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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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# Pining for My Beloved

*My heart pines for my beloved Friend!  
Some laugh and chat and rejoice  
while others weep and wail and grieve.  
Go and proclaim to the spring in bloom –  
My heart pines for my beloved Friend!  
My washing and bathing have all gone to waste;  
A knot has settled in my Beloved's heart.  
Oh, set fire to this jewellery and adornment –  
My heart pines for my beloved Friend!  
Enemies have driven me mad  
And I am completely engulfed in anguish.  
Beloved, come home that I may have a glimpse of you –  
My heart pines for my beloved Friend!  
O Bullah, my Beloved has come home;  
I have clasped Ranjha close to my heart.  
My grief has vanished beyond the seas –  
My heart pines for my beloved Friend!*

Bulleh Shah  
As included in *Voice of the Heart*



# Becoming Love

In these words the mystic poet Eknath describes the state that we long to achieve:

*Blessed are those who dance through life  
loving God, singing his Name.  
Merciful towards all, they feel  
happiness and sadness as one.  
Fountains of wisdom, love and devotion,  
they've forgotten the senses,  
forgotten 'I' and 'you' as two –  
they live in contentment and certainty.  
They've dropped the baggage  
of intelligence and skill,  
and walk through the world as tourists.  
Awake or asleep, says Eknath,  
they sing the Name,  
always attuned to the One within.*

*Many Voices, One Song*

Any person who's reached that blessed condition that Eknath speaks of will have gained everything out of life that the Lord intends for us. But this state is sublime and no doubt rare.

If one has been at the bedside of someone who is dying, one would probably know that most people have the same kind of concerns when they reach the end of their lives. The questions often asked are: Did I make the best use of my life and live my life fully? Did I love well? Did I learn to forgive and to let go?

These seemingly simple questions lie at the very core of our being. When all is said and done, these are the things that should matter to us – the hallmark of a life well lived. But sadly, for so many it is only when time has run out that they suddenly come to realize that perhaps they should have done things differently; they could have done better.

When we consider these questions, we begin to see how our fears, distractions and attachments have hampered and limited us for most of our lives. How many of us can say that we have really learned what it means to love fully without any attachment? Can we honestly say that we are no longer subject to the obstructions of the mind and have accepted all of life's challenges and changes with wisdom, compassion and grace?

Have we truly experienced the sense of freedom and joy that comes when we leave all our worldly cares behind us, turn to our Master within and allow him to guide us – so that we can reach that sublime state where we, too, become love? When our life comes to an end, will we be able to say: Yes, I have lived my life fully, I have reached my spiritual goal and I have learned to love fully – I have become love?

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. II, Great Master tells us that love is a force greater than any other. Sant Mat is a path of love. Only a perfect living Master, the embodiment of love and already one with the Lord, is able to show us how to achieve this sublime state of being: where we are able to become love.

But how can we describe what love is? Mere words cannot convey its true essence. Although the Saints have tried to clarify its mystery, it can only be understood through personal experience. For us there are essentially two types of love, two ways in which we can experience love. Firstly, there is the love that is most familiar to us, which finds expression through the faculty of the mind and senses. And then there is the true love which is experienced through the faculty of the soul.

At some point every seeker on the spiritual path and, indeed, every human being has experienced a feeling of emptiness or being lonely and has sought comfort in the physical world. The mind is only able to love what it sees, so it seeks to attach itself to another human being or object. But nothing in this material world remains the same for very long and everything is always changing, so the result of worldly love is all too often heartache and sorrow.

Although the source of true love is actually the soul, the mind interprets feelings of attraction to worldly people or objects as real love. And as long as we are here in the physical creation, the loving worldly relationships that we experience are important to us. They inspire and uplift us and give us a sense of purpose and belonging. But regardless of how wonderful it may seem, worldly love is only a pale reflection of our true heritage, the divine love that awaits us. It is a mere stepping stone to our destination. Great Master describes it this way:

*The physical love is like a bridge, and a bridge is meant only to cross the river and not to live on. Those who stay on the bridge do not achieve any progress in their endeavour to meet the Lord.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II*

When it comes to loving God or our Master, we may truly believe that our love is sincere and that we are already one with our Master. And it's good that we should believe that. But at our level this is still only a perception of the mind. However, when we eventually experience that sublime love that the saints tell us about, then we will be able to surrender ourselves completely to our Master. Then every aspect of our lives will reflect this. As Eknath says in his poem, we will be in a permanent state of joy and contentment.

By now we may have already found that the ever-changing face of worldly love holds no lasting contentment for us, leaving us unfulfilled and restless. We start to know an increased longing to be connected to the real and lasting love of the Father – that exalted love experienced through the faculty of the soul.

The only way in which the true spiritual seeker can reach this state, though, is by being connected to the Shabd. This can happen only through initiation by a perfect living Master who is the physical manifestation of divine love. It is only through his grace and mercy that we are shown the way to seek within, so that we too can become one with his eternal love. Great Master tells us:

*God is Shabd. God is love. Therefore, Shabd is also love. Saints are Shabd incarnate. They bestow the gift of Shabd on others. Those who practise Shabd and listen to the Divine Music become oceans of Love. They love everybody and by the currents of this Divine Love radiate a virtuous influence in this world.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II*

The natural tendency of the soul is towards the Lord and the Lord is love. But still, the path to becoming one with that love is long and arduous. Great Master spells it out for us:

*To take to the path of love is not the work of ordinary people. Only those who are fearless and who are prepared to sacrifice their very lives can do so. Cowards cannot approach it. The Lord of Love is very high and it is not possible for weaklings to gain access to his Court. So long as we do not sacrifice our head at the altar of our Beloved, we cannot succeed on the path of Love.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II*

We may ask ourselves why this all-consuming love, this surrendering of our will to the Master, is so difficult to achieve. Why do we struggle so much? From the time of initiation, the inner connection to the Shabd has already been made, but we are still blinded by the ego and our task is made difficult by our scattered minds. The mind has been wandering in the world for thousands of lifetimes, so withdrawing the attention from the outside world and focusing within is far from easy. The Masters assure us, though, that we can do it – through our devotion and by following our Master’s instructions.

Our first priority then is to still the mind. When the mind is still and the soul is concentrated at the eye centre, the soul will begin to blend into the Shabd, which will take it to the home of love. The road home may be long and challenging, but we are not alone in our struggles. Our Master is ever by our side. But aspiring to this goal asks of us a humble and disciplined way of life if we are to make spiritual progress and reach it. As Great Master tells us:

*The path of love is as narrow and as sharp as the edge of a sword. There is room for only one to tread on it. Here God and the devotee have to become one, and the least waver or negligence on the part of the devotee will cause his downfall. Therefore, only the strong-willed can follow this path with the support of God and the Master and by surrendering themselves at all times into the lap of the Beloved.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. II*

All who have the blessing of initiation by a perfect Master do have to struggle to achieve spiritual liberation. But we are guided at every step and cannot fall. But then, it is imperative that we remain focused on our Master and our work for him. We cannot let anything else get in our way.

# The Art of Surrender

Expectations – we all have them. Perhaps we feel that life and our circumstances owe us more than we've been given. And on an internal level, once we're initiated we expect to see the light, hear the sound, and have all the experiences that our spiritual books talk about as soon as we start sitting for meditation.

After some time, reality hits. Some of us will meditate for years and get no obvious results. We started off full of enthusiasm when we were initiated, but slowly that enthusiasm has dwindled down to almost nothing – even though our Master gives us the reassurance that he himself will escort all the initiated souls to Sach Khand. He will drag us there kicking and screaming if necessary. (But by the time he has wooed us into submission, we will no doubt want to gallop off to Sach Khand as fast as we can, probably with our Master saying, “Whoa! Not so fast!”)

Most of the Sant Mat books reassure us that in spite of a seemingly uncontrollable mind, we really will make the grade one day. It is, in fact, as inescapable as death and taxes! For many of us though, the path remains a struggle. At the same time it seems there's value in the struggle. Every great achievement has been accomplished by those who have patiently accepted their struggle.

The greatest athlete creates his winning ability by getting up every morning when no one is around to notice, and by pushing himself to the brink of his own limits. Or take the artist. We see the final painting and we think how talented the artist is. But there are very few artists who can just paint a beautiful picture. A true artist keeps refining his work as he reaches for perfection. No one else knows what struggles he went through to reach the final work.

Stephen Hawking is an astrophysicist at the University of Cambridge and perhaps one of the most intelligent men on earth. He has advanced the general theory of relativity further than any person since Albert Einstein. Unfortunately Hawking is afflicted with the motor neuron disease ALS, which will eventually take his life. He has been confined to a wheelchair for years, where he can do little more than sit and think. Hawking has lost the ability even to speak, and now he communicates by means of a computer that is operated by the tiniest movement of his fingertips.

Hawking has admitted that before he became ill, he had very little interest in life. He called it a pointless existence marked by sheer boredom. Then he learned he had ALS and was not expected to live very long. The ultimate effect of that diagnosis was extremely positive. “When one’s expectations are reduced to zero,” he said, “one really appreciates everything that one does have.” Suddenly each small pleasure becomes precious. By contrast, those who believe life owes them a free ride are often discontented with its finest gifts.

Looking to ourselves, perhaps we lack appreciation for the great gift that we have been given. So, when the question arises as to why the Master doesn’t just take us up now, the answer given most often is that we are not yet ready. Perhaps the truth is that when we are ready, we will accept all that we have as his gift. And through this acceptance we will understand that every effort is a step closer in our return to the One.

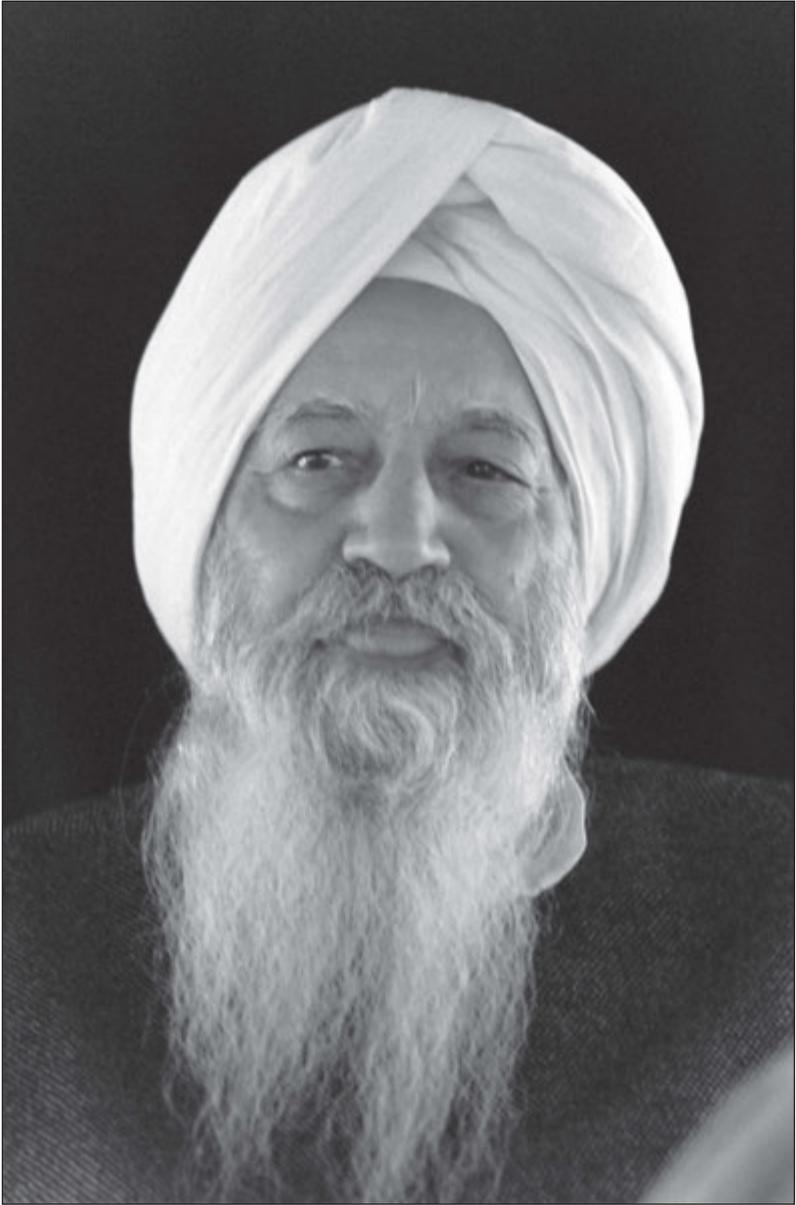
We are here in his perfect timing and we will progress by his grace. There are really just two things that we are responsible for – our effort and our attitude. The rest is all his work. It is for us to follow the instructions of Master and leave the rest to him. And we need not be too concerned whether results appear in our meditation or not.

Still, we know all too well the frustration we feel when our expectations are not met. And we may often feel that he is disappointed in us – we may feel we aren't living up to his expectations of us, or that we don't measure up – but he is always accepting and encouraging us without judging us. The Master asks us to be patient and to persevere in our efforts. Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter. But we cry out to him and say, “Master, give me patience – but I want it now!”

The Master does the job given to him by the supreme Father extremely well. He patiently draws his sheep to himself in different ways and then fulfils the massive task of keeping them motivated on this path, which is often very slow. The Masters have watched their marked souls progress through all the species of creation. Can there be greater patience than that?

Rome was not built in a day. Great things cannot be done in haste. Those of us who, after having put in a little work, want results immediately are foolish to do so. Impatience will lead us nowhere. It will waste the labour or efforts we have already put in. Therefore, it is advisable to learn this lesson and translate it into action: The key to the accomplishment of any big task is labour, patience and perseverance.

Our attitude in meditation should be to present ourselves to the inner Master, devoid of purpose and agendas, with no expectations of results or inner visions. Putting aside all worries and desires, we should release all preconceptions. With single-minded and gentle attention fixed on the simran or the sound, we are to become receptive to the way of Shabd. As we go about the business of our spiritual work, we will slowly start expecting less, persevering more and developing more patience. We will slowly start learning the virtues of letting go of



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

our expectations and living in his will. And then, once we let go and surrender, there will be no expectations.

In the Hindu religion, Lord Krishna is greatly loved and respected by his devotees. Whenever we see a picture or idol of Lord Krishna, he is always with his flute, which is known as his *murali*. Once his disciples asked the *murali*, “What merits does our Lord see in you, that he holds you so lovingly and tenderly day and night that you might drink deep the nectar of his lovely lips? Will you not reveal that secret to us?” The *murali* replied:

*My dear friends, I know neither magic nor any art of attraction. I do not possess any merits either. Ignorant of everything, I am simply a forest reed, all hollow within and bereft of any beauty. Krishna, my lord and lover, calls this quality of mine the greatest virtue and is extremely pleased with it. Over and over He whispers into my ear this excellent teaching: ‘Empty yourself and I will fill you.’ I have realized its truth, and I obey it to the very letter.*

So, like the flute, we should pursue the art of surrender. Then all expectations will disappear and we will resonate with and see the truth in what the Muslim saint Bayazid said:

*At the beginning I was mistaken in four respects – I concerned myself to remember God; to know Him; to love Him; and to seek Him. At the end, I saw that: God had remembered me; His knowledge of me preceded mine of Him; His love had come before mine; and He had sought me before I had sought Him.*



# The Only Reality

In the book *Mysticism, The Spiritual Path* there's a chapter that asks some difficult questions:

*What is this world? Is it what it appears to be or has it a reality behind its appearance? It is changing every moment: everything here is undergoing perpetual, unceasing change. Is there anything that does not change? What is the reality behind phenomena?*

The author concludes that we have no idea what it's all about because, he says, we can see and experience only phenomena – reality is a sealed book to us.

This is something the Masters have always been telling us – that we're all living in delusion. The only one who knows what reality is, is the saint, the enlightened one.

It's quite a frightening thought that just about every human being who has ever walked this earth has lived his life in delusion, trapped in darkness and relative misery – and not even aware that he is imprisoned here by his own delusion. He doesn't know that his existence could be one of eternal light, love and bliss, instead of one with some periods of happiness but far more times of suffering, fear, pain, illness or poverty. What pity the Masters must feel for us when they see our plight. No wonder they are moved with compassion to leave their own state of bliss to come down to this dark world to help us.

One of the Radha Soami Masters, Maharaj Jagat Singh, looked at our lives and the world we know. From his higher perspective he saw them as brief and meaningless, no more real than a stage performance

in which we are all, unknowingly, acting out our various roles. In one of his discourses, he summed it up very well:

*Life is like an empty dream. There is nothing real about it. Just as a blossom does not last for long, so does not life. As in a dramatic performance the various actors come to play their part as king, queen, villain, etc., and on its conclusion go their own way, forgetting all about the ephemeral relationships, so is the world a big stage where we come to perform the predestined roles and then depart. Like the dramatic performance, our attachments in life are unreal and only for the purpose of carrying out our allotted jobs.*

*The Science of the Soul*

It is quite depressing to think that since the beginning of the creation we have been going through one life after another, our immortal souls caught up in one form after another, achieving nothing more than to keep this plane populated – providing the negative power known as Kal with a population of souls that he can rule over. And all the time he is luring them to commit endless karmas that bury them deeper and deeper in the mire.

At no time did we ever realize what was happening to us. Or rather, our suffering souls might have been aware of it, but there was nothing they could do about it. This is what Maharaj Jagat Singh said in another of his discourses:

*All form, beauty and fascination of the world is nothing but illusion. It is a well-designed net which ensnares us all. ... Impelled by desires, the soul gets caught like a bird that tries to pick inviting grains from a hidden snare. It is verily in a hostile*

*land and is surrounded by passions which are never satisfied. One temptation follows another in quick succession, leaving behind a trail of insipidness. In such circumstances the soul is helpless. It can only sit back and watch the wreck, and suffer in silence.*

*The Science of the Soul*

It is only when we come in contact with a living Master and he initiates us that we can find our way out of our sorry plight. And that is by following his instructions to practise meditation and to live in such a way that we create minimal karma. But we can feel sorry for the vast majority of souls who are caught on this wheel of eighty-four until the next dissolution. And who knows how many long ages it will take to come around again?

However, the idea that everything around us is unreal is difficult for us to grasp. So let us see whether we can shake off our mental confusion about it. The way Hazur Maharaj Ji explains it in the first volume of *Spiritual Perspectives*, it is not so hard to understand. When he says that life on this plane is all an illusion, it means simply that it is always changing and it does not last. Only that is true or real which never changes, which lasts forever. Therefore we should see our lives here as nothing but a passing dream. In his words:

*What it means is that what we see has no reality – reality in the sense that nothing will exist, nothing will remain, everything is perishable, it's not everlasting.... Only he is real whom we do not see, whom we do not know. What we see, ... what we think we know, has no reality at all.*

In that same book somebody also asks whether karma itself is an illusion, devised by Kal to delude our mind. And he replies:

*That's right. You see, karmas are accumulations of the mind. ...  
They are not something which stays. They come, they go.*

Our karmas certainly feel very real to us, especially the ones that hurt, the ones that cause us fear or injury or illness or even just discomfort. But then, we can understand what Maharaj Ji means when he says our karmas are unreal if we think of our lives as having no more reality than a stage production. We endure the sufferings as dictated by the script of the play and then in time they are over. In the time span of eternity, our lives are over in the blink of an eye. According to Maharaj Ji's definition, karmas simply come – and then they go. How real are they then in the greater scheme of things?

As far as we can see with our limited vision, in this world only the Master is real. But then we should bear in mind when we look at him that it's that form of him that's eternal that's real, not the body. The body will get sick, grow old and eventually die. It cannot last forever. Even the body of the Master cannot last.

It is this fact of mortality that causes us tremendous pain every time we lose anyone who is dear to us. We go through that pain because of our attachments. And we all have attachments. This is simply because we do not see our lives as a stage show and the people close to us as part of the cast, who will leave the stage and go away when their performance is over. If only we could see this illusion for what it is and let them go easily, how much pain we would be spared.

In *Spiritual Gems* Great Master points out that the number of mothers, fathers and other near relations that we have had during our many lifetimes is countless. He advises us:

*Do not set your affections on things of this world for it is to be dissolved. This world is not durable. What is the value of loving that which must perish?*

Great Master warns us that it is our love for “that which must perish” that brings us back here lifetime after lifetime. He tells us that because we give so much of our love to the people and things of the world, we are dragged back here again and again. But if we give our love to the Lord, he says, that will pull us out of here.

This is the very crux of this path that we follow. Somehow we have to free ourselves from our intense love for those we are attached to and give our love to what is real – real and everlasting. Great Master tells us that if we give our love to the Lord we will attain salvation. But how can we do that? Only by giving our love to that form of the Lord that we can see, who is at our level. In other words, by loving a Master.

And truth to tell, deep inside ourselves we do know that. We recognize with some sort of mysterious inner knowing that there is nothing worldly about the Master. We do sense an aura of light and love and power about him. And something inside us relates to the power that he brings with him, the power which he is. We have known it before. And it attracts us and draws us to him.

The saints tell us that power is Shabd, the sound current, the creative power of God. And once we were consciously part of that stream of all-sustaining power, before we came down into the creation. Now a small spark of consciousness inside us remembers its source and yearns to get back to it. But it is blocked – by layers of mind, of karma and worldly attachments and desires. And yet, because it once knew a blissful oneness with Shabd and has a subconscious memory of that, it suffers now in its separation from its source.

There is no hope for us to free ourselves from this world of illusion unless the Lord himself starts pulling us to return to him. Only then, and with the help of our meditation, can we start to see this world for what it is: a perishable place, a temporary stopover en route to our real destination. And with his help, and through our meditation, we will start to see ourselves for what we are. Our meditation will eventually bring us to the point where we will see we are really spiritual beings who do not belong here – who are longing to return to our real home.

So let us pay attention now when the Master pleads with us to do our meditation. It is urgent, he says, and our time is running out. He can see more clearly than we can. So let us try harder to do what he asks – because he desperately wants to take us all out of here. Let us show him that we also want that.



*The body goes in a moment,  
but we don't believe it.  
A ripple on water – this is the world.  
A mirage of water is not water,  
the shadow of a cloud gives no rain.  
A statue of salt dissolves in water –  
this body is dying while you look at it,  
says Eknath.*

Ekknath, in *Many Voices, One Song*

# The Battle to Find God

The anonymous mystic who wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an early English work, tells of his own struggle to experience God. He says:

*All I feel is toil and pain, not rest. When I try to follow his advice, suffering and struggle beset me on every side. On the one hand, my faculties hound me to give up this work, and I will not; on the other, I long to lose the experience of myself and experience only God, and I cannot. Battle and pain assail me everywhere.*

He then explains why meditation is often such a struggle:

*You find this work painful because you are not yet accustomed to it. Were you accustomed to it, and did you realize its value, you would not willingly give it up for all the material joys and rest in the world.*

*Yes, I know, it is painful and toilsome. Still, I call it rest because your spirit does rest in a freedom from doubt and anxiety about what it must do; and because during the actual time of prayer, it is secure in the knowledge that it will not greatly err.*

This English mystic tells us an important aspect of prayer: that during prayer we do not greatly err because our mind is busy with God.

*And so persevere in it with humility and great desire, for it is a work that begins here on earth but will go on without end into eternity.*

# Finding Pleasure in Meditation

Maharaj Ji was asked if there was anything that could help us make more effort to meditate. He recalled that he had once received a letter from a satsangi saying this:

*I have found a very good substitute for this dry simran. I have invented a machine that works by electricity and when I switch it on and sit on it, all my soul currents come up at once. So I just sit for ten or fifteen minutes on that machine rather than spending two hours in dry simran.*

*Spiritual Heritage*

Then Maharaj Ji remarked: “See how far the mind will go!”

We are regularly asked by the Master to put in the effort to do our meditation. And the very word ‘effort’ may turn it into a chore in our minds. Meditation has everything to do with our attitude – with our mental disposition towards sitting – whether we see it as a chore or a pleasure. When we see meditation as a chore it takes effort to sit and the simran is boring and dry. When we see meditation as a pleasure, simran is more relaxing and the experience is enjoyable.

Mental effort requires discipline and determination. But it seems that when it comes to putting any real effort into our meditation, we may dream about doing it; we think about doing it; and we promise ourselves we will do it. But perhaps we never get down to actually doing it. So what do we need to do to get past the dreaming, thinking and promising phase and on to the actual *doing* phase of our meditation?

We cannot have the attitude that when the Master wants me to meditate he will make me sit. What we need is a strong desire to make it happen. We must want to meditate. And not only that, we must believe that meditation will offer us the results as promised by the Masters. It is our longing for the Master, and our belief in his teachings, that fuel the fire in us to put in the effort necessary to truly experience this spiritual journey. When we believe we can achieve something, we put our heart and soul into it. If we are not putting effort into our meditation, we need to ask ourselves if we really believe in what we are doing. Are our actions in line with our words?

A strong desire is the impetus that will take us to the eye centre. It's about wanting to do it – not just some days, but every day. It is the difference between idly wishing for it and putting in earnest effort to achieve it. If we are idly wishing for it, we are unlikely to ever put in the effort to reach there. The Master is in our life. The path is our way of life. It is now up to us to use correctly both the knowledge and opportunity he has given us. To do this, we need to create a strong desire for meditation.

All too often our minds are taut with tension and stress, filled with challenges and desires associated with our materialistic lives. We seem to be convinced that our lives are our own, lived according to our own wishes and hopes and ambitions, according to our own plan and design, and reflecting our own individual efforts. Maharaj Ji explains this saying:

*It is a very simple thing: Once we are separated from the Father, we are part and parcel of this creation. Then we try to think this creation belongs to me, and we start putting in efforts to own our attachments or to be owned by them.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

The decision to change this situation lies with us. When we take the first step to overcome the challenges we face, the Master will be there to help us. As our effort to let go of the world grows stronger, so we will find increasing support from the Master: through our simran and bhajan. But if we are not doing our meditation, how can we expect to receive that guidance? The Master is always there to help us, but first we have to put in the effort to be receptive to that help.

We cannot withdraw from our worldly responsibilities, but we can teach ourselves to withdraw our emotion and the associated mental contamination that goes with much of our worldly interaction. Removing the 'stuff' in our heads – making sure it is no longer available to us during our meditation – is an essential part of our effort. We must learn to relax and let go of all the worldly impressions that disturb our meditation and hold us back. Maharaj Ji tells us that the right attitude is to sit in a relaxed manner:

*'In a relaxed manner' means sitting in meditation without any tension or excitement on your mind. ... So with an absolutely relaxed mind, you should forget the whole world when you are sitting in meditation. Only you should exist and the Father should exist, and nothing else should exist between you.*

*Spiritual Heritage*

This is the ideal – the perfect way to meditate. This is what we strive to achieve. This is what makes all the effort worthwhile.

Physical effort requires that we create a place to sit. It also requires that we adhere to a certain time and duration for our daily meditation. Mental effort is ensuring that our time is used wisely and not wasted by allowing our concentration to be dissipated by thoughts about the

outer world. The mental effort is clearing our minds of all clutter and focusing only on our repetition.

Repetition is the way we teach the mind. It is the way we create the mental discipline needed to maintain the mental effort required to meditate. It is to compel the mind to accept a condition that we choose, rather than accepting the conditions our mind forces on us.

Repetition can have either a positive or a negative effect. This means we should be conscious not to repeat negative suggestions in our mind because they can also be accepted by the subconscious mind and can plunge our life into states of depression. This is why the Masters repeatedly suggest that we do simran as much as possible during the day. Apart from creating strong, positive spiritual currents in us, this also prevents us from making negative auto-suggestions to the mind.

Through repetition we train our mind to accept our spiritual holy words, and even to enjoy repeating them. Over time this will improve our ability to sustain the kind of mental effort that is necessary for the improved concentration level that we want in our meditation. It is a process that has to be adhered to and there are no short cuts – not even an electric machine to sit on! What we want is ‘smarter not faster’. We simply have to decide if we are prepared to work toward our own good and then to put in the effort to make it happen.

The more we neglect our meditation, the more difficult it becomes to sit, and then we become discouraged. Maharaj Ji said that when we are discouraged, it means we need to do more meditation. That is probably the most difficult time to put in more effort. He also tried to encourage us by saying:

*Every effort that we put in meditation is a step forward.  
Definitely we get its advantage, and we have its effect. Even if we  
devote five minutes, it is to our credit.*

*Die to Live*

The problem is that we fluctuate and are not constant in our effort. We take the stress and strain of our daily life into our meditation and then find it difficult to get into the rhythm of simran, so that our minds constantly pull us out.

Meditation sanitizes the mind. It clears the mind of all the debris that we so willingly store in it: relics of our past – our personal museum. When we wake up in the morning we bring all that old information from our past into our fresh mind and clog it up. We carry the ‘museum of me’ wherever we go.

Meditation is to the mind what cleaning the call logs and messages are to a cell phone. We regularly clear our cell phones of unnecessary messages and call logs. Similarly, we should maintain the integrity of our memory, keeping it clean of dated and useless information and associations, letting go of the ‘museum of me’.

Meditation is our future. What kind of future are we creating for ourselves? Are we simply focusing on, and putting our effort into going through our destiny, or are we awakening our inner potential? When we meditate we are creating our tomorrow – we are putting the past with all its antiquated concepts, ideas and stale relationships in the rubbish bin. The Master has given us the key to a bright new future. Are we working on that future today? Meditation is about creating that future. It is about unleashing greatness, but we need to smarten up our performance to experience it.

The only way we can move forward and create the future the Master wants us to have is by letting go and being still – by stilling

the flow of thoughts and focusing on what is inside. It requires the utmost effort, not only to do it well, but also to do it in such a way that we will not have to return to this plane of life again. As the author of *One Being One* writes: “Live in such a way that when you die, you laugh and others cry.”

The vast majority of us are not going to be fast-tracked to freedom but have to slog and get on with it. We have to put the effort into doing our meditation. We cannot allow ourselves to be continuously carried away on the turbulent cross-currents of thought. The grace of the Master comes automatically when his instructions are followed. So what are we waiting for? We can start creating that wonderful future today if we want to.

Sant Charandas tells us that we need to make a concerted effort to overcome the wanderings of the mind and commit to following the path of the Guru. He tells us that effort is the alchemy that will turn the disciple into the Supreme Being. In his words:

*This teaching is the essence of all teachings.*

*Guru Sukdev has revealed to me that effort is supreme.*

We should never allow the negative association we may have with the word ‘effort’ to distract us from doing our simran and bhajan. And, we should never underestimate the value of our effort. It is our dedication to our own spiritual purpose and our persistence and effort in working towards its realization that will take us to the peace and joy of our eternal home. But ultimately, as the author of *One Being One* tell us: “Our effort is simply a response to His call.”



# Love in Action

Whenever Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh was asked for any special message, he often quoted Jesus Christ's message to love one another. Hazur spent nearly forty years of his life advocating love. He was the perfect living example of love and he practised it always. Like all Masters, he also emphasized the importance of love in the sangat, within a family unit, in all relationships between people and in whatever we do in life. And he made it clear that the central pillar of spirituality is love.

So what is this love that the Masters refer to? We have all said "I love you" to someone at some stage in our lifetime. What do we mean by these words? It is difficult to adequately describe love in words. It has to be experienced, and even then only a lover can really understand what love is.

The love that a mother has for her child cannot be expressed in words. At best she can say, "I love this child," but that means very little to another person. Only a mother can truly know what it is – as her love is beyond words, beyond definitions and explanations. We cannot teach someone to love, neither can we control love in any way. Love has to be experienced to be known. Only once we have experienced it at some stage in our life do we have an idea of what it is.

The word 'love' is used in so many contexts, for both animate and inanimate objects. We all speak of love in relation to people and things. One can say: "I love my mother" or "I love chocolates" or "I love my pet" or "I love my Master." It is used to describe one's likes, preferences, emotional feelings or attachments. It is often based on our needs and expectations, which makes love conditional, whereas true love is unconditional and unselfish.

Of all the kinds of love that exist between people, the love of a mother for her little child is perhaps the purest form to be found in human relationships. Most other forms of love are dependent on having the expectations of the lover met. On the path of the saints we are also interested in the meaning of love in the spiritual context, as when one says that “God is love.”

Can the same single word ‘love’ have so many meanings and applications? If love in a worldly sense is so difficult to describe, then one can imagine how impossible it is to describe it in a spiritual sense. Again, unless we experience it for ourselves, it is just an intellectual description of something we can perhaps look forward to experiencing some day.

Much has been written on the subject of love, and many mystics have tried to give us a preview of what spiritual love is. All our talking, reading and philosophizing about love will not in itself lead us to love. At best these may act as a catalyst to set us on the path of practising love.

We read in *The Book of Mirdad*:

*Love is the Law of God. You live that you may learn to love. You love that you may learn to live. No other lesson is required of Man. And what is it to love but for the lover to absorb forever the beloved so that the twain be one?*

What does this mean? A law is something that governs or provides the rules by which things are governed, for example, the law of gravity. Therefore love is a power by which the Creator governs the creation. It is the power that ensures that the creation functions the way it should – by God’s design. This is achieved by the presence of that power in everything, hence the omnipresence of the power of God. Therefore divine love is the omnipresent power of God.

And when Mirdad says you live that you may learn to love, he means that the very purpose of living is to learn to love. There is no

other purpose. If we do not learn to love while living, then our life has been wasted. And when Mirdad says you love that you may learn to live, he means that once we have learnt to love, then we have learnt how to live eternally – how to live beyond the physical realm and how to live after death.

So we live here in this body to learn how to love so that we can live eternally hereafter. No other lesson is required, Mirdad says. All the knowledge we gain is useless, as we will not take it with us when we die. But the lesson of love will go with us even when we die, and it is therefore the only lesson worth learning. Mirdad's description of love is exactly what the Masters have been telling us. It is when the lover becomes absorbed in the beloved in such a manner that the lover and the beloved become one.

Hazur often said that love is losing one's own identity and merging into another being. We cease to exist and only the beloved exists. This of course only happens when our ego ceases to exist and we become nothing. By becoming nothing, we eliminate the self and merge into the beloved and become the beloved. Paradoxically we have to become nothing to become everything!

The Master tells us that because we function at this physical level and have experience of love only at the physical level, we have to start the journey of spiritual love by first developing love for the physical Master. As we grow and develop spiritually, our love for the body Master also grows, develops and eventually migrates beyond the physical to the spiritual level.

So how does one develop love for the Master and turn that devotion to the Shabd within? We know that God is love and the soul is of the same essence as God. So we need to allow the soul to manifest that love by releasing the soul from the bondage of the mind, senses, desires and passions. This is like removing the rust from the knife to let it shine.

The Masters teach us a technique of meditation that gradually brings the desires, passions and senses under the control of the mind, and the mind under the control of the soul. Since creation began all true Masters have taught this technique – the true way to worship the Lord. True worship of the Lord leads to discovering the soul or self-realization, which in turn leads us to God-realization. So if we are sincere in our devotion to the Lord, our true form of worship will be through meditation.

We are all struggling souls, trying to make a success of travelling this path. The fact that we have commenced the journey does not make us saints. The reason we follow this path is because we realize our imperfections and we are trying to improve.

Mirdad also says: “Love is not a virtue. Love is a necessity, more so than bread and water, more so than light and air”. We are taught that air, light, water and food are essential for survival – but only for the body. What about food for the soul? Well, the food for the soul is love – love is a necessity for the soul.

The way to feed the soul is through meditation. Just as we have regular meals to feed the body, we have to feed the soul daily with our meditation. If we want to worship the Lord, let us heed the advice of the lovers of God and practise the true form of worship by daily meditation with love and devotion – within the true temple of the living God, our very own body.

We have all heard of the expression “love in action”. For seekers who are initiated by a true Master, there is only one form of this love: sitting in meditation with one’s full attention focused at the eye centre, repeating the holy names with one-pointed concentration. That is love in action.



# Sharan

In the context of Sant Mat, *sharan* means taking shelter with a Master. The concept of sharan runs like a thread through the teachings of the Masters, and all the Masters underline the importance of sharan for a disciple of Surat Shabd Yoga. Whoever takes shelter with a Master submits himself unconditionally. But surrender and loving submission relate not to the human person of the Master as such, but to the divine Word that has taken human form in him. According to Sant Mat, the will of God and the will of the Master are one and the same. . . . While obeying the instructions of the Master, a disciple recognizes the will of God and becomes its executor. Whatever the disciple does, he does in the name of the Lord, and the Lord works through the disciple.

Surrender to the Master is a gradual process. A certain measure of faith and confidence in the Master is necessary to take the first, perhaps hesitant steps on the way to surrender and devotion. As disciples progress on the spiritual path, willingly and sincerely devoting themselves to the Master's spiritual guidance and surrendering to him, their faith and confidence in the Master becomes deeper. The more perfect the disciple's loving submission to the Master becomes, the more his faith turns into certainty. Every disciple on the path of the Masters can learn from experience that sincere surrender saves much suffering and helps to avoid many mistakes, whereas each attempt to push through his own will always ends in disappointment and pain.

Shradda Liertz, *Adventure of Faith*





*Maharaj Jagat Singh*

# The Lord's Children

The Iron Age is a hard and brutal time; there is no denying this. However, for initiates, even now there is real cause for great joy every day for the rest of our lives – no matter in what physical and material conditions we may find ourselves.

The present living Master offers us daily challenges. He exhorts us to do our meditation faithfully, punctually and determinedly every day. However, he wants more from us; he challenges us to focus, to prioritize, not to worry and to be joyous and positive.

Obviously, if we are meditating properly, the challenges to our mindset will be dealt with more easily. Equally obviously, with a mind focused and joyous, meditation will come more easily. These are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

In the midst of the world's pain it is indeed a challenge to develop a mindset that is focused, positive and joyous. One might even ask: Is it appropriate to be joyous when so many of our fellow human beings are starving, living in misery and dying painful deaths? Do we have any right to be joyous?

In a beautiful poem in *The Odes of Solomon* we read:

*Let all the Lord's children praise Him,  
and let us receive the truth of His faith.  
His children will be acknowledged by Him:  
therefore let us sing in His love.  
We live in the Lord by His grace,  
and eternal life we receive from His Messiah.  
For a great day has shone upon us,  
and marvellous is He who has given us His glory.*

The poet has given us many reasons why we should legitimately feel this joy. Firstly, he calls us “the Lord’s children”; then he says the Lord will acknowledge his children; and we will receive eternal life from the Messiah. Surely there can be no more joyous thought than that we are the Lord’s children and that he acknowledges us as such. We may not always consider it to be a blessing or source of joy to be in this human body, yet it is an incredibly precious gift. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

*The first and most important thing for an initiate, is to realize the great value of human life and the true purpose for which the Lord has conferred this rare gift on us. A soul comes into human life after sometimes passing millions of ages in the lower subhuman species in which God-realization is not possible. This privilege and capacity to return to our eternal home has been given to human beings alone.*

*Quest for Light*

Happily for us, we have no memory of those millions of ages in the lower subhuman species. But what a terrible thought to have spent so long trapped in those plant, insect, bird and animal bodies. Surely then, one should now wake up every morning rejoicing.

One of the closest human relationships is that of a parent and child. If we were asked to describe the perfect parent, what words would we use? We would imagine our perfect mother or father to be always patient, kind, loving, forgiving, good-humoured, dependable, honest and available to us. All initiates have such a parent: who never lets us down, who always loves us, and who loves us enough to discipline us for our own good. We have the Master, who is the earthly embodiment or representative of the Lord – the Master who initiates his marked souls and brings us back to him. Saints try to explain who

or what the Master really is, but words are very one-dimensional when trying to describe him. Saint Paltu tells us simply and clearly:

*Know that the saint and the Lord are one.  
There exists not the least difference between them ...  
Says Paltu, know this to be true,  
That the Lord abides in the saint,  
And the saint in the Lord.*

*Saint Paltu, His Life and Teachings*

The Master, through initiation, puts an end to our comings and goings, and secures our eventual return to our original home of Sach Khand and reunion with our Father. This is a huge reason for joy – but probably too big for us to comprehend or actually come to grips with. Far more important is the Master’s impact on our lives. And because we can learn to feel the impact, eventually most disciples come to trust and love the Master, and out of this love and trust comes security. If we feel loved and secure, surely this allows for joy in our lives, even in the midst of the world’s sufferings and hardship!

The relationship that develops between disciple and Master is deeply personal and individual. We love him. We long to feel his love. We long to be with him. And he truly loves us. The presence of the Master in our lives and his gift of initiation should have us jumping for joy and bubbling over with gratitude every single day of our lives.



# Spiritual Wealth

It may seem a little strange to combine the concepts of spirituality and investing in one phrase, but if we examine the root of the verb to invest we see that it means to put energy into a venture with the expectation of achieving a profit.

One invests money into a commercial venture, shares or property. In spirituality we invest our time with the hope of receiving a far more worthwhile return on it – that of spiritual wealth, of merging into and becoming one with divine love. When we conscientiously adhere to our Master's instructions and invest our time wisely, then our goal is to become suffused with Shabd, with divine sound and light.

Every person has the same amount of time every day of their lives. For everyone a day has twenty-four hours. How we use this gift is entirely up to us.

How do we go about investing our time wisely? We are asked to give one tenth of our daily time to sincere and devoted spiritual practice. We are given five words by our Master and we repeat these over and over, in remembrance of him and the Lord. This brings the mind to a focussed still point, above and between the eyes where the Radiant Form of our Master patiently awaits us. He will then lovingly guide us from here on for the remainder of our journey along the *shah rug* or royal highway, to regions beyond time and mind, to realms where we will be suffused with pure love.

The Master's path is called Surat Shabd Yoga. Maharaj Sawan Singh explains in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol.V, that *surat* means consciousness and refers to the soul. Shabd is the melody-based power of the Supreme Lord, the Sound Current that resounds everywhere in creation. Unless we are attentive we cannot hear it as its music is not external or worldly, but the music of the soul. Yoga means the uniting

of the surat with the Shabd and becoming one with it. When hearing the sound the soul is irresistibly drawn to it.

*Surat Shabd Yoga is very ancient and has existed from the very beginning. One cannot add to or subtract anything from it. The Shabd was in the beginning. It created this universe. The soul has a natural affinity for the Heavenly Music.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. V*

Masters consider Surat Shabd Yoga to be the highest of all forms of yoga and has as its objective connecting the soul with the Shabd. This is the only way to merge the soul into the divine source from which it originally emanated. Great Master tells us that it is an easy form of yoga to follow as we do not have to undergo any suffering while practising it. No effort is required other than listening to the melody of the Shabd with close attention. All that is required is to find a secluded spot away from noise and distractions where one can achieve this inner seclusion. To help us, our Master teaches us a method of closing the outer doors of the body and sitting in one-pointed concentration gathering our attention at the third eye.

The poet Rumi's own spiritual Master Shams-i-Tabriz, had this to say of the role and function of true Masters or true teachers:

*There are birds who lay golden eggs,  
They fly to the realm of the skies every morning  
When they run, they seem like suns in the seventh region.  
When they sleep, they make the sun and moon their pillows.  
O Shams-i-Tabriz, they enable thousands of those born blind,  
With one kind look, to see the path.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol V*

The Masters who have achieved such union with the Lord find souls who are earnestly seeking God, wherever they may be. Masters help such souls and they become the means of uniting them with the Lord. Such Masters distribute their spiritual powers freely and at no cost. By their grace, a disciple can progress rapidly and unite with the Lord in this very life. Although perfect Masters have assumed human forms similar to our own and live among us, in fact they live in union with the Lord. We are incapable of fully describing or even understanding such great beings. Even Kabir had difficulty. He said:

*If I were to mix all the mountains in the sea to make ink,  
and were to use the whole earth as paper,  
I would not be able to describe his virtues.*

*Philosophy of the Masters Vol. V*

Great Master wanted to know how we, poor beggars completely deceived by maya, can even begin to know anything of the glory of such spiritual kings. It takes a true Master to describe a Master, and we are unable to understand what or who a Master is. Soami Ji offers this description of a perfect teacher in Sar Bachan:

*He alone is the Guru  
Who loves the Shabd.  
He who knows it not is not a perfect Guru.  
He who practises the Shabd  
Is a perfect Guru.  
Bow before such a Guru.  
Become the dust of His feet.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. V*

Every one of us needs a Master to convey the teachings of the saints to us and guide us as we proceed. A very special relationship develops between the disciple – the one who meditates to seek the Lord – and his or her spiritual Master, who guides the disciple to find the Lord. By following the teachings presented to us and investing our time in sincere meditation in the end we will, through our efforts and with his infinite grace, reap our rewards.



*The Lord's Name is my wealth;  
I neither hoard it for myself  
Nor sell it for a living.  
Nam is my farm, Nam my orchard;  
Thy slave worships thy Name  
And seeks thy shelter.  
Nam is my asset, Nam my capital.  
Other than thee, O Lord,  
I know of no riches.  
I neither hoard thy Name  
Nor sell it for a living. ...*

*Whom the Lord keeps in the world  
Yet keeps detached from it,  
Of such a one Kabir is a slave.  
My wealth is the Lord's Name;  
I hoard it not for myself,  
I sell it not for a living.*

*Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name*

# The Rope

The San people of the arid Kalahari region in South Africa, who belong to what may be the oldest culture on Earth, say that everything in this world is connected by ropes of light. The story that the tribal elders tell of these ropes of light is that there are many kinds of ropes, but the purpose of life is to find the rope that connects us to God. Once found, they say, one should do everything in one's power to make that rope strong – so that we will be able to feel when God is tugging on it. According to the San, the secret of life is to be guided by the pulling of the rope.

The elders also say that when we want to learn about Spirit we should find a person who has fallen from the sky, from God's village in the sky, as they put it. It is rare to find such a one, such a strong healer. "Look for him," they say. "Find him, and he will teach you to follow the way that will take you home to God."

How many can say that they have found the rope of light and the one who has fallen from God's village in the sky? This way that we follow – the path of the Masters – is our rope of light. Maharaj Charan Singh explained this by using the example of a man who has fallen into a well, with no way of getting out. Someone comes along and throws down a rope and says, "Take hold of the rope and I will pull you out". But instead of grasping the rope the man wants to know how he got there. His would-be saviour says, "Just grab the rope, I'll explain later! First, let's get you out". The man, however, demands to know who made the rope, where it comes from and how long it is.

Are we not doing the same? Instead of asking unnecessary questions, we should pay attention when our would-be rescuer tells

us that separation from God is like a well and remembrance of him is the rope.

The San elders say when we start climbing the rope, our life will never be the same. This rope takes over everything we do; we are pulled by it and led to where we need to be; we are guided in whatever we need to say and do. How do we go about climbing the rope? By following the teachings and instructions of our Master. We have been given the very rare opportunity to be guided by a true Master.

Our Master tells us that it is the little things we do that make a difference, that every five minutes more of meditation will make a difference. The more we meditate, the more we will feel the tugging of the rope, the more we will be aware that the Master guides us in all things, even in little ways.

Something else the San elders say is that the oldest truth and the mystery of the human way is summarized in one word: love. They say that we are hunters of love – of God's love. And that the rope of light connecting us is God's love, expressed as a song. So they too, like our Masters, speak of love as light and sound. And all Masters continually remind us to attend to our meditation, to seek the light and sound in order to detach ourselves from the world of illusion. As Soami Ji advises us:

*Do not get embroiled in the affairs of this world.  
Think of it as no more than a night's dream.  
This body is false, as are its relationships,  
so why exhaust yourself over an illusion?*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*

There is a Buddhist parable of a monk who is walking home on a narrow path that winds its way high up along the steep slopes of a

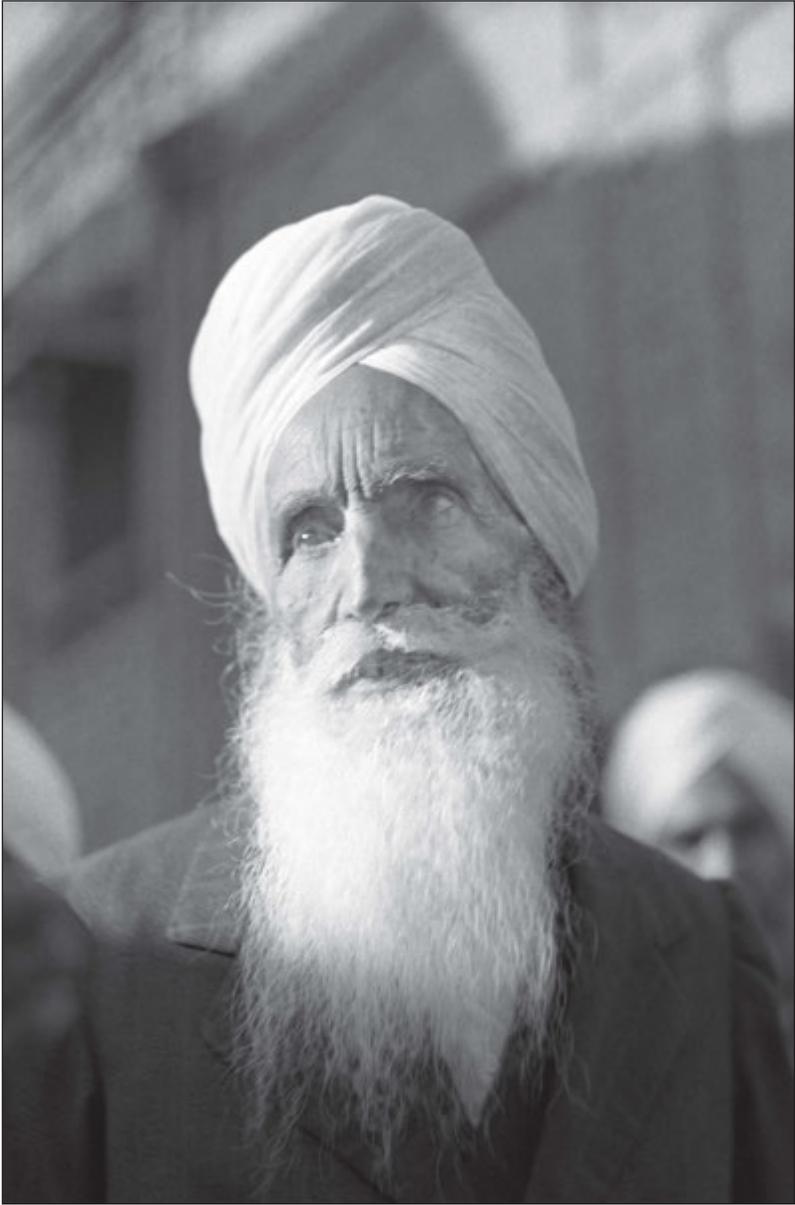
mountain in Tibet. Dusk falls quickly as the sun slides away, and suddenly in the half-light the monk sees something on the path in front of him. He can't quite make out what it is so, slowly and carefully, he steps forward. His heart beats faster. Wide-eyed and alert, he takes another step. There it lies, long and thin and coiled. The monk stops dead in his tracks and in his mind he screams "Snake!" He is terrified of snakes. But this is his only path home.

Panic and fear slam into his chest. "I must get home soon, before it gets completely dark. What if the snake is poisonous? What am I going to do?" These are the thoughts that rush through his mind. Quickly he collects some grass and twigs and makes a crude torch. He lights it and cautiously moves forward in the fire light. He then sees that it is a rope someone must have dropped on the trail. With great relief he laughs at himself. Panic turns to peace. As he steps over the rope the monk realizes how he had deceived himself with an illusion.

How often do we see snakes when they are just ropes? We are often deluded by our thoughts, allowing things to scare us and then, when we look back and see the big picture, they become meaningless. Every time we worry we bring down the shutters between us and that higher state of consciousness that we call God or Love. Every time we worry we see the snake and not the rope.

But how to free ourselves from these pointless worries of life? The Masters teach us that only by raising our consciousness through meditation can we begin to see beyond the illusion and overcome our distracting fears. Meditation will make us hunters of love and show us the San people's rope of light which, in time, will bring us back to God's village in the sky.





*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

# Like a Child

A disciple of Jesus once asked him this question: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus replied by calling a little child over and setting him in the midst of the group. He said:

*Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. ... Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*The Bible, Matthew 18:3-4*

When Maharaj Charan Singh was asked by one of his disciples to explain this answer, he replied:

*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Who is entitled to go back to the Father? ‘Except ye be converted’ means that our whole outlook on life should be changed. Now the tendency of your mind is outward. But you have to withdraw your mind inward to the eye centre, and turn it upward; that is conversion. You change from one way of living to another.*

*Light on Saint Matthew*

This is then how we, as adults, qualify for entrance into the kingdom of heaven: by humbling ourselves and becoming childlike. What Maharaj Ji says here is that unless we are converted – by becoming initiated, living in his will and doing our meditation – we

will not be able to eliminate our ego and become as innocent as little children. Therefore we “shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”.

Maharaj Ji often talked about the innocence of the hill people, many of whom would go within as soon as they were initiated. He explained that they were like innocent children, with minds still pure and unsullied by the world. How do we regain this simplicity, this innocence and purity of mind? Once again Maharaj Ji supplies the answer: that if you follow the path and do your meditation, all good qualities come in you like cream upon milk.

What could be clearer than this? Follow the path, do your meditation. Be eternally grateful that you are fortunate enough, in this life, to be in contact with a living Master, a highly evolved soul. A Master is someone who has eliminated ego from himself and can guide us and give us directions so that we too can become as humble and innocent as children, and have nothing else in mind but our Master and the Lord.

There is a tale of Lord Krishna paying a visit to the house of a man called Vidur. As Vidur was out, his wife – delirious with joy – peeled some bananas, handing the peels to Krishna and throwing away the fruit. When Vidur arrived and saw her folly he asked her what on earth she was doing. “Oh, I didn’t realize,” she replied innocently and handed Krishna some other fruit. “Vidur,” said Krishna, “these peels are sweeter than this fruit.”

This is an example of having nothing else in mind except one’s Master.

Apart from innocence and humility, another endearing quality that children possess is spontaneity: the quality of responding or acting naturally in the moment – as little Johnny demonstrated when an argument arose between him and his brother over who should have the first pancake. Their mother, seeing an opportunity to teach the boys a moral lesson, asked them, “If Jesus were sitting here at the

breakfast table with us, wouldn't he say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait'? Johnny quickly turned to his younger brother and said, "Okay, Alex, you be Jesus."

Spontaneity is an attribute of those who live fully in the present moment and who respond to those around them with ease. Do we not observe this when we are in the presence of our Master, and see how spontaneously he quips and interacts? We also observe how he responds to our many questions and demands in a natural, witty and joyful manner. And then does our love for him not brim over spontaneously? We leave the room with a smile on our face and carry the joy in our heart out into the world.

Another quality that children have, which can be an endless source of amusement and a lesson for us, is their wonder and curiosity about life. It is important for us, at any age, to retain our sense of wonder and curiosity, to never stop learning about the creation and our Creator.

We can also learn from children about not being judgmental. We adults tend to judge. We are often advised that it is a waste of precious time. Masters advise us to control this tendency, especially the gossiping habit. There is nothing that scatters the attention so much and brings unnecessary and even harmful ideas into the mind as the habit of gossiping.

In a reply to a question, the Master recently talked about being judgmental, by asking the questioner who he was, to judge anyone else. He asked him what he knew about the life of others and the challenges they were facing. The Master's advice was to focus on oneself. He said that focus is everything, that what you focus on is what you become, and that no one has achieved success without focusing on his or her own goals in life. We all know what our ultimate goal is, so let us focus on our meditation, on self-realization and God-realization.

And let us lighten up! Like children, let us laugh easily and at the simplest things. We can learn so much by observing their way of being in the world. Keep in mind the proverb: “A little nonsense, now and then, is practised by the wisest men.”

The Master once even suggested that the name of the path should be changed to: “Laugh your way to heaven.” While we should take the path seriously, we need not take ourselves so seriously. Consider the power of laughter to prick the balloon of pretence and to deflate tension. We’ve all been told that laughter is the best medicine, and even that “he who laughs...lasts!”



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# Book Review



## A Treasury of Mystic Terms, Part II

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*A Treasury of Mystic Terms* is an on-going multivolume exploration into the spiritual beliefs and literature of the major world religions and native traditions. Its purpose is to demonstrate through that literature the common thread of spirituality that has been manifest in humanity since the beginning of time.

Part I of *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, published in six volumes in 2003, is centred on the universal principles of spirituality – the nature of God, the creative process, the hierarchy of powers in the inner realms, birth and death, the theory of karma, reincarnation, and the like. Part II of the *Treasury* has now been published in four volumes, focusing on the nature and importance of the spiritual guide or master, including such topics as the master-disciple relationship, descriptions of the disciple's contact with the inner guide or beloved, the pattern of succession of one master to another, and spiritual or miraculous powers attributed to advanced souls. As with Part I of the *Treasury*, the entries for these subjects have been drawn from the various spiritual traditions and offer numerous quotations across the immense breadth of the world's spiritual literature.

All terms are explained in a simple manner, with each term presented as a separate entry. Cross-references to other terms broaden the reader's scope. With the explanations grouped according to subject, and placed alongside one another, many similarities between different religions become apparent. The author offers a broad mixture of concepts, doctrines, beliefs, theories, parables, teaching stories, and myths, all taken, usually with quotations, from ancient and modern scriptures and spiritual writings and commentaries.

The following are examples of some terms covered and of the wealth of material brought to bear in covering each of them.

The concept of the “messiah” or “anointed one” appears in Judaism, Christianity, and other religious traditions. The author cites numerous quotations which illuminate how the view of the messiah evolved over time. We learn that the term originated with the ritual of anointing a chosen king, prophet, or priest in early Judaic times, and later became used in Judaism and Christianity for a supernatural being who can save people through the holy spirit. A lovely legend from the Jewish Talmud, written between the second and sixth century CE, illustrates the belief that the messiah will always be available to humanity, if we are receptive. The story relates that one of the Talmud’s rabbinic authors met the prophet Elijah near the tomb of the second-century holy man, Simeon ben Yoḥai, in the mystical centre of Safed (Tsfat). He asked the prophet: “When will the messiah come?” Elijah responded, “Go and ask him!” After inquiring of the prophet where he could find him, he was told, “at the gateway of the city.” “And how will I know him?” “He is seated among the poor, who are suffering and sick.” So the rabbi went to the messiah, greeted him, and asked when he would come to bring salvation. The messiah replied, “Today.” So the rabbi was distressed, feeling the messiah had lied, as he had not appeared. He returned to Elijah and complained, and Elijah responded: “What he said to you was, ‘Today, if you will hear his voice.’”

Another interesting term, common to Islamic and Jewish mysticism since the Middle Ages, is *al-insan al-kamil*, which literally means the perfect (*kamil*) man (*insan*): the perfect, complete or universal human, the perfect saint. The *Treasury* author cites Spanish/Moroccan scholar Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi (1076–1148), who taught that “the perfect man exemplifies the divine purpose in creation – for a potentially perfect human being to realize his potential, his innate perfection, uniting with God Himself; for the human microcosm to realize itself as the macrocosm.” We learn that “the idea is derived from the biblical book of *Genesis*, which says that God made man in His own image.” The belief is that we can all realize this level of consciousness within ourselves. ‘Abd al-Karim al-Jili, who lived in fourteenth-century Baghdad, was known for his book *Al Insan al-Kamil*. He writes:

*Man is the link between God and nature. Every man is a copy of God in His perfection; none is without the power to become a perfect man (al-insan al-kamil). It is the Holy Spirit that witnesses to man's innate perfection; the spirit is man's real nature and within him is the secret shrine of the divine Spirit. As God had descended into man, so man must ascend to God, and in the perfect man (al-insan al-kamil), the true saint, the absolute Being, which had descended from its Absoluteness, returns again unto itself. In treading the Path, the sufi ascends until perfection is reached and, in the perfected saint, God and man become one again...*

Drawing on the Indian spiritual heritage, we find a discussion of the familiar term 'guru' and its derivation:

*Various traditional but doubtful etymologies are prevalent. Guru is said to be derived from gu ('darkness') and ru ('removal'). Sometimes, ru is said to represent 'light'. The guru is therefore said to be the one who dispels or removes the inner darkness and bestows inner light.*

*The state of the guru is great and sublime,  
it is very difficult for even gods (devas) to attain.  
The Reality of the guru (guru Tattva) is supreme,  
there is nothing greater than the guru:  
One should worship his guru and dedicate himself –  
body, mind and soul – to the guru...*

The related and more specific term *puran guru* literally means the complete or perfect teacher or perfect master, a *guru* of the highest order; he is also called the *satguru*. The entry in the *Treasury* explains that "he is called perfect because he has reached the highest stage of spiritual perfection, and has merged with the Divine. He is therefore perfect from a spiritual perspective... A *puran guru* is beyond death, one with and sustained by the creative power of God. He is a truly free soul." A quotation is brought from the *Adi Granth*:

*Good are his deeds, and glorious and (truly) wealthy is he,  
within whose mind the instruction of the puran guru abides.  
Grant Nanak an abode in the society of saints (sadh sang), O Lord,  
whereby all the comforts shall become manifest unto him.*

The Daoist (Taoist) Chinese mystics wrote about the qualities of the “great man” or spiritual master. In the ancient work called the *Yijing*, often known in the west as the *I Ching*, we read:

*The great man (daren) is one who is in harmony with heaven and earth in all his attributes. He is one with the sun and the moon in his brightness. He joins the four seasons in his orderly proceedings. He is in accordance with the spirit-like operations of providence – with all that is fortunate and calamitous. He may precede heaven, and heaven will not act in opposition to him. He may follow heaven, but will act only as heaven itself would at the time. If heaven will not act in opposition to him, how much less will ordinary people?*

A poem from the Quanzhen (Complete Reality) school of Daoism in the thirteenth century puts it very simply:

*When obscurity (yin) is gone  
and illumination (yang) is pure,  
then the work is done;  
The true human (zhenren) emerges  
and visits the spiritual sky (shenxiao).*

In a few years Part III is scheduled to be published, in six volumes, focusing on spiritual experiences and practices, experiences of death, and ‘dying while living’. Still later Part IV will appear, covering living in the world – morality and ethics, the vegetarian diet, human perfection and imperfection. A final volume will contain a complete bibliography, indexes, and cross-references.



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