

February 2017

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

contents

- 4 Yours Affectionately
- 6 Pending Perfection
- 8 Something to Think About
- 9 Attitude
- 13 Ayaz
- 14 The Fern and the Bamboo
- 18 Compassion
- 21 Credit Cards
- 23 Did You Know?
- 24 Seek the Real
- 27 Repartee of the Wise
- 28 The Master Answers
- 31 Unwrap the Gift
- 33 Spiritualisticks - Part 1
- 34 Masters and Karmas
- 36 Struggling Souls
- 39 Spiritualisticks - Part 2
- 40 Letting Go
- 42 Sweet Symphony
- 45 Spiritualisticks - Part 3
- 46 Am I Worthy?
- 48 Heart to Heart
- 50 Book Review

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India
Copyright © 2017 Science of the Soul Research Centre®

Articles and poems that appear without sources have been written by the contributors to this magazine.

VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 2 • FEBRUARY 2017

Yours Affectionately

Letter from Maharaj Sawan Singh to Daryai Lal Kapur

Radha Soami. May grace from the Satguru be showered on you. I received your affectionate letter and I am now glad to learn that you have a good and comfortable job. Now that the Lord has given you material ease and comfort, it is incumbent on you to do your meditation; for without meditation the soul will find neither peace nor a resting place. In worldly matters a satsangi tries to be punctual, industrious and attentive. But when it comes to meditation, I get letters asking me to take care of bhajan for them. No, this is not the right attitude. This is not true discipleship. Just as a satsangi is not slack in his worldly pursuits, he should not be slack in meditation.

What a pity that meditation, which is a satsangi's prime duty, is neglected. Deeply concerned with succeeding in worldly jobs, earnest prayers are addressed to God; but concern for meditation is missing. It is because the worldly jobs are taken as important and the real duty – meditation – is taken casually. Just as you attend to worldly matters with zeal and determination, so too pursue meditation with love and regularity.

Start today. Fix a time for your daily meditation and hold to it. Meditation can only be done if you are punctual. If you miss meditation, consider your food unearned for that day. This is the way to control the mind; this is the prescription to tame its waywardness. Put this into practice, dear son. Keep your mind in meditation throughout the day, even while walking about and working.

Heaven on Earth



Pending Perfection

The teachings of the saints set a very high standard for their disciples. Satsangis are expected to uphold the highest moral values and bear the hallmark of excellence in conduct and behaviour at all times.

To achieve self- and God-realization, we recognize that we need help. The mystics often say that it is not healthy people who need a doctor, but the sick. So, when an individual stands before the Master in humble supplication for the gift of Nam, he is seeking guidance and grace to fulfil his deepest desire to become the best version of himself and realize the purpose of human life.

Living the Sant Mat way of life is the medicine we take in order to accomplish this. We try to strengthen ourselves, curb our negative tendencies, and exercise our sense of discrimination to become good human beings.

The problem arises when we expect perfection – from others and ourselves. The Masters explain that expectations are the root of our unhappiness. Our disappointment and sadness most often appear when others do not respond to us the way we imagine they should. Sometimes we expect a business transaction to be smooth sailing just because we are dealing with a satsangi. If he turns out to be flawed, we become disillusioned and think: “But how can that be, he is a satsangi!?”

The Masters often remind us that if we were perfect, we would be with the Perfect One. But instead, here we all are – struggling students in the university of life, where every event and circumstance is meant to teach us something, so we can learn, evolve and grow.

After all, it is only when we make mistakes that we have the opportunity to learn what it means to forgive. And when we have to

work with difficult people, we acquire patience. When we come across selfishness, it is our chance to show understanding and kindness. And when people criticize us, we get to practise how to respond calmly instead of reacting.

The point is that as human beings, we are all a 'work in progress'. The Masters have told us again and again that there is no difference between a satsangi and a non-satsangi. Until we have united with the Divine within, we are all seekers. We are all at varying stages of our evolution – pending perfection.

Under the fatherhood of God, each one of us is trying in our own way to be deserving of his love and grace. The only difference is that initiates look up to a true living Master for guidance and inspiration.

No one is perfect. But Sant Mat is a path of compassion and forgiveness. And that is the point. This is what we have to learn. Because the minute we have learned to forgive and be compassionate towards others, then we will have earned His compassion and His forgiveness.

And if we have that ... the only thing pending is eternal bliss.



God is busy with the completion of your work, both outwardly and inwardly. He is fully occupied with you. Every human being is a work in progress that is slowly but inexorably moving toward perfection. We are each an unfinished work of art both waiting and striving to be completed. God deals with each of us separately because humanity is a fine art of skilled penmanship where every single dot is equally important for the entire picture.

Elif Shafak, *40 Rules of Love*

Something to Think About

The One who made the creation, the One who takes care of all living beings, is inside us. Guru Amar Das asks us: Who is it who fulfils all our daily needs? Wherever a soul is in a body, the Lord is there, providing it with sustenance every day. People say, “We plant the crops and do all the hard work, so how does the Lord come into it?” But I say, “If there weren’t any sun, how would your crops grow? Scientists have experimented with this. So now tell me, what would your efforts achieve in that case?”

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol. II



No one should give the answer that it is impossible for a man occupied with worldly cares ... to pray always. Everywhere, wherever you may find yourself, you can set up an altar to God in your mind by means of prayer. And so it is fitting to pray at your trade, on a journey, standing at the counter or sitting at your handicraft ... By the power of the invocation of the Name of God, one would come to know from experience that frequency of prayer, this sole means of salvation, is a possibility for the will of man.

Saint John Chrysostom, as quoted in *Living Meditation*

Attitude

*God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

The Serenity Prayer. As children we would recite it every day in school. It reminds us that there are many things in our lives that we cannot change, that much of what we go through is predetermined. Life after life, we come into this world to face the consequences of our actions from previous lives. Along the way, we made good choices and we made bad ones.

This human life is an opportunity that has been given to us to learn from our mistakes; to spiritually evolve and acquire a clear understanding of what we have been doing wrong. In *Living Meditation* it is written: “To choose a positive path is to affirm one’s spiritual nature.”

A spiritual life is a call to positive action in every area of our lives. In recent times, most of Master’s answers to questions concerning problems in our daily lives tell us to do two important things: the first one is to carry on diligently with our meditation and the second one is to have a positive attitude because our attitude is the only thing we can change.

How can we define attitude? Our entire mental makeup – thoughts, perceptions and reactions – defines our attitude, which can be positive or negative.

Thinking positively should be our only choice

The root cause of our suffering is our own thought process.

*Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think.
Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow
the oxen that draw it.*

Buddha, as quoted in *Life is Fair*

Actions follow thoughts; our thoughts and desires, whether good or bad, give shape to our lives. Finally, our thoughts and actions lead to consequences, which we call our karma or destiny.

The potential of karma always increases over time. Small seeds have the potential to produce massive fruits.... From the slightest positive action can come the greatest consequence of happiness, and in the same way the smallest negative action can bring about very intense suffering.... Just as drops of water can fill a large vessel, in the same way the smallest actions, when continuously committed, can fill the minds of sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama, as quoted in *Life is Fair*

The law of karma is the law of cause and effect. Our mind is the world of causes, and the world we see around us, is the world of effects. Therefore, it is as essential for us to exercise control over our thoughts as it is to control our actions. We can compare the human mind to a garden where we can choose to cultivate flowers or fruits of useful and pure thoughts and weed out all the useless and impure thoughts; that choice has always been ours. The right kind of thoughts will definitely enhance our spiritual advancement and lead us down a positive path.

Our reactions matter

Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: some things are within our control, and some things are not.

Epictetus, as quoted in *Living Meditation*

Circumstances, events, situations and people in our lives – none of these are within our control. They are what they are because of our past karmas. Resistance to what we encounter in life simply makes situations tougher to handle. When we accept our lot, we get the courage to face our destiny.

Dr Viktor Frankl, who was an eminent psychiatrist and author, faced a heart-wrenching incident in his life, which inspired the birth of an idea that in the years to come would develop into “logotherapy”; a form of therapy that would help innumerable people deal with their difficult situations. This incident took place at the time of the Second World War. As he was a Jew, Dr Frankl was imprisoned by the Nazis, while his wife, children and parents were all killed in the Holocaust. When the Gestapo took Viktor and stripped him down completely, even removing the wedding band from his fingers, he said to himself, “You can take away my wife, you can take away my children, you can strip me of my clothes and my freedom, but there is one thing no person can ever take away from me – and that is the freedom to choose how I will react to what happens to me!” Circumstances in our lives can only affect us in so far as we allow them to do so.

What should be our perspective?

Nothing is true and nothing is false. All depends on the colour of the lens through which we look.

Ramon de Campoamor, as quoted in *Living Meditation*

We perceive the world based on our own inner experiences. If we see beauty and joy around us, or ugliness and pain, it is because we contain those judgements within ourselves. Our reality is only based on our thoughts and emotions. Layers of impressions accumulated from previous lifetimes form the very mind which is trying to perceive the world and make sense of it. It is because of this karmic baggage that our perception is fogged and there is no real clarity in our thinking.

Clarity in thinking will come when the turbulent waves of our thoughts settle and our mind becomes tranquil at the eye centre. This state of stillness is only achieved when we attend to our meditation daily – when our every thought becomes simran. Ultimately, it is only through the practice of listening to that celestial sound, the Shabd, that our minds will be cleansed of all its false projections.

It is important to keep reminding ourselves that our understanding of life is limited and our perception of people and situations is impaired. We get hurt because we have expectations. And this is foolish, because we fail to consider that there is always a higher law at work and that each individual is subject to this law. That is why the Master always urges us to adopt an objective and logical approach to life.

Met with a positive attitude, this world can become a source of joy, inspiring us to see the divine will in everything and to worship the Lord through his creation.

Living Meditation

When we learn to perceive everything in life as the Lord's will, then the Lord will surely grace us with the serenity, courage and wisdom to face life with a positive attitude.



Ayaz

When Sultan Mahmud, King of Ghazni, first came across the slave Ayaz and his owner, the Sultan asked the owner of Ayaz, “Why are you selling this slave for such a high price?” The owner replied, “Because he knows how to be a slave.” Impressed with the response, the Sultan paid the price and bought the slave, Ayaz.

After the transaction was complete, the Sultan ordered his guards to whip the slave, Ayaz, 100 times. And while this was going on, the Sultan told one of his ministers to go to Ayaz and whisper in his ear to plead with the Sultan to stop the whip. So the minister went up to Ayaz and said to him, “Ask the Sultan, ‘O Sultan, why are you whipping me when I have done nothing wrong?’” At this, Ayaz replied, “I cannot do that, Sir, because the Sultan is my master and I am happy with whatever my master does with me.”

The minister reported back to the Sultan and when the Sultan heard the answer of Ayaz, he said, “If that is his answer, then I really bought him at a very cheap price.” Thereafter, the Sultan would ask, “Oh, Ayaz, what type of food would you like to eat and what type of clothes would you like to wear?” And Ayaz would reply, “Whatever my master gives me as food, I will eat and whatever my master gives me to wear, I will wear.”

And it was because of this attitude that Sultan Mahmud began to love the qualities of his beloved Ayaz. So much so that he eventually made Ayaz the chief minister of his court.



The Fern and the Bamboo

“I decided to quit. Quit my job, my marriage, my spiritual path. I wanted to quit my life.” This was the desperate cry of a person who became unbearably frustrated with life. The reason? Was it the strain in his marital life, the demand of a heavy work-load, financial issues, or health problems, that was causing him to struggle to hold on to his mental balance? It was hard to say.

But the sentiment is not unfamiliar to us. There have been times in our own lives when we, too, have broken down and cried and contemplated giving up – times when we felt we could not take it anymore.

The rich and the poor, the king and the beggar, man or woman, all are reaping the fruits of their karmas. Wherever the place of one's birth may be, one goes through a long chain of suffering and misery, pain and difficulties. Separated from the Lord, one has no peace or respite anywhere.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

All saints proclaim that there is only one solution – the soul can gain bliss only when it meets the Lord. Thus it is written in the Adi Granth:

*In pain, O Nanak, are all created beings ...
Happy alone are they who are dyed in Nam.*

But here comes our greatest challenge – the practice of regular and punctual meditation. It requires sincerity and discipline to sit for the minimum prescribed meditation period every day in order for a

disciple to make progress; and this too while still encumbered by life's daily routines and situations.

Ironically, when we are at the brink of despair and we are somehow led to the spiritual path and the practice of meditation; when we sit for meditation we are faced with yet another struggle against the mind. Under these circumstances, how does one stay composed and balanced?

The answer was provided to the same person who had given up on life and one day decided to quit. He went to the woods to have one last talk with God and said, "God, can you give me one good reason not to quit?" and God's reply surprised him.

"Look around," God said. "Do you see the fern and the bamboo?" "Yes," he replied. "When I planted the fern and the bamboo seeds, I took very good care of them. I gave them light. I gave them water. The fern quickly grew from the earth. Its brilliant green covered the floor. Yet nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo. In the second year, the fern grew more vibrant and plentiful and again, nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo. In year three, there was still nothing from the bamboo seed, but I would not quit. In year four, again there was nothing from the bamboo seed and still I would not quit."

"Then in the fifth year, a tiny sprout emerged from the earth. Compared to the fern, it seemed small and insignificant. But just six months later the bamboo rose to over 100 feet tall. It had spent those five years growing its roots. Those roots made it strong and gave it what it needed to survive."

Then God lovingly explained, "I would not give anyone in my creation a challenge they cannot handle. Did you know that all this time you have been struggling, you have actually been growing roots? I would not quit on the bamboo, and I will never quit on you. Don't

compare yourself to others. The bamboo had a different purpose than the fern. Yet they both make the forest beautiful. Your time will come, and you will rise high.”

“How high would I rise?” the man asked.

“How high will the bamboo rise?” God asked in return.

“As high as it can?” the man questioned.

“Yes.” God said, “Give me glory by rising as high as you can.”

The moral of the story is, never quit, because struggling makes you stronger. Maharaj Charan Singh once wrote to a disciple:

All these trials that come to us in life, if taken in the proper spirit, as a satsangi should take them himself, will develop strength of character and make one throw himself absolutely at the feet of the Satguru within. On the other hand, they may also discourage us and make us unhappy, which reveals to us our own weakness.

I am sorry I do not appreciate your attitude of being fed up with life and having no interest in it. Life was given to us for a definite purpose and that, as a disciple, you know well. It was given to us in order that, by complete surrender to the Satguru and daily spiritual exercises, we might be joined to Shabd and rise above this valley of tears. That is a privilege which nobody can take from you unless you yourself, in a fit of petulance or despondency, give it up or cease to make use of it. Even then, no disciple's life is hopeless. But the road is much easier for us if we do our bit. You have to take care of your worldly duties and give as much time to simran and bhajan as you possibly can, and then leave the other matters to the Satguru.

Light on Sant Mat

Hazur Maharaj Ji's powerful message is unmistakable. We must be strong and focus all our effort towards meditation.

We should attend to our meditation so vigorously every day that it actually becomes a part of our life.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Divine Light*

Whether it is regarding life or meditation, Maharaj Charan Singh says very firmly that the attitude of quitting is “not appreciated”. As disciples, we are given the technique to achieve salvation, and only our sincere effort is required. Like the bamboo, we should not be disheartened if we see no progress or spiritual growth, for it is during this time that we are growing roots and making our foundation strong. The time and effort that we put in will never go to waste. In the words of the scientist and former president of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam:

Difficulties in your life do not come to destroy you, but to help you release your hidden potential and power. Let difficulties know that you too are difficult.

Inspiring Thoughts of Great Educational Thinkers



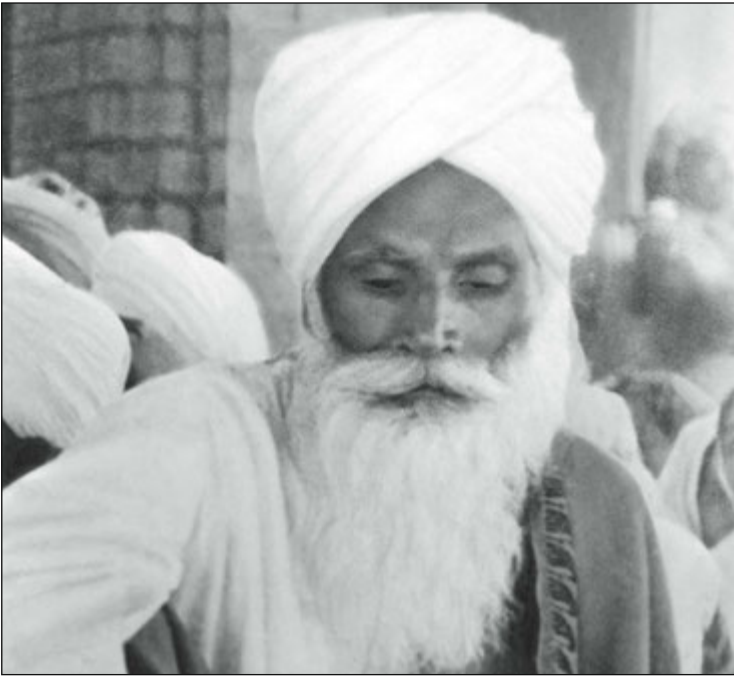
Compassion

On one occasion, during the period when Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh was a professor in Punjab Agricultural College in Lyallpur, a student from Baluchistan did not pay his college admission fee, his monthly tuition, and his hostel fee for many months, in spite of repeated reminders. The amount due swelled to two hundred rupees, and so the college authorities decided to bar him from appearing for his examinations. When Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh happened to learn about it, he asked the student why he was not paying the college fees.

The boy said that he had not received a cheque from his father so far. When Sardar Bahadur Ji told the boy to send a telegram to his father for the money, the young man, who was himself quite worried, replied, “Sir, you too are my father.” Hearing this, Sardar Bahadur Ji immediately deposited the money in the student’s account.

After a few days, the boy received the money from his parents. He went to Sardar Bahadur Ji and quietly placed the amount on his desk. Sardar Bahadur Ji gave it back to the boy, saying, “If I was your father then, am I not your father now?”

At another time, a student who is today a senior officer in the Government ran short of money when his father passed away – so much so that he had problems continuing his education. When Sardar Bahadur Ji came to know about this, he paid the boy’s college and hostel fee for three years and never mentioned it to anybody. While serving in the college at Lyallpur, Sardar Bahadur Ji paid the expenses of about 25 to 30 students for their entire studies. He would help to pay the students’ expenses through Pundit Lal Chand, and they never knew who was helping them. He sent two students abroad at his expense for higher studies. He sent his Lecture Table Assistant,



M. S. Nasir, to study in England. Even Pundit Lal Chand was not aware of this. On his return, Nasir told him about Sardar Bahadur Ji's graciousness.

Sardar Bahadur Ji, by nature was compassionate and forgiving. He had faith in the innate goodness of human beings. Once, a student from an affluent Bengali family had a very expensive camera, which was stolen by another student. The principal sent for Sardar Bahadur Ji and told him the theft would give the college a bad name. He felt that somehow the thief must be caught and the camera recovered. Sardar Bahadur Ji replied, "Sir, the camera will be recovered, but on the assurance that you will neither punish the thief nor ask for his name." He then announced to the students, "This theft will ruin the reputation of the college. I appeal to the student who took the camera to put it in my laboratory. There will be no punishment." The next day the camera was returned, but several faculty members insisted the student be punished.

The principal asked Sardar Bahadur Ji to reveal the name of the boy who had stolen the camera, but Sardar Bahadur Ji reminded him that the condition was that he would not be required to reveal the thief's name. The principal accused Sardar Bahadur Ji of protecting and encouraging a thief who must be punished for his deed. At this Sardar Bahadur Ji said, "I am not protecting a thief; I am trying to save the boy from becoming a confirmed criminal. Punishment will ruin his life, and instead of reforming him, it will have the opposite effect."

The next day, the student who had taken the camera confessed to Sardar Bahadur Ji and asked for forgiveness. Sardar Bahadur Ji told him to forget what had happened and to put himself firmly on the path of honest living. Today the student has risen to a very high post in the Indian government.

Sardar Bahadur Ji was strict but at the same time loving in dealing with his students, and they adored him. His superiors, colleagues and subordinates held him in great esteem for his sincerity, large-heartedness and consideration. His punctuality, attention to duty, efficiency and spirit of dedication to the job of imparting knowledge to students inspired all other members of the staff. These qualities, along with his personal charm, had created an atmosphere of purity and serenity in the educational circles of Lyallpur. Although he never called on high government officers and had no contacts in the official circles, his contribution to the field of education could not go unnoticed, and the British Government conferred on him the title "Sardar Bahadur".

Pundit Lal Chand often recalls the advice Sardar Bahadur Ji gave him when he joined the staff of the college in Lyallpur: "Always be truthful. If you are at fault, admit your mistake at once. Look upon your job as a service to the Satguru. Be punctual and never be slack in the fulfilment of your duties. Avoid negligence and shun dishonesty. Always respect your superiors."

Heaven on Earth

Credit Cards

We may recall receiving our first credit card and how easy it was to get carried away and spend too much. The shock of our big debt when we got the first monthly statement made us take matters to hand. Some people even cut-up their cards when they realized that their spending was out of control.

Imagine if instead of a monthly statement, the card statement did not come for twenty years? To make the danger of overspending even greater, imagine that the card had no credit limit! When that statement finally arrived after twenty years, we would have run up a debt that could not be paid in lifetimes. But even worse, imagine that none of the goods bought had any price tag so we could not even tell how much was being spent!

This is precisely the kind of credit card that has been issued to every human being to allow them to incur karmic debt. This karmic credit card is even more dangerous because the card statement only comes at the time of death, when we ultimately reach the check-out counter for this life. It is no wonder we incur a huge debt that cannot be repaid in many lifetimes.

The Master gives us the first vital help we need in order to take control of this karmic debt. He tells us the price of everything. He knows the price of meat and eggs. He says don't shop in that section – shop in the fruit and vegetable section only. He knows the price of drinking alcohol and of immoral conduct and of every other kind of indulgence. By warning us to obey the first three principles of Sant Mat, the Master helps us to spend wisely and incur the least amount of debt on the karmic credit card.

The second favour he does is this: till now we could only pay off karmic debt by enjoying and suffering; now he gives us a new form of currency – meditation!

Actually, all this meditation – 99.9 percent of it – is meant for the store of karmas, our sinchit karmas.

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

So meditation is a pain-free way of reducing karmic debt. What's more, Hazur says that what can be achieved in this region takes centuries to achieve on the inner planes – so that is a marvellous exchange rate of more than 100 to one. We need to deposit as much as possible of this currency into our karmic bank account.

You always make better progress in the physical body than in other regions. That's because there is so much misery around you that you always want to escape. And there's more grace and help because you always have guidance. There is somebody on your physical level to guide you, and that same guidance is also always within. So you always make better progress in the body than in the inner regions.

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

The third thing the Master does for us is that he agrees to act as our karmic debt manager. Usually when the debt collector knocks at our door, we run and hide but when the divine debt collector comes to us, we can boldly say: “My good man, I have appointed the Master as my debt manager – you please deal with him!” The debt collector is very disappointed to hear this because he knows that negotiating with the Satguru is going to be painful and tricky and the Master is going to drive a very hard bargain. He is going to force him to accept a reduction in the debt – he will never pay him in full so most of the debt will have to be forgiven!

Perhaps initiation is the best *MasterCard* anyone could ever be issued.

Did You Know?

Your attention may remain focused for no more than a minute or two, or five or ten, or it may barely hear the Sound, but even then the news of your effort will reach right into Sach Khand, that you are offering a prayer.

Baba Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*



So long as the attention of a disciple has not reached *tisra til*, it does not see the protecting hand of the Master over the disciple's head, nor what the Master does for the disciple. The Master looks after the disciple as a mother looks after her child.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



Man is a wonderful creation. He not only carries his past history with him; but the whole creation, visible and invisible, and the Creator of all are within him, and he has been gifted with the capacity to see all that lies in him and to be one with his Creator.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



When you leave the body at the time of death, you have nothing to worry about. Death simply means separation of the mind and soul from the body.

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

Seek the Real

There is a story of a man who fell into a deep, long sleep. Weeks passed but he remained in this state of endless slumber, unable to wake up even when prodded. Puzzled by the man's condition, the villagers sought a sage who could reveal the mystery behind his sleeping state. The sage visited the village and used his inner vision to access the man's psyche. Upon learning the truth, the sage turned to the villagers and declared: "This man is dreaming that he is awake and so he has no intention of getting up."

Our human experience is so real for us that we have little inclination to rise above it. We can relate more to our worldly affairs than to the concepts of self-realization, God-realization, and making a journey within to our real home. In fact, the underlying reason we find it challenging to focus during meditation is that we believe our worldly experience to be more real than the experience within. We are not convinced that if we let go, events will unfold just the same. We feel we will lose out if we do not entertain the ideas that come to us during meditation. As a result, we drift along with our thoughts and persist with our problem-solving rather than our simran. Consequently, our meditation often becomes an extension of our time to think and plan our daily affairs. And in this way, yet another day passes without meditation.

Do not worry about anything in this life, which is all an unpleasant dream. The real life lies beyond, where your Master awaits you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

In the movie *The Matrix*, the character Cypher is actually disgusted with the nature of reality in comparison to the comforts found within the illusory world of the Matrix. Cypher exclaims that “ignorance is bliss” and arranges for his body to return to the Matrix.

Perhaps we are not too different. Even after being made aware of the illusion, we cling to it. Probably because like Cypher, the current point of comparison for most of us is the darkness of our experience of the real. But Hazur used to remind us that when we close our eyes, the darkness is where we should be. He also reassured us that the dryness we experience in meditation only occurs in the beginning; later on it becomes fulfilling.

The pity is that what we see, what we feel, what we touch is not real. What we don't see, that is real.... So we are in love with the creation. And we cannot love what we don't see, what we can't hold, what we can't feel, and yet we have to love the Lord and detach ourselves from this creation. That is the whole struggle. That will be real – what you will see with your inner eyes.

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

The saints reveal that our worldly responsibilities, our ‘dharma’, are a result of our past actions or karma. The playing-out of these karmic responsibilities is already predetermined and our destiny cannot be changed. While we still have to go through the motions and undergo our karmas, it must be done with a relaxed approach, surrendering to the divine flow of things. Our true objective is to journey inward and build our heavenly treasure. And our meditation practice is the time we allocate to our primary responsibility. At that time, it is our

dharma to strive to direct and redirect our attention to our simran. The efforts do not need to translate into any specific results, but the effort must be there nonetheless. It needs to reflect an active striving, not a passive sitting, for the act to carry any meaning for us.

Imagine a crowd of people in a cellar, very busy trying to stay alive. They are scrambling around for food and blankets. But one of them has caught a gleam of light at the top of the staircase. And he is convinced that there is a way out to a larger, brighter, easier world. He tries to tell. Many are too busy to listen. Some are too stubborn or too blind to believe. Others listen and say, "Yes, but not now. I have an appointment with a man who has a blanket. That is more urgent right now." And the saint, for such is he in the world, loses interest in the business of the cellar, spends long hours upon the staircase, knowing that one day, through grace, the door will be opened and he will go out.

Nancy Pope Mayorga, *Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary*

Like prisoners, instead of receiving better blankets we can escape from the prison altogether. That is where the saints come in. To inspire us to seek more, to seek the real.



Repartee of the Wise

Once, a few years after partition, great tension developed between India and Pakistan, and the armies of the two countries were moved to the border. People of the border towns and cities panicked and left for safer places in the interior. Some satsangis thought they should leave the Dera for a safer place because the Dera is so close to the Pakistan border. They went to Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Ji and asked if war was coming. He smiled and said, “Brothers, for predictions you should consult an astrologer. I only know this: even if the Dera and all adjoining villages are abandoned, I will stay here because that is my Master’s order.”

Heaven on Earth



Once a satsangi came to Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Ji and said, “I am a sinner. I am a wretched fool...” The man continued in this vein, using disparaging terms about himself to describe his faults. Sardar Bahadur Ji smiled and said, “My friend, you have criticized yourself and used strong words to vilify yourself. But the real indication of your humility would be when someone else says the same things to you and you do not feel annoyed.”

Heaven on Earth

The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Master, we seem to have high periods and low periods of spirituality. Is this a trick of the mind or is it part of the development?*

A: Sister, ups and downs in meditation do come. You call them high activity or low activity. Our meditation, our spiritual practice, is never smooth. Sometimes we feel that we have gone up, we have made progress. Sometimes we feel that we have fallen down. Ups and downs always come in meditation. That is due also, sometimes, to our past karmas and so many other things pulling us which we do not consciously realize. Unconsciously they are affecting us. So, we should not worry about the ups and downs. Gradually we have to steer upward.

The Master Answers

* * *

Q: *Maharaj Ji, would you tell us what is love?*

A: Love is losing your own identity and becoming another person. That is love. There's no ego left. To become another being and to just lose your own identity; you don't exist; only the other being exists. That craving to become another one and lose your own identity, to eliminate your ego and be in the will of another being, that is love. But how far we succeed is something different.

Die to Live

Q: *Is it correct to say then that ultimately our meditation or remembrance of the Master really becomes a twenty-four hour job? I mean, that's really the only way, isn't it, to avoid running to the senses?*

A: Well, for the lover, love is a twenty-four hour sickness. He doesn't have a specific time to love or to think about the beloved. He is in love twenty-four hours. He doesn't specifically fix the time – this is my time for love. His mind is always there, no matter what he's doing, where he may be. So similarly, the Lord should always be there in our mind, no matter where we are, no matter what we are doing. That remembrance should reflect in our actions, our dealings. We should never forget him at any cost. That is why I say Sant Mat is a way of life. It is not closing yourself in a room for a couple of hours for meditation and then forgetting about it. The Lord should become part and parcel of your life.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

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



Unwrap the Gift

The cry of the soul for peace and happiness has forever been misdirected by the mind, leading us to seek our objective in hollow worldly recreation and temporary relationships. As a result, many times we have departed from this world carrying the burden of regret and repentance.

When we come into the fold of a true Master, we are made to understand the nature of this cry, which has to do with the longing for our source; the yearning to go back to our real home. Through initiation, we are given the rare opportunity to learn how to silence the mind and empower our soul once again, allowing our consciousness to explore the realms of eternal peace that lie beyond this illusory world.

The Master 'injects', as it were, his consciousness and Light into the soul of the disciple at the time of initiation. This injection of his own consciousness and Light permeates the disciple like leaven and produces a new spiritual consciousness and Light as the practice of Nam is continued.

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

In the holy scriptures, it has been said that the gift of initiation is the greatest gift of all for it is through this precious gift, if practised sincerely, that we are able to come face to face with our true Father. The question is, can we grasp the value of what we have received?

Gratitude is what instantly wells up within us when we receive a gift from someone, and depending on how valuable this gift is to us, we reciprocate accordingly.

We may receive a beautifully wrapped box with a silk bow and a greeting card containing a heartfelt message. Guessing from the feelings of the person who gave us this gift and from the appearance of it, we conclude that it must be something truly special. But can we ever know the value of this gift if we do not unwrap it?

We are grateful for our initiation. We most definitely cherish our Master's presence in our lives; we find great solace when we feel his guiding and protecting hand over us. Moreover, we also find fulfilment in pursuing a goal that we know is truly worth striving for.

But the fact is, true gratitude and appreciation will only come when we realize or experience the actual contents of the gift we have received.

This disciple wishes profoundly that it could come within the power of human words, either spoken or written, to convey a proper sense or estimate of the wealth we have come upon through initiation into Sant Mat. But the story can never be told. It must be experienced in the innermost depths of the soul.... The little spark that now draws you on will have become the infinite Light, flooding all your souls with unutterable joy.

With a Great Master in India

Meditation is nothing but an effort to unwrap the gift of initiation that has been given to us by our benevolent Master. Yes, the Shabd is and has always been within us, but the 'touch' of the Master on our

soul during initiation – our priceless gift – enables us to manifest the beautiful treasures that we possess within.

It is up to us to unwrap this gift by dutifully attending to our meditation and adhering to the principles of Sant Mat. Our Master assures us that what will emerge is something that we could have never possibly imagined.



SPIRITUALISTICKS[®]



Masters and Karmas

An Explanation by Maharaj Charan Singh

Whoever comes into this world must have karmas to live here. Without karma, nobody can exist in this world. Even a saint needs a mother. A saint needs a father. He will have siblings, friends and acquaintances. Without karmas, he would meet no one. We cannot take a step without karma in this world. But saints are not a slave of these karmas; karmas are not their masters. They have to take on karmas in order to come to our level in this world, but they are not slaves of karma. They can leave this body whenever they want to. They can avoid any karma they want to. They can take on anybody's karma to help, to share that person's karma. But we, who are slaves of our karmas, cannot do that. And we cannot get rid of our own karmas if we do not want to face any particular karma. But Masters are above karma. So whoever exists in the body, whoever comes into the flesh, has no option but to take on karma, because without karma nobody can exist in this world.

He shares people's suffering, whether it is physical or mental. However happy you may be, if someone comes to you and starts telling his woeful story, won't you feel for him? We may have no suffering of our own, but we are so moved by the suffering of another person that we mentally start suffering along with him after hearing his woeful story. So whether we help him or not, we definitely share his misery and his mental suffering. Though that suffering is not ours at all, out of sympathy, out of compassion and regard for another person you suffer along with him.

So Masters come on a mission of mercy. They have no load of their own, but they are so kind-hearted and merciful that they also suffer along with their disciples because they want to help them. They

have to hear everybody's woeful tale, everybody's miserable story, everybody's problem. Nobody will come and share his joy with him. Everybody has to share his tears with him. So naturally one is also affected to that extent...

Saints sometimes do take the karmas of their disciples, and being in the domain of Kal, they themselves have to account for those karmas on their bodies. That is why we feel that they are suffering physically, from a health point of view. Actually, they are above the cycle of karmas and can clear any karma. They do not like to break the law of nature, being in the domain of Kal. So we may think they are suffering. Really, the soul is not at all bothered with what the body is going through. There is never a deficiency of what they give. The more they give, the more it grows. It is just like love. The more we are helpful to others, the more we feel like helping others, and the more it grows every day. The question of deficiency does not arise. Being in this world, they do not like to break God's law. So sometimes they help their disciples by taking their karmas on their own bodies. The soul does not suffer at all.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I



The Shabd "lives and abides forever" in the Master, as he is born of incorruptible seed – he is one with the Shabd, without attachments. He takes on karmas in order to take life in the body, but he is not subject to those karmas – he is in control.

Concepts and Illusions

Struggling Souls

Looking back at the time when we were seekers longing for initiation, we watched as disciples at question-and-answer sessions pleaded to the Master for the grace and strength to do their meditation. We listened to them talk about the challenges they faced, but could never really understand how serious their struggle was. We thought, ‘How could sitting in meditation for two and a half hours be so difficult?’ Sant Mat books are full of promises about the joy that awaits every sincere disciple, so why couldn’t they just bear down and do it?

Reality set in when we joined the squad of struggling souls. Everything changed. There were days when our duties vied for our attention and it was just impossible to focus. There were days when temptations and distractions lured us away. Eventually came the realization that to be able to meditate, not only were we required to put in the allotted time, but our whole life had to be regulated to meet our objective. Clearly, what was needed was a lifestyle change.

So, as it turned out, it wasn’t as easy as it looked. At times we felt absolutely incapable of meditating at all, and the guilt that came with that was another form of suffering altogether.

Thankfully, a disciple’s cry for help never goes unheard. Just when it seemed like we had hit rock bottom came some form of relief – either in a passage we read from a book, or an inspiring message we heard in satsang. The bottom line was clear. If the Master did not feel we were capable of walking on this path, he would not have initiated us. He believes in us and we have to draw our strength from that.

*When the Lord has chosen you for eternal liberation, then
what other power can keep you back for long in this creation?*

It is only a question of time. All are struggling souls and are carrying their individual burden of karmas. It will take a lot of time, effort and perseverance to control the mind and throw off this burden. But it will definitely be done one day. The Master will see you back home. So give up all your worries and with love and devotion do your duty every day. Give time to simran and bhajan without caring as to how the mind behaves. Slowly it will take interest inside and will turn away from the outside. That would be the turning point. The Master is always with you and so is his love.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

While battling against our mind, we learn that it is with effort and perseverance that we can strengthen our resolve. The Master assures us that progress is taking place with every moment of our meditation. They ask us to be courageous and to never succumb to the dictates of the mind.

A teacher once explained this analogy to his disciples: Some people, when asleep, are almost impossible to wake up. They may be called upon several times, and in irritation they yell, "Leave me alone!" After a while they may be shaken and finally, they wake up; they may even sit up. But the moment you leave them, they collapse back into their beds and fall asleep again. On the other hand, there are others who respond with alert attention the moment you call them. That, the teacher explains, is the way of the true devotee. The moment God summons him, he responds eagerly and willingly. Thereafter, he never thinks back to his sleep, but seeks ever greater wakefulness in God. This is the way of a true disciple.

The Masters never claimed that the spiritual path was easy; but they always remind us that there is a higher power that is guiding

and calling us towards itself; that the Lord is yearning for every soul to turn towards him. Hazur Maharaj Ji has also said: “Nothing gives the Master more pleasure than a disciple contacting him within.” In this sublime relationship between Master and disciple, the only true expression of love is meditation.

Our efforts to show our love for God by purifying our hearts, refresh and delight him. It is for this that he “thirsts”... for the purity of our hearts, the emptiness of our hearts, that his joy, his freedom and his immensity may fill them.

Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*

The struggles, temptations and doubts are all part of the process. Just think, if the spiritual path was easy, when would we yearn for him? If we had no reason to turn to him, how would we experience the glory of his grace? It is only through struggle that we make progress on this path. The Masters have never asked for results in our meditation – they only ask for our best effort.

I would advise that a practitioner should have firm belief that he will surely succeed on this path, and he should go on struggling with faith until his last breath. It is better to die in sincere effort than to attain all worldly success. There is no task in the world so difficult as spiritual practice is in the beginning, but its end is the most joyful. Do not be anxious. The Master is taking care of you every instant. You cannot see it now, but as you advance in your journey, you will see it yourself.

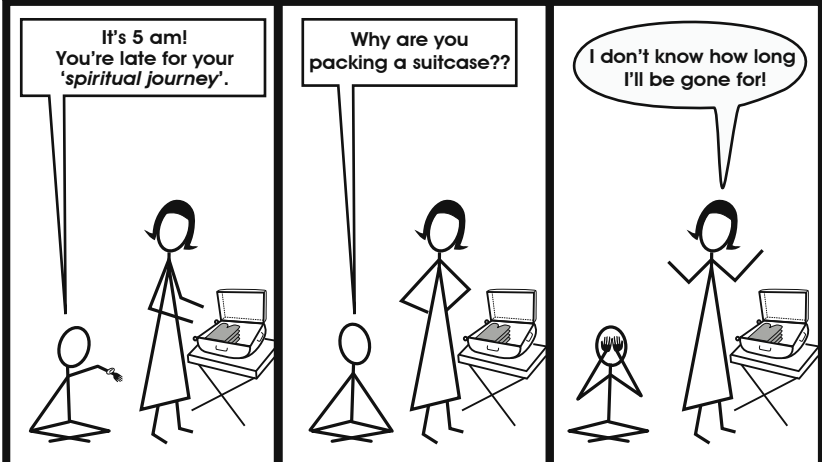
Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Dawn of Light*

Hazur Maharaj Ji would say: “Why curse the darkness? Why not light the candle?” Rather than worrying about how difficult it is to meditate, he asks us to be positive and just try. Rather than dwelling on our weaknesses, perhaps we can remind ourselves that meditation is a joyful opportunity to sit in his presence – one on one; a precious time when we can fulfil the most important duty of our life – the purpose for which we were born – to love the Lord.



SPIRITUALISTICKS[®]

Dress for Success - Part 2



Letting Go

*O Lord, it is a ceaseless dying,
if one wants to gain You.*

*O Lord, it is a ceaseless letting go,
if one wants to seize You.*

*O Lord, it is like death to the senses,
if one wants to obtain You.*

*Yet it is the rejoicing sound of a thousand violins,
when You become my own.*

Bernard of Clairvaux, as quoted in *Adventure of Faith*

Have you ever seen a man drowning? How he fights the current to keep his head above the water, gasping for his next breath. How he struggles to hold on to his overturned large boat believing that in doing so it will prevent him from going under. And yet, how each struggle only seems to pull him deeper into the water. At that moment, anyone watching this man fight for his survival would immediately ask him to let go of the boat so he can be rescued. Holding on to an overturned boat can be quite dangerous because the powerful force of suction can lead the boat to sink rapidly.

We are not very different from that drowning man. Often, we find ourselves drowning under the weight of the situations that life brings us. We are pulled into the current of sadness and suffering and we find it difficult to swim back to the surface. We then begin to question, “Why me?” Why is the Lord putting me through so much pain and hardship? Why has he abandoned me at the time when we need him the most?

We all face sorrow in our lives – it is inevitable. Just as we cannot expect every single day to be a sunny day, we cannot expect to always be happy in this life. Our actions have already put in motion the consequences that we will have to face – whether good or bad. This is the simple reason we have to go through difficult times, in the same manner that we go through the happier times.

We may have experienced sickness, the loss of a loved one, or failure at some point in our lives. And it becomes very easy for us to feel overwhelmed. The sadness creeps into our life and we find it hard to move forward. We latch on to the pain and suffering and we find ourselves in despair, unable to function. We start to wonder if there will ever be light at the end of the dark tunnel in which we seem lost.

In the midst of all the pain and suffering, we tend to turn to the Lord. We ask him to help us. We pray for strength and wisdom so that we may overcome the difficulties we are faced with. And his answer is simple – “let go”. He asks us to stop clinging on to the things that bring us pain and suffering. He urges us to turn away from the negativity we may feel after going through a tough ordeal. He becomes like that lifeguard asking the drowning man to let go of his overturned boat so that he can pull him to safety. At that moment, the drowning man needs to trust the lifeguard by releasing his grip on the boat that prevents him from floating to the surface of the water, even if his instinct is to hold on to the most tangible thing around him. It is only when he leaves his overturned boat that the man can be saved by the lifeguard. In the same manner, it is only when we learn to let go of all that is pulling us down, can the Lord come and pull us up.



Sweet Symphony

Have you ever witnessed an orchestra warm up? Moments before the conductor enters, as each and every musician tunes his or her particular instrument – it is collective dissonance to say the least. Yet when the conductor appears, the chaos stops. Eyes become fixed. Thoughts become focused. Each performer is ready and open to receive direction from the maestro. With each gesture of his baton, the notes flow freely from every instrument in perfect harmony. The result is a musical symphony that lifts the hearts of all who hear and experience it.

As we go through the orchestra of life, some of us may play isolated notes like the musicians tuning up. It is only when we are faced with the Master's presence that we are transformed. Like the maestro, his every gesture is a guiding force that draws out the best in us. We learn to focus and surrender to the master-conductor's lead, so that we are finally able to play that magnificent melody.

In every soul there is a great potential to play a sweet symphony. But most of us do not realize that we are out of tune. The Master helps us connect to that untapped source of beautiful music within, by means of initiation into the Shabd practice. He teaches us that all we need to realize this potential is focus.

We are living in a world caught in an epidemic of distractions. The thoughts that germinate as a result of all these distractions can create mental chaos. The images and thought processes in our minds never seem to stop. Each thought is rapidly followed by another, crowding our minds, like too many people entering an elevator. If one were to liken the mind to a computer, it is almost like having too many files open, overloading our processor. We do not realize the true cost of

these distractions. They use up what is actually a limited supply of time and attention each day, scattering our focus.

It is the nature of the mind to focus first on one thing and then on something else. This moment it builds castles in the air, and the next it demolishes them. It is tossed about between objects of love and hatred, as a feather in a stormy wind. In short, the mind is never still.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*

The Masters emphasize the paramount importance of bringing back our attention to the seat of the soul, within ourselves. They teach us to rein in our attention and focus it, without wavering, at the eye centre. This focus is essential for meditation.

Numerous motivational books and talks extol the virtues of focus. Any endeavour in life is more likely to succeed if the mind is attuned to the job at hand. It works the same way in spirituality. In fact, in spirituality, the task is even more daunting as the mind continually rebels at the thought of sitting still.

The third eye is the seat of the mind and soul. This is the pivotal point that holds the mystery of life. It is from here that our attention continually descends and spreads into the world through the nine outlets of the body.... From here every minute the mind wanders out. It does not sit still at this spot even for a moment.... The path of the saints lies in drawing the attention back to this point.

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

The saints explain that it is all a question of discipline and practice. For countless incarnations our minds have been scattered in this creation. We cannot pierce the darkness within because our attention is caught up with our body and our attachments. Unless we can reverse this process and hold our minds still at the eye centre, with the help of simran and bhajan, our minds will continue to get tossed around like a ship in the midst of a stormy sea.

Focused meditation will transform the way we perceive things and the way we live our life. Spiritual progress depends upon making the mind still at the eye centre, and concentration is what makes the mind still. Concentrated simran is the best way to train the mind to 'sit' at the eye centre. Our minds are used to jumping from one object to another, so to train the mind to concentrate on simran is a difficult task, but not an impossible one.

Living Meditation

There are many examples throughout history where people have overcome what seemed to be impossible odds and insurmountable obstacles. The one common factor that contributed to their success was their ability to focus, to concentrate the mind on their objective. The objective of every disciple on the spiritual path is to connect with his maker, with the Lord. And the means to this end is to focus at the eye centre.

The mind is similar to a focusing lens – whatever we focus upon, internally or externally, becomes our picture of reality. It is therefore the source of our bondage as well as our freedom.

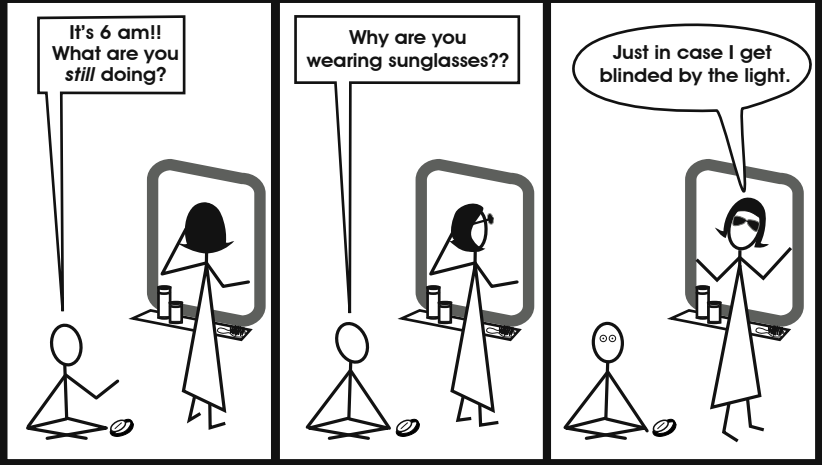
Aaron John Bethel, The Spiritual Guide for the New Millennium

The mind is driven by memories and emotions that run rampant and accelerate our thoughts and actions. The saints explain that the only way to put a brake to these thoughts is by meditation. By closing our eyes and repeating the words of simran in the darkness, we are “knocking on heaven’s door”. The Master assures us that as the mind begins to focus at this point, it gradually becomes more and more absorbed with the true reality, and it is then able to enjoy the sweet symphony of the Shabd.



SPIRITUALISTICKS[®]

Dress for Success - Part 3



Am I Worthy?

God creates out of nothing. Wonderful, you say. Yes, to be sure, but he does what is still more wonderful: he makes saints out of sinners.

Soren Kierkegaard, as quoted in *Quotes for the Journey, Wisdom for the Way*

Starting a spiritual journey can be a difficult task. Often, we do not even know where to begin. It usually starts with an internal feeling of unrest, which then leads us to question if there is more to life. The world with all its glitter and glamour, no longer seems appealing. In fact, at times, we find ourselves feeling lonely and empty, despite being in the company of the people we love. More often than not, this feeling triggers our search for something more.

Then one day we find ourselves being drawn to a path that seems to hold the answers we are looking for. We are pulled by a power we do not know or completely understand, and we decide to walk down that road. We start learning about the path and what it entails – the lifestyle, the vows, the commitments and the end goal. It is at this point that doubt may start to creep in.

Am I capable enough of upholding the vows? What if I succumb to peer pressure? My lifestyle does not align with this path at all, what am I even doing here? Everyone around me seems to have it figured out, why am I struggling? Am I even worthy enough to walk down this road?

When these questions and doubts start forming in our mind, we need to remind ourselves of the greatest misconception we may have had when we started this journey – we do not come on the path

because of our own will. It was not our own decision or action that brought us here.

We have often heard in many satsangs that all that has happened and all that will happen in our lives is already predestined; we just have to wait for it to unfold naturally at the right time. Without his will, nothing moves.

The Lord will put you on the path. It is not you who are seeking. It is the Lord who is seeking you. The Lord is pulling you from within, and when the Lord makes you receptive, he will automatically put you on the path through someone. You just have to be receptive to the pull of the Lord.

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

Having established this truth, we can then rest assured that it was also his will that brought us to the spiritual path. And it is only with his will that we can go back to the Father.

If we are on this path it is because he willed it, surely he has not made a mistake, for the Lord never makes mistakes. The loneliness that we initially felt was his gift to trigger our search for him. Our searching for a path and the Master was actually him finding us. So the next time we find ourselves struggling with doubt and questioning whether or not we are meant to be on this path, we need to remind ourselves that it was by his great design that we were pulled onto this road. It was his will that led us to a true Master, and it is only through his will that we will move forward and succeed in this journey. He has already deemed us worthy; all we have to do is put in our effort.





Heart to Heart

During one of the evening meetings at the international guest house, Hazur Maharaj Ji once said: “I am quite conscious that many people don’t have a question, even when they come to ask a question. And even if they do have questions, they are not interested in the answer, and they don’t want any answer. And whatever answer I may give them makes no difference to them. They only want to talk; they only want to keep me here; they only want to hear me. I am quite conscious of it. When I find seekers, real seekers, I do give the answer, and with

clarity. Sometimes I know their real purpose behind it, so I put it off, in one way or another.

So this game is going on. And I know every day it will be the same. It's not one session or two sessions, or one meeting or two meetings. For the past thirty-five years, this question-and-answer is going on. No dearth of books have been printed, no dearth of tapes recorded; same questions, same answers.... I don't know what is the reason, but it is going on. They want to be here and I want to be with them; they want to be with me, and we are here. You can explain it in any way.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I



INFORMATION ON ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

If you wish to submit an article for publication in *Spiritual Link*, please mail a printed, typed version by post to one of the following addresses. *Emailed submissions will not be accepted.*

Science of the Soul Study Center
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
4115 Gillespie St.
Fayetteville, NC, 28306-9053, USA

Science of the Soul Study Centre
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
Haynes Park, Church End, Haynes
Bedford MK45 3BL, United Kingdom

Science of the Soul Study Centre
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
1 Mortimer Road
Wynberg, Cape Town 7800, South Africa

Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Attn: Spiritual Link Submissions
27th Floor, Tower B
Billion Centre, 1 Wang Kwong Road
Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong

- Articles should focus on the Sant Mat teachings and may also draw on the universal teachings of other mystics.
- Articles should not be based on, or discuss, the personaity of the master or the writer.
- Articles must be your own original work. If quotations from other sources are included, complete source references must be given.
- Articles should be between 500 and 1500 words in length.

If accepted, your article will be edited according to the requirements of the magazine. You will be contacted only if your submission is accepted. Please include your name, age, postal address, and email address with your article.



Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance

BY MIR SAYYID MANJHAN RAJGIRI.

TRANSLATED BY ADITYA BEHL AND SIMON WEIGHTMAN.

PUBLISHER: OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000.

ISBN: 0-19-284037-1

Madhumalati, written in the mid-sixteenth century, is an epic romance replete with mystical symbolism. Narrated in a poem of 539 stanzas, this tale of love, separation, intense yearning, and struggle is interspersed throughout with verses expressing insights on the spiritual path. The author, Mir Sayyid Manjhan, was a shaikh in the Shattari lineage of Sufism. Born in Bihar, India, he wrote the poem in Hindavi, a Bihari dialect of Hindi. Behl and Weightman have produced an excellent English translation of this Sufi classic, rendering the verses into simple and clear language while maintaining, as much as possible, the metre and rhyming patterns of the original.

The first forty-three stanzas comprise an introduction, beginning with verses in praise of God, the Prophet Muhammad, love, and Manjhan's own shaikh, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus. Of God, Manjhan writes: "How can I describe the One who pervades the universe in so many forms?"

*In heaven, earth, and hell, wherever space extends,
The Lord rejoices in multiplicity of form.
The Maker makes the universe as He wills.
He came as Death, comes still, will always come.
Placeless, He is present everywhere....
One Light there is which shines alone,
Radiant in all the worlds.
Countless are the forms that Light assumes,
Countless are its names.*

Speaking of his master, he writes,

*Shaikh Muhammad is a matchless guide;
He is the steersman over seven seas.
Whoever comes in contemplation at his feet
Sees his face and is filled with joy.*

The Shatarri Sufis, perhaps more than other lineages in Sufism, integrated aspects of Indian spiritual traditions into their expression of Sufism, even using yogic practices as a part of their spiritual discipline. *Madhumalati* includes references to such terms as “the lotus of Brahma”, the sound of Om, and the state of *sahaj*. Manjhan sometimes calls the spiritual master “Guru”, rather than “Shaikh”.

*If you want the Guru's grace,
leave aside all the mind's whims to know him!
Everyone sees his manifest form,
but few recognize his secret nature.*

Following these verses of praise, the story begins with the familiar scene of a childless king and queen longing for a son. Asking aid of a great yogi, the couple soon have a son, for whom a glorious destiny is predicted. When Prince Manohar is fourteen, a group of ethereal nymphs are so impressed by his beauty that they seek a princess beautiful enough to be his bride. While he is sleeping, they transport his bed to a far-off palace, placing it beside the bed of the sleeping princess Madhumalati, whose name means the night-flowering jasmine, ‘*raat-ki-raani*’, or Queen of Night. The prince and princess open their eyes and fall madly in love. But the nymphs then whisk the prince back to his home before he can learn who Madhumalati is or where she lives. And so begins the dramatic tale of his search for his true love. While it is a story of high adventure, full of set-backs ranging from a shipwreck to magical enchantments, as well as temptations the lovers must overcome, the reader is never far from the spiritual teachings delicately woven into the story.

Central to this message is the importance of the pain of separation on the spiritual path. This *vireh* or yearning to be one with the beloved is understood to be not only the source of rankling pain and restlessness in the human heart, but also the “only hope for humans”. As Manjhan expresses it poetically:

*I have heard that on the day the world was born,
the bird of love was released to fly.
It searched all the three worlds
but could not find a fit resting place.
So it turned and entered the inmost heart,
favoured it and never flew elsewhere.*

Prince Manohar even says that the intense longing he feels for Madhumalati is, in reality, the love that has rankled in the soul since the beginning of time, equating it with the soul’s pain of separation from the Lord.

*Suffering overwhelmed mankind
at the very beginning of the creation.
The lotus of Brahma was the home of grief.
The day that sorrow entered creation,
the soul learnt of its own existence.
The pain I feel for you was not born today,
but has been my companion from the beginning.
Now I carry the burden of this grief,
sacrificing all the pleasures of now and hereafter.
I have given myself to you and accepted this pain.
Through dying I have tasted immortality.
O Madhumalati, the pain of love for you
brings happiness to the world.
Blessed is the life of the man in whose heart
is born the pain of love for you.*

Manjhan claims – and illustrates through this epic narrative – that this intense love is actually the key to dying while living and achieving the purpose of human life. In the second to last stanza he writes:

*In this world no one can become immortal,
but death cannot destroy the one
who has died himself before the death.
Whoever suffers the burning fire of love,
escapes from death in his life on earth.
He who has saved himself by taking refuge in love
will never die no matter who kills him.
Once he has found his life in dying,
death will never come near him again.
Death has become the fruit of life,
through it, one's body becomes immortal.
O Soul, if you are afraid of death, then
follow the path of taking refuge in love.
Now and hereafter, fear of death disappears,
for love is the sanctuary of the world.*

Manjhan concludes with a final couplet:

*The elixir of immortality will fill love's sanctuary
wherever it is found.
As long as poetry is cultivated on earth,
so long will our lovers' name resound.*



