

# Spiritual Link



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# Yours Affectionately

I am glad to receive your letter and to read that your faith in the Master is firm and you are busy with the exercises despite the infirmities of old age, and that you long to see the Master's Radiant Form and hear his melodious Voice. Rest assured that the Master is within you and is watching you, and will not leave you alone. He knows his part well and is playing it. Have courage. There is no room for despair here.

The Word is the foundation on which the whole visible and invisible structure of the universe is resting. Everything has sprung from this Word. The Master is the embodiment of this Word and is one with it. Your karmic debt is being paid up, and the more you pay here, the better, for then the rise hereafter will be unhindered. I fully realize your situation. When life ceases to have any charm but instead feels burdensome, when memory is failing and thoughts are not fixed, much of this life is gone and little remains. Try to surrender your will to his will, so that the moment he calls you, you are ready to go with him.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

# To Fight or Not to Fight

That was the dilemma. The two armies were ready and facing each other. Just as war was about to break out, Arjuna, the greatest hero of his time, was suddenly overwhelmed with doubt. On one hand was his sacred duty as a warrior and, on the other hand, he saw so many on the enemy side who were his beloved friends and family that he was unable to bear arms against them. It was this inner conflict that started the dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna – in what is known as the Bhagavad Gita – where Lord Krishna says to Arjuna:

*Look to your own duty; do not tremble before it; nothing is better for a warrior than a battle of sacred duty.*

From childhood we have been conditioned to think of struggle as a negative aspect of life. But what if conflicts were actually a good thing? We may not realize it, but most of us face an internal war every day. Not the kind that is fought on a physical battlefield but one that rages within.

On one hand, there are forces that spur us forward to help us reach our highest potential, courageously face our destiny, and carry out our spiritual duties. And on the other, there are negative forces that lure us into temptation and distract us from achieving our true goal. Both these forces are inside us, and every day we struggle. We strive to find a balance between our spiritual and worldly responsibilities; and we make the effort to find a middle ground. We try.

But sadly, in today's world, it is extremely difficult to keep a balance. It takes enormous inner strength to be morally virtuous when everyone around you is getting ahead through corruption and deceit. It takes immense courage to be good and stay that way.

So how do we focus on our true goal? How do we remain faithful to the teachings when even after doing everything that is asked of us, we still have to go through major set-backs in life, be they financial, health or family related? With all this negativity constantly threatening to consume us, sometimes it feels like the only solution is to just run away. But where would we go?

*Do not fear the conflict, do not flee it. Where there is no struggle, there is no virtue; where faith and love are not tempted, it is not possible to be sure whether they are really present. They are proved and revealed in adversity, that is, in difficult and grievous circumstances, both outward and inward – during sickness, sorrow, or privations.*

St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*

The fact is, there is nowhere to run. It has been said that the only way out of any conflict is to go *through* it. The Saints affirm this when they tell us that struggle should be looked upon as a great opportunity. It is natural and essential for our transformation and growth. It unravels the heroic qualities of the warrior within us, compelling us to fight with our mind and overcome our tendency to give in. It forces us to face our shortcomings and rise above them. And since there is nowhere to run on the outside, the only option left is to turn inside and seek comfort, and inner strength from the Shabd within.

*Take it as his grace and think more about the Father. When we are suffering, we think more about the Father than when we are in happy situations. So which is better from his point of view?*

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

There is a little bit of Arjuna inside each one of us. We are vulnerable to weakness and yet we have the potential to be our own greatest hero. As disciples of a true Master, it is our sacred duty to face whatever comes to us in life; to fulfil both our spiritual and worldly obligations and face our destiny with courage and forbearance. And standing by our side helping us, is our Master, our guide, our greatest benefactor, ready to inspire and support us at every step.

Life is one strenuous drawn-out war of self-mastery that each one of us must wage if we want to emerge victorious from the prison of earthly life. These challenges that come to us are not hurdles as they appear to be but signs of his grace – a loving message from the Divine that our journey home has begun.



*Those who experience contemplation and practise prayer are always ready for the hour of conflict. They are never very much afraid of their open enemies, for they know who they are and are sure that their strength can never prevail against the strength which they themselves have been given by the Lord: they will always be victorious and gain great riches, so they will never turn their backs on the battle.*

Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*

# Something to Think About

One should meditate, make efforts and go in. Although the Satguru has the power to pull up the soul and take it inside, it would be like lifting a man who is tied down with heavy chains. The wise course for the Satguru is to undo the chains one by one, free the man, and then take him up. This no doubt takes time, but the soul will rise with ease, and when once it goes up, the chains will not be able to pull it down.

*With the Three Masters, Vol. II*



Humility is not weakness. It is such a powerful thing that all the powers of the world have to bow to it. Man conquers himself with pridelessness. No one can defeat a prideless man; as behind his humility is acting the secret power of the Lord. Humility is an ornament of great men.

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



The only activity of lasting value is simran (repetition of the holy Names revealed by the Guru) and bhajan (listening to the celestial melody from within). Parents and children, power and pelf, wealth and possessions – none of these can we carry away with us to the land of the hereafter. Two things alone are our permanent companions – the Master and the Word. If we have any true kinsmen in the world, it is these two. Yet, our affection for these two true friends is woefully meagre.

*Maharaj Sawan Singh, Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol. I*

# No

“Please don’t go there.” “Please don’t do that.” “No son, it’s raining, we cannot go to the park.” “No darling, it’s late, you cannot watch TV now.” “Be careful, don’t touch that.”

No, and variations of it, are some of the most commonly repeated phrases children hear. While children innocently learn and absorb the world around them, grown-ups often step in and abruptly halt this exploration. To the child, this may seem cruel and unfair, but everyone knows that a parent’s strict and uncompromising behaviour comes from love.

Every parent knows what it takes to keep a child safe from harm. Parents understand the law of gravity and how jumping from heights can be dangerous. They know the physics of fire and the catastrophic outcome of playing with a box of matches. It is not the parents who created these scientific laws; but they are aware of their effects and it is their duty to teach their children and guide them.

Similarly, albeit on a deeper and grander scale, saints come into this world to guide us. We have come into human existence as newborns who are unaware of many things. We do not know who we are, where we have come from and what our purpose is. And like innocent children, we are curious. So we experiment – with our food, clothes, bodies, jobs and relationships. And saints, like loving parents, come into the world to help us understand the law of nature and the outcomes of our actions.

*We are just reaping the fruit of what we have sown. We do not even learn from our mistakes in this life, not to speak of our*

*past lives. This world is a field of karmas. Whatever we have sown, we reap, and whatever we sow now, we reap here in the future. We have come here again and again to fulfil those desires, to reap the fruit of the seeds that we have sown in our previous births, and while reaping we also sow for the next birth, and the excess also increases our stored lot. That is karma.*

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

But from our limited, childlike perspective, it may seem as if the Master says no to a lot of things. No meat, no fish, no eggs, no animal rennet, no alcohol (not even the occasional glass of wine), no tobacco, and no intimate relationships before marriage, and so forth. There are so many restrictions that it seems like we do not get to have any fun at all.

While these rules might seem stringent and severe, the saints did not create the natural law that governs the creation. They do not choose to be harsh, rather, it is the law itself that is relentless. So when they offer us guidance and advice, they are simply looking out for our best interests and what will ultimately benefit our true self – the soul.

When the Masters advise us to abstain from animal products, it is because they can foresee the heavy effects of karma upon the soul. When they ask us to live a moral life with a clean heart, it is because they know that only a pure soul can merge back into the perfect One. And when we are told to earn our livelihood through honest means, it is because a spiritual life cannot be sustained on fraudulence and deceit.

There are many who want to learn about life through personal experience. On this point, the saints cannot be more encouraging. They do not want us to take their word at face value; nor do they

want us to follow the path like blind sheep. They want us to verify everything for ourselves by taking a scientific and logical approach to spirituality. As with a science experiment, the saints present us with a hypothesis. They provide us with the tools to test the hypothesis and then it is up to us to perform the experiment and draw our own conclusions.

*Man himself is the perfect book; for all books have come out of him. Inside of him is the Creator, with all His creation. The study of books gives second-hand information; while the study of man gives first-hand information – that is, the study of what lies within ourselves. So why not enter within ourselves and see what is there?*

*It is incumbent on man to seek his origin because he is a “thinking” person. He is expected to “supervise his planning department,” go inside and go ahead to get his reward. I wish that you go within and see the reality with your own eye and to your satisfaction, and compare it with that your reason has pictured. The substance lies within you....*

*The first essential thing, therefore, is to enter this laboratory within ourselves, by bringing our scattered attention inside of the eye focus.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

The point is we need a teacher whom we can trust. An expert who we can turn to for guidance and advice. A fledgling, before taking flight, learns from its parents. It learns how to fly, how to hunt for food, how to build a nest – just like a little child, who at every step in life needs guidance from his parents and elders. Similarly, when it comes to the inner life, we need a spiritual teacher who can teach

us the Truth and show us the way to make best use of this precious human life.

When we look back at the time when we were children, we recall the countless times that our parents said no to us. As adults, we can understand perfectly where they were coming from. So just as we trusted our parents and reaped the reward of that trust as successful adults, at this stage of our spiritual childhood, we too need to trust our Master and obey his instructions, because in order to conduct any experiment – to begin with, one needs to have a certain amount of faith in the teacher. One day, our soul too will reap the reward of that trust; when it can shine in its own pure light and stand shoulder to shoulder with the beloved Father – free at last from the bondage of transmigration.



*It is our duty to obey the instructions of the Master, and spiritual exercises are his instructions. It is also the direction of the Supreme Father that we should be moral, honest and laborious in the spiritual practices. And, if we do not obey his instructions, we cannot escape the consequences. We must turn from the world and obey with love and faith. His power is unlimited and he will save us.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

## There is Always Something Good ...

There was once a king whose advisor had a habit of saying: there is always something good in whatever happens. Whether someone gave him good news or bad news, his response was always the same. The king was very fond of his advisor, but this habit really annoyed the king. Out of respect for his elderly friend, he usually just ignored it. Until one day, the king cut his finger on a piece of glass. It was quite a serious injury and the king was in a lot of pain.

Later that day, when his advisor came to visit him to discuss a hunting trip that they were taking the next day, he saw the bandaged finger and asked the king what happened. When the king related the story, the advisor repeated his favourite phrase: there is always something good in whatever happens.

Now since the king was in a lot of pain, the comment made him more furious than usual. His finger was throbbing and again this irritating man was telling him that this was a good thing! To teach him a lesson, he called his guards and told them to take the advisor to the castle prison and leave him there.

Now, not only would his trusted friend miss the hunting trip, he would also be sitting alone in this cold dark cell for two whole nights. The king thought, “Now let him say: there is always something good in whatever happens.”

The next day, the king left for his hunting trip with his entire entourage. Along the way, however, his party was overtaken by local inhabitants, who did not know who the king was. Out of nowhere these assailants appeared, threatening all the king’s men. Out of fear, everyone scattered around and disappeared, leaving the king, who was eventually captured.

At this point, the king felt very disappointed about how his so-called defenders had abandoned him, and then he remembered his friend and trusted advisor locked up in the castle. He thought to himself, had I brought him, he would have defended me and would have never abandoned me. Anyway, the captors surrounded the king, bound his hands and feet and carried him to their temple, intending to offer him as a religious sacrifice.

They began decorating him with coloured dyes, as was part of the ritual, and that was when they noticed the king's bandaged finger. One of the men unwrapped the cloth and inspected the cut and then yelled out something that made everyone stop the preparations.

Apparently, it was considered disrespectful to offer 'imperfection' to the gods. So the kidnappers irritably put down their instruments and released the king. The king, of course, ran as fast as he could and eventually made it back to his castle.

While he was recovering from this traumatic episode, the king remembered his friend and trusted advisor and felt terrible. He realized that the cut on his finger was what saved his life and that his advisor was right in saying there is always something good in whatever happens. He pondered on his actions and deeply regretted what he had done.

The king ran down to the cell feeling great remorse. He told the guards to release his friend immediately and then told him the whole story. He said, "I was so wrong and you were so right. There is always something good in whatever happens. If it wasn't for the cut on my finger I would be a pile of ashes right now. Please, can you ever forgive me for locking you up in this terrible place?"

The advisor thought for a moment and then said to the king again, "There is always something good in whatever happens."

The king was shocked. “How can you say that? For no reason, I locked you up in this awful place. If you had been with me on the hunt, you would not have abandoned me like the others, and I wouldn’t have had to go through that whole ordeal.”

“Yes, my king,” the advisor agreed. “I would surely have been by your side. But remember, I do not have a cut on my finger. Had I been with you, I would have been the ‘perfect’ sacrifice. They would have offered me to the gods and I would be a pile of ashes right now.”



*Whatever happens is for our ultimate good although at times it appears antagonistic, to our calculations. We are ignorant of our past karma, but the Master knows. So the whole thing reduces to this, that we should do the spiritual practice as we have been asked to by the Master and do our worldly duties with our ordinary wisdom, but never care for the result. Do your duty and expect nothing – leave the results to the Master.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Dawn of Light*

# Bend Not Break

*Be like a bamboo.*

*It bends, but does not break;*

*it's flexible, yet firmly rooted.*

Japanese Proverb

Bamboo is hard and firm and yet sways gently in the breeze while its trunks stay rooted firmly in the ground. The nature of bamboo gives us insight into the secret of facing the ups and downs of life.

Life was never meant to be easy; it was never meant to offer us permanent happiness and peace of mind. But at the same time, life need not exhaust and overwhelm us. Failures are meant to break our ego not our spiritual will to go on. Our karmas were never meant to defeat us but rather to humble us. We have been allocated a destiny based on our load of karmas, but we have also been given the capacity to bear that load. There is a saying that the will of the Lord will never lead us where the grace of the Lord cannot keep us.

A bend-but-don't-break or go-with-the-flow attitude comes from having a non-judgmental outlook towards life and people. It allows us to forgive others and ourselves for mistakes and incompatibilities. While this is not an easy outlook to adopt, with sincere effort it can be learned. Like any other skill, changing our outlook and adopting a good attitude requires conscious practice supported by effort in meditation.

*Meditation will strengthen your love, strengthen your faith, strengthen your devotion. Your roots will go very deep, and then nobody will be able to shake you from the path. There is no other way – only by meditation.*

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

Botanical studies reveal that in its first four years of life, the Chinese bamboo tree shows no growth above the soil. But in the fifth year, the tree can grow as much as 60 feet in a span of just six weeks. But this is only possible because in the early years, the tree develops a strong root system underground to support its growth. The same principle is true for our maturity on the path. Out of impatience, we look for early signs of progress and feel discouraged by the persistent darkness within. But the mind has been attached to this creation for so long that reversing the outward flow of attention is a slow affair. We need to be patient and build our efforts on a foundation that has to sustain a phenomenal growth that has yet to come.

*Remember that once the seed of Nam has been planted, it must become a tree and bear fruit. Brahmans may perish, but the seed of Nam will not perish.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

In Ryuho Okawa's book *Invincible Thinking – There is No Such Thing as Defeat*, he discusses the pattern of joints on a bamboo stalk. He notes that the joints of bamboo occur at intervals of eight to twelve inches, and each joint is very strong. In this way, the bamboo grows steadily, segment by segment, up to as high as 60 feet despite the stalk being only eight to ten inches wide.

Similarly, by attending to our meditation regularly, day after day, we too are growing 'segment by segment'. We experience a change in our attitude, we feel a sense of contentment, we experience greater peace of mind. All this forms part of the spiritual maturity needed to support our upcoming realization. It is only by persistence and commitment to the teachings that we can progress steadily to reach greater spiritual heights. With our belief deeply rooted in a strong foundation, when faced with the storms of daily life we will bend in humility rather than break in despair.



*Do not lose heart but fight courageously. The battle has just begun.  
Mind is not stronger than the sound current. The Master is with you.  
He is watching your every movement. He is prepared to fight your  
battles with you. Take him as your helper. Have faith in him. Fight the  
mind and you will succeed.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

# Love

## An Explanation by Maharaj Charan Singh

Love? Well, if there's love, there is nothing to speak about, and if you speak, there is no love. Love loses its depth when you try to express it. The more you digest it, the more it grows. It is more to experience than to express. What do you want to know about love?

You see, love has two aspects. It raises our soul upwards; then passion pulls us down. So we are more concerned with the devotional part of love. Love means to lose your own identity, to become another being, to merge into another one, to do which pleases the other person and not to do anything which displeases the other person. That is love. The soul by instinct is in love with the Father. The tendency of the soul is always towards its own origin. It is full of love and devotion for the Father, but it is just helpless due to the mind. The mind has a weakness for the senses, so it has become a slave of the senses. There is such a great load on the soul that its love is just crushed under that weight.

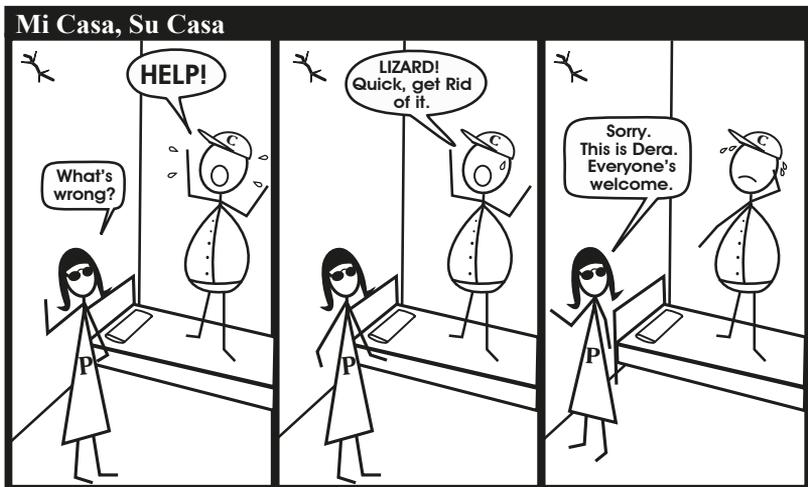
The soul cannot help but love its own origin. So we have to lift the weight of the senses, of the mind, of karmas or sins, before we can experience that love. And we feel real love when we go beyond the realm of mind and maya, when there are no coverings on the soul, when the soul shines, when it knows itself. Then it experiences the real love for its own Father, for its own origin. Love has the quality of merging into another being, becoming another being. Ultimately, we lose our own identity and individuality and become one with the Father. And that is why we say that love is God and God is love.

The more love you give, the more it grows. It is something which doesn't decrease by sharing. All other things decrease if you share them, but this is something within us which always grows and grows, the more and more we give. And the only way to experience that love is to withdraw it from the senses by simran and dhyān and attach it to the divine melody within. Because the mind is fond of pleasures, when it gets a better pleasure than the sensual pleasures, it automatically leaves the sensual pleasures. So the more the mind is attached to Shabd and Nam within, the more the soul starts shining within – what we call a higher consciousness. That is our concept of love.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*



## SPIRITUALISTICKS<sup>®</sup>



# The Master's True Form

As human beings, our understanding and knowledge of the world around us, is gained from what our mind absorbs through the body's sense organs. Our physical being influences how our mind perceives the physical world, as depicted in the fable of the frog and the swan.

According to the fable, the frog's world existed inside a well. He could not see or move farther than the walls of the well around him, so he had no idea that the real world was, in fact, incredibly larger. The swan, who had flown across the skies and had seen many ponds and landforms, tried to explain to the frog how wonderful and vast the world was. But the frog merely looked at the swan in disbelief and declared that the swan had no idea what it was talking about. The moral is that one is not prepared to believe anything that is beyond the mind's ability to understand – hence, the human mind sees the world within the limitations and abilities of its physical body and sense organs.

In our case, the only way we know that there are places beyond what we already perceive is to travel by car, or on a train, looking out the window. We get a wider view when we fly in an airplane. However, to know the world is truly round, we depend on astronauts. From their experiences, pictures and other proofs we even learn that the universe is much larger than we could have perceived from where we are right now.

Given our physical limitations, how can we know God? He is not seen with the eyes, or heard with our ears. How then, can we understand the path of spirituality? This path cannot be found physically, even though it exists within us.

Through the teachings of the spiritual Masters, we may surmise the following: God is here, there, and everywhere! Every cell in our body knows that he is real despite his physical invisibility. We cannot perceive him through books and discourses, as these can only give us intellectual insight about his existence and reality.

What we need is a guide – a teacher to direct us. Thus, God sends his messenger in a human form to connect with us at our level of understanding, in a way that is appealing and acceptable. Without such a guide, because of the limitations of our mind, we would be in the position of the frog unable to see the world through the eyes of a swan. The author of *Concepts and Illusions* explains:

*On the physical side, the Master is as human as we are, but herein lies a huge difference: On the spiritual level, he has traversed the path of truth, experienced inner bliss, realized the Ultimate by going deep within himself and being connected to Shabd – the inner spiritual sound. Only a Master has the experience to show us the way within.*

In the process of learning how to connect with the almighty Lord from the Master, we develop a relationship with him. This relationship is built on faith and trust and develops into love and devotion. At the same time, we must not fall into the trap of worshipping and chasing his physical form, believing that the physical form or his darshan is enough to free our souls or can compensate for our lack of meditation practice.

All the Masters emphasize that the true guru is the Shabd. Soami Ji Maharaj once wrote a poem that begins:

*Guru Mohe Apna Roop Dikhaao (Master, reveal your true form to me).*

We may have heard these words sung before. The entire poem focuses on Soami Ji Maharaj's desire to see the Radiant Form of the Master which would lead him to the Creator. In the first half, he professes that the physical form is important, is dear to him, and that he loves and values the physical form because without it, he cannot perceive the "other form" which refers to the inaccessible, boundless, true form of the Lord – that is the form he wishes to be absorbed in.

The Masters emphasize that the true Guru is the Shabd. In the second half of the poem, Soami Ji Maharaj further highlights the value of the Shabd. The Shabd, the sound current, the sweet celestial melody, resounds within the body of every human being. The Shabd goes on within us without any interruption. We would not exist if it were to stop for even a second. It is the life current in us. This sound comes from the mansion of the Supreme Lord, and by catching hold of it, the disciple can return to that mansion. Soami Ji further reassures us in the second part of this poem:

*I shall not rest till I show you that form  
why are you in such a hurry?...  
I shall myself help you put in the effort,  
I shall myself take you to your ultimate home.  
Listen to what Radha Soami has to say:  
all will be worked out  
as and when the supreme will ordains it.*

To connect with the Shabd is the true objective, not only of Soami Ji Maharaj, but for all of us. It was the desire to unite with the absolute Lord which pulled us on to the path. Deep inside we too are singing, *Guru Mohe Apna Roop Dikhaao – Master, reveal your true form to me!*



# Reveal Your Own Real Form

*Reveal your own real form to me, Master.  
You have assumed this physical form  
to lead souls to their salvation.  
Show me now your other form  
that is inaccessible and boundless.  
Let me see that form and be absorbed in it,  
and grant me the gift of fearlessness.  
This physical form is also very dear to me,  
but let me experience that one through this one –  
the hidden through the manifest.  
Without the help of this form nothing can be accomplished, for  
without the help of this form,  
how can you possibly reveal the other one?  
This one is therefore to be greatly valued,  
but show me now the other one too –  
the one that is your eternal form,  
while you take on the physical to awaken souls.  
I have learned this secret from your many explanations  
of the path of Surat Shabd.  
Let my soul now merge in your Shabd form,  
which is truly your own, real form.  
I live in constant fear of death and adversity –  
deliver me from this and make me fearless.  
Merciful Radha Soami, benefactor of souls,  
help me realize the purpose of life.*

Soami Ji Maharaj, *Sar Bachan Poetry*

# The Master Answers

## A Selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

**Q:** *Master, it seems like a lot of little miracles happen in a disciple's life.*

**A:** What more important miracle can come in a disciple's life than that his whole attitude to life is changed? What is more of a miracle than that? His whole attitude of life changes. He becomes blind to the world and opens his eyes towards his home. First he was dead; now he's alive. What better miracle can there be than that?

People who were running after worldly things and worldly desires don't want to look at them anymore, don't want to see them and they have no time to talk to anybody. Day and night they are filled with love and devotion for the Father. What more of a miracle can a disciple have than this? His whole approach to life changes. Where people weep and cry, a disciple becomes happy. That is a miracle, which comes into every person's life when he comes to the path.

And some things happen also, just to convince a disciple to remain on the path. That is a miracle. If anything happens in anybody's life, he shouldn't broadcast it. He should digest those things within himself because that is his own personal experience. That's a personal miracle for him, a personal advantage from the master or the Lord. He must digest all that within, not broadcast it. At every step in a disciple's life, there is a miracle.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

**Q:** *Maybe we should accept pain with pleasure?*

**A:** Accept pain as a pleasure. Accept pleasure, but don't get lost in it. But you can only accept what he gives you when you are above the eye centre, when you are one with that holy spirit within. Then, whatever happens below the eye centre, you are not worried about it all, whether it is pleasure or pain.

*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*

**Q:** *With our simran, are we really calling to the Master all the time?*

**A:** Yes. In meditation, there's nothing else. In meditation, we're calling the master at every stage, all the time, even to the last moment. For a disciple, meditation is nothing but the master, at every level.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

## He Knows Best

Life passes by almost seamlessly when things are going well. Day after day, we go through our routine with a relatively positive frame of mind until an unexpected turn of events upends our entire world. In one moment, everything can change – a visit to the doctor when he reveals that we are suffering from a terminal illness, an accident that leads to a permanent disability, a financial crisis, or the death of a loved one.

In our helpless state, we cry out to the Lord in our prayers because he is our only anchor. But instead of asking him for courage and strength, we beg him to change our circumstances so that our life runs smoothly again. In the midst of this internal commotion, we forget that if he has the power to give, then surely, he has the power to know what is best for us.

In the *Book of Mirdad* it is written:

*Do you remind God of the hours for the sun to rise and for the moon to set? Do you remind Him of the countless things that fill this boundless universe? Why do you press your puny selves with your trifling needs upon His memory? And where is God that you should shout into His ear your whims and vanities, your praises and your complaints? Is He not in you and all about you? Take not to God your countless cares and hopes. But search the vastness of your hearts. For in the vastness of the heart is found the key to every door.*

There is a fable of two birds, perched on a tree branch, observing people looking worried and stressed, rushing from one place to another. Seeing their faces, one bird asked the other, “Why is man so full of worries and cares?” The other bird answered, “Maybe they don’t have a heavenly Father like we do.”

Human beings are the top of creation, otherwise known as the ‘temple of the living God’. Does the Lord not know what his temple needs? He knows all our thoughts, and needs even before we ask. One of Hazur Maharaj Ji’s frequent sayings was, “He knows best!” This is the Lord’s creation and he knows best how to run it; and he does not need our input.

From our limited viewpoint, life’s events may sometimes appear unfair, but the mystics tell us that everything takes place in accordance with the law of karma. According to the law of karma, our birth, the environment in which we are born, the happiness and suffering that we have to undergo here, are all a result of some earlier cause. We are merely reaping now what we have sown in the past. In one house, a family may be celebrating the birth of a child, and in another, one is mourning the death of a loved one.

So the question naturally follows, how does one maintain a calm and positive attitude when going through adversity? Hazur Maharaj Ji once responded to a similar question and said: “Accept it as his grace.”

From our perspective, we define grace when we are given a good partner, a comfortable home, a prosperous life, and so forth. But the saint’s concept of grace is very different. Hazur Maharaj Ji explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I:

*He may take your wife from you or your child or your friend. And you may become frustrated by this world and turn back to the Father.*

*That may be his grace, to pull you out of all the attachments of the world and make you realize the reality, which you never would have thought about otherwise. You were so much engrossed in your own love, your achievements and your own wealth that you have practically forgotten him. That is not his grace. His grace is what pulls you back to him, and that may be a very bitter pill....*

*We don't even know what suffering is. We are only worried about these few moments of suffering here, but we've forgotten the suffering from birth to birth, from species to species – what we have gone through from age to age. The Lord wants just to save us from all that, and we are only concerned with these few moments of pleasure, and we think the Lord is unhappy with us, that he doesn't want us to enjoy this life.*

The Master understands our helplessness and the pain that we go through living in this world. And so he teaches us that it is only attachment to the Lord that eventually creates detachment from the world. Our daily meditation progressively detaches us from our worldly relations and possessions and attaches us to the Shabd – the divine melody that resounds within all of us. This Shabd, the saints explain, is “sweet beyond measure”. Once the mind experiences the captivating music of God’s holy Name and sees its beautiful inner light, it sheds its attachments to the world. As we practise our meditation, our attitude to life becomes more positive; we become stronger; we become content no matter what state we are in. We learn to live in the Lord’s will and by doing so we become receptive to his loving grace. Great Master beautifully put it:

*When a person is depressed for want of food and resources – when even the last penny has left him, when he is without a job – even*

*then if he gives place to the Lord in his heart, he shall forever be freed from want. When one is torn by cares and anxieties, when his body is diseased, when he is deeply immersed in domestic worries, when he wanders to and fro and finds no home or hearth where he can rest, even then, if he repeats the simran of the Lord, he shall attain inner calm and peace.*

*Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. I*

Life presents plenty of challenges. However, if we live in the world, holding on to our Master's hand by practising our meditation sincerely, we will always feel his protection. The mystics say that we cannot even comprehend how much the Master does for us; if we did, we would be overwhelmed by his love. Rather than wallowing in self-pity when faced with turbulent times, perhaps we should look at the bigger picture – that we have the boundless love of our Master supporting us and the redeeming power of the Shabd to hold on to. By accepting and living in His will, we allow the Lord to direct our lives so that with his grace, we can grow closer to him and closer to the realization that he truly knows best.



*Until the disciple reaches the higher spiritual planes, he knows but little of the saint's grace or of the help he receives from minute to minute, from second to second. The disciple knows nothing of the evils against which he is protected, the disasters from which he is saved. The saint ensures that his disciples are carried with a minimum of suffering across this material world to domains which no prophet can enter, and no practitioner of penances can reach.*

*Saint Paltu, His Life and Teachings*

## Did You Know?

Poor health interferes in meditation, but it does not mean that we are to give up effort. The sound current does not stop during illness. It is the soul that has to meditate and hear the sound current, and the soul never gets ill. It is the body that suffers. In fact, during illness the blessing of the Supreme Father is extraordinary. The sound current becomes clearer. During illness, if sitting in posture is not possible, meditate while lying down. In no case is meditation to be neglected.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

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We have only one future: to go back to the Father. There's no other future.

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

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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 disciples'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*

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# The Angry Man

When we were children, our parents would often tell us meaningful stories in an effort to instil in us good moral values. One such tale was about ‘the angry man’. While the details of the story remain vague, the impression that it left on my mind is clear. He was a lonely, unhappy and an unloved man who no one should ever aspire to become.

We know that anger is one of the deadliest emotions. It erupts like an active volcano, spilling ash, rocks and hot lava all around itself. When we stand back and observe another person getting angry, we can see how destructive it can be. Not only to the person at the receiving end of the angry tirade, but more so to the person who is unable to control it.

Even if the anger did not spill out, but continued to bubble and fester inside, it would be just as destructive, like a lethal poison curling through our veins, penetrating every fibre of our being.

*If you knew how much harm anger does to your liver and heart, you would never lose your temper over anything.*

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

A common justification is blaming others or the circumstances for ‘making us angry’. We do not take responsibility for our own actions and reactions. So much so, that we consider becoming angry as acceptable behaviour.

Anger is born of ego. And as long as we have ego, we are all potential victims of anger. No matter how calm or composed we

might usually be, there are times when we lose control and fall prey to this destructive emotion. And when we do, we hurt not only those who are close to us, but also ourselves. Whatever progress we may have made on our spiritual journey, we lose. Like slipping down a snake in a game of snakes and ladders, we move further away from our spiritual goal.

*Anger is a great enemy on the spiritual path;  
A single spark can kindle a million misdeeds;  
A single wave of anger aroused by ego,  
Can drown devotion and all good deeds.*

*Kabir, The Great Mystic*

Sometimes the rage we feel inside may be triggered by another source. We are enraged when we witness any injustice, especially where our loved ones are concerned. If anyone were to knowingly hurt a friend or family member, the anger that we would direct at that person is just as destructive as anger born of ego. It eats away at our peace of mind.

I vividly remember the time when my father was attacked by a robber. As he lay bleeding and helpless in the hospital, I remember feeling shocked and enraged at the person who committed the crime. It was like having a huge ball of fire churning in my stomach. Intellectually we know that everything that happens is predestined, and such events are all our own karmas which we have to bear and withstand. But when we are going through it, it is difficult not to get carried away by the anger and pain. It refuses to go away. The only way to douse the flames is with simran. That is all we can do.

*At the time when anger seems to be creeping into your mind, you should immediately begin repeating the Names with your attention for about five minutes. You will then find that the raging fires will subside.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

As disciples on the path, we have been given a gift that not only helps lead us back to God, but also helps us deal with the challenges we have to face in our daily lives. Meditation helps us to deal with these disturbing passions and destructive emotions. It replaces agitation with peace. Instead of the heat of anger, we are soothed by the cooling shade of Shabd. As advised by Maharaj Charan Singh Ji:

*We should try to digest our anger within because anger doesn't solve any problem. As far as possible, one should try to avoid losing one's temper. Getting angry can become a habit. If we start expressing it because we think that by voicing it we can get rid of it, rather it builds more and more. It's always better to rise above it.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

By turning to meditation, we are turning our face towards the Lord. And it is only when we turn to him that we realize his strong presence in our lives. His grace is always there; we have only to be attuned to it. The Masters are the embodiment of love and kindness, and they always advise us to be loving to everybody, no matter what the circumstances.

*We have to fight with the mind not to become angry at all. But if we do, it's better to keep our lips sealed rather than express it. It's better not to feel it, but if you feel it, at least don't express it, and if you do express it, express it very gently and lovingly.*

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

Destiny may place us in different situations, but how we react to those situations is our choice. We can choose to be like the angry man, or we can choose to rise above anger and make love our strength. Anger pulls us down into the depths of darkness; love lifts us up into the light.



*Reason is light in darkness, as anger is darkness amidst light.*

*Be wise - let reason, not impulse, be your guide.*

*Kahlil Gibran, A Spiritual Treasure*

# The Lord's Very Good Son

Maharaj Charan Singh once narrated in satsang an incident concerning the Great Master which was quite an eye-opener for us. One day, the Great Master called Maharaj Ji and his brother (Shoti), and put a question to both of them, asking, "What would you like to become – a son, a bad son, or a good son?"

Maharaj Ji replied that he did not fully understand the question.

The Great Master explained that a 'son' is the son who inherits from his father all the land, wealth, reputation and goodwill of the family, and keeps it intact, neither increasing it nor squandering it. A 'bad son' is the son who squanders the inheritance he had received from his father and loses it, while a 'good son' is the son who increases his father's inheritance and wealth, raising the name and fame of his father and the family.

The Great Master again asked, "What would you like to be?" Maharaj Ji's brother kept quiet, while Maharaj Ji replied, "Hazur, of course I would like to be a 'good son', but everything is in your hands."

The Great Master said, "The Lord will make you a very good son."



*The Master is a man who has made himself one with the supreme Father, and the Shabd is the supreme Spirit in process of manifestation throughout the universe. The Master is now the representative and the spokesman of the supreme Father on this earth plane. He is the real son of God. All Masters are real sons of God. In fact, all men are, but the Master is a perfected son. There is not the slightest philosophical difficulty in this concept. It is a sublime reality.*

# Time and Tide Wait for No Man

*Every breath that we take without thinking of the Lord is time wasted. Every day is a step nearer to the end of this life.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Words Eternal*

There is an old proverb that emphasizes the value of time and how every moment that goes by is lost forever. Legend has it that there was once a king who was told by a sage that he had the power to do anything. Wanting to test the authenticity of the sage's words, the king went to the oceanfront and ordered the waves to stop. When nothing happened, he had an epiphany and said to the sage that time and tide wait for no man and one day he too would die.

*I declare to the loud beat of drum:  
With every breath that passes  
In forgetting the Name of the Lord  
You are losing the chance to conquer the three worlds –  
Your chance to reach the spiritual heights.  
If you lose a single one of these invaluable breaths  
Your loss is greater than the loss of the fourteen worlds.  
Why do you throw away such precious breaths?*

*Kabir, The Great Mystic*

We all long for perfect, unlimited happiness. We say that we want God-realization and we want to attain the absolute Truth, but we postpone our spiritual practice thinking that we can find time to attend to it later. And as time goes by we continue to slack in our

efforts and become more and more attached and involved with the world, forgetting the importance of our spiritual practice.

We are living in a world of opportunity brought about by new technology and highly advanced social and working conventions. But the consequence that comes with this is a world that lures us into a mode of 'drifting through life'.

The one thing that technology cannot change is the passage of time. The hands of the clock are ticking and we do not know when we will take our last breath. We will not live in this body forever. If we do not attend to our spiritual practice now, then we are losing the opportunity to return home to our beloved Lord and we will not get this opportunity so easily again.

Our lives reflect our priorities. The time we get up, what we eat, what we think, what we do and what we do not do, all stem from our priorities. We spend so much time and energy on various activities, some out of necessity and some just out of indulgence. We make time to take care of our body and health so we go to the gym or for a walk. We make time to relax so we watch television or go to a movie. We feel the need to keep in touch so we check our mobile phones for messages and then take the time to respond to all of them. We make time for our family and friends, we make time to go to work in order to earn a living. We even make time for physical seva, and the list goes on. But what about making time for our meditation?

Unless we discipline our mind, it will always find excuses not to sit in meditation. If we try to do one thing every single day, we will eventually get into the habit of doing it. If we neglect it and leave it for some other time – if we postpone it – we will get out of the habit. And if we lose this habit, we have to work hard again to get back into it. But unless we get into the habit of meditation, we will never achieve any results. Just as a car will not start unless we put the key

into the ignition, similarly we will never realize God unless we ‘start’ our meditation. Maharaj Charan Singh Ji once said:

*Whether you are giving a very soft knock at the door or whether you are giving a very hard knock at the door, whether you are frightened to knock and only shouting, you are at the door and you want the door to be opened to you. Even when we are too nervous to knock, our intention is that the door should be opened and we should get admission. So our effort is there – everybody has a different approach. Everybody who is on the path wants the door to be opened. Effort is when we are sitting in meditation, whether we are too nervous to knock or whether we are knocking. But when the owner of the house sees that you are not interested to get in, he will close the door again.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

It is human nature to procrastinate. But if we really want to succeed, we need to adapt our lifestyle to Sant Mat and not Sant Mat to our lifestyle. We cannot afford the luxury of being lazy and allowing the disease of procrastination to overpower us. If we want to experience the Truth, if we want to reach the Lord’s gate, then our actions must reflect that desire.



*Our meditation is the most important thing in this life, which is so short-lived and so uncertain. Every moment is precious, as we do not know when the call for exit will come.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

# The Lighter Side of Wisdom

Kabir ridiculed the degree to which people are impressed with name and fame. A village washerman had a donkey who performed his duty faithfully at all times, except when the temple priest blew the conch in the evening to call the people to temple. Then the donkey would cease working and begin to bray loudly. The washerman at last came to the conclusion that, because his donkey responded in this manner to the sound of the conch, it must have been a sadhu in its previous birth. Therefore, the washerman named his donkey Shankeshwar Swami, which means Swami of the Lord of the Conch.

After some years, the donkey died and the washerman went into mourning. To all those who asked him why he was in mourning, he replied, “Don’t you know that Shankeshwar Swami has passed away?” And so the word went round the village and soon every man had shaved his head, beard and moustache as a sign of mourning. From one village the news quickly passed to the next until at last the news reached the capital. Hearing the news, the king decided to go into mourning also. The queen, however, did not like the idea of the king shaving his head, beard and moustache, and asked the chief minister to find out exactly who Shankeshwar Swami was.

Inquiring from one person to another, the chief minister at last reached the village of the washerman. “Who was this Shankeshwar Swami for whom everybody is mourning?” asked the chief minister. “It’s a pity we never met him.”

“Did you not know Shankeshwar Swami?” replied the washerman. “He was my donkey who used to bray at the call of the temple conch.”

*Kabir, The Great Mystic*



# The To-Do List

Our busy day-to-day lives have made to-do lists quite common and indispensable. We have lists for our tasks in the office, at home and for just about any activity. It is so popular that even cellphones have applications that can help us make our to-do lists.

A to-do list gives a clear and concise summary of what needs to get done in our work life, our family life and everything else that we are involved in.

In our spiritual lives, what would our to-do list look like? As a devotee, would it consist of what needs to be accomplished to fulfil our spiritual duties to enable spiritual progress? What do we need to do so that with each passing day we inch closer and closer to our spiritual goal?

First, we must meditate. Meditation is the backbone of the Sant Mat path and without it, there is no spiritual life to speak of.

*There is one special process. And that is the very special process. That is meditation. You see, meditation creates love. It strengthens love. It deepens love. It grows love. Ultimately, it illuminates you and it makes you God. That's all meditation. I can't suggest to you any bypass. There is no short cut or bypass. That is the only way.*

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

Meditation is the only way to get attached to the sound current and achieve liberation. Furthermore, with constant meditation our wayward mind is curbed and tamed bringing forth a multitude of good attributes and attitudes that will further our spiritual

development. We cultivate qualities such as detachment, patience, peace of mind, kindness, charity and ultimately love – deep love for the Master and love for our fellow human beings. And slowly, we shed all our negative habits associated with our unstable minds.

Second, we must restrain ourselves from worrying and overthinking. Maharaj Charan Singh has this observation:

*Unnecessarily we are thinking the whole day and making ourselves miserable about things we can't control, which we can't help, which have passed. We are always thinking – thinking about either our future or about the past. By thinking those things, we're always worrying.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

All this overthinking becomes a stumbling block when it is time to sit for meditation. It simply makes it more difficult to meditate.

Hazur Maharaj Ji advises us to live in the present, to do our best in the present moment, as the past and the future are not in our hands. As each day dawns, we should just strive to do our best and leave the results to the Master.

Third, we must aspire to live a balanced life, whereby our worldly obligations as well as our spiritual duties are fulfilled. But the vow of meditation is quite difficult, as the world we live in is frenzied and fast paced, pulling us in all directions. We can get caught up in the whirl and end up losing time for the single most important task on the Sant Math path, our meditation.

So to achieve balance in life, it is best to do this task first and foremost. It makes perfect sense to start our day with meditation, so that the rest of our time can be used to attend to worldly matters. This is in fact what all the Masters recommend. They suggest that

we do our meditation in the early morning when the mind is fresh and the rest of the world is still asleep, so that there will be no distractions. This, however, is not a hard and fast rule. What is important is that we have regularity and punctuality in our meditation, so that over time, meditation becomes a habit.

With meditation done, one achieves more balance and composure and is relaxed during the rest of the day because the most important task is done; one is then free to concentrate on all other tasks.

Finally, we should keep good cheer at all times. Being happy and content despite the ups and downs of life is the hallmark of a devoted disciple. Knowing that the Master is with us during both good times and bad, and that he is helping us at every step should make us smile no matter what is going on in our lives.

Most of all, we should count our blessings and be grateful for the priceless gift of Nam.

*In whatever circumstances the Lord keeps us, we should try to be happy. Take it as his grace, whatever he gives us. That is why Christ said: Be like a little babe. You give him a stone to play with, he's happy; you give him a diamond to play with, he's happy. He doesn't discriminate between the stone and diamond. So we shouldn't try to discriminate among these events of life, whether a cold wind is blowing or a hot wind is blowing. We are happy in whatever circumstances the Lord keeps us.*

*And we can have that attitude only if we attend to meditation. Only with the help of meditation will we be able to build peace within ourselves, and then we share peace with others. You go to a miserable person and he will make you miserable in two minutes. If you go to a happy person, however miserable you may be, you will*

*just come out laughing and smiling – because we give what we have, we radiate what we have.*

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

As devotees on a spiritual path, we have a lot to be grateful for and happy about. Most importantly, we have a Master and the invaluable gift of Nam. This chance to taste the divine nectar every time we sit in meditation is a powerful tool that changes us; it is the means by which the Master purifies us. We transform into better versions of ourselves because meditation gives us the will to subdue our passions and the right attitude towards life. We end up happier, no matter what our circumstances.

Thus, with just these five items on our to-do-list – meditate, don't worry, live a balanced life, stay happy and be grateful – we help ourselves live a healthy and fruitful spiritual life.



*Our priority has to be to consider our obligations to our soul. First and foremost, we have to value our soul so much that it is more important to us than everything else.*

*Living Meditation*

# I Hear God Laugh

*A great wise man once said,  
“Man proposes, God disposes”  
And that’s true for most one may suppose,  
But as I’ve lived my life  
Full of happiness and strife,  
This truth I can disclose:  
God just laughs when I propose.*

*I plant my garden with my dreams,  
Water it with thoughts and schemes,  
And when it’s harvest time I reap,  
Not the wheat,  
But just the chaff,  
And that is when I hear God laugh.*

*I could become depressed, I guess,  
Living life with small success,  
But instead I find great comfort,  
Because it’s His decree,  
And when I hear God laughing,  
I know He’s watching,  
Over me.*

Original poem by a satsangi

# The Measure

Once a sevadar who had had a dispute with another sevadar came to Sardar Bahadur Ji and demanded: “Maharaj Ji, I want justice.” Sardar Bahadur Ji smiled and said, “That commodity is not available here.” The sevadar insisted, “Hazur, I have already told you what happened and what is needed to set things right. Now I beg you to give me justice.”

Sardar Bahadur Ji repeated, “Brother, I have already told you, justice is not available here.” The man exclaimed, “Hazur, if justice is not to be found at your door, where else will I find it?” Sardar Bahadur Ji replied gently, “My good friend, in Hazur Maharaj Ji’s court nothing is available except mercy and grace. Justice is available in Kal’s court.”

We all have a formidable account of karmas that needs to be settled. We cannot change the fact that we will be judged and sentenced for each and every one of our actions, but what we can hope for is that the measure by which we are judged is a compassionate and kind one. Christ has said: “Judge not, that ye be judged.” And Maharaj Charan Singh explains this further by adding:

*When we try to judge anybody, we also expose ourselves to judgment.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

It seems quite simple to understand – if we point out others’ mistakes, then our mistakes will be exposed too, whereas if we forgive others then we too will be forgiven.

Why is it then that we have such a hard time forgiving those who wrong us?

There are two things that we would do well to remember when we are faced with people who offend us or do us wrong.

The first thing is to give everyone the benefit of the doubt – we never know what people's circumstances are and why they do what they do. If we try to see things from their perspective, things may not seem so wrong after all.

The second thing is to remember that we ourselves need a lot of forgiveness. A common idiom states that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. So before we decide to belittle anyone for their mistakes, let us try to take a good look at our own flaws.

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

*The Lord is all love, he is all grace. We do not know, nor can we comprehend what that grace and love is.*

So if he loves and cares for us, and if we are sincere in our repentance, then why would he not be willing to forgive us?

The point is, that sincerity in our repentance needs to show in our actions. We cannot expect the Lord to forgive us for our transgressions if we are not willing to forgive and forget the wrongs that others have caused us. We cannot expect the Lord to be understanding and compassionate towards us if we do not display and feel some of that understanding and compassion within ourselves towards others. And most of all, we cannot expect the Lord to redeem us from this sphere of action and reaction unless we express that wish through our sincere efforts in meditation.

*The Lord's grace is not lacking; our efforts are lacking, our sincerity is lacking, our faith is lacking.*

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

If we were sincere, we would treat our every action as a new action and every reaction towards us as a settlement of an old action we have done, accepting responsibility for it.

Being sincere requires us to be willing to seek forgiveness from anyone who we may have unintentionally hurt and to forgive anyone who may have hurt us, even if it was intentional.

If we truly want to be forgiven for all that we have done, then we should never give up on our meditation no matter how dull or pointless it may seem. Through our own efforts in meditation, we will never be able to conquer the mind nor pay for our karmas, but these efforts put together form a genuine plea for forgiveness; an honest and sincere request to our Master to overlook our flaws and make us his own.

As Sardar Bahadur Ji said, "In the Master's court there is only forgiveness." We can rest assured that every honest effort we make, no matter how inept it may seem, will go a long way in earning us that final redemption from all our sins.



*The Lord is within us. He wants to wash away our karma, to make us pure and fit to get into his presence. Our only course amidst sufferings of any kind is first to bear them patiently, with courage and fortitude; and secondly, to pray to the Lord for forgiveness. The Lord hears our prayers and showers concessions which we cannot see unless we go in.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

# Heart to Heart

An old man came hobbling into the Beas Hospital using two sticks for support.

The Patient Welfare Officer asked him, “What is the problem?”

He said, “Eye problems.”

The Officer asked, “Why didn’t you bring your son to help you?”

He said, “I have heard that in Maharaj Ji’s house there is no need of a son or helper. The sevadars in Maharaj Ji’s house will help me.”

He was admitted and the eye specialists operated on him. When he recovered, he bowed to the Guru with whose grace he recovered the use of his eyes, without the help of his sons.

*Labour of Love*



Maharaj Ji once gave the example of a satsangi with one leg who used to come during the bhandaras. “He used to come from the hills of Himachal and was very poor. Just to save money to give in seva, he used to walk from his village in the hills to the Dera, with the help of his crutches, covering a distance of over 75 miles. Once he was brought to me by Mr. Bolakani. He offered one rupee in seva. Looking to his poverty, I asked the sevadars not to accept it, but he burst into tears, and I had to accept his offering.

“How can you value this seva? Is it not worth much more than the hundreds and thousands that the rich give? The value of seva is not in how much one offers, but in the feelings and love with which it is offered.”

*Treasure Beyond Measure*

# Book Review



## Interior Castle

BY TERESA OF AVILA. TRANSLATED BY E. ALLISON PEERS

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Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), passionate lover of God, mystic, reformer, humble servant and loving sister to all, is one of the most beloved of the Catholic saints. She was both a contemplative and a reformer, balancing a life of prayer and meditation with an activist's zeal and energy. She was the only woman in the history of the Church to reform a religious order of men, and one of only two women recognized as a Doctor of the Church. She lived during a time of intense religious persecution and was herself threatened by the Spanish Inquisition. She suffered from significant physical ailments and was beset by doubt, but she never turned aside from the interior way and her desire for mystic union with God.

*Interior Castle*, one of the most celebrated books of mystical theology, was written toward the end of her life. It was undertaken in obedience to the request of her superiors. She believed herself to be unworthy of the task: "If you find anything good in this book which helps you to learn to know Him better, you can be quite sure that it is His Majesty Who has said it, and if you find anything bad, that it has been said by me."

It begins with a simple metaphor: "I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions," with God, the great King, dwelling in the innermost mansion. Using this metaphor, Teresa sought to describe the journey

to God, whose call is gentle but so powerful that the aspirants on this journey give up all things outside the castle for love of him. Battling the forces that would lead them astray, passing from room to room, they ultimately reach God himself, where “the two lighted candles join and become one; the falling rain becomes merged in the river.”

The journey home begins when we realize that we are lost.

*Would it not be a sign of great ignorance, my daughters, if a person were asked who he was, and could not say, and had no idea who his father or his mother was, or from what country he came? Though that is a great stupidity, our own is incomparably greater if we [do not know] what good qualities there may be in our souls, or Who dwells within them.*

The way into the castle and through the mansions is clear: “As far as I can understand, the door of entry into this castle is prayer and meditation.” She explains that our attention has been focused on the exterior of the castle rather than on the interior where the Lord resides. The spiritual journey is made by reversing this process, by shifting our attention from the exterior to the interior and from ourselves to the Lord.

The interior life of the soul is described as it progresses through the inner mansions. Upon its entry into the first mansion it is imperfect and sinful, beset by base desires pictured as venomous creatures. On reaching the seventh and final mansion it has become pure and worthy to be the bride of a spiritual marriage. The foundation of the journey is humility; the momentum is longing; the result is ever-increasing love; and the culmination is merging with the Beloved.

Teresa, an advocate for balance, believes that self-forgetfulness and self-knowledge must coincide and that both should be held within the container of contemplation on God.

*However high a state the soul may have attained, self-knowledge is incumbent upon it, and this it will never be able to neglect even should it so desire. ... Yet one can have too much of a good thing ... and if we never rise above the slough of our own miseries we do ourselves a great disservice. ... The soul must sometimes emerge from self-knowledge and soar aloft in meditation upon the greatness and the majesty of its God.*

She suggests we should be able both to forget our weaknesses – “Let us leave our reason and our fears in His hands and let us forget the weakness of our nature which is apt to cause us so much worry” – and to remember them: “Let us think of his greatness and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at His purity we shall see our foulness; by meditating upon His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble.”

The struggle required to subdue the mind is presented with sincerity, humility and the intimacy of a long-time combatant. Although her pain is sometimes palpable, she is always hopeful and positive, emphasizing the grace that always accompanies effort in meditation.

*Do not imagine that the important thing is never to be thinking of anything else and that if your mind becomes slightly distracted all is lost. ... The soul may perhaps be wholly united with Him in the Mansions very near His presence, while thought remains in the outskirts of the castle, suffering the assaults of a thousand wild and venomous creatures and from this suffering winning merit. So this must not upset us, and we must not abandon the struggle.*

Our purpose is clear. “The Lord asks only two things of us: love for His Majesty and love for our neighbour.” The second love is only

possible through the first: “I do not believe we could ever attain perfect love for our neighbour unless it had its roots in the love of God.” Yet love of our neighbour also increases our love for God:

*And be certain that, the farther advanced you find you are in this [love of neighbour], the greater the love you will have for God; for so dearly does His Majesty love us that He will reward our love for our neighbour by increasing the love which we bear to Himself, and that in a thousand ways.*

She admonishes us for the ease with which we love and forgive ourselves and the “ensoriousness concerning our neighbours, lack of charity towards them, and failure to love them as we love ourselves.”

She enjoins us to live in his will at all times and cautions us against desiring anything outside his will, especially spiritual favours. This is particularly difficult during times of spiritual dryness.

*Do not ask for what you have not deserved. ... Oh, humility, humility! ... Whenever I hear people making so much of their times of aridity, I cannot help thinking that they are somewhat lacking in it. ... These periods of aridity may teach you to be humble, and not make you restless, which is the aim of the devil. Be sure that, where there is true humility, even if God never grants the soul favours, He will give it peace and resignation to His will, with which it may be more content than others are with favours.*

We are advised to persevere regardless of results. “All that the beginner in prayer has to do ... is to labour and be resolute and prepare himself with all possible diligence to bring his will into conformity with the will of God. ... You may be quite sure that this comprises the very greatest perfection which can be attained on the spiritual road.”

The beauty and necessity of dying in order to live is explained using the metaphor of the silkworm.

*You will have heard of the wonderful way in which silk is made. ... The silkworm ... starts to spin its silk and to build the house in which it is to die. This house may be understood here to mean Christ. ... Let the silkworm die – let it die, as in fact it does when it has completed the work which it was created to do. Then we shall see God and shall ourselves be as completely hidden in His greatness as is this little worm in its cocoon.*

Teresa teaches that though we are small, limited and feeble, we can, with His love, reach the Lord. He gives us that love, and all we have to do is give it back to him. Our part is clear: “If you would progress a long way on this road and ascend to the Mansions of your desire, the important thing is not to think much, but to love much; do, then, whatever most arouses you to love.”



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