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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
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Don't Give Up, Dear Friend

*You feel like a rock in the river of Holy Name.
You try to flow along with the current,
but feel too heavy and earthbound
to break free.*

*You are far more river than rock,
more clear, clean water of spirit
than carbon and stone of earth.
The real you is a luminous being
so translucent, fluid and fine
that you can't cast a shadow
in this world.*

*Don't give up, dear friend.
Repeat the handful of words
from the Awakened One
and every sky breaks open
with thunderous applause
to celebrate your freedom.*

*The bells of home ring out,
chiming waves of welcome
so loud and clear
rocks and stones are shaken
from ancient slumber,
and your mind awakens
from the dream of daily life.*

*Don't give up, dear friend.
Listen to the shining Song
from the Enlightened One
that resounds so bright and strong
it cures night's age-old fear of the dark,
and tumbles down the walls
of the dungeon of birth and death.*

*Don't give up, dear friend.
The glance from the Radiant One
lets fly love's deadly spear
tipped in spirit's flame
to pierce the heart,
frozen with forgetfulness.
And from that blessed wound
your soul bleeds light in a sacred stream.
In a flood of freedom, you flow
in the river of Holy Name
rushing home to the Sea.*



A Crack in Everything

The late poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen wrote, “There is a crack ... in everything, that’s how the light gets in.” As we tread the path of spirituality, we often find that we have many cracks in our lives – in our faith, our resolve, and possibly even within our very selves. We struggle more than we want to, fail and lose focus more than we think we should, and doubt much more than we thought we would when we began the journey. Our imperfections become more glaring the longer we are on the path, and we struggle to live with our lack of will and seeming inability to stay with our vows, especially the vow to do our meditation. But as many mystics explain, it is through these cracks in our lives that the light can enter. Baba Gurinder Singh often says that life is a learning process. We are here to learn, and we sometimes learn as much, or more, from our imperfections as we do from our strengths.

Mystics address our struggles and seeming failures with grace and compassion because they understand human frailty. They understand that sometimes it is the very things we resist, avoid, and flee from that bring us closer to awakening. In *Sar Bachan Poetry*, Soami Ji writes, “It was only when my heart burst open and was shattered into pieces that I received the vision of Radha Soami.” He explains throughout his teachings that our real self is the soul – love – and that all else is illusion. He says: “This world, this alien land, is a game of body, mind and senses. Discard these coverings, these extraneous fragments of your Self.” The shattering experience he describes is a necessary part of the spiritual process if we are going to discard the coverings we hold on to so tightly.

The Sufi mystic Rumi writes, “In this house of mud and water my heart has fallen into ruins” (*The Pocket Rumi*). These are descriptions of a ruined, shattered heart and a broken spirit. Perhaps when we began our spiritual journey, we didn’t anticipate this part of the process, but the mystics know that it is inevitable in order to discard and dissolve the “extraneous fragments” of the self. We have so many coverings wrapped around our souls, and these have to come off one by one in what may sometimes feel like fracturing and traumatic experiences. We would prefer to avoid having our heart shattered, yet it is often in our deepest

suffering that we truly turn to the Lord. Mirabai writes: “Tormented by pain, I wander in the wilderness unable to find a physician who can cure my affliction. O Lord, Mira will be relieved of her suffering only when the Lord himself becomes her healer” (*Voice of the Heart*).

The mystics often write of the pain of their spiritual journey. Why is it that we think our journey will not include these tales of difficulty and trial as well?

Sultan Bahu pleads with his Master not to turn away from him, not to blame him for his evil deeds:

*Take heed of my lament, O Master of Masters –
to whom should I relate my tale of woe?
For me there is no one like you,
but there are millions like me for you.
Do not read the scroll of my evil deeds;
pray do not push me away from your door.
Says Bahu: Had I not been such a blatant sinner,
whom would you have forgiven?*

Voice of the Heart

Sultan Bahu pleads with the Lord to accept and forgive the cracks in his life. Bahu even somewhat boldly asks the Lord: Who would you have to forgive if I hadn't sinned? This highlights the compassionate, accepting stance that the mystics have toward our mistakes and the cracks in our lives. The relationship between the Lord and the soul is intrinsically one of immense grace.

Describing the relationship between the Lord and the soul, Goswami Tulsidas says:

*I have heard, O Lord, that you are
the saviour of the fallen. ...
I am fallen, and you are the saviour of the fallen.
We are so well suited.*

The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas

The Master and the disciple are so well suited because the disciple is weak, imperfect and full of cracks, and the Master is infinitely loving and forgiving. Baba Ji tells us to learn from our mistakes and move forward.

One of the keys to this, though, is that we have to admit our weaknesses and acknowledge the cracks in our lives. Then we simply have to turn to the true healer to heal those cracks and let the light in.

“May your troubles be your treasure!” says Rumi in his *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*. “It’s a shame you veil your own treasure.” A treasure is something we cherish, something that is precious to us. Troubles can come in the form of difficulties, worries, misfortunes, burdens, and feelings of agitation and distress. Instead of rejecting these experiences, Rumi says that we should treasure them. In the Bible, the apostle Paul explains that when he asked God to take away his troubles, the answer came back, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul goes on to reflect on this grace: “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, I am strong.” It is in acknowledging our weaknesses that we draw close to the spirit, because then we begin to come to terms with the “extraneous fragments” of ourselves that hold us back from deeper spiritual experience.

Kintsugi is a Japanese form of art in which broken pottery is mended by repairing the cracks with lacquer and powdered gold. The broken pot is transformed into something more beautiful than it was in its original form. The cracks in the pot that might be viewed as flaws become the golden lines of the newly created artwork. Similarly, our troubles can be our treasures, our weaknesses can become our strengths, and our ruined, broken hearts can become vessels of spiritual openness.

In a Buddhist temple in Thailand, there was once a huge, ancient clay statue of the Buddha. It was not a refined piece of art, but it had been cared for over a period of about 500 years and was revered for its endurance. Many changes had taken place in Thailand during the life of the statue – violent weather, invading armies, collapses and changes in governments – yet the Buddha statue remained. Buddhist writer Jack Kornfield, in his book *The Wise Heart*, describes a discovery made by one of the monks:

The monks who tended the temple noticed that the statue had begun to crack and would soon be in need of repair and repainting. After a stretch

of particularly hot, dry weather, one of the cracks became so wide that a curious monk took his flashlight and peered inside. What shone back at him was a flash of brilliant gold! Inside this plain old statue, the temple residents discovered one of the largest and most luminous gold images ever created in Southeast Asia.

The golden Buddha was discovered by shining light into the cracks of the statue, in much the same way that we discover our own soul by shining light on our troubles and flaws. Without the cracks in the clay, the golden Buddha within would not have been discovered.

When Soami Ji said that his heart “burst open and was shattered into pieces,” it was because of the power of the Shabd. He wrote: “As the thundering resonance of Shabd arises within, my heart is enthralled by its overwhelming strains. It was only when my heart burst open and was shattered into pieces that I received the vision of Radha Soami.”

Because of the power of the Shabd, the extraneous fragments of the self were dissolved, and the heart was shattered. We may experience times of breaking down, sorrow and loss, but if we keep the perspective that it is the Shabd working within us to shine light through the cracks of our lives, we can endure and grow from our difficult experiences. We can learn to treasure our troubles. As Rumi says: “He made us like a stream, humble and flowing, to wash us of our sins. To pull us back to that place of No-direction, He sent us troubles from all directions.”

The full verse of Leonard Cohen’s song “Anthem” is:

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in*

We are not expected to come to the spiritual path as perfect disciples. We are asked to learn from our lives, face and accept our weaknesses, “ring the bells” of our meditation practice to the best of our ability, and allow the light of Shabd to shine through our cracks so that we can open fully to the power of grace, love, and forgiveness.



Rescue

I was approached by two gentlemen as I was coming out of a pizza place after dinner one evening. They said they were hungry, so I offered to buy them a meal. I explained that I was vegan, and that the meal would be vegan.

One of the two men understood and was okay with a vegan meal.

The other one seemed to struggle with the idea of a meal that didn't include meat. He rubbed his belly as he asked himself (and me) how he could possibly fill up on just vegetables. The idea of a meal that didn't include meat seemed completely foreign to him. He reasoned and argued with me, even suggesting that I could pay and then leave, so I wouldn't have to see the meat.

In the end, I wound up saying, "Sorry, I can't," and walked away.

I was thinking as I drove home that I am not that different from the man who insisted that I pay for his meat dinner.

Imagine being adrift for longer than you can remember in a broken boat, getting tossed this way and that by the movement of the sea.

After many years, someone in a seaworthy craft comes along and throws you a life preserver and offers to pull you to his ship and take you home.

Your broken boat is filled with things that you've become extremely attached to over your many years adrift. You want to bring all of this stuff back home with you.

But your rescuer explains that he can take only you, not your stuff. You'll have to leave your things behind. This is actually not a big deal, because, as foreign as the idea seems to you, you won't need all this stuff after you leave your broken boat.

But you can't imagine life without these things. So, you argue and reason with your rescuer about ways to bring all your stuff along. He explains to you, kindly and in so many different ways, that it's just not possible. But you can't let go. You keep wheedling: what about this and what about that – not unlike our friend outside the pizza restaurant.

In the end, your would-be rescuer says, "Sorry, I can't," and he sails away.

I don't know what the man outside the restaurant thought after I left, and whether he got to eat what he wanted, or whether he encountered other crazy vegans that evening.

But let's put ourselves in that not so imaginary broken boat. Unlike an offer of a meal, which may come through many individuals, what is the likelihood of our getting an offer of rescue? Forget many rescue boats – what are the chances of encountering even a single rescue boat?

And yet here we are – we have encountered such a rescuer. Incredibly, despite our whining, he hasn't sailed away.

But what if he did? How would we feel? What import would all of our demands and conditions hold as we watched his ship slowly disappear from our view? Perhaps a better question is: how foolish might all that we are holding on to seem?

Again, thankfully, he's not sailing away. He reasons with us. He patiently explains to us what we must do. He even pleads with us – yes, the rescuer pleads with the one he is rescuing! How many of us would even think to plead with the gentleman outside the restaurant to accept our offer? How many of us would just give up and walk away?

But yes, our rescuer begs us to let go of our stuff and allow him to save us. He uses the analogy of seeing us drowning in the ocean, throwing us a life preserver and feeling helpless because we refuse to grab on. All we have to do is let go of our broken boat and grab hold of the life preserver he's thrown to us. All we have to do is grab hold of that life preserver he calls meditation, and we get to go home.

The choice is ours. What do we want? Do we want to go home? Or do we want to remain on our broken boat, holding on to our broken stuff?



The Hostage Negotiator

Hostage! The word evokes graphic, powerful images. It conveys the power that one person holds over another, and it also happens to convey the power that the mind has over the soul. The mind holds the soul hostage and thereby obstructs our efforts to meditate.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, “The soul can’t escape from the clutches of the mind, the soul is being dominated by the mind, the soul is helpless before the mind.” The Masters know the struggle we face every day when we sit for meditation: Our soul wants to fly back to the Lord, but the mind mercilessly holds sway over the soul and denies it that opportunity. This control is very subtle in that the mind is also not free, because it is under the control of the senses. The soul continues to suffer the consequences of its domination by the mind and the senses. And just as a hostage needs expert help to gain release, the soul requires the help of the Master to gain liberation.

Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II: “You can never have a better friend than the mind, and you can never have a worse enemy than the mind. So, we have to win over this enemy and turn it into a friend... Only with the help of that friendship with the mind can the soul go back to the Father.”

In spite of the soul’s subjugation by the mind, the soul needs the mind to achieve its goal of realizing the Lord; it needs to befriend the mind to progress on its journey. So, how can the soul free itself from being a hostage and transform the mind from an enemy into a friend?

In *Sar Bachan Poetry*, Soami Ji comes to the rescue with a two-part lesson in hostage negotiation in which the soul petitions the mind in a series of steps similar to those used by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): active listening, feeling empathy, establishing rapport, exerting influence, and inducing behavioural change.

In the first part, the soul addresses the mind persuasively and ultimately induces the mind to change. In the second part, the mind changes its tune and surrenders to the logic of the soul. The soul’s approach is one of empathy as opposed to a face-off with ultimatums. Soami Ji begins with the soul saying:

*O mind, listen to the one petition I place before you.
Life after life I have been your slave, and you my master.
You are called the Lord of the three worlds....
Gods, humans and yogis are under your control,
no one dares act in defiance of your commands.
You can trap anyone you want in this world,
and set them free whenever you like.*

In these lines, the soul sets the stage for the negotiation by first acknowledging the mind's capability, position and supremacy, using facts and flattery. The soul then lays the foundation for the next step in its argument by acknowledging the mind's power, asking: "Why do you languish in this vale of darkness, this base realm, the world of matter?"

The soul builds rapport with the mind by asking the million-dollar question: Why are you here? After all, this world is perishable; a place of immense suffering, with no lasting peace or happiness – so why should the mind remain trapped here? Then the soul directs the mind to the advice of an unimpeachable source, the Master, and makes a daring request:

*One thing my Master has advised me:
Take your mind along as soon as possible.
So, I entreat you, my mind,
to soar with me to the heavens without delay.*

The soul tells the mind that the goal of the journey is to ascend together to the higher spiritual regions. The words "without delay" convey the urgency of the request and the immediacy of the action needed, so that the mind, the hostage-taker, feels pressure to make a decision. This is also a classic negotiating tactic in FBI hostage situations.

Next the soul makes a strong plea to the mind, emphasizing their bond – the potential for friendship. "For me there is no companion like you, for I belong to you and you are meant for me." The touch is soft: instead of focusing on the mind's enslavement of the soul, the soul pleads a case for both of them, so that, together as friends and companions, they may rise above their current difficulties and transcend the world. The sense here is: Let's do this together! Like an expert negotiator, the soul "plays"

the mind – throwing out a hard fact here, a challenge there, a demand here, a timeline there, some cajoling here, an invitation to work together – these are great negotiation tactics!

Now the soul dangles the “What’s in it for me?” card by telling the mind what it will get for becoming a friend: “You will regain your original glory and will no longer have to suffer the intense pains and pleasures of the world.”

The opportunity to return to its source and find peace – this is an offer the mind cannot refuse. To “seal the deal,” the soul reinforces the need for partnership:

*The Master has given out the secret
of how to take you with me on my return home.
But I am still in your power,
unable to reach the Shabd without your help.*

The Master’s “secret” is the way of life and the meditation technique that will benefit both the mind and the soul. But there’s a catch – while the soul has the method, it cannot implement it without the cooperation of the mind. Then the soul rests its case:

*If you do not follow my advice,
both of us will languish in the cycle of birth and death...
Let us both rise to the higher regions within
and establish ourselves firmly [in Trikuti].
You stay there to rule the whole region,
while I move on to the court of Radha Soami.*

The soul spells out the consequences of ignoring its request and the benefits of accepting its advice. Either both will continue to suffer in the cycle of transmigration, or the mind can reach its home in Trikuti and rule there, free of the pains and pleasures of the world, while the soul continues on to Sach Khand. Each one gets what it really wants.

The second part of Soami Ji’s composition is the successful culmination of the soul’s strategy. Responding to the soul’s petition, the mind acknowledges its dilemma:

*I really do want to give up the sense pleasures,
but when faced with them, I lose my resolve.
I severely repent, before and after,
but at the time I do not miss a chance to indulge.*

The mind confesses to its weakness and inability to resist indulgence in the sense pleasures. When faced with temptation, it succumbs. The mind realizes it too is enslaved and not really in control. Like an alcoholic seeking recovery, the mind acknowledges that it cannot overcome its shortcomings on its own. It must appeal to a higher power:

*I therefore suggest we beg for the Master's help.
Let us join together to seek refuge with him....
I can never go up with my own strength –
I must meet the Master,
the emancipator of prisoners.*

When the mind realizes it is a slave of the senses, it turns to the Master for mercy and grace. This is indeed a welcome turn of events – the mind changes its behaviour. Together the soul and mind sit in meditation. The negotiation is successful; the hostage soul is released, and the mind now becomes a friend to the soul.

Soami Ji explains the happy outcome:

*Holding hands they rose up to the inner sky –
moving from Shabd to Shabd
they greedily quenched their thirst with nectar.
Radha Soami showered his mercy upon them
and they collected diamonds, pearls and rubies.*

The mind returns to its source, and the hostage soul is finally freed to merge with its Creator.



Our Search for Meaning

Pull on a sweatshirt before you step outside; it's chilly this late at night. Ease the door shut; everyone else went to sleep hours ago.

But you're restless. You feel like something is missing. You don't know where to find it because you don't know what it is.

Perhaps you're searching for meaning. Perhaps you're searching for your real home, for the power that created that home. You sense that "there is a Secret One inside us; the planets and all the galaxies pass through His hands like beads" (*The Kabir Book*, a popular rendition of his poetry). Perhaps you want a glimpse of those hands.

If the night is dark enough and the sky clear enough, you can scan the bowl of the heavens above you. Surely what you see intensifies your search, inflames the embers of your longing. Because, if your sight isn't blinded by electric lights, the night sky is astonishing. For a moment, you might even believe that a magnificent Creator made it all on purpose just so humans throughout time, in every place, could see something beautiful and be filled with awe.

The number of stars in the universe is unfathomably vast; we have countless points of light to astonish us. *Why* we're astonished, *why* we're so drawn to beauty is inexplicable. Could we be drawn to those lights because *we are stardust ourselves*? Scientists tell us that every atom in our bodies was forged from a fiery star.

We have ancient and powerful roots. We emerged as souls from beginnings we can't imagine, from the region called Sach Khand, our original home. And here we are now, bound by gravity, time, matter and mind to a seemingly infinite physical creation. Yet vast as our cosmos appears, Maharaj Sawan Singh has told us that "from Sach Khand, the whole creation looks like bubbles forming and disappearing in the spiritual ocean" (*Spiritual Gems*).

All the millions upon millions of galaxies, our solar system, our planet, ourselves – we are *so small*. Bubbles forming and disappearing. Yet we are divine. As the Masters tell us, the Lord is within the soul, and the soul is within the Lord. The very purpose of spirituality is to strive to

realize this truth. We can't figure out what it means, but we can *realize* it, through our meditation.

Baba Ji has told us that if we want to feel closer to God, we should get closer to nature. In the natural world, we sense a yearning, a wonder that speaks to the deepest part of us. We often end up asking ourselves: How did all of this come to be? Why? What's my place in this creation?

This is the search for meaning and for home. Millions of people believe these questions can't be answered or aren't satisfied with the answers religion or science gives. Yet the stories we've told one another throughout history reflect this search, this longing to return to our source. From characters in the ancient Sumerian tale of *Gilgamesh* to Homer's *Odyssey* to the modern *Star Wars*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Lord of the Rings*, we have created heroes who leave home, then yearn to return. These tales of physical return, on a deeper level, reflect our desire to return to our spiritual home.

When we are really ready for answers, we turn inward; we lean inside. Studying religion, psychology, philosophy, astrology, metaphysics; reading sacred texts; spinning through the online web – all of these activities are like reading recipes. They don't satisfy our hunger. They may whet our appetite, but they don't end our craving. The understanding we want is more than written knowledge. It is an experience within us, found in either the darkness or the light, the silence or the sound of our meditation.

We are told that we are not human beings seeking a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience. We are divine by nature. Though our divinity sometimes seems overpowered by anger, greed, and selfishness, our core is love.

Every culture has tried to use words to explain the inexplicable. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that the Divine wanted a physical creation and souls to occupy it in order to express love. We could say that the cosmos came into being through breath or sound or divine will. Spiritual Masters who have experienced what no one can describe tell us that love is the reason for existence. This love cannot be grasped by our intellect but rather experienced through our meditation. "Instead of getting confused in trying to understand metaphysical problems through human reasoning, try to seek Reality and to 'know thyself' in the spiritual way," Maharaj Charan Singh told us in *Divine Light*.

This is knowledge that we can use to see beyond the here and now, to learn how life works, to make sense of who we are, to free ourselves from limitations, and to live in harmony with nature. When we remember we are spiritual beings temporarily having a human experience, new possibilities open up.

Understanding, even just a bit, that we are all divine shifts the axis of our world. Political, social, and personal events swirl around us. Nations make and break treaties, economies boom and crash, rain nourishes crops and overflows rivers. We get hired or fired, watch children being born and sometimes weep as they die, live with good health, or suffer during a pandemic.

Yet as we grasp our spiritual nature, we develop a different way of responding to the events that fill our years. Old patterns of reacting negatively begin to drop away. In fact, we may not react at all. Fear, insecurity, anger and other negative emotions gradually recede. Our hearts grow lighter. We respond more often with kindness and acceptance, with less judgment and more understanding.

Our quest might begin with wonder at a night sky ablaze with stars, but it leads to a path inside each of us. Eventually, our search for meaning takes us home.



Life is Short, and We Are Dying

In a world where most of us fear, avoid, and fight against death in every possible way, saints tell us something wonderfully refreshing. They say that death is actually part of life; it is not the end of our journey, but rather a step forward in our evolution. With each birth and death that we experience in this creation, we are ever transforming. So, we can view death from a higher perspective: to be mortal, to have been born in a human form that must die, is a gift that allows us to make the most of our limited time on this earth.

Life here is an opportunity for growth and learning. The present Master urges us to use with thoughtful care what the Lord has bestowed on us. We find ourselves in the school of life, in which the journey of the soul lies in its evolution until it realizes its true nature and achieves union with its source – the Lord.

The great paradox is that, knowing that we are fallible creatures, insignificant in the story of the universe, we must live our lives with purpose. We find ourselves in this illusion, this web of maya that cajoles us to believe we are this body, this mind, this personality. We spend countless hours and endless energy on creating a world we perceive to be real, constantly searching for security and certainty in a place where none exists. Slowly we begin to see that in this ever-changing physical realm, nothing lasts forever, and we actually have no control over any of it. We are simply playing our part in the game of life.

Yet the saints tell us that this human life is a rare gift, not to be wasted, but rather cherished and fulfilled. Ultimately, we are asked to both embrace death and live to our highest, fullest potential. What is that potential? Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Die to Live*:

This form is bestowed upon us for the sole purpose of attaining God-realization. It is the only exit with which the Lord has provided us to escape from the vast prison house of the phenomenal world.

At the same time, as the American author and poet Mark Nepo writes in *The Book of Awakening*:

We cannot live fully until we can first accept our eventual death.... Only when we can accept that we are fragile guests on this Earth ... will we be at home wherever we are.

With every moment that passes, we are closer to our death. With every breath we take, we move toward our end – “fragile guests on this Earth.” Maybe that realization can help us to live with more gratitude and awareness. As spiritual seekers, we can use the certainty of our death as a catalyst for fulfilling our duty to our Master and ultimately, our duty to ourselves. It can force us to face our life, let go of the drama and constant tugging of the world, and refocus our energy on what is essential – our spiritual purpose.

The great mystery of death has left many philosophers and thinkers scratching their heads. This riddle that cannot be solved, that brings us to our knees, draws us out of the small story of “me” and propels us toward faith and trust in a higher power. The Masters say that although our physical bodies die, our true essence remains immortal. In the book *from self to Shabd*, we read: “True spiritual Masters tell us that we are not our body, and they advise us on how to make conscious contact with who we really are before we die.”

So now we have the opportunity to realize the truth for ourselves – to die while living, as the saints call it. Shedding the self as we know it and merging with the Shabd or Word gives us the highest ideal and goal to work toward. Hazur writes in *Die to Live*:

At the time of initiation, the Master teaches the disciple the technique of withdrawing his consciousness from the entire body, up to the eye centre, where he comes in contact with the Sound Current. The mystics refer to the process of vacating the body and withdrawing the consciousness to the eye centre as “dying while living.”

This is the essence of Sant Mat and our daily meditation practice, which slowly turns our attention away from the world to the Shabd within. All of the constructs and concepts we use to describe this life – and death – are only to satisfy the mind. To really understand the nature of life and death, we must go beyond the mind. To accomplish this, the Masters give us the

gift of meditation, through which we can experience the reality of life and death for ourselves.

How simple and natural is this act of meditation, which ultimately will lead us to union with the true Shabd form of the Master. We are not asked to dress in any particular way or to run to mountains or caves and live as ascetics. We come to meditation with all the baggage our minds carry, all our emotions and our thoughts – all of our *stuff*. All we are asked to do is sit in meditation every day, without fail.

When we sit down to meditate, we are preparing to face ourselves, without any deception, illusions or masks. And every day, with practice, we come closer to leaving behind everything that we believe we are, so that we can finally see our truth – and, with it, our beloved Master. As the Japanese poet Basho put it: “Sitting quietly, doing nothing, Spring comes, and the grass grows, by itself.”

In Daniel Ladinsky’s book *The Gift*, Hafiz tells us:

*This world is a treacherous place
And will surely slay and drown the lazy.
The only life raft here is love
And the Name.
Say it brother,
O, say the divine Name, dear sister,
Silently as you walk.
Don't die again
With the holy ruby mine inside
Still unclaimed.*

Hafiz reminds us to cultivate the treasure that is within every human being. He refers to the Name or Shabd as our life raft, our anchor in the stormy comings and goings of the world. Urging us to make full use of this rare chance, this potential for realization, he pleads with us not to die again in ignorance of the truth.

Through meditation we die every day; we experience the slow death of our ego, this “me” we have spent so many years building up. We gradually learn to let go of our attachment to this body, our relations, our ideas

and possessions. We die to everything unreal so that we can realize the unwavering, unconditional presence of the Shabd.

Almost as a warning, yet with firm, loving insistence, the mystics remind us that our time here is short. Do not waste this precious opportunity, they advise, for one never knows when death will call. Now is our time to practice, so that when our physical death comes, we will be ready and able to recognize our Master and the love that has always been our real abode and everlasting truth.



Our Transformation – A Fairy Tale

The following is a fairy tale for grown-ups, a metaphor that explains the condition in which we find ourselves in this world and how we might return to our spiritual home.

Once upon a time, at the edge of a dark, foreboding jungle was a small, spare, one-room structure. Beyond this structure was the vast expanse of impassable, arid desert where nothing grew.

The one-room structure at the edge of the jungle served as a telegraph station. Stories handed down from the ancestors advised the creatures of the jungle to check every day at the telegraph station for a message. As there had been no messages in living memory, most creatures no longer checked the telegraph station, considering it both foolish and futile to do so.

There were a few, however, who continued the ancient practice, who every day entered the bare structure to check their message box, and who every day returned more dejected than the day before. One of these creatures was named Megalump. She was similar to others of her species, with long dark hair covering her body, a slow, shuffling gait, and a back so bent that it seemed she soon might become four-legged. She felt akin to the ancient mastodon; yet she knew that she was not, for she could remember that she had been born upright with a spring in her step. She could see her former self reflected in the young ones, but even they were no longer light and bright – they were becoming encrusted too.

Then one day when Megalump wearily entered the telegraph office, she found a message addressed to her. It stated that she would soon return to her Source and that she would travel, like electricity, through the telegraph lines to get there. But for that to happen, she must become very fine, very pure, very light. Keep coming every day to this telegraph office, the note advised, to check for further messages.

Megalump was initially elated and cheerfully checked her message box daily for some time. But as the days turned to years,

and as she considered her encrusted state, her hope faded into the despair of grim reality.

Here she was, a thick, heavy beast who daily acquired yet another outer layer, a crust, merely by living in the jungle. You could not walk through the jungle without becoming dirtier and more encrusted. Despite everything Megalump tried to do to lighten herself, every day she found her mind and her body more ossified, and she knew with increasing certainty that she would never be light enough or pure enough to fit through the telegraph lines.

Yet, she continued to plod each day to that barren telegraph office at the edge of the jungle to check for the message that never came. And so the years passed.

The day came when Megalump could barely haul her bulky frame through the door. She was about to resolve not to come again when she noticed a thin piece of paper in her message box. The message read: “Your time has come to return home.” And as her thick mind started to object that this was not possible, she began to realize that she was melting from the inside out. Each trip to the telegraph office had been softening her, transforming her from the inside. Each encrusted layer started sliding to the floor, as it melted, until there was nothing to hold the extreme outer layers, and they fell from her in one piece, of their own weight. Megalump emerged from her shell to find herself light, fluid, and able to fly, like electricity, through the telegraph lines – which she did.

Like Megalump, we also hope that someday we will be transformed from within into conscious beings of pure light. As Soami Ji tells us in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*Have patience; keep the company of the Saints
and I shall purify you through my grace.
I shall not rest till I show you that form –
why are you in such a hurry?
I carry your burdens in my own heart
so that you may be free of worries
and nurture my love in your heart.*

*Give up your misgivings, be steadfast in your love –
a love tempered with faith.
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.*



The Way of the Ant

The real miracle of this path, for many of us, is that we continue to meditate even when we seem to be making no discernable progress. Only the grace of the Master makes this sustained effort possible.

Maharaj Jagat Singh acknowledges the difficulties we face in *The Science of the Soul*:

Our attention has been 'out' for ages, and to draw it 'in' again requires both time and effort. The tendencies established for such a long time are at once up against us when we attempt any re-orientation. It... is naturally difficult and slow. For some it is slower and more difficult than it is for others.... The same applies to focusing the attention at the eye centre. ... [T]he drawing up of consciousness or shaking it loose from the material body is a slow and laborious process. It has been called "the way of the ant," which first laboriously picks up grains of sugar from amongst the grains of sand with which it is mixed, then slowly moves up the wall, frequently slipping down and then laboriously moving up again. All that is required is to persist with patience, hope and faith. Then success will one day be yours. Leave the rest to the Master and remember that effort is never wasted.

We can learn from the persistence of the ant. Persistence seems to be half the battle: to continue to sit in meditation, knowing that to do so is the grace of the Master. Persistence means to bring the mind back to simran, the repetition of the five holy names, again and again. Every time the mind runs out, we attempt to bring it back. This truly is the work of a lifetime.

We slowly begin to sense why this process to turning inward takes time. Through our meditation, we are attempting a path of purification, transforming a mind that is covered with rust, a mind that can be obstinate and corrupt, capable of virtually anything, into one that is absolutely clean, bright and perfect. This transformation would be impossible without the grace of the Satguru. Using the pumice stone of satsang, the grindstone of simran and bhajan, he brings about

this transformation, working a miracle. He will polish our souls until they shine with the light of God.

The ultimate enticement to go within is the saints' promise that we will meet and reunite with God. The invitation to return home is not to be answered on the day we die or in some distant future. The invitation is extended now, at this very moment. At any stage of discipleship, as we shift our attention away from the world and toward the Master – through our meditation, simran and bhajan, satsang and seva – we can be in his presence. Every moment counts.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, exactly how we can sanctify each moment:

Any moment when we think about the Father, when we think about the Master, when we think about the Lord, that is a blessed moment. That makes it worth living in this creation. All others are useless moments. Whatever time we devote to meditation, whatever time we devote to the Father, they are blessed moments; that is the blessed time.

Further, Hazur tells us that if we are thinking about the Lord, if our attention is towards him, then we are never alone: “If you are feeling him, if you are thinking about him, if your attention is towards him, you are always with him.”

Regardless of where we are starting on the spiritual map, regardless of the love that we may or may not feel – here is the wonderful thing: this path is about the Master and his grace and his mercy; it is *not* about our shortcomings. If we were perfect, we wouldn't be here. We are asked to attend to our meditation, to struggle with the mind, to keep knocking at his door; but we know it is the Master who ultimately will take us up. Hazur tells us in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II: “He who is pulling you is within you. He will make you sit in meditation; you can't help that.”

Our job is to give the Master, the Lord, our attention, our meditation. Ultimately, it is not about our meager attempts to pick out the grains of sugar from a vast sand beach and then carry them up a polished wall. This path is about the Beloved who will carry us home. With the time that we have been given, we are to do our meditation with patience, persistence,

hope and faith. We are asked to try. The Masters extend the invitation to every one of us to join them beyond the confines of this temporal world, beyond the constraints of time. As Soami Ji Maharaj appeals to us in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*Come now, dear soul, to the Master's country,
where there is neither body, nor karma, nor conflict....
Discard these coverings,
these extraneous fragments of your Self.
Listen to the Guru's message with full attention,
through Surat Shabd practice head for your home.*



Rising Above

Saints have often warned us against the volatile tendencies of the mind. The Master has compared its nature to that of a mischievous monkey – fiddling and jumping from one branch of desire to the next. Because of its incessant tricks, we defer our meditation for some immediate gratification; a sports match, a new Netflix show, a social commitment, or a lavish meal tempts us away from our spiritual practice and the promise we made to the Master. Our mind somehow convinces us that we can meditate another time, when we'll be less busy and worldly matters will need less of our attention. But does that time ever come?

Sometimes a wave of karma overwhelms us, and we lose our balance. It could be the loss of a loved one, a drop in our income or social standing, or poor health. As we put our regular meditation on hold, our difficulties mount, and we begin to doubt our capacity to fulfill our promise. We start wondering if we were *really* meant to be on the path. We forget the value of this human birth and get buffeted by passing worldly storms. Our mind then succumbs even further to worry and chatter, because we are attached to our loved ones, our wealth and property, our fine clothes, and our high-flying notions of the “good life.” We are afraid of letting go of those attachments and forget that none of them will accompany us beyond this perishable creation.

The only thing that does go with us beyond death is our love for the Master and our devotion to the Word. The Master never lets go of our hand. Even in the toughest times, he watches over us like a faithful friend.

The saints tell us that devotion to him can help turn our fickle minds into allies. The author of *Living Meditation* tells us how: “By switching our thoughts to simran, we extract ourselves from the world of concepts. We let go of the need to be endlessly entertained by our thoughts, give up our addiction to inner chattering and step out onto the path of inner peace.”

Once we still the bubbling chaos of our minds, we find that our lives become easier, whatever our external circumstances. Simran begins to lighten and cleanse us. We stop attaching ourselves to the objects of the world or letting our happiness be affected by things outside of our control.

Over time, we see everything as a gift from the Master, without feelings of doubt or resentment. We learn to let go.

So why stay up all night regretting the past and pondering the future when we can trust our Master and rise above these petty concerns? Part of loving him means having faith in the larger plan he has laid out for each of us. We must live in his will to the best of our ability without giving in to our habitual calculations. We simply need to focus on our bhajan and simran and resist the tricks of the mind. As we learn to give ourselves up to the Shabd and embrace the stillness within, we begin to free ourselves from our addiction to our own inner chatter. As Soami Ji Maharaj is quoted as saying in *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol. II: “You have this opportunity to ascend the throne – give up your habit of pecking through rubbish heaps.”

We are told in satsang that we are all part of one divine being. We must not forget that we are spiritual beings going through a human experience and that our real home is in the kingdom of love. Our separation from God is an illusion, like the separation between a wave and the ocean.

Our reunion with the Supreme Being has already been destined. It is he who first pulled us to the path with a magical tug and then ignited our desire to seek the blessing of Nam. He created for us an environment of satsang, seva, and devotion. The nature of our journey will now be defined by *our* effort and love. He has done everything for us today, so we must not wait for a better tomorrow to be good devotees.



The Gift of Joy

The late comedian Joan Rivers, when explaining how to diet, used to say, “If it tastes good, spit it out.” This sums up a philosophy that some people seem to live by: If you’re having a good time, or if you are experiencing pleasure, beware – the axe is about to fall. It’s inherent in the so-called work ethic that values toil, thrift, and efficiency over enjoyment, and in the guilt many of us feel if we are thinking we’re having too much fun. Many individuals naïvely assume that they are mostly bad and had better be careful because God will strike them down sooner or later. They go through life, hiding in their foxholes, picturing God hurling thunderbolts at them, without ever believing that joy coming from the Lord can be a part of their human experience.

But just as we can enjoy a healthy diet that includes tasty foods, there is a way to experience happiness in this life despite its unpleasant, painful, or scary aspects – through meditation. As initiates of a fully realized living Master, we can contact the source of real joy and happiness – by following his instructions to calm our mind, raise our consciousness to the eye centre, and go within. As we read in *Spiritual Gems*, the Great Master, Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, wrote to an initiate:

I am anxious to see you go inside, truly, and find the great light and joy which awaits you there. There is nothing equal to this way, and it gives more real joy and satisfaction than all else in the world. But to get that you have to go inside. It cannot be realized outside. All the world is seeking it in books, holy places, and association with people; but it has to be found inside. That is gained by steadfast meditation and holding your attention in the eye focus, without wavering.

He expands on this explanation in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV:

If our ears cease to hear the outer sounds and our eyes cease to see the outer sights, then we can hear the call of the Lord. When in this way our thoughts cease to wander out, we begin to hear the inner melodies and to relish the celestial joy. And then the secrets of the Lord begin to be revealed to us.

When Great Master talks about finding real joy, he means receiving the benefits of hearing the holy Sound – the Shabd, the Word, the universal vibration – and experiencing the jyoti – the inner light or flame, as described by Saint Matthew in the Bible: “If . . . thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” These manifestations of the Lord kindle joy in the one who perceives them, and that joy overflows into daily life.

A philosophical outlook of impending doom may help to keep us in line, but it doesn't leave much room for joy. When Mother Teresa was recruiting nuns to work with her in her ministry to the poorest of the poor in India, she said she always looked for people who could transmit uplifting, positive energy to those suffering souls, along with the care and feeding that they needed. In other words, she wanted those who could share what she called “the gift of joy.” She knew that everyone needs more than medicine, food, and clean sheets. Everyone, no matter their station in life, needs love.

We are fortunate to be on a spiritual path that will lead our soul back to its true home with the Lord. Why not lead a relaxed and happy life? Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

Everybody wants to be happy in this world. Nobody wants to be miserable. So why not be happy? Why not lead a relaxed and happy life? Why worry about the past and the future? Why not live in the present? Relaxation comes only when you're happy within. When you are able to obtain that peace within, then wherever you go, you radiate peace.... We can never get that from outside, from worldly and sensual pleasures. That has to be obtained from within. Then your whole attitude towards life becomes relaxed. Then you will attend to everything in a relaxed manner, with a relaxed attitude.

The Masters encourage us to do our meditation to detach from worldly objects and desires, and to rise to a higher spiritual level where we can merge with our divine source. As this occurs, we become more familiar with feelings of spiritual bliss and joy. In *Spiritual Gems*, Great Master recommends that we give as much time as we can to concentrated simran. “As your concentration increases by repetition,” he says, “you will get more peace and greater joy.” This is a good reminder that our feeling of joy

doesn't depend on our thoughts – it arises, like cream from milk, as we do our meditation. We can't simply think ourselves joyful. It comes through our meditation, through stopping time by means of concentrating our mind at the eye centre and experiencing inner bliss.

Once we are firmly established in our meditation and our love and faith in the Master, the joy we feel will be so strong that it will not be shaken by the ups and downs of daily life. As we work on following the spiritual path, we should remember that we are making room for joy by simply doing our meditation. The Shabd will do its work, and then we will experience the highest level of happiness and peace and be able to manifest the gift of joy.



Behind the Yearning

What do we want in life? What are we seeking? What do we yearn for? Certainly, it is peace – a feeling of tranquility and contentment. But more than that, we desire fulfillment. We want to be recognized, understood, and loved unconditionally.

The Masters tell us this yearning is within us because we are experiencing real loss, and our soul is suffering from that loss. They tell us the love that we seek exists; and because our souls were once immersed in this love, we miss it, we long for it, and we yearn to be once again enveloped in its comfort and joy.

That love that our soul misses is the love we once knew from our Creator. And the yearning we have for fulfillment is our soul's desire to merge back to him, our source.

The Masters tell us that we are an expression of God himself. Just as sun rays are part of the sun, we are projections of the Father, made of the same essence. The part wants to merge back with the whole. Our soul wants to regain its former state. It misses the bliss of being one with perfection, one with the Creator, one with that which is described by all the saints as love. Because we are made of love, our soul longs to rejoin the source of love.

Caught as we are in the alluring net of maya, or illusion, most of us do our best to avoid facing our inner yearning and loneliness. We fill our days with activity, seeking fulfillment in the pleasures of our outer lives. But the Masters tell us that lasting joy and fulfillment can only be found within. It is for this reason our experiences here fall short of our desires.

This creation is all the Lord's play. He sends souls down into his creation. In its descent into the lower planes, the soul acquires the mind as a necessary covering to function here. In *The Path of the Masters*, Dr. Julian Johnson writes about the change the soul undergoes once it acquires the covering of the mind:

Now the soul begins to acquire experience upon its own initiative. Its era of ... 'self-regulation' now begins. This means that it begins to establish an individual law of its own life, its own regime, and to create its own destiny.

It begins to enjoy, to suffer, to reap rewards and to pay penalties. And this is the beginning of its own karma.

Because the mind has been left unguided throughout its odyssey here, it has gained great power and control over the soul, severely limiting its expression. In the process, we have lost touch with our true identity, while accumulating vast quantities of karma, thus forging chains of attachment to this plane.

However, owing to good karma, at some point in its evolutionary ascent back to the Father, the soul begins to awaken from under the domination of the mind, and the individual experiences a growing dissatisfaction with what life offers. We are told this discontent, the sense that something is missing, and the desire to find greater meaning in life, is grace from God. When the Lord decides we are ready to meet a Master, he makes us receptive to his pull, and we become seekers.

While we believe that we are the ones searching for answers, Maharaj Charan Singh tells us this is an illusion. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, we read:

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.

That someone is a guide in human form, a Master who imparts the teachings of the saints, the core of which is the practice of meditation. It is through meditation that we are made worthy of merging back into God's love. Hazur calls our spiritual practice love itself:

And what is the purpose of meditation? To merge your soul back into the Father, to remove all the dross from the soul and to make it shine and to make it one with him. That is meditation. So that is why meditation itself is love.

So, when we do our meditation, we are loving him. This is true even when we feel sorely lacking in love and devotion, dissatisfied with the depth of our love. The effort we put forth is the result of our desire to know him, to be with him. We are loving him, and his love for us causes us to meditate.

And what of our dissatisfaction with the depth of our love?

Hazur answers:

This feeling which we have within us, that our love should grow, that is also planted by him, that is also a part of destiny, that is also part of his grace.... This wanting it to grow is not in your hands; that is in his hands. That he's pulling you and you feel that your love should grow more and more – that is in his hands.

Although our efforts in meditation are absolutely necessary, they cannot take us far on our spiritual journey. The Master tells us the mountains of karma we have amassed, along with our powerful attachments, could never be eliminated through our own efforts. What our efforts *can* do is invoke the grace of the Lord to accomplish the impossible – to pull us out of this creation and return us to the source of love.

The knowledge that progress in meditation is not ours to claim, but rather the result of his abundant grace responding to our feeble efforts, can help us to keep a proper perspective. We cannot expect rapid progress in the extraordinary process of detaching from bonds that have imprisoned us here for eons.

Disappointment and frustration with our meditation practice arise from a lack of understanding. If we were aware of the role of the Master in the course of God-realization, we would feel only humility and gratitude for everything we do to follow the path. We are guided and encouraged within for every effort we put forth in meditation, for our struggles to control our thoughts with simran, for leading a life often at odds with conventional behaviour – for every action we perform that leads us toward our goal of merging into his love. If only we knew how much he gives us!

Hazur responds to a questioner:

He is within us, every one of us. Being within us, he gives us his own love. We think we love him, but actually he loves us. It is he who creates that love in us. We are just responding to his love. The more we respond to his love, the more we feel his love in us. In fact, it is the Giver who is giving this love. We are not doing anything. We are just responding to what he

gives us. The more receptive we become, the more love and devotion we feel within ourselves for the Lord.

It's a circle of love, beginning with the Lord and returning to him. We are mere players in his holy game. Our interminable passage through lifetimes on this plane is coming to an end. Let us recognize who is moving the pieces and creating the opportunities, acknowledge who is behind our efforts to reach our goal, and strive to be receptive to his love. Gratitude and humility will replace impatience and dissatisfaction as he opens our heart to the reality of his love.



Mistaken Identity

Three articles in this issue have referred to an idea that Baba Ji often repeats: we are spiritual beings going through a human experience, not human beings seeking a spiritual experience. As the author of *from self to Shabd* writes:

As spiritual beings, we have the same wholesome, blissful nature that the master has. But by perceiving reality in a delusional way, we have constructed a delusional identity within which we live. This false identity is what gives us the feeling of being apart from the oneness that is in everything and it is the main reason we feel lonely and fearful. If we realized that we truly are the conscious, formless energy – that is, the Shabd – we would be at peace, with no desires, fears, or anxieties....

The root cause of all our problems is the identification with body and personality that we have adopted so unthinkingly... In reality, what is this individuality that we boast so much about? It is nothing but karmas and desires. Born of the false identification of the Shabd with its human experience over many lifetimes, it is just the illusory product of a huge case of mistaken identity.

If our human experience “is nothing but karmas and desires,” then it is our meditation that will give us the strength to go through those karmas and eventually raise us above the pull of our desires. Hazur Maharaj Charan Singh told us that our meditation consists not just of our effort but the Lord’s grace. As he once recounted in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II: “We have to beg. We have to ask, but he always gives.... Of course, we will only get when and what he wants us to get, but we must make the effort by doing the spiritual practice.”

There is no good meditation or bad meditation – we attend to it because our Master has asked us to; it is his *hukam*. We can just relax and have faith that we are slowly, steadily growing beyond the drama and turmoil of our limited personalities into our true identity – the Shabd. We will discover what we truly have been all along.



BOOK REVIEW

Songs of Devotion: The Gathas of Zarathushtra

BY JANE CLARKE WADSWORTH

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Zarathushtra, whose name can be translated as illumination or “He of the Golden Light,” lived and taught in Persia prior to the rise of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. As the founder of the religion of Zoroastrianism, he is one of the earliest prophets in human history. He composed a collection of seventeen prayerful hymns, called the Gathas, which convey the essence of his teachings and explain how human beings can experience the divine.

This publication by Radha Soami Satsang Beas compares a number of scholarly translations of the Gathas, seeking to plumb their spiritual message. It particularly relies on the monumental work *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* (1951) by the Parsi scholar Dr. Irach J. S. Taraporewala, who offers both a close literal translation of the Gathas and a “free English rendering” conveying their teachings at their “spiritual heights.”

Zoroastrianism was shaped by Indian, Greek, Babylonian, and Egyptian influences over the centuries. Zoroastrian priests were known as the Magi, mentioned in the Bible as the “wise men from the East” foretelling the birth of Christ. Zoroastrianism suffered when Alexander the Great invaded Persia, killing priests and burning libraries. After the territories of Persia fell under Muslim rule in the seventh and eighth centuries, some of the Zoroastrian community fled their homes and migrated to India, where, known as the Parsis, they have maintained their religion to this day.

The word *gatha* is derived from the same Sanskrit word as *gita*, meaning divine song. The Gathas are the only scriptures in the Zoroastrian canon that are directly attributed to Zarathushtra. The author describes them as “the centrepiece of scripture and inspiration for Zoroastrians and the heart of the Zoroastrian liturgy.” They were initially memorized and passed down

orally by the priests, a common practice at the time, and were written down centuries later.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra lays out the path for human beings to tread.

*From the beginning, O Lord of all Creation,
You have created for us bodies with souls within;
Out of Your Intelligence You gave us power to think;
You have placed the life force within this body
And granted us strength to act and words to guide us,
So that we can freely choose the path to tread.*

The Gathas tell how Mother Earth, after creation, awakens to her condition and begs the Creator to guide the creation out of its suffering.

*The Soul of Mother Earth complained to her Creator:
“Why did you create me? Who fashioned me?
Anger, pillage and violence are all around;
Outrage and aggression enmesh completely.
For me, there is no Protector other than You.
Therefore, reveal to me a way out
Through a good saviour.”*

In answer to this plea, the Creator chooses Zarathustra as “good saviour” to protect and inspire humankind. Mother Earth is not happy because she expected as saviour a powerful world leader, not an ordinary man. She asks the Lord of Life to grant Zarathustra “Primal Consciousness” and, this done, accepts him as “Your Noblest Creation.”

Zarathushtra becomes the “spiritual guide,” the “soul-healing friend.”

*He is the flower of humanity,
The guardian in spirit, the soul-healing friend,
O Lord of all Creation.*

The spiritual guide seeks to uplift not only seekers of truth but even followers of untruth.

*The spiritually powerful one
Receives a seeker with understanding,
Whether by divine decree or out of humanity;*

*This wise one, the follower of Eternal Truth,
Living in truthfulness,
Thus receives even a follower of Untruth.
With good judgement, he will reveal to him
That knowledge which leads to self-reliance,
To save him, O Lord of Life and all Creation,
From utter destruction.*

Six qualities of the Supreme Lord are captured as concepts foundational to Zarathustra's teachings. Eternal Truth is the divine and universal law; Primal Consciousness is the pure mind; Almighty Power is the strength, majesty, and creative power of God; Sacred Love is single-minded devotion; Spiritual Wholeness is completeness or perfection; and Immortality is eternal life and immortal bliss.

*By devotion to Sacred Love,
I seek to honour Him who, in His graciousness,
Is known as the Lord of Life and all Creation,
For by the help of His Eternal Truth
And through Primal Consciousness,
He has promised [that], under His Almighty Power,
Spiritual Wholeness and Immortality will give a person
Continuous spiritual strength
And renewed meaning to life.*

The Gathas invoke the Supreme Lord's "own Voice from Within" as leading to God-realization.

*Therefore, for reaching the final goal of life
I will invoke the greatest of all:
Your own Voice from Within,
Achieving life eternal, reaching up
To the domain of Primal Consciousness,
Through the straight path of Eternal Truth,
Where the Lord of Life and all Creation
Reigns supreme.*

Zarathustra taught that living a moral life is a foundation for the spiritual life. His moral teachings can be summarized by the phrase “good thoughts, good words, good deeds.”

*I will strive to draw Him towards us
With songs of adoration,
For I have seen Him clear with the eyes of my soul;
Good thoughts and deeds and words taught me first,
And then through Eternal Truth did I realize
That the Lord of Life and all Creation
Is the Lord Supreme;
Songs of devotion will we offer Him,
In His Abode of Heavenly Song.*



Book reviews express the opinions of the reviewers and not of the publisher.