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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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The Flood of Joy Is Abroad

*Light, my light, the world-filling light,
the eye-kissing light,
heart-sweetening light!*

*Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the
centre of my life;
The light strikes, my darling, the
chords of my love;
the sky opens, the wind runs wild,
laughter passes over the earth.*

*The butterflies spread their sails on the
sea of light.*

*Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the
waves of light.*

*The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it
scatters gems in profusion.*

*Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and
gladness without measure.*

*The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the
flood of joy is abroad.*

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*



The Purpose of Meditation

When our Covid-19 lockdown was first imposed on us more than a year ago, it seemed that here was a good opportunity to do lots of extra meditation. But did that actually happen? No – well, not nearly as much as intended. Why not?

Probably it comes back to our old problem: that if we work hard at something, we want to see some reward. And when that doesn't happen with meditation, we may lose a bit of enthusiasm. But then, how many times have we been told that we're not meditating for results – in the form of light or sound or inner experience? So, what then?

Our Master has always insisted that we should not look for results in meditation, because that's not what it's for. We just need to keep doing this because our Master has requested us to do it, whether our mind cooperates or not. By gradually attaching to the Shabd within, whether we are aware of it or not, our meditation is cutting the attachments that keep bringing us back, life after life. And it reduces our many desires that keep pulling us back to the plane where we hope these might be satisfied.

So even simple common-sense should tell us that we *need* to meditate, as much as possible, if we want to escape from these repetitive physical rebirths and let our souls return to where they once knew perfect happiness and the love of our Father. Results or no results, meditation is the most important thing we could ever do. It's this that transforms us.

But sadly, we keep forgetting what the main purpose of this rare and precious human birth is: to return to our source. We've forgotten who or what we are and where we should be heading.

What exactly is this transformation we are engaged in? Surely it's an expanding of our consciousness, until we rise to a level where we can finally merge back into the great consciousness that is God himself.

For that to happen we have to realize who we truly are – something much finer and higher than this coarse physical being. And that's what our meditation actually is for: to enable us to become pure and perfect enough to merge back into the ultimate perfection, the Creator himself.

But quite honestly, for most of us that's a prospect that seems almost too unreal even to consider at this time. But then, here's something

else to think about: the very fact that we were marked for initiation is proof that by the time we were initiated, a degree of transformation had already taken place – a little spark had been lit and there was a lessening of our load of karmas. Perhaps it started even in a previous life. And it is evidently a process that's ongoing, even if very slowly.

If we look back over the years, we'll see that we have already changed. To quite a large extent our whole mindset is now different. No doubt it's largely our way of life and our meditation that have been changing us. We may take our four principles for granted and we may think our meditation is ineffectual – and we may complain that we see no results. But already our changed attitudes and behaviour are a significant result of our way of life.

We find that by now we've developed a more sensitive conscience. We try to treat others with more love and kindness, and often we're happy to serve them. And if we have the opportunity to do seva, we really value it. We find that we want to be good human beings (as Baba Ji keeps advising). We want to live in our Master's will. Part of this is accepting what we have been given in this life and not constantly wanting more. And trusting that whatever karma he has allocated to us in this life must be for our ultimate benefit. We feel gratitude for the many blessings that have been bestowed on us.

We also find that we're less dependent on others for our happiness – we don't cling to them as much as we used to. And we can find peace and satisfaction in solitude. In fact, we become a bit uncomfortable when we're surrounded by too many people.

So many worldly activities and entertainments no longer interest us. We're contented to live more simply, no longer chasing excitement. In fact, we find that our *wants* have changed. We want a more spiritual satisfaction, and most of all, we want our Master – we want to see him, hear him, feel closer to him. And every now and then we have a clearer vision – a sense that there's another reality that's more significant than what we've always thought of as real.

The truth is that all those familiar things around us that constitute our present reality are what are actually unreal. And the whole reason for the Master seeking us out and initiating us is to help us see that this world is unreal and cannot last. And that we belong elsewhere.

But again, if we're honest we'll admit that this higher reality is still a bit beyond us, because this physical world and our own physical bodies are all we know. Great Master tells us in *Spiritual Gems*: "As long as we are covered with mind and matter, we cannot see Reality."

We've also been told that our ultimate goal is God-realization. But what do we understand of this? Absolutely nothing. What do we even know about God? The Masters tell us we can never understand God – we can only *become* him. And we will become him through love – that same love that's given to us as a gift when we meditate. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

It is said that God is love and love is God, because the characteristic of God is love. We become one with him. We lose our own identity – we merge in him; we become another being.

What Hazur is saying is that God is love; inside us there is a spark of the same love, and the two will eventually merge into one. In this we are serving the purpose of our being sent down into the creation. So it's love, the outcome of meditation, that helps to transform us. And to prepare us for this we're given love for our Master, and ultimately for the inner Master and the Lord himself.

But we also have to accept the fact that by ourselves we can actually do nothing. Everything depends on his grace. To quote Hazur again from *Spiritual Perspectives*:

Everything happens by grace. Without his grace, nothing can happen. Unless he wishes, nobody can reach him. We are all blind, groping in the dark.... He is the one who is pulling us from the back. We are only an instrument, so to say.

We are only his instruments. The action is all his. We can only dance according to how he pulls the strings. And thank goodness for that! Because it makes the ultimate outcome inevitable. Whatever we can or can't accomplish, eventually he is going to take us back to the Father. All that we need to do is obey what he tells us to do and live in his will.

We hear what the Master tells us. And still we worry about our own helplessness to achieve what our hearts want. We've been told so often

how important our effort is, and we look at our efforts, and they just seem so inadequate. But those efforts will become better – in time. It may take fifty years or even sixty years or more, but what does time matter to the One who has been directing the creation for all infinity?

In the meantime his grace must be working in some way that we just don't see, preparing us for a destiny that someday will be incredible. We just need to keep trying, and sooner or later he will bring us to him. And till then, we just live our way of life as best we can and we keep working at our meditation.



Give Yourself to the One Who Gives Everything

Saint Tukaram asks a poignant question: What can you claim as yours?

*You've landed on earth, so wake up, hurry up –
give yourself to the One who gives everything.*

*Your body is owned by time and death,
and your goods belong to the god of wealth –
what can you claim as yours?*

*A giver gives, but it's the Divine who's giving,
a taker takes, but the Divine is behind it –
what power do you have?*

*A living being is simply an excuse
for all that has to happen.*

*But you still believe in 'me and mine',
so you waste your life, says Tuka.*

*You still believe in all that perishes,
so you ignore the Lord and work for nothing.*

Many Voices One Song

Tukaram tells us to wake up. When we sleep, we believe our dreams to be real, but when we wake up they dissolve, having no meaning, no substance. Similarly, we believe that our stay on this earth, in the material world, is real, solid, permanent.

Tukaram reminds us that it won't last: we will die – our body is owned by time and death. Already the unavoidable truth of aging is apparent. Our entire culture is geared to denying these markers of time. We conceal or disguise encroaching age as if nothing is amiss and avoid the uncomfortable truths of pain, suffering, loss and death. Essentially, however, this body is on loan to us, as are our wealth and possessions.

Tukaram says our goods belong to the god of wealth. We think we possess them, that they are ours now. And so ego gets linked to attachment. Wealth is a god to those who worship it and our goods belong to him. Tukaram reminds us that we cannot claim these goods

any more than we can own our bodies. So, Tuka asks, what can we claim as ours? Not our children, spouses, friends, learning, nor our gifts and talents. They are given to us for a period, and eventually they either leave or are taken away.

Tukaram goes on to explain that everything belongs to the Lord, comes from the Lord, and the Lord is moving in and through everything.

*A giver gives, but it's the Divine who's giving,
a taker takes, but the Divine is behind it –
what power do you have?*

The saints teach that the creation is projected from the Lord. Everything is imbued with divine essence or life force, holding the entire universe together. Maharaj Charan Singh describes this life force or Shabd:

When the Lord withdraws that power from the universe, this whole universe will dissolve.... So there is something to hold this whole universe together, to prevent dissolution,... We call it Shabd, or nam.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Others call this power energy, or God, Father, Lord, Tao, Kalma, Holy Spirit, Truth, Love, Word, or Logos, to mention a few. It is through that Word of the Lord that he brought this whole universe into existence. Maharaj Charan Singh is saying that the Lord is at the heart of everything. Unfortunately, we are unable to distinguish between truth and illusion.

We can look to the saints for clarity. Mystics teach that this world of phenomena is governed by the law of karma or cause and effect – our present circumstances being the outcome of our actions in past lives. We have constructed this so-called reality that we inhabit, but underlying everything in creation is the divine life force. As Tukaram says: “A living being is simply an excuse for all that has to happen.”

We don't know the purpose of creation, but mystics have described it as the Lord's play or *leela*. They have compared God to a grand puppeteer and we then are simply puppets in his play. The strings by which we are made to dance are our karmas. Maharaj Charan Singh clarifies this point:

As long as the puppet show is going on, we think it is a reality. But when the puppeteer finishes it, puts the puppets in the bag, we see there was no reality. So unless we reach that stage when we are all put into the bag, we cannot know. Now we are just dancing like puppets.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

Maharaj Charan Singh explains that there are two kinds of puppets: first are the ones who know that they have strings and are being pulled by the Lord. They have come to this realization through their meditation. They know that they have no power of their own. Then there are those who believe in their own independent free will and are certain that there are no strings, and no puppeteer. These are the followers of the mind, believing themselves to be in control of their actions and choices. To reiterate Tukaram:

*You still believe in 'me and mine',
so you waste your life, says Tuka.
You still believe in all that perishes,
so you ignore the Lord and work for nothing.*

The natural outcome of this is that we ignore what is permanent, whole, conscious, blissful, divine: the Lord. And if we ignore the Lord then all our work in this life is for nothing. And so Tukaram tells us to give ourselves to the One who gives everything, to the Lord, the great giver. Maharaj Charan Singh elaborates on this:

Whatever you want from him, whatever you ask him for, he will give you. He will never be tired of giving to you, but you have to come back again and again and again and again to get all that you want. So don't think that all that you are desiring you will get in this life. You may have to take another life to get all that.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

As long as we are chasing after our own desires we are caught in the cycle of transmigration, coming back life after life to fulfil our wants, and to pay for their consequences: caught in the play of giving and taking.

In truth, whatever we have and are comes from the Divine: if we remember the Lord rather than his gifts, then we can fulfil the purpose of

human life, which is God-realization. He will never deprive us of his gifts, he only wants to give.

We forget the Giver and enjoy only his gifts; but if we realize the Giver within us, we automatically get everything. He is the owner of everything, he knows what we need, and he will definitely give us what we need. But we are only to ask for him.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

So give yourself to the One who gives everything.



The Holy Secret of God

Love is the highest and noblest feeling; it purifies our mind and elevates our being. In all ages, it has been the central theme of human existence. The world would be barren without it, and our life a dull void thing. It is love that charms this short mortal stay of ours, that makes this earthly life worth living. Take it out, and the whole universe is reduced to a dry, lifeless structure, a bony framework, wanting the touch of the alchemy of love to transmute this skeleton into a living entity.

All writers praise this sublime sentiment, all poets sing of it in rapturous ecstasy. It is the spiritual cement that keeps the whole cosmos intact: it is the divine lubrication that makes this complex machinery run smoothly; it is the celestial stream of existence that permeates every pore of phenomena; it is the heavenly blood of life that flows through every vein of this gigantic organism....

God is love, they say, and so is our soul. It is through love that we are nearest to God. Love is the deep secret of life, the profound secret of the world, the holy secret of God. Love prompts action, love controls thought, love is the reigning deity of our subconscious life. In all our feelings and doings, love is the predominant force; it is the final urge in all our deeds, the ultimate goal in all our activities.

Mysticism, the Spiritual Path



The Journey of Love

We have heard and read that love is God and God is love, and Sant Mat is often referred to as ‘the path of love’. But what is this love? Can the fluctuating love we experience in the world be compared to this love of God?

In the relationship of love there are two – the beloved and the lover. But the unique love between us and the Lord culminates in a merging into one – the Beloved, the Lord himself. For as Maharaj Charan Singh is quoted in *Die to Live*: “Love is losing your own identity and becoming another person. That is love.” It is a love where, having merged into the Lord, we cease to exist. By comparison, in the worldly love we experience we jealously protect and preserve our own identity. This is a love based on how we can benefit from the relationship.

In its purest form, love is the ceaseless desire of the lover to please the beloved, and is expressed in the lover’s every action. In this pure love, the lover feels that he is nothing while the one loved is everything. But this form of love is extremely rare, and the ones who find it are very fortunate.

Spirituality may be seen as the journey of this relationship of love. It begins with seeking: where the lover tries to intellectually understand what God is; how he permeates the creation through the creative energy or Shabd; where he can be found; the prerequisites for loving God; how to please and serve him, and so on.

The next crucial phase in the journey is understanding the relevance and importance of a living Master, and accepting the Master as the guide on this incredible journey of a lifetime. This leads to the next phase, where the lover now puts in the practice to follow the directions of the Master with diligence, obedience, faith, love, devotion and submission. The final phase is total surrender by the lover – when the lover feels he no longer exists and only the beloved exists. This is the culmination of the love relationship – the jewel of the spiritual path.

Unfortunately, the obstinate mind and an equally obstinate ego use reason, and logic to obstruct the spiritual path. It is certainly important to

satisfy the intellect, but the journey of love cannot be sustained with logic and reason. For as the Great Master said:

Logic and love face in different directions. Love knows no law, and logic knows no love. Law and logic are meant for the affairs of this world. To the abode of the beloved, one can fly only on the wings of love.

The Call of the Great Master

On the spiritual path love displaces logic. Where there is logic there is no love, and where there is love there is no logic. For as Hazur so beautifully said:

Love needs no proof. It comes from within and it comes with conviction. No logic, no reasoning will convince you. Something within you will convince you.... There is something within which compels you, which convinces you. And that is all his grace and pull.... No reasoning is required to convince yourself that you are in love – you know when you are in love.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

So, let's be wary of logic on the path of love. Immersed in the domain of illusion, the logic and reason of the mind dictate that we understand everything, including that which is beyond our comprehension – especially matters of spirituality. The mind wants to feel in charge and resists submission to anyone else, thereby creating the greatest stumbling block on the spiritual journey. In effect, the mind is the very opposite of love. It wants to retain its identity, its individuality, and its separateness, and doesn't want to lose its existence by merging into another being.

Ironically, the initial part of the journey of love cannot be travelled without the use of the mind, and the latter part of the journey cannot be travelled with the mind. Therefore, in the initial phases of this journey we have to control and use the mind judiciously, to make it our greatest ally.

The Masters teach us that to travel this journey we have to live a lifestyle that is conducive to spirituality: one that makes us compassionate, forgiving, loving, considerate, and caring. In short, we must become good

human beings. As noble as this lifestyle is, it is only a means to the end, for the journey of love can only be travelled through the spiritual practice of meditation – the crux of this journey. Meditation is the art of travelling the path of love in order to free our soul forever from the bonds of creation, and ultimately to merge once again with the Shabd.

We can approach meditation like any laborious task – a mere chore. Alternatively, we can remember that this is a journey of love, and we can choose to approach the practice with the enthusiasm and fervour of a lover who wants nothing else but to be with the Beloved. We know that love cannot be forced; it happens inexplicably and involuntarily from within us. When we approach meditation with eagerness, pleasure, and joy, we will experience an irresistible, powerful magnetic pull that draws us to the mystical presence of the Master. This exquisite happiness overrides everything else.

In this approach to meditation, reason and logic become irrelevant. When one is in a state of peace, happiness and contentment, who would want to question and establish its cause instead of just imbibing the pleasure and enjoyment of this blissful state?

The question is: How are we approaching our meditation practice? Is it with a sense of duty and obligation where we meditate mechanically, merely to fulfil an obligation? Or do we meditate with a desire to be with our Beloved, where we are driven by this pull of love?

In *Discourses on Sant Mat*, the Great Master advises us:

The disciple who works hard at his meditation, earns the special grace of the Master, who is always ready to help him.... Keep sitting in meditation, even if you fail to achieve concentration.... Ceaseless effort will be crowned with success; if not today, a few days later.

Although the essence of Sant Mat is love and we often refer to it as the ‘path of love’, it is much easier to talk about love than to put in the effort to experience it for ourselves. Meditation is not just sitting for two-and-a-half hours. It is a twenty-four-hour lifestyle – meaning that we must live all twenty-four hours in the atmosphere of meditation. The measure of our love for the Lord is evident in the way we spend the

twenty-four hours of each day *and* how much our attention is focused on God during that time.

Although the physical form of the Master will perish one day, his Radiant Form is one with the Lord and is therefore imperishable. The physical form attracts us and draws us inward as we develop love for the Master, which then automatically graduates to love for his Radiant Form and culminates in love for the Lord – the Shabd.

The Great Master confirmed this when he said:

A Master is a lover of God. In him there are boundless currents of true love. He is the physical form of that love. To love him is to find the most important medium for developing love for God.... His face shines with the light and energy of God.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II



Ignorance versus Knowledge

All religious and spiritual paths are based on faith, without which we would not follow any belief system. But can faith be transformed into personal and profound knowledge? It is not too difficult to develop intellectual knowledge, but if we strip away the verbiage, what do we actually know of spirituality from our own personal experience?

We believe there is a God. To believe in God is a fundamental element of any spiritual faith or belief. We say that he is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and that he is the Creator of everything. But how can such a being exist – beyond all description, beyond characteristics and attributes, beyond time and space? This is utterly beyond the mind's capacity to grasp. So how can we truly say we believe in him?

There is no easy or obvious answer to this, except to say that there is a facet of our being – which we may call intuition – that senses the presence of a higher power. When we observe the workings of the world around us, such as the perfect geometry of flowers, or the spectacle of an endless night sky, our intuition enforces a sense of the presence of a Creator. It gives us confidence that we are not alone in the universe, and that there is a greater purpose than the works of man.

But who and what are we that we have this sense of intuition? Are we the physical body with a mind, which we may even believe to be a product of our equally physical brain? Spiritual paths refer to our true self as a soul, an immortal tiny spark of the eternal flame that is God himself. How on earth do we come to grips with this? It is beyond the intellect and the mind. And yet *we believe!*

There is something within us that knows this great mystery and aspires to its all encompassing love – something that has lain dormant for many ages. Now, through the Master's grace, this 'something' in us has become activated and alive. As our soul begins to realize its separation from the Father, we feel its pain and longing to return home. We struggle to understand the meaning of all this, and we have no idea of how to answer this insistent call from within to return to our source.

But we need not fret. The Master, having brought us to this spiritual path, awakens us to our condition. He explains to us the inward path of

discovery that leads to our own realization, and ultimately takes us into the presence of the Lord.

But first we need to recognize our present state. The mystics say that we have created our bondage to the creation by losing ourselves in the dense jungle of sense pleasures. This bondage is brought about by our constant creation of karma and the deep attachments we form for the physical world. The situation is very simple in principle, but impossibly complex if looked at in detail.

When we contemplate the prospect of spiritual liberation, the task seems downright impossible through our own efforts. Dominated by the mind, our senses, our actions and thoughts, we simply strengthen the binding ties that imprison our soul in the endless cycle of coming and going in this world. This is due to the currents of our attention constantly flowing downwards and outwards in pursuit of our worldly ambitions – leading to further complications and bondage.

The Master advises that our first priority should be to avoid exacerbating the problem. He teaches us some basic rules to follow so that we limit the addition of further karma and attachments. Of these the practice of simran is paramount. Engaging in simran during the course of the day will reduce our mind's wandering into the world and redirect it inwards. Success in this practice will lead us to a situation where our consciousness is fully concentrated at the eye centre and we find ourselves at the feet of the Radiant Form of our Master within.

Next the Master puts us in touch with the Shabd, explaining the importance of bhajan and teaching us the practice of developing our own awareness of the sound of Shabd within ourselves. Through devotion to this practice our soul ascends, realizes its true identity, and separates from both mind and body, ultimately reaching the end of its journey in the court of the Lord himself.

However, it appears that many of us may not yet have developed our inner faculties to the extent where we can grasp the realities of God, the Master or our soul. As such we are ignorant of the inner path and find ourselves powerless to do anything spiritually significant. In fact, when it comes to our spiritual practice and our progress on the path, it is easy to

become discouraged. Not having reached the Radiant Form of the Master at the eye centre, we may feel that we have not progressed at all.

Nevertheless, it is not true that we have made no progress. Spirituality does not work in accordance with the workings of the world and its processes. The results we expect from the world are far removed from the subtle outcomes of spiritual practice. This is because the consequences of spiritual practice happen beyond the grasp of our intellect, within the inner world.

Over time we must surely all have experienced distinct changes in our perspective and in our ability to deal with the constant changes of life. We may also sometimes notice that we are able to detach more easily from things that we no longer consider important to us; things that previously we would have fought tooth and nail to hang on to. These changes are not insignificant.

What is very interesting is that often we have no idea how these changes came about at all. One day we just realize that we see things differently, and that somehow changes have occurred within us that are not the direct or obvious product of our efforts. And this is a key element of our journey.

We do not understand and we do not know. This is precisely why we need a Master and a guide on this path. What we do know is that within us there is an overwhelming need, a yearning for something that lies completely beyond our understanding. Our situation is not unlike a seed, buried in the dark soil, waiting only for the water of love in order to germinate, grow and finally to burst forth into the light of the divine. We too can blossom and bloom into the spectacular fulfilment of our true spiritual potential.

We are in the process of spiritual advancement. We have been since the day our Master initiated us. This process is ongoing, and whether we realize it or not we are progressing under his tender care and merciful gaze. We are not alone. We were never alone. He is always with us and we have only to turn our attention inwards to be with him.



Iron and the Magnet

During our question-and-answer sessions with the Masters, past and present, the majority of questions – or rather complaints – by far are that after so many years of meditation, there's no sign whatsoever of any progress. Most concerns are focused on the difficulty we have with raising our attention to the eye centre and going within.

Not so very long ago Baba Ji countered just such a complaint by explaining that what prevents the attention from rising is the multitude of karmas that are still weighing us down, karmas that can be worked away by our meditation. He recalled the example given by Maharaj Charan Singh that as long as a piece of iron is held down by a heavy weight, it cannot be attracted to a magnet. But once the weight is lifted, the iron will fly automatically to the magnet. In other words, when the karmas have been wiped out, the attention will rise automatically to where our Master awaits us at the eye centre.

Maharaj Charan Singh told us more than once that our meditation is not intended to bring us results in the form of light or sound. By far the greater part of our effort is to evoke his grace, through which we will make more effort. But we forget this. We keep looking for results, and when they don't come, we get anxious or depressed and we see ourselves as failures.

But our Master doesn't see us as failures. In fact, he doesn't ever judge us. After all, he knows us – he knew what we were, with all our karmas, when he initiated us. And he took us on anyway. He never asks that we produce so-called results in our meditation; he asks only that we try, and keep on doing so – to the time of our death.

In *With the Three Masters* a previous Master, Maharaj Jagat Singh, is quoted as having said:

If the disciple's veil is still not lifted, it does not mean that he should give up meditation or think that he has not made any progress. It is just that his pralabdh [fate] karmas are getting in the way.... At the time of the disciple's death, when his pralabdh karmas are exhausted, the Saints give him back the spiritual wealth he has earned and his veil is lifted.

All disciples should therefore continue in their efforts at meditation, irrespective of whether the veil is lifted or not.

The truth is that we should be doing our meditation simply as an act of devotion, a way of showing our Master that we love him, want to please him, and are grateful for what he is doing for us. We should trust that he loves us and wants only the best for us.

We might view our efforts as weak or inadequate, but he has told us that not a single moment of meditation goes to waste. He is using it to take care of our karma, collected over many lifetimes. Maharaj Charan Singh has also told us:

Do not mind whether you see any light within or not, or whether the sound is audible. You simply do your duty and leave the results to the Master.... He alone knows what is good for us and when it is to be given. He will pay in abundance. Have faith in him.

Divine Light

He tells us repeatedly not to “judge” our meditation, whether it is good or bad. We are to just “do it”. He explains that a positive result of our meditation is that it is helping to crush our stubborn egos and create in us some sense of humility. Our very helplessness to do better can only make us realize how utterly dependent we are on him and prepare us to surrender to him, to leave ourselves completely in his hands. Hazur Maharaj Ji has in fact stated that we *have* to surrender to the Master by getting rid of any idea that we can achieve anything by ourselves. And this surrender can come about only through meditation.

In the first volume of *Spiritual Perspectives* Hazur makes it clear that without becoming humble by getting rid of the ego there can be no merging back into the Lord. “When humility comes in its place,” he said, “we merge into the Lord and inherit the kingdom of heaven.”



Prodigal Satsangis

Many of us may be familiar with the parable of the prodigal son in the Bible – about a man who had two sons: one of them responsible and the other a reckless spendthrift. The younger one said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate.” So the father divided his property between the two sons. Then the younger son set off for a distant country and there he squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a famine in that country, and he began to be in need. So he hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to look after his pigs. There he laboured and he began to suffer hunger. When he came to his senses, he said: “How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving! I will go back to my father and admit my faults.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him, ran to him and kissed him. The son said to him: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Bring the best robe and put it on him. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

The story of the prodigal son is not a story about sins or about being bad. It is a story about being lost. Similarly, at times in our spiritual journey we may feel lost, perhaps because we feel distant from our Father. We could be lost because we feel nothing on the path – no love, no longing, no pangs of separation, no fear, not even a feeling of discouragement – just indifference. We could be lost because we don’t meditate as much as we used to. Or perhaps we have stopped meditating altogether. We could be lost because we have gone totally off the path.

In order to understand our plight, it might help to examine the reasons that led us to a point where we went astray. The first is unfulfilled expectations. This is often the cause of our frustration, disappointment and discouragement. As satsangis we probably have expectations with regard to our meditation. As soon as we are initiated, we want to hear the sound and see the light and have the inner experiences that the books talk about. Some of us meditate for years and never see any results. We start off

full of enthusiasm, but slowly that enthusiasm dwindles down to almost nothing. We get disheartened, lose confidence in ourselves, and perhaps even in the Master and his teachings.

The second reason is lack of instant gratification. We are accustomed to seeing the results of whatever we do in the world. So we approach meditation thinking that the more effort we put in, the more results we should see. We not only expect results, but we want those results instantly. Initiation today, enlightenment tomorrow! On this lifelong path, where efforts are seemingly disconnected from any visible results, this attitude is sure to bring us crushing disappointment.

The third reason is our lackadaisical attitude and reluctance to take responsibility for our actions. In time we may start fulfilling our spiritual duties as a matter of habit. Our spiritual life loses its depth and, without being aware of it, we get lost in our day-to-day duties, creating a state of indifference that is lethal to true spirituality – so many moments wasted when we should have been turning our hearts to God.

Such habits can become an insurmountable hindrance on the spiritual path. Perhaps our day-to-day duties absorb all our time and energy. We meditate mechanically so that we lose our longing for spiritual union. The divine horizon in our life begins to fade and we start feeling forsaken by the Master. We see ourselves facing the ruins of our spiritual life as we realize that we have neglected him too much.

At the point where we become aware that something is not right, there is a strong tendency to do the octopus dance. Arms shoot out in every direction looking for people and circumstances to blame. We might think: It's my parents' fault. It's the fault of the economy. It's my genes' fault. Or: we are not making progress on the path because Master does not love us, or because he decided to put us at the end of the queue when he was dishing out grace. But the fact is that as long as we are looking to put the blame elsewhere, we aren't taking responsibility for our own actions.

As strange as it may sound, another reason for us feeling lost could be the will of the Lord himself. What does that mean? Shams-e-Tabrizi says we cannot even take a step on the path of spirituality without being needy, without acknowledging that we are incomplete – and that we need God

to make us whole. The same feeling of aloneness and need that isolates us and makes us feel insignificant can also powerfully motivate us to seek the Lord and bring us to a point of dependence on him.

What the prodigal son couldn't learn in his father's house, he learnt in the pig pen. He recognized the incredible bounty and generosity of his father that he had so foolishly traded for the fleeting pleasures of the world. Now he needed to cultivate humility and acknowledge his neediness.

In a similar way, we need to realize that only God has what our soul needs, what our heart longs for. So God permits us to wander away for a season in order to pull us back to him through realization of our need.

Our Master is playing us like a skilful angler with a very special catch at the end of his line. He will wait for us to tire ourselves out with fighting him, and then, when we are exhausted, he'll quietly reel us in. How grateful we'll be to land at his feet.

We may think that turning to God depends mainly on our own determination and initiative. We forget that everything is his grace. He does not forsake us – he sees our hopelessness and despair. Although we may stray from him, he is always as close to us as ever. But sometimes we have to go to the brink of the abyss to realize our utter inability to come to God by our own strength.

In Sant Mat we are dealing with an individual relationship between ourselves and our Creator. He has made us as we are. He has set this whole production up to benefit our growth while he nudges us forward. We are here in his perfect timing and we will progress by his grace. There are really just two things that we are responsible for – our effort and our attitude. The rest is all his work. He is pulling us in because he loves us. In the book *Legacy of Love* we read:

*You don't fall in love with the Master; Master has fallen in love with us.
And then, we become restless – we feel we have fallen in love with him.
The pull is from within.*



Fear and Depression

Negative emotions can descend on us like mist or fog. When we are assailed by them, what was clear becomes suddenly obscure, and we find ourselves wandering through a world of uncertainty, questioning ourselves and doubting our capacity for success.

There are two negative emotions in particular that present many of us with difficulties, namely fear and depression.

Fear can range from mild anxiety and apprehension to full-blown panic-attacks and paralyzing terror. We can fear being alone, being old, poor or ill; and we can fear death. Most of these fears boil down to fear of the unknown. Where there is a lack of clarity or security, fear may follow.

Depression is somewhat different. In some it can be an actual disease of the brain, the result of a chemical imbalance, but often it is caused by insecurity, feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, or ill health. Both fear and depression are states of mind where the joy and light of the sun are obscured and familiar landmarks lose their clarity and reliability. They can both be crippling and devastating when uncontrolled.

Is there an antidote for such negativity? Can those of us who are prone to it find a way to experience ongoing security and joy? We can, but it is unlikely to be either easy or quick. It's no good simply trying to suppress negativity. If insecurity is at the root of most fears, then the Master and his teachings offer us the most extraordinary source of strength, security, and reliability.

When we were initiated, we became part of the Master's flock. He assumed responsibility for us. We need to find refuge in him, to turn to him when anxieties invade. It's no good relying on the world, because it is fundamentally unreliable.

Everything in this world is transitory, including our bodies. The only constant is change. Consequently, we may experience anxiety, because nothing here is truly secure and reliable – with the exception of the Master. The spiritual path may seem full of new and scary scenarios, but we are never alone on this journey. Our guide and protector is not weak and flawed as we are.

This knowledge can take the sting out of many fears. There is nothing that we will have to face alone, not even death. We just need to go through our destiny with a positive mindset – our attitude is something we have the power to change.

If we consciously and conscientiously use the tools that the Master has given us, if we constantly grasp the lifeline that moors us to him, then we have our refuge. We will have increasing access to him within and will therefore start to feel more secure. Life's storms may rage, but our boat will be firmly anchored. The Master is always with us, guarding and guiding us at every step of the way.

The method he urges us to use is meditation. This is the task he asks of us, knowing that it will eventually bring about a shift in our thought patterns. Through our spiritual practice we will learn to turn away from the world and increasingly rely on the Master and his boundless strength.

However, when we don't get what we want, when we want it, we get frustrated, discontented and depressed. Some just accept the events of life gratefully and cheerfully, while others sink into the fog of depression. In our worldly life we have been conditioned to expect results from our efforts. So we might think, after many years of effort on the path, what do we have to show for it? Where is that light and sound? Some may have accessed it, but many may not have, despite diligent and sincere efforts. This can lead to frustration, depression and impatience. And this apparent lack of "progress" often leads to the thought: "Am I disappointing my Master or letting him down?"

These negative thoughts are probably unfounded: firstly, because the Master is completely non-judgmental; secondly, because we are his children and he loves us unconditionally; and thirdly, because he is with and within us all the time – he knows where we are coming from and what we are going through. He knows the depth of our attachment to this material world of sense pleasures. He knows how many lifetimes have been spent feeding this addiction.

It is hardly reasonable for us to expect the situation to change overnight. We need to think clearly about this, instead of just giving in to the negativity of the mind. In the words inspired by Rumi:

*Strive, struggle, grapple and wrestle,
None won the battle by weak-kneed submission...
When the Master has put a sword in your hands,
He has clearly expressed his wish.*

Living Meditation

We tend to think of the mind as being huge and powerful – an unseen, unknowable adversary. How can we ever overcome it? The answer: one step at a time. We can do this. Our negative thoughts and mental habits need to be replaced with positive thoughts and attitudes. The Master has given us the weapon of simran. It is up to us to use it.

Strangely, our negative emotions on the path and in meditation can sometimes be good for us. When grief, sadness, longing, and frustration translate into renewed determination to try harder, they are good. But if they lead to inertia and depression, then they are severely inhibiting and counter-productive.

Every time we try to say our simran or try to meditate, we are directing our attention upwards, in Master's direction. We are trying to create a new and positive habit. These are our successes; this is our progress. Let's not lose sight of these in the quest for what we think of as results. It is true that the eye centre, the Master's Radiant Form, and contact with the Shabd are the big goals. The Master wants us to aim for them, to dream big and work accordingly. But we should not get despondent along the way, nor lose sight of our small daily accomplishments.

All of our apparent lack of progress is good for our ego – the source of so many of our ills. It demonstrates to us that our effort achieves nothing, and actually never has. Destiny and grace have given us what we thought our talent and intelligence had achieved. These are big and vital learning curves. Ego holds us down here. We must reduce its hold over us, or risk having to return for yet another birth. Apparent failure is essential to show us how powerless we are without his grace. Struggle is essential, but depression is not.

Negativity is a great stumbling block. Fear and depression can paralyze us. With the Master's grace and our mindfulness we can turn them around. If we are trying our best, we are definitely making progress.

We need have no fear. We are in the palm of his hand and there is no room for negativity and depression. On this wonderful path, all initiates *are* going home. Simran and bhajan are our tools. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*I assure you, if we really beg from the heart, he is always ready to give.
If we come one step, he comes ten steps to receive us.*

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Fear and depression can be overcome with his help, little by little, one step at a time. This battle can be won; negativity can be turned into positivity. Grace, perseverance, and clear thinking are the key. Simran and bhajan are our tools. All we have to do is use them as constantly as possible. The rest is in his loving hands.



Reaching the Real through the Unreal

Maharaj Charan Singh makes the following statement regarding that which is real and that which is unreal:

My definition of real is that it never changes. That which is true, only that is real. All else is illusion. Only the Lord is real. The soul is real. All other things change.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. 1

When the Masters say something is unreal, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist; it exists as in a dream – it is impermanent and it deceives us into believing it is real and important. We get so caught up in our involvement with the world, we forget that for every joy there will be a sorrow and yet we continue to strive to solve difficulties – make our fortune, marry the princess, kill the dragon, save the world.

Carving out a career, serving humanity, expressing ourselves, and pursuing dreams and ambitions is part of our karma, and supporting family and being responsible human beings are part of our duty. But if these things are more important to us than the spiritual path, then following this path becomes extremely challenging.

However, we cannot allow ourselves to become so disenchanting with the world and its pain and suffering that it becomes an aversion to us. It doesn't help to resist life. We have to face our circumstances with clarity and responsibility, knowing that we have created our own karma through our past actions. By respecting our worldly duty and honouring our spiritual commitments, we lighten our karmic load, cleanse the mind, and learn to live in the will of the Lord. By working with the unreal we come to the real.

The mystic Bahinabai explains this paradox beautifully:

*If you abandon your family
because it isn't your real family,
this will be your loss, friend.
It takes clear thinking
to reach the Real through the unreal.*

*Only within this dream of a body
can you awaken to Truth and rest in the One.
Borax is worthless but it makes gold coalesce.
Blunt iron tools shape gold into jewellery.
Bachnag [aconite] is a poison, but take it and thrive –
it cancels a stronger poison that kills.
If you walk the way of a teacher of Truth,
you'll reach the Real through the unreal.*

Many Voices One Song

Bahinabai addresses those who think they can use spiritual truth to avoid personal karmic responsibility. Saints remind us that our human attachments are karmic impediments on the spiritual path. If they are more important than the Lord then we won't be able to prioritize the path. Nonetheless, we cannot use this as an excuse to avoid the many challenges that come with human relationships.

Many seekers turn to the Lord because of unhappiness, but trying to avoid suffering is not the same as spiritual longing. We can, however, use our dissatisfaction with the illusory nature of the world as a goad to spur our efforts.

Bahinabai reminds us that liberation from the cycle of transmigration can only happen while in the human form. Our “dream of a body” is the Lord's temple, the gateway to liberation. It is also our implement for clearing karma, the laboratory in which we scour and purify our minds through meditation. Here is how we rise within to where the Shabd is ringing our way home.

She says that although our bodies and our lives in this material plane are illusory and transient, they are the catalysts for our spiritual labours – just as borax coalesces gold and blunt tools shape it into jewellery.

Her poem ends by pointing to the method in which one can reach the Real through the unreal: We need to walk with a teacher of Truth who can lead us through material sensory existence to the actual experience of that Truth. Having found such a teacher, says Bahinabai, we must walk his way: we must do as he teaches, not just give lip service. The following extract explains:

*Mulla Nasruddin was seen with a book tied to his leg:
His friend asked Nasruddin, "Why do you have a book tied to your leg?"
"So I won't lose it," replied Nasruddin.
"But you can't read it when it's tied to your leg."
"I can't read it if I lose it either."*

Essential Sufism

When navigating the unreal, we need to be very conscious of its many pitfalls and try to avoid them. There comes a time when instead of paying lip service, action is required. We can discuss the path, do all the external stuff – do seva, attend satsang – but it is only meditation that will take us on our journey to the Real by traversing the Unreal.



Gratitude to the Master

The most precious gift to a spiritual aspirant is to have a true Master who shows us how to connect with the eternal Shabd, which is the dynamic power of God and kindles our love for the Lord, so that we may find our way out of this world of duality and attain peace and joy in the constant company of the Lord.

One who understood the significance of a true Master and his gift was Tulsi Sahib. He wrote:

*At the outset, I offer salutation to my Lord, the Satguru;
In surrender at his feet, Tulsi loses himself in ecstasy.*

*I pay homage in all humility at the feet of my Master,
Whose grace has revealed the mystery of Light and Sound.*

*I offer myself in adoration to the Saints,
Who have bestowed on my soul the power to see.*

*The brilliant light of surrender has revealed unto me
The essence and the true form of my Master.*

*Lowly and bereft of wisdom, I offered my heart to him;
Through surrender, recognition of Satguru has come to me.*

*The Satguru, indeed, is an unfathomable ocean of bliss.
He has revealed the path and the method to attain the Lord.*

*Again and again, I bow at the lotus feet of my Master;
In all humility I sing praises of him.*

*Perceiving my state of misery he took pity
and gave me inner vision;...*

*With all my heart and soul, forever I am thy slave;
Except the saints, O Satguru, none can fathom thee.*

*O merciful Master, full of joy is thy blessing;
By surrendering to thee, helpless sinners are ferried across.*

*The Sant Satguru is my very life and being,
The lowly Tulsi has taken refuge in him....*

Tulsi Sahib, Saint of Hathras

Until he came in contact with his Master, Tulsi only saw with his physical eyes and heard with the physical ears, but now, he says, he sees with his soul. This experience has led to a state of surrender, through which he has realized the true form of his Master. Realizing who his Master is, he offers his love completely to him.

What else can a disciple offer his Master? The Master wants us to experience the reality of the path by following his instructions, so that we may achieve true or eternal love. He also advises us to adopt an appropriate lifestyle, so that we do not bind ourselves further to this world, where we have to reap what we sow.

Those disciples who devote themselves fully to their Master go beyond merely accepting their destiny. They express their gratitude to their Master and the Lord even under the most trying circumstances. For example, Sarmad, the seventeenth-century Jewish-Sufi saint, was tortured and beheaded, and Guru Arjan, the sixteenth-century Sikh guru, was made to sit on hot irons and had boiling water poured over him. They accepted their fate without flinching and maintained their faith throughout their ordeals. Being the mere mortals that we are, however, we are never thankful for the pain and suffering we undergo. On the contrary, we are upset and disillusioned. We complain and even lose faith.

In fact, the Lord is always present within us, helping and guiding us, but our grief and our pain create a barrier, preventing us from experiencing his presence and acknowledging his grace. On the other hand, if we remember him and repeat the names even during the difficult times, then our problems become easier to bear.

It is through the Master's grace, and not our effort, that the miracle of our transformation takes place. Love and grace are the cornerstones of the disciple's relationship with the Master. Without this relationship there is no path. Through the grace of the Master, the disciple is given the love and guidance that are needed for this journey.

True lovers of the Lord experience a deep joy in following the instructions of their Guru, the most important one being simran. This constitutes the devotional link between Master and disciple. When the Master is physically near us, our repeating the names is our expression of gratitude to him for the bliss of his presence. But when he is physically absent, it becomes our cry to him to help us bear the longing and the pain of separation. In times of trouble, simran brings reassurance, comfort, and strength.

The Masters say that with the loving repetition of the holy names, the veils that have kept him hidden fall away, and the lover feels the Master's presence and experiences his love. Then the lover finds him not only within, but also in the outer world, so that wherever we turn we may see the face of God.

The love that comes from the Master is pure and unconditional. It does not arise from duality or the normal dynamics we associate with a relationship. The Master's love is constant, neither increasing nor decreasing. His love for the disciple is implicit and never-ending. He does the real work of transforming the disciple.

If we want to meet the Lord, if we want to attain salvation, we cannot keep desiring the frivolous pursuits of this material world. We need to change our lifestyle by adopting a simple life that is conducive to spirituality. In addition, we need to make sincere efforts in simran and bhajan in order to reap the associated rewards.

To reach our goal requires a change of focus, where all of our thoughts and energies must be directed towards attaining the objective of self-realization, followed by God-realization, while discharging our duties towards family, friends and society. This represents a drastic change from being outwardly directed to being inwardly directed. Then, as we listen to the Shabd, we will begin to discover the divine mystery of love within our souls.

The true Masters know how to disentangle us from this web of illusion and they want us to feel complete and fulfilled with eternal love. Only after we experience this love will we be able to know who the Lord is and what spiritual bliss is. Just as important, we will become free from death

and rebirth. It is for this reason that saints awaken within us love for the Lord and the desire for union with him.

Our purpose then as human beings is to reconnect with the Truth, and uncover the mystery of the Shabd. This has been made possible for us by our Master, who has equipped us with the method to experience this for ourselves. What a phenomenal gift this is! Let us therefore show our appreciation for this gift and do what is expected of us regularly so that we too can experience the rapture of divine union.



What More Could We Ask For?

No one is happy in this world. How could we be? Everything that we consider to be valuable or attractive is temporary. Everything in this world is in a state of flux. Nothing is stable here. Where can we go in order to find a happy, peaceful and fulfilling life? Certainly, we are not encouraged by our experience in this world.

Logically, then, since we cannot find peace and fulfilment here, we should be looking elsewhere, but for most that presents a significant problem. This world is all that we know. Where then should we look? The mystics have a simple answer; they tell us to seek contentment within.

They say this because, from their own experience, they know that this world is an illusion, a passing shadow-show that can never provide us with the stable, dependable solution that we seek. The very things we pursue for our happiness turn out to be the cause of so much pain and suffering. So the mystics bring to us the benefit of their inner experience and say that *all the answers lie within us*.

But we have never been within; we do not know this inner domain that the Masters are pointing to. The reason is that we have become so habituated to directing our attention downward and outward to the world around us that we know no other way. In addition, we have also become attached to the places, faces and things of this world, and this attachment prevents us from going within.

So how are we to address this dilemma in which we find ourselves? The Master explains that whatever takes you towards the Lord is good, and whatever takes you away from him is bad. That's all we need to know.

The Masters tell us that the Lord is not separate from us – in fact it is we who are separated from him. The reason is not hard to find. We identify so much with our perceived self that we have become ego-obsessed. Believing ourselves to be this ego, we act, and the consequences of our actions bind us here, and, together with our attachments, prevent us from turning within.

So the solution is fairly simple – we need to detach ourselves from the external objects that fascinate us so and redirect our attention to the eye centre, which is the gateway to the inner worlds. This ideal is not so

easy to implement, but nevertheless, if we keep the Master's instructions to us as our rule for life, then every day takes us closer to our goal. By our lifestyle we avoid the pitfalls of the world that previously occupied so much of our attention and got us into so much trouble, and by our meditation we slowly and slowly withdraw our attention from without and direct it within.

So we don't need to go anywhere to seek the Lord. We just need to recognize the things that are standing in our way and eliminate them. He is not in some distant location on the other side of the universe; he is right here within us. There is a well-known saying: "Closer than hands and feet, closer than thy very breath is He."

This path was never going to be a quick and easy solution; rather, it guarantees slow and steady progress. Every effort generates a result. It might not be obvious or apparent, but it is there nevertheless. All that is required is perseverance. In addition, we are under the Master's constant guidance and care. He has initiated us and he has guaranteed our return to Sach Khand. Could we ask for anything more?



BOOK REVIEW

Basic Principles of Sant Mat: A Translation of Santmat Sidhant

BY MAHARAJ SAWAN SINGH JI WITH FURTHER ADDITIONS BY T.R. SHANGARI

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Basic Principles of Sant Mat brings an early work by Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, known as the Great Master, to English-speaking readers for the first time. The Great Master selected quotes from the Adi Granth and arranged them to illustrate 84 topics. Published in 1920, the book was titled *Gurmat Sidhant: 84 Vishyonwala*, which can be translated roughly as “teachings (or philosophy) of the Gurus: 84 topics.” This should not be confused with a different book also titled *Gurmat Sidhant*, first published in 1940 and translated into English as *Philosophy of the Masters*. In the 1920 book, there was no commentary or explanatory notes. After an Introduction by Great Master, the quotes, grouped together under topic headings, were left to speak for themselves. Maharaj Charan Singh wrote,

Hazur Maharaj Ji had deep devotion for the Adi Granth, and it was his heartfelt desire that people have a clear understanding of its teachings so they could mould their lives accordingly.

In 1979 Maharaj Charan Singh authorized a new edition of *Gurmat Sidhant: 84 Vishyonwala* with brief commentary added for each topic. In the Foreword to this new edition, he wrote, “I felt that if a small explanation could be added to each topic, supported by verses from Gurbani, it could help readers better understand the various topics.” Later Dr. T.R. Shangari expanded the book further, adding verses from various saints and some new topics. The title was changed from *Gurmat Sidhant* to *Santmat Sidhant* when this expanded version of the work was published in Punjabi and Hindi in 2003.

Santmat Sidhant is now translated into English with the title *Basic Principles of Sant Mat*. Divided into three volumes, the topics are organized under three broad headings: “God, Creation and Guru” in Volume 1, “Meditation, the Mind, and Love” in Volume 2, and “The World, Living in the World, and External Practices” in Volume 3. An index to the topics is at

the back of each volume. Throughout the three volumes, the quoted verses make up the vast majority of the text – the commentary is minimal.

One of the most precious gems in this work is Great Master's original introduction, which is reprinted at the beginning of each volume. In his inimitable style, he takes the reader to the very essence of the teachings, and in less than three pages. He begins: "The creator Lord has designed the wonderful play of nature by creating innumerable physical and spiritual realms." Great Master invites us to "look from the tiny atom to the immense sky" and see that the "unfathomable multicoloured creation is a beautiful example of the Lord's impeccable workmanship." He describes the human being as the pinnacle of creation:

Though one can see the Lord's craftsmanship in every particle, his art reaches its zenith in the creation of humans. The human body appears to be made of just flesh and bones, but in reality, it is such an exceptional piece of art that many books and treatises have been written about the secrets it contains.

Great Master states that the essence of the teachings of the Saints is Shabd and Nam, the hidden treasure the Lord has placed within us. "Many often claim that they follow the teachings of the saints, but in truth these teachings are extremely difficult to follow. Walking the Gurus' path amounts to dying while living."

Volume One deals with many topics – among them God, the Lord, Soul, and Oneness – which are impossible to define with words and which people try to confine in rigid or dogmatic interpretations. The verses gathered under these topics point to a reality that can only be known through experience. The commentary is often clear and succinct, shedding light on the key message. For example, "When saints say 'The Lord is One,' 'One' does not denote a number. It expresses the Lord's completeness and non-duality. Calling the Lord 'One' conveys that everything is the Lord; without the Lord there is nothing." Saint Namdev is quoted:

*Everything is the Lord; the Lord is everything.
There is nothing but God, the world sustainer. As one
thread holds hundreds and thousands of beads, so is that
Lord in warp and woof. The water's waves, foam, and
bubbles are not distinct from water...
Says Namdev: See the creation of God and*

*contemplate on it in your mind. In every heart
and within all is but one Lord.*

Volume 2 brings together verses on the spiritual practices taught by saints, grouped under topic headings such as Meditation, Contemplation, Nam, Surat Shabd Yoga, Sahaj, Dying While Living, Longing and Love. Emphasizing the universality of these teachings, it begins with a section titled One Path. The state of one who has achieved realization is described: “One who has merged with the Lord perceives the Creator’s will in action everywhere and in everyone; he becomes the embodiment of that will.” Guru Nanak is quoted:

*No one is now my enemy, and I am no one’s foe, for the
Lord pervades the inner core of my mind; this is the
wisdom I have gathered from the Guru.
I am a friend to all; I am everyone’s friend.
The sense of separation has been removed from my mind and I am
now united with my God, my king.*

Volume 2 also deals with the nature of the mind as the primary obstacle on the Path, including topics such as Ego, Five Vices, Desire, and Worry. The commentary warns us:

*Worry causes unnecessary doubts and suspicions and thus reduces our
capacity to remain strong, to face and solve problems. A person who is a
victim of anxiety can neither perform worldly duties properly nor make
satisfactory spiritual progress. Worry is a self-made disease. The cure
for the disease of worry is to place full faith in the Lord and perform
both our worldly and spiritual tasks with courage and confidence. This
requires us to be ready for the unexpected and understand that the
unexpected, too, is the will of God.*

Volume 3 deals with many aspects of living in the world. In the topic Our Condition, the commentary paints a vivid picture of how we are entrapped in an intricate web:

*The entire world is stumbling in the immense darkness of ignorance.
The Lord is all-pervading; he abides in each and every particle of the
creation, but few of us are able to perceive him outside or within....
When we are in darkness, we are not aware of the reality of this world*

– that it is impermanent. In this darkness, we do not try to understand the primary purpose of this human birth, nor do we make focused effort towards achieving the goal.

Volume 3 offers much helpful guidance from the saints on living our lives, gathered under such headings as Honest Earnings, Keeping Good Company, Humility, Seva, Non-Violence, and Desireless Action. The introduction to the section on Way of Life begins: “Saints and mystics advise those who have made God-realization their real objective to mould their way of living according to the principles of Sant Mat.” If our goal is God-realization, it says, we must drop self-deception and make this goal the primary focus of our attention and effort.

With hard work, persistence, and courage, we can make progress on the spiritual path even though we have many shortcomings, even though our mind is completely sullied, and even though we may be going through adverse circumstances. When our Master initiates us, he implicitly and explicitly assures us that we can improve our present condition. Having faith in ourselves, in our Master, and in the Lord’s grace and using all the strength we can muster, we must mould our way of life according to the principles of Sant Mat – the higher the goal, the greater the effort it requires. When we are determined to transform ourselves, sooner or later we will succeed; no worldly power can stop us from reaching our spiritual destination.



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