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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# Meeting Him

Love for the physical is the means –  
The needle cannot sew without thread.

Love of the form is a giver, a benefactor.  
It brings the wealth of blissful rapture.  
People in whose marrow love gets absorbed,  
Die while they are still alive.

Love is our father. Love is our mother.  
It brings joy. It gives ecstasy.  
The body of the lover increasingly withers.  
I stand under the shadow of the moon-like Beloved,  
And watch the fair ones laugh heartily...

It is indeed an open secret.  
He sees his presence everywhere.  
Bullah, the lover, is thus redeemed.  
He who is mindful of his abode,  
He gets salvation on meeting the Lord.  
He peeps into his mind, his self,  
Which transports him into the beatitude of bliss.

Love for the physical is the means –  
The needle cannot sew without thread.

*Bulleh Shah*



# Love

When we came to the path, we may have thought that it would be only a matter of months, or at most a few short years, before we would get a glimpse of the inner worlds of which the Masters speak. Had we known then how many turns our lives would take, how many times our love and devotion would be put to the test, perhaps we would have been too daunted to set out on this adventure. But, of course, we had no choice. The flame of love that inspired us, which drew us to the Master, also dazzled us and made our problems seem insignificant.

Fortunately, if we underestimated the challenge, we probably also failed to fully grasp the Master's ability to affect us. It seems that even at the best of times we can only vaguely understand the importance of the Master's influence on us. Often it is only when we look back on events that we realize that he was always subtly present in our lives, influencing and helping us in ways we could not perceive or imagine at the time. We have been accustomed to darkness for so long that we adjust very slowly to the brightness we are beginning to experience.

No matter what happens in our lives, clearly, the key is to always try to keep close to Master in our thoughts and our feelings. No matter what problems we are going through, how weak our faith, how poor our devotion, we shouldn't let go of his hand. To be an imperfect lover is better than not to love at all. Even if we stray far from our original intentions, even if we get so confused we cannot imagine that he really is a true Master, even if a thousand contrary thoughts assail us, we should just keep on turning our hearts towards him. Thinking of him, remembering him, repeating the names, makes us consciously aware that he is always in our lives. Then we get to that place where we feel his influence, and we start to experience changes in ourselves.

Meditation is an adventure. We should meditate with love, just to please him, trying in our own way to touch his heart with the simple gift of our feelings and our thoughts. If we knew of the depth of the ocean of his love for us, perhaps we would never come out of meditation – we would be unable to breathe, or think or function at all at this level. But even if we only get a faint glow of inspiration from time to time, we should try to focus on him as often as we can. Contact with him has a tremendously positive effect. It changes the way we see things, what we want, and how we behave.

We cannot ask him to do everything for us and not lift a finger to advance the process. Nor can we, through our efforts, achieve it all on our own. There should be neither pride in our devotion nor over-dependence. It is as subtle as the most beautiful of dances. We must listen to his voice and fall in with his step, trying to make the moves he asks of us – even if at times we feel uncomfortable. Offering even our poor efforts at devotion has the effect of preparing us for him. Only by losing ourselves entirely in the music can we become absorbed in it and begin to move in perfect harmony. Clearly, we must play our part in making the effort and at the same time submit to him entirely. But no matter how we manage, one day, no doubt, we will fall deeply, utterly in love, and nothing will be able to keep us away from him. Then the music will overwhelm us and we will be swept off our feet. For such is his wish.



# Finding the Light in This Dark Age

According to Hindu cosmology, this period of the physical universe in which we are living is *kaliyug*, the dark age. Also called the Iron Age, this is a time, as described in *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, Vol. V, when man

*measures his achievements not by the quality of his inner spirituality, his humanity, his self-control, his true inward happiness, and his peacefulness, but by his ability to create external witnesses to his existence: his buildings, his apparent control over nature and his fellow creatures, and by the creation of organizational structures in which he is in fact imprisoned.*

We are imprisoned by the structures and the organizations that we ourselves create. We think that our achievements will bring us happiness and contentment, but it's not long before some problem or challenge or loss arises. There may indeed be lovely interludes when we are happy, but we know they will never last. Life is often difficult.

We have only to give our attention to the news of the day – is there anything much other than violence, war, disaster, confrontation, disagreement, disrespect, abuse, and just plain meanness that gets reported? Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Quest for Light*, “The problems of the world will never end and have never ended. No man in this world can say that he has no problems in life.”

The human mind perceives itself as being separate from God. And it is that sense of separation that results in the mind becoming attached to the senses and drawn out into the world of experiences in search of happiness or satisfaction. We use the mind to try to understand the nature of the universe, but we fail to understand the very nature of that

mind. We try to study the mind with the mind – a losing proposition. The mind searches for happiness, but gets lost in this realm of duality. Duality is intrinsic to the physical creation in which we live; everything has an opposite. The gnostic writer of the Gospel of Philip is quoted in *The Treasury of Mystic Terms*, Vol. V, as saying:

*Light and darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable. Because of this, neither are the good good, nor the evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death. For this reason, each one will dissolve into its immediate source. But those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal.*

The Supreme Being who is “exalted above the world” knows exactly what he is doing. The apparent suffering of this age has a divine purpose. Mystics say that, in reality, this is all an illusion. Nothing lasts, whether pleasure or pain. Eventually it’s all just a memory, no longer “real.” Mystics say that the suffering we experience in the physical world during this *kaliyug* has a positive aspect. Because the suffering is so intense, souls are more willing to accept the guidance of the saints and Masters who incarnate in this world with the mission of returning us to God. These Masters tell us that the spiritual purpose of human life is to reunite with the One, return to our origin – for it is only through the human form that the soul can find the path that leads back to God. We could say that this is even the purpose of *kaliyug*, this dark age, for without the suffering, souls would be content to remain in the creation and not think about how they are actually part and parcel of the Creator. They wouldn’t think about the light. According to the same volume of *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, it says:

*Even amid the sufferings and vicissitudes of physical existence, most souls accept their lot and cling tenaciously to physical life.*



*However, when the pain of separation becomes too much, then their impetus and desire to go back to him are sharpened. It is the darkness which makes a soul appreciate the light.*

So here in this age of darkness, we have been given the Light and the Sound, the keys that will unlock this prison we find ourselves in. We find that living a life with the goal of leaving this world can be challenging, when we're in the midst of this dark age. But once we meet a Master we have nothing to fear. There is no challenge we cannot overcome as long as we do our meditation and never, ever, ever give up! That's what mystics have told us for centuries. Chola Mela, a thirteenth-century saint, says:

*You've built mountains of misdeeds,  
but happiness will be yours  
in this age of darkness  
if you repeat the Name.*

*Many Voices, One Song*

In this dark age, Masters don't even ask us to succeed but only to make the effort. We need not attach ourselves to the results, only the effort. The results come from him; the effort itself can be our reward. Remember, the Masters tell us that no meditation, no matter how poor it seems, is ever wasted. We have no idea what our meditation is doing. We have no idea what's happening when we try to keep our mind in simran. But it must be important to the Master, or he wouldn't ask us to do it. It doesn't matter if we sit in the darkness or see light; remember, the darkness makes us appreciate the light. It doesn't matter whether we hear the Sound or just sit in silence. Eventually, when we learn to enjoy our practice of meditation – when we “learn to

love repeating the Name” – our perceptions of this material realm will begin to change. Namdev says in *Many Voices, One Song*:

*If you learn to love repeating the Name,  
the web of illusion will be torn away,  
the ocean of the world will evaporate....  
God has given me his promise, says Namdev,  
no other method is needed.*

In this age of darkness, we have the precious opportunity to focus on the light and find lasting happiness and bliss.



*Love is not premeditated. It is spontaneous. It bursts up  
in extraordinary ways. There is nothing of mathematical  
certainty in love. Love is not thrust upon us from without.  
It is born within. Love is a rare commodity. It knows of no  
bargain and is free from the limitations of time, space  
and circumstances.*

Khwaja Chishti, as quoted in *Sheikh Farid*

# Doing What Comes Naturally

Laws of nature govern this physical universe. The sun rises and sets, the tides ebb and flow, the earth emits a gravitational pull whereby if you throw a ball up in the air, it falls down. Leaves drop from trees at a certain time of year, and during another season new leaves unfurl, seeds sprout, and buds give way to flowers. These natural laws are unstoppable.

A magnetic field illustrates another natural law. A magnet's nature is to pull certain materials to itself, and objects made of those materials can't help but be pulled. This describes exactly the relationship between the Shabd and the soul, which are of the same divine essence. Maharaj Sawan Singh writes in *Spiritual Gems*, "The current acts like a magnet on the spirit. It attracts the spirit to itself, and if the spirit were not covered by the rust of mind and matter, it would go up like a shot."

Sant Mat provides a natural method by which we can remove that rust of mind and matter and reunite our essence – our souls – with our source, the Shabd. The Master teaches us how to meditate on that current, that Shabd, which exerts a pull on the soul that is so powerful that the soul must, eventually, merge with it.

Why does this merging take so long, from our perspective? Nature teaches us that even events that are inevitable don't always happen instantaneously. For example, a river must eventually flow into the sea. But it may be so filled with sludge, garbage, and dead trees that the water doesn't move – it's stagnant. That's our condition.

The sludge that prevents our soul from being pulled back into the Shabd is made up of our attachments and our karmas, all the actions we've committed over many lifetimes that have forged chains around the soul, binding us to this world.

That sludge, that rust on the magnet, has become familiar to us. The saints call this sludge “mind and matter” – it’s the pull of our attachment to this material world. We’ve grown so used to the sludge that we think that being stagnant is our natural state.

And yet, when we receive initiation from a perfect Master, we become aware of something stirring up the sludge. We feel discontented. We long for a purer, higher state of consciousness than we are used to. It’s as if our souls were sleeping, and the Lord poked us to wake us up:

*There is something in us which is always disturbing us, something within us which always makes us feel that we are lonely in this world. We feel that we are missing something, and that ... is nothing but a natural inclination of the soul towards its Lord. Unless it merges back into him, we can never stop that feeling of missing something.*

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

Hazur says that the soul’s inclination toward its Lord is natural. Something pulled us to this path. Something pulls us to want to hear about the teachings, to see the Master, to keep meditating even if our effort is sloppy and half-hearted. What is it that pulls us, and keeps pulling us? Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, “There is someone who is creating that unrest in you, who is pulling you towards him.”

Similarly, Guru Arjun Dev, quoted in *Die to Live*, says: “The One who has sent you to this creation, he is calling you. He is calling ‘Come with me. Let’s go back to the Father.’”

But we tend to turn away from that call, to resist what is natural and embrace what is artificial. Instead of removing the rust from the

magnet of our souls, we rush out to collect more. Instead of dislodging the sludge from the river, whose nature is to flow to the sea, we pile on more sludge. Part of us wants to merge with that most natural of all forces, the Shabd. But the ego – the part of us that believes it's separate from the Lord, that believes we can be happy in this world – resists the natural inclination of the soul to go back to its source and insists on remaining separate, on hanging on to its identity, its individuality.

And herein lies the perfection of the mystic path. The saints know what human nature is. They understand us. They tell us that we are at root spiritual beings. They give us a glimpse of our true nature, our true home. And they give us tools which, if we use them, can very gradually turn our attention away from the world toward the Shabd that is always pulling us within.

They know that this is a slow process and that there is much we must overcome. They know our struggle is difficult. But they also know that resistance is futile and that union is inevitable. The Great Master explains in *Spiritual Gems*:

*Saints have to deal with human nature. If they ask a person to leave kam at once before initiation, we know he cannot do so. They attach him to Nam. There is something for him to look up to now.... A tiny spark is kindled in him. He gives it some attention. The days are passing. Partly through receiving knocks (sickness, death in the family, demands on purse, shocks to pride, etc.), partly through age, partly through satsang, partly because he has passed through some of his pralabdh karma (fate), and partly through devotion to Nam, his attention is slowly contracting. So, by the time he reaches the end of his days, he is almost ready to go up and grasp Nam.*

Through all these means, we are primed to surrender to the pull of the Shabd by the time we die. This is a natural process that happens slowly, and most important, inevitably. The process is guaranteed to work because the spirit – as Great Master tells us – once freed of mind and matter, goes up like a shot. It's just a matter of time.

Doing our meditation and leading a Sant Mat way of life is how we do our part to remove the rust of mind and matter covering our souls, so that we can become pure enough to be pulled by the magnet of Shabd.

The effects of meditation can be subtle. It changes the attitude of our mind toward this creation. We begin to see through the deception of the world and discern our true condition here. Meditation clarifies for us the purpose of our existence and enables us to fulfil it. Meditation sets our compass, so that we can align ourselves with the natural, irresistible pull of our divine home.

Though we may not think we're making progress, if we do our part, we get signs that we're on the right track. And these signs give us confidence. For example, we might feel upset if we miss our meditation or don't put in our full time – we feel off-kilter, and then we want to do better, to try harder. And we become more sensitive. We may feel bad if we hurt someone's feelings. We find ourselves being kinder, more patient, more tolerant, not so quick to react. And we may gradually find ourselves losing interest in many of the activities and people that pulled at our attention in the past.

This is all a natural process, the result of attending to meditation and following the Sant Mat way of life. The spiritual path is natural, as natural as the unobstructed current of a river flowing to the sea. Remove the obstructions in the river, and the river will flow.



# Like Laundry Day

*You're like an old woman  
washing clothes on the river bank.  
She squats in the mud and beats cloth  
on a rock to get out the stains.  
She doesn't see the sunlight  
dance on the river in sparkling steps.  
She doesn't hear the singing waters  
rushing happily toward their home.  
All she knows is mud, rock and cloth  
and dark spots she can't get clean.  
She's made the magic of the moment  
into a burdensome chore.  
Stop looking at meditation like laundry day.  
Why do you keep wringing the romance  
out of your love affair with the Divine,  
leaving it dull, wrinkled and dry?  
You were not born to squat in the mud.  
You were designed to flow, wild and free.  
You're a radiant drop of the River, my friend,  
that's madly in love with the Sea!  
Dive into the rushing waters of joy.  
The current will wash your spots clean  
and carry you on love's rollicking ride,  
back into the Ocean of Home.  
Original submission by a satsangi*

# Pushing Our Boundaries

If we wish to open our inner eye, we will need to push our boundaries. We will need to go beyond what is familiar – to go beyond what we are comfortable with and what we think we know.

The first step is to become aware of these boundaries and to begin questioning them. There's an old British movie, called "Alfie," in which the main character asks the question, "Is this all there is?" A lot of us have asked this question. It is the nature of the mind to keep us trapped here. First we are attracted to so many people, places, and things. We enjoy some of them for a while, but then we become disenchanted, bored, and dissatisfied. And when that happens we may keep searching for new experiences that bring fun and thrills, perhaps a sense of happiness. But over time we still remain dissatisfied and feel empty. Nothing in this world creates permanent happiness. Nothing belongs to us. Everything is temporary. So rather than waste so much time getting consumed by all these temporary things in this world, we need to come to grips with this reality. Nothing lasts. We – along with our families, friends, and possessions – will all disappear over time.

A Sufi saint gives us some perspective on living in the world. He says:

*The deeper your involvement here, the harsher your pain and suffering. Donkeys with colorful ornaments or loud bells are groomed for heavier loads.*

Shaikh Abu Saeed Abil-Kheir, *Nobody, Son of Nobody*,  
translated by Vraje Abramian

So, like the donkey, we might have the colorful trappings of the world, but all of these things weigh us down and bring suffering



rather than peace. The world and its trappings take us deeper into darkness and illusion. Spirituality, on the other hand frees us and takes us toward the light of the Lord.

When we finally realize and accept this, then we should tread lightly in this world. We should treat the world as we would a beautiful rose. Roses are fragrant and pretty. If we came across a rose garden and saw an especially beautiful rose, we might lean over and smell it and admire its beauty and the colour of the petals. But we would never wrap our hand around the stem and pull it to us, as all the thorns would cut our hand and leave us bleeding. And if bees were flitting around the roses, we would not get too close for fear of being stung. That is like the world. We can enjoy the beauty and fragrance of it but not grab it. And when the rose fades, and the petals drop off, we see that it is gone. We are not sad, because we enjoyed the rose for a little while, and it gave us pleasure before it died. And this is just what happens in our lives – the world slips away from us, or putting it more positively: Focusing on the Lord loosens our attachments here and allows us to slip away from the world. With the Lord's grace, he grants us our freedom and salvation from the world. We are no longer slaves here. We are becoming enlightened souls preparing to go home.

However, this enlightenment seldom comes to us quickly or easily. As we begin to get a glimmer that this world offers little, and we push our boundaries to be open to the possibility of a much greater destiny of returning home to the Lord, often we are initially elated. Yet, as we plod along, despair may set in. Sometimes people run away and attempt to deal with the pain by distracting and dulling themselves – maybe with alcohol and drugs, extreme sports, dangerous situations.

But the Lord works with us to give us the encouragement and strength to keep going. We are drawn back, again and again, to that fundamental question, "Is this all there is?" Finding the answer

to that question keeps us searching for deeper meaning. That search pushes us beyond our normal boundaries, and we typically question the purpose and meaning of life. We need a search and rescue operation to put us on the path to salvation. And that's what happens when we come into contact with a Master – a true teacher. Without a living Master to guide us we are hopelessly lost and adrift in this world. We cannot reach God under our own steam. The importance of a living mystic cannot be overstated. A mystic is like gold – something to be treasured. The saints explain the teachings in a simple way that we can understand. And they inspire us by their example and the beauty of their teachings.

Sometimes we may think that we can't do what Masters ask of us. Some initiates tell the Master that they want to resign from the path. But he tells us that there are no resignations that can be tendered in Sant Mat. The Master has made a commitment to take us home. And he never falters in his commitment, his seva to the Lord. And if we think about it, why would we want to resign from Sant Mat? It is the only "gift that keeps on giving." We just need to develop inner resilience.

Recently there was an interesting magazine article that explored the topic of resilience based on the research of two prominent scientists. The scientists' premise is that we can do a lot more than we think we can. The research of these two scientists came up with ten tips to enhance our resilience – each of which we can apply to living a spiritual life.

**1. Develop a core set of beliefs that nothing can shake.** This is what happens in Sant Mat. Disciples have a deeply held core set of principles and beliefs based on direct personal experience that over time nothing can shake. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives* Vol. II: "If you have experienced personal knowledge that this is a horse, let

the whole world say it is a cow – you will never believe it.... Personal experience creates depth in our faith.”

**2. Try to find meaning in whatever stressful or traumatic thing has happened.** By following a spiritual path we get real meaning in life. The question “Is this all there is?” is answered for us. This puts things in perspective so we can handle stressful and traumatic situations. We learn to “roll with the punches” of life and live in the will of God.

**3. Try to maintain a positive outlook.** The Master teaches us to “light a candle” rather than curse the darkness. As we relax into Sant Mat, we trust the Master, and our outlook becomes more and more positive. Master continually reinforces the point that having a positive attitude goes hand-in-hand with spiritual progress.

**4. Take cues from someone who is especially resilient.** Masters model resilience for us – whether it is their ability to go through illness without losing balance or by their lifelong commitment to serving the sangat. By tuning in to their example we gain strength. We are always influenced by the company we keep; and when we remember the Master, we can become like him.

**5. Don’t run from things that scare you. Face them.** The Master tells us we have nothing to fear. They teach us clear thinking which helps us to be fearless. And knowing that he is there for us helps us to be brave and more steadfast.

**6. Be quick to reach out for support when things go haywire.** We do this every day with our meditation and our way of life. Simran is always available to us. And by attending satsang we are part of a support group of like-minded people all seeking to move upwards.

**7. Learn new things as often as you can.** The Master urges us not to be locked into lifeless concepts but instead to have our own

direct experiences, to delve deeply within ourselves and broaden our consciousness. We have a lot to learn, and he is there to guide us.

**8. Find an exercise regime you'll stick to.** Our spiritual exercise is meditation. We stick with it day in, day out, year in, year out. We get to the point that we feel we can't live without meditation – even if there are no visible results. Meditation becomes the most precious part of our lives.

**9. Don't beat yourself up or dwell on the past.** The Masters tell us this all the time. Don't get bogged down here. When we are having a tough time, don't get obsessed with it. Go beyond it. Just forget about it and move on to something positive.

**10. Recognize what makes you uniquely strong – and own it.** What makes us strong and resilient is living the Sant Mat way of life. Through meditation we are waking up, we are becoming alive again. We have been given a gift, and it's that gift that is our core strength.

The Master gives us all the tools we need to be resilient on this path, to keep trying. Let's cherish what we've been given and focus on breaking the bonds this world has on us. There really is nothing here worth holding on to. So let's keep pushing our boundaries and open ourselves up to the Creator within us.



*If your desire is to find your soul  
look for it among the People of the Heart  
so you too may become what they are.*

*Sheikh Farid*

# New Ways of Seeing

A key part of the teachings of the saints is the process of changing the disciple's perspective on life, death, destiny, and so many other things. It is a gradual refocusing of the disciple's understanding, attention, and priorities, under the direction of a true Master, who has the highest perspective.

Generally, when we speak of perspective, we are talking about how the relative importance of things changes depending on our viewpoint. We say to someone who is upset, "Take a step back. You're too close to it." Meaning that, if they pull back and get a broader view, a broader perspective, they may see things more clearly.

As disciples, we see through the lens of our ego, a very limited and distorted perspective. While it's impossible to know exactly how or what the saints see, we can get a sense from their writings that their perspective is beyond time, beyond space, beyond the physical or mental worlds.

The most fundamental error in our perception is our sense that we are a separate being and that this being is capable of functioning on its own. The whole foundation of our problem in this existence is that we think we're separate from the Lord and independent of him. We look around and see many individuals, seemingly in control of their bodies, and minds and lives. "He is separate from her. And she is separate from those people over there. And I am separate from them all. And I am separate from God." That's our perspective.

The Master's perspective is utterly different. He tells us that, in fact, we are not separate from the Lord and never have been. The core of our being, our soul, is identical in its essence to the Lord's.

It's who we really are – a part of God. We are not separate from God because nothing can be separate from God. We are part of God, just like everything else is part of God.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, “The concept that we have of ourselves should be the same as our concept of the Lord.” But it's not. Our mind creates the illusion of separateness.

Through meditation the Master teaches us how to gradually change our perspective and disentangle the soul from the mind and body, so it stands free and pure.

And how do we perceive other people? We tend to divide people into neat categories: educated/uneducated, Indian/Western, satsangi/non satsangi, American/Russian/Chinese, friend/enemy. But Masters don't differentiate between people as we do. They don't identify others by external labels. They see that we are all children of the same Father and that the Lord is in everyone, whether a person is a satsangi or not. Being a satsangi means only that we have a spiritual practice to focus on – not that we are different from or better than others. So how do the saints tell us to see other people? Rumi, as quoted in *Legacy of Love*, says:

*The current of love from the one God is flowing through the entire universe. What do you think when you look at the face of a man? Look at him carefully. He is not a man but a current of love, the essence of God, which permeates him.*

So much misunderstanding, strife, and unhappiness would be avoided if we saw each other in this way. We are all soul; we are all

particles of God; we are all one; we are all love. But we don't realize it because we cannot see the reality with these physical eyes.

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

*We are so much involved in this maya, in this illusion, that we hardly know what reality is. Things which are not real, we want them; that which is real – we don't know what is real. We love those who have no reality, and he who has reality – the Lord – we are not even conscious of him. Only he's eternal, only he exists – nothing else exists in this creation ... which has to perish.*

Hazur's definition of what is real is something that doesn't change or die. We think we're real because we can kick a ball or pick up a book or drive a car. We can move around in the physical world and manipulate it, and it seems solid and real from our perspective.

But the saints say that all these physical objects are temporary. From the saints' perspective, they are no more real than a patch of mist or a bubble on a stream that forms and then vanishes a few seconds later. They know a higher reality that is permanent, eternal, and unchanging, a reality that had no beginning and will never end. And they urge us to close our eyes to the temporary and open them to the eternal.

Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I: "When you wake up from a dream, then only you realize that there was actually no reality at all. It was just a dream." He knows we have to live in this unreal world, this bubble existence. So he advises us to keep the saints' perspective in mind as we go through our karmas, remember how temporary this all is, and work to uncover the reality that lies hidden from our view but is always so close.

And what perspective do disciples have towards their meditation? In our lives in this realm, we get used to seeing a link between efforts and results. We plant a garden and harvest the vegetables when they're ripe. We study to be an engineer and obtain a degree. We mix some ingredients together, bake them, and out of the oven comes a cake.

Our meditation is different. The Master tells us clearly, constantly, insistently, that our part is to make the effort but that all results are in his hands. So this is a completely different set of rules from what we're used to. And we find it hard to accept. We work at our meditation and can't help thinking, as a disciple used to jokingly say, "Where's my bliss?" We want something in return for our work.

It's natural, but completely inappropriate on a spiritual path. Annie Besant writes in the book *The Three Paths and Dharma*:

*As our hearts are hard and selfish even in religion itself, we have the subtlest forms of selfishness, we ruin the pure gold with the dross; ... and convert that sacred place to a market where buying and selling goes on, so much worship for so much joy. Where there is no free giving there is no place for God.*

Our perspective might be: "I should get something in return for my efforts!" The saints and mystics tell us that, "Where there is no free giving, there is no place for God."

A disciple's life is a pendulum that swings back and forth between the perspective of life and the world that we carry inside our head and the perspective the Master lays before us, again and again, to explain why we need to do what he's asking us to do. In satsang or when reading spiritual literature or listening to CDs of the Master, his



words pull us up so we can see from a higher perspective. Then we go to work or to have our car repaired or to the beach, and our worldly perspective floods back in. Which perspective will win out?

The Master's perspective will eventually win. We assist that process by doing our meditation, trying to still the mind and contact the Holy Spirit within. But ultimately, his power and grace will dissolve, melt, and wash away our limited mental perspective and replace it with his. That's the beauty, the wonder, the miracle of a true Master.



# Swimming with the Waves

The poet Hafiz writes:

*When I became a lover,  
I thought I would secure the pearl  
that was my aim.  
I did not know how immense  
the waves of the ocean were.*

Hafiz, as quoted in *Sultan Bahu*

Although Hafiz assures us that the treasure is within, the ocean or the waves of the mind prevent us from securing this pearl there. For the devotee, navigating the waves of the ocean to secure this treasure is life's challenge.

The Sant Mat way of life – the vegetarian diet, abstinence from drugs and alcohol, the moral code, and daily meditation – works directly to still the waves of the mind. In place of devotional rituals, this way of life and the vows to which we commit ourselves provide the means by which we achieve the concentration necessary to seek the pearl within.

Guru bhakti, love and devotion for the Master, is the heart of the path. The relationship with the Master, though, is not intended to meet our emotional needs or the needs of our mind. It is not man-worship. The purpose of Guru bhakti is entirely spiritual: the true Master, the true Guru, is to be sought within in the form of the Shabd, not outside in the form of a man or a woman. The relationship with our Master is unique and inward, unlike any worldly love affair.

Although we are advised not to focus on the outcome of our practice, we cannot help but be driven by a desire to secure the pearl within. But what does the Master tell us is the objective of our devotion? Saints emphasize that meditation is to open our inner eye, making self-realization possible. Self-realization makes us better able to face our life and our destiny, while accepting that we cannot change our circumstances. Meditation is the way to go home. We cannot get there by imagination, wishful thinking, demanding, or weeping.

The separation we experience while riding the waves of the mind is the complement to love and devotion. When we are not experiencing love and devotion we are experiencing separation. The pain of separation is a gift, reminding us of what we are missing. Maharaj Charan Singh says that the pain of restlessness that rankles in the heart cannot stop because the soul and the Lord live in the same house, and they must eventually meet. Our mind programs us to run away from pain and toward pleasure. The Master uses this natural tendency to the soul's advantage. He instructs us to turn away from our worldly pain and turn toward that inner pleasure that is permanent and transformative. This is the dance of love and devotion.

Yet why do we have so much trouble loving God, loving ourselves, and loving one another? It would seem that love should be the simplest and most universal of human experiences. Maybe what we think of as love really is not. And maybe love is right before our eyes, and we fail to recognize it. In spite of the fact that we may believe that God is love, and it is from this love that all his other qualities spring forth, cold logic does not aid us in our quest for love. We must experience love and devotion to go beyond logic and reach our inner potential.

So what comes from our love and devotion for the Lord? It allows us to merge and become one. To merge we need full concentration,

brought about through deeper and deeper simran, so that all our other faculties are absorbed and focused. Simran – the remembrance of the Lord’s name while sitting, standing, coming and going – brings about our total surrender to him. Without the annihilation of the ego through concentrated devotion, the mind will continue to drift and turn outward. But the destruction of “I-ness,” which is the fruit of devotion, brings freedom from birth and death by severing our attachment to this world permanently.

Paraphrasing Shakespeare, Maharaj Jagat Singh says in *Science of the Soul* that, “The path of true love is never smooth.” He continues:

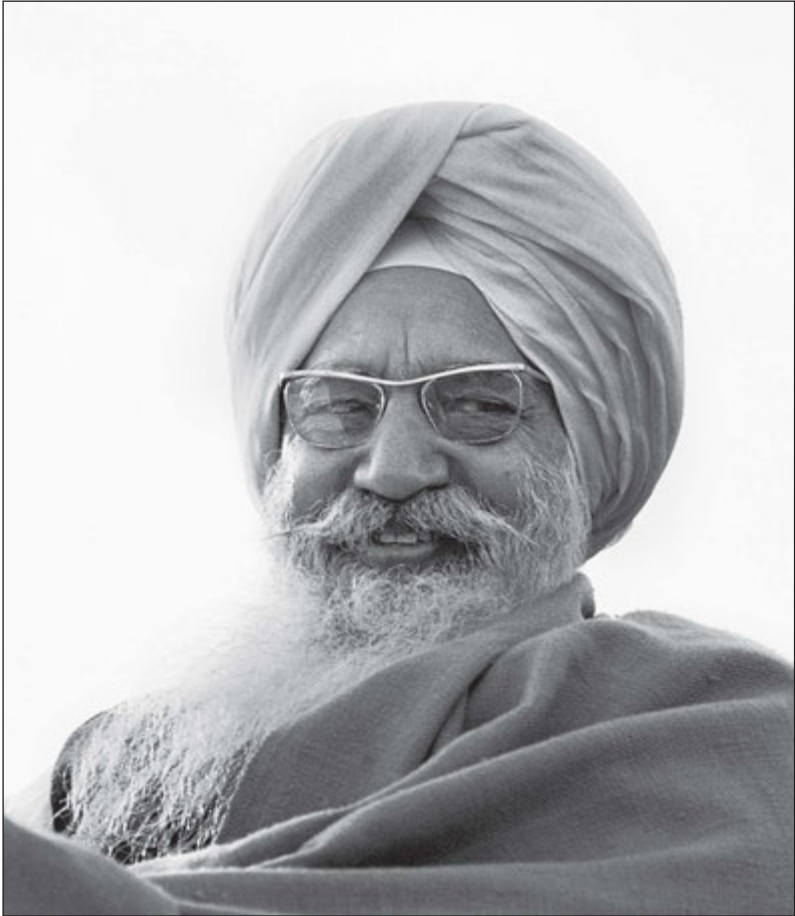
*The truer the love, the rougher the road. This is also true in the case of love for the Lord. The more you love him, the more difficulties and trials he puts in your way. Gold, to be pure, must be put in the fire.*

We all heave a collective sigh when we read these words of the Master. Because of our ego, experiencing the love and contentment we seek is a struggle. The ego permeates all our relationships and endeavours.

Hazur says in *Legacy of Love*:

*There can be no ego before a person who you love because love creates that humility in us. We try to become another being, we try to lose our own identity, our individuality and we try to become another being. That is love. So, automatically we are filled with humility.*

What distinguishes the Master from us is that he emanates the Father’s love all the time, thereby providing us with one of the few direct experiences we have of love in this world. He changes us, if only



in the moment, because in his physical presence we are humbled. We get a break from our minds, from our personalities. Yet the Master does not encourage adulation of his outer self. He turns our attention instead to the practice by which we will gain direct experience of the divine. This is the Master's service to his own Master – to be a living example of what it is possible for his disciples to become in this life.

The Master's example gives us a glimpse into the power and nature of love. Romantic love teaches us that love is spontaneous and may develop in lovers without their understanding of how it came to pass. This, too, is an aspect of spiritual love and reminds us that we cannot make love happen. Love is a gift that may come to us even when we are not seeking it.

Hazur says in *Legacy of Love*:

*Love means that which lasts forever. It doesn't diminish. It always grows and grows and grows and grows. That is not love that today we feel, and tomorrow we feel "I don't love them anymore." If love comes, it never goes. If it goes, it is not love.*

We have all experienced "love" that did not last. The Masters understand the fickleness of the mind. So they put a high value on service as a school of love. Hazur continues in *Legacy of Love*: "It is through love, forgiveness, and the serving of humanity that one's life becomes a single vision of the sublime beauty of God."

Love, like forgiveness and seva, is an action; it is both a practice and a state of mind. If we have attempted to forgive or to serve another we know how impossible it is without love. Like the rising and the falling of the waves, we forgive one moment and the next we remember the injustice perpetrated against us or against another, and we are back in the cycle. We serve one moment and the next we are computing what we are owed for our gesture of kindness. So love has to inform all that we do so that we can be released from all these calculations. We have to forget ourselves in this service. Through love and service we will become god-like – with Master's example and assistance within.

As love grows in us, we learn to swim along with the waves of the mind and life's circumstances. If we have ever gone for a swim in the

ocean, we know that our strokes and our kicks can take us only so far. In a strong current we have to relax and literally go with the flow. Similarly, we can learn to float on the tides of love if we let go of our resistance and our dependence upon our own efforts and cling instead to the Master for support. We do this through daily meditation, through simran and listening to the Sound within. Hazur reminds us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*We have to swim along with the waves; we cannot swim across the waves. So we have to accept the facts of life as they come. The very fact that we have to go along with the waves automatically makes us happy – there is no other way.*



*Our every action should reflect the teachings and build that holy atmosphere in which we attend to meditation, and become receptive to his bounty and grace. To this end, we must adjust our entire life, for success requires a complete transformation of the disciple. We should keep a balance, and meet our worldly duties and responsibilities, but our spiritual duty to the Master is foremost.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

# Be Bold Enough to Struggle

There is a Chinese proverb that says, “If you get up one more time than you fall, you will make it through.” If we keep getting up whenever we fall, it is certain that we will reach our destination. Masters remind us that there really are no failures on this path, but, they urge us to never give up our efforts. In the Bible it says: “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

When we first come to the path, we are filled with zeal and determination. The challenge is to maintain that enthusiasm and to persist in our efforts despite the fact that meditation can be difficult. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Die to Live*:

*I don't think there is anything more difficult than meditation. Meditation is the most difficult. It looks simple, and yet it is so difficult to attend to it. It's easy to understand Sant Mat because the whole philosophy is very simple, but when we put it into practice, many obstacles come in the way. To live Sant Mat, to live the teachings, means a constant struggle with the mind.*

In truth, our struggle to overcome the domination of our mind is the only real struggle that we face. There is no end to our desires, and we know how easy it is to be dominated by them. The mind is a formidable opponent. Its tendency is to run downward and outward. In so doing, it attaches us to this creation, and then these chains of attachment hold us captive. Because of our attachment to the world, we have developed the insidious habit of compulsively thinking about it throughout the day. Then when our time to sit in meditation arrives,



we find ourselves faced with a considerable struggle to still the mind and make it one-pointed at the eye centre. But Masters tell us that nothing of this external world will ever give us permanent satisfaction. They encourage us to let go of our worldly thoughts at the time of meditation, and they tell us that if we do this we lose nothing, we only gain. In *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh says:

*When you go to sleep, you forget all worldly activities. What do you then lose? If nothing goes wrong for you then, why during bhajan and simran do you indulge in worldly thoughts? What will go wrong if you do not recall worldly affairs during meditation?*

Letting go also means not having expectations of “results” from our meditation. A desire for instant results makes meditation practice very difficult, and such a desire is contrary to the whole spirit of meditation, which involves simply being receptive to whatever he gives us – without analyzing and without expectation. In the material world, we become accustomed to experiencing satisfaction as a result of our efforts. For example, when we go to work and perform our job according to the boss’s instructions, we expect to receive a paycheck for the tasks we perform. However, meditation is an entirely different process from our worldly work. One reason that we do not necessarily receive visible inner experiences has to do with our karmas – the results of our past actions. In this context, Hazur says in *Die to Live*:

*Everybody has an individual load of karma, and that is why no time limit can be fixed for how long it will take. If the load of karma is the same for everybody, then you can fix a time limit that “You can clear this much load in this length of time.” But*

*you can't say how much time it will take you to reach that level of consciousness because everybody has a different load of karmas.*

*And then the length of time depends upon how much karma you burn. The time it takes to burn a big heap of rubbish depends upon whether it is wet or dry, whether, while you are burning it, the rain is falling. So to burn that heap of rubbish depends upon many things....*

*It depends upon how much effort he is putting forth, how much the grace of the Lord is there, and the type of environment he has been brought up in and he is living in. There are so many factors to burning that load of karma. Suppose he has even a small load but doesn't attend to his meditation, then how would he burn it? If he is putting in all his effort to attend to meditation but his environment is such that his mind is not there in meditation, or if he has such worldly activities that he can hardly snatch any time for meditation or he's hardly in a mood to meditate, or if he is a victim of certain weaknesses which he can't get rid of, then how can he burn that karma?*

Master doesn't take away our suffering or our karmas. But, as a true friend, he remains with us and gives us support, comfort and encouragement. And that makes all the difference.

In supporting and encouraging us, Masters urge us to be bold enough to struggle and they assure us that we are always making progress. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

*When he's bold enough to walk, there's a chance of him falling also. We should take all these failures as our pillars of strength, provided we get up and walk again. If we don't get up again, that is different. We are full of weaknesses, so pitfalls are there.*

*But we should always be steady on the path. Our destination should always be before us, and we should try to get up again, and again walk. Ultimately we succeed. So there's no failure at all.*

Our job as disciples is to never lose heart, to be bold enough to struggle, to get up each time we fall. That kind of persistence is all that is required of us. Then he will do the rest.



*Open the window of your heart  
and look at the Beloved's face.  
Love's task is to create that window  
so His Beauty may illumine the heart.  
It is in your power, my friend,  
to gaze constantly at the Beloved's face.  
Make a way to the core of yourself  
and banish all other impressions.*

Rumi, *Rumi's Little Life Book*,  
translated by M. Mafi and A. Kolin

# Watching My Roommate

Have you ever had the experience of living with an annoying and needy person, someone who is insecure and critical, never pleased with anything in life, constantly demanding attention and reassurance? The contemporary spiritual author Michael Singer, in his book *The Untethered Soul*, says we all live with such a “roommate,” but we don’t realize it because this roommate is inside of us – it is our mind, our constant inner chitter-chatterer. We identify with this mind, not with the soul consciousness that we really are.

Maharaj Charan Singh says, in describing the mind, that it is dissatisfied because it constantly “tries to find happiness in these outside material things, in this matter composed of five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether.” He goes on to say in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*Now we hardly differentiate between the mind and the soul, so we think that whatever our mind wants, our soul probably wants it. But then a time comes when we feel the soul never wanted it. It was something else that was wanting it. Otherwise, what the soul wants, it wants that always and it never wavers. The soul never feels frustrated with what it wants; but the mind does sometimes feel frustrated with what it wants. The soul is happy when it gets what it wants. It is always happy there and it never likes to change. The mind always wants change and it always shifts from one thing to another.*

Michael Singer asks us to try to differentiate between our soul, our real consciousness, and our mind, this roommate we think is our real self. He asks us to imagine what it would be like if our mind were made physical, and we actually had to live with such a person. Imagine living with someone as crazy, obsessive, insecure, melodramatic and nasty as our mind really is. We would hate him, would refuse to put up with him, and would do everything possible to get rid of him.

But do we show this obnoxious creature, the mind, the door? Do we do everything possible to prevent this character from taking over our life? No! We don't because we're afraid to, because we think he's helpful, we think he is the one taking care of our problems – defending us and caring for us. We are so delusional! Does this roommate solve our problems? Does he bring happiness and peace to our lives? Even when we start to recognize that this crazy creature is not who we are, is not who we want to be, we find it very hard to quiet him down and to stop identifying with him.

We can't actually get rid of our roommate, our mind – as long as we are in this life, we have to live with him. But we can change him from a roommate to a housemate only, we can choose to shut ourselves in our room and ask him to stay outside occasionally. And we can stop identifying with him.

If we can accept on a theoretical level that this life is not real, that it is a play, a movie, then we can attend the movie with our Master, watching our housemate play his roles. We are soul consciousness, the one who is watching the movie of life and listening to the dialogue. We can watch as our housemate plays the role of the star of the movie, falling in love, having adventures, defying enemies; or as he acts as the director, responsible for controlling what happens and how it happens. We can watch as he constantly participates in the movie of life as a critic, keeping up a running commentary on what

was done, analyzing whether it should have been done this way or shouldn't have been done that way.

As the audience, all we have to do is to sit and watch and enjoy the movie along with our Master. Whatever happens in the movie, we can enjoy. We may laugh and cry along with the characters, but we don't enjoy the movie less because it is sad, or because someone's love is spurned, or someone gets murdered. If the roles are badly played, we don't care. We would enjoy this movie of life more if we didn't identify with our housemate, if we could disassociate ourselves from him and realize more and more deeply that we are soul.

We learn to do this in meditation. In order to disassociate ourselves from our housemate, we have to shut ourselves in our room daily and practice being alone with our Master, paying attention to him rather than our housemate, sitting in stillness, not talking or listening to our housemate, but talking to our Master and listening to his sweet voice. Doing this we build our relationship with our Master, we become intimate with him, we start to identify with him. We decrease our identity with our housemate and stop listening to him and wanting to make his life perfect.

When we leave our room, we don't become our housemate, we merely watch him play the role he has to play. We take our Master with us and take refuge in him, relying on him to protect and care for us. We realize that our housemate can never take care of us. We don't try to stop our housemate from playing his role. Most of the time, we let him do what he wants to do. We watch and listen to him interacting with his fellow characters, but always with the Master with us and always non-judgmentally. We realize that God doesn't care whether our housemate messes up his life or straightens it out. He's just playing the role he has to play. And when we do this, a miracle happens. We start living with our Master, talking to him

throughout the day, watching and enjoying our lives. We experience the bliss of detaching ourselves from our mind. We stop constantly judging ourselves and others. We live in mindfulness and love. We enjoy being still, listening to the music of the Shabd.

As we do this, we find that our housemate also starts to change. He also starts to fall in love with the Master. As he sees the peace he can be associated with, he also wants to live in that peace. As he comes in contact with the Shabd, he wants constant association with the Shabd. And he realizes he can get this only if he remains still. He starts to want to be subdued; he turns from a noxious irritation to a friend. As Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*We have to subdue our mind before we can drive the ego from us. As I have said so many times, the mind is fond of pleasures. Unless we give our mind better pleasures than the pleasures of the senses, the mind never leaves the desire and craving for possessions in this world. Therefore, saints always advise us to withdraw our mind by simran, by dhyān, back to the eye centre and to attach it to that sound, to see that light. When we are attached to that, we are automatically detached from the senses, the desires and cravings for possessions.*

Imagine what life would be like if we could attain this detachment, if we could stop being critics. We would feel constant love and appreciation for every person we encounter, in every situation we find ourselves in. As Michael Singer says in *The Untethered Soul*:

*What if it is really true that God is not judging? What if God is loving? We all know that true love doesn't judge. Love sees nothing but beauty.... The reality is that God's way is love, and*

*you can see this for yourself. If, for even one moment, you can look at someone with the eyes of true love, you'll know those eyes are not yours. Your eyes could never look with that amount of love.... Those are the eyes of God looking down through you.... Instead of being unwilling to lift your eyes to the Divine because of what you've said or done, you'll see the Divine as a place of unconditional refuge.*

When we start looking through the eyes of love rather than judgment, when we see the movie as a movie, and the reality as reality, we become happy. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

*If this is all a play, then what is the reality? What is my role in that reality? It is actually the Lord preparing us from within to hold on to something that is real. He is preparing us, after making us realize the unworthiness of all this – our surroundings, our environment. It is the Lord preparing us to be one with the reality. Then this vacuum automatically goes. Then that bliss and peace and happiness fill us. Then we, without any rhyme or reason, remain happy. We then have a sense of belonging to someone and someone belonging to us. And then automatically we become happy.*





# What Works, What Doesn't

My favourite diet was one that claimed that all I needed to do was to eat foods that “sang” to me. Unfortunately, I did. An ice cream sundae always has and always will sing to me. Going with my instincts, I gained five pounds in a week. A lifetime of dieting has resulted in a new plan. I will eat what I like best from many different diets. The ones with portion controls allow you to eat anything you want. The high-protein diets permit great quantities of butterfat. The low-carb diets encourage nuts and olive oil. Apparently fresh fruit can act as an appetite suppressant. It should come as no surprise that by focusing only on what we like and rejecting what is difficult, demanding or sacrificial, we will be gaining weight at a pretty fast rate. And we will be deceiving ourselves.

While this might be glaringly obvious when it comes to weight control, it is surprising how many followers of spirituality use this same thinking when it comes to spiritual discipline. We think that we can pick and choose whatever we find attractive at the moment, and ignore anything that is difficult, demanding or sacrificial. We can be enormously appreciative of a moving story of a Radha Soami master or an eloquent poem by Rumi but then ignore what the saints say about how essential it is to meditate and attend satsang. The fact is that living a spiritual life requires discipline and sacrifice.

We cannot claim to love science, and yet choose not to employ the scientific method. The same would be true if we wanted to become a musician – we would need to practice incessantly and we can fantasize all we want about becoming a great athlete, but unless we're willing to work out regularly, we will not succeed.

What is true in the material world also applies to our spiritual lives. Sant Mat has no dogmas, creeds or rituals. But this doesn't mean that there aren't real consequences to the priorities and goals we focus on and how those priorities are reflected in our actions. The decisions we make about what is important and our beliefs about what is essential in our daily lives, make a difference in our outlook, our sense of perspective, and even in our capacity to sense the Master's presence.

While we are naturally attracted to a God of love, mercy and grace – and as we depend completely on the Master's compassion, forgiveness, and kindness – the path of the saints is also very demanding. We are told to do two and one half hours of meditation every day. We are asked to do as much simran as we can at other times. And we are constantly being offered opportunities to practise surrendering our own will and accepting the Lord's. Every day and every moment, we are given the choice of turning in the direction of the world or turning in the direction of the Lord. As in any endeavour, as we continually refocus our lives, our attention, and our willingness to serve, we may discover a new strength. With better choices we might discover what we'd been looking for all along: depth, courage, and blessings.



# Near and Dear

In a world that often breaks our hearts with hatred, violence, and sadness, the mystics tell us that at the very core of life lies a love that is so powerful that as the Bible says, “God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” Love is a vast subject. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Legacy of Love*, “In spite of being away – you have all been very near and dear to me.” A Master can communicate a great deal in just a few words.

We assume that we know what the word “near” means – close by, standing next to. But when a Master says that he is near to every initiate he is describing a mysterious and profound link. The Masters remind us that meditation is the gradual realization that God is always with us. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*Master takes charge of us right from birth ... we become conscious that we are being taken care of only when we see the Master within – then we know that we are being helped.... Once the Master initiates a person, he never leaves that disciple.*

Someone asks Hazur, “I know that you are my Master, but you seem so far away from me in my day-to-day life.” He replies:

*Brother, every satsangi has a personal relationship with his own Master, and he's never far away from his Master. Neither is the Master away from his disciple. We should never feel our Master is somewhere at a far distance. He is the one nearest to us. He's always with us....*

*We are never left alone. We are not orphaned. There's somebody to guide us, somebody to lead us, somebody to pull us forward, somebody to push us forward within.*

The closeness of this relationship between the Master and the disciple is described in detail by Baba Jaimal Singh in *Spiritual Letters*:

*In his Shabd-dhun form, he is ever present in each hair, in each and every part of the body. Inside and outside, he is always with us. The Satguru is ever present within us.... Even now he is with us – he is bestowing his gracious mercy upon us all the time.*

If this nearness is hard to fathom, then how “dear” we are to the Master is an even greater challenge. “You have all been very near and dear to me.” Every initiate? Even the distracted, the unfocused, the arrogant, the insecure, and the unappreciative, those of us who struggle with meditation? Hazur describes the love of the Master for every initiate in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*The Master is never displeased with any soul.... We can only displease a person when we do something which he never expected. When he knows how helpless we are, what victims we are of our mind, that at every step we are full of failures, it is nothing new for him to know about us; he already knows us. We are all imperfect. That is why we are here.*

We might ask, “How can you love me when I feel so lost?” The Master’s answer to that question can be found in an unpublished letter that Hazur wrote to one of his disciples.

*Please do not lose heart. Never feel for a moment that you are being neglected or that you have no one looking after you. The Lord and the Master both are always by your side giving whatever help is possible. Sometimes certain karmas are quite heavy and these have to be gone through by some physical or mental suffering. Of this be assured, that whatever you are going through, you are being prepared to enter into the Lord's kingdom and stand in his presence. A disciple passing through the fire of suffering comes out pure gold.*

*Never misunderstand the Master. He never blames anyone, never hurts anyone's feelings. He knows very well that all human beings are weak and suffering greatly in this life. The suffering of the disciple is the suffering of the Master.*

*Please face life with strength and faith in the Lord. Times here keep changing. Everyone lives on hope. The Lord knows very well what you are passing through. Do your best and leave the rest to his will. Pray to the Lord for his grace.*

The Masters describe a real relationship, a lasting relationship, and the only one that ultimately matters. Hazur says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, "We belong only to him." And the astonishing thing is that we don't have to earn the approval of our beloved or achieve his acceptance. The Masters urge us simply to give our attention to what is positive; and the most positive aspect of a disciple's life is our relationship with the Master.

For whatever mysterious, unfathomable reason, every initiate is the beloved child of the Master. He is close by. We are dear to him. And yet as lovely and as comforting as those words might be, they are mere words and can never satisfy us.

In order to move closer to this love, we need three things. First, we have to understand that this is an inner path. Second, we have to act. And third, we need to trust our Master.

First, this is an inner path. The reality of this path can only be understood within ourselves, at a higher level of consciousness than this material world of delusion. The Masters compare the invitation that the saints extend to their disciples to go within to a situation where, if you found your friend standing in the scorching sun, you would naturally invite your friend into the shade. The saints invite us into the shade of Nam. For those of us who live in more northern climates, the metaphor can easily be re-interpreted. We are standing out in a blizzard. The wind chill is below freezing. The snowplow has just buried our car, again. Then the saints invite us inside to a warm fire, and a cup of hot chocolate.

We have to go inside to partake of the wealth that is being offered to us. As Baba Jaimal Singh explains to Maharaj Sawan Singh in *Spiritual Letters*, “His call is resounding within everyone’s body; He is summoning everyone to his palace, Sach Khand.” This path is within us.

The second requirement is that we accept the mutuality of this relationship. We have been given an active part to play. While we might entertain the pleasant fantasy that the Master will transform us with his grace and mercy, sparing us any necessity for effort or sacrifice, that does not accurately portray our relationship. Hazur was direct about this mutuality. He says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, “We ourselves have to work to make our soul free from the mind and senses. We have to put in effort to do that.”

This invitation to action is an ancient theme in spirituality. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna plays the part of a warrior who doesn’t think he should have to fight. But Krishna says you are here on this earth

to do the work that God has assigned to you. Neither this world, nor the next is for those who are not willing to sacrifice. Be a warrior! Kill your laziness, your self-indulgence, and your arrogance. You must act. This is the war that opens the door of heaven. Do not run from this spiritual battle out of cowardice or fear.

What actions need to be taken? Meditation, simran, following the vows, seva, and attempting to be a good human being are all required. Great Master expands the list in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I:

*We should so mould our lives, that all our actions, namely, seeing, hearing, talking, eating, drinking, reading, writing, working, and meeting with people should ensure our progress.*

The Masters tell us that if we are willing to work with them, everything is possible.

Thirdly, we need to learn to trust our guide, our Master. In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I, Great Master quotes Rumi, who says, “The face of a saint is the answer to every question.” Hazur puts it simply in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

*What more could we want, if we can trust ourselves to the Lord? What more do we want? We think we know more than the Lord? What else could we want – that he will take care of us, he will absolve us from all our planning, all our thinking, that he takes our destiny in his own hands – what more could we want in life? These are the most fortunate people.*

The Master suggests that we let the Lord decide how to move us through the world. Trust means confidence and reliance. Trusting him means that we are willing to receive his help. This trust is meant

to grow, until whatever the Master wants is what we want. Whatever situation he places us in is good enough for us. Whatever personality he gives us, whatever challenges we face, whatever setbacks we encounter, and whatever success we enjoy – nothing distracts us from our relationship with him.

The Master promises that someday we will completely surrender to his will. If we received a letter from our Master saying that we will be going straight to Sach Khand, and a second letter saying that we will return here, surrendering would mean that we would be as happy with the second letter as we would be with the first. This is what trust looks like. No matter what happens, we will be steady and unshakable. The Master tells us that being a satsangi is learning to be who the Lord wants us to be, and that meditation is the opening of the heart to receive the love that he wants to give us.

Someday we will truly know that we are near and dear to the Master. As our attention goes within, as we work like warriors, and as we implicitly trust in our guide, we will be the most fortunate of souls.



*O Bullah, this mystic hint is of great import.  
Those suffused with the longing for his glimpse,  
They come to know the home of the great Hawker [the Lord].  
"The hand of God is over Your hand."*

*Bulleh Shah*



# Book Review



## Concepts & Illusions: A Perspective

BY SABINA OBEROI

PUBLISHER: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS, 2016.

ISBN: 978-81-8466-442-3

## A Wake Up Call: Beyond Concepts & Illusions

BY SABINA OBEROI & BEVERLY CHAPMAN

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*Concepts & Illusions* and *A Wake Up Call* are two groundbreaking books that vary in approach and presentation but offer a common message. Both books shine a light on common misconceptions and illusions that obscure the purity and clarity of the teachings of the Radha Soami mystic masters. Readers are invited to re-examine their own perspectives and re-orient themselves to a closer alignment with those teachings.

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In *Concepts & Illusions* we are plunged into reality head on:

*We have the remarkable ability to create convenient conceptions and twist them into innovative interpretations. We weave wonderful webs of fantasies and fallacies, romanticize the path, misunderstand the teachings, squeeze pointless meanings from the master's words, find excuses to escape from our commitments, and play the blame-game with the karma theory. Thus we totally digress from the reality, and move further and further away from the master's teachings.*

The section on Blissful Delusions clarifies unclear thinking on initiation, the master, darshan, so-called VIPs, speakers as “special,” rites and rituals and other topics.

We often rely on outward devotion, but the path of the masters is an inner, mystical path, a science based on individual experience. *Concepts*

✧ *Illusions* cites the testimony of many mystics and scriptures on this point, such as Guru Nanak's emphatic statement, "Everything is within the home, nothing is outside. He who seeks outside is lost in illusion." Saints urge us "to listen to the sound inside and see the light with our inner eyes," but we find it "easier to take a shortcut and ring bells and light candles outside." The book gives two examples from the history of the Dera for this propensity of ours: "The well opposite the Great Master's kothi (house) was made inaccessible and we were jolted out of our stupor. The well was built with the sole aim of providing water, but we turned it into a well of 'divine nectar,' carrying bottles of 'holy' water home to heal people or transform them into our belief." "Satsang ghar tours were discontinued because we were paying homage to the building. Baba Ji has cautioned that if we continue bowing to the satsang ghar, he would not hesitate to tear the building down." The master does not allow us to dwell in these illusions. He comes "to tear us away from myths, rites, and rituals – to kill them completely, to demolish them and bring our focus back to the simplicity of the teachings."

As to our perception of the master, we are told bluntly, "We envision the master from a narrow perspective thereby limiting his presence and purpose in our lives." For example, we "attach miracles to the master if one of our loved ones is saved in an accident. What about the other who died?" A clear understanding of the teachings and the role of the master reveals that "the master does not guarantee that we will not face death, pain, and other human frailties. As a matter of fact, we are constantly being prepared for this very death we dread so much."

In a section on Mind and Madness the potential to use the great power of the mind to either our benefit or our detriment is explored. "The mind is at the same time strong yet weak, sincere yet deceitful; it can take man to the heights of success and to the depths of destruction." This shows the importance of taking the responsibility to use it rightly. "The way we use this instrument called mind is completely up to us."

Throughout, readers are advised to take the responsibility to go beyond limiting beliefs, beyond the literal nature of words, even those of the master, to a deeper understanding of his teachings by using their

own discrimination, discernment and good judgment founded on and sustained by the practice of meditation.

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In the second book, *A Wake Up Call*, we are told, “Truth is simple. We are not.” The book shows how what seems up can be down, and what we take as true can be just long-held beliefs. Such beliefs can obstruct the disciple’s inner practice and the master’s living teachings. Illusions beset us across all areas of the path from initiation, to the sangat, satsang, seva, darshan, meditation, even to the understanding of the master. Maharaj Charan Singh explains that all mystics bring the same message, truth, and path, but “unfortunately ... the teachings become perverted and overlaid with the conceptions of lesser minds, unable to grasp their ‘real essence.’”

The book is a clear call to “get real.” “Getting real” means to:

*Stop kidding yourself. Get a grip on who you are and your situation ... In spirituality, it ... also means waking up to what actually is real at the deepest and ultimate level. It means doing what we need to do to experience that reality. It means living that reality, becoming that reality. It actually means God-realization.*

So what is a concept and what isn’t? What is real and what is illusion? “Every single thing we think we know about the spiritual path that is beyond our own experience is just a concept.” And, “the only thing we can count on as bedrock reality is what we know through our own experience.” No doubt at our level, concepts are a necessary starting point for basic understanding. The masters therefore use “metaphors, analogies and images” to advance our understanding. The problem is that these may be interpreted too literally or from the partial light of a limited perspective. Or “we adjust the master’s teachings and add a few of our misconceptions, creating illusions that we then live in.”

For example, “In the writings of Sant Mat we find the statement that once initiated, it takes a maximum of four births to achieve permanent liberation.” We may interpret this as, “No need to put any great effort into meditation.” But the present master tells us emphatically that “so long as

we are more interested in this world than in spiritual reality, we will not be liberated.”

How about incarnating as an animal or in an even lower life form?

*Do we really think we've been certified with the "stamp" of initiation and now we are above the law? Do we think that the karmic law applies to everyone else, but not to us? When queried about this so-called guarantee that once initiated we can't and won't take a birth as an animal, the present master responded: "Why not?"*

Here is one illusion that may be particularly hard to give up: "Satsangis are special..." The truth is, "A real satsangi is one who has merged in the shabd, merged in spiritual truth. The rest of us are seeking. We might call ourselves initiates. We might call ourselves seekers. If we're honest and think clearly, we'd hesitate to call ourselves satsangis."

\* \* \*

The present master has been known to say, "Burn the books!" But a reading of these two provocative works will clear the way for a truer understanding of the teachings and an increased emphasis on our real work as disciples of these mystic masters, our meditation. We are urged to understand our objectives and to make choices based on those objectives. We can remain in the "comfort" of concepts and illusions or we can choose to experience the truth. The choice is ours.



