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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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All Things Were Made by Him

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 1:1, 3-4

These moving and meaningful statements made by Saint John in describing the Divine Word of God are among the best known in the entire New Testament. But it is safe to say that their true meaning is one of the least known of all facts in the entire teachings of the Bible.

Should you ask any representative group of Western Christians what Saint John meant by the Word that was with God and was God, you would receive in all probability a diversity of answers....

To the spiritual Masters, of both the past and the present, however, the Word referred to in this passage ... is not a spoken or written word or teaching. It is something entirely different.

What, then, is the Divine Word?

It is a power, the omnipresent and omnipotent creative and sustaining spiritual power of the Supreme Lord God. Emanating from the Creator in the form of a current or wave of spiritual vibrations of immeasurably powerful intensity, it flows outwards without ceasing to permeate and penetrate all worlds and all created things and beings.

All life and energy in the universe come from the Divine Word. It is a power that is mightier than any known on earth, for it is the power behind all other powers. All other powers are finite, but this power is infinite. It is the one basic power in the universe. It shows itself in many apparently different forms of energy; but trace them back to their original source and they are all found to be fundamentally one – the dynamic power of God. It dwells hidden, but supremely active, at the back of all other energy.

The Word is the incalculable power that controls the movements of the suns and planets in their orbits. It is the tremendous power that binds together the particles in the nucleus of the atom – the greatest force as yet discovered by scientists of today. In it abides all the energy of the universe, either latent or dynamic. It requires only the proper conditions to express

itself as dynamic force or, as some of the eastern masters have called it, God in action. It has many forms of expression, most of which are as yet unknown to the scientists of today.

At this point it should be noted that this great power, the Divine Word of God, is the basic factor in the Yoga or spiritual science of the Masters. It is the very foundation of all true Masters' teachings, and the principal factor that distinguishes their method of spiritual development from all others. It is the one fact by which a real Master may be known, for no one is or can be a genuine Master unless he teaches and practises the Divine Word.

Like electricity in the air, the Word or Holy Spirit of God is everywhere present. It permeates the universe and is immanent in every individual and in every other created thing. Its omnipresence helps to explain the omnipresence of God.

In recent years the scientists have found that energy exists everywhere, and is present in every atom of matter throughout the universe. Einstein showed that matter and energy are actually only different forms of the same thing. Scientists no longer talk about matter and energy separately. They are identical, and this is so because all matter is built up of atoms that contain the boundless energy of God. Everything that exists in the material world is energy, electric vibration in one or another form. Even the very stones and rocks are interpenetrated by the God-life of their atoms. So tremendous is this power that according to the scientists, enough of it is locked up in a teaspoonful of water to raise a load of five million tons from sea level to the top of Mount Everest...

This is true of our physical bodies, as well as of the air, and all the material objects that surround us, and because of this we are with and within God every moment of our lives. He is not far away. Wherever else He may be, He is always here, with and within each of us. God is all in all and no one can be apart from God. There is no separation from Him at any time.

The life of all

The Word is also our own life-force, for all life comes from it. It is the very essence and being of all things, ourselves included, the life of all that lives. There is not a living creature in all the material worlds that does not derive

its life and energy from this life current. For God is life, intelligent life-force, and without Him, nothing could live for a single moment, or even exist... Thus the love and life and power of God which brought the universe into being is our own real life, the inner spiritual energy that sustains the outer form. This current of divine life-force flows continuously into every electron in every atom of every person's body. It flows through the human nervous system as a current of light, which is imperceptible to the physical eyes because of its high rate of vibration. It is the Word or Holy Spirit which really gives life to our bodies and sustains them. Without its invisible presence our bodies and those of all living creatures would immediately stop functioning and become inert pieces of matter.

The Supreme Being is the beating of our hearts, and the blood that pulses through our veins. He is our breathing, and the air we breathe. Thus God dwells within us and is our very life. He is so near that he hears our feeblest whisper, aye, even before we speak.

We are as close to God as we ever shall be. All that is needed is to know this by experiment and experience. And this is made abundantly possible for all who follow the path of the Masters.

Yoga and the Bible



A Letter

Dear Master,

That day will forever remain etched in the heart and mind of this disciple. It was the day you asked a group of us a question that no one could ever imagine. “If you had only one wish, what would it be?”

At first thought it appeared to be an easy question to answer. Going around the room, it was now time to submit a reply. But one circle around the group was surely not enough time for a conclusive debate with the mind to come up with an appropriate answer. And then, after stating what my friendly foe made me believe was suitable enough, it turns out that it wasn't after all.

Doesn't this always happen? Don't we all look back and admit deep within that we could have done a better job, given it our all, and only wished to get another opportunity to undo what has just been done? But then again, as we are often reminded: If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

Perhaps it's a question of self-reflection, for the journey through time is walked alone – taking that plunge into the book of life and accepting it as we experience it. Unfortunately, this seems to be the most difficult part of life: acceptance.

Acceptance – observing our life as the Lord's will, hukum, call it what you may. This is a beautiful art that can only be learned through you. For the Master is the epitome of accepting all that has come his way even though he has the power to change course at will. Yet, despite being in touch with the divine supreme power, he chooses not to. Is this a royal bluff played eloquently by the bluff master? Maybe. Or is it an intentional move by the immortal soul within the mortal coil?

It's anybody's guess. But it feels as though the Master chooses to accept and walk along his life path, for he is the living example of a perfect disciple in the reflection of a true master.

There is much to learn, much to say, but a lot more to digest. To have the courage to fathom instructions without question, doubt or

application of the mind is indeed a challenging task – one that can only be achieved through implicit faith and belief in him.

At that level of faith, happiness is found in the smallest, simplest and most innocent things. If only we could absorb and digest all the grace showered on us and do as we are taught, perhaps life would not be as complicated as we make it, and we would be content. At that stage of tranquillity, a reality will dawn on us, awakening us to the one truth that only he is.

Thank you, Master, for granting me that one wish.

May we always accept and learn to live in the Lord's will.



You are the father of the world,
Of the moving and the unmoving,
You are the object of the world's worship,
And its venerable guru.
None in the three worlds is equal to you;
How could there be anyone greater than you,
Of incomparable greatness?
Therefore, bowing down and prostrating
My body before you,
I seek your forgiveness, O adorable Lord.
You, O God, may you bear with me
As a father to his son,
Or as a true friend to his friend
Or as a lover to his beloved.

Spiritual Guide Vol. 1



Consciousness, Awareness and Stillness

Still your inner vision

*and fix your attention on the door of the inner eye
that opens to the path leading within.*

Break through the inner barrier ...

liquidate your karmas and soar to higher regions.

Radha Soami says this for you to hear, friend,

so that you can tread this path with understanding.

Sar Bachan Poetry

To realize the transcendent reality beyond the physical realm, Soami Ji Maharaj encourages us to quieten the mental dialogue inside our heads, and focus instead on the “door of the inner eye.” Also known as the third eye or eye centre, this door is the seat of the soul and the gateway to a higher level of consciousness. Trying to physically locate the eye centre either by inverting our eyes or searching for a specific point in the darkness is counterproductive. As noted in the book *Living Meditation*, “If we are thinking of the eye centre, it means we cannot be in it. If we are in the centre, we will not be thinking of it.” Likewise, Maharaj Charan Singh said that all we need to do to uncover the “pivotal point that holds the mystery of life” is close our eyes and focus inward. In *Die to Live*, he added:

When you close your eyes, you are there where you should be. Being there, do simran, concentrate. When you close your eyes, you are nowhere outside.

The last part of Maharaj Charan Singh’s explanation, where he says “unless your mind is scattered somewhere outside,” is noteworthy because it highlights the difference between being consciously aware of being at the eye centre and merely closing our eyes. The book, *The Untethered Soul*, explains the key to understanding the distinction:

The essence of consciousness is awareness, and awareness has the ability to become more aware of one thing and less aware of something else.

The essence of consciousness is awareness, for without consciousness, there is no awareness. Moreover, in the same way that we can use a flashlight to shine light in a single corner of the room, our consciousness can select where to direct its focus. The downside is that currently, it is engrossed in our thoughts, emotions and sensory inputs to such an extent that we have come to identify with these experiences, losing all awareness of our real self – our soul. It's like becoming so captivated by the object we're illuminating that we forget we're the one holding the flashlight, or being so immersed in a book, we lose track of our surroundings and forget we're the one reading.

The aim of meditation is to shift the focus of our consciousness away from the body's nine sensory portals and collect it at the eye centre. As we become adept at this and disassociate from our mental, emotional and physical experiences, we become aware of our real nature: Shabd. The key to this spiritual awakening lies in making our mind motionless. All mystics emphasize that spiritual progress is wholly dependent on stilling the mind. Maharaj Sawan Singh explains:

The secret of success lies in making the mind motionless. The treasure that you are seeking will be yours when the mind is motionless.... The extent to which you render it motionless, you are nearer to the treasure – Nam.

Spiritual Gems

Making the mind motionless is of utmost importance, as our thoughts obstruct our ability to focus. Only by calming the whirlwind of our thoughts will our focus naturally rise to the eye centre. The importance of making a concerted effort to concentrate is aptly illustrated in the following parable.

One day, a Zen master wanted to demonstrate a new archery technique to his students. He asked them to blindfold him, and then he released his arrow. When he opened his eyes, he noticed the target was untouched, and his students looked embarrassed at their teacher's failure. The Zen master inquired, "What lesson do you believe I wanted to impart today?" They replied, "We thought you would teach us to aim without looking." The Zen master explained, "No, I aimed to show you that you must always focus on

the target to succeed. If you lose sight of it, you risk missing your goal.” The students exchanged impressed glances, reflecting on the valuable lesson.

He continued, “In life, like in archery, always be mindful about your goals. No matter how skilled you are, losing sight of your objective can lead to failure.”

The students nodded, now understanding the deeper meaning behind the master’s lesson. By deliberately missing the target, their master taught them that success is unlikely without focusing on one’s objective. By shooting blindfolded, he demonstrated that even the most skilled can falter without such focus.

While stilling the mind is a crucial step in realizing our true self, it is not the only one. Achieving physical stillness during meditation is just as vital as quieting the mind. In *Living Meditation*, the author cites an example used by the masters to highlight the importance of being still during meditation. He explains that if we pick up a glass of water and place it back on the table, the water continues moving even though the glass is still. This is referred to as ‘the ripple effect’. Similarly, even slight movements during meditation create ripples in the mind, disrupting any calmness achieved. However, by focusing on simran and remaining still, we come to realize that stilling the body helps calm the mind and vice versa. When both body and mind are at rest, we enjoy the peace arising from concentrated meditation.

Since meditation is an activity that involves both our mind and body, we are told to adopt a comfortable posture because, as advised in the book *Living Meditation*, “In no other position is the link between mind and body as clear as it is in our meditation posture.” To quiet the mind, the body must be still. While we are free to adopt any posture that prevents frequent shifts in position, sitting with an upright and straight back is crucial to boost concentration. Slouching not only strains the back but also leads to mental lethargy. For instance, when we feel lazy or depressed, we tend to hunch over. Sitting upright can counter these feelings, making it hard to indulge in self-pity. An upright posture fosters alertness and focus, enhancing the effectiveness and enjoyment of meditation.

Being still is the starting point of God-realization. Initially, it may seem like something we can do easily. However, we quickly learn that being

still requires practice. This is because our mind and body are in constant motion from the moment we are born. We live in a culture that has taught us to be comfortable with crowds and noise and uneasy with solitude and silence. On the rare occasions we find a spare moment to sit quietly, our addiction to thinking is such that we feel we should be doing something, or we're unable to stop ruminating over mundane and inconsequential matters. In the words of the 17th-century French mathematician Blaise Pascal: "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

Our mind is quick to react to discomfort, leading to restlessness. Both mind and body resist being controlled, but perseverance is vital as, with time, they will eventually yield. When this happens, we will connect with the Shabd, the eternal divine power that runs the universe and beyond. Connecting to the Shabd will eradicate our karmas and our consciousness will "soar to higher regions." This is Soami Ji Maharaj's promise and that of all true mystics.



Meditation is the only way to follow the path. And love will definitely push us and pull us towards our destination. That is very essential. But love without meditation is just emotion – sometimes you feel it, sometimes you don't.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives* Vol. III



Turn the Other Cheek

When someone lays thorns
On your path, lay flowers on his.
You will receive flowers in return
While he will be pierced with the barb of remorse.

Never persecute the lowly, meek and helpless
For their cry of agony devastates.
Remember, the breath of the lifeless bellows
Reduces steel to cinders.

O Kabir, never deceive others –
Better to be deceived yourself.
Being deceived will bring you happiness
As it lightens your karmic burden,
While sorrow will come from deceiving others.

O friend, give up egotism and gather
What you have come here to gather –
Devotion for the Lord.
The market-place for devotion will soon pass away.

Gather what you have come here to gather –
The treasure of Nam.
Forget hearsay – tales told by the intellect
That have bound you for myriad ages
To the cycle of coming and going.

O friend, keep your mind cool and composed
And you will make no enemies in the world.
Give up your ego, and all will show you
Kindness and goodness.

O Kabir, why are you afraid
When the Lord's hand of protection is upon you?
Have no fear – a thousand fierce dogs may snarl at you
But you are seated on an elephant.

Kabir: The Great Mystic



Grace: Love in Action

Mystics draw our attention to two certainties in life, which unfold without our consent and over which we exercise no influence: birth and death. We do not choose to be born but are ushered into existence by a force beyond our control. Nor can we escape death, irrespective of how hard we try to ignore it. We awaken every morning and, after tending to our daily responsibilities, retire each evening without reflecting upon our actions. As we are often asked, “We exist, but are we truly living?”

Somewhere in the recesses of our minds, we’re aware that one day we will no longer be alive. However, we don’t think about death, at least not in any meaningful way that would make a difference in how we live our lives. Attending the funerals of loved ones should serve as an opportunity to reflect on our mortality; instead, we return home with a sense of gratitude that we’re still alive. Unwisely, we give no thought to the day when death will come for us – we continue to think of it as something that happens to other people. Yet who can fathom the sheer multitude of people who have lived on earth since the beginning of time, only to depart? Among the 8.1 billion individuals alive today, we too, are destined to join the ranks of those who came before us. How often does this make us pause and think about what happened to them after death? Where did they go? What was the purpose of their existence? And what of our presence here? Where did we come from, and where is our path ultimately leading?

If we broaden our perspective, we realize that we are nothing more than fleeting specks in the history of time. If our contributions to knowledge, science, or the arts are deemed significant, our names may be immortalized in books, and passers-by might pause before our statue to honour our memory. But amid these tributes, where are we? Philosophers, poets, essayists, writers and novelists have penned countless words about the purpose of life, the existence of God, the essence of our being, and the nature of reality. Theories upon theories have been put forward and debated. Yet, for most people, the mystery of life and death remains unsolved, an enduring enigma seemingly without an answer.

To illustrate our plight let’s take the analogy of a blind man. He stands at the edge of a bustling road, his ears tuned to the numerous cars

speeding past, their horns adding to his sense of unrest. Paralyzed by fear, he dares not cross the road. Eventually, a compassionate passer-by notices his predicament and offers a helping hand. The stranger assures the blind man that he can safely guide him across to the other side, provided he trusts the stranger's care. Taking a leap of faith, the blind man does so and together they navigate the bustling road, reaching the other side safely.

Like the blind man's anxiety amid busy traffic, we often find ourselves unsure of the way forward. However, we are not alone. Mystics, like the compassionate passer-by, offer us a way out of our confusion and guide us towards enlightenment if we are willing to place our trust in them. In the process, they shatter our illusions, informing us that while we associate ourselves with the physical body, this is not our true self.

*Why are you confused and disheartened, dear soul!
Take it from me
the master will ferry you across the ocean.
... hold tight to the banner of Shabd.*

Soami Ji Maharaj, Sar Bachan Poetry

It is through divine grace that we can accept, at least in theory, that:

1. God is not a figment of the imagination, a mere idea or a concept. He exists.
2. God brought himself into existence and manifested a dynamic sound current, Shabd. It is through this great power that God created and sustains the universe. As the life force of the entire universe, whatever exists continues because of Shabd and is Shabd.
3. Like soundwaves, God in Shabd form pervades the entire creation; not even a microscopic speck is devoid of Shabd. Shabd is like a musical string connecting everyone and everything with God.
4. Of the eight million, four hundred thousand species of life, human beings alone have been blessed with the unique opportunity to realize the purpose of life: God-realization.
5. God-realization is possible only with the guidance of a true living master.

As we read about the lives of past saints, a common narrative unfolds – many encountered difficulties when seeking a true master. Regardless of the ease with which today's seekers find their spiritual path, the literature is unwavering on one crucial point: the greatest grace the Lord bestows on humanity is the opportunity to receive guidance from a true mystic. Without this grace, it would be impossible for anyone to contemplate on the Lord, let alone find the path back to him. Indeed, our spiritual journey is, above all else, characterized by grace. While the Lord's grace comes first (by marking souls as ready to return home), for disciples, it is their master's grace which is paramount.

It is impossible to convey all that a master does for a disciple, but the 1990's gospel ballad 'Movin on Up' by Primal Scream captures an aspect of the change a mystic induces among those under his charge:

*I was blind, now I can see
You made a believer out of me ...*

*I was lost, now I'm found
I believe in you, I got no bounds
I'm movin' on up now
Getting' out of the darkness*

My light shines on, my light shines on.

Whenever somebody helps us or gives us a gift, it's natural to want to reciprocate. As the Master has given us the greatest gift of all, that of initiation, surely we should thank him by doing everything he asks. The quintessence of spirituality is love, and the best way of expressing our love is by dedicating ourselves to the spiritual practice that the masters impart. Mystics reassure us that whatever effort we make, however paltry, is recognized. As the masters remind us, let us leave results to the Lord, for He is the ocean of love and, one day, this very love will engulf us. This is their promise.



The Soft-Spoken Sevadar

The grounds team had been enjoying a beautiful sunny morning clipping hedges, weeding, and tending to other tasks at our satsang centre. Suddenly, an unexpected thunderstorm hit prompting the sevadars to seek shelter in the garden tent. While waiting for the weather to clear, someone asked, “What’s the purpose of seva? With proper tools, the rain wouldn’t disrupt us, and we could complete our seva in half the time.” For a few moments the question hung in the air. Eventually, a soft-spoken sevadar replied, “The purpose of seva is not just the task at hand, but the transformation it brings. Working side by side, seva erases our ego, paving the way for Shabd practice. No fancy tools can achieve that.”

As everyone turned to see who spoke, the sevadar calmly continued, “The opportunity to serve the sangat helps us to realize our shared humanity and, by working together in harmony, we also come to recognize our unity as a spiritual family, with the Satguru as our father. With this awareness, we treat each other with greater respect, kindness, and patience, which brings us closer to our Master.”

A somewhat confused group member interjected, “It’s good that seva makes you feel that way, but being completely honest, sometimes I find it frustrating. After putting all my heart into doing something, it’s disheartening if I’m asked to redo it or someone else changes everything I’ve done.” Heads turned towards the soft-spoken sevadar; what would the response be?

“We do seva for our Master so whenever I’m asked to redo something, I’ve found it useful to think of it as yet another opportunity to serve him.”

Someone in the far corner said: “It seems to me that differences of opinion cause most of our problems. If our view is different from the majority, how can we accept this?”

The quiet sevadar offered a practical suggestion, “Above all, the Master wants seva to be harmonious. Keeping this simple principle at the forefront of our mind can make it easier to accept decisions that we may not personally agree with.”

After a moment of reflection, another sevadar inquired, “What about seva at home?” Once again, the grounds team turned to the soft-spoken

sevadar for a response. “Some of us confine ‘seva’ to tasks we undertake at our satsang centres. However, seva knows no bounds of location or time; it can be practised anywhere, anytime. It’s not about what we do, but the spirit in which we do it. I recall Hazur Maharaj Ji saying that every action has the potential to be ‘seva’ if it’s performed selflessly and in the name of our Master; this includes caring for our families. Here, *nishkāma* karma (selfless action) means looking after our loved ones without expecting anything in return. Achieving this, in some cases, is an extraordinary feat but that shouldn’t deter us from continually striving to be selfless.”

The sevadar added, “By itself, outward seva won’t lead to complete surrender; nor will it provide the bliss we seek from our inward seva. For that, we must attend to our meditation. When we serve our Master’s sangat we express our desire to please him, which in turn helps to purify us. There’s no doubt that physical seva is demanding, but mental seva is much more difficult.”

Another sevadar asked, “What do you mean by ‘physical’ and ‘mental’ seva? Are you saying that office sevadars’ service is harder than ours – because I totally disagree with that!”

“No, you misunderstand me,” replied the first sevadar, “Physical seva is when we use our bodies as instruments to serve the Master and his sangat. It can be a young person lifting heavy sacks of *atta* (flour), a senior sevadar who can barely walk folding bin liners, or someone working in an office. Using their individual strengths for seva, they are effectively offering their entire body to the Master. Service with the body is to subdue our self-importance, which is why we are all here, trying to do the best we can.”

The soft-spoken sevadar continued, “Mental seva involves making a conscious effort to control the five passions: lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. It’s more challenging than physical seva because it requires us to override our instinctual desires and our immediate reactions to situations. In groups like ours, we need to be particularly mindful of pride and anger. If we find ourselves in a supervisory role, we must ensure that this doesn’t lead us to feel superior; when giving feedback, it’s crucial to communicate in a way that doesn’t leave a sevadar feeling inadequate or frustrated. Likewise, when receiving feedback, we should do so without allowing it to bruise our ego. Even if we succeed in managing our impulses in a particular moment, there often remains a tension between what

our emotions crave and what our minds recognize as the right course of action. Reconciling these two forces is no easy task; only with a detached mind can we avoid lapsing into arguments.”

Someone jeered, “Is that why you don’t talk much?” Turning to face the speaker, the sevadar smiled kindly and replied, “Each time we control our impulses because we hope it will please the Master, we’re *living* Sant Mat; it’s no longer a theoretical philosophy but a way of life. This is why the Master’s most precious gift to us is simran. Its power is immeasurable; it turns our greatest weaknesses into our greatest strengths.”

A young sevadar asked, “I’m worried about my parents. They spend so much time doing seva at the satsang centre that when it comes to meditation, they say they’re too tired to do it. But isn’t meditation the most important seva of all?”

Once everyone had expressed their views, the soft-spoken sevadar explained, “As individuals, we each follow our own private path with our Master. Our aim is to work together and benefit from a harmonious atmosphere, like the one your parents help create. An agreeable atmosphere helps develop inner harmony, and we all share the responsibility for contributing to and maintaining harmony at our centres. Ultimately, the initial impression people form of the Master stems from the behaviour of his disciples. Therefore, by contributing to a friendly, welcoming and serene atmosphere at our satsang centres, we ensure that we represent our Master positively.”

“However, you’re right,” the soft-spoken sevadar said to the young man. “The highest form of seva is our meditation, and no other seva can replace this. The purpose of all other types of seva is simply to help detach the mind from the world so that we’re more focused during meditation. The Satguru is a channel for the Lord’s love for us, and we can reciprocate his love through all our various sevas.”

At that moment, the sun emerged, and the grounds team resumed seva. Since then, we haven’t heard much from the soft-spoken sevadar. However, we haven’t forgotten the insights that arose on that rainy day and the wonderful atmosphere in the garden tent, where we all bonded in our love for our Master.



Abducted by Aliens?

Following Sant Mat can sometimes feel alien since its values, goals and way of living often stand in stark contrast with those of mainstream society. As children, many of us followed our family traditions and attended church or visited the temple or mosque each week. Who could have predicted that one day we would encounter a saint?

When we reach adulthood and embark on a career, we consider our lives from every viewpoint. We may search for social connections and friendships, and our horizons widen as we look at who and what is around us. We are encouraged by social media, advertising and our peers to acquire experiences, possessions and money, to pursue professional achievements and status. All of this, however, is created by the mind. It's an illusion. We don't bother to consider our mortality; we live for things in this world. The mind – as has always been the case – distracts us, misleads and tempts us. As recorded in the Adi Granth, Guru Nanak stated:

*Running about after worldly affairs,
You have become bound to the creation;
You have not realized the Truth.
You fool, you are a slave of the mind:
You ignore that you are subject
To life and death.*

Some of us, however, aren't so caught up in the worldly glitter, though we don't know why. Perhaps we feel sidelined, a little different and somewhat restless. We might have started to consider how we live our lives or thought about the prospect of death. As Goswami Tulsidas says, "Every being in the creation is in pain and distress." We don't necessarily understand why this world is one of pleasure and pain or, as many religions have described it, a vale of tears. We see things this way because our material life lacks spiritual meaning and purpose.

Then, one day, our universe seems to shift on its axis. We find ourselves drawn to something or someone, and our spiritual journey begins. There may have been subtle changes already, such as giving up alcohol for Dry January, reducing meat consumption for environmental reasons,

or showing more kindness in the face of societal unrest. But it's when we encounter a true saint that a more profound transformation begins. This is an otherworldly, 'outer space' moment. Soami Ji Maharaj captures this beautifully:

*When one meets a master who knows
The secret of the Shabd,
He implants the pain of longing
In the disciple; the soul
Starts listening to the Shabd
And the mind begins to come
Under control.*

So, we encounter no aliens, simply the love of a true master. Inspired by him, we agree to abide by the foundational principles of Sant Mat: adopting a lacto-vegetarian diet, abstaining from alcohol and mind-altering drugs, and living a life of the highest moral and ethical standards. Then, at the time of initiation, we promise to meditate for a minimum of two and a half hours a day for the remainder of our lives. Our Master offers us certainty, a way home to the peace and bliss our soul yearns for. In *Sar Bachan Poetry*, Soami Ji Maharaj says:

*He who gives the message of Shabd
Is the true Guru;
For Shabd is the real truth.
He who practises Shabd
Is the perfect Guru,
Be thou as dust beneath his feet;
Look not for any other marks,
Care not for any other qualities.
Seek instruction into the secret of Shabd
From such a master
And practise it
With wholehearted devotion.*



Discipline

Discipline involves training oneself to adhere to a specific code of conduct, often requiring dedication and self-control to achieve a particular goal. Spiritual seekers following Sant Mat commit to upholding four vows made at the time of their initiation.

Three foundational vows

The first vow involves adopting a lacto-vegetarian diet. It entails abstaining from meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and animal products like gelatine.

Lacto-vegetarianism aligns with a fundamental religious principle that emphasizes the sanctity of life. For example, the New Testament of the Bible asserts “Thou shalt not kill” as a core commandment. Likewise, Hinduism and Buddhism prioritize nonviolence as a cornerstone of ethical living. All major religions teach against causing pain and suffering to others. But why should our compassion be limited to humans when scientists have shown that animals are sentient beings and so experience pain? What right do we have to take their lives?

Maintaining a lacto-vegetarian diet requires discipline and mindfulness. It involves carefully checking our food to ensure it does not include animal derivatives; for example, we may need to check that cheeses are made with vegetarian rennet or that cakes are eggless. By embracing this discipline, we cultivate a deeper awareness of the impact of our dietary decisions. In this way, our diet is not a restriction but a celebration of intentional living.

The second vow involves abstaining from tobacco and all mind-altering substances, including marijuana – even for medicinal purposes. The essence of meditation lies in cultivating a focused mind, and consuming substances that alter our mental state undermines this objective. Additionally, all drugs – whether mind-altering or not – carry the risk of addiction. What may begin as recreational use can swiftly spiral into dependency. When an individual becomes preoccupied with satisfying cravings for substances like cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, ketamine, LSD, ecstasy and others, they find themselves enslaved to the whims of their desires. This not only erodes self-control, but also severely hinders their ability to achieve mental clarity.

By committing to a drug-free lifestyle, we encourage the focused awareness that is essential for our spiritual development.

A disciple cannot simultaneously serve the Lord and succumb to the whims of the mind and the senses. When we follow the mind, we become undisciplined. The third vow calls for leading a pure, moral life while fulfilling our worldly duties. It encompasses honesty in the way we earn our living, in relationships and all interactions. We must account for every action and every breath we take.

In *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh emphasizes the significance of living honestly and ethically, urging individuals to rely solely on income earned through their labour and to avoid exploiting others. He explains that the Lord provides each person with what they need. Resorting to deceitful means for acquiring wealth or status leads to negative karmic consequences, trapping individuals in the cycle of birth and death. His teaching highlights that ethical living aligns with divine will and is crucial for the liberation of one's soul. Meditation cannot offset or compensate for dishonesty; our karmic debts must be settled on the material plane. Therefore, he concludes:

Apart from your rightful earnings, you are never to use what belongs to others. This is the first step on the spiritual ladder. Even if you are the king of the whole world, you are still to eat only the rightful fruit of your own labour.

Each spiritual seeker must adhere to the first three vows for at least a year before seeking initiation and practising the fourth: two and a half hours of meditation daily. The *Seekers' Guide* emphasizes the seriousness of these commitments, which represent profound internal commitments, transcending verbal promises:

These four vows, taken at the time of initiation, are the most serious commitments you will ever make. They are an internal commitment and not a verbal or outward promise.

The fourth vow: practising meditation

The purpose of meditation is to connect with or become conscious of the Shabd, the sound current within us. To achieve this, spiritual seekers are taught two key practices: simran and bhajan. Simran involves repeating

five holy names, which the author of *Message Divine* describes as “meditation on the object of one’s worship and for identification of oneself with this object.” Simran prepares one for bhajan, attuning oneself to hear the sound current.

Becoming aware of the sound current requires reversing our outward-directed attention inwards and focusing it at the eye centre. Yet, one of our toughest challenges is maintaining an unwavering focus on a single activity. Unconvinced? Try this concentration test: spend the next few minutes reading this article without letting your mind wander. Can you ignore the alerts from your phone or any other sounds? Can you stop thinking about the errands you must run or the tasks waiting for you?

All of us will fail the concentration test because, historically, our attention has been drawn outward through our senses, especially the mouth, eyes, and ears. Speaking involves us in worldly matters while our eyes and ears absorb and imprint in our minds a constant stream of external images and narratives. This is why saints emphasize repetition: it shifts our attention from the external to the inner realm. However, even as we attempt to focus inward, memories of worldly events and experiences resurface, and we soon realize that images of family, friends, hopes and aspirations are virtually indelibly imprinted in our minds. Since these recurring impressions hinder our focus, eliminating them is our first step.

One way we could develop our ability to concentrate during meditation is to practise undertaking worldly activities with a single-minded focus. The more we concentrate on a single activity with intention (instead of being distracted), the further we progress on our spiritual journey. Whether working, listening to music or engaging in other activities, dedicating our attention to one task at a time significantly enhances our capacity for focus and concentration. By channelling our energies into singular actions, we train our minds to cultivate the habit of concentration and create a deeper connection to the present moment.

By immersing ourselves fully in each activity and developing our concentration muscles, our daily routines can indirectly support our spiritual growth. However, as Maharaj Charan Singh states in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, simran alone has the power to counteract the mind’s natural tendency to think:

Be 100 percent in simran, because the mind is in the habit of projecting many things at one time. We do simran and we also start thinking about other things, so that means the mind is not 100 percent in simran. By 100 percent I mean that we should do only simran and nothing else. Nothing in the whole world exists except for the simran.

Engaging in simran during moments that do not demand concentration further supports our spiritual development. Ideally, this practice should become second nature, much like the instinctive act of breathing. Yet, repeating simran constantly is far from easy; it requires a continuous struggle against the distractions of the mind and a steadfast commitment to choose to remember the Master in every hour, every minute, and with every breath.

Without the grace of the master, dedicating just ten per cent of our day to meditation would be insufficient to address the vast load of karma accumulated over the billions of years our souls have been residing in the material realm. The precious gift of human life bestowed upon us is due entirely to divine grace; there is nothing we have done to deserve it. Adhering to the four vows is the best way to express our gratitude to the Lord.

Each time we sit in meditation, we are given an invaluable opportunity for focused communion with our master. Let us show that we love him deeply by spending as much time as possible with him inside, for he is always devoted to loving us. In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh poignantly stated:

Our relationship with the master is that of love and devotion, of meditation. It is not any worldly relationship; it's only a spiritual relationship. And the more we are filled with love and devotion for the master, the nearer we feel to him. The master is always near to us; it is we who are away from the master. The more we are filled with love and devotion for the master, the nearer we feel to him and the more we feel that he belongs to us and we belong to him.



Truth in a Nutshell

The Choice

Which do you desire,
wine or water?
Because you cannot have
both in the same cask.
In fact, it is difficult to enjoy wine from
a cask not entirely
free of its previous
liquid – which is why
pouring the water out
is necessary before you
should fill it with wine.
It's the same for you:
pour out what distracts
you, and make room
for the single love
that alone fulfils.

Meister Eckhart's Book of Darkness and Light

I saw an ant carrying a grain of rice
And then she spied a lentil along the way.
She was puzzled how to carry both.
Kabir says she cannot –
She must take one and leave the other.
A devotee must choose between the Lord and the world...

Only that country is peaceful
Which knows one ruler, not many.
I have never seen happiness
In a kingdom where two hold authority
Nor in a person whose mind is divided.

Kabir, The Great Mystic



The Boat of Nam

Kabir Sahib was a 15th-century Indian mystic known for using poetry to convey his teachings. Challenging the belief that rituals, ceremonies, and idol worship are effective methods of spirituality, Kabir Sahib taught the timeless practice of Shabd (the divine sound or Word) as the path of God-realization, emphasizing the importance of a living master on this journey.

Kabir Sahib's poetry is replete with powerful imagery. Common motifs include depicting life as a sea or an ocean, and a true, living master as the captain or oarsman of the only vessel capable of spiritual salvation: the ship of Nam. This metaphor of the ship of Nam symbolizes the spiritual journey, with Nam serving as the means to navigate the challenges of life and reach the shore of spiritual bliss:

*In the world's deadly ocean
Surge waves of desire and avarice,
The billows of pride and anger
Make the waters turbulent.
The sharks of ego and envy
Lie in wait to prey on you;
Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain
Are its ever-changing shores.*

Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name

Kabir Sahib's metaphorical "deadly ocean" represents life as a challenging sea journey. The surging "waves of desire and avarice" symbolize the strength of our attachment to material possessions and worldly relationships. Alone and adrift in this turbulent sea, the "billows of pride and anger" rise dramatically, creating storms devastating our peace of mind. These powerful emotions obscure our judgment and lead to conflicts with others, making life's waters even more difficult to navigate. The storm of pride inflates our ego, blinding us to our limitations and fostering arrogance. Meanwhile, the thunderstorm unleashed by anger creates misery and harm, affecting ourselves and those around us. Alongside the dangers posed by ocean waves and stormy weather, prowling beneath the sea's surface are the

“sharks of ego and envy.” These represent hidden threats of allowing one’s ego to dominate our actions and jealousy to erode our sense of contentment.

In the vast expanse of Kabir Sahib’s metaphorical deadly ocean, what if a passing ship took pity on us and helped us to the shore? Would we find safety there? The last two lines of the verse above suggest not. Mirroring the dual nature of existence, the ocean’s shoreline is ever-changing, where joy is counterbalanced with sorrow. The relentless cycle of pleasure and pain is elaborated upon in a different poem by Kabir Sahib:

*People drown or stay moored
To this shore of misery and pain –
They keep burning in the world’s deadly fires,
No one comes to their rescue.
They do nothing to save themselves;...
[but] Burn in their own blazing passions,
Like moths in the flame.*

Kabir: The Weaver of God’s Name

The term “moored” suggests being anchored or tied down, indicating that human beings are not just temporarily experiencing pain but are permanently bound to a “shore of misery and pain.” This sense of desolation is further intensified by the imagery of “burning in the world’s deadly fires.” Here, the metaphor highlights how people are consumed by their desires and cravings, leading to a continuous cycle of suffering and ignorance. These desires trap individuals in a relentless pursuit to satisfy ever-growing wants, closing their eyes to what is truly beneficial or harmful. This metaphorical fire keeps them agitated and restless, preventing them from reaching a state of contentment.

Kabir Sahib’s analogy of “moths in the flame” further illustrates this point. He suggests that humans, like moths drawn to light, surrender to their “blazing passions.” Initially alluring, these passions ultimately lead to self-destruction in the same way that flames consume moths. Consequently, human beings remain stuck in the endless cycle of birth and rebirth, unable to escape the illusions and attachments of the material world.

The stark lines “No one comes to their rescue” and “They do nothing to save themselves” highlight the tragedy of the human condition. The former

indicates that despite having a loving family and good friends, we ultimately endure our suffering alone. The latter emphasizes that until we act upon the guidance of an “adept oarsman,” a true master, we remain the cause of our own pain, suffering, and imprisonment in the material realm.

In several poems, Kabir Sahib employs the metaphor of a boat or ship to illustrate how the Lord’s name serves as a vessel for spiritual salvation. The “boat” (or ship) represents the spiritual practice of Nam, which offers one both a refuge from the disappointments and challenges of life but, more significantly, carries us across the turbulent ocean of the material world. In *The Ship of Nam*, for example, Kabir Sahib wrote:

*My gracious Lord in his mercy
Raised the ship of Nam,
And its command He entrusted
To the saints.*

*Nam is the destroyer of all pain,
The adornment of the entire creation;
The source of all love and devotion,
It is the haven of peace and bliss.
The Lord himself has made this ship,
And it is called the Lord’s Name.*

*Those who hold onto the ship firmly,
Cross over to the shore of bliss.*

Kabir: The Weaver of God’s Name

Kabir Sahib emphasizes that the spiritual pathway of Nam (the divine name) has been established through the Lord’s grace. This imagery suggests that the path to liberation is divinely guided. The ship, crafted by the Lord, signifies its trustworthiness and highlights that spiritual salvation is attainable through the divine name. Nam is portrayed as a powerful force that alleviates suffering and is the source of life. It is described as a destroyer of pain, suggesting that remembrance of the divine name can alleviate misery and bring solace. It is the fountainhead of love and devotion, providing peace and joy to those who embrace it sincerely.

The journey across this metaphorical ocean is not one we can undertake alone; it demands the insightful guidance of a living, enlightened master who comprehends the intricacies of the human condition and is adept at navigating life's perilous ocean. True mystics are entrusted by the divine to lead others. They act as navigators, aiding devotees in traversing the ocean of worldly existence toward spiritual enlightenment. As depicted in Kabir Sahib's poetry, only a true master, likened to an adept oarsman, possesses the wisdom to steer disciples safely toward the shores of spiritual fulfilment. Without such protection, the treacherous ocean waves threaten to overwhelm us, dragging us to the bottom of the sea and disconnecting us from our humanity.

Kabir Sahib concludes the poem by emphasizing that the soul's liberation is attainable when a practitioner's life centres on love and devotion to the Master. He urges individuals to connect with the Shabd and awaken to their true selves. This timeless message inspires a life of faith, love, and unwavering commitment to the divine, a sentiment echoed nearly five hundred years later by Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Discourses* Vol. I:

It is only by meeting with masters who are themselves steeped in Nam-bhakti, and by following their directions, we can cross the ocean of phenomena, and tear away the veil that masks the reality and that we can break through the barrier that hides the Lord from our sight; and that we can transcend ourselves, and that we can transform ourselves, and merge in the Lord himself and become one with Him.



Embracing Death

Amid life's fleeting journey, death stands as an inevitable reality we all face, arriving without warning and sparing no one. It does not discriminate between young or old, rich or poor, powerful or powerless. No wealth or status can shield us from its reach. Even Alexander the Great, famed for creating one of the largest empires in ancient history, could not delay the moment of his death.

Legend has it that when Alexander the Great was returning to his homeland, he consulted astrologers about the circumstances surrounding his death. Their calculations indicated that his life was nearing its end. Caught between honesty and self-preservation, the astrologers crafted their response carefully: "O mighty king, you will not meet your end until the earth turns to iron and the sky transforms into gold."

Pondering this cryptic message, Alexander felt reassured. Such miracles, he mused, will take aeons; perhaps I am destined to live forever. With this comforting thought, he began his journey westward toward Persia. However, as Alexander navigated the Makran Desert, he was struck by a malaria attack. "I need to stop," he said to his chief minister.

The minister implored, "O sir, I beg you, ride just a few more miles; perhaps we may find a tree under whose shade you can rest." So, Alexander and his army pressed on across the barren expanse, but Alexander's condition deteriorated rapidly. Unable to ride further, Alexander dismounted and collapsed onto the scorching ground, gasping for breath.

Desperate to provide comfort, the minister removed his coat of iron chainmail and spread it on the sand as a resting place for the king, while holding his shield above Alexander's face to shelter him from the sun. As he lay on the ground, Alexander saw the shield, richly adorned with gold stripes and realized the truth of the astrologers' prediction: the earth beneath him was iron, and the sky above was gold.

Soon, the royal physicians arrived and assessed the king's condition. "Your majesty," they professed, "there is no use in deceiving you; you are lying on death's door."

“Is there no remedy at all?” Alexander asked, desperation tinging his voice. “I will give half my kingdom to anyone who can prolong my life just enough, so I may see my mother one last time.”

The physicians, bound by their duty to truth, responded, “Nay, sire, the fever is too severe. No medicine can save you now.” Turning to his minister, Alexander declared, “O faithful friend, announce that I will give all my conquests to anyone who can take me alive to my mother. I will live on alms if I must.”

“Your majesty,” the physicians said with grave finality, “not a single breath remains for you, and no one can prevent your passing now.”

At this, the mighty conqueror wept like a child and realized the fleeting nature of life.

Fear of death

Alexander the Great’s desire to see his mother one last time raises questions about his choices and priorities. His willingness to relinquish his kingdom and live humbly suggests that had he been conscious of his mortality before his final moments, he might have prioritized returning home over empire-building. Yet, believing he had ample time, Alexander continued expanding his territories until it was too late.

Like Alexander the Great, most of us ignore our mortality. Each passing day, week, month and year should serve as a reminder that the knock of death grows ever closer. Instead, we celebrate birthdays, conveniently forgetting that each one edges us closer to our funeral. The reason we ignore death is simple; we’re scared of it. We know nothing about what happens to our soul (and mind) when, at the time of death, they finally leave the physical body. We keep death shrouded in mystery.

Logic dictates that if we could experience dying before our actual death, we’d know what to expect and, therefore, overcome our fear. The idea of dying while living, not in metaphorical terms but the actual physical experience of what happens when we die, seems extraordinary, if not outrightly absurd. Yet true mystics have taught spiritual seekers the technique of dying while living since the beginning of time. These Shabd-realized guides, who navigate seamlessly between the physical world and spiritual realms, inform us that:

Death is not to be feared. It is only the name given to the phenomenon of the soul leaving the body and its entrance into finer regions. It is merely giving up the present garment, namely, the body. It does not mean annihilation. There is life after death, although we may not be able to see it.

Philosophy of the Masters, Vol. I

While the Great Master's words provide a modicum of reassurance, we will never wholly eradicate our fear of death unless we too perfect the art of dying by practising the meditation technique taught by our master. This practice, handed down by the mystics, offers a path to transcend our fear and find peace in the face of mortality.

Dying while living

At the time of initiation, mystics bestow five holy names. Their repetition enables spiritual seekers to concentrate the scattered rays of their soul's consciousness into a single focal point. By gathering its dispersed rays at the eye centre, the soul connects with the sound current and begins its ascent to higher spiritual realms. Mystics refer to this process as dying while living because it mirrors what happens during physical death. As explained in *A Spiritual Primer*:

When a person dies, the soul current begins to withdraw from the body, starting with the soles of the feet and ending with the top of the head. The whole body becomes numb, and when all of the soul current has collected at a point between the eyebrows, breathing stops and all bodily functions cease. At that moment, the soul leaves the body and the person dies.

While gathering one's attention at the eye centre parallels the experience of dying, substantive differences exist between the two processes. In meditation, the bond between the soul and the body remains intact, enabling the soul to experience death without ever leaving the body. Moreover, while physical death can often be a painful experience – particularly for those unfamiliar with it – the death encountered during meditation is profoundly blissful. A seeker who has mastered the art of withdrawing their consciousness to the eye centre perceives this state as true life; conversely, they consider themselves in a state of death when their attention descends below the eye centre.

By dedicating ourselves to the practice of dying while living, we demystify death, and it ceases to be a source of fear. Rumi urges us to embrace this practice, suggesting that if we could detach our souls from the confines of the body, we would ascend to an ever-blooming garden of peace and eternal life. As cited in the book, *Living Meditation*, Rumi states:

*What a blessing it would be
If you were one night to bring your soul out of the body,
And, leaving this tomb behind,
Ascend to the skies within.
If your soul were to vacate your body,
You would be saved from the sword of Death:
You would enter a Garden that knows no autumn.*



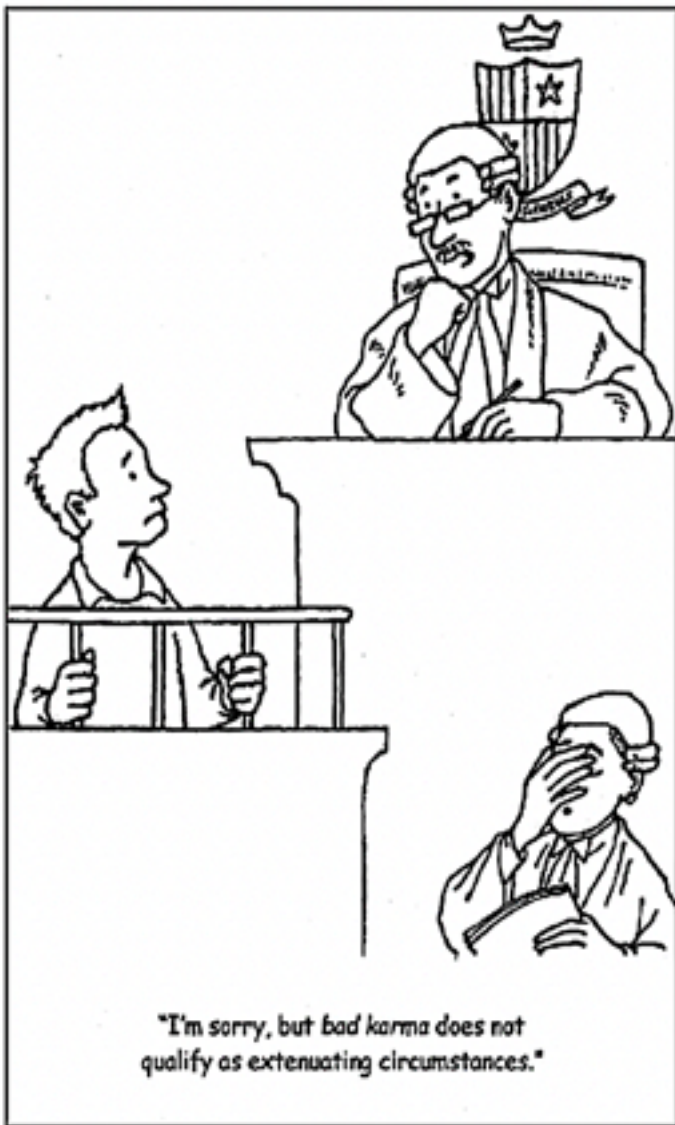
*Now face the consequences of all that you have done –
reap the harvest you have sown.
The true Lord imparts justice; he gives only what you deserve.
I am calling out; listen to me, one and all – pay attention!
Says Sukdev to Charandas: this creation is a field
in which the soul is like a ball, tossed from birth to birth.*

Sant Charandas



Food for Thought

Karma



Hold On Tight!

Our spiritual adventure is underway – we're on a journey of self-discovery and transformation; a journey to eternal liberation. However, along the way, we realize that the path is not as smooth as we envisaged, but marked by twists, turns, and moments of exhilaration.

The call to adventure

Our spiritual adventure arises from a profound call echoing within us, a longing for meaning and a yearning for connection. An insistent energy drives us to seek answers beyond the boundaries of the material world. Whatever form it takes, this pull encourages us to step out of our comfort zones and explore the astonishing possibilities that lie ahead. With a sense of curiosity, we muster the courage to take our first step onto the path of spirituality. It's thrilling and scary all at once. We stand at the edge of the unknown, unsure of what's coming next. Yet we feel drawn forward by some mysterious force. With a mix of nervousness and anticipation, we take a leap of faith, trusting that our Master will guide us through the twists and turns ahead.

Navigating the ups and downs

'Lifestyle' is a term that encompasses the choices we make, the habits we form, and the way we navigate our daily existence. Our routines, rituals and relationships reflect who we are and what we value. At the heart of spiritual transformation lies a conscious decision to embrace a lifestyle rooted in ethics and spiritual values. The spiritual path is a quest for self-discovery, aligning our actions with the goal of God-realization. Yet, like any great adventure, it is not without challenges, and we may find ourselves struggling with turbulent emotions.

Transitioning to a lacto-vegetarian diet isn't just about swapping burgers for broccoli; it's a radical shift in perspective, inviting us to see all living beings as equal. Giving up our favourite comfort foods can feel like bidding farewell to old friends. However, with every bite of leafy greens and each sip of lemonade, we nourish our bodies and minds. Our meals become a celebration of life and compassion.

Next is the social scene. We say goodbye to that glass of wine and hello to a clear mind and a happy heart. It's not always easy to resist letting loose, especially when family and friends raise their glasses in an illusion of celebration. But the real celebration begins when we are fully present and in tune with our inner selves.

And let's not forget that decisive showdown – battling our inner demons, those pesky habits and tendencies that hold us back from reaching our full potential. It may be the urge to tell a white lie or the temptation to take the easy way out and skip our meditation. We've all been there. The struggle against dishonesty, laziness, greed and pride is a battle with our minds. But our secret weapon is the teachings of a true living master. We turn to him when the going gets tough, finding strength and solace in the Sant Mat teachings. His guidance is a constant source of comfort and reassurance, helping us navigate the challenges of our spiritual journey.

The struggle with the mind is universal when it comes to lifestyle changes. With it comes the pull of old habits, fear of the unknown, and the discomfort of stepping outside of our comfort zones. There will be setbacks when we feel like we can't seem to keep it together. But we need to remember that struggle is part of our journey. By facing our fears, we grow, and our faith strengthens.

As in a thrilling rollercoaster ride, we experience exhilaration, fear, and moments when we want to hide and cry. Even so, we need to hold on tight, especially during those moments of weakness, knowing that with every effort we make, our Master is helping us to tame our pride and shed the layers of habit that hold us back, bringing us ever closer to self-realization.

Embracing the thrill of the ride

Mind is the biggest challenge – the Master of distraction – yet we cannot function without it. Until we still our thoughts, we are controlled by our wants and attachments. Just as a rollercoaster can leave us feeling dizzy and disoriented, our minds can also wander off track and make us lose focus on what matters.

Staying committed to the path is challenging, but we need to remain focused. What helps us stay focused? It is the teachings, the timeless wisdom handed down by the masters through the ages. We are not alone on this rollercoaster ride of life; our Master is alongside us, offering his grace and mercy. Our fellow seekers of truth are here with us, all working towards the same goal of God-realization. In their company, we find strength, support, and encouragement to persevere on the path. Surrounding ourselves with like-minded people, attending satsang, dedicating ourselves to seva, immersing ourselves in Sant Mat literature, and, most important, engaging in regular meditation practice help us stay grounded and navigate life with purpose, steadily moving towards the divine truth. The camaraderie we experience with our spiritual companions is a comforting reminder that we are not alone on this journey.

The final destination: union with the divine

The journey of spiritual awakening is not about seeking something external or finding God. It is the inward realization that he has been with us all along. This realization transforms our struggles into meaningful experiences, as he slowly opens our awareness within. Each obstacle we face will no longer be a hindrance but a stepping stone. Each step we take with faith, love and devotion brings us closer to this realization. Our struggles are not in vain; they are the very means through which we can experience and realize unity with the divine.

Just as a rollercoaster eventually returns to its starting point, so does the soul return to its eternal home in the loving arms of the Lord. In his presence, there is no more striving, no more seeking – only true inner peace, love and unity. The rollercoaster of spiritual transformation will end when we realize our unity with the source of all existence – the resounding, radiant light of divine love.



The Final Word

Embracing every task as ‘Satguru’s work’

With love and devotion, keep the inner faculties and the higher mind always attached to the Shabd-dhun, and remain content at whichever place he keeps you. All work is his work; remain happy wherever he keeps you, and take on whatever work you do as the Satguru’s work – do not keep your self in it. Instil it firmly in your mind – this idea should never leave the mind – that the body, mind, wealth, and the inner faculties, the eyes, mouth, nose, ears, hands, feet, all, everything, each and every article that exists in the world, belongs to the Satguru: “I do not exist.” Look upon everything you do as the Satguru’s work; do only that which is appropriate.

This advice, the directive I have written above, should never leave your mind at any time. Keep these words firmly in the mind while doing your work, and also during simran and while listening to the Shabd-dhun. You will then certainly receive the bliss of the Shabd-dhun. Always remember these three points: Do not feel elated even if you receive the kingship of fourteen realms, because it would be false and transitory – if you love false things, you will be deceived. If such a sovereignty is taken away, do not feel depressed, because he who gave it took it away. It belonged to him and it was unreal. However much respect or criticism someone may offer, neither be pleased with the respect and praise nor offended by the criticism. Always remain happy and content wherever the Lord is pleased to place you. When our attachments do not touch the mind, and the mind always remains in balance, then the boon of entering Sach Khand by way of the Shabd-dhun comes daily through the Satguru’s Word. Grace and mercy especially are upon you all the time. Keep listening to the Shabd-dhun every day with the inner faculties of surat and nirat.

Spiritual Letters



Book Review

NAM: Essence of Spirituality

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Nam: Essence of Spirituality is dedicated to exploring one topic only – Nam, also known as Shabd, Word, Logos, and so many other names. This book is an English translation of the Hindi book *Nam Sidhant*, first published in 1985. In the 1980s, the four authors were asked to write several essays each about Nam. The Publisher's Note describes the authors of the essays that make up this book as "scholars of spirituality" and explains:

The scholars took different aspects of the power that is Nam and held it up to the light, gazed at it through different lenses, and saw its beauty refracted through many facets of its gem-like glory. Each essay, therefore, stands as its own contribution, and each can be read for information, for inspiration, for comfort, for solace, or perhaps just to help us remember again the power that created and sustains everything.

For this English translation, the order of the essays from the original 1985 book was changed, and the final chapter, "Shared History, Shared Experience," was significantly expanded.

Each of the essays makes an in-depth exploration of Nam from a particular angle. For example, among the essay topics are "The Creative Power of the Lord," "Nam That Can Be Heard," "Nam that Can Be Seen," "Searching for Nam," and "Nam and Dying While Living." Some of the later essays turn to questions of the role of religion in human spirituality and the differences between rituals, customs, and the practice of Nam. Although each essay can be read as an independent study of Nam, when put all together in this book, the essays form an inspiring narrative that encourages the reader to connect with this creative power.

All the essays explore their subject thoroughly, with each point supported by numerous quotes from saints and mystics. For example, in the essay "Nam: The Lord's Gift" the author says, "Nam cannot be obtained by our own effort; it can be obtained only by the Lord's grace." All happens by his command. Soami Ji goes so far as to say, "Without grace, no plans can materialize; only with grace can I comprehend the mystery."

The author stresses that Nam is God's greatest blessing because it is the means of merging with God. He shows convincingly how rare it is to receive this gift. As Soami Ji says, even the desire for Nam can only be had by "special grace":

Those blessed with the special grace of the Creator will be the only ones who want to drink this Nectar.

The author then shows that the only way to be blessed with this unique gift is through a living true master. Quoting from the Adi Granth, he writes, "My Guru is the dispenser of bliss, and he instils in me the Lord's Nam and is my refuge in the end." In the words of Paltu:

He who brings the divine Melody from the skies within is my master. He indeed is my master, and him alone shall I worship. He remains absorbed in the strains of the Word; such is his state.

Throughout the essays, the authors affirm that the seeker can hear Nam, the wondrous power of God. As Guru Nanak says, "The sweet, melodious, unstruck Sound Current resounds continuously in the home of the fearless Lord." Sufis have referred to it as the call from the skies, the imperial Sound, the Voice of the Lord, the blissful Melody, and the blissful Voice. By hearing this divine Sound, the mind turns away from the world.

The essays also show that Nam is seen as well by the seeker. Saints and mystics have extolled the glory of Nam as not just Sound but also Light. This divine light can only be perceived by the inner eye and with the guidance of the master. This light is constant, unchanging and illuminates the entire world. Kabir writes, "Oh my love, I have known the story of the sovereign Lord. Within us, the Lord's Light shines, but a rare one, by the Guru's guidance, becomes aware of it."

Most of the quotations from saints and mystics in the book come from the Adi Granth, Soami Ji, or the bhakti mystics of India. However, the authors also bring quotes from other spiritual traditions that corroborate these mystic teachings, using different words and images. For example, from the Christian tradition, where the human body is called the temple of the living God:

And then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelations 11:19

From the Buddhist tradition, the Lotus Sutra says of the Buddha:

His body was motionless and his mind had reached perfect tranquillity. And as soon as the Lord had entered upon his meditation, there fell a great rain of divine flowers ... And at that moment, there issued a ray of Light from within the point between the eyebrows of the Lord.

Saddharmapundrika, 1Prose

And from the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an says:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His Light may be compared to a niche that enshrines a lamp with a crystal of star-like brilliance. It is lit from a blessed olive tree neither eastern nor western. Its very oil would almost shine forth, though no fire touched it. Light upon Light; God guides to His Light whom He wills.

Qur'an 24:35

The final chapter, "Shared History, Shared Experience," further proves that "throughout history, saints and sages have given us the same message." It surveys how Nam is discussed in each cultural and religious context, beginning with the Vedas and then, in roughly chronological order, in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Jainism, Buddhism, the Greek philosophers, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, and finally, the mystic tradition of India.

The book's message is that the Almighty has devised a plan of return for all sincere seekers. It is for all to embrace. In *Sar Bachan*, Soami Ji writes:

I devised a step-by-step approach of Shabd practice by which you would reach your true home. Through the inner practice of Surat Shabd, hold on to the path of five Sounds. Climb the ladder of Shabd step by step, and reach Sach Khand, the region of Satnam.

All in all, Nam: Essence of Spirituality gives us uplifting insights into our inward journey. The waves of Light and Sound of Nam, Shabd, the Word, and the Logos permeate every particle of the creation. These waves emanate from the highest realm of absolute being. Attuning to them, seekers undertake their spiritual journey and return to their original home. Following the Sound and Light of Nam, they one day realize that ultimate truth of which we catch a whisper, a glimmer, from the words of Guru Ram Das:

*The Lord himself is the Shabd.
He himself is the awareness, attuned to its music.*



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