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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Friend

The heart is deeper than the ocean;
dive deep into it, O seeker, and explore!
Drink the water of life from this ocean,
or your soul will always remain thirsty.
Those who contemplate on the Lord,
devoting every breath of their lives
to his remembrance,
will always keep him in their hearts.

Love flourishes in that heart
in which glows the Name of God.
The love of God is like the fragrance of musk –
even a thousand wrappings cannot hold it in;
or like the sun, which cannot be hidden behind one's fingers,
or like a river that cannot be stopped in its course.
My Friend is in me, in my Friend am I;
there is no distance left between us.

Sultan Bahu





Divine Deja Vu

We often think of our birth as a time of awakening. But actually, our birth is the moment we begin to lose touch with our divine origin. We withdraw from the light of our eternal home and enter the darkness of the physical plane.

Despite this, many of us retain a sense that life is not what it seems to be on the surface, and we feel a glimmer, a hint, a memory of something beyond what we know rationally. We have a kind of divine deja vu. We sense that there is a deeper meaning hidden behind the obvious, a curtain obscuring what is real – as if behind the backdrop of this stage of life there is another reality. And this is probably what drove many of us to search for what lies behind this veil of illusion and darkness. And, eventually, we were led to the Master and the spiritual path.

When we are born into this life we forget our glorious origin. We live much of this life on the wrong side of this curtain. We are covered with the layers of karma that keep us trapped here. But at a certain point, we feel the Master's pull.

Maharaj Charan Singh puts it this way in *Die to Live*:

The soul is always yearning to go back to its own Source, to the Father. But we don't feel that longing now due to our load of karmas and our tendency towards the senses.... Similarly, every soul, without exception, is yearning to go back to the Father, but owing to the wrappings of karmas, of the mind, of the sensual pleasures, of all worldly attachments and entanglements, it doesn't feel that longing. The more we remove those wrappings,

the more we start feeling that longing, and ultimately the soul shines and goes back to the Father.

The miracle of our lives is the moment we finally turn toward the light. That is the time we flex our spiritual muscle and try to break free of everything that weighs us down – our desires, fears, attachments – and we finally move into the state of unbounded freedom that the Master has promised to reveal to us.

How do we experience this? The Lord gives us the yearning to know our source. He gives us a feeling of separation. And this longing is the only thing we need on the path, says the Master. The longing will keep us true to our commitment to meditate and follow the vows – because we know this commitment will please him. This longing will eventually pull us to the level of higher consciousness when we will transcend our materialistic minds, and unite with him. Hazur Maharaj Ji says in *Die to Live*:

Does a seeker need anything else besides longing? If he has a longing or desire to go back to the Father, love for the Father, yearning for the Father, then is there anything else to be done?

Is there anything else for a seeker to do if he gets that bliss, that boon from the Father – that longing to become one with him. Then all desires leave you, and your mind is no longer attached to the creation.

The Lord knows when we are ready to take this giant step. And he sends the Master to help us do this. Sometimes the Master uses the example of a tree that we uproot from one place and transplant to another. First, we are involved in the world and our attention runs outward; and then, once we come to him, our attention begins to move

inward. Then we will no longer run after the pleasures of the world, but will enjoy the bliss of being in the presence of the Father. This is truly a miracle. Without the intervention of the Lord, acting through the Master, we could never make such a drastic change. It's as if he reaches down and transplants us from one field, where the soil and water are toxic, to another field, where we get all the nourishment we need.

Our coming to the Master has been orchestrated by the Father. And now that we are initiated, it's time for action – time to practice with honesty and integrity. And if we've started the journey and then fallen away from the path, it's never too late to pick up from where we left off.

We say we want to be disciples of the Master, but this involves discipline. Disciple – discipline – the same word. Discipline requires effort, and effort means struggle.

Struggle is the rule in the realm of change. As we know, everything in this world is subject to change – this is the realm of duality – we experience pain or pleasure, wealth or poverty, health or sickness. The only constant thing in life is the need to struggle. To study, to work, to raise a family, we face struggles. To accomplish anything worthwhile involves struggle. And to follow the path the Master has put us on, we have to struggle with our mind. That is the irrefutable truth of our lives. We need to make this struggle a daily habit, so that it becomes second nature. Because our mind is so used to running out, it is a great struggle to pull it in. But we should not give up.

The Master often says we have to have courage at every step when we fight with the mind because it's a fierce enemy that will never give up. It always tries to keep us entangled in the world. Understanding the teachings intellectually is one thing, but practising them consistently is another.

Hazur Maharaj Ji emphasizes that our very habit of trying to concentrate will help us achieve our goal. We need to use the mind's craving for routine to create positive habits. He says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

The main thing is to give time to meditation. It is a constant struggle with the mind. And all the time you spend struggling with the mind during the course of your meditation is itself a meditation ... as long as we are regular in giving our time, fighting with the mind, disciplining the mind, we are attending to our meditation.

And as we struggle, our longing to see the light and be in his presence will increase. The struggle will give us the longing. First we need the hunger, the longing, that drives us to sit, but then that hunger will grow only through meditation. We need to become passionate about our meditation. Make your meditation tasty, as Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, "First you have to fight with your mind to attend to your meditation, but the time comes when it becomes very tasty."

So this discipline and commitment have to form the basis of our daily life. It doesn't matter if our mind behaves, we just need to keep doing it. Hazur continues to emphasize this in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, when he says, "And all the time you spend struggling with the mind during the course of your meditation is itself a meditation."

A very pertinent remark was made by Maharaj Jagat Singh:

First the mind will make you cry and then the mind itself will cry. That is, at first you will cry while you are exerting yourself

in meditation and the mind will remain unaffected. But if weeping and crying you persevere in your efforts, you will ultimately succeed in conquering the mind. All devotees should remember this fact. They should never be disheartened and give up their efforts.

Why is this so? Because ultimately, the Master's grace will take us across the whole realm of the mind. If we follow his instructions and stick to the path, follow the four vows, make our best efforts, and trust in him, there is no doubt that he will see us through. We have put ourselves under his protection and guidance, so we have to trust that his advice is for our own good and follow it.

The Master often emphasizes that we shouldn't be concerned about progress. Our mind wants to measure progress – it wants to calculate how we did today in our meditation versus how we did yesterday. Did we control the mind? For how many minutes? Did we see or hear anything? Did we fall asleep? Were we able to sit still the whole time? But this kind of analysis is destructive, as it activates the mind, instead of allowing the Master to take charge. Master tells us that all we have to do is sit, do our best to repeat our simran, and leave the rest to him. We are not to worry about results.

Someone once asked the Master how we can get the strength to withstand the assault of the mind, which sometimes drives us to act in ways that lead us away from the Master. Hazur Maharaj Ji reassured the questioner by acknowledging that sometimes waves of karma do come that drag us away, and we end up doing something that we know is wrong. This is because our minds are so powerful that we become a victim of our weaknesses. We feel helpless. But then he reminded us that we have a life-support system. He said to the questioner:

Only meditation gives us that strength, that strong willpower, to keep us steadfast on the path. And even if we fall, we again get up and keep to the path. But if we don't attend to the meditation and only intellectually try to know that this is the right path, then we never know when we will be swept away from the path. So meditation, even if we fall, pushes us back again to the path – if we keep to the meditation.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

Then, the same questioner asked: “Even if the meditation is poor?” Hazur responded:

Every meditation is poor. Meditation is meditation – effort, effort, effort. Ultimately it becomes strong. A child doesn't start running right after birth. He has to pass through so many phases before he learns to walk, and then he learns to run. We also have to pass through so many phases in meditation.

So if we wonder, “What hope is there for us?” we need to remember that we are all in the same boat. We are completely in the grip of the mind. None of us actually does ‘good’ meditation. The main thing is to be regular and punctual in our meditation – every day. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*:

If you are tied to a strong chain, you can move only within a limited area. So if we are tied to our meditation every day, no matter how much we're involved in other things, we will always remain within the circle.... If the chain is broken, then of course you are absolutely gone, you're involved. So the chain of meditation should not be broken. Meditation must be attended

to every day, and then no matter how much you try to involve yourself in other activities, you'll never be allowed to go astray at all. You'll never be allowed to get involved so much that you forget your real path, because your chain is very strong.

Hazur is saying that we need to remain within the circle of love, of meditation. If we stay within the circle of simran, we will have the protection of his divine love.

The Master's purpose is to work with us, to guide us through life. But we also have to do our part. Baba Ji often says that we need to work with him; he is with us by our side. The Guru is not just the physical body. The real Guru is the Shabd. Our soul, when attuned to the Shabd, is the real disciple. The awakened consciousness is the true disciple. It is powerful. Loving the physical Master means that we obey him implicitly, and practice just as he has taught us to. This will lead to love for the Shabd.

The true miracle of our lives is that the Master has come for us. He has shown us the way to our true home and freed us from the worries and desires that imprison us. We may think we are not his best disciples, but he is always showering his grace and love. And though we may sometimes forget him, he never forgets us. His love sustains us.

So let us make the most of the miracle of his presence among us so that we can find his real form within ourselves, and always remain happy. It is we who have written each page in the book of our life. We need to go through our lives gracefully, accepting what befalls us as the result of our own actions. The Master has lifted the veil of illusion from our eyes. Now we can awaken to the truth and respond to his pull, and make the best use of this life.

A philosopher once said: “Life is not a process of learning something new, but rather of remembering what we already know.” We have a faint memory of the destination that awaits us – it is our original home in the highest spiritual realm. Let us take the journey side by the side with the Master.



What we need is his grace. When his grace is there, circumstances combine in such a way that we want to get out of the creation. We come to the path, we get the opportunity to meditate. We get the facilities, the atmosphere. We feel his love, his devotion, and we turn our back to the world and look to him. All these things come just by his grace. It's not that we have done something to deserve all that... We can never do anything to deserve his love. He just gives it and gives it... It's all his grace. If the Master won't come with his grace, then who will? It is nothing but his grace that we get so much pull and love for the Lord from within. Unless he pulls from within, nobody can even think about the Father...

We are just helpless.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

The Sweetest Sounds

As disciples of a perfect Master, we might wonder what we have to look forward to in the days and years ahead. Everything! We should be leading the parade of the hopeful. Our confidence is in God, in the living Master, in the word made flesh, in the divine music that lies within every human being. We are told that this music – the Shabd – will lead us home.

But it is not only the mystics who tell us that our best days are ahead. An unusual source of inspiration can be found in the lyrics of an old Broadway musical entitled, *No Strings*. One song in the show is called “The Sweetest Sounds”. Unlike most songs it only has one verse.

The sweetest sounds I'll ever hear are still inside my head.

The kindest words I'll ever know are waiting to be said.

The most entrancing sight of all is yet for me to see.

And the dearest love in all the world is waiting somewhere, for me.

The deeper spiritual meaning of the words is apparent to us. *The sweetest sounds* are the sounds of the five Shabds that are ringing even now, within the eye centre. Someday we will hear these sweet sounds within. *The kindest words* are the words of welcome, spoken or unspoken that – as we have our inner reunion with our Master – will be heard by the lost soul, who, after so long a separation, has finally returned to the source of all love and forgiveness. *The most entrancing sight of all* is the Radiant Form of the Master that our eyes and our souls ache to see. That form of the Master is said to be so entrancing, that we will never want to look away. *And the dearest love in all the world* is the Master himself, who is waiting for every one of us at the

eye centre. He is the love we have been searching for all our lives; but until we go there, his presence within us is only a concept. He waits for us at the eye centre where we can truly experience what he has to give.

Satsangis have everything to look forward to. Our best days, spiritually speaking, are in front of us. And yet out among the many distractions of the world we can become afraid that the divine reunion is far away. To correct this mistaken assessment, we need to listen to the Master's words and to the assurances he gives us now in the present moment; that the Shabd that is always ringing in the eye centre will someday become the sweetest sounds that we will ever hear and that he is waiting for us there.



Is it not true that, when the light of God's glory reaches the heart, it feels intoxicated and, when that light is absent, the opposite is felt? This state will be repeated until the heart melts and is lost, so that the heart breaks and is no more. Then only God will remain.

Shams-e Tabrizi: Rumi's Perfect Teacher

Why Meditate?

Meditation is not just a ritual. There is a deep purpose to it. And, by understanding why we meditate, we can be faithful to the meditation practice, no matter what may happen in our life.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. III, Maharaj Sawan Singh emphasizes the value of understanding our ideals and goals:

Those who follow a path followed by others without due consideration get involved in some superstition. Their progress stops and they do not get spirituality. It is, therefore, an essential condition of success to keep before you the ideal. Ask of yourself as to what you want to be. What ideal have you set in life?

Since we *do* want to “get spirituality”, knowing why we do what we do is essential. So, let’s explore some of the reasons we might have for meditating. These reasons can differ from person to person, and they can also change during the course of our lives.

Seeking Truth

First and foremost, many of us come to the spiritual path because we are seeking truth. We come to feel that there must be more to life than living here in a mindless way; accumulating material possessions, forming human relationships, growing old, and then dying. When that feeling comes in us, then our view of what is really important begins to shift. We cease to be satisfied with the emptiness of life, and we develop an inner desire for something more real and lasting than the external world that is full of turbulence. Saints build on that feeling of emptiness.

Soami Ji says, “Come, my friend, to your true home. Why live in an alien land?” Why does Soami Ji call this world an “alien land”? Because we don’t belong to this world, nor does anything in this world belong to us. We belong to a different land.

Unless we have that awareness and the desire to seek that land, that truth, there is no next step. But, once we have that awareness, there are many ways to seek the truth. For example, we could adopt a belief in a set of religious concepts or doctrines, or we could seek direct experience of the truth within ourselves.

In the book, *One Being One*, the author illustrates one master’s approach to explaining the difference between a conceptual approach to truth versus direct experience of it.

“What’s an orange?” asks the Zen master of the eager young disciple, and the disciple sets out upon a long conceptual discourse on the nature of oranges. “No!” exclaims the master, taking an orange in his hand and squashing it firmly upon the head of his surprised disciple, “That’s an orange!”

Without experiencing the orange, without experiencing spirituality through meditation as taught by a living Master, the path is just a philosophy; it is not knowing the truth.

So, one reason for meditating is to connect with the truth within us. We come to understand at a deep level that our meditation is our search for truth that can help to sustain us and keep us focused. This is one answer to the question of “why meditate?”.

Obeying Our Master

Another reason we often hear for meditating is, “Because Master

wants me to meditate.” This is a wonderful reason to meditate – if this is really true for us.

But, if we honestly look at ourselves and see that we don’t really put in sincere effort in meditation – because we say it’s all in his hands and we can’t do anything – then perhaps we are just fooling ourselves when we say that we are meditating to please him.

Saints definitely want us to meditate. The writings of Soami Ji, Kabir Sahib, and other saints are full of warnings of what will happen if we don’t meditate. They remind us of our death and that our time here is limited. Saints try in one-hundred-and-one ways to encourage us to meditate. Through their charming natures, they make us fall in love with them – and that also inspires us to meditate.

But, the irony is, that despite all that they do to encourage us to meditate, Masters acknowledge that our efforts, limited as they are, will be insufficient to take us back to the Father, who is unlimited.

Yet, somehow, they want that sincere effort coming from our heart, the kind of effort that touches their heart. Otherwise, why would they keep urging us to meditate? Why would Maharaj Charan Singh have spent forty years of his life encouraging us to attend to meditation? Baba Ji also mentions meditation in every satsang. So, if our reason for meditating is to please the Master, then our sincerest and most honest effort must be made.

Feeling Closer to Him

Another reason to meditate is that it makes us feel closer to the Master. In *Philosophy of the Masters*, abridged, Maharaj Sawan Singh says:

Nearness to God is achieved and felt in two different ways: outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly it is done by keeping the

company of saints; but inwardly one cannot attain it unless heart is connected with heart.

Perhaps there have been times in our lives when years and years have gone by without us having an opportunity to see the Master physically, or perhaps we have never seen his physical form at all. The inward connection of meditation is our real link with Master. The body is limited, but the Shabd is not limited. And if we don't meditate, we are losing the opportunity to do our part to grow that connection and make it real in our lives.

In *Die to Live*, Maharaj Charan Singh explains that meditation can create the same type of love and devotion in us as personal contact:

In the past, there were only a few people following the saints. They had a personal contact with the saints, and the saints gave their writings mostly from that point of view. That is why the saints have given so much emphasis to love and devotion, which can be created through that atmosphere. But we can create the same love and devotion from within by attending to meditation.

We are fortunate to have a Master with whom we feel a personal connection, someone who jokes with us and listens to all of our questions, patiently and nonjudgmentally. Having that relationship encourages us to follow his teachings, but it is no substitute for the work of meditation. Just because a patient is very friendly with the doctor, that friendship won't cure his disease; he has to take the medicine prescribed by the doctor. So, in order to feel close to the Master and develop our relationship with him, we must meditate.

Gaining Practical Benefits

Meditation changes our approach to life. It gives us happiness, balance, and clear thinking. Even scientists are beginning to discover the benefits of meditation.

In the June 2011 issue of *Scientific American* there is an article entitled, “Meditation Correlated with Structural Changes in the Brain”. It states:

Recently scientists from Massachusetts General Hospital had 16 participants take an eight-week mindfulness meditation program.... Brain images were taken of each subject before and after the training. Scientists found increases in gray-matter density in the hippocampus – an area responsible for learning and memory. And they saw decreased density in the amygdala – which is responsible for our anxiety and stress responses.

Over the past decade, there have been numerous studies documenting the positive impact of meditation on the physical brain and body. As practitioners of meditation, we may sometimes feel that our meditation is having no effect or that it is an exercise in futility. When we feel this way, we are simply one hundred percent wrong!

But meditation is not just about brainwaves and blood pressure. Perhaps the biggest benefit of meditation is that our attitude changes to one of accepting the events of our life and not losing our balance.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, there is a question and answer with Maharaj Charan Singh on this point:

Question: How can we better accept the conditions of our lives?

Hazur replies:

Well, that is what the meditation is training us to do; to accept everything which comes in our destiny. Meditation is nothing but training our mind to accept or to live in the Lord's will. That is the object of meditation: to surrender to him, to keep us in any way he likes. We accept both joy and misery with the same balance, the same attitude.

Sometimes we may think of progress in meditation as being only about inner experiences of sound and light. But, developing an attitude of living in his will is real and tangible progress. And there is nothing more beautiful than this kind of surrender based on the direct experience of meditation.

In *Legacy of Love*, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

The best plan you can make is to live in his will and accept his commands and be receptive to his grace – that's the best plan we can make.

Enjoying the Experience

Recently, Master advised a questioner who was seeing light and hearing sound within that it's best not to bring in the analytical mind at that time. Instead, he said that we should just enjoy the experience, go with it, and give ourselves to it. Master wants us to enjoy our meditation. The experience of enjoying meditation is powerful. Once we begin to enjoy meditation, we'll never leave it. Even in our daily lives, we always tend to repeat the experiences we enjoy – whether it's eating certain delicious foods, watching movies, or going to beautiful beaches. The same is true for our meditation. The more we enjoy

meditation, the more we are naturally inclined in that direction. And then our whole life becomes meditation, not just the time of sitting.

There is value to understanding why we are meditating, since that awareness can help to sustain our efforts. Our reasons for meditating can change during our lifetime and usually do. We might begin meditating because we are seeking the truth, then we may develop a relationship with Master and meditate to please him, and we may also meditate simply because we enjoy it and see its many benefits in our lives. But, whatever our reason, the main point is to attend to meditation with sincerity. The Master maintains that what we can obtain within through our meditation is vastly superior to anything in this world.

Soami Ji says:

*Why do you drink water, O swan soul?
There is an ocean of nectar within you,
which you can drink
just by withdrawing your consciousness inside.*

Sar Bachan Poetry



In Love, if you are comfortable for the space of a breath, what right do you have to stand with the lover? You cannot approach the Beloved with your mind sharp as a thorn; become a rose and the Beloved will fall into your arms.

Rumi, as quoted in *The Rumi Daybook*
Translated by Kabir and Camille Helminski



Simple

A Guru promised a scholar a revelation of greater consequence than anything contained in the scriptures. When the scholar eagerly asked for it, the Guru said, "Go out into the rain and raise your head and arms heavenward. That will bring you the first revelation."

The next day the scholar came to report: "I followed your advice, and water flowed down my neck. I felt like a perfect fool."

"Well," said the Guru, "for the first day, that's quite a revelation, isn't it?"

This anecdote from Anthony de Mello's *Taking Flight* shows us how one guru uses a simple method to teach humility. The Masters have always used simple methods to teach us basic spiritual truths, and one of those truths is the value of simplicity itself.

Most of us lead overly complicated lives. We wear ourselves out striving hard to please and live up to the expectations of everyone but our Master. What if we were to change focus? How could striving first to please the Master help us lead simpler lives? And how could simpler lives enrich both ourselves and those around us?

We know how to please the Master, and each of us knows the areas where our efforts need shoring up. Perhaps we need to concentrate on putting more 'seat' time into our meditation or more meditation into our seat time, doing simran, or acting with love and patience. Reinforcing any of these basic principles of the path helps us build simpler lives by focusing our daily activities and detaching us from the whirl of the world.

As we meditate, we develop an attitude of detachment. In fact we may begin to feel as if we are watching all the events of life from behind a sheet of glass.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

We should just attend to meditation. All attachments automatically fade out, whether they are old, whether they are new – whatever they are. The only way to get rid of them is to attend to meditation. Get attached to something higher, then they start fading out.

This detachment then frees our hearts to engage less in the outside play of drama and more in the inside play of love. Our efforts to live simply and to please the Master weave themselves into every aspect of our lives. One movement towards simplicity prompts another; one desire to please the Master feeds another. Under their influence, our inside life begins to matter more than our outside life, and this shift in priorities lightens our spirit. We find delight more easily, and we spread delight more readily. Some of the remnants of a hurried, multi-tasking life slough away, and we see that following the basic teachings of the Master are really all we need.

And that's quite a revelation, isn't it?



The Great Debate

Once upon a time there were two disciples who had a disagreement about how to do simran. The first disciple said, “Do the simran however you can. Just do it!” His name was Nikeji (like the famous running shoe). The second disciple said, “No, no, you can’t just do simran. You have to do it with love and devotion.” His name was Heartfeltji. Other disciples listened to them and said that they both seemed right. So Nikeji and Heartfeltji went to their Master to ask, “What is the right way to do simran?” He said, “We will set up a public debate so everyone can benefit from hearing the different sides of this argument.” So a date was set, and word got out. It drew a lot of people who were excited to resolve this issue in their meditation and learn the best way to do simran. The debate began.

Heartfeltji went first. “Simran is the most difficult thing in the world. It means suffering. It means tragedy. It means sacrificing everything you are attached to for the sake of the Beloved. Ceaseless simran means thinking more of your Beloved than of yourself. If that self-sacrifice isn’t there, then you better not play this game of simran. It is a very difficult game and should be played only by the lovers of the Lord. It means putting your own head under the sword, sacrificing your ego and all that you are attached to. If you are not prepared to do this, you cannot be called a devotee of the Lord. Simran should be done with burning zeal, with close attention, with fear and reverence, and with the deepest humility. Then you will feel the warmth and sweet satisfaction of repeating his Names.”

The crowd was impressed. How could one argue with Heartfeltji. His words were, well, so heartfelt.

Then Nikeji spoke: “Yes, doing simran with love and devotion is the ideal. But love and devotion are not within our power. They are gifts from God and come only by grace. God has not given us the power to access them at will. The quality of simran is not in our will, but the quantity of simran is. He has given us the power to repeat his Names at all times and in all places and has commanded us to do so. Quantity is our part, but not quality.

The secret to drawing aside the veil of illusion is to repeat simran in any way that we can. Just do it! Do it with every breath, in every circumstance we find ourselves. Simran calls for continuous action to counter the downward tendencies of the mind. Repeat the Names without ceasing.

If our hearts don't feel the warmth and sweet satisfaction of doing simran, then bring to the altar of simran what can be brought – whatever lies within our power. And what lies within our power is the frequency and consistency of the repetition. Let the humble instruments of our mind first grow familiar with frequent, persistent simran. Let the call upon the mighty Names given to us by the Master be often and without interruption. There is not a greater labour than this. The Master has said that if we couldn't do it, we wouldn't have been initiated. So just do it! Do simran continuously and do not labour much to conquer your passions by your own strength. Simran will destroy them naturally. This is where the secret of awakening lies.”

Nikeji continued, “So it is fitting to do simran at work, travelling, standing in line, or waiting for satsang to begin. It is possible to do simran everywhere and in every place. And if we sincerely turn our attention to the task of simran, we will find convenient circumstances everywhere. We just need to be convinced of the fact that simran should constitute our chief occupation and come before every other duty. Then we will prioritize our life accordingly and just do it!”

The crowd was stunned. Nikeji made so much sense. And what a relief that it is in our power and we can do it!

Then it was Heartfeltji's turn. "That's good advice if you are a lizard or emotionally brain dead. But if you have an ounce of emotion, channel it into devotion. It doesn't have to be love, it can be your frustration, sadness, hopelessness, guilt, fear, pain, anything. Let these emotions charge the simran and it will lead to love.

How can we repeat simran without any feeling? We will get bored and our minds will wander away in a minute. Feelings charge repetition which then focuses the mind. Maharaj Charan Singh was once asked: 'Great Master once said that you cannot rend the veil inside unless there is grace, longing, and love. Does constant simran have the power to do that, or will simran develop the love to rend the veil to pierce within? Is it the power of simran alone, or will that just develop love?' Hazur replied in *Die to Live*:

Simran or meditation without love doesn't yield much result. Simran and meditation with devotion yields results. That's why the Great Master says that if you just mechanically do simran and your love is not there, your faith is not there, your mind is not there in it, then you don't get much result. You have to attend to simran and to the whole meditation with love and devotion.

Heartfeltji's closing argument was, "You have a heart. Access it and channel it into your simran."

Again the crowd was swayed. Of course we need to channel our hearts into our simran.

Then Nikeji spoke again. "Let's see how Hazur answers another question: 'How does mechanical simran get turned into simran with love and devotion? And does it help to try to repeat the words with

love and devotion if you're not feeling it?' Hazur also said in *Die to Live*:

First you may start with a dry simran, and then ultimately you may end with a love of simran. When a child is sent to school to learn the ABCs, it is very dry for him. He is made to repeat it over and over. It's only later [that] he loves to read, and enjoys pronouncing the words. Simran is the same thing.

If we can't attend to meditation with love and devotion, it may be attended to even mechanically. Slowly and slowly that love and devotion will be built. To begin with we have to fight with the mind. We have to put the mind in meditation, and then automatically love develops with effort, and faith also comes. Some people are lucky, and start with faith and devotion; others have to build faith and devotion.

Nikeji finished with, "So if you aren't one of the lucky ones who starts with faith and devotion, what are you to do? Just do it!"

By this time the crowd was totally confused. Do we just do it, or do we do it with love and devotion?

They turned to the Master. He said, "Thank you, Nikeji and Heartfeltji. You have helped me very much. My job is to confuse my disciples so much that they will drop their intellects and just do it!"

The crowd gasped, thinking Nikeji must have been right. He must have won this great debate. But then the Master added, "So my only advice is to just do your bhajan and simran every day – with love and devotion."



Devotion

*Whether you are respected or condemned,
Uphold the will of God and do your devotion.*

Rely on the strength of the Master,

Keep it in your heart.

O my dear, listen –

And do your devotion.

Practice of devotion

Will turn unripe into ripe devotion -

No other remedy exists.

Some day immature devotion will become mature.

But give up insincerity and deceit

And do your devotion.

Hypocritical devotion is useless.

Even then I say, whether sincere or immature,

Do your devotion.

Radha Soami tells you, listen, listen, listen:

Do your devotion, do it anyhow,

Do it as best as you can.

Soami Ji Maharaj, Sar Bachan (Hindi)

in Kabir, the Great Mystic

Experience

The Masters tell us that Sant Mat is a path of experience. And this experience – even the experience of the Beloved – begins right here and now, wherever we are on the journey home. We may not see the face of our Master within or hear the music of the spheres, we may not see the rose, but we begin to experience the fragrance of the rose, and that fragrance – that presence – alters our days.

When asked what he most remembered about his Master, Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh replied that he was *always* remembering his Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh.

Here and there in our daily lives he makes his love and presence known – as a Persian poet once said, “a fragment of ecstasy, a flash of grace from the other world.” Hazur constantly told us that our meditation is nothing but to make us receptive to his love. This feeble little effort of meditation, of simran, somehow makes us receptive to him. So we begin to experience his presence, his guidance and affection.

And we begin to experience ourselves differently. What we used to do with pride, we may hesitate to do. What we still cannot control, we keep resolving to change; and we beg for his help to do so. At times we notice that we express the tiniest bit more patience, forgiveness, and compassion toward others as well as ourselves. We find that we can laugh, here and there, at our own insanity, rather than fully identify ourselves with this very ‘serious’ script called life. Or we might pause for a moment to ask: Does this move me toward my destination, or is this a definite detour? And sometimes we actually avoid some of these meanderings off the royal highway. Hallelujah! No victory is too small. But who effects this transformation? Only the Friend.

So it begins to dawn on us: it is all the little mercies, all *his little mercies* of cleaning us up for the meeting with the King. Gratitude begins to grow for the Master, for our gift of Nam, for our raggedy little steps on the long and winding road home. It is all his doing. It is all his game. We discover that he gives whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and however he wants. What a relief to begin to let go of our plans, our machinations and manoeuvres to win the prize. The prize whispers within us. We simply have to walk in that direction to discover more and more of the shining symphony.

These are all experiences of the Master. And then it deepens, this experience of our relationship with him. We begin to experience the pull to meditate and the pleasure of solitude. And we know this is from him. It cannot be a result of our flimsy little efforts.

Then we begin to experience the longing – the longing for him, the longing to experience that one true relationship, that one love that never dies.

This is all experience, right here as we walk through the world. This is no small thing because these experiences are all signs of our growing relationship with the One. We have often heard Baba Ji say that this is not a path of sound and light – it is a path of love. Right here and now, if we turn to him with simran and meditation, we can experience the beginnings of it all.



The Power of Simran

Simran will enable the disciple to withdraw his consciousness to the eye centre, listen to the sound, and see the light within. Sant Tukaram, in *The Ceaseless Song of Devotion*, says, “By repetition man becomes God.”

It is the power of simran that will lead us to the Shabd. Nothing is in our hands except trying to repeat the simran as much as possible throughout the day and at the time of meditation. Simran is the only thing we can do. It is the key to making progress on the path of the Saints. The holy words given to the disciple at initiation have the power of the Master in them. Those words, when repeated during meditation, will pull the mind away from worldly things and attach it to something better.

Sant Tukaram then tells us about the power of simran: “And the One who could not be found before will himself come to meet you on repeating the Name.”

The Master is always present, but it is through simran and bhajan that we become aware of his presence twenty-four hours a day. With our effort and his grace we will feel his presence – he will come to meet us.

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

Regularity in meditation gives confidence and strength that are difficult to acquire in any other way. Then you would also realize how the Master is helping you and, in fact, molding you.

Then in another letter he writes,

Truly, Nam is the greatest gift of all, and one can only begin to have some idea of the magnitude of this wonderful blessing after going in.

The more we meditate, the more we will feel the Master's love. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

And the more we love, the more it grows. Of course, it starts with the Father; but then we try to search for him, and our love grows and grows. The more he gives, the more it grows. The more effort we make, the more love we feel; the more his grace is there, the more effort we make. These will always go side by side.

From this love, and with the Master's grace, we will begin to look for any opportunity to sit in meditation. Our whole day will be geared to finding time to be with our Master. Every moment that our mind is free will be turned to simran and, eventually, even when we are talking, it will go on automatically in the background. When we sleep at night, the simran will go on, and when we awake, it will be there. We will live in that atmosphere day and night. We will be able to hold on to our Master at every moment.

In *Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion*, Sant Tukaram pleads:

*O my Lord, let my eyes be forever
Fixed on your form.
Your form is so sweet,
Your Name is so sweet –
Endow me with your love forever.*

This will be our state through the power of simran.

Surrendering to Him

Do we really believe that our Master is taking care of our lives? Or is it that we are a little afraid to allow him to do it? Perhaps we are so used to taking charge that it is hard to believe that all we need to do is our meditation and everything else will work out perfectly. And yet this is exactly what our Master tells us over and over again. So why not just let go and surrender completely to him? What do we mean when we say we want to surrender to the Master?

There seems to be two kinds of surrender. First is the one that occurs when we turn our lives over to the Master for him to take care of everything for us. This may be what Maharaj Jagat Singh is talking about when he encourages us to lean on the Master:

So long as we lean on others, he lets us do so, but when after repeated disappointments we surrender to him completely, regarding him as our only sheet anchor he comes to our succor instantly.

Science of the Soul

Leaning on the Master in our daily lives, seeing him as the sheet anchor that holds us fast in the turbulent waters of the world, this is one kind of surrender. But there is another kind – one that is purely spiritual in nature.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, a questioner asks, “Can you talk to us about the unconditional surrender to the Master?” Maharaj Charan Singh replies:

First what is surrender? Surrender is when we take our ego and I-ness out of us. As long as the mind dominates the soul, there can be no surrender. When the soul dominates the mind, then you can say that we are in a position to surrender to somebody.

This second kind of surrender comes about when the soul dominates the mind, a very high stage in our spiritual evolution, but there can be signs that we know how to surrender even in our worldly lives. Hazur continues:

We feel that we have surrendered, even in physical love, when we submerge our will into the will of the other person. We try to merge our happiness into the happiness of the other person. We always try to do what pleases the other person, and never try to assert ourselves or to adjust the other person to us. We always adjust ourselves to the other person's will. That is what we always like to do in love, even in this world. We always try to cooperate and to submit ourselves to the other person.

This description of physical love is a model of the way love should be. Each person in the relationship submits his will to the other, wants only to give and expects nothing in return. We love the person irrespective of their good or bad qualities. This is unconditional love, which is the kind of love that the Masters show us. But they, unlike us, can see beyond the physical to who we really are: soul. The Master's love is spiritual. In spiritual love, there is no ego, no separation, no lover and beloved; there is only one, as Maharaj Charan Singh further explains:

[Surrendering to the Master] means that we have to take our ego out of us and blend our whole heart with his heart. He is already merged into the Lord, and by merging ourselves into him we are automatically merged into the Lord. That can be done only by meditation. The more we meditate, the more we are driving out ego. By doing so, we will be drawn towards the Master, and we are automatically surrendering to him; and through him, we are surrendering to the Lord himself.

This surrender – when we lose our identity and merge in the Lord – can only be experienced through meditation because meditation dissolves duality. Meditation reveals to us who we truly are: not mere drops, but the ocean itself – the ocean of love. This is our highest goal: God-realization, to realize that we are one with God, that we are love.

As we meditate, even before we reach that highest stage of oneness, we see signs of our changing nature as we become more loving, more giving, more compassionate. The closer we draw to the eye centre, the closer we draw to the Master and the more we begin to imbibe his qualities.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

If you have a kind and loving heart, you are kind and loving to everybody, you are helpful to everybody.... It happens automatically if we are filled with love and devotion for the Father. Then all such qualities come like cream on the milk. You don't have to strive for them; they become part and parcel of you, because then you see the Lord in everyone. You are humble before everyone.

We become loving automatically when we are filled with love and devotion for the Father. First comes love for the Master, then the Father, and finally comes love for the people of the world. As our relationships improve, as we become softer, we can see that we are making progress on our spiritual path – this is a natural process. We sit down, close our eyes and repeat the five holy names we are given at initiation by our Master. Just sit down, close our eyes and let go. Every time we do this, we are driving out our ego and coming closer to merging with, to surrendering to our inner Master.

Hazur continues in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

So we can surrender unconditionally only when we go inside, see the Radiant Form of the Master, merge ourselves in him and then go ahead. This is the real unconditional surrender. But we have to work for that while living in this world. To attain that real surrender, which we call sharan, we have to remain within the dictates and principles that were told to us at the time of initiation.

Attaining *sharan*, or surrender, is a very high goal that we can achieve in this very lifetime, but as Hazur says we have to do it while living a normal life. This is not easy because it seems that everything around us is designed to pull our attention away from the eye centre. But the Master gives us a framework of the four vows in which to live; and if we remain within these principles, we can succeed.

Following the vows is an essential part of the path. Every time we make a conscious choice based on our vows, we are thinking of the path and the Master. Doing seva, reading the books, doing simran when our minds are not busy during the day, and remembering our Master keep our minds in check and make the Master happy. Actively

choosing to do what pleases our Master is showing our love for him, showing devotion, showing that we want to surrender.

Maharaj Charan Singh ends his answer in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

We have to put forth our honest efforts to remain on the path, to give time to meditation. That, in a way, is surrender to the Master, and this surrender will lead to the internal surrender, the real or unconditional surrender. That will be when we see the Master inside, forget our self and merge in his will, in his love.

This is our goal, to merge with the Master – to lose our identity in him. This is true love. And with this true love, we become perfect just like our Master. Then all our interactions in the world will be driven by unconditional love.



Just give yourself to Him. To love somebody means to give yourself without expecting anything in return. To give yourself, to submit yourself, to resign to Him is all meditation. We are losing our own identity and our individuality and just merging into another being. We have no expectation then.... In love you don't exist. You just lose yourself, you just submit yourself, you just resign to His will.... The more we give, the more it grows, the more we lose ourselves, the more we become another being.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

On Death

Everyone dies sooner or later. Modern medicine and technology can stave it off for a while. We can be put on life support: machines can breathe for us, pumps can keep our hearts beating, and dialysis can flush our kidneys. We can be fed, irrigated and evacuated through tubes; but ultimately, death wins. We all fall down. Everyone dies.

We don't like to admit that death exists; we don't like to think about it. It's considered in some circles impolite even to *talk* about it. The pragmatists among us try to plan for it by making out a will, buying a burial plot, and writing up detailed end-of-life instructions.

Death is the one certainty of life – perhaps the *only* certainty. But, steeped in denial as we are, we live our lives from occasion to occasion, holiday to holiday, event to event, refusing to give death the thought and respect it deserves. But we know it lurks, always – a specter hiding in the shadows. Death, like the weather, is something we can talk about or choose not to talk about, but we can do nothing to avoid it.

If we were to ask most people about death and the afterlife, they would probably tell us that they won't know about them until they die. In contrast, the teachings of Sant Mat propose that we find out what death is like while we are alive: to actually take our consciousness, our spirit, our soul, our essence, to where we go when we die, and to do it while we are living in the body. When we die while living, in this way, we can find out if death is merely a sequel to life or, in reality, greater than life.

Sant Mat teaches us that our purpose is to go home: to become one with God. Or more to the point, to rediscover the God that we are – that we have always been. Our souls, hearing the Lord's call, are spiraling upward on an inevitable inner journey homeward. The



Creator has not abandoned nor forgotten us. There is a plan, a system, and a path for our safe and certain return to our true and original home, Sach Khand. And that plan includes a true living Master, who can tell us the truth about death and how to prepare for it through the process of meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Die to Live*:

Meditation is nothing but a preparation to leave the body. That is the real purpose of meditation. Before you play your part on a stage, you rehearse the part so many times, just to be perfect. Similarly, this meditation is a daily rehearsal to die, so that we become perfect at how to die.

In meditation, we withdraw our consciousness to the eye centre in the same way that we all die when death comes... When the soul withdraws from the nine apertures and comes to the eye centre, it leaves the body.

Maharaj Charan Singh further explains that when we practice dying while living, and begin to feel the withdrawal of our soul and mind from the body, we should not be afraid. He says in the same book:

When you go up, don't be frightened that you'll never come back to the body. Then nobody would sit in meditation. This whole Sant Mat way of life and attending to our meditation is nothing but a preparation for that particular time....

Why should death be terrible when we are trying to experience that same death every day? Unless we start preparing ourselves for that time, death is terrible and painful. But when we sit in meditation every day, it means we are preparing

ourselves. Even though we have no experience to our credit, we are preparing ourselves every day to leave the body, and when that achievement finally comes, then why should we be frightened?

He concludes:

What is there to lament and weep about? At death, we are getting what we have been trying for our whole life. That is rather a happy moment.



Through meditation we fulfill the very purpose of human life. Meditation is the only worship that pleases the Father. Through meditation we become worthy of his grace and receptive to his love. We build and grow the love and devotion which he gives us to carry us speedily towards our goal. So attending to meditation is submitting to the will of the Father... It is through meditation, by his grace, that we develop an intense longing to return to our Source.

The effect is truly a miracle!

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Forgiveness

In the course of a lifetime we face numerous challenges, perhaps including attacks against us and betrayals by those whom we trusted. Fortunately, we have the Master's inner support, which provides deep solace for us when we are hurt, and his encouragement to find forgiveness in our heart. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh says, "So forgiveness is always best."

Let's imagine that our boss or a friend or a family member cheats or double-crosses us. Our first reaction may be anger; we may have lost significant income, authority, or prestige. We may also feel humiliated, and the passion of revenge may rise up in our minds. It is extremely important at that moment to stop!

Whatever we need to do to restrain ourselves from reacting to these attacks, we should do even though we may feel overcome with outrage and find it difficult or impossible to keep focused on the path. Refraining from revenge, while it does not excuse the attack against us, keeps us from becoming like our attacker. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, "If there's one fool under a roof, then there is no necessity for two under the same roof."

Maharaj Charan Singh counsels us again in the same volume: "If we don't forgive what other people do to us ... we may have to come back to forgive them." Still, we may try to forgive, and not be able to. We may think, "If I forgive my enemies, they will keep attacking me." Actually, we don't know that. If we engage in this type of thinking, we can be sure the incident will develop into a feud or grudge; and that feud may continue, even over lifetimes. We don't want that. Forgiveness does not mean surrender to our attackers. Forgiveness

means we hold nothing against them – we do not hate them. We try to remember that the Creator also lives inside them.

If we let go of this burden of resentment, we are free to respond to any action in a positive way. By keeping our attention in simran, we are more able to respond as the Master wishes us to respond. If we continue to pile up resentments, our meditation will be negatively affected as we will be concentrating on our enemy instead of our Master. If we don't learn to forgive, how can we expect the Father to forgive us?

By not forgiving, we are carrying a burden on our heart. That burden hinders our meditation and keeps us distant from the source of love, the inner Master, the Shabd. When we carry resentments or seek justice on our own terms, it will take us away from the Lord. The Masters tell us there is no getting even; there is simply the karmic wheel. Do we want to return to this world in order to 'get even' with somebody? If there is to be a payback for them, it needs to be in the hands of the Creator, not us. If we desire to get even, we're entering the court of justice; however, if we want to be in the court of the Master, then we can strive to forgive and forget.

When we experience a personal betrayal, this experience may profoundly shock and hurt us. We only have this one moment to step aside from reaction and revenge. If we are hurt, we don't want to spread more hurt. If the person who betrays us is a good friend or close relative, this moment will not be the last we share with them. Down the road, when this incident has receded into the past, we want to feel that we stayed close to the Master when we were hurt and that we followed his guidance as best we could. What feeling is better than that? As Maharaj Charan Singh says: "If you are carrying a grudge against anyone or have hatred in your heart, it is not pure.... Then you cannot receive what the Lord wants to give you." No matter how deep

this pain is, the Shabd and the Master's love are deeper. That is no time to avoid meditation. As often as we can, during the day and night, it is imperative to sit still and practise simran. We have no better consolation and guidance than the Master and our meditation and we should attempt to remain calm.

Holding a grudge not only maintains a negative relationship, it may hurt other innocent people who are close to us. We see here how karmic relationships can go on forever. When will it stop? Master teaches us to be the leader and be the one who stops reacting. Hazur continues in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III: "And if you also retaliate against someone, you become like the other person."

Don't become like the other person; become like the Master who is constantly forgiving. Also, if we don't retaliate, we don't reinforce our attacker's violence. We want to show him peacefulness and demonstrate that anger can be contained and released. As disciples we aim to "turn the other cheek", a thousand times if necessary, because we always wish to face our Master, and he is in everyone, even our attacker. Much as it may grate on us to forgive and forget, that is our only path to freedom from the painful entanglement of negativity.

Forgiveness seems easy to discuss, but it can be hard to *do*. We don't come into this life free and clear but arrive with a burden on our head; and it is this burden, which keeps us enslaved to the painful patterns of the mind and complicates our life. We appeal to the Master to relieve us of this burden and to forgive us completely. We wish to get closer to him, to become free like him, yet we also wish to remain as we are. That is impossible. We wish to be forgiven, and yet we do not easily forgive others. Hazur says, "So we should just forgive the person and call it quits."

In our depths, we must forgive; it is there that light-heartedness resides. Imagine how many people have insulted, slandered, or slighted the Master. If he were not a completely forgiving person, shadows would surround him. He would be part and parcel of this dark world where action and reaction dominate behaviour. On the contrary, he is buoyant, light-hearted, and peaceful.

We have the classic moral choice here: to turn toward the world or turn toward the Master. Hazur Maharaj Ji is strong on this point:

It is immaterial whether the person even asks us for forgiveness. We should not have any idea of revenge within us.... We should not have that attitude, even if he's arrogant enough not to ask for forgiveness. Even then I think we should forgive the person, because we've had enough and we don't want more of these karmic relationships.... We should even forget that we have forgiven.... Forget the incident, absolutely.

The Master's love is so deep he even forgets that he has forgiven! Meanwhile, we may be satisfied with a routine forgiveness of someone's attack on us. We may even carry a strong memory of our forgiveness and feel proud of ourselves. Our Master suggests we not compromise on our forgiveness. He wants us to forgive others and to forgive them completely. He wants us not to "go through the motions" but to make our forgiveness real. Why would we want to hang onto any distressing event at all? It only keeps us from the Master. Do we want only a smaller karmic burden? No, we want no burden at all. He notes: "We do forgive people, but we don't forget that we have forgiven them. So a scar is always there. The wound is gone, but the scar is always there. We shouldn't be conscious of even the scar." He reminds us that, "A heart full of love has no room for hatred."

Baba Ji often reminds us that our true identity is Shabd. Given that, who is hurt when we are insulted or betrayed? If we are truly an expression of the divine current of love, then why would we hesitate to forgive, or to apologize? And after we do forgive, then why wouldn't we let go completely, and let our hearts be full of his love?



*The Name is nowhere to be had for a price;
the Name is only to be had
by following the Guru's instructions....
The true Guru has himself shown
that liberation comes from devotion to true Name.*

Jap Ji: A Perspective

*When, at the time of Creation,
God separated me from himself,
I heard him say: "Am I not your God?"
"Indeed you are," cried my soul, reassured.
Since then has my heart flowered
with the inner urge to return Home,
giving me not a moment of calm here on earth.*

Sultan Bahu

Ocean of the Heart

In the ocean of my heart
arise the waves of my Master's grace.
In it appear whirlpools, in it blows fierce gales
of countless thoughts and arguments
that hamper my contemplation of the Lord.
I am in an alien land, where I find no support.
To add to my woes, I have fallen in love!
My lack of maturity, my inexperience,
aggravate my plight, and yet –
ever since I tasted love, O Bahu,
I have lost all taste
for worldly play and merry-making....

Unity is written on the tablet of your heart –
you should continue studying that tablet for eternity.
You only have to remember the one Word of God –
and keep practising that one Word.
Those who enshrine the Lord in their hearts, O Bahu,
have both worlds at their command....

Between you and me, my Lord,
surges the ocean of love....
I beg for your Name – to sail across to you.

Sultan Bahu



The Hunger of the Soul

BY NANCY POPE MAYORGA

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From 1948 to 1980 Nancy Pope Mayorga, a Vedantist and a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, kept a spiritual diary of her inner experiences, her struggles, and her ecstasies, sometimes describing “such ecstatic joy as to be almost unbearable to my body.”

She had no intention to publish this record of her inner life. But in 1980 a friend visiting her house discovered it “wedged in a corner, its manila cover dusty.” The friend recalls, “Curiosity prevailed over my respect for privacy. As I turned the pages, I found myself deeply moved by the marvellous revelations it contained. Could the author of this remarkable spiritual diary, who recorded living so many days in spiritual bliss, be the same woman now engrossed in a crossword puzzle (she was an expert) in the next room?”

At the urging of many friends, Mayorga finally agreed to let the diary be published, giving it a title from one of her favourite quotations, from William Law: “The hunger of the soul is the first necessity. All else will follow.” She added one note after the last diary entry:

I have never been, and am not now, a recluse. During the thirty years covered by these notes, I kept house for my family, nursed my mother and father through their last illnesses, and after my husband died, ran a fair-sized business for my son. The outer, worldly life is by no means incompatible with the inner spiritual life.

In 1948, in her first attempts at meditation, she followed the instructions in Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms*. She sat down, “determined to make my mind a still lake.” She records, “I concentrated my whole attention, with all the strength of my being... I was at once grabbed, swept upward,

completely out of myself ... beyond space, beyond time, into an unlocated, timeless, inexpressible bliss." A few months later she wrote:

The soul stands steady in front of God, bathed in His radiance, rendered motionless with bliss ... I see a luminous darkness, and if I hold that sight in a spirit of resignation, expectancy but total self-surrender, intense self-surrender, then my whole being loses itself to burn in that luminous darkness with a sweetness and delight that brings me near to fainting.... St. John says the soul is being burned free of its impurities. I believe that.

Throughout the diary Mayorga quotes liberally from mystics and great thinkers as varied as Lao-Tsu, William James, Saint Augustine, Plotinus, Ramakrishna, St. Francis de Sales, and Shankara, finding a mirror of her own experience in their words. For example, she quotes Thomas Merton: "And we long for the place He has destined for us and weep with desire." Then she exclaims: "Do you think this is rhetoric? Figurative language? No, no, no! Out of the soul's extremity when it is abandoned, out of its sick loneliness, real, physical, hot, salt tears are wrung. I have felt them roll down my cheeks. I have been – just recently – on my knees before God. Begging."

The diary often dwells on her interactions with Swami Prabhavananda. One time, with great trepidation, she tells him that after years of making steady progress, it all seemed to have stopped. He replied, speaking slowly, "In the first place, you have to realize that no person can judge his own progress. It is like a man walking up a gradual incline. He himself cannot see how far up he has gone." Reflecting later on this conversation, she wrote:

Probably I could not have come to Swami Prabhavananda any sooner than now. If I had come earlier, I would have come with lots of little conceits and my mind not fully made up. After a year and a half of wandering in a desert land, I dumped many of my conceits and found out with all sureness what it was I wanted above all.

Then, in a later entry, she joyfully writes:

Now, now I am coming to the goal toward which I have been struggling for 10 years – a constant remembrance of God. Almost uninterrupted, day and night, day in and day out, that bliss courses through me. I never really believed it could be achieved, not by me anyway. But it is here, it is here, ever since God took my heart. There He lives, filling it completely. Oh how is it possible that there should be such joy? Joy that never grows less, never palls, but increases and expands.

On another occasion Swami Prabhavananda encouraged her, saying “You have to make efforts, yes, tremendous efforts, but ultimately everything depends on the grace of God. You’ve heard me tell about raising your sail to catch the breeze. So go on doing what you’re doing and be patient.”

Her interviews with her guru are lively, a blend of reverence, intimacy, and humour. She writes, “The last time, I was complaining to him that he had not given me enough instruction. He said, ‘You have been initiated.’ ‘Yes.’ He burst forth explosively, ‘Well then, what more do you want? You have been killed already!’ We both burst out laughing.”

The diary alternates between such accounts of learning from her guru and descriptions of her inner experiences. Attempting to relate an inner experience, she writes:

Let me see if I can describe it. There is a beautiful, clear, all-pervading light, tranquil yet pregnant with promise; still, yet very much alive. It has to be held by the inner eye with the utmost care and yet without tension.... Then comes the most tempting distraction – bliss, glowing and increasing with the intensity of the attention, as the glow of an ember is increased by blowing on it. This has to be ignored. This too is a distraction. And here faith must be strong, faith to believe that what is to come is far greater than the bliss of the moment. And yet it is not a matter of mere intellectual belief. There is something deep that says, “Go on, go on! Don’t let yourself be side-tracked.” Dear God! I must go through. Take me!

Another entry reads:

In all my life I have never known such a morning. When I controlled my inclination to make efforts of my own, I was invaded by God, purified, comforted, encouraged, reassured, in a way I could not have invented nor dreamed. The miracle is this; that you not only believe in God, but you feel that He has a very personal and special interest in you and your progress.

As the years passed, Mayorga feels increasingly detached:

I feel less and less interest in this world. I feel like someone staying at a motel. Very little of me is here and it's only overnight, and I'm not interested in fixing it up because I'll be gone in the morning and nothing of me will be left in that impersonal room. Nothing to get attached to in a motel room, nothing to miss, and no regrets on leaving.

As the book nears its end, she writes:

At the deeper level of ecstasy, the body has no part. It is soul to Soul. It is, as John of the Cross says, "the deep and soft voice of God, Who speaks to the heart in solitude; it is in profound peace and tranquillity that the soul is to listen to God." That tranquillity is fathomless, and the joy indescribable. Just one tranquil sea of joy.

The final entry in the diary, dated October 28, 1980, three years before her death, reads:

The journey is not ended yet. Perhaps it will not end, even with death. So my final comment may not be final at all. But here it is: My conclusions, my deductions, even my intuitions can be argued with. But my experiences, no. I have tasted sugar and found it to be sweet. You may say to me, "You might be mistaken. It may be sour. It may be salty." And I will say to you, "It is sweet." I have been in the water; it is wet. The stuff of the universe is consciousness, and the nature of consciousness is bliss.



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