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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

# contents

- 2 This Day Is Dear to Me
- 4 Cleanse Your Heart
- 12 Soft Whisperings
- 14 Finding Our Treasure
- 20 Loneliness vs Solitude
- 25 The Importance of Seva
- 31 The Pain of Separation
- 32 The Master's Presence
- 37 The Good Old Days
- 39 Our Wonderful Life
- 44 The Storm
- 47 The Way out of the Jungle
- 48 Book Review

## **Spiritual Link**

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# This Day Is Dear to Me

*This day is dear to me above all other days,  
For today the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house;  
My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence.*

*My longings sing His name,  
and they are become lost in His great beauty:  
I wash His feet, and I look upon His Face;  
And I lay before Him as an offering my body, my mind,  
and all that I have.*

*What a day of gladness is that day in which my Beloved,  
who is my treasure, comes to my house!  
All evils fly from my heart when I see my Lord.  
'My love has touched Him;  
my heart is longing for the Name which is Truth.'  
Thus sings Kabir, the servant of all servants.*

*One Hundred Poems of Kabir  
Translated by Rabindranath Tagore*



# Cleanse Your Heart

The great saint Tulsi Sahib has counselled us: “Cleanse the chamber of your heart so your Beloved can enter.”

Tulsi Sahib urges us to empty our hearts of our desires and attachments – all our bad habits, everything we are carrying from the past, our expectations and worries for the future. We need to empty ourselves in order to feel the presence of our Master within us.

And just as we truly want to welcome the Lord into our hearts, he longs to be seated there also. Hazur Maharaj Ji commented that the Lord is the one who pulls us to him to love him. Someone once asked him:

*Maharaj Ji, it seems clear that the lover needs the Beloved. Does the Beloved have any need of the lover?*

*Yes [Hazur said] who gives that love to the lover? It is the Beloved who gives love to the lover. The lover thinks he loves the Beloved. But the pull in the lover's heart comes from the Beloved always. ... The Beloved must be needing that love.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

So he needs our love as much as we need his love. He is waiting for us patiently, to welcome him into our hearts. So let us prepare ourselves to receive him.

How can we do this? We have to live the Sant Mat way of life and control our minds through meditation. In this way we will rid our hearts of anything that drags us down, and make room for him to be seated there.

Hazur Maharaj Ji spoke about how we can live in the divine presence all the time – by training our minds to obey the Master, by living the Sant Mat way of life, attending satsang and doing seva. He always emphasized that service with body and mind were the best way to channelize the mind towards the ultimate service – meditation. Selfless service will allow us to keep our minds focused on him.

Hazur once said:

*Of course, the best service is bhajan, but there are other services also which are strong means leading to bhajan. To train the mind to live in the will of the Father is also a service. ...*

*We have to face situations at every step in this life, and at every step in this life we have to explain to our mind to accept whatever comes in our fate smilingly, cheerfully – why grumble? It's a constant training of the mind. This is also doing service, because that will help us in meditation. If we always feel perturbed with every little thing, then how can we concentrate, how can we meditate? If we make every little thing an issue the size of the Himalayas, then how can we concentrate? We have to forget; we have to forgive; we have to train our mind to take things easily, lightly, to laugh them away, to ignore them. This is all training the mind.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

So Hazur is telling us that by taking things lightly and going through life happily, accepting what comes to us as our destiny – that this in itself is training our minds, and this is the first step in controlling our mind.

Very often the Master gives us practical advice, hints on how to overcome our weaknesses and live in accordance with his teachings.

We have to take positive steps towards the Master at every moment. And our meditation will protect us. It will create a protective barrier against the distractions of the world.

Hazur spoke about why regularity in meditation is so important. He said:

*If you are tied to a strong chain, you can move only within a limited area. So if we are tied to our meditation every day, no matter how much we're involved in other things, we will always remain within the circle. ... So the chain of meditation should not be broken. Meditation must be attended to every day, and then no matter how much you involve yourself in other activities, you'll never be allowed to go astray at all.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Our life is like a fast-flowing river, and we are trying to swim against the current towards the opposite shore. If we don't put in the effort to control the mind and swim upstream, we will be dragged downstream – perhaps over violent waterfalls to the rocks below and certain death. It is a matter of life and death for us to control our minds. We don't know what our destiny holds. So we have to be prepared for any and all eventualities by having our minds focused on the Master and the Lord. We don't know when death will come, so we need to remember God at all times.

A story from a Jewish mystic in 18th century Europe presents a radical way of looking at this problem of controlling our mind:

*Once a disciple complained to his Master: "Master, I can understand why I am responsible for my actions, even for my words. But my thoughts? How can I be punished for my*

*thoughts when they enter my mind of their own accord? Can a person control his mind?"*

*His master listened quietly and responded: "Just go visit Rabbi Jacob, my devoted disciple who lives in a remote village in the distant mountains. Only he can answer your question." So the disciple made the trip in the dead of winter. After travelling for two weeks, he finally reached Jacob's village late at night. He could see a light shining in the window of Jacob's study, Jacob himself studying his holy books.*

*The traveller knocked, and continued knocking, but there was no response. He pounded on the door, but Jacob, just a few steps away, continued his studies, oblivious to his cries.*

*It was almost morning when Jacob rose from his seat, opened the door, and warmly greeted his visitor. He sat him by the fire and prepared a hot glass of tea. He then led his guest to the best room in the house to rest. For several days, Jacob attended to all his needs, and the visitor, a model guest, never mentioned his terrible experience on the night of his arrival. But after about a week, the traveller felt it was time to go home. Just before leaving, he posed his burning question. "Why," he asked, "should I be responsible for my thoughts, when I have no control over my mind?"*

*The rabbi replied simply: "Tell me, my friend, is a man any less a master of his own self than he is of his home? You see, I gave you my answer on the very night you arrived. In my home, I am the boss. Whomever I wish to admit – I allow in, when I'm ready to. Whomever I do not wish to admit – I do not permit to enter."*

So we need to ask ourselves: Are we the boss of our minds? Or do we just let any thought or desire enter freely, at any time? Why aren't

we as firm with our minds? When we sit in meditation, how hard do we really try to control our thoughts and keep our attention in simran, directing our mind towards our Master?

This story illustrates that we can indeed be the boss of our minds – if we choose to. We cannot blame outside conditions for our lack of mental discipline. It's a struggle, but we can't give up. When the mind drifts away, we should keep bringing it back to simran. And never give up. And it's not as if we're alone on this journey. The Master has made it very clear that if we take one step towards him, he will take a hundred steps towards us. But we need to take that one step. Then he's ready to help us – his grace will take us the rest of the way.

He said:

*You take that one step. We are more anxiously waiting for his hundred steps rather than our one step.*

*We are so tied down with the attachments of this creation that it becomes difficult for us to take even one step. ... So even our one step is a great step. Without his grace, we can never get out of this creation. Our one step is sufficient for him to pull us.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol . II*

Even our one step is sufficient for him to pull us.

The Master gives us so much encouragement. He's doing everything he can to help us along the way. Hazur said:

*When we try to follow the path, he gives us strength to follow the path. He strengthens our faith, he strengthens our love with the help of meditation and by our following that path. He is the one who's pulling us from within. We sometimes think that we worship him or that we are in love with him. Actually, he is in*

*love with us. But for that we would never be in love with him at all.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

And meditation will strengthen our love. It will give us the personal experience that can never be shaken. Personal experience creates depth in our faith, and that we can get only with meditation.

Of course, it is because we have faith in the physical form of the Master that we come on the path in the first place and make the effort to obey him. It is faith in the Master that will encourage and inspire us to do our meditation and eventually raise our consciousness to the level where we can see him in his true form as Shabd. We can look forward to the time when we will find the Lord seated in our hearts. We will become him.

On a practical everyday level, we have to live our lives with maturity – spiritual maturity, as Baba Ji has called it. Maturity means that despite all obstacles and challenges, we will continue with our meditation and stick to our values, our way of life. Our faith will allow us to accept the events of our life.

In one of his shabds, Soami Ji tells us to strengthen our faith in the Lord's will. He advises us:

*Put your faith in the Lord's will –  
not in your labour, not in your effort.  
Submit yourself to Radha Soami now,  
one day he will fulfill your heart's desire.*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*

Ultimately it is not our efforts which will see us home – it is his grace. We live in the illusion that we have control over our lives, even

over our meditation. We need to give up that illusion. We need to submit to the Beloved, our Master, and humbly do what he instructs, and then the Lord will enter the chamber of our heart.

The Master always emphasizes that everything we are to get, we will get through meditation. By listening to the Shabd, our mind becomes pure and we can develop a positive attitude. And he advises us to continue with our simran all the twenty-four hours of the day when we are not otherwise occupied. That is our act of love. Hazur once said so succinctly:

*For the lover, love is a twenty-four-hour sickness. He doesn't have a specific time to love, or to think about the Beloved. He is in love twenty-four hours, no matter what he's doing, where he is.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

Soami Ji gives us great words of comfort. Here are a few lines from another shabd:

*I shall myself help you put in the effort,  
I shall myself take you to your ultimate home. ...  
Have patience, keep the company of the Saints,  
and I shall purify you through my grace.*

*Sar Bachan Poetry*

What could be more encouraging for the struggling disciple? Here we are, embarking on the road to cleansing our heart so the Beloved can be seated there, and the Beloved himself is reassuring us that he himself will make the effort for us. We just need to take the first step. We need to keep him in our mind at all times. We have to live in His presence.

So let us not forget that the Lord has marked us, that the Master won't let us go astray. As Hazur Maharaj Ji often said, the Lord worships himself through us. This means that he is pulling us to him. He has planted the seed of love in us that makes us want to love him. In fact, we can't help loving him, as it is his love that is within us, that seeks to merge back into him. All we can feel is gratitude.



*With hands folded in supplication,  
To whom shall I surrender?  
Apart from you, is there anyone who will help me?  
You are the ocean of mercy,  
You are the friend of the humble and the poor  
And the redeemer of the world, O Lord!  
You are indeed the true ship, says Tuka,  
That will carry me across the ocean of existence.*

*Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion*

# Soft Whisperings

*Ever and ever my thoughts escape  
from the garden of living simran  
to frolic and flounder  
among the dead world's illusions.  
I sigh in frustration and despair.  
But, 'Just call it back,' you whisper softly.  
'Just call it back.'*

*Ever and ever the devious mind  
sows seeds of doubt  
and tries to convince me  
that my pathetic endeavours are a waste of time,  
chasing after a rainbow that does not exist.  
I writhe in an agony of indecision and anguish.  
But, 'Just be patient and don't give up,' you whisper softly.  
'Just be patient and don't give up.'*

*And ever and ever I find  
that the evil promptings of the mind,  
no matter how loud its clamourings,  
cannot drown out or overcome your soft whisperings  
in the knowingness of my heart.*

Our Master's soft whisperings – they have always been there. We may have done or said something and suddenly we were made aware of the fact that it was not wise, or perhaps not kind. We may have had good intentions to do something, but some thought cropped up that prevented us. We may become frustrated when we struggle, without success, to keep the mind still during meditation – but something

urges us to just keep trying. If we are receptive and listen with dedication, attention and concentration, the voice is there. It will warn, prescribe, advise and encourage.

We know when our actions are not those worthy of a disciple of a perfect Guru. We know when we can do better, when our efforts show room for improvement, when our reactions to things are stupid and unwise. That voice that keeps whispering to us tells us. It is the mind that may try to smother it, to come up with clever excuses and sage observations to justify any compromises we may make. It is the mind, the poet says, that sows seeds of doubt and tries to convince us that we will never succeed, and asks, 'Why keep on trying?' It is the mind that runs off from the living garden of our simran to frolic and flounder among the dead world's illusions. But although we may sway a bit, we do not break; we return and start afresh and do not give up. Nothing is as engaging, compelling and encouraging, as sweet and wonderful, as the soft whispering of our Master in our hearts.



*Those people who have come to the path, Master takes charge of them right from birth – he will never allow them to go so astray that he cannot pull them back to the path. You have seen a kite flyer flying a kite. He keeps loosening the string, but when he thinks the kite is going out of his control, he pulls it back. ... We become conscious that we are being taken care of only when we see the Master within – then we know that we are being helped, we are being taken care of.*

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

# Finding Our Treasure

In the Bible Jesus says:

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,  
where moth and rust doth corrupt,  
and where thieves break through and steal:  
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ...  
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*Matthew 6:19–21*

People have been talking about treasure since time immemorial. Treasure has wonderful connotations, and of course, it means different things to different people, but generally it refers to something precious and beautiful – perhaps with the ability to confer happiness or even power.

Sometimes treasure is intangible, such as the memories that we hold dear in our hearts; and our own personal treasure, like our family, is precious to us. We lavish not only time, money and love on our treasure, but also much of our attention and energy. We may eventually discover that our treasure is always hungry, demanding more and more attention, and that we must feed it constantly.

We often expect something back from our treasure, be it peace of mind, love, security or happiness, and we think that the more effort we put into it, the more we will receive in return. In this way it begins to gain control over us, assuming an ever more demanding and dominating role in our lives. This would be fine if it gave something back to us, something that lasted, something that was real and permanent, but the trouble with the treasures of the world is that they

don't. It seems to be a reality of life that worldly treasures, in one way or another, will always disappoint us.

It is a part of human nature to want treasure. We feel sure it exists – we just don't know where it is, or exactly what it is. But we know it's there and will bring peace, happiness and security when we find it.

These are therefore the questions we need to consider: Is there a treasure that will neither decay nor corrupt? Does such a thing exist, and, if so, where do we find it? Happily, the answer is: yes, there is a treasure that is real and permanent, that does not corrupt or decay. But, as one would expect with something so valuable, it is kept in a very safe place, and may not be easy to find without great effort.

There is a bank vault where every individual has a safety deposit box, and there is a bank manager waiting to give us the key to our own box. He is prepared to explain how to open the box, and show us how to enjoy and even grow the treasure that has already been set aside for us. The treasure of Nam, or God's holy word is to be found inside our own bodies at the eye centre, and the Master is the keeper of the key. The longing for this treasure is a feeling given to us by God himself, to propel us to search inside ourselves for his holy word.

Initially it may take many of us by surprise to discover, after years of searching in the world, that the treasure is to be found within ourselves – that all along we've been looking in the wrong direction. Even our bodies are an amazing treasure and gift, as it is only within the human body that the treasure can be found. Dadu says:

*So priceless is this birth, O brother,  
That in it, the Supreme Lord can be met.  
The human body is the door to salvation.*

*Dadu, The Compassionate Mystic*

This human body, whatever its outward appearance and condition, is the pinnacle of God's creation, as he has put the entire creation in this body in subtle form. Not only that, but he has put himself there as well. Maharaj Sawan Singh tells us in *Spiritual Gems*: "The Lord himself is within you."

It is not the body itself that is the actual treasure, so becoming preoccupied with adorning and pampering it is not the answer. It is the treasure of Nam that lies within us that we must consciously seek. If we truly want this treasure more than anything else, then we must make the search our number one priority. It might not be easy to turn away from our worldly treasure to seek the inner one, but the only way to find it is by turning away from the decoys and concentrating on the real. We can seek either spiritual wealth or material wealth. Both are on offer and the choice is ours. We must choose and then act upon the choice we make.

Shabd is the treasure within us. It is consciousness, the life and essence of every created thing, and it sustains every level of creation. Our soul is a drop of that ever-flowing stream of Shabd, the path home to God – and that is why it is such a treasure. It is the essence of God, beyond understanding, and can be heard in the form of beautiful music. It will mesmerize us and draw us up like a magnet, and reunite us with its source. Only on this life stream can we rise through the higher regions until we eventually reach our spiritual home. This is the only pathway that leads to full spiritual light and complete freedom. By learning to listen to this holy sound, we can leave this world behind and travel into the inner kingdoms.

We can make contact with the Shabd only with the help of the Master. He sees our soul trapped by the mind, which in turn is trapped by the senses and their addiction to worldly treasures. He is aware of our true nature and divine origin, while we are not. Through initiation

he connects our souls to the Shabd, and places his Radiant Form within us at the eye centre. This is the true treasure for which we have been searching.

But this inner treasure is not simply handed to us – we have to work hard for it. The work starts with the practice of meditation as taught to us at the time of initiation. Every time we repeat the names of our simran we come closer to the jewel that our soul is seeking, and we reduce our dependence on the mind and the world. It is this effort that pleases our Master. What greater incentive or treasure could there possibly be than winning the approval of the Master?

We have to try to reach the eye centre, if only because we are trying to please and obey our Master. This is the hardest part of the journey, sometimes depressing, frustrating, boring and dry. But even the driest of times will yield more fruitful ones. We can detach ourselves from the rubbish of the world only by attaching ourselves to something far finer and more wonderful – that is the Shabd within.

Through meditation we can gradually bring the mind and senses under control. The five passions keep us from our real treasure. They lure us away from meditation and spiritual effort by keeping us preoccupied with the world. Every attempt at meditation brings us that bit closer to the Master and his Radiant Form. Surely that is a goal, a treasure that supersedes anything the world can offer us, worthy of persistent effort, even when there is no obvious progress? We must not postpone our meditation, but should rather act now; we must not let the mind and the world lead us astray and blind us to our true inheritance.

If it seems like an impossible goal, we should remember that every time we try, we are taking a step forward towards that goal, the treasure that will be achieved through millions of small, faltering steps – not in one quick and easy leap. But those little steps add up, one by

one, and if the Master says we can do it, then we can. We just have to keep at it.

If we can break the hold this world has on us – even if we appear not to be achieving anything in our meditation, we need never come back here again. And we *can* break the world's hold through meditation, by turning our attention away from the baubles of the world, and focusing it on the treasures within. We must just think of our Master, looking at us with love and affection, every time we try. His smile and approval alone are greater treasures than anything the world can offer.



*No doubt you are making some headway and I am anxious to see you go inside, truly, and find the great light and joy which awaits you there.*

*There is nothing equal to this Way, and it gives more real joy and satisfaction than all else in the world. But to get that you have to go inside. ...That is gained by steadfast meditation and holding your attention in the eye focus, without wavering. When you learn to do this, the Treasure, which is yours already, will come into conscious possession and you will realize more than you can dream of.*

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# Loneliness vs Solitude

Loneliness is one of our greatest dreads. We have all felt the stab of loneliness, the fearful feeling of emptiness, isolation and separateness, like an aching chasm deep within us. We sometimes think of loneliness in terms of haunting images: an isolated figure, a derelict house, a leafless tree against a backdrop of a barren winter landscape – solitary, bleak images, cold enough to freeze our bones.

Loneliness reflects an inner need to love and be loved. Yet many lonely people have a social life, a busy job, and even a stable family life, giving credence to the old cliché that it is possible to feel lonely in a crowd. The number of questions put to our Masters about loneliness is an indication of just how many people experience the pangs of loneliness.

Solitude, on the other hand, is simply the lack of contact with people. We tend to classify loneliness and solitude as the same thing, and to think of them both in a negative way. But being alone is not the same as being lonely. Loneliness tends to have a negative effect on us, while solitude has a positive effect. There are plenty of loners who happily choose solitude as a way of life. Paul Tillich, a philosopher, said:

*Language ... has created the word 'loneliness' to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word 'solitude' to express the glory of being alone.*

Solitude is also associated with religious experience. We often read about monks and nuns having inner religious experiences, while living a solitary life in monasteries and convents. This makes sense. We are never going to have an inner experience while our minds are

scattered and we are busy interacting with others. Inner experiences are more likely to occur when we sit quietly on our own, in deep concentration. As Maharaj Charan Singh has told us, concentration may result from reading, from emotions, meditation, or may even be achieved by other means.

Solitude, and the ability to focus our minds during periods when we are alone, is very beneficial to us, because we learn the art of concentration; on the other hand, loneliness is an emotional experience that agitates and scatters the attention.

Time spent alone can be of great benefit to us. Hazur Maharaj Ji tells us that when we feel lonely we should continue with simran because this will remove the feelings of loneliness, and we will have the feeling that the Master is with us.

We can draw an analogy between a long distance runner and our attempts at concentrated simran. Long distance running is a lonely and tough undertaking – just the runner and the road, an isolated figure pounding the tarmac. Irrespective of the conditions, the runner must practise daily to achieve the goal. No matter how tired we are, we have to keep at it – one step after another, even though the road stretches endlessly ahead. Every step and every breath stem from the determination to keep running. At times it may seem like an endless, futile task, but if we stay focused on the objective, we will reach the finish line.

So, too, in our meditation practice – whatever our conditions, we have to practise daily. Every round of simran gives us the determination to keep at it, one round after the next, until our simran reverberates throughout our entire being like the pounding of the runner's feet.

Like the runner, we never seem to be getting anywhere, and sometimes it seems so very futile that we may feel like giving it all

up, but this is when it is important to keep going. The time will come when the mind will become still. Then the eye centre is not far off. The difference here is that as runners we know where the finish line is – we know how far we have to run. We know where the eye centre is, but we don't know how much distance we still have to cover.

Loneliness is often thought of as a human condition, but when we look at nature we find that most species live collectively with some form of social structure, and individuals certainly feel the effects of loneliness when separated from their group. So it's not surprising that we humans also shun the solitary life in favour of a life of sharing, companionship and love, as we surround ourselves with family, friends and acquaintances with whom we share our lives. Given our need for human interaction and togetherness – to love and be loved – it's interesting that when we embark on the spiritual journey, we start on the loneliest path that we could ever imagine, and by the time we realize it, there is no going back.

Every time we sit down to practise our meditation, we are in the process of severing our attachments to this world. In fact it's an oddity that we regularly try and release ourselves from our attachments through our meditation, and yet it is often because of our feelings of loneliness that we create new and binding attachments.

It is in our hands not to embrace many of these attachments – to simply let them go – but others are part of our destiny, and we have to do our meditation to rise above those bonds. Attachment is the strongest force that can bring us back to this creation, and not only that, it can also bring us down to the level of the one to whom we are attached.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Quest for Light*:

*The feeling of loneliness that you experience is, in fact, a blessing in disguise. In the life of every one there comes a time when he*

*feels and realizes that there is none in this world whom he can call his own. Throughout our life we select different people and try to make them our own, but after some time we realize that 'something' is still missing. In the end our experience tells us that all these loves are selfish – one is always demanding something from the other.*

Following the spiritual path can also create feelings of loneliness in us. We don't feel we fit, or want to fit, into regular social structures, and not having reached the eye centre yet, we feel as though we don't really belong in either world.

When being with the people we love does not remove our feelings of loneliness and isolation, these feelings are probably due to spiritual loneliness – a void within ourselves. We interpret this feeling of separation as being physically separated from our loved ones, but there is nothing others can do to remove this loneliness. Our feelings of loneliness are not people-related, but are rather due to our spiritual separateness, which cannot be filled by other people, irrespective of how fulfilling and loving our relationships may be.

Spiritual loneliness and yearning come from deep within us, creating a sense of incompleteness, which affects every aspect of our lives. We feel that something important is missing. Maharaj Charan Singh clarifies spiritual loneliness by telling us that the natural inclination of the soul is to go back to its own origin. He says:

*You always have a feeling of loneliness in you, whatsoever you may have in this world; whatsoever you may possess in this world. The whole world may be at your command. If you sit quietly you will still feel that loneliness. You are not able to overcome this feeling of loneliness. This is the inclination of the*

*soul, which is urging you to go back to its own Source. Unless the soul merges back into its own Source you will not be able to overcome the feeling of loneliness. And that loneliness forces you to seek your own origin. ... That feeling in you urges you to go back to the Father.*

*Thus Saith the Master*

It is only through our practice of meditation that the hollow yearning is filled and our spiritual loneliness is cured. Deep within, where we used to feel incomplete and lonely, we now find ourselves satisfied and fulfilled. And the more we practise our meditation, the more satisfied and fulfilled we feel.

We believe the Master is waiting for us within, but until we reach the eye centre, this belief is simply a concept, another creation of our imagination. When we close our eyes, we are aware only of ourselves. After numerous hours of meditation, many of us have realized that the path we walk to meet his Radiant Form is a very long, slow journey, and we do it alone – nobody walks with us. So we come to realize the truth of the Master's words, that the spiritual path cannot be walked with friends and family by our side. It is a solitary and lonely journey, until we become conscious of him within.



*You have no friends in this world –  
make Nam the mainstay of your life.  
Tie the thread of your consciousness to Shabd  
so the door to the Lord's court is opened to you.*

*Soami Ji, Sar Bachan Poetry*

# The Importance of Seva

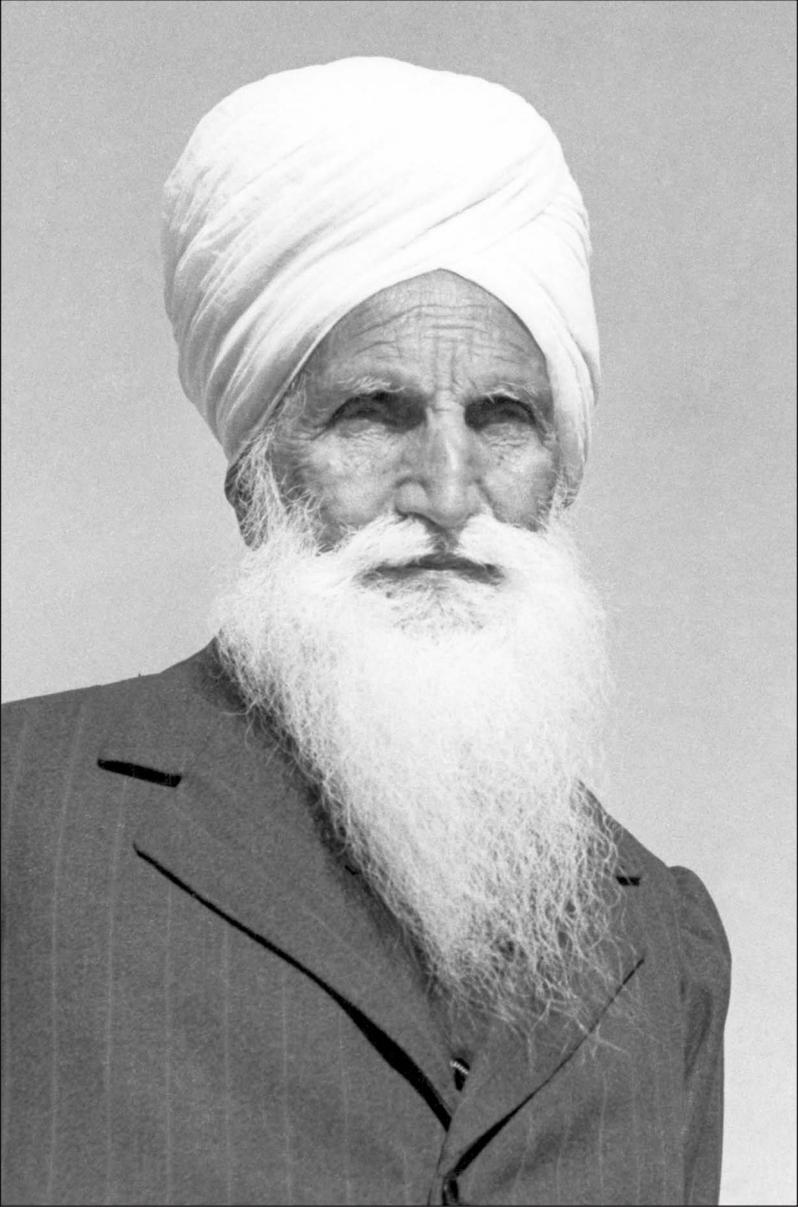
When the Great Master announced his intention of building the satsanghar, a wealthy contractor offered to build the entire building at his own expense. Great Master replied:

*No, I want every satsangi, even the poorest of the poor, to be given the opportunity to offer something in seva, even if it is only half a rupee. I would also like all satsangis, rich and poor, young and old, to participate in the construction, even if they carry only a handful of sand or a few bricks. Their smallest efforts are precious to me. Every drop of perspiration shed by them is valuable to me. This is seva of love and devotion.*

*Labour of Love*

The opportunity to perform service for the Master is one of the greatest gifts a disciple can receive. Whatever seva we are invited to perform, we should keep in mind that there is a process and methodology which we are asked to follow by putting our personal likes and dislikes aside. When doing seva we should focus on the service we perform and on the Master. This creates love and humility.

In *Spiritual Perspectives* Vol. III, Maharaj Charan Singh tells us: “It is entirely by his grace that we get an opportunity to do seva and that we are capable.” No matter how much we may want to do seva, we may find obstacles that prevent us from doing it. Certain seva requires specialized skills or qualifications which may preclude us from doing that seva, or our personal circumstances may simply prevent it. It is through his grace that we get both the opportunity and the ability to do the seva.



*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Seva is a great equalizer. Through seva we learn to put our opinions and ideas aside as we learn to submit to others. Submission and surrender are the real benefits of seva, through which we learn how to let go of pride and arrogance. But if we continue to perform our seva according to the dictates of our minds and not as we have been requested, this will only serve to puff up the ego.

Ego is the greatest obstacle on our spiritual path – it alone stands between us and the Master’s Radiant Form. The more pride we have and the more opinionated we are, the greater our inflated ego. Seva gives us the opportunity to break down this barrier, to slowly change the ego’s opinions. But if we stubbornly refuse to change our thinking and attitudes, how can our seva ever help us?

At the time of initiation the Master asks us to follow the four principles of Sant Mat, and he connects us to the Shabd. With the Master by our side and Shabd as our weapon, we are empowered to win the battle against the ego – provided we do what the Master says and not what we think.

It is through our adherence to the four principles, especially our regular meditation, that we slowly learn to put aside the likes and dislikes of the ego. The Master provides opportunities for us to do seva which, when done with the right attitude, helps us to subdue the ego. This in turn enhances our meditation. It is our dedication to the practice of the Master’s teachings that is the greatest seva we can perform, as this will ultimately enable us to achieve withdrawal and unite with the Radiant Form within.

Again, in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Maharaj Charan Singh says that although we speak of four types of seva, there is only one seva. The other three sevas are means to achieve that one seva: seva with the body, seva with the mind, and seva with money are done so that we may be able to bring our consciousness to the level of the Shabd.

The first type of seva is the kind of service we can offer the Master with our body and brain, which is to do manual and intellectual work. Whether the service is easy or difficult is irrelevant – the important thing is that it must be done according to the instructions we are given. Many times we may question the procedure of the seva we are doing, but the point is not how quickly we can get it done, or if we can employ a better method, or whether it is important or unimportant – the object is to obey the Master’s instruction. Whatever seva we are given is a gift from the Master, and its importance lies in our attitude towards its accomplishment. To do our seva as instructed is to have faith in the word of the Master. To continually question our seva is to challenge the Master’s instruction; to simply do it our own way is to deny his authority. If we can obey his instructions at this physical level, then we will learn to follow his instructions at a spiritual level.

The second type of seva is service with the mind. We should offer our mind and intellect to the Master. In other words, we should use our intelligence to understand the teachings so that we can translate the philosophy into action. First we learn by word of mouth and then through experience. By taking control of the mind, we are able to practise concentration and sit in meditation to enjoy the sweet melody of the Shabd. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that seva with the mind is really our attempt to bring the mind back to the eye centre by means of simran.

The third type of seva is that of wealth, which does not necessarily refer only to money but also to anything material we have earned through honest means. We are told that there is no better use for worldly wealth than offering it in the service of the Master – bearing in mind that he, personally, has no use for this wealth and would never take it for personal use. From our earliest childhood

we are taught to protect what belongs to us. We learn to be frugal with our pocket money. We learn to invest our income, accumulate and plan for the future. An important lesson in wealth seva is that it instills in us a sense of surrender, for we are now asked to surrender something that all our worldly instincts tell us to hold on to. Kahlil Gibran writes so beautifully:

*It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked,  
through understanding; ...  
And is there aught you would withhold?  
All you have shall some day be given;  
Therefore give now,  
that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors'.*

*The Prophet*

Wealth seva encourages us to detach ourselves from an excess of worldly riches, and this in turn helps us attach ourselves to the wealth of Shabd.

The fourth type of service is that of the soul – offering one's own self to the Master. In a nutshell it means withdrawing our soul current from the body and connecting it with the Shabd. As stated in *Thoughts on Indian Mysticism*: “We should be singular in our devotion, singular in our purpose, singular in our life's ideal and mission of service and devotion to the Master.” This is service of the soul.

Maharaj Charan Singh says that all these sevas are done to achieve one seva, which is also the biggest seva – to bring our consciousness in touch with the Shabd by means of our meditation. Other sevas are just to clean our cup so that we may be able to fill it with that nectar within.

The Master himself is a wonderful example of a perfect sevadar, as he devotes his life and love selflessly to the sangat. Through his love and dedication he sets us free. We should emulate his attitude in whatever seva we perform. Let us follow his instructions with dedication, love and devotion.

As Kahlil Gibran says:

*All work is empty save when there is love;  
And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself,  
and to one another, and to God. ...  
Work is love made visible.*

*The Prophet*



*When I was sick, it came to me that there are two approaches to work. One is bold and quick, fearless in action. The other is worried and constricted with concern about things that could possibly go wrong. If action flows from anxiety, the outcome is murky and disturbed. But if action moves with a swift joy and courage, the world begins to resolve its difficulties and grow whole.*

Bahauddin, as quoted by Coleman Barks  
& John Moyne in *The Drowned Book*

*Only such a one is in a position to serve the Master as has abundant grace of the Lord, because this service is imprinted on the individual's forehead and was preordained as the result of his previous life's actions or karmas. He is fortunate indeed who devotes himself to the service of his Master, because the Lord himself is manifest in him.*

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

# The Pain of Separation

Love is painful because it has separation in it; it wants to merge. Unless it becomes another being, it is separated, and separation is always painful; so love is painful. When we merge back into the Father, then there's no pain at all. Before that we have to go through that pain – we can't help it. The more we feel the pull within, the more painful it becomes because we become more anxious, more anxious and more anxious to become one with him.

The more we love him, the more the feeling of becoming one with him is growing. We become more anxious to become one with him, so naturally it will become more painful. Its blessing is also there, peace is also there, happiness is also there in the presence of the beloved.

This is a very strange feeling. It is like the example of a lady delivering a child. She has to go through the pain of the delivery, but then she's the happiest woman in the world after the child is born. She can't avoid that pain; that's a part of what she has to go through. Similarly, we have to go through that pain, but it is nothing compared to what we are going to achieve. Even when we feel the pain, would we like to get rid of that love? We would never want to get rid of that love.

Separation is painful. If anybody advises you to forget, what is the sense of that? You will never leave it. There also is some satisfaction and pleasure within at the base of that pain. So it is a mixed feeling. The more we grow in love, sometimes the more separation we feel and the more anxious we are to become one with him.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

# The Master's Presence

It is a fundamental truth of the mystic path that it is necessary to follow a living master and seek the Lord within. Instead, however, most people worship mystics of the past and seek the Lord in external objects.

Jesus was a mystic who preached love and worship of God, yet even though his disciples had great love for him, he was betrayed by them. According to the Bible, Judas betrayed him, and Peter denied him three times.

But why would disciples of a mystic betray or deny their Master? As disciples of a perfect living Master, we wouldn't intentionally do this. But could we do so inadvertently? Sultan Bahu may help us answer this question. He said:

*Any moment you are negligent in remembrance of God  
is a moment spent in denial of God.*

*Sultan Bahu*

A simple example of denial would be to commit an act that we would otherwise not commit in the physical presence of the Master. When the Master is physically present, we are conscious of his presence. However, we are not always conscious of the Shabd Master, who is always present within. So Sultan Bahu tells us that it is at these times, when we are unaware of the presence of the Master, that we are denying his existence through our forgetfulness.

What if we disobey our Master? Put simply, that could be interpreted as a lack of respect both for him and for his authority, and this could be perceived as a form of denying his authority. The Master

is extremely forgiving, but we should not abuse his love by repeatedly being disobedient and expecting to be forgiven.

We know Christ said that to sin against the Holy Ghost could not be forgiven. Hazur Maharaj Ji has explained that to sin against the Holy Ghost means to turn our back on the Father by not practising devotion through meditation.

We also know that this path is not a part-time affair; it is a lifetime commitment, to be lived with every breath. Maharaj Charan Singh often reminded us that meditation is not just sitting for two and a half hours a day; we must live our whole day in the atmosphere of meditation. This path is therefore not for the faint-hearted. The Masters emphasize that this path is only for the brave and valiant, those who are prepared to give up everything in order to reach the ultimate goal. Most of all, what the Master wants us to give up is our ego. We are not required to give up our material possessions, though we should be prepared to do so if necessary. In other words, everything else in our lives should be secondary to our goal of God-realization.

On the one hand, we believe that the Master is all-knowing, and yet our behaviour may be inconsistent with that belief. Similarly, we believe that we should obey the Master's instructions with regard to following the four vows, but we find it difficult to do so, as we merrily follow the dictates of our mind. Why this inconsistency? Could it be because our belief in the importance of adhering to the vows is just that – a belief, a concept or theory?

Belief is something that we accept as true or real, without any proof. Belief shapes our perception of reality, irrespective of whether it actually exists, and perhaps we would rather not have to put it to the test, for fear of shattering our belief.

We should be cautious that our behaviour does not undermine our belief in the Master and his teachings. For example, if we say the Master is unlimited, why do we rush to sit right in front of him? The Master reminds us that the Master is not limited, and that the disciple can be thousands of miles away and still receive what the Master gives, or that we can be right under his nose and get nothing, if he so decides. The Master will give us only what he wants to, and sitting in the front of the audience assures us of nothing except our own mental satisfaction.

A conviction on the other hand is based on experience. When we experience something it is not an idea or belief any more, and nothing can change a conviction that is based on personal experience.

So if we want to replace our beliefs with conviction, what do we need to do? The simplest way is to approach them as we would any scientific experiment. If we wish to prove a scientific theory, we start with a proposition that the theory has merit. It is this preliminary faith that we intend to prove through experience. Then we follow the experiment, according to the instructions of one who has himself proved the theory. Once we perform the experiment and experience the results for ourselves, we gain an unshakeable conviction that cannot be overturned.

The mystics advise us to follow the same scientific process for the discovery of spiritual truth. They advise us to find one who has himself performed the experiment successfully, and then perform the same experiment ourselves, in accordance with his instructions. They tell us that within the human body we have all that is required for the spiritual experiment – all we have to do is perform the experiment in the prescribed manner. We start with a little faith in the teacher, perform the experiment exactly as he instructs us to, and *voilà*, we have our own personal experience, proof and conviction.

The experiment we need to perform is simply to concentrate our attention at the eye centre. We are to become oblivious of the external world, our body and senses, and become conscious of the inner realms and of our soul within.

How is this concentration achieved? Our senses constantly seek satisfaction through the fulfilment of desires, and this keeps our attention focused externally. By stilling our senses we can reverse this outward process and focus our attention inside, away from external distractions. We select a quiet place where our senses can be calmed, and we sit in a comfortable posture so that we can remain absolutely still for the entire duration of the experiment.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to tell us that when we close our eyes we are there where we should be. Then, being there, we occupy our minds with the mental repetition of the five precious, holy names that the Master gives us at the time of our initiation. To derive the full benefit of the holy names, we must repeat them with all our attention, focus and concentration, and with love and devotion, as if they were priceless diamonds being placed in a jewel box.

What role does the Master play in all of this? Frankly, without him nothing is possible. Initially the desire to meet our Maker is sown by the Father himself, who also makes it possible for us to meet a perfect living Master. Then the Master takes over the responsibility to deliver us to the Father. He creates that love and devotion in us for the Father, and answers all our questions on spirituality. His love and devotion for his own Master is an example for us. His service and obedience to his Master is a beacon of light for everyone. If we observe his behaviour and lifestyle, we shall see nothing but unstinting love, devotion, service and obedience.

We now know that a living Master is absolutely vital to spirituality, but we have to understand his role, and more importantly, our role.

The sheer beauty of his form makes it difficult not to want to always be with him. But we know we can't always be in his physical presence. When asked if the separation from the Master was necessary, Maharaj Charan Singh replied:

*It is very, very necessary. We cannot even gauge our love and devotion without physical separation. We can never know how much we miss him, how much we are involved in worldly attachments, and how much we actually love our Master, unless we have physical separation. In the presence of the Master we always feel we love him, because there is nothing else to pull us aside. We are always charged with his love and devotion. But how much depth it has, we get an opportunity to know when we are absolutely engrossed in worldly activities, worldly possessions and worldly love. If in that atmosphere we still miss him, we still have the same love and devotion for him and are yearning for his physical form, then we know that we really love him. If we forget him when he is out of sight, you can imagine how much the depth of that love is.*

*Spiritual Heritage*

If we experience the path of spirituality as a struggle, let us not lose hope. Let us remember that the Master has chosen us because he is confident we will be able to follow the path. So to ensure that we do not return to the wheel of transmigration, let us fulfil our responsibility of being good disciples – because that is the only type of disciple that is worthy of a perfect Master.

# The Good Old Days

One evening in a meeting at the Dera a satsangi was talking of the “good old days” when the number of foreign visitors was small. It was easy to have personal contact with the Master. Interviews were given without asking, and one could meet the Master quite frequently in the street and walk and talk with him. Baba Ji replied that one of these days we would be calling *these* the good old days.

Certainly the Dera has expanded phenomenally, and the numbers who flock to the Hostel 6 sessions and attend the designated weekends and regular satsangs grow and grow. Yet surely, the more the Dera changes the more it remains the same. Why are we drawn there? It is the attraction of “the moths to the flame”, and the flame doesn’t change. No matter whether there are ten people or a million, if we have our priorities right, we will get what we need. And if we cannot visit the Dera, are we being neglected? Only if our mind tells us so.

It is a common human failing to harp on the good things of the past, bewail the present and hope for a better future. Reminiscing with nostalgia on past good times is not a bad thing, as long as that is all that the thought is, but how easily our minds can slip into wishing the impossible back again!

The buzzword or phrase these days in our stressful society is living or being in the moment, and for that we are given the most precious gift in the world – simran. What better way is there to keep one’s mind focused in the present? Hard work, yes! And for most of us, years, even a lifetime of hard work. But when the end result is the guaranteed return of the drop into the ocean from which it has been separated for so long, every second of effort we put in is worth more

than any worldly action, especially as Master's grace far outweighs our side of the bargain.

*In the floodwaters of transgression  
every hair of my body is drenched in sin.  
I am all evil, You are all goodness.  
Oh, how long will I trespass and go astray,  
and how long will You show me clemency?  
I am ashamed of my deeds,  
and more so because of your mercy.*

*Sarmad, Martyr to Love Divine*



*That which is big now will one day be small,  
while that which is small today will grow tomorrow.  
So relish not in what passes but rather in what remains.*

*Daniel Levin, The Zen Book*

*By the grace of the Master we know how to get rid of karmas  
and how to rise above them. We can know this only through the  
grace of the Master. ... If we live in the teachings, if we follow the  
teachings, if we withdraw our soul current to the eye centre and  
hear the spirit within, that is the grace of the Master. Without  
grace we can achieve nothing.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I*

# Our Wonderful Life

Probably we have all met many wonderful people in our lives. We may think members of our family, our friends, our partners or our teachers are wonderful, and it will have been our pleasure and privilege to have known them. The sad thing about all of these wonderful associations is that they cannot last forever, and no matter how wonderful the person, there is no guarantee that he or she will be there for us when we need them the most. Work, illness, accidents and death all have a nasty way of intervening when we need help. Human frailties and destiny also mean that even when we promise to be faithful, constant and true, it may not always be possible. Worldly relationships are something of a roller coaster – up and down, full of highs and lows. And of course no one can be with us as we go through death.

As initiates we are fortunate to have been graced with a non-worldly relationship with a purely spiritual being. We have received immeasurable grace from the Lord himself, allowing us to have heard of, read about, seen, met and even been initiated by a perfect Master. And for all of us, without exception, whether we understand and appreciate the gift fully or not, life is indeed wonderful because he is in the world; because he is in *our* world. He, the perfect Master, will always be there for us. He is not troubled by human imperfections and frailties. He is constant, true and faithful. His love, which is perfect, never wavers. His compassion never wanes. His Shabd form never ever leaves us, even when his physical body leaves this physical level of creation. What a wonderful world this has become for us, because of his presence. Our world has become a haven of love and security because he is in it – and of all our associates, he alone will accompany us through death and into whatever it is that awaits us.

Let us pause here for a moment and think back on our lives before we heard about a perfect Master, learnt about his teachings and received his gift of initiation. Doesn't knowing about karma, destiny and reincarnation make life's knocks easier to cope with? Before we started to learn about the philosophy of our path, the inequalities of the world, with its changing faces and its darkness, may have been difficult for many of us to deal with. Now at least we have a vague glimmering of understanding, which makes acceptance just a little easier. The knocks are still there, but perhaps less overwhelming.

Remember our lives before we were taught the five names. Remember back to the pre-simran days – to the days before meditation! Meditation may be the most difficult and frustrating task that we have ever been given to do – but who would be without it? Would any of us ever give it up? Would anyone give up those chances of being alone with our Master, no matter how fraught they sometimes are? Would anyone step off that glorious road that leads to his Radiant Form?

How bleak and scary the world was before we had our direct line to our Master through simran. We may not hear his replies to our calls, but we do know, deep down, that he hears us and responds. This is a wonderful comfort and security, a safe haven we can always access – because he has given us his gift of meditation and simran, to use throughout the day and night, every day, for the rest of our lives. That direct line is always open to us.

However, it's mostly the knowing that he himself is in our world that has changed our lives so much for the better. What were our lives like before he called us; before he accepted us and before he promised to take us home? What were our lives like before we began to understand and accept who he is and to know that we sit in the palm of his hand from which no man may pluck us? Remember

back to those directionless, pleasure-seeking, lonely days and then remember to give never-ending thanks for his divine presence and all that his presence implies.

Our lives are wonderful because of him, because of who he is and what he is doing for us. In *The Odes of Solomon* it says:

*O what a greatness  
that came down into bondage!  
O unspeakable liberty  
brought into slavery by us!  
O incomprehensible glory  
that is come unto us!*

The Master is in our lives, and he is in this world for one main purpose, namely, to take certain marked souls out of the creation and reunite them with their heavenly Father. Were it not for this task, this perfected being would not be here interacting with us at our low level of existence. He would be in bliss in Sach Khand. We can have no idea what he must sacrifice to be here. We can have no idea of the love he must feel for his Father and for us. Isn't it just extraordinary, mind-boggling in fact, to think that such a one has come into our lives and claimed us?

The Master provides us with the role model of perfection, and shows us what we can aspire to. He brings his light and his love into this world, whether the world perceives it or not. What on earth would our lives be like without him? It doesn't really bear thinking about, does it? And we have no real clue about what all of this actually means. We have no real understanding of who he is and what it is, exactly, that he is doing for us. But do we know that we want him in our lives and to keep doing whatever it is that he is doing.

The Master lovingly protects and guides us at every step of our journey. He manages everything to make it possible for us to leave this level of creation forever. At the time of death it will be our loving and compassionate Master who will take control of our soul and send it on to its next destination. Maharaj Charan Singh says in *Quest for Light*:

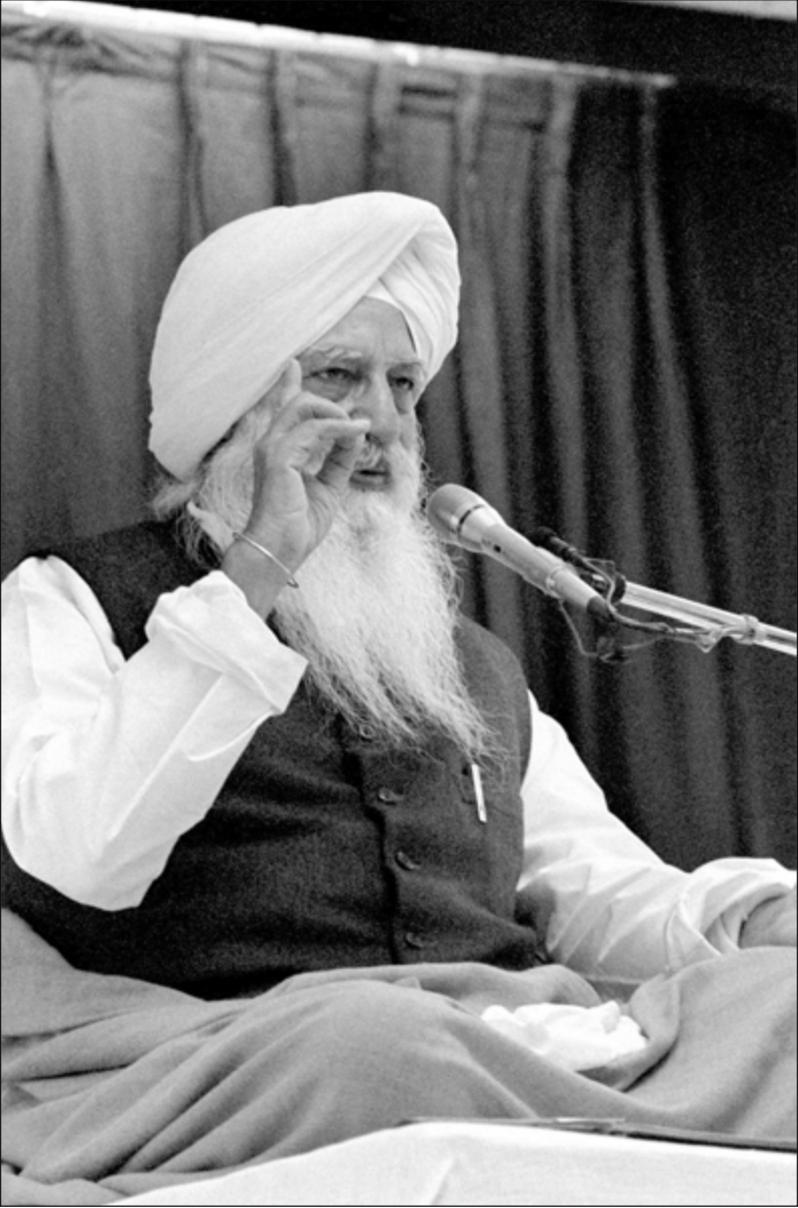
*Every initiate is being looked after by the Master and whatever comes to such a one, whether good or bad from the disciple's limited point of view, is all within the knowledge of the Master and is for the disciple's own good. The Lord has His own hand of protection on all those whom He has drawn to the path. Whatever pain, suffering, fear, unhappiness and whatever else such a disciple faces is all the settlement of his karmic accounts, which means the lightening of his burden.*

So all of this is what it means to have a perfect Master in our lives. Isn't that wonderful?



*My Master has sown in my heart  
the jasmine of God's Name.  
He has taught me how to captivate  
the heart of my charming Beloved.  
He keeps me in his thoughts eternally.  
He makes me do his will.  
He himself grants me his wisdom, O Bahu.  
He moulds me into his own real Self*

*Sultan Bahu*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# The Storm

*The storm of knowledge has come;  
Its blast has swept away  
My thatched roof of delusion.  
My hut, built by Maya,  
Can no longer hold its own:  
The two posts of duality  
Have come crashing to the ground,  
The rafters of attachment  
Have been torn apart,  
The eaves of avarice  
Have collapsed,  
And the pitcher of evil tendencies  
Is shattered into fragments.*

*Kabir, The Weaver of God's Name*

In this poem Kabir likens knowledge to the strong winds that some-times swoop down on the Indian countryside in summer, destroying faulty structures. Like the wind, he says, true knowledge sweeps away the delusion that maya has built around us. And then the saints come and they rebuild the roof and create a shelter that is reliable and secure.

*With concentration and technique  
The Saints have rebuilt the roof,  
A roof strong and stable,  
Free from leaks and drips.*

*When falsehood and duplicity  
Fled from my body's house,  
I realized the Lord  
In all his glory.*

When delusion is forced to give way to knowledge, then comes a downpour of the Lord's grace. Kabir continues:

*Rain came in torrents  
After the storm,  
Torrents of divine love  
That drenched this slave,  
Heart and soul.  
Then, O Kabir, emerged the sun,  
The glorious sun of the Realization,  
And darkness faded away.*

One evening at the Dera, in the spring of 1980, an incident occurred that relates strongly to the above poem. A sudden strong wind came up and we were forced to close all windows. Still, the fine soft sand of Dera managed to penetrate into every nook and cranny, leaving a layer of grit on all surfaces. Then came the rain, and the next morning the earth, trees, lawns and flowers were like wet laundry waiting to be hung up to dry.

We set off for the morning satsang. Some days of initiation were in progress after the April bhandara, so the crowds were quite large. People were pouring in and finding a seat on the mats spread over the vast area under the shade of the colourful shamiyanas. Suddenly there was a rustle and a stirring, and a general exclamation issued from the mouths of the masses, as happens when the Master appears

unexpectedly. We were momentarily confused, until we realized that all heads were facing *away* from the dais. Finally, the word got through to us that the Himalayas, those mightiest of mountains, were in full view! Most of the time, they are not visible from the Dera at all. The storm of the past night had cleared the impurities in the air over the entire vast Punjab plain and enabled us to witness this rare and truly magnificent sight.

That day we were like children going on a picnic. After satsang most of us walked to the river so that we could appreciate the full grandeur and beauty of the mountains and breathe in the fresh clean air. It was an occasion of joy and inspiration, and a strong awareness of Master's boundless love – an opportunity to realize that the Master is not limited to his physical form but is present in every atom of his creation.

But were the Himalayas really responsible for the festive mood that swept through the entire colony that day? They were the catalyst, yes, but, after all, those mountains are merely very large heaps of earth and rock – as much part of the illusion as are our frail human bodies, subject to change and decay. The inspirational force was, then and always will be, love: the Master's love or Shabd.

If the vision of the snow-capped Himalayas or the Victoria Falls or even a butterfly or a flower can fill us with peace and joy and all the qualities that love brings, then how much more so may our minds become vessels of joy through meditation and focusing the attention at the eye centre. And, unlike the fleeting moments of pleasure followed by the inevitable pain, which is the best this creation provides, the gradual elevation of the soul of the disciple towards the inner Master creates a slow but sure progress to permanent bliss and ecstasy.

# The Way out of the Jungle

*Please have no worry. Master is always with you to help, guide and protect you at every step. Just turn to him and realize his constant presence. Attend most regularly to your meditation with faith, love, and humility.*

*Quest for Light*

Lakha Singh was a devoted satsangi from Amritsar. Once, when he was in Nanded in Maharashtra, he met an old man. Both the men wanted to go to a temple and they decided to travel together. On their way, they came across a jungle inhabited by tigers, leopards and other carnivorous beasts. When night came, they lost their way. They saw nothing but the jungle all around them.

The old man felt helpless and started to cry. He was convinced that they would be devoured by a wild animal. Lakha Singh, however, was in a different state of mind. He quietly sat down in meditation. Baba Jaimal Singh appeared to him inside and said, "Walk a mile and a half towards the right and you will come to a footpath. Go on this path and soon you will come to a small village. From there, you will find your way."

When the two men walked a mile and half to their right, they found the footpath and the village. They spent the night in the village. The next morning they left for the gurdwara and reached their destination.

Satguru is always with us. It is we, who lack faith and do not put in the effort to sustain this belief.

*Tales of the Mystic East*

# Book Review

## Krishna's Other Song: A New Look at the Uddhava Gita

BY STEVEN J. ROSEN

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The *Bhagvad Gita*, Krishna's discourse to his disciple Arjuna, is one of the most widely known Hindu sacred texts. Far less well known is the *Uddhava Gita*, Krishna's dialogue with another of his disciples, Uddhava. The *Uddhava Gita* is contained in the eleventh of the twelve books making up the *Srimad Bhagvatam* (also called the *Bhagvata Purana*). The *Srimad Bhagvatam* is often referred to as the fifth Veda, signifying its importance among post-Vedic writings.

Steven Rosen, translator of this volume, is the founding editor of the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* and the author of more than 28 books on Hindu spirituality. He offers a commentary that, while insightful, is also brief, allowing him to present all the 1030 verses of the *Uddhava Gita* in a single volume of under 300 pages.

Like Arjuna, Uddhava was Krishna's cousin as well as his disciple. He appears as an important figure in several episodes of the Mahabharata. Readers who are familiar with the *Bhagvad Gita* may be surprised, however, to find that Krishna's teachings to Uddhava seem to diverge from his message to Arjuna. Krishna's famous advice to Arjuna, who wants to quit the battlefield in favour of a more reclusive life of spirituality, is to act out his part in the world, while, as Rosen observes, "Krishna tells Uddhava to renounce the world and accept the life of a mendicant." Rosen explains:

*Is Krishna contradicting Himself by telling Uddhava to become a renunciant, to shy away from worldly activities? Not in the slightest. Arjuna was a warrior, in the middle of a battle, and many were depending on him to do his duty. But Uddhava's temperament was different.*

In other words, Arjuna's temperament was suited to his role as warrior; renunciation was not the way for him. As Rosen points out, Krishna's teachings "take each person's unique psychophysical makeup into account, celebrating the diversity of creation and the special way in which each of us is meant to serve God."

The setting of the *Uddhava Gita* is the last night before Krishna leaves the mortal world. Krishna has told Uddhava of his impending departure. Grieving at the thought of separation from his beloved Krishna, Uddhava pleads:

*O Lord Keshava [Krishna], my dear Master, I cannot tolerate the thought of Your departure – of giving up the association of Your lotus feet even for a fraction of a moment. I urge You to take me along with You to Your spiritual abode.*

Krishna does not grant this request, and instead imparts his teachings to Uddhava, explaining in great detail the philosophy summarized earlier in the *Bhagavad Gita*. For this reason some say that the *Uddhava Gita* picks up where the *Bhagavad Gita* leaves off; at the very least, it augments the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Krishna teaches Uddhava about the three modes (*gunas*) of material nature – goodness, passion, and ignorance – and how to become free from their influence. He teaches the complexities of *karma*, or action and reaction. He uses a variety of stories to illustrate his teachings. For example, he tells the story of King Pururava, who was desperately attached to his wife. After she left him, his despair and lamentations are transformed into detachment when he realized that he had wasted his life enamoured by his wife's external beauty.

Life, Krishna teaches Uddhava, is a precious opportunity, and especially rare is life in the human body: "The created world manifests numerous types of material bodies.... But know for certain, O Uddhava, that the human form is especially dear to Me." He explains: "Why is human life special? ... Human life is like a gateway through which one might understand My essential nature." The "special benefit" of the human

body is “intelligence that prompts living beings to directly search for Me, guiding them to practices that bring them closer to Me.”

The purpose of human life is fulfilled by living under the spiritual instructions of a guru, as Krishna explains with an elaborate metaphor:

*The laws of nature automatically award all humans their material bodies – and this particular form is precious and rare. In fact, sages have compared the human body to an expertly constructed boat. The bona fide guru is like a captain, and the instructions of God, as revealed in sacred texts, are comparable to favourable breezes, setting it on its course. With all these assets, a human being is loath to not use his precious human body for crossing the ocean of birth and death. He must even be considered a “killer of his own soul” if he neglects to do so.*

Krishna emphasizes the importance of faith in and devotion to the guru:

*My dear Uddhava, even if My devotee is not fully in control of his senses, and is burdened by material desires, he will not be defeated by sense gratification. This is because his faith in Me is without question.... In the same way that fire can burn firewood into ashes, devotion directed toward Me totally destroys the sins committed by My devotees.*

Krishna uses a strange parable to teach Uddhava that by meditating upon a guru one imbibes his qualities. A large wasp once forced a lesser insect into his hive and kept him trapped there. The smaller insect, with intense fear, naturally kept his attention riveted upon his captor. Gradually the small insect achieved the same state as the wasp, developing similar features.

Explaining the different types of yoga – *jnana* (knowledge) yoga, *karma* (action) yoga, and *bhakti* (devotion) yoga – Krishna makes it clear that *bhakti* yoga is ultimately most dear to him.

*The process of bhakti yoga is actually the most intelligent and clever path of all, for by engaging in its practices one can in this very life use*

*the temporary and unreal accoutrements of the material world to achieve Me, who is eternal and real.*

Jnana yoga may serve as preparation for bhakti. But, in the end, love and devotion are most important. Krishna declares,

*O Uddhava, utilizing your mature intellect, you should practise unmotivated devotional yoga (bhakti) by attentively seeing to the needs of the spiritual Master, and with the razor sharp axe of transcendental knowledge you should slice to pieces the subtle material covering that engulfs your soul. And when you fully realize Me, the Supreme Person, you should abandon that axe of knowledge in favour of love.*

When a devotee surrenders himself through bhakti and “desires to attain Me and nothing else,” Krishna says that such a devotee enjoys a “happiness that cannot be known or achieved in the material world.”

*These pure souls, who have concentrated their consciousness on Me, do not desire to be like Brahma or Indra, nor do they aspire to some leadership position on Earth – they desire no sovereign position anywhere, nor do they want the perfections of the eightfold yoga system. Indeed, they do not even aspire after liberation from birth and death. Such a person desires to attain Me and nothing else. Those who do not desire personal gratification, whose minds are always taking shelter of Me, who are peaceful, without misconceptions of the self and merciful to all living entities – and who are not opportunistic when it comes to personal enjoyment – these devotees relish a happiness that cannot be known or achieved in the material world.*



