

October 2014

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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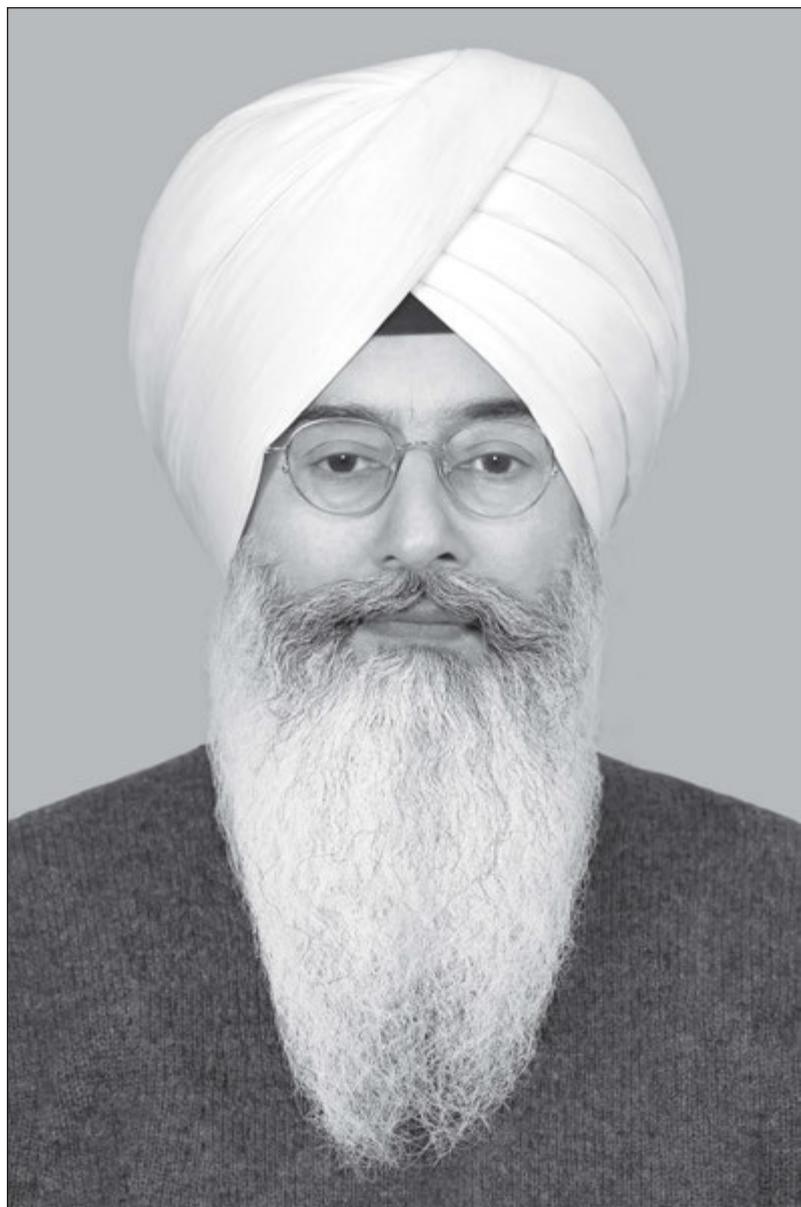
Yours Affectionately

The object of meditation is to transfer the centre of attention to inner and more real things, compared to which the outward shows are like shadows. The door to those inner realms is above and behind the two eyes, and it is by persistently knocking at those gates (concentrating the attention between the two eyebrows) in the manner taught to you at the time of initiation, that admittance is gained.

The easiest way to achieve this, without disturbing normal existence and upsetting existing relations, is to practise meditation for at least two and a half hours every day so that one learns to withdraw the attention gradually and voluntarily and also to hold it there. This preliminary work is hard, and in the beginning it is tiring and boring also, for the tendency of the human mind is to go out, and not in. It is only by going in that we can reach the kingdom of God. Once concentration has been achieved, the rest becomes comparatively easy, for then bhajan is delightful. However, for the average individual, this is almost the work of a lifetime. But when this has been accomplished, one literally rises above the world.

The eye centre is the door that leads up into higher regions, and down into this body or the world as well. The world exists for us and influences us only when we play through the nine doors, but when we make for the tenth door we rise above the world. It is then that we acquire strong faith in the Master and realize that in whatever we have to face, to go through, the Master is always with us and guides and protects us.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*



Thank You, Master

Throughout millennia, the saints have laid great stress on humility. Their intent is surely not that we should let others walk all over us; rather, they lovingly explain that humility is a by-product of our love and devotion for the Lord. True humility comes when we are able to eliminate our ego and see the Lord within ourselves and in the whole creation.

The natural question is, how do we develop that humility within us? It is important to understand that humility, love, meditation and seva are all intertwined. On the path of the saints, many of us are fortunate to have the opportunity to do seva at our satsang centres. We often take to seva with great zeal and gusto but it is incumbent upon us to evaluate how seva can lead us towards becoming humble disciples.

Hazur Maharaj Ji used to tell us that if we do seva, humility will come automatically. In love, we do that which pleases the other person, not what pleases ourselves. Similarly, seva is done to please another person, not to please ourselves. And so, seen in this light, seva perhaps starts as a manifestation of the love we have for our Master; and if we want to please him, automatically we should perform our seva with humility.

It is important to note that the saints also tell us to broaden our horizons. Seva is not just helping at a satsang centre – it encompasses a much broader space. In fact, seva is an attitude, it is a distinct way of life where the self is always willing to give of itself anytime, anywhere and unconditionally, without expectation. Hazur Maharaj Ji once said to a questioner:

The greatest reward in seva is the contentment and happiness that we feel within, that we get an opportunity to serve someone. That is the greatest happiness one can ever get, to make someone happy. It doesn't make you so happy if anybody makes you happy, but it definitely makes you very happy when you are in a position to make someone else happy, and that is real seva. Seva for any institution, seva for any individual, seva for the masses – in other words, a charitable attitude of helping other people – that is seva. The base of seva is love and devotion for the Father. Seva is not meant to make one a leader in the community, in the group, or to wield any authority – that is not seva.

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The Masters tell us that we don't serve or help others in order to deepen our spiritual life: it is the other way around. The deepening of our meditation practice naturally develops in us the desire to be helpful to others. Nobody is being more helped than the one who does the service. The purpose of seva is to help us expand our love.

However, we are imperfect beings attempting to travel on the path of truth. At times, it is possible to get carried away. Egotism creeps in, we become critical and end up nullifying the entire purpose of seva. The question is, what should we do in such situations? A disciple once asked Hazur Maharaj Ji that if we notice that we are so full of pride that even our attempt at seva has a lot of ego attached to it, should we give up that seva until we become more detached? His answer was characteristically practical:

We should give up that ego rather than the seva. Seva will help you to create humility sooner or later. But give up the ego which you think is attached to your type of seva. By running away from the situation, we don't solve any problem. We have to tackle the situation.

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So the question arises, in our weak moments, when our enthusiasm to do seva the 'right way' (which invariably means our way) overcomes us, how do we work towards building that humility and love which is the very purpose of seva?

At times like this it is important to remember that it is entirely by the Master's grace that we get an opportunity to do seva. While many people may be anxious to do it, they may not get an opportunity – either due to their circumstances, their environment or their family commitments. It is by the grace of the Lord that we get this opportunity.

Not surprisingly, this approach of being grateful for what Master gives us permeates all aspects of the path, including meditation. Hazur once said:

Our approach to meditation should be that of gratitude. The Lord has given us the opportunity of this human form and then the environment in which to attend to meditation. So we should always approach meditation with gratitude.

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And so it comes down to gratitude. At every step, if we remember to thank the Master for all that he has given us – our environment, our seva, our love – that will remind us to be more humble.



Something to Think About

If a thousand-candle bulb is suddenly shone into your eyes, you can't stand that light – you'll faint. But if we show you one candle, then two candles, then three candles, every day, slowly and slowly, you'll get into the habit of seeing that light, and eventually you'll be able to see a thousand candles without hurting your eyes. That happens slowly, with practice. Similarly, with the method of simran that has been adopted by saints, we have to withdraw our consciousness – which has been spreading into the whole world for ages and ages – very slowly, so that we do not faint or hurt ourselves or get so frightened that we stop sitting in meditation. But if slowly and slowly you see a little ray of light and hear a little sound, gradually you become used to it, and then you are able to bear all that. You start enjoying all that. That is why this method is slow, but sure, and there is no injury to anybody.

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



Practice maketh a man perfect. Even though he starts with misgivings, in due course, perseverance and sincere effort enable him to develop a strong fervour and piety. Mere show can lead him nowhere. An antidote for lack of devotion is more and more steadfast devotion. With unwavering faith in the Master, devotion unfailingly leads to realization of 'Nam' – the elixir against all suffering in the world. Soami Ji lays stress on *Bhakti*. There is no other way to realize him and to free the soul forever.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Imperfections

We can truly understand the intensity of the struggle with the mind as soon as we make a serious attempt to meditate. It is when we practise concentration that we become acutely aware of our lack of unity and wholeness. In our quest for eternity, there are times when we feel we are making no progress at all. We blame our weaknesses, which may include our lack of strength to gather the attention at the eye centre or our inability to complete our two and a half hour session every day. We feel we cannot succeed, as we have yet to achieve a sufficient degree of perfection, whether in our meditation, moral standard of living, or even in our thoughts and actions.

Saints remind us that this world is not the place for perfection. In fact, we are here in this creation only because we are imperfect. However, there are times when we forget this and seek perfection in our spouses, jobs and even in our spiritual practice. If we think deeply, we are seeking perfection in all these things through the dictates of the mind. And we all know that the mind itself is the source of all imperfections. It commits mistakes, repents and commits the same mistake again – in the same life, life after life, for millions of ages. When we fail to control it through our meditation, it tries to justify our weaknesses. It deceives us into believing that we are ‘too hard’ on ourselves. After all, as human beings, we are allowed to make mistakes, aren’t we?

On the other hand, there are times when we dwell on our imperfections, which may leave us distressed. Although saints do not want us to brush these feelings aside and be unconcerned, they advise us that indulging in self-pity is not good for us either. Guilt and a sense of unworthiness are actually forms of self-absorption. They are

distractions of the mind that keep us from devoting all our energy and attention to our meditation.

Though it is natural at times to entertain such feelings, it is not a positive step. Saints warn us against such a defeatist attitude. They encourage wearing strong boots rather than avoiding thorns. They want us to step forward, not look back; light a candle, not curse the darkness. So actually, it is not our imperfections but our attitude towards them that stands in the way of progress.

We should have a positive approach, which is to get rid of our weaknesses. And only by meditation can we help ourselves rise above our weaknesses. Just to feel guilty and not to do anything about it also doesn't solve any problem. We have to repent by not repeating our mistakes, and then we have to try to rise above our weaknesses with the help of meditation.

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

Saints advise us that it is through meditation that we will be able to overcome our weaknesses. Meditation is nothing but repenting and asking the Lord for forgiveness for all the sins we have committed. As time goes by, we begin to realize our weaknesses, which itself is a great step towards overcoming them. When we are conscious of our faults and weaknesses, half the battle is won. The next step would be to put in effort to correct them.

However, in spite of our best efforts, we may face dejection in our search for God-realization. We may feel inadequate and fall into the mind's trap of focusing on our sins and shortcomings. We need to remember that no matter what kind of sins we may have committed in the past – even sins we have no recollection of – they are nothing compared to the Lord's grace. Like a loving parent, the Master is

always there to welcome us with open arms, however much we may have been rolling in the mud. Nothing is hidden from him. He sees every disciple as one would see the contents of a transparent jar. He knows what sins we have committed in the past and has still bestowed the gift of initiation upon us. He would not have initiated us if we did not have the potential to reach God.

As disciples, it is therefore necessary to continuously increase our effort in meditation. We need to perform our devotion dutifully and diligently and, at the same time, rely on the grace and mercy of the Lord. When we associate with a perfect living Master and surrender ourselves to him, we eventually come to realize that there is no need to dwell on our imperfections, as long as we continue to work hard on the path.



*How long should I worry about my dark record
and ponder my actions in sadness?*

*I will rest in his grace and mercy
and be released from past, present and future.*

Sarmad, Martyr to Love Divine

On Forgiveness

An Explanation by Maharaj Charan Singh

Unless we learn to forgive others, we cannot expect the Lord to forgive us. We have to forgive others when they have done something against us. The Lord will forgive us if we learn to forgive others for what they have done against us, and we can only get forgiveness from the Lord by meditation.

What is forgiveness? There is a block of karmas between the soul and the Father. That is why we are separated from the Father. That layer of karma doesn't let the soul go back to the Father. Forgiveness means to forgive us for all those karmas, all those sins which you have collected in the past birth. Whatever seed we have sown, before it comes up, we can uproot it. But once it becomes a plant, we can't uproot it. Then we have to taste its fruit.

If you hurt another person, if he is still alive he can forgive you and you can forgive him and that karmic relationship is finished. You've uprooted the seed. But if the other person leaves the world, you have no opportunity to ask for his forgiveness – then that karma goes to your debit. You have to account for that karma. You will have to come to this world to account for it – you can account for it by meditation, or you can ask the Father to forgive you for that karma. But the Lord will forgive us only if we also forgive others.

Real forgiveness can only come from the Father by meditation. Clearing our karmic account is forgiveness. Eliminating the karmas which stand between us and the Father is all his forgiveness. When he wants to forgive us, he puts us on the path. He brings us into the company of the mystics. He gives us that environment where we can meditate. This is how he forgives us.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

Have Courage

It's very easy to understand Sant Mat, but I know how difficult it is to follow.

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

If there is one thing every disciple comes to realize after being on the spiritual path for several years it is that it is not easy. Sant Mat is an all-encompassing way of life, and to be a good disciple twenty-four hours a day, from the time you wake up in the morning till the time you go to bed at night, can be quite exhausting.

At every step there is a raging battle with the mind; to do the right thing; to be good; to be dutiful, kind and loving; to have faith and to be patient. And we do this for one compelling reason – to be worthy of our Beloved. But day and night our old enemy – the mind – lies in ambush, ready to strike at the slightest sign of weakness; to take advantage the minute we let our guard down.

Sometimes, when the pressure builds up, we tell ourselves that we need a break. So we go to the spa and have a massage, or we meet some friends for lunch, or we go somewhere for a short holiday. Sure enough, afterwards, the body feels rejuvenated and the brain feels refreshed. But the mind, unfortunately, is the same old mind.

Even at lunch, one has to take care not to eat the wrong food or partake in any gossip. On a holiday, there is so much fun to be had that one ends up compromising with meditation timings. “It’s okay,” the mind says, “as long as you do your two and a half hours; it doesn’t matter if you break it up twenty-five times.”

But it does matter. So when a disciple once said to Hazur that before initiation, he was afraid of death but after initiation, he became afraid of life, he was absolutely right. Living in a constant state of conflict

with a powerful and unpredictable enemy is extremely daunting. And we have to watch this audacious mind like a hawk, for it is capable of stooping to humiliating depths – we wouldn't be able to live with ourselves if we didn't.

'Have courage' was Hazur's loving response to that disciple. It was a positive and inspiring piece of advice – precisely what every disciple needs to be able to carry on with life without losing his balance. The question is, what does it mean to be courageous?

The word 'courage' originates from the Latin word *cor* which means heart – a common metaphor for inner strength. This is perhaps the most accurate definition of courage – having inner strength. There are those who believe that courage is that quality of mind that enables a person to face difficulties and challenges without fear. But Sant Mat teaches us that courage is not about the absence of fear – it is about having the ability to overcome it.

It means taking on an opponent much more powerful than yourself, facing him with all the weapons you have, even if it is just a toothpick, confidently holding it up, looking at him straight in the eye, even though deep down inside you are terrified.

It is a quality that develops within us as we keep practising it, just like a muscle that can be strengthened and developed through consistent training. Every experience that allows us to stop and face our fear helps us build courage. This is why students are often challenged to take on things that are above and beyond their comfort zone. For when they take on tough tasks, it develops their courage muscle. Similarly, every time we overcome something difficult we become stronger, more confident and more courageous.

Fear holds us back. And many times fear takes on various disguises that we do not recognize. An example of this would be procrastination. When we keep putting something off, it is not only because we

do not want to do it, or because we find it boring – it is because we are afraid to do it. It is our fear of failure or the fear of discovering that we do not have what it takes to succeed. But the mystics assure us that the only way to overcome this is to stop putting it off, to simply decide to tackle the situation and just do it.

No doubt there will be times when we will be able to control the mind and there will be times when it will control us. But the mystics explain that it is important to rise whenever we fall, dust ourselves off and keep on going. The mind can easily get weighed down with thoughts like ‘I can’t do this’ or ‘this is too difficult’. But there is no room for discouragement or self-pity on this path of the brave. The teachings of Sant Mat are resolute – our Master initiated us because he knows we can do it.

The Shabd is our only anchor in this storm of life. The audible life stream is the source of all virtues. If we want courage, we can obtain it directly through meditation. Like a battery that gets charged when plugged into an electric socket, we too get charged when we tune in to the Shabd.

When we come across someone who is encouraged to do everything that comes his way, who is joyful, hopeful, ready to accomplish his duty, ready to make sacrifices, to take up responsibility and answer the demands of life like a soldier on the battlefield, it shows very clearly that his connection to the Spirit is strong.

When a man begins to grow dull and lukewarm in spirit, even the smallest labour distresses him, and he eagerly welcomes any worldly comfort. But when he begins to overcome the self and advances manfully in God’s way, then he regards as nothing those labours which he previously found so burdensome.

Thomas á Kempis, *The Inner Life*

The fact is, when we find ourselves struggling to cope with life, when we feel tired and unable to handle situations, chances are, it is due to the lack of concentrated meditation. When our connection to the Spirit is weak, we become feeble and frail. But if we make the effort to keep our mind in simran, gather our attention at the eye centre, and listen to the Shabd reverberating within us every single day, then gradually, we will regain that inner strength.

How long will it take us to achieve our goal? We have no way of knowing. But time and again we are assured that when the inner Master takes over our destiny on the day and hour of our initiation, our success is assured.

Granting this, it also depends on our meditation. The more intensely we work at it, the quicker will be our progress. Our Master will do his part but it is imperative that we do ours. Sitting and holding our full attention at the eye centre every day, as much as we possibly can, is the only way. Yes, it is difficult, but this is the way of the courageous.



A warrior is always ready to fight, so we should always be ready to fight with our mind, to conquer our mind and be prepared to sacrifice anything in order to achieve our end – like a warrior.

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

Lighter Side of Wisdom

Once Akbar said to Birbal, “I have heard that there are many fools in my kingdom, but I haven’t seen any, so today I want you to help me look for at least four fools.” To this Birbal agreed.

They consequently met a man riding his donkey on the road, with a pile of wood on his head. They asked him, “Good man, you are riding a donkey, but still you carry your load over your head?” The man answered, “Well, my donkey is very precious to me and I don’t want to burden him any more.”

Birbal told Akbar, “Your highness, here is your first fool!”

They then met another man who was searching for his ring on the side of the road. They asked him, “Good man, what are you looking for?” He answered, “I have lost my ring inside my house and I am trying to look for it.” They said, “But if you have lost your ring inside the house why are you looking for it outside?” The man answered, “Well, because it is too dark inside, and I can’t see anything!”

Birbal looked at Akbar and said, “Your highness, here is your second fool, and with this our search is over.”

“Over?” exclaimed Akbar, “but what about the other two?” “They are right here,” said Birbal. “One is you for wasting your precious time looking for fools, and one is me, for accompanying you and wasting mine!”



My Story

I have a woeful tale to share. I was born into this world blind, deaf, mute and handicapped. However, since birth, I have been taught to adapt to my limitations. I possess a pair of synthetic visual aids, called eyes, which like a horse's blinders allow me a very short range of sight. I can only see objects of a material nature. I was also given a pair of contraptions – ears – which allow me to hear but, like my visual aid, they are not the best. I am convinced that they are faulty or perhaps not accurately connected to my head, as I can hear different languages and sounds but I can't comprehend them all. I have also been told my hearing aids will age with me and slowly lose their function. As for my speech, I had a speech aid installed called a voice box. It only produces certain sounds which not everyone understands. Besides, the sounds I produce often do not do my thoughts and feelings justice.

As for my physical body, it is pitiful. I have rods called arms and legs attached which operate poorly as they tire easily and are beginning to stiffen. The worst of all is my mind. It has five inoperable tumours attached to it. They have been named lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride. In short, these tumours affect my behaviour by presenting irresistible temptations, feelings of dependency or superiority despite my state, my unquenchable desires all year round – you get my drift.

As I grew, I became accustomed to my incompetence and managed to live a normal life. Sometimes a nagging thought interrupts my sense of normalcy, a thought that something is wrong with me – that there is a missing piece of puzzle in my life. However, with practice, I became a pro at ignoring these silly intrusions.

The twist in my tale began when one fine day, I was told that there is someone who has the ability to cure me. They call him the ‘perfect Master’. Rumour has it that he has travelled from infinity and beyond and is currently setting up shop here on earth. He sees without eyes, hears without ears, talks in a different medium – basically he is different. I succinctly recall my initial reaction of scepticism: I did not need his help! I felt fine the way I was and I have grown to like my funky contraptions. Besides, I was convinced it was another marketing gimmick.

However, as I began to hear more about this ‘perfect Master’, I discovered that his services are free of charge! So at the urging of my friends, I arranged a consultation. After all, I had nothing to lose.

The ‘Master’ examined my pitiful state and assured me that should I follow his treatment rigidly, I would be able to heal myself of my chronic lifelong symptoms. As for the tumours, he assured me that they will gradually shrink to nothing. I would no longer require these cumbersome contraptions to see beyond material objects. Furthermore, I would be able to communicate without words, and travel to regions without any means of transportation. What won me over was the knowledge that I will survive the disintegration of my body and become an eternal being. He will guide me through the journey to where he hailed from – the infinity and beyond. It seemed that I found the last piece of the puzzle that I was looking for.

My initial scepticism eroded. I couldn’t wait to start the course of treatment: to devote ten percent of my time daily and sit in silent contemplation of five words. Furthermore, there were other requisites which, if not followed, would reverse the effects of the treatment. They included leading a clean moral life, earning an honest living, keeping my diet free of meat, fish and poultry products and abstaining from mind-altering drugs.

Fast forward a few years: I am still a patient of the Master. I must say that my initial enthusiasm has dwindled but it is not entirely gone. My goal of seeing myself healed keeps me going. I must admit I can feel the positive effects of the medication. Sometimes, I am able to see flashes of light in the darkness, and hear some sounds with my ears closed. I often experience tingling sensations in my legs and arms too. I go for check-ups when I get the chance and each time I find myself in awe of my Master. He is one loving benefactor who never tires of giving. Indeed, I consider it my great good fortune to have crossed paths with him. If you are one of the lucky few, I wish you and myself a speedy recovery!



This is indeed a great opportunity and everyone who is so fortunate as to receive initiation ought to devote his best time and attention to making progress on the path. The Master supervises the efforts of the disciple, but the effort has to be made by the disciple himself.

In the beginning you should start with love and faith, and keep the mind away from worldly things so that you might be able to draw your attention inside and concentrate at the eye centre. It is by means of our thoughts that we have become attached to the outside world, and it is by the same means that we ought to withdraw ourselves and concentrate our thoughts at the eye centre. The Master is never happier than when he sees the disciple working honestly and faithfully, trying to reach his goal. And of course, his blessings always go out to such a disciple.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

Mechanically Yours

Sant Mat provides clear and guided teachings for anyone wishing to tread the path of spirituality. Seekers are encouraged to conduct their investigation into the path to understand its philosophy and, in doing so, craft their lifestyle with the principles at its core. During initiation, disciples are taught how to meditate under the instructions of the Master, using simran, the repetition of words, and bhajan, the technique of listening to the sound current. From then on, the initiate is asked to meditate daily for a minimum of two and a half hours.

It is not long before the initial novelty of meditation turns into a struggle where one constantly looks for new ways to stay motivated. In such cases, it sometimes warrants that we pause and assess our attitude towards the path and meditation.

Life generally has us operating in some kind of a pattern where our minds tend to switch to autopilot mode during almost every activity we perform as a routine. When we brush our teeth, do we think about why we are doing it? More than likely we don't. Like many other activities performed daily, it is done without much thought and carried out as a mechanical function. The shared commonality between our mundane everyday actions and our repetition of simran at the time of meditation can be uncanny. Has our simran also turned into a mere set of mechanically rattled words?

It would be incorrect for one to say that mechanical simran has no place on the spiritual path. Masters have always stated that we can start with mechanical simran as long as we keep to our meditation; that from quantity will come quality. But in order to better understand our meditation technique and its mechanics, it is important to first gain a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Mystics tell us we are soul, and have been given a mind, the senses and a physical body in order to function at this physical level. The mind, being a highly sophisticated entity, is meant to be used to gather information, think, and then act through the body. However, being in constant association with the mind, we now identify ourselves with it, no longer recognizing that it is no more than a well-engineered device used to serve the real us. It would be similar to someone owning a smartphone and, after becoming dependent on it, forgetting that its purpose is to communicate with others, to the extent that one now believes oneself to be the phone. Have we ever heard anyone say, “I am an iPhone?” This is what it compares to when we use phrases like “I think so” when we really mean “my mind thinks so”.

Furthermore, in directing our attention to ourselves, we will observe that the mind is continually running an endless marathon of thoughts. Thoughts are forever generated, flowing one after the other, many times forming long chains.

Understanding that we use the mind in everything that we do, mystics advocate the use of simran as part of our meditation practice. Using set words given by the Master, we are to substitute them for the random trail of thoughts that emerge when we sit.

Moreover, due to the lack of association with the words themselves, it can become very easy to repeat them without feeling, eventually resulting in meditation becoming mechanical.

Simran, therefore, is really an exercise for the mind. However, this immediately seems to lead us into a paradox. How is one to apply the mind through repetition in order to transcend the mind?

To transcend the mind, the saints tell us that we need to be pulled by something existing outside of the mind. A power from beyond its realm, fully capable of turning our meditation into a success. Masters tell us that this power is love.

Love, the saints explain, is the greatest power, and is in fact synonymous with the Creator himself. Reading through Hazur Maharaj Ji's and Great Master's letters to their disciples, one sees the most common advice: "Attend to your meditation with love and devotion." The three key words being: *attend*, *love*, and *devotion*. Masters choose their words very carefully indeed. Each of these words convey the secret to successful meditation.

Love, the saints tell us, is in reality God itself. When the Great Master was once asked how one can develop love for God, he replied:

"That love is the gift of the Master." Then the satsangi asked, "Will the disciple always get it?" The Master said, "Why not, if he works for it? Everyone else pays wages earned, and so if anyone works for the Master, he must draw the wages due him."

With a Great Master in India

Hence, meditation is really a communion with the Master in which he gives us love. Devotion has been explained by the mystics as our response to this love that they give us. It is an overwhelming feeling of affection, gratitude, contentment and piety.

Therefore, simran with love and devotion is the key. Mechanical simran keeps us bound within the domain of the mind. Until and unless we invoke the grace of the Master through love and devotion, our practice will remain stagnant.

The real esoteric secret to our success in meditation lies in the Master's third word – attend. The entire philosophy and essence of mysticism is condensed into this single word. The distinction between doing meditation and attending to it is where the difference lies. As mentioned earlier, what is our attitude towards our meditation? Do we really feel that this is a burden or a chore that we have to do? What

is our state of mind when we sit? Are we sitting with the purpose of achieving some goal, or maybe a realization of some kind? Are we sitting with some expectation and thereby forcing it on ourselves? Then perhaps we are 'doing' our meditation. Attending to it simply means being present. To attend. We stop analyzing and sit for the simple joy of sharing those sacred moments where it is just us and Him, and a vast emptiness of space ready to be filled with love. We have lost all track and worries of clocking time and are in the bliss of just being with our inner self. Whether we are given paradise or not, it is no longer a concern. We are happy being present without it feeling like an effort.

The mind loves nothing more than to constantly re-establish and validate its identity. It does this in many ways, the most common of which is self-recognition. It enjoys working hard and accomplishing its given tasks so that it can duly take credit for its achievement. However, meditation is a gift from the Master. Something given for free that requires us to be present. This is beyond the mind's capacity to grasp that its efforts do not produce any results. Hence, we struggle and work hard ... and then we fail. This is what Great Master meant when he said, "Bring me your failures."

Indeed there is effort involved, but the effort lies in our failing to make any progress. When we understand that we just need to be present and repeat our simran with love and devotion, only then will we draw the grace of the Master and achieve success in meditation.



Our Actions Tell the Story

What do we tell a child who constantly repeats the same mistakes after saying he is sorry? How would we respond to a devoted spouse who claims that he or she loves us dearly but does not make any time for us? What would we say to disciples who declare they want God-realization but cannot get themselves to sit for meditation?

The answer would probably be unanimous: “you don’t mean what you say.” If we care about someone or something enough, we will always be moved to show it through our actions, no matter how difficult the task may be. So if we are slack in our meditation, could it be because we do not really care about realizing God?

When we take stock of our actions, we realize that this is not necessarily the case. For if it was, why would we have sought initiation? Why do we still try to get up every morning and put in an effort to sit for meditation? Why do we constantly seek inspiration through satsangs and Sant Mat literature if we really do not care?

The reason why we do not translate our words into action on this path is not because we do not care; it is because we do not fully understand the severity of our situation.

We simply cannot comprehend how powerful the mind is and how difficult it is to tame, nor do we realize what a limited amount of time we have.

You who talk of tomorrow, should realize that with every day that passes the evil tree grows more vigorous, while he whose duty it is to dig it up by the roots is getting old and feeble.

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

With every day that passes our habits are becoming more rigid, we are less flexible in our outlook, less capable of change, and our bodies are not as cooperative as they used to be. How then can we expect to do better meditation later on in our lives if we cannot do it today?

Saints have often explained to us that our spiritual endeavour carries a great sense of urgency; it is not something we can afford to take lightly, for we have already invested many millions of lifetimes to have come this far. What is at stake here is nothing less than our very own divine legacy – the attainment of self- and God-realization.

We are too poor to dilly-dally and too needy to procrastinate. If we have the right intention, then it has to be translated into the right action now, for anything well-said or well-intended will unfortunately always fade away into oblivion unless it is well-done.

There is a painting by Jean-Francois Millet, entitled *The Angelus*, where he depicts two peasants, a man and a woman, with their heads bowed in silence as they attend to their evening prayer. At their feet there is a large basket of potatoes, a pitchfork and a wheelbarrow with bags containing the fruit of their labour – all set aside as they observe their evening ritual. A church sits on the horizon and a light falls from the sky. This light does not fall on the man and the woman however, and neither does it fall on the church. That light illumines the pitchfork and the wheelbarrow at the couple's feet, reiterating the fact that God's divine glance will always fall over the work of our hands – our efforts and our actions.



The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Could you explain to me about doing simran with love and devotion? To me these are just words, and I don't understand what they mean.*

A: Put your whole mind in these words; you will automatically feel the love and devotion. Let no other thought come in your mind. Let the whole of yourself, the whole of your mind, be in the simran. Love comes automatically. The idea is that love creates faith, and faith helps us to practise. If we love someone, we naturally develop faith in him, and if we have faith in him, naturally we always like to follow his advice. So if we have love for the Master, love for the teachings, faith will come in us. And if we have faith that what we are doing is right, then practice will come automatically.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Maharaj Ji. when we reach the Master inside, are there big groups of souls with the Master?*

A: Do you want to be with people there? If your way of thinking is in that state, you will never see the Radiant Form of the Master. You will see the Radiant Form of the Master when you are concerned only with yourself and with the Master, and with nobody else in the world. When you see the Master within, the whole creation ceases to exist for you. You exist and the Master exists. You're not aware of anyone else. You're so much in love that you're not aware of anyone else around you. You

have seen moths. The moth is in love with the light, and there are a thousand moths on that light. Ask that moth if he knows any other moth there. He knows only one thing: the light he's in love with. He's not conscious of any other moth – and if he's conscious of the other moths, he is not a moth at all.

Die to Live

* * *

Q: *This lady has suffered a hearing loss recently and she is very much concerned about whether this will impede her spiritual progress.*

A: Our hearing with these physical ears has nothing to do with our spiritual hearing. Whether we hear anything with the physical ears or not, we have internal ears which we have to open to hear that Sound. As you have read in the Bible, Christ so beautifully said: Ye have ears and hear not; ye have eyes and see not. So it is not these physical eyes which see within; it is not these physical ears which hear within. There is an internal ear, which is not physical, which hears the Sound. So whether you are able to hear with the physical ears or not is immaterial.

Q: *[Here the deaf lady said:] I would love to hear what you are saying.*

A: That is all right, but I want to tell you that you are not missing anything if you do not hear from the outside, through the physical ears. The thing worth hearing is inside. Give your attention to that hearing. That Sound inside will automatically pull you up and you will hear much better things than you were used to hearing outside.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *



Seva: For Whom?

There is a story of a young college graduate who was given the opportunity of doing seva as an usher during regular Sunday satsang. She gladly accepted the offer and was very excited to start her seva. But this young sevadar was no ordinary girl; on the contrary, she had graduated from a top American university with honours and had received several job offers across the country. Everything she did was always very well planned, organized and meticulous. She never accepted anything below an 'A' at school and this attitude ultimately became a part of her work ethic, which made her very successful. Filled with excitement, she accepted the seva of being an usher and showed up on time every week with a very committed heart and full of new ideas on how to improve the seating process.

For such an accomplished individual, being an usher would seem pretty simple, wouldn't it? How hard could it be to ask people to turn off their cell phones and direct them to the front of the hall? On the contrary, she confessed that it was one of the most difficult tasks allotted to her in her life! Her coordinator was an elderly individual who had been doing his seva for years and who spared no opportunity to tell this young 'know it all' what she did wrong. Week after week she was reprimanded for the minutest things, to the point where she considered quitting. It was the first time in her life that she ever considered 'giving up' at anything. At one point, her coordinator even told her: "You see that sign on the wall that says 'NO CELL PHONES'? It can do your seva. Don't consider yourself so indispensable." Needless to say, it was a serious blow to this Ivy League graduate's ego.

But like all committed sevadars, she swallowed her pride and stuck it out. In time, the elderly man grew very fond of her and she

eventually became his assistant. When asked how she felt about the entire experience, she sighed and replied: “I realized that one does seva for oneself, nobody else. The seva did not need me, I was the one who needed the seva.”

Like this young woman, many of us have gone through the experience of doing seva and feeling inadequate in some form or another. To have our ideas shot down, plans criticized or strategies simply dismissed, can be difficult to swallow. Sometimes we are placed on teams with people with whom we have some history, or with whom we don't see eye to eye, or must report to people that we feel are younger or less qualified than ourselves. Yet why do most of us keep ploughing ahead? Because like that young graduate, deep down we know that seva has always been going on and will continue to go on, with or without us. We need the seva to better ourselves – the seva does not need us.

At times like this, some of us feel we need to stick it out in our seva out of love and respect for our Master. We feel like we are doing it for him – but in reality, he is providing us with an opportunity to learn. Do we ever stop to wonder why a young Ivy League graduate somehow gets paired with a wise, though less educated elder, or why the businessman who wants everything done yesterday gets paired with a lawyer who takes his sweet time crossing every *t* and dotting every *i*? Or why is it that someone with the least possible computer knowledge is assigned a task in the administration office? This is because seva is not about how quickly results are being achieved on the outside, but about the work that is taking place on the inside. Seva is not about the final outcome – it is about the transformation that takes place within.

During the construction of satsang centres, it hardly matters how quickly buildings get erected; what is important is how much of our

ego is demolished in the process. Even the cleanliness of our centres' bathrooms is secondary to the purity of our hearts. The point is, like the college graduate and the elderly sevadar, have we become more understanding, patient and compassionate through our seva? Have we become more humble and receptive to other people's ideas? The truth is that we need one another. The Master uses us as sandstones to smooth out each other's rough edges, and if this is taking place, then the true purpose of our seva is being accomplished.

Indeed, we are often reminded about how Maharaj Ji could have quickly built the Dera Hospital with the use of bulldozers, dump trucks and heavy construction gear, but instead he chose to build the hospital by mitti seva. Bucket by bucket, sand was carried on the heads of villagers, doctors, lawyers, housewives, locals and foreigners alike, while Hazur Maharaj Ji himself would sit at the site under the hot sun for hours in the afternoons. It was extremely dusty in those days and, possibly aggravated by all the dust, in his later years he often suffered from a bad throat or cough. Whenever questioned about his health, he would brush aside any concern saying: "These ailments are the natural decorations of a body at my age."

On another occasion, speaking about the langar at the Dera, Hazur Maharaj Ji said: "One of the objects of running the langar is to provide an opportunity to the satsangis to serve others. It increases mutual love and understanding amongst the satsangis. It enables them to rise above the narrow distinctions of the rich and the poor, of the high and the low."

We must always be mindful of the true purpose of our seva. We often get carried away by our egos and perceived talents and forget the true value of the task at hand. While building the hospital in Dera, the architects kept coming up with beautiful modern designs and facades. However, none of their designs found favour with Hazur Maharaj Ji,

and understandably this made the architects unhappy. Hazur Maharaj Ji diplomatically explained: “The hospital is not for you and not for me. It is for simple people who will come for treatment. So we don’t want the building to look intimidating or strange, no matter how beautiful it may be.”

All our seva is but a means to an end – and that end is inside each of us. The Masters are our example and they work with all of us, no matter how accomplished or illiterate we are. The Great Master used to say that if the Lord wills it, then even sticks and stones could do our seva. Or as the elderly usher aptly told that young graduate, even a sign could do her seva!

At the completion of the Eye Camp in 1989, Hazur Maharaj Ji beautifully summarized the true purpose of seva by reminding the sangat that the real beneficiary of seva is neither the patient nor the institution but the one serving:

It is one’s great good fortune to get this opportunity to do seva. It is the Lord’s boundless grace, and we should thank the patients for giving the Dera sangat this chance to serve.



Seva is service to the Master through service to our fellow human beings. Nobody is being more helped than the one who does the service. The purpose of seva is to help us expand in our love. Seva is an act of love meant simply to help us grow in love. That is seva. The practice of meditation will gradually help us to look upon everything we do as the Master’s work.

Living Meditation

Did You Know?

What is meant by being at the eye centre? It means you don't let your mind scatter into the world. You don't lose your balance. Your mind is absolutely still, and you're always contented and feel happiness, and radiate happiness. That will be the effect of stilling the mind: you're always happy, nothing bothers you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*



When you sit in bhajan, begin by attaching the mind and attention to the Sound that you hear first – which is like that of a grain handmill, or a steam locomotive, or an oven going full blast – and keep the faculty of inner seeing and hearing directed upward to focus on where the Sound is coming from. Then attach the mind and attention to the Sound of the bell, and next to that of the conch. The soul will then gently savour the bliss, and one day it will surely reach Sach Khand. Please do not be in a hurry. When the soul becomes steadfast in its love for the Sound, a bond is then forged with the Shabd-dhun. Thus step by step, slowly, slowly, the mind is tamed. One day you will certainly reach Sach Khand.

Baba Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*



Never hurt the feelings of anyone. This is a sin which even God himself does not pardon, because it cuts at the very root of spirituality. We should not thrust our views on others. An attitude of humility should be adopted and we should always speak kindly.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

The More I Practise

When someone asked a world class golfer what his secret was to winning the championship tournament five years in a row, his response was a memorable one. He said, “the more I practise the luckier I get.”

Reflecting on this, one is reminded of the deep significance of practice, not just in golf, but in all the aspects of life. In fact, it is interesting to observe that the qualities required to practise golf are the very same elements needed to practise meditation.

Technique

When golfing professionals provide guidance, they usually give advice on what type of equipment to use, the right posture and balance to maintain; and they explain the various techniques necessary to execute the perfect golf swing.

Just as the correct application of these methods determines our ability to play the sport successfully, so too will the correct application of the techniques given to us at the time of initiation contribute towards the success of our meditation practice.

At the time of initiation, the spiritual Master imparts a specific technique on how to meditate. This involves sitting in a particular posture and repeating the five holy names while holding our full attention at the eye centre and listening to the inner Sound. This technique forms the foundation of our meditation and every part of it is crucial towards the success of our spiritual practice.

Concentration

Every good golfer knows that he has to focus his mind solely on the shot he is playing at that single, specific moment. If he thinks of

anything else, the seamless connection between the eye and brain is severed and the game is lost. Without that intense level of concentration, it is impossible to execute a good shot.

In meditation, concentrating the mind, withdrawing the attention from the world and holding it at the eye centre is a constant battle for most disciples. The mind is so immersed in sensual pleasures and flooded with thoughts, that it is extremely difficult to direct it inwards. Like the avid golfer, every serious meditator knows that only intensity of focus and strict confinement of the mind to the present moment can lead to successful meditation. Every vagrant thought that passes through the mind during meditation makes concentration impossible. Only deep, penetrating repetition of the five holy names can achieve that intensity of concentration.

Perseverance

In golf, through persistent practice one develops rhythm, coordination and muscle memory. One develops a feel for certain shots, so that when one is out on the course, it becomes natural to execute the proper shot.

One often hears comments like: what a lucky shot that was, or it was his lucky day. But luck, as they say, is what is left only after one has given one hundred percent. The fact is, when we witness any inspiring performance what we might consider is what we did not witness – the endless hours of practice that led to the execution of that piece of perfection.

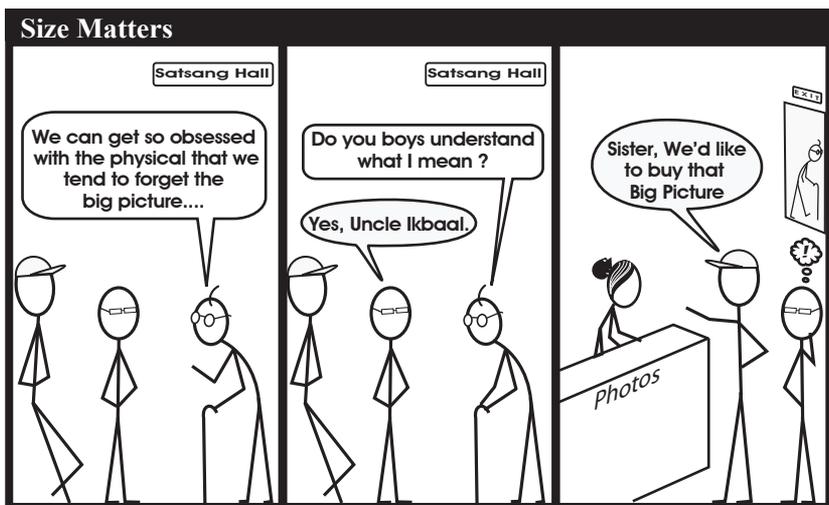
The mystics inspire us when they say ‘practice makes perfect.’ Despite the obstacles we may encounter in meditation, we simply have to go on practising diligently, until the entire process becomes a habit. Eventually, it will become easier to accomplish, as the mind is a creature of habit. The Masters always emphasize in their teachings that it is only by obediently sitting in meditation that the disciple

can subdue the mind. Even if it rebels, one just has to sit. Eventually, meditation itself generates the desire for more meditation.

At the end of the day, there is no substitute for plain vanilla practice. Practice, when done with discipline and dedication, eventually leads to mastery in any endeavour. The only difference is that in a worldly endeavour, practice leads to perfection. But in meditation, practice is the means to realize the perfection that already exists within us – our soul, a drop of the Perfect One. And when we give him one hundred percent of our effort from the bottom of our hearts, then his loving grace makes our practice perfect.



SPIRITUALISTICKS®



Wazira – the Silent

“Can you show me any advanced soul here?” the professor asked.

“There are many, but they always try to hide themselves,” I told him.

I was just thinking of various spiritually advanced persons who lived at the Dera when Bhai Wazira passed in front of the room where we were sitting. I called him in. The professor stood up and shook hands with him and offered him a seat by his side on the sofa, but the Bhai shyly sat down on the floor and waited for a question or an order. I left them to gaze at one another for some moments. As neither could understand the language of the other, a conversation between them was out of the question.

After a few minutes, Bhai asked for permission to leave. After his departure I told the professor that this man belonged to an untouchable class, was very poor, had no property and had been living at the Dera since his boyhood. After his initiation, he gave full time to meditation and made good spiritual progress inside, reaching the stage where he could see the Master in everything – animate or inanimate. He would embrace a tree and exclaim, “Master, my beloved Master,” or would take a dog in his lap and say, “My Master is in it.” For hours he would go on rubbing the back of a bull with great love, constantly repeating, “My Master, are you pleased with me?” Sometimes he would take dust from the ground over which the Master had passed and would rub it on his face and head, saying, “It is a great cleanser.”

One day he fell down at the feet of the Great Master, crying, “My Guru is God, the Creator of all.” The Master had heard of his conduct. He made him stand up and asked in a stern tone, “What is all this I hear about you?”

“Are you not the Creator Lord? Are you not the life of all?” Bhai Wazira asked.

The Great Master said, “It is not proper to give out secrets. You shall suffer for it.”

“I only proclaim the truth,” said Bhai.

“Who told you to do that?” the Great Master asked him.

“You,” said Bhai.

“All right, I take back my permission,” said the Great Master. And instantly everything was taken back. The door was shut against Bhai Wazira. The Lord’s grace was withdrawn. The fountain of love and devotion dried up. He could not sit in meditation for a single moment. His zeal and enthusiasm were gone. The shock at the loss of spiritual wealth is much greater than at the loss of material wealth. Bhai could not bear it and wept for days and nights. The Great Master refused to see him. Apart from the cessation of the inner audience, he was denied the outer audience also. This went on for a full month, at the end of which Bhai was reduced to a mere skeleton due to lack of food and sleep. Then a number of old satsangis interceded on his behalf and he was brought before the Great Master. The Great Master smiled and said, “Well, how are you now, my son?”

Bhai put his hands to his ears (a sign of remorse) and said, “My Lord, I have learned the lesson. Now forgive me.”

The Great Master told him, “Never forget it. Now go.”

“Bhai was given back what he had lost,” I said, finishing the story, “and since then he talks very little. A calm serenity covers his face and he is now called Wazira – the Silent.”

Call of the Great Master



Dedicated to Thee

Reading the life stories of the Masters, and reflecting on their daily schedule, we get a glimpse of their untiring efforts. They go through all kinds of difficulties, committing to long schedules from morning till night, travelling from country to country to awaken us from our deep slumber, urging us to turn our attention inwards. With their unconditional love, they encourage and inspire us to attend to our spiritual practice, often compromising their own comfort and well-being. In *Heaven on Earth*, the author explains:

When we recollect how the Great Master and Sardar Bahadur Ji never spared themselves in the performance of their duties, and when we see how Maharaj Charan Singh undertakes long and incredibly strenuous tours, we realize the meaning of the Great Master's words, "Toil and discomfort is the legacy of the saints."

And yet, it is said that this is only a fraction of what the Master does for us, for this is only from a physical perspective. We can never truly understand the intensity and depth of the inner guidance that the Master bestows upon every soul allotted under his care. In a letter to a disciple, Maharaj Charan Singh wrote:

Once a Master has accepted a disciple, he never leaves him but is ever ready to guide him on the path. He does much more for us than the human mind can comprehend. All that is asked of us is to follow his instructions with faith and devotion, and he will do the rest.

Light on Sant Mat

When we experience their compassion and love, as undeserving as we may be, our hearts are filled with gratitude. But we know that a heart filled with gratitude is not enough. Every thankful heart needs to express itself through action, obedience and effort to fulfil the promise that we made to the Master at the time of initiation.

We would all have our own special story to tell of how we came on to the path. But the underlying reason why we asked for initiation is the same. Nothing in the world could fill the gaping hole in our hearts, and we yearned for someone to show us the way to a place where peace and happiness was abundant and unchanging.

At that time, did we not promise that we would make every effort to obey the Master, for this was truly what we wanted more than anything? The question we need to ask ourselves is: are we fulfilling that promise? Is our longing to go back to the Lord as deep as it was when we asked for initiation?

As we go through life, we will face many more obstacles and there will always be days when we feel distant from the path. It is precisely then that we need to put in more effort, and call to the Master for help. The Master never gives up on us. His love, encouragement, and guidance is evident in every facet of our lives. We need only to turn to him, and he does the rest. Maharaj Charan Singh assures us:

He is more anxious to pull us than we are anxious to go back to him. But for that, we would not be on the path at all today. It is because of his pull that we find ourselves on the path.

Everything the Master does is born out of his deep love for us, and it serves only one purpose. The Dera, his visits to the centres all over the world, satsangs, seva, the gift of initiation are all given to us so that

we can practise our meditation and be filled with the necessary love and devotion to reach our goal. Our fervent and heartfelt dedication to this path is the only gift that conveys what words cannot adequately express – thank you, Master.

*For myriad births have I been separated from you, O Lord.
This birth is dedicated to you.*

Guru Ravidas, The Philosopher's Stone



*Be dedicated to God while the body is in good condition;
Else later on, when the body and mind
are worn out, you shall repent, says Dadu.
Repeat the Name with pangs of separation
and sing its glory with love and devotion.
Fix your mind in repetition with joy
and dedication, O Dadu.*

Dadu, The Compassionate Mystic

Turn Inwards

Once upon a time, the head monk of a Buddhist monastery had a cat which he was very fond of. The cat was a playful one and it used to jump all over him when the monk sat down to meditate. So the monk ordered his junior monks to tie up the cat every time he meditated. This became a routine. Whenever the head monk sat down to meditate, the cat would be tied up so as not to disturb him during his meditation. And so this practice went on for some time. Then one day, the head monk died and another monk took his place. Now this monk and the cat had no relationship whatsoever. But because man is a creature of habit, so it happened whenever the new head monk sat down to meditate, the junior monks would tie up the cat!

Then one day the cat died. Do you know what the junior monks did? They went and bought another cat just to tie it up so the head monk could meditate! And so this tradition went on. And that is the nature of tradition.



When these Saviours of mankind depart, however, we tend to forget or misinterpret their teachings and instead of turning inwards and seeing the Light and hearing the Sound, we take to ceremonies and rituals, which are of no help. It is only by going inside that our mind becomes bound and subdued, and releases the soul from its grip.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

It's All in the Attitude

When you look at a glass that is filled half way with water what do you see? Do you see it as being a glass half full or half empty? This question is very common in philosophical studies, used to determine how a person perceives things. A person who sees it as half full is an optimist – a positive thinker; whereas a person who sees it as half empty is a pessimist – a negative thinker. A negative person always thinks “I can’t” but a positive person says, “I can”. A negative person always worries about problems but a positive person focuses on solutions. A negative person laments what is missing but a positive person counts his blessings.

It is very natural to have negative thoughts, especially when we face criticism and rejection and have to endure suffering. We get frustrated and depressed and just want to give up.

Our thoughts determine our action. When we constantly think about something, we slowly take steps towards achieving that goal. If we are always negative, we will never even take the first step. We tend to dwell on our fears and allow them to get the better of us. We find ourselves thinking, “I can’t focus during meditation, I am no good at writing articles, I am afraid of public speaking, I am not good at doing anything.” When we keep telling ourselves this, we are actually programming ourselves for failure. These examples reflect a negative attitude and lead us to disappointing results.

Look at a small child. When he first learns to walk, he stumbles and falls; he may even get hurt, but he still picks himself up again and again until he finally succeeds. He never gives up. If he were always afraid of falling, he would never learn to walk.

Life will always have its ups and downs. We may find it hard to overcome obstacles, difficulties and fears. We may make mistakes, suffer disappointments and, because of our human failings, when a strong wave of karma comes, it may shake us from the path. Saints tell us that we must never, ever give up. Persistence is the key. While we may not like failing at anything, it is a necessary part of the road to success.

We can look for the positive even in our negative experiences. Difficulties or hardships can give us perspective. If we suffer from a life-threatening illness, we do not allow the little things to bother us and we start to focus on the important things in life. Hardships teach us to be grateful. We do not usually appreciate something until it is taken away from us. Overcoming problems and challenges make us stronger and teach us valuable lessons, which helps us to grow spiritually. Whatever we have to go through, our good and bad karmas alike, they are a learning experience, and if we always strive to maintain a positive outlook towards everything, it will help us to keep moving forward and eventually inward and upward. As Hazur always used to say, “Instead of cursing the darkness, we must light a candle.”

Saints tell us that there are no failures in Sant Mat and that we should always take a positive approach and remain faithful. Meditation gives us that strength, that strong willpower, to keep us steadfast on the path. Even if we fall, we should not feel dejected but instead we should get up like the little child and try again.

Success requires effort, commitment, discipline, patience and the willingness to persevere through difficulties. The mystic Rumi says:

In this path struggle on and on and do not rest even at the last breath.

As quoted in *Spiritual Gems*

Meditation is difficult and it involves a lifetime of struggle, but we must be honest in our efforts and persevere. His grace is never lacking if our effort is honest and sincere. In a letter to a disciple, Great Master wrote:

I am well aware that you have struggles. You have some things within yourself to overcome and some things outside of yourself which must be surmounted. But you can do it.

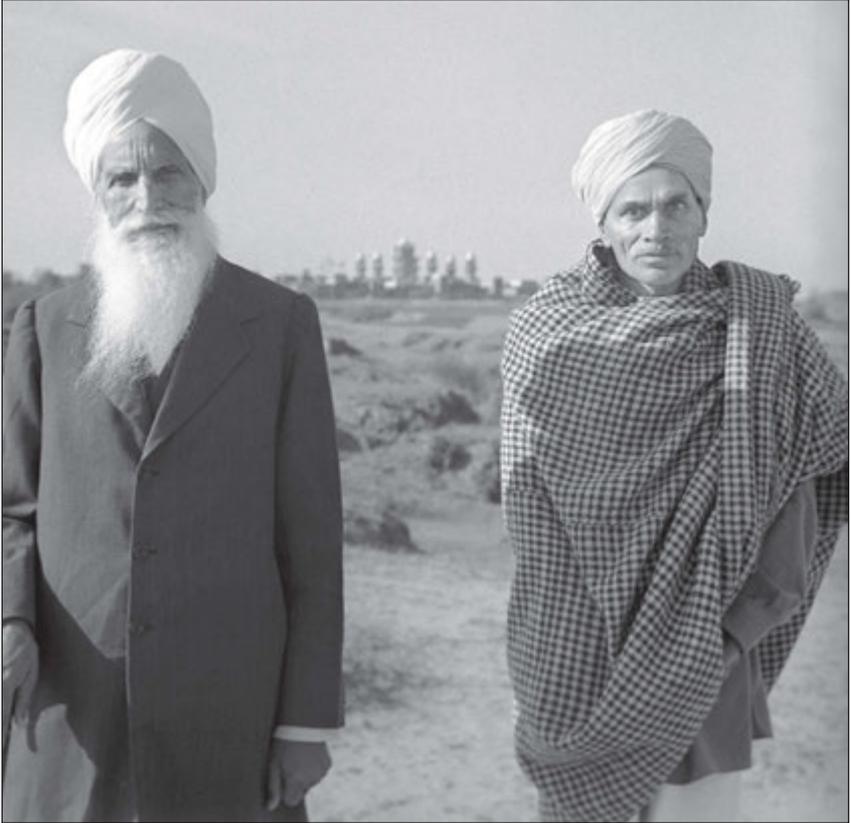
Spiritual Gems

We can do it. The Lord has planted that seed of love within us and it has to grow. All we have to do is take one step forward and then another and another. All we have to do is stay positive and keep trying. Slowly but surely, with the Lord's grace, we will become successful.



It is a law of spirituality that if a disciple takes one step on the path indicated by the Master, the Master takes a hundred steps to meet him. He is the bestower of all benefits. He is beyond praise or comprehension. He is immortal and limitless.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. III



Maharaj Sawan Singh with Maharaj Jagat Singh

Heart to Heart

Hazur Maharaj Ji returned on 28th February very late and the Dera inhabitants were bidden to darshan by lamplight. A petrol vapour lamp was placed on the dais near him and hymns were sung. For his audience it was a most moving moment. At such times very often the Master's face is not expressive of human emotion but it is very 'alive' and his eyes travel to each individual in the audience much as a good shepherd might count his flock and note each one's well-being.

In Search of the Way



In 1964, when Hazur Maharaj Ji visited Calcutta – at that time a centre of political upheaval – it was once again embroiled in riots, and there was much gunfire throughout the city. On his way to satsang, Maharaj Ji's car was hit by a bullet. Not surprisingly, the driver panicked, but Maharaj Ji reassured him and told him to drive on to satsang. Gunfire could be heard during the entire satsang; however, Maharaj Ji delivered his one-and-a-half-hour discourse completely unperturbed, and his tranquillity permeated the sangat, quieting their fears.

Heaven on Earth



A disciple had already told us how indulgent the Great Master was to him in his requests for leave of absence from his army unit for Dera functions. When the Great Master passed away and Sardar Bahadur succeeded him, a disciple asked him if he could expect the same indulgences and Sardar Bahadur said, "No, for he was a king and I am a beggar."

In Search of the Way

Book Review



Sant Charandas

BY DR. T. R. SHANGARI

PUBLISHER: RSSB, 2014. MYSTICS OF THE EAST SERIES.

ISBN: 978-81-8466-302-0

Sant Charandas by Dr. T. R. Shangari was first published in Hindi and Punjabi in 1992. The new edition in English brings to an English-speaking readership a selection of the hymns and couplets of the beloved eighteenth-century saint Charandas (1703-1782). Like other books in the Mystics of the East Series, *Sant Charandas* also presents an overview of the saint's life and teachings. The introduction details the historical context in which Charandas lived and taught – a time of intense political turmoil and rigid religious intolerance – and reveals how, despite these challenging conditions, he fearlessly taught his path of devotion to all: Hindus and Muslims, men and women, rich and poor.

Three of Charandas' direct disciples wrote extensively about his life, publishing their biographies shortly after his death, and a fourth disciple, Sahjobai, included biographical information about her Master in her poems. These sources provide a store of facts about his life at a level of detail unusual in the lives of saints. They document his childhood in Rajasthan, time spent with his Master, Sukdev, and his period of mastership. They describe his travels and the ashrams he established. He had about 5000 disciples at the time of his death, but did not appoint a successor during his lifetime.

In *Sant Charandas*, the saint's teachings are presented in three sections: Our Predicament, Living Teacher, and Spiritual Practice. Our Predicament covers such topics as the rare opportunity of human life, the certainty of death, and the fleeting nature of everything on the ever-changing physical plane, including our friends and dearest relations. Charandas says:

*O Saints, this carnival will end in a short while;
we will depart after watching this show.*

*Never again will you meet those
who have gathered here together.
Many travellers from different directions
cross the river in a boat – they meet
only to go their separate ways a few moments later.*

In this predicament, he says, the Lord is the only support for our souls. He alone is true, everlasting and unchanging. Charandas addresses the Lord:

*O immaculate invisible Lord,
you are the one who has assumed innumerable forms.
Your light illumines the whole world –
you abide in every heart.*

Singing the praises of the Lord, Charandas loses himself in awe:

*No one can create colours like him;
no one can create designs like him –
there is no craftsman like him in this world.
Many astonishing marvels has he created –
unparalleled, grand and infinite.
Behold them in the waters, earth, air and sky
and enjoy their beauty.
The creation is a garden in which the gardener
has created innumerable blossoms.
Lose yourself in awe, as you gaze upon such wondrous beauty.*

The section titled “Living Teacher” discusses the master-disciple relationship, the central place of Shabd and Nam as the path to the Lord, and love as the essential ingredient in spirituality. As Charandas says:

*Love liberates you from the world;
love unites you with the Lord.*

*Love turns you around, changes your course
and leads you to the Lord's abode.*

In nearly every hymn, Charandas speaks of the loving kindness of his guru, Sukdev.

*A hundred times more than a father does the mother love the son.
Inwardly she takes care of him, while outwardly admonishing and
rebuking him.
The Lord's love is a hundred times that of a mother.
The Master's love is a hundred times that of the Lord.
O Charandas, this is how Sukdev loves you and removes your faults.*

The section titled "Spiritual Practice" discusses such topics as dying while living, the unique power of the Shabd to subdue the mind, and the entrancing melody heard by the soul in the higher regions. Charandas says:

*Entranced are all the beautiful souls
while the Lord plays the sweet melody of the flute.
Listening to the lilting notes, they are captivated by love
and tormented by the pain of longing.*

This section also discusses the importance of not only faith, but also courage and effort, without which one cannot persevere on the spiritual path. Charandas taught a path of action, not one of mere words:

*Tasks in both this world and the next cannot be accomplished
without action.
Action alone brings results; action lies at the heart of everything.*

The 'action' of which he speaks requires stillness and a focused mind:

*Do the repetition with a still mind;
the mirror of your consciousness will become clear.*

*You will behold the Lord, and all darkness will vanish.
He who repeats Nam with focused attention
detaches himself from the body;
he merges in the Lord of truth, consciousness and bliss –
and becomes silent.*

Charandas' poetry, composed primarily in Hindi, was recorded and compiled during his lifetime by a few of his disciples, so that a body of work that we may assume is authentic is still preserved today. The hymns and couplets in *Sant Charandas* are taken from two such compilations, *Charandas Ji Ki Bani* and *Sri Bhakti Sagar*. This may be the first time poems from these collections have been translated and published in English. English-speakers, many of whom may have listened to the hymns of Charandas sung in Hindi for years, may now appreciate something of the clarity of his message and the power of his imagery:

*The Satguru is a sword of Shabd;
its blow slices the devotee in two.
The coward turns his back and runs away;
only the brave one faces the onslaught.*

*O devotees, realize the invisible and formless One.
More hidden than hidden, more manifest than manifest,
such is his real form ...
Ever supremely conscious, wondrous and amazing –
nothing compares with him.
Nobody is like him; he is beyond comparison –
he alone is like him.
Both within and without, he is complete in himself –
he stands apart from anything
in the physical and subtle realms.
Guru Sukdev has revealed this secret,
and Charandas is a sacrifice to him.*



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