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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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## **Spiritual Link**

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Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India  
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# Just Beyond the Veil

Just beyond the veil of what you think you know,  
is all you don't know – the unseen infinite.  
Why not abandon this little bay of body and mind  
and sail into the sea of everywhere?

Be a free spirit.

Be a serene witness of the wild dance of Maya.

Be a full moon floating in the night sky –

luminous, free of shadow –

reflecting the radiance of your Beloved's face.

Light up the night for the lovers

in the world below.

A mystic's words are only a travel guide

for a soul seeking liberation.

You have to climb up this human tower,

sit on the window sill within,

and listen to the big bell chime.

Then spread the wings of your soul,

and take flight on the Holy Sound.

Soar back into oneness.

Your home is there. Not here.



# Making the Teachings Real

When we listen to the teachings of this path we follow, do we make the connection in our minds that what is being said is actually about us – you and me? That we are, as Maharaj Sawan Singh (known as the Great Master) says in *Spiritual Gems*, one of the “souls wandering in the world”? And as such, we have been here for uncountable millions of lifetimes, the same soul knotted together with the same mind?

Not only that, but our soul and mind have been born in pretty much every kind of creature in the 8.4 million species of life that exist, including vegetables, insects, and even angels. It is a little difficult to identify with statements like that because they seem so remote from the lives we lead, and there is no way to verify them. We have never seen our soul; we don't remember our past lives; and until we go within through the process of our meditation, very little that we hear in satsang can be verified.

And yet, it is important for the teachings to be real to us, because if they are not, how will we commit ourselves to them? How will we be able to stay on the path, doing our daily two-and-one-half hours of meditation every day, following the vows we took when our Master initiated us?

In *Sar Bachan Prose*, Soami Ji Maharaj addresses the importance of truly grasping the meaning of the teachings as given in satsang:

*It is very difficult to keep in the satsang of the Saints. Some attend the satsang but are really inattentive; that is, they seem to be sitting and listening to what is said but do not listen to accept it. What good will satsang then do for them? They alone truly hear and understand whose minds are affected and also their conduct, more or less.*

Soami Ji is telling us that satsang is valuable to us to the extent that we are attentive in satsang, our minds are affected by what we hear, and our behaviour begins to change. Only then, when we have understood what we have heard and we believe the teachings are relevant to us, will we try to put the teachings into practice.

How can we make the teachings more real, more relevant to us? Perhaps if we personalize the teachings to being about us and not about mankind in general, we will be able to put our understanding into action.

For example, when we read the following words about who the Master is and what he does for us, if we mentally change the pronouns into “I, me, and my” to make the statement about ourselves and not some impersonal third person, then the message may affect us to the point that we commit to making changes in our lives. Great Master tells us:

*The Master takes on this [physical] form for man's guidance – to talk to him, to sympathize with him, to make friends with him, to develop confidence and faith in him, to induce him to seek peace and happiness within himself, to show him the way to it, to teach him by becoming an example, to develop in him godlike attributes, and to pull him up out of his physical form to his astral form.*

*Spiritual Gems*

If we change “The Master takes on this form for man’s guidance” to “My Master took on this form for *my* guidance” – it personalizes that statement.

We could each say to ourselves that Maharaj Charan Singh and Baba Ji were born for the purpose of guiding *me*. My Master came here for *me*. That’s incredible. That is exactly what Great Master is saying. This path is personal. We have a personal relationship with our Master.

Continuing to personalize the quotation, we learn that the Master was born into this physical creation to talk to *me*, to sympathize with *me*, to make friends with *me*, to develop confidence and faith in *me*. This means that he understands our struggles. Haven’t we felt that in our lives – that he knows what we are going through? We don’t even have to go up to a microphone and ask him a question or have a personal interview to feel that he knows us, he understands us, he loves us. We don’t need to talk to him to get the answers that are troubling our mind. We somehow know that he is our friend, and he shows this in myriad ways.

Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I: “Our real master is shabd, which is within each one of us, and there is nothing which is hidden from the shabd.”

The Master is omniscient. He knows everything about us – you and me both – inside and out.

What else is our Master doing? According to Great Master, he has come to induce *me* to seek peace and happiness within myself, to show *me* the way to it, to teach *me* by becoming an example. Our Master wants us to be happy; but he tells us that there is no happiness in this world. We are

all just going through our karmas: Sometimes we may feel at peace and contented, while at other times we feel on fire with the pain of just being alive in this creation. “How can I be happy continuously?” we ask. He tells us that no matter what’s going on in our lives, we should keep doing our meditation, and go within to experience eternal happiness.

Our Master is a perfect role model of how this works in the world because he has had his own personal and health problems while still performing his duties as a master, with a smile on his face. He invites us to do the same and shows us how to find that peace and happiness within.

Continuing Great Master’s comment: He is here in this physical form to develop in *me* godlike attributes and to pull *me* out of *my* physical form to *my* astral form.

He is going to develop godlike attributes in *me*? Who, me? Loving, patient, compassionate, contented, humble? Yes – even me. We will all become more and more godlike as we follow the path and go within to meet our Master’s Shabd form. This is the goal of the path and of everything the Master does for us: he induces us to become like him, and then to become one with him, where there is no I, me, and my; no you and yours.

But at our level, here in the creation, before we have reached the eye centre, when we personalize a quotation like this one of Great Master’s, what we hear and understand is that this Master is our one true friend. The only reason he is here in this creation is for us – for you and for me; he was born into a physical form to find us, to draw us to him, to initiate us, to build a relationship with us, to help each one of us return to our source, to everlasting happiness.

When we realize that our Master is doing everything for each of us personally, then our actions must change to demonstrate our gratitude for this unbelievable gift of a personal friend and guide in the world and the inner realms.

The proof of our gratitude will be when we go home after satsang with our minds affected and our conduct improved, more or less – hopefully more. More effort in meditation; more love and devotion; more surrender.



# The Miracle of Sant Mat

When we say, “It’s a miracle,” we’re referring to an event or experience that cannot be explained by the laws of physics or the known systems and forces of nature. Because we cannot explain it, we attribute it to a divine force.

In that sense, all of Sant Mat is based on core concepts that are miraculous.

The Shabd is a divine sound current, the creative life force, the manifest form of God and is often called the “unstruck melody.” On Earth for there to be a sound, there must be a force of some kind that causes something to vibrate. The vibration sends out a wave in the form of sound which travels through the medium of air. There is no point in playing a guitar or drums on the moon because sound cannot be heard in a vacuum. Space is a vast, infinite vacuum. Somewhere in this unending universe floats our tiny blue planet, orbiting in the absolute silence of space. Somehow, the Shabd can reach us and create sound within the human mind. It can reach us in spite of the vacuum of space and without any force. It is simply miraculous. Not only is it attributable to a divine agency, but Sant Mat teaches us that it is the divine agency itself.

Humans have created amazingly sensitive instruments like electron microscopes, radio telescopes, and even gravitational field detectors. In spite of this, no instrument is subtle enough to detect the sound of the Shabd. A different instrument is needed. To address this need, the Lord has performed a second miracle – he has created a receiver subtle enough to hear the Shabd. As Maharaj Sawan Singh (Great Master) has said, noted in *With the Three Masters*, Vol. III:

*God has made the human body with the utmost skill. It has two parts: one above the eye centre and the other below it. The lower part is designed to interact with the world and help us perform our duties; the upper is for God-realization through meditation.*

So, when we are using our faculties to listen to the Shabd – to any subtle sound we can hear within – we are combining two miraculous elements: using the upper part of a human body to listen to an unstruck melody. This is amazing, and yet we complain that our lives are boring! If we have the human body with its miraculous upper part, then we should

use that upper part to listen to the voice of God. Anything less is a waste of a priceless opportunity. It would be like getting a smart phone but only using it to make telephone calls –something the elderly may do. Of course, young people use their phones for everything *except* making a phone call.

One disciple may be hearing the inner sound loud and clear while a person sitting next to him cannot hear a thing. It is a miracle that God can reveal himself to one while remaining hidden from others, no matter how close they may be.

Once we have discussed this miracle of the audible sound current, it hardly seems worth discussing anything else because that miracle is so profound and crucial. But there is more.

The teachings place key importance on the existence of the law of karma, God's law for this region. The affairs of the world and the details of our individual lives are all explained by this law. Everyone is reaping the karmic consequences of their past. The saints say that even if the wind blows a seed from your neighbour's land onto your land, that has to be accounted for. For such a law to operate, there must be a record of everything that is happening on Earth 24 hours a day, seven days a week, down the ages. Such a record must cover not only the events but also what each person was thinking when the event occurred. What we think determines our moral blameworthiness. The same act can be noble or malicious, intentional or accidental, depending on what we were thinking. The first miracle of the karmic law is that all this recording is done invisibly and secretly without any sign that it is happening.

The second miracle of karma is that for everyone to reap what they have sown, everything that appears to be random must in fact be predetermined. That is exactly what the saints tell us – our destiny is written in the most minute detail before we are born. Great Master wrote in *Spiritual Gems*: "In peace and in cataclysms or catastrophes, only they suffer who are destined to suffer." Consider a volcanic eruption which spews molten lava, rocks, and ash into the sky. This comes raining down on the surrounding lands and people. Nothing could seem to be more random. Yet if someone is not destined to suffer, then the lava and rocks will not land on him. How miraculous that the random appearance of everything that is going on is, in fact, entirely controlled in some hidden way. What a great magician the



Lord is to stage a play and create an illusion so complete that no one can ever see the hidden strings being pulled.

The saints encourage us to vacate the body and enter the astral region. Great Master, however, warned in *Dawn of Light*: “As the whole astral plane is the manifestation of the negative power and it is intended by that power to hold back the up-going spirit, so great caution is needed in crossing this plane.”

On the one hand our travel agent, the Master, wants us to go to the astral land but, on the other hand, it is very dangerous. Now we would be entitled to ask the travel agent before we head to some foreign and unknown country whether we will be safe. Should we hire a guard or carry weapons? The Master says: “Don’t worry, I will give you a mantra.” We say: “A mantra? For a dangerous country? Wouldn’t we be better off with a gun?” The Master assures us that the mantra is no ordinary thing. It has magic powers. According to Great Master: “No evil spirit can stand before the repetition of the five Holy Names. All spirits that come in this way must be tested by repetition of the five Names.”

In *Spiritual Gems* he tells us:

*When you see any form inside, then repeat the five names. ... Evil spirits do not stay when those five names are repeated, and thus they would not be able to deceive you. Only good spirits stay, and the spirit that stays when these names are used is worthy of your trust. Converse freely with it.*

It is miraculous that the simran given by the satguru is charged with his power. That power is recognized by all spirits in the astral region. If we ourselves give the mantra to anyone, it will be worthless to them. But when it is given by the Master, it has power throughout the higher regions. Our novels and movies of magical stories always have the wizards or witches using some magic incantation, some magic words, like abracadabra. Consider that we as disciples now also have an actual magic mantra that is so powerful that evil entities cannot resist its force.

Another magical aspect of simran is this: Our simran is a kind of passport to every stage within, and it is an “open sesame,” a key that opens every gate and door. Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Quest for Light*:

*The idea of repeating the names of these governors or rulers of the territories we have to pass through is that we should familiarize ourselves with them and they should know us when we come across them during our spiritual journey within. When we repeat their names they help us in passing through their territory with great comfort and ease.*

How incredible that although we are so tiny and insignificant, still, our faint repetition is heard in the highest regions, and those powers respond.

Simran isn't only magic in the inner regions – it also has vital magical properties right here on Earth. First, simran gathers the attention. All other thoughts spread the attention into the world. Simran gathers the attention towards the eye centre. Second, simran finds the eye centre by itself. It resists going downward and has the magic tendency to go inwards and upwards. Third, simran is the only thought that we can think in our entire lives that will change us, the thinker. All other thoughts leave us in the same state of consciousness as we were, but simran elevates our consciousness. Fourth, simran is the only thing that we carry with us beyond death. Anything else we get hold of during our lives, we leave behind when we die. But simran is a gift from the Master that goes with us even after death so that we can use it in the inner regions.

The Master's simran is given at the time of initiation. We do not appreciate the nature of this gift, nor can we understand the wonder of being initiated by a true master. A seeker might think that he can give this path a try, get initiated, and see how it goes. "I can always give it up and go back to my old ways," he says to himself. But that is not how this path works. Once the Master initiates us, we can never become "uninitiated." The best thing about initiation is that the Master will never leave you alone again. The worst thing about initiation is that the Master will never leave you alone again.

As Hazur Maharaj Ji said in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

*Well, brother, this relationship is such that it can never be destroyed. Once the seed has been sown, it has to sprout and bear fruit. Once we come on the path, we have to follow it and find the destination. No matter how much we go right or left, ultimately we will again find ourselves on the path. ... Once the seed has been sown, it cannot be destroyed.*

So, in a sense, initiation by a true master is like a slow-acting poison for the wayward mind, an injection of an antiparasitic potion for which there is no cure. Slowly it will take effect and weaken the grip that the parasite mind has held over the soul for ages. It is irreversible, and there is no antidote.

When we take stock of our situation, we see that we have a human body with miraculous faculties. We have access to the miraculous inner sound of divine origin. We have a magic mantra to protect us from evil and open all inner gates and doors. We are initiated. Our good days have begun. We are homeward bound. The chorus of a song made popular by Rod Stewart captures our happy condition:

*We are sailing, we are sailing  
Home again 'cross the sea  
We are sailing stormy waters  
To be near you, to be free  
Oh, Lord, to be near you, to be free*



*Awareness of God does not come by degrees  
from timidity to intellectual temerity;  
it is not a decision reached at the crossroads of doubt.  
It comes when, drifting in the wilderness,  
having gone astray,  
we suddenly behold the immutable polar star.  
Out of endless anxiety,  
out of denial and despair,  
the soul bursts out in speechless crying.*

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel,  
*I Asked for Wonder: A Spiritual Anthology*



# Thirsty in the Desert

After he drank the last of his water, the thirsty man knew he had to find more, or he might not make it back to his car. As he struggled to walk through the heat, he saw a small hut in the distance. At first, he thought it was a mirage. But as he kept walking, he saw that it was real. Encouraged, he opened the door but found it deserted. The place looked as if it had been abandoned long ago.

He noticed a hand pump in the corner, with a pipe going down through the floor, presumably into a well below. Of course, he started pumping the handle vigorously, but no water flowed out. The well must be dry, he thought, or maybe there was a leak in the pipe. Or else the pump was just broken. After desperately searching the hut for something to drink, he found a bottle of water with a note attached: “Please use this water to start the pump. It works. After you’re done, please refill the bottle.” That was it.

This was a dilemma. If the pump was broken or the underground well had dried up and he used the bottle of water to get the pump started, he’d have wasted that small amount of water with no hope of finding more. Could the note be trusted? Maybe it was some sort of sick joke.

The man closed his eyes and tried to quiet his frightened, jittery mind. He felt that God had always looked after him, so he decided to trust him now. He poured the precious water into the pump and pumped the handle hard. Soon he heard a bubbling sound, and water poured from the spout. With a sigh of relief, he drank the water and quenched his thirst. After filling his bottle and the bottle in the hut, he added to the note: “Have faith. It works.”

In a way, we are in a similar situation. God has sent the Master to teach us how to get off the wheel of life and death and thereby quench our spiritual thirst. He asks us to trust in his teachings – no matter how long it takes for us to find the water of his grace, no matter if we don’t hear the bells and whistles inside, no matter what others say about our lifestyle. We need to trust him and use his water, his help, his grace, to prime the pump of Shabd by doing our daily meditation practice, living the vows, and being good human beings.



# Slow Enlightenment

A blues musician once said, “If you haven’t had a bad time in life, just keep on living.”

What he meant is what all the mystics tell us: It’s impossible to get permanent peace and happiness in this imperfect world, this plane of duality, of light and dark. If we live long enough, we will suffer. The purpose of saints, they explain, is not to make this world perfect, nor to make us happy. Rather, they come to take us out of this world of suffering, back to the divine source from which we’ve come.

Despite the impossibility of finding lasting peace here, we always look for it. After all, the mind is hard-wired to seek pleasure and avoid pain. But pleasure is temporary and pain unavoidable. We are trapped by the karmas that we ourselves have created.

The saving grace for us is that, regardless of the weight of our karmas, the soul has a natural instinct to return to its source. No matter how much we may try to suppress it, our yearning for God is built into us, even deeper than our desire for pleasure. Our soul is a ray of divine light and thus yearns to be reabsorbed into that divine energy. That yearning, with God’s grace, forces us to seek our spiritual home and return there.

Our spiritual awakening starts to take practical shape when we come in contact with true masters. Their advice and guidance are at the highest spiritual level and yet at the same time utterly practical. They take into consideration our human nature, the divine design of this creation, and our accumulation of karmas over countless lifetimes.

This awakening is slow by necessity. We must completely shift our orientation from the outer world to the world within, from the outer music of the physical senses to the inner music of the Shabd, which pulls us in and up once we still our mind at the eye centre through meditation.

In the book *Die to Live*, someone asks why meditation takes so long, and Maharaj Charan Singh replies: “We can’t even extend our imagination to grasp how long we have been here in this world and how many karmas we have been collecting in every life.... Naturally it has to take time.”

It’s built into the process that we must struggle to turn our attention within over the span of a lifetime. If it happened quickly and easily,

we would take it for granted, or think that it was our efforts alone that resulted in success. If there was no struggle to attend to meditation and live the Sant Mat way of life, would we value the privilege of meeting a true master and receiving initiation?

In *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh (also referred to as the Great Master) further explains the slow pace:

*Saints have to deal with human nature. If they ask a person to leave kam all at once, before initiation, we know he cannot do so. They attach him to Nam. There is something for him to look up to now. He has heard of the magnificence of Nam from the saints. A tiny spark is kindled in him. He gives it some attention. The days are passing. Partly through receiving knocks (sickness, death in the family, demands on purse, shocks to pride, etc.), partly through age, partly through satsang, partly because he has passed through some of his pralabdh karma (fate), and partly through devotion to Nam, his attention is slowly contracting. So, by the time he reaches the end of his days, he is almost ready to go up and grasp Nam.*

First, we hear about Nam and the masters, who unlock its mysteries for us. Then we start attending satsang, which reminds us of our heart's desire and how to achieve it. At satsang we're reminded of what's true, what the teachings are. And every day we attend to our meditation, follow the other promises we make at the time of our initiation, and do our duty in the world – as family members, employers, employees, friends, and colleagues. This is how we slowly clear our fate karmas to lighten our load. We're undergoing the cleansing that will purify us enough to give and receive the spiritual love that we crave.

At the same time, we're also receiving knocks, as Great Master calls them – illness, disappointments, hardships, humiliations, losses. These all serve the purpose of pushing us to turn within. We're getting older, at first dealing with the challenges of establishing careers and starting families, later with the challenges of aging bodies. Life is hard work; fighting the mind is hard work; and we get tired. All these things, over time, begin to detach us from the pleasures of the world that we used to enjoy.

All these factors together are slowly contracting our attention and pulling us within, preparing us to “almost grasp Nam” by the end of our days. This is the journey of a lifetime.

Great Master goes into even more detail about why our awakening takes so long:

*The spirit has lived in bodies for ages, and its connection with the body has become so perfect that the withdrawal looks almost abnormal. But that is through ignorance. It falsely believes the body to be home, and when the spirit learns that its home is not in matter but that it is imprisoned by it, and that now in the human form there is the chance to break this connection, it wakes up, and the longing to ascend is aroused. It gains strength slowly. Rising and falling and struggling against mind and matter, it makes headway up with the help of the saints. The rise and fall are natural and so is the struggle. For that which is achieved after struggle gives strength, self-reliance, and incentive to go ahead. Achievement thus obtained is lasting and can be reproduced at will.... It takes time, and slow progress is better.*

*Spiritual Gems*

Rising and falling, struggling against mind and matter, the soul begins to make headway, with the Master pushing and pulling us along. We're not even aware of all the ways that he does this, of how his pull to merge with him shapes our lives.

We don't realize the enormity of what the masters do with us, for us, and to us to enable us to wake up spiritually – the enormity of being released from mind and matter, after our souls have been trapped here for innumerable lifetimes. We're like toddlers demanding to understand nuclear physics, but we can't even walk or talk or feed ourselves yet.

We need to take a breath and try to appreciate the miracle we've been given, which is admittedly hard because the mind isn't designed to understand it.

Yet here we are. Our longing, our loneliness, our suffering motivates us. Our awe in the face of the Master's love and charm motivates us. We get inklings along the way that lead us to believe that this path is true. And we receive shocks that spur us onward.

Here's Great Master again, in *Spiritual Gems*:

*When love begins to run smooth, the charm is gone, and life becomes a monotony and a routine. Some shock is necessary to break the monotony. A period of disappointment intervenes often in the life of the devotee. This is desirable. It has a purpose. It gives the shock. After a time spent in disappointment, the intensity of love for spiritual uplift increases. A temporary obstruction in the path of determination gives it momentum to proceed ahead.*

We need to be shocked out of our stupor. Periods of disappointment and temporary obstructions are the shocks we need to wake up, to increase the intensity of our longing for spiritual uplift.

The fact is, we will receive only that which pulls us back to the Lord. We don't need to fear the obstacles and hard times we encounter in life or be overwhelmed by them. They're part of our story, steps in the process of realizing our true self, our true divinity. In fact, they are confirmation of the Lord's love for us. He wants to save us from suffering, so he sends us true masters to haul us homeward once and for all. Rather than complaining, "Oh Lord, why are you doing this to me?" we should – metaphorically speaking – be dancing in the rain with our arms outstretched shouting, "Bring it on!"





# Gifts to a Good Man

There was once a good man whose wife brought him great comfort and companionship. They walked hand in hand through the world, facing all of life's challenges and joys, together. And because they were together, all of their bad times seemed only half as bad, and all of their good times seemed twice as good.

One day, the man saw an envelope with his name on it, sitting on his wife's desk. Just above his name, she had drawn a small bird flying up toward the sun.

"Oh! Is this for me?" the man asked, reaching for the envelope. But his wife quickly held it out of his reach.

"Yes, my darling," she said, "but not for now." She smiled playfully and slid the envelope into her desk drawer.

"But I would like to have it now," he protested, putting his arm around her shoulder and giving her a little squeeze. "No," she answered. "I'm waiting for just the right time."

And so he waited, expecting the envelope at each birthday and anniversary, but it never came. After a few years, he forgot about it.

Many years passed, and the love between the man and his wife deepened. And then, as everything must in this temporary world, things changed. The man's wife fell ill, and her soul left this world for a realm no one can see.

The man grieved, for there was no one beside him now to warm his heart, to talk to or share with. He felt his world without his companion to be a frozen winter. He wandered lost through the barren landscape of his days, wondering if his wife still existed in some form, in some place, and where it was.

And then one day he opened his mailbox to find an envelope from a close family friend. He opened it and found a note that read, "Just before she passed, your wife asked me to send this to you six months after her death."

Stunned, the old man sank down on the weathered garden bench that he and his wife had placed by the rosebed so many years ago. Then he looked inside the envelope and pulled out a smaller one inside it. His name was written on the front, below a drawing of a small bird flying up toward the sun. The old man ran his finger over the drawing for a moment, remembering. Then he took out the pages and read his wife's handwritten message that now seemed to come from another realm:

To my beloved husband,

*If you are reading this, I am no longer sitting by your side in the garden of our life. This was all part of a plan and a promise I made to you, before we even came to the world. I was to leave first, for a great purpose. Love taught us how to open our hearts, and we gave many gifts to each other. But now I give my final and greatest gifts to you.*

**I give you the gift of loss and loneliness.** *Where I once stood beside you now seems a cold, unkind, and empty place. I have freed you now to finally and fully feel the great sorrow of separation from your true Source. Don't run from this pain! Let it be your lantern in the dark, leading you to the One who can show you the way, the One who can teach you how to walk through the world, hand in hand with the true Beloved, who is eternal warmth, kindness, and comfort.*

**I give you the gift of solitude and silence.** *We never tired of being together and talking about every little thing. I know you sometimes feel swallowed up by the silence that surrounds you now. But this silence is a great gift. Don't try to drown it in a sea of noise and activity. Sit in solitude and listen, for silence holds within itself a secret: the sacred sound of all life, love, and light. Forget the sound of my voice now. Seek the One who can show you how to hear the holy Sound within yourself. Learn how to listen with the soul's ear and see with the soul's eye, and you will soon know that you are never alone. You will know that wherever you are, you are in the company of the One Being. You will come to know that you, yourself, are a precious particle of this One.*

**I give you the gift of my absence.** *Now you wander the empty rooms of a house that once was our home and wonder what has happened. Where has she gone? What is her life like there? And that is my greatest gift to you, my love. For at last, instead of tying you down to the old world, your thoughts of me are leading you to wander into a new and finer realm. Whenever you think of me, you are reminded to rise up, while you are still alive, to a region far brighter and happier than the one in which we walked together. Seek the One who can set your soul into the stream of spirit within you. It will carry you out of your lonely house, on and on through undreamed-of realms and return you, at last, to your real home, where you will revel in true rest, real oneness, and perfect peace.*

*Forgive me, my love. For so long I filled the sacred place beside you. I kept you from the quiet. I stole your silence and solitude. I robbed you of your loneliness and longing for God. But that was how it was meant to be for a time. We learned how to love through each other. Now I ask for only one gift from you. Find the One who can show you the way to a far greater love than mine. Learn how to pour your love for me into the true Beloved, within. Begin to live in the blessed company of the One Being that is within you and all around you, in every atom of all that is. Do it now, while there is still time.*

*Sending you luminous waves of loving light from the ocean of the One...*



*When [the Lord] has marked you, he creates that loneliness – the intensity of that loneliness in you, the intensity of that urge in you – and gives you a better company, better society, better atmosphere, better environment, which turns your direction towards him. The feeling is already there. It was dormant, but when he marks you, when he allots you to come back to him, then that urge becomes more and more intense and you get a certain environment, certain facility, certain opportunity. And in that atmosphere, you turn towards the Father. This is how he moulds you, moulds our direction towards him.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. 1



# Realization

At a cemetery, the grave markers show not only the name of the deceased buried there, but two dates – birth and death – separated by a line. Just one small line signifies the extent of all the years between the cradle and the grave. How often do we think about what that line – an entire life – means?

We come to this world with nothing and leave with nothing, so what is the purpose of our lives? Why are we here? Saints say this life is an arena of learning, of awareness; it is meant for self-realization and God-realization. But what is realization, and what are we realizing?

In ordinary usage, realization means becoming aware of something that is a fact, already true, already present, only we are unaware of it. For example, if we are intensely absorbed in some work and a friend walks into the room, we may not notice our friend's presence. Then, after a few moments, when we look up, we are surprised to see her there, so we say, "Oh! I didn't realize you were here!"

Sant Mat is a path of realization in this same sense. It is a way of waking up to life's most profound reality. Our real friend is standing right here by our side. And who is that friend? It's the Shabd.

The masters explain that we are supported by the Shabd all the time – we just don't realize it. Saints give us the wake-up call. They tell us that every moment we are cared for by Shabd, under the protection of Shabd. Without the Shabd, we wouldn't exist.

So, our spiritual journey is simply a matter of waking up to this fact. We are not really taking a journey to a distant goal. We are only realizing what is already true – right here, right now, within us. Meditation is the technique by which we wake up to what is real.

The American children's book writer Rebecca Stead asked herself a question in an acceptance speech for a major award: "When does the life of a storyteller begin?" Her reply:

*Mine began when I was about six. Up until then, I had half believed that my mother could read my thoughts. But at some point during first grade, I realized that I was completely alone in my own consciousness. I used to*

*regularly freak myself out by sitting still, closing my eyes, and asking myself the same question over and over until I was in a sort of a trance. The question was, How am I me?*

*What I meant was, How did my particular self get in here? Again and again, I would close my eyes and plunge myself into this existential angst. Why did I do it?... I think that, like someone alone in a dark room, I was feeling around for a door. Because I really, really did not want to be alone there.*

Most of us have probably also asked ourselves at some point: “Who am I? Am I all alone?” Soami Ji Maharaj asks this very question in *Sar Bachan Poetry*: “Soul, who are you? Where have you come from?”

We are born knowing nothing. We start capturing and storing information in the form of images, sounds, and other sense impressions. We try to make sense of what happens to us, our reactions to events, and so on. But ultimately, we are faced with basic questions about the nature of reality and the purpose of our lives. At some point we realize, in seeking the answers to those questions, that discovering the divine reality within us – the Shabd –and merging with it, is the purpose of life.

The noted astrophysicist Stephen Hawking raises a serious question about our perception of reality. He hints at our feeling of living in an unreal world when he wrote in the October 2010 issue of *Scientific American*:

*A few years ago the city council of Monza, Italy, barred pet owners from keeping goldfish in curved fishbowls. The sponsors of the measure explained that it is cruel to keep a fish in a bowl because the curved sides give the fish a distorted view of reality. Aside from the measure’s significance to the poor goldfish, the story raises an interesting philosophical question: How do we know that the reality we perceive is true? The goldfish is seeing a version of reality that is different from ours, but can we be sure it is any less real? For all we know, we, too, may spend our entire lives staring out at the world through a distorted lens.*

In *from self to Shabd*, the author writes:

*Some quantum physicists say that our human experience is taking place in energy fields arranged in such a way that they give the illusion that “things are here,” when in reality, at a quantum/subatomic level, there are*

*only energy fields with no solidity in them. These scientists say everything that we see is nothing but a huge quantum mirage blinking in and out of existence all the time.*

The author also writes, “Baba Ji says that we are born in illusion, live in illusion, and die in illusion.” Further, because our attention is “glued to the human experience,” the reality we perceive is delusional. Our task now is to realize who we really are.

Why is it hard to see reality? It's because it is not apparent to us. It is distorted, similar to what Stephen Hawking described. Maharaj Charan Singh also gives an answer to this human predicament in *Light on Saint John*:

*Our problem is that what we see does not exist – it is all perishable. What we do not see is real – it is eternal. What we see, we fall in love with; and what we do not see, we find difficult to fall in love with. Without falling in love with the One whom we do not see, we can never escape from this creation.*

*This is the human problem. We always get attached to someone at our own level. We find it very difficult to attach ourselves to someone we have never seen – and that is why we need the living Master.*

In *from self to Shabd*, the author writes:

*Our transformation begins when we become aware of where we keep our attention. For most of us, our attention is in the drama of our karma. We are more interested in manipulating our karmas than in accepting them. We are more interested in having and doing, rather than in being. Having and doing do not lead to peace of mind. Being does. ... We keep all our attention in our human experience... [T]o keep our cool in the face of terrible circumstances is a state achieved only by doing daily meditation and lots of simran during the day. Only with such daily discipline can our mind become anchored in the peaceful serenity of Shabd. With practice, this can be achieved even in the midst of the most adverse karmas or situations.*

Why is this realization important? Because who wants to come back here for another lifetime? There is indeed nothing more important for us than to become familiar with who we really are, while we are alive. This opportunity is here now. If we don't do our spiritual work, no one else will do it for us.

If we don't unveil the illusion in this lifetime, then we have lost the golden opportunity of this human birth. There is no guarantee that we will reincarnate as a human. And even if we do, that new life will not be a continuation of this one. What is the guarantee that we would have the same inclination toward the Father, toward finding a master, toward putting in the necessary effort to obey him and pierce the illusion? Who knows how many more lifetimes we will cycle through before we get another opportunity to be born as a human. We must do it now.

How does one attain realization? We cannot get it through reading books or by listening to another's experience or applying self-help methods. Realization is very much tied to experience.

When we first come to the path, we hear from saints that we are a soul, and that the soul is a particle of the Lord. This information helps us to answer questions like the ones the children's book writer had when she closed her eyes and asked: "How am I me?" If we want to realize God, the One, we first need to realize that our soul is a particle of that One: self-realization comes before God-realization.

All Shabd mystics have told us that whatever has to be given by the Lord has already been given to us. Nothing has been held back from us; what is missing is our realization of these gifts.

Saints say that the Lord has blessed all of us equally with the ability to return to that divine One; no one is less blessed or has had fewer showers of mercy and grace. If we don't work hard to fulfil our promise of daily meditation, then we are choosing to live in poverty, choosing to remain unaware that we have inherited a great fortune.

In the end, realization is not possible without effort. Although the Lord has already given us everything, our effort is essential to reach the awareness, the realization of that treasure. As Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us in *Quest for Light*:

*You are quite right when you say that the Master rewards disciples according to the amount of effort they put in with the proper attitude. The more we strive on the path, the more help we receive from the Master. Those who do not make an effort of their own have no idea of the blessings that are being showered on us every day of our life. The rewards that are*

*received by a disciple are far greater than one could ever expect or even dream of, and this realization comes only when we are doing our part of the duty.*

Between the cradle and the grave, we must use our time wisely and take advantage of this precious opportunity to attain realization by meditating every day without fail. Let us not leave this life a beggar, ignorant of the treasure that is our birthright.



*The journey is not ended yet. Perhaps it will not end even with death. So my final comment may not be final at all. But here it is: My conclusions, my deductions, even my intuitions can be argued with. But my experiences, no. I have tasted sugar and found it sweet. You may say to me, "You might be mistaken. It may be sour, it may be salty." And I will say to you, "It is sweet." I have been in the water. It is wet. The stuff of the universe is consciousness, and the nature of consciousness is bliss.*

Nancy Pope Mayorga, *The Hunger of the Soul*





# The Way of Joy

This path of Sant Mat, or Surat Shabd Yoga, is profound and life altering. It is a practice in realizing the divine, an answer to our deepest seeking, and, if we imbibe the teachings in our daily life, this path becomes our greatest strength. It is a simple way, and the masters remind us that it is to be walked with joy.

Each of us face countless challenges as we move through life, and with its complications, we worry about our future and obsess over the past. It is rare for us to live in the ever-present now, to settle even for a moment in a place of clarity and ease. But the American Quaker Thomas Kelly, who writes extensively about the beauty of being present, reminds us that it is only in the now that we are truly free, and it is here that we meet God. The author of the book *Awareness of the Divine* quotes him:

*Between the relinquished past and the untrodden future stands this holy now, whose bulk has swelled to cosmic size, for within the now is the dwelling place of God Himself. In the now, we are at home at last. The fretful winds of time are stilled, the nostalgic longings of this heaven-born earth traveller come to rest.*

*Testament of Devotion*

Is it possible to be content no matter the changing weather and the twists and turns in the script of our lives? The truth is that we have very little control over the circumstances that each day brings us. But we can learn to control our state of mind, attitudes, and reactions. On the spiritual path, we can learn to live in the will of God. The subject of God's will is vast, and its understanding varied; ultimately, the masters tell us, we cannot truly know what it means to live in his will. It is beyond our intellectual capacity to understand. All we can do is accept the effects of our karmas with a balanced and steady heart. His will is the here and now, this moment, the very stuff of our lives from hour to hour and day to day. Whatever life brings us, that is his will. What is important is how we face it. Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. I:

*If you can take what comes to you through him, then, whatever it is, it becomes divine in itself; shame becomes honour, bitterness becomes sweet,*

*and gross darkness clear light. Everything takes its flavour from God and turns divine; everything that happens reveals God.*

Can we imagine, even for a moment, living this way? It is most likely hard to imagine finding sweetness in the bitter blows of life, honour when all we feel is shame. Can the gross darkness we find when we close our eyes become clear light?

We are programmed from birth to put things into boxes. We interpret success, material wealth, and good health as blessings, and we neatly preserve those experiences in a jeweled box of all things good. But then, inevitably, we encounter failure, heartbreak, maybe ill health. Wanting to move on and far away from those experiences that we think of as bad, we quickly pack them away in the box marked “bad.”

But the masters ask us to look again, with a clear mind, so that we can find another perspective. Contrary to the ways of the world, the saints teach us that there is no good and bad, and that our way of categorizing the shifting events of our lives is merely a habit of the mind.

Our aversion to anything we deem bad and our attachment to what we consider good are actually part of a deep-rooted pattern embedded in society. And because we are human, we naturally feel sad and overwhelmed when uncomfortable situations arise in our lives. In fact, the teachings of the saints do not ask us to bypass the pain when life brings us suffering, or not to be upset when someone we love is hurt or when things don't go the way we expect them to. But Sant Mat does give us a method of meditation that, when we practice it consistently, begins to lift the veil of illusion clouding our ability to perceive reality accurately. Then, our state of mind becomes more accepting. Gradually we can see clear light in the gross darkness of this world.

Imagine how pleased our Master would be if we were joyful, if we underwent our karmas cheerfully, as we are told it is possible to do. With meditation and devotion to the way of Shabd, we come to see that his strength and love carry us through them. Then the only thing that's left for us to do is to live each day with resilient positivity and to cherish every gift he has given us.

In a translation of the Bhagavad Gita by the spiritual teacher Eknath Easwaran, Lord Krishna advises his friend and disciple Arjun that knowledge of the self within destroys ignorance:

*Those who cast off sin through this knowledge ... are not elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad.... Not dependent on any external support, they realize the joy of spiritual awareness. With consciousness unified through meditation, they live in abiding joy.*

This abiding joy comes when we still the mind and contact the Shabd with the practice of meditation, and ultimately when we realize the self within. With time, the mystics say, we slowly see the fickleness of the world and the mirage of the sense pleasures, and we become less attached to seeking particular outcomes. We realize the transient nature of relationships, and, with fewer expectations and more humility, we love more freely.

With meditation we strengthen our awareness and our ability to pay attention to the beauty and flow of life. The effect of this practice bestows wisdom, which allows us to make peace with our circumstances. As Krishna says, we find the middle path between elation and sadness. Then we notice God's love in the blooming flower, the unconditional kindness that life offers us every day, and we find joy in the holy words of simran that join us to our Master.

Our meditation practice is a transformative journey of a lifetime. On this path it is non-negotiable, and we are asked to be faithful to our practice until our last breath. There will be times when we are tired and doubtful, when we are filled with the never-ending stories and antics of the mind. It is then that we can remind ourselves that with our diligent efforts and our Master's grace, we have absolutely nothing to lose and joy, at the very least, to gain.



# The Road to Eternity

The spoken word can never take us along the road to ultimate Eternity. As a child, listening to my schoolmates gabbling the Lord's Prayer as quickly as possible so they could go out to play, I used to wonder: Here we are, in a convent dedicated to the religious life of worship of the Most High. What then, does this prayer really mean? Child that I was, I could find no answer. I thought: My mother, a Protestant, prays: "Our Father *which* art in heaven"; and here in school, Catholics say "Our Father *who* art in heaven", which means they intimate he is a person. Is he out there, a kind fatherly old gentleman, resting on a damp cloud; or is he some feeling inside me that is demanding my full attention?

When we grow up and find a Master, through habit we carry these mundane ways of reasoning with us into our early practice of Sant Mat. The outer form of the physical Satguru is our target of worship and we strive with each other to show who is the strongest in expressing our appreciation and respect for him only in the way our *earthly* senses perceive him. Then if we leave his presence, or he goes away, time and space make a gap that tends to dim our love through forgetfulness. He seems to be telling us so clearly: Don't worship this earthly form, this *who* that you have made of me. Go to that *which*, that power of Shabd, the Holy Ghost inside your innermost being that shines within you. Then I will always be present, always available; now, and now, and now, a glorious hymn of sound and light and life, of bliss and peace and joy within you, against which all the calamities and attractions of life in the world will pale into insignificance and disappear. Mankind is busy outside, searching like the scientists do in outer space for the black hole through which we came when creation began with a BANG! But, from the moment of initiation we can now look within much more convincingly through that black hole of our third eye, into a growing and widening awareness of timeless perception that no earthly words can convey.

Flora E. Wood, *In Search of the Way*



# Winds of Grace

*Winds of Grace*, a collection of Sufi poetry and stories, refers to a passage in the Qur'an on grace as "God's benevolent and loving glance." God's grace is something that is given freely, yet we often feel we do nothing to deserve or earn it. Without his grace, we would be lost. With it, this loving glance enlivens and energizes our spiritual journey, simply by giving us the strength to keep going. The author and translator Vraje Abramian quotes from the Qur'an:

*As in the spring, God's beneficial glance brings the world the message of new life and glory, and the breeze loosens that which the winter has entangled.... Just so, God's benevolent and loving glance at the believers' hearts raises the winds of Grace and Obedience – so they may struggle to become worthy of Holy understanding and persist in their prayers and remembrance.*

*Winds of Grace*

This benevolent, loving glance from the Lord, which causes daffodils to bloom and trees to burst into bud, is the same divine gift that allows and motivates us to struggle and persist in his remembrance. God's grace is not the promise of worldly success or an easy life, nor even the promise of spiritual union with the divine – at least not yet. God's grace is the gift of a sacred opportunity to engage in his remembrance.

One of the many paradoxes on this path is that meditation is both an inner sanctuary and an inner struggle. In meditation, we discover a mind that is rearing and bucking, attempting to escape in every possible direction from our efforts to focus. The mind resists any attempt to contain it. Maharaj Sawan Singh (Great Master) wrote in *Spiritual Gems*:

*It is a life-long struggle. Those who have undergone this struggle, or who are engaged in it, understand what it is to conquer the mind. It is son, daughter, wife, husband, friend, wealth and poverty, attachment, greed, lust, anger, pride and whatnot.*

Great Master continued, with a dramatic image of how the mind is held captive by its attachments.

*It is attached to the outside world with ropes, double ropes, triple ropes, and manifold ropes, and has been held by these chains so long that it does not feel the irksomeness of its bonds. It likes them instead.*

*Mind has completely forgotten its origin. To the caged bird, its captivity is the normal run of life....*

*If it were an easy affair, Guru Nanak would not have sat on pebbles for twelve years ... and Soami Ji himself would not have contemplated in a solitary, dark, back room for seventeen years.*

*I need not write more. You know the struggle.*

Indeed, we know the struggle. Thankfully, Great Master ended this passage with a hopeful message of encouragement, reassurance, and promise: "All that I would add is that there is no disappointment to those who are attached to the current within. Sooner or later the door will open."

Outside the eye centre, we are caught in the prison of the mind and our desires, the narrow world of the ego. But the saints assure us that the door within will open one day. There are no failures in Sant Mat. In spite of the inherent struggle, or possibly because of it, meditation is what the Master has asked us to do. It is our part to play. Only through his grace are we able to bravely and steadfastly persist on this path of God-realization, despite feelings of difficulty, frustration, or failure that the mind struggles to overcome. Yet, we are asked to continue the struggle. We are asked to persist and persevere.

The good news is that the Master's grace sustains us at every moment, at every step of the journey, both before and after initiation. In the following passage, Maharaj Charan Singh beautifully described the lifeline that the Master freely extends to us through his grace, which is immeasurable and infinite. He packed quite a lot into this short passage:

*We owe everything to the immeasurable grace of the Master. He showers his blessings on us by joining us with the Shabd and Nam, removing all our doubts, and pulling us out of this quagmire of illusion. It is our Master who puts us on the right Path and awakens in our mind abiding love and devotion for the Lord. Blessed with his infinite grace, through meditation, we seek the door, we find it, and we knock.*

*Die to Live*

Through meditation, the Master is opening our hearts to the grace that is perpetually raining down on us. We should show our gratitude by adhering to his guidance. In doing so, he helps us navigate in this world of illusion. The masters come to this world on a mission of mercy. Putting us in touch with the Shabd – the divine energy emanating from the highest spiritual region – is their only purpose in coming to this world, their only mission in life. Ultimately, nothing can come between master and disciple.

Hazur Maharaj Ji once responded to the question: “Maharaj Ji, on the special occasions when grace and mercy are bestowed on the disciple, is that an intervention by the master?” He answered:

*The whole life of a disciple is a special occasion. When the marked soul takes a new birth, the saint becomes responsible to take the soul back to the Father.... So every step, every occasion, is a special occasion for the disciple. The Lord's blessing and grace is always there with the disciple, but it is up to us to be receptive to that grace.... Whenever we attend to meditation, that's a special occasion to get the grace.... Otherwise his grace is always there.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

His grace is always flowing. Our receptivity grows whenever we attend to meditation. In fact, our struggle to contain the mind is the surest sign of his grace. Through the Master, the entire life of a disciple is a special occasion to open our hearts to the winds of grace. Let us lean into that grace and let the force of the winds fly us out of this world back home to the Lord.



# How to Please the Lord

The thirteenth-century mystic Dnyaneshwar tells us how best to please the Lord:

*[B]e still, be peaceful, be patient.  
Otherwise, you'll exhaust yourself  
with wasted efforts.  
Day and night, you tire yourself  
tending to the world – what is it  
within you that keeps you  
from devoting yourself to God?  
Only by repeating God's name, ...  
will you break the world's hold on you.*

*Many Voices, One Song*

Human beings are born for the purpose of reuniting with God, but they are also born with a mind that has other plans. Unfortunately, the monkey mind is such a force, such a power, that it is virtually untamable. Hopes, fears, desires, worries, pleasures, and pains course through the mind endlessly, no matter how hard we try to control it. But mystics tell us that with the help of a master, one can overcome the mind and bring it into balance to be still, peaceful, and patient.

## ***To please the Lord, be still***

We are told that when our body is motionless in meditation and when our mind is quiet, centred, in balance and concentrated, the Lord is pleased.

In the book *Zen in the Art of Archery*, the author described his first meeting with Awa Kenzo, the man who would become his Master. While sharing tea and conversation, the author suddenly heard a low rumbling and felt heaving under his feet. The whole building swayed and creaked, objects crashed, and people called out in alarm. Many rushed for the stairs. The author jumped up to run for safety and turned to Awa Kenzo and urged him to hurry up. But Awa Kenzo sat unmoved, with hands folded, eyes nearly closed, as though nothing concerned him. The sight so astounded the author that he remained with Awa Kenzo. Throughout the earthquake



Kenzo remained still and unperturbed. When the earthquake ended, Kenzo resumed the conversation at the exact point where he had left off, having remained completely concentrated and unaffected by what was going on around him. Throughout, he was calm and still despite the chaos.

In a similar way, those seeking God-realization are challenged to achieve stillness. This is no easy task. It is a lifelong struggle with the mind, which stimulates endless thoughts and actions. Seldom do we get a quiet moment, let alone achieve stillness. Only when we are quiet and still the mind do we get the full benefit of meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh said in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

*The mind is in the habit of always thinking about something or another. The purpose of simran is to eliminate all those thoughts ... to achieve that silence where the mind can be absolutely still.... The moment that ... you have been able to eliminate worldly thoughts, light and shabd will absolutely pull you, will catch you there. It will not let you remain in a vacuum.*

Once we're in touch with the Shabd, the game changes. The power of that inner sound subdues and quiets the mind, pulling it away from its desires and attachments. Only then is the veil lifted and the wall smashed that separates us from the Lord, allowing stillness to prevail. When that happens, the soul is able to meet the Lord in his Shabd form.

### ***To please the Lord, be peaceful***

Hazur Maharaj Ji used to quote Christ's message: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9). Only when we find peace within will the soul be released from the mind, allowing us to attain self-realization. While the mind remains dominant, we are miserable and at war with ourselves. When we are at peace within ourselves, the whole world looks peaceful to us.

Those fortunate people who are living at peace with themselves can go beyond the mind and become one with God. Hazur Maharaj Ji writes in *Light on Saint Matthew* that they have "obtained peace within themselves by love and devotion for the Father, and by forgiving and having mercy on other people... They radiate peace around them and share that peace with others."

This ideal can be achieved only through working hard at our meditation and trying our utmost to do our simran whenever our mind is free during the day. The more we can concentrate our mind – the higher we can bring the attention – the more peace we will find, and the more pleased the Master will be with us. Being peaceful allows us to be loving, kind, and compassionate. As Hazur Maharaj Ji said, those who are at peace have no malice against anybody and are full of forgiveness.

### ***To please the Lord, be patient***

Seeking the Lord is the most important, difficult, deepest challenge a human being can undertake. We were created for this challenge, struggling with a strange mixture of angel and demon, the divine and the animal. For reasons only the Lord knows, we have two aspects: we are soul, always looking inward and upward, always yearning for the Father whom we feel we have lost. And we are mind and body, always looking downward and outward, always running after something, anything, to satisfy the mind's addictions.

The task before us, with the Master's assistance and guidance, is to realize our true self: soul. Are we trapped in this world forever, or do we have a way back home to the Lord? Once we question our existence, we begin to understand that our real purpose in life is to break this cycle of birth and death and go back home to the Lord. We realize that we have always been part of the Father and that through self-realization first, we can break the bonds of this world and achieve God-realization.

Samarth Ramdas, one of the Maharashtrian mystics, describes the scope and complexity of the work involved in the task the Master has assigned us. In *Many Voices, One Song* we read:

*Whatever you can see, know it's not real.  
Whatever you can't see, know that it's real.  
This knowing has grown as my mind  
has digested the master's teachings.  
Try to understand what can't be understood,  
try to see what can't be seen,  
try to know what can't be known –*

*think clearly and see that this is the way.*

*What is hidden, let it be revealed.*

*What is unattainable, try to attain it.*

*What is difficult to study, study it slowly.*

What a picture! This path requires that we learn to understand what can't be understood, see what can't be seen, know what can't be known, reveal what is hidden, attain what is unattainable, and slowly study that which is difficult to study. We are trying to undo patterns created over untold lifetimes. We need to be patient and let the Master do his work on us in his own time. As the mystic Attar said, "The Friend decides the when and how."

So, what happens next? What can we do? Hazur Maharaj Ji sums up our plight when he tells us in *Spiritual Discourses*, Vol. II:

*What is it ... that brings us again and again to the prison of the body?  
Our love and attachments in the world. What created them? Simran and  
dhyān. What kind of simran and dhyān? The simran and dhyān of this  
world, which will perish and pass away.*

*Since we already have the habit of doing simran and dhyān, of thinking  
constantly and visualizing, saints tell us to take advantage of it. Only  
simran will release us from simran, only dhyān will release us from dhyān  
– but we must do the simran and dhyān of that which will never perish or  
pass away. And what is that? It is the absolute Lord.*

Saint Tukaram tells us this when he urges us to focus on the Lord every moment through our daily practice:

*Your Name is my penance, my charity, my austerity.*

*It's my religion, my duty, my daily practice.*

*My only pilgrimage, my only vow,  
your Name is my one virtuous deed.*

*Your Name is my path to union, my sacrifice –  
it's my remembrance, repetition and contemplation,  
my family customs and duties.*

*My one daily practice is your Name –  
it's my thought, my conduct, my commitment.*

*I've no wealth nor possession worth mention,  
says Tuka, other than that of your Name.*

*Many Voices, One Song*

As saints advise us, to please the Lord we must be still, peaceful, and patient. To achieve this, we must constantly repeat God's name. Only then can we come in touch with the Shabd, Nam, or Name, merge with the Lord, and complete our journey home.



*Never be disheartened if you are to pay some severe debt. It is all for your good. Suppose someone ill-treats you without any fault on your part – you should see in this ill treatment the hand of the Master working. He wants you to find out whether your pride has died or not, and how deep has meekness and love taken root in your mind....*

*All events which appear to be misfortunes are not really so. They come to chasten us, to add to our power of resistance and leave us better human beings in the end. Be always resigned to His will. What the Father does, He does for the best....*

*Our Father is love and we are small drops from that ocean of love. This huge machinery of the universe works by the eternal principal of love. So try to bring yourself in harmony with this principle of love. The deeper the love for the Master takes root in you, the fainter will be the worldly love in you. His love will displace the love of earthly things. Then the mind and spirit will transcend the flesh and the curtains will rise before you one by one. The dark mysteries of the universe will become revealed to you and you will find yourself in the loving lap of the holy Father; in fact, you will be one with Him.*

*Maharaj Sawan Singh, The Dawn of Light*



# He Worships Himself Through Us

**Q:** *Master, you said something about when we were brought down to this creation and we didn't have a choice. And I wondered if that is the reason why we love it so much?*

**A:** Sister, Guru Nanak says, if you go on washing the earth, there will be no end to it, you will never be able to reach the bottom, what to say of clearing our karmas, our sins. We are humans, we can't help it. We can escape from this realm only with the Lord's grace. If you say we can escape by our effort, by our intellect – it's impossible. We can do it only by his grace.

We are all condemned to this creation, and we can't help it. We have been made like that. It's not even our fault. . . . Guru Nanak says that we humans will always act like this. If we want to account for our karmas, there will be no limit to it. We will never be able to escape. What we need is his grace. When his grace is there, circumstances combine in such a way that we want to get out of the creation. We come to the path, we get the opportunity to meditate. We get the facilities, the atmosphere. We feel his love, his devotion, and we turn our back to the world and look to him. All these things come just by his grace. It's not that we have done something to deserve all that. We have done nothing. . . .

We can never do anything to deserve his love. He just gives it and gives it. We are too small-fry to even invoke his grace. If the master won't come with his grace, then who will? It is nothing but his grace that we get so much pull and love for the Lord from within. Unless he pulls from within, nobody can even think about the Father. Actually, he worships himself through us. When he wants to pull us to his own level, he worships himself through us. We are just helpless.

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



# Book Review

## Rabi'a: The Woman Who Must Be Heard

BY JANE CLARKE WADSWORTH

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In *Rabi'a: The Woman Who Must Be Heard* the author offers us a masterful study of the spiritual teachings of the early Muslim mystic Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (717–801 AD) based on the latest historical research on her era and on the myriad teaching stories that have been passed down about her. The author writes,

*It is clear that during her lifetime Rabi'a was known as an early Islamic love mystic with a single-pointed focus on devotion to her Beloved Lord. Loving union with God was the goal of her life and one which she is believed to have achieved.*

The author notes that at the time Rabi'a lived, in only the second century after the death of Prophet Muhammad, “both women and men were recognized as authoritative teachers and exemplars of Islam.” As recent historical research has revealed, Rabi'a was associated with a school of female ascetics in Basra (in present-day Iraq). One of Rabi'a's spiritual teachers may have been a woman named Hayyuna, known as one of the “Wise Fools” or “The Rationally Insane,” who had a “tendency to go into raptures because of her love of God.”

*Rabi'a used to visit Hayyuna regularly. One night, in the middle of her devotions, Rabi'a fell asleep and Hayyuna kicked her awake, saying “Get up! The wedding of the Guided Ones has come! Oh, One who beautifies the Brides of the Night by means of night vigils.”*

The women in this community generally called themselves “slaves of God.” By choosing a lifelong vocation as a “slave” or “servant” of God, these women had independence and respect not enjoyed by other women. “They could travel without a chaperone, mix socially with men, teach men in public assemblies, and develop intellectually in ways that were not accessible to their non-mystic sisters.” It is clear from the many anecdotes and sayings that have come down to us that Rabi'a was, indeed, highly respected even by

the most influential male religious authorities. The earliest written mention of Rabi'a comes from the famed mystic al-Muhasibi (d. 857 AD). He wrote,

*Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya would say at the coming of night, "The night has come, the darkness has mingled, and every lover is left alone with his beloved. Now I am alone with you, my Beloved."*

A rich oral tradition of stories about things Rabi'a did or said continued for centuries until, four hundred years after her lifetime, Farid ud-din 'Attar wrote his Memorial of God's Friends, which records the lives, sayings, and deeds of seventy-two masters of Muslim mysticism or Sufism, including Rabi'a. Scholars today believe that 'Attar may have conflated Rabi'a with one or more other woman mystics also named Rabi'a, thus explaining some of the inconsistencies in the portrait he paints. Similarly, the stories depicting her as a slave may be due to the use of the expression "slave of God." In any case, as the author points out, "With each anecdote, saying, and verse, 'Attar conjured a vivid tapestry of Rabi'a's life and spiritual values, transforming her once-enigmatic figure into a guiding light for generations to come."

This book presents the teachings of Rabi'a through the lens of "stations," the term used by early Sufis for stages in the spiritual path. A "station" is understood to be a permanent condition attained slowly through discipline, love, effort, and grace. A "station" is thus distinguished from a "state" – a passing moment of uplift which may come unbidden and leave as suddenly as it came. According to the author, "Within the realm of Rabi'a's teachings, seventeen stations emerge, marking a progression in the heart of the disciple from asceticism to sacred union.... Though the specific sequence followed or taught by Rabi'a remains a mystery, it is widely acknowledged that she traversed the entire landscape, reaching the pinnacle of spiritual attainment."

The author has grouped the stations in four chapters. "The Journey from Asceticism to Loving Union" covers renunciation, repentance, poverty, and scrupulousness. "From Fear to Trust and Oneness" covers fear of God, hope, patience, trust in God, and divine unity. The next chapter, "Deepening the Relationship with God," covers sincerity and truthfulness, creating an intimate relationship with God, passionate longing for God, and humility. The final chapter, "The Final Stations to Divine Union," covers gratitude, complete satisfaction and contentment with God's Will, love, annihilation of the ego, and subsistence in God.

The discussion of each station begins with a saying from Rabi'a. These pithy sayings encapsulate a wealth of spiritual wisdom in a few words.

For example, the section on humility begins with Rabi 'a's saying: "I ask God's forgiveness for my lack of truthfulness in saying, 'I ask God's forgiveness.'" Similarly, the reader may reflect at length on the few words from Rabi 'a at the beginning of the section on sincerity and truthfulness: "Asking for mercy with the tongue is the business of liars." The section on patience begins with the seemingly cryptic saying "If Patience were a man, he would be generous." The discussion of patience that follows shows vividly how Rabi 'a was "generous" in her practice of patience:

*We paid a sick call on Rabi'a. We couldn't speak for awe of her. We said to Sufyan, "Say something." He said, "O Rabi'a, pray, so the Real Most High will ease your pain." Rabi'a said, "O Sufyan, don't you know that the Real Most High has willed my pain?" He said, "Yes." She said, "You know this and still you tell me to request what is at odds with His Will. It is not proper to be at odds with the Friend."*

Each chapter is rich with powerful sayings related from Rabi 'a. In Chapter 4's discussion of repentance, we find:

*A man said to Rabi'a, "I have committed many sins and acts of disobedience. If I decide to turn to God [i.e. repent], would He turn to me?" She answered, "No. Only if He were to turn to you, then you would be able to turn to Him."*

The author comments,

*When Rabi'a delves into the essence of repentance, with her profound words she highlights that our repentance unfolds within the divine embrace. Tawba [the Arabic word here translated as "repentance"] puts more emphasis on the positive transformation in attitude and behavior prompted by regret than on backward-looking contrition for something done or left undone. Tawba is a positive impulse that causes one to return to God.*

The next chapter, explaining Rabi 'a's teachings on divine unity, relates a story from 'Attar about a meeting with Rabi 'a:

*They said, "Do you love the presence of Majesty [God]?" She said, "I do." They said, "Do you hate Satan?" She said, "Out of love of the compassionate, I have no occasion for hatred toward Satan.... Love of the Real has so pervaded me that there is no place in my heart for the love or hatred of another."*



Rabi 'a's spiritual message – so consistently positive, hopeful, and encouraging, offered from her standpoint of highest spiritual attainment – will inspire all spiritual seekers on the path to God.

*Salih al-Murri said in her presence, "He who persists in knocking at the door will have it opened for him." "The door is already open," she replied. "But the question is: who wishes to enter it?"*



*We are all lonely in this world, even in the midst of friends and the pomp and show of the world. Only we do not realize it. When we meet with failures and disappointments, then we realize our loneliness. I think the sooner we realize it the better, for then we would seek some other and better support. Worldly relations and friendships are temporary and leave us moaning and mourning. But if we turn within, and seek solace and comfort and support within, we shall find that we can be really happy. The Master within and the Shabd are incontestable Realities. They guide and protect you here and make you happy and guide you after death too – till you reach your Home....*

*This does not mean that one should become a hermit or a recluse. Rather, while living in the world and meeting our social and other obligations we should find time regularly for bhajan and simran and leave the rest to him. This is the way to reconcile ourselves with fate and feel happy while still in the ups and downs of life. Faith in the Satguru, however, is essential. Then in moments of difficulty or despair, we turn automatically to the Satguru.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*



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