any more than an astronaut is his space suit.

Our true being, our soul, existed before our birth into this physical creation and will exist after our bodily death. Our true self is far beyond anything that we can imagine. Presently, we can't remember anything except what we have seen, felt, heard, and experienced physically and mentally in this lifetime. But we have actually been here for millions of lifetimes in one form or another. And now we have been gifted a precious human form. Why is it so precious? Well, this is the part of the teachings that really sounds like science fiction. The human form is a launching pad for the soul to the higher planes beyond the mental and physical. It is the only form from which we can launch our true selves out of this world of illusion on to this mystical journey that will take us back to our true home with the Lord.

Only by turning inward through meditation are we able to withdraw from what we experience outside so that we may catch the inner light and sound. This light and sound slowly and slowly become unimaginable in strength, with an intensity unlike anything we have ever experienced in the physical creation. This light and sound, known as the Shabd, emanate from

the Supreme Lord of the creation. Like a wormhole in space that transports a spaceship beyond time and space, the Shabd is our means to travel beyond this material, mental plane to beyond the beyond.

From the human form, we embark on the ultimate phase of our journey through the countless forms of existence. One past saint said that he started out as rock then he became a plant. He moved on to become a fish, a bird, a cow, and finally a human. Although the human form is rare and difficult to obtain, we probably take it for granted since we can't remember anything else. The saints tell us that this human birth is a precious gift that most of us waste.

Intuitively, however, we think that there has to be something else going on that can ultimately satisfy us. Spiritual teachers confirm this feeling when they tell us that there is something much greater and more everlasting that awaits us. But there is a catch. To find it we have to detach ourselves from everything outside. We have to let go of the false concept of paradise in this world to which we have devoted our lives so that we can find the real paradise that is within us. The things to which we have devoted our lives – beauty, wealth, possessions, fame, relationships – will all leave us one day. They are like a dream.

To achieve true happiness, we have to detach ourselves from everything outside and go inside. Outside, everything we find is temporary. Inside we find the eternal. This does not mean that we should ignore our worldly responsibilities and live a solitary life in a cave. Nor does this mean that we should leave our near and dear ones. We continue to act in the play of our lives, playing our part to the best of our ability. However, our attitude shifts from one of attachment to one of detachment. By following the teachings of the saints, we learn to control our mind through meditation. No longer are we dragged around by the mind through lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego.

We all want to find happiness, peace of mind, contentment, and bliss that is never ending. So far, everything else that we have tried is just an idea that hasn't worked. The great spiritual teachers show us the way to find eternal life and bliss that never ends. They show us how to achieve God-realization by turning our attention inward to fulfil the true purpose of our life.

Our journey back to our true home is better than any science fiction adventure. We can burst the bubble of our limited human perspective and experience the infinite reality when we follow the instructions of our Master and learn to go within. For then we start our journey on the royal highway of Shabd, that eternal power of light and sound that will take our soul – our real self – back to our true home.





## The Enclosed Garden of the Truth

BY HAKIM SANAI, EDITED BY KIERON D. MOORE, TRANSLATED BY  
M.J. STEPHENSON  
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## The Walled Garden of Hakim Sanai

BY HAKIM SANAI, TRANSLATED AND ABRIDGED BY DAVID  
PENDLEBURY  
PUBLISHER: LONDON: OCTOGON PRESS, 1974  
ISBN: 0900860359. (ALSO E-BOOKS.)

The masterwork of Hakim Sanai, the twelfth-century Persian Sufi from Ghazna, entitled *Hadiqat ul-Haqiqat* (translated as *The Enclosed*, or *Walled Garden of Truth*), opened a new era in Sufi literature. As the first Sufi work to present spiritual teachings in poetry, it was the inspiration for Rumi's *Masnavi* a century later. Rumi wrote of Sanai: "I left off boiling while still half-cooked; Hear the full account from the Sage of Ghazna."

It is surprising, then, that so few attempts have been made to translate this masterpiece into English. The only significant undertaking was by Major J. Stephenson, who in 1910 published a Persian edition of the first book of the *Hadiqat ul-Haqiqat*, about one-sixth of the entire work, also translating it into English. No further English translations of this monumental piece of Sufi literature has been attempted, perhaps because of the poor condition of the early manuscripts, which are often confusing and conflicting even as to the order of verses.

Unfortunately, Stephenson's work is dense and challenging to read. This is partly because he ignores the poetic structure and compresses the verses into long paragraphs of prose, and partly because he uses a Victorian style of English. Also, Stephenson provides no notes to explain the many references in Sanai's work that, however clear in his time, baffle readers today.

Two more recent books have set out to make the profound spiritual insights of Sanai's work more accessible to the English-speaking reader. Both are based on Stephenson's work. Kieron Moore took Stephenson's prose and re-structured it into verse form, aiming to capture something of the rhythm and meter of the original. For example,

*Say, the world of evil and of good proceeds not  
except from Him and to Him, nay, is Himself.  
All objects receive their outline and forms from Him,  
their material basis as well as their final shape.  
Element and material substance,  
the form and colours clothing the four elements.  
All things known as limited and finite,  
are as but a ladder for thy ascent to God.*

Moore also added detailed endnotes for every instance where Sanai alluded to a Quranic verse, a saying of the Prophet, or an image, story or metaphor obscure to the modern reader. Moore finds that many of Sanai's allusions require some knowledge of Aristotle, Plotinus, Avicenna, and other philosophers, and his endnotes decode these references. Nonetheless, much of the text will be readily understood by any spiritual seeker. For example,

*Since the object of desire exists not in any place,  
how can you purpose to journey towards Him on foot?  
The highroad by which thy spirit and prayers can travel towards God,  
lies in the polishing of the mirror of the heart.*

David Pendlebury, in the second book here reviewed, took a different approach. Relying on Stephenson's edition of the Persian text, he chose to abridge and re-translate it. Skipping over all the obscure references, he selected passages that he felt spoke in a universal way to seekers following any spiritual path. These he rendered into verse in modern English, placing his selected verses in the same order in which they appear in the original, but with no notation showing how much was left out. The end result is brief (75 pages), but beautiful and inspiring. Some examples:

*He introduced himself to us  
out of kindness: how else  
could we have known him?  
Reason took us as far as the door;  
but it was grace that let us in.  
Bring all of yourself to his door:  
bring only a part,  
and you've brought nothing at all.  
The way is not far  
from you to the friend:  
you yourself are that way:  
so set out along it.*

In another place Sanai gives clear instructions:

*Arrange things so that when death calls,  
he finds your soul waiting in the street.  
Leave this house of vagabonds:  
if you are at God's door, stay there;  
if not, make your way there now.*

And in another conveys stern warnings:

*A man must enter into prayer  
sore-wounded and in poverty;  
without humility and trust,  
the devil will lead him by the nose.*

He reveals our true condition:

*You have broken faith,  
yet still he keeps his faith with you:  
he is truer to you  
than you are to yourself.*

Yet gives encouragement:

*From him forgiveness comes so fast,  
it reaches us before repentance  
has even taken shape on our lips.*

From the Pendlebury book are additional words of encouragement and wisdom.

*If you wish for a pearl  
you must leave the desert  
and wander by the sea;  
and even if you never find  
the gleaming pearl, at least  
you won't have failed to reach the water.  
It is your part to hand out  
forgiveness and mercy;  
mine to falter and fall.  
Fool that I am, take me,  
stumbling drunk that I am,  
take my hand.*

Either translation – Moore's more complete and annotated version, or Pendlebury's abridged but more lyrical one – clearly reveals the depth and beauty of Hakim Sanai's teachings.



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