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# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

# contents

- 2 My Companion
- 4 The Prayer to Our Father
- 10 The Way
- 11 Accepting Responsibility
- 16 Love Is Supreme
- 18 To Everything There Is a Season
- 19 Just Please Him
- 22 Always Do Your Best
- 23 Emptiness
- 29 The Subversive Mind
- 32 The Invisibility Cloak
- 34 Essence
- 39 Enlightenment
- 40 Pride – The Powerful Passion
- 42 The Final Journey
- 44 Seeking Happiness
- 45 Love – The Inner Voice
- 48 Book Review

## **Spiritual Link**

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# My Companion

*My constant comrade you are; wherever I go,  
With love you hold my hand and lead me on.  
Your support alone enables me to tread the path of life;  
You are the one who carries my burden on your shoulders.  
It is you who lends meaning to my foolish blabber;  
You've removed my reserve and made me impudent and bold.  
The whole of mankind has become my guardian;  
They are all my own relatives, my loved ones.  
The bliss of your company I experience within and without;  
Tuka now basks in the sunshine of your divine love.*

*Tukaram, Saint of Maharashtra*





# The Prayer to Our Father

Most followers of religion use prayer as a personal and emotional form of communication with God. The prayer that Jesus gave his disciples is known as “The Lord’s Prayer” and is probably the best-known of all the Christian prayers.

Around 1943, ancient texts of the early Christian Church were discovered which contain a version of the Lord’s Prayer. Now translated into modern English, it’s called “The Prayer to Our Father”:

*O Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,  
who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.  
May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.  
Your Heavenly Domain approaches.  
Let Your will come true – in the universe (all that vibrates)  
just as on earth (that is material and dense).  
Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) for our daily need,  
And detach the fetters of faults that bind us (karma),  
like we let go the guilt of others.  
Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common  
temptations), but let us be freed from that which keeps us off from  
our true purpose.  
From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,  
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age.  
Amen.*

Let’s look at this translation. Firstly, the prayer acknowledges that God not only gives, but also sustains life. Every breath we take is God-given and keeps us alive. The moment he “withdraws” himself, in the

sense of withdrawing our soul from our body, we no longer have the breath of life, and we die.

Spirit is the only self-acting substance in existence, and without it nothing would be able to move or exist. If God withdraws himself from anything, it ceases to exist. God not only gives us life, but he also sustains the material universe and all the astral, causal and spiritual regions. This is confirmed in the second line of the prayer, which refers to the regions or heavens that are mentioned in almost every scripture.

In *Ascension of Isaiah*, an early Christian work of unknown authorship, there's a reference to six heavens. Isaiah is quoted as saying:

*And he (the angel) took me up into the air (spiritual space) of the sixth heaven and I beheld a glory I had not seen in the five heavens while I was being taken up ...*

As quoted in *The Gospel of Jesus*

Jesus also referred to there being many heavenly regions when he said:

*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

Bible, John 14:2

So the prayer acknowledges that God gives and sustains life, and that he fills all heavenly realms with sound, light and vibration – which are also key elements of Sant Mat. The Shabd or spiritual current, the “breath” of God, is the very essence and life of all things, and is mentioned in all religions. It vibrates within all life and sustains all realms and universes.

This was the sound heard by Mohammed in the cave of Gar-e-Hira. Moses heard this same sound on Mount Sinai, and Christ in the wilderness. Shiva heard it in a cave of the Himalayas.

The flute of Krishna is said to be symbolic of this sound. It is said that those who are able to hear it and meditate upon it are relieved of all worries, anxieties, sorrows and fears.

Musical instruments are widely used in spiritual assemblies because people try to emulate this inner sound. They sing hymns and become enraptured with this outer music. The ringing of bells in churches is meant to suggest the same sacred sound and lead people towards the inner life. The whole world is enchanted with outer music, which simply entertains the mind, while the divine inner music breaks our worldly fetters and we become truly pure by listening to it.

Baba Ji has explained that the silence we hear and the blackness we see when at first we close our eyes are similar to a television set that has not been tuned. During initiation we are taught how to fine-tune our soul's seeing and hearing faculties until we hear the sound that our soul will recognize as the divine Word of God. This is the sound that will eventually lead our soul to the Radiant Form of the Master within us.

Next, the prayer talks of divine light. This light is also mentioned in most scriptures. In St Matthew, Jesus says:

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

Bible, Matthew 6:22

The single eye or third eye is a metaphor in many religions for the soul's eye that can see the divine light within us. Again, in *Ascension of Isaiah* we read:

*And then, when I was in the sixth heaven, I thought that the light which I had seen in the five heavens was darkness. And I rejoiced and gave praise to him who had bestowed such light upon those who await his promise.... And the angel who was accompanying me realized what I was thinking and said: "If you rejoice in this light, how much more will you rejoice in the seventh heaven when you see the light where the Lord is."*

As quoted in *The Gospel of Jesus*

The words in the text "who await his promise" may be encouraging for satsangis who feel that they have made no spiritual progress. Our waiting will eventually be rewarded with his light. We consider churches, mosques and temples holy places, but in truth our body is the only holy place in which we can witness this divine light.

The prayer then refers to "the Heavenly Domain". It is said that as the devotee experiences spiritual awakening, he becomes more aware of the presence of the Lord in everything around him. During meditation he now sees the divine light, and hears the sound that will lead him to his spiritual destination – the Heavenly Domain.

The prayer goes on to speak of the Lord's Will and our surrender; our total acceptance of whatever the Lord wills. The Masters teach that total acceptance only comes when one has reached the fifth spiritual region and has become God-realized. Then the devotee comes to realize that his ego no longer exists and everything is the Lord's Will. Until then we think we are separate from God and behave as such, but by total surrender to the Master, we rise above the ego and gain everything.

The prayer now asks for the wisdom to know our daily needs. The Master gives us wisdom with the four vows that we take at initiation and through which he guides us to live a compassionate and moral life: correct living for a life dedicated to spirituality. Baba Ji has said that witnessing inner light and hearing sound are not the only proof of



spiritual progress. The positive changes that we make in our day-to-day lives by following the four principles are also spiritual progress, which is very encouraging to hear.

But our most important daily need is our meditation, and wisdom is realizing this and acting accordingly. Getting out of bed to meditate when that alarm goes off in the morning is attending to the most important of our daily needs.

If we live in his will and he grants us the wisdom to carry out our daily duties in his name, then our karmic load will gradually be lightened. In the prayer there's a plea for detachment from the fetters of our faults. A fetter is a chain or shackle, and this refers to the burden of karmas which chain us to this creation lifetime after lifetime.

In order to be truly detached we also have to forgive those who have acted against us. Both our karmic debits and credits keep us from our true home. We have to reap what we sow, good or bad. Without the Master's grace we are doomed to return again and again to this world in one form or another, paying back and receiving whatever we owe or are owed.

The next few lines of the prayer are a plea to the Lord to give us the strength not to become entangled in the distractions of this material world. Our purpose is to escape this world and return to our true home, which can only be done in the human body. The human body is special because within it is the key to the heavenly door – the door to the spiritual regions. During meditation slowly and gradually the soul and mind gather all their forces at that inner centre and finally leave the physical world entirely by penetrating the inner door. At that moment the soul passes through “gates of light” and enters the inner heavens.

If we don't meditate and tune in to these higher regions, we will never really get to know what we are. We will never really understand

the truth Baba Ji refers to: that we are spiritual beings having a human experience and not human beings having a spiritual experience.

The prayer continues by acknowledging that God's will gives movement to everything, and that everything is dependent upon God for life. The acknowledgment that from God we receive "the strength to act" means that we would not even be able to move a muscle without God's will. Our soul, as a drop of God, gives us life. Nothing else can activate us.

The prayer closes by referring to the Shabd as "the song that beautifies all" – that gives life to everything and sustains all creation from age to age, beginning to end. Nothing is created, beautified or renewed without the divine sound. This sound, or Word of God, is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all the regions, heavens, universes and worlds – and this sound is within us.



In a conversation with Maharaj Sawan Singh, a seeker asked if one should simply leave everything to the will of the Lord and not pray at all? The Great Master spoke in favour of praying:

*Prayer has its own advantages.... It brings humility and removes one's pride and haughtiness. Bringing one's helplessness before one's mind, it tends to make a man devotionally minded, pious and godly. Our whole life should be a life of prayer. It makes us pure-hearted. Only we should not pray for worldly pleasures.*

*Call of the Great Master*

# The Way

*The Way is not hard to a simple heart,  
nor is there any hurdle to upright thoughts,  
nor any storm in the depths of an enlightened mind.  
When supported on all sides by the harmonious,  
then there is no discord within.*

*The likeness of that which is below,  
is that which is above.  
For everything is from above,  
and whatever is below exists only in the imagination  
of those who are without knowledge.*

*Grace has been revealed for your salvation:  
have faith, and live and be saved.*

*Hallelujah.*

*The Odes of Solomon*



*Man seeks the Lord  
because He is his origin.*

*Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat*

# Accepting Responsibility

You know the old question: Why do you always find the thing you are looking for in the last place you look for it? Obviously, because you stop looking when you find it.

As satsangis many of us, perhaps most of us, are still looking for that certain something which still seems to be missing. If we were able to meditate successfully and go inside and converse with the Guru, we would not need to keep searching.

That same force that drew us to this path in the first place is no doubt the same one that is urging us to keep up the search. That force is, of course, the hunger of the soul – the spark of the Divine inside us that is nagging for release from its entrapment here. Somehow most of us have come to realize that we are in the wrong place. And we have also realized that we are entirely responsible for our plight. We must help therefore by taking some responsibility for getting out of here.

What is this path that we follow? This path is a way of living the rest of our lives. We have to do that by paying attention to what we do with our lives from moment to moment.

We have to take responsibility for the results if we don't take our lifestyle seriously every single moment. Each one of us is personally responsible for every thought, word and deed. There is nobody else we can blame and there are no grey areas.

This way of life is simple in its principles but much more difficult to practise. It is governed by four principles. Firstly we promise our Master not to eat meat, fish or eggs. In this modern world this is easier said than done. There are so many processed foods and so many foodstuffs and meals prepared by industry and other people that we require extreme vigilance not to break this promise of ours. We have

to check all labels and ask lots of questions or, as an alternative, avoid that product.

Just a small example: You have been out with friends at a restaurant for a good meal (vegetarian, of course) and your host has settled the bill with the waiter. He passes you a soft peppermint which came with the bill. You unthinkingly pop it in your mouth and head for the door. Sadly you now have to pay the price of eating animal products in the form of gelatine in the sweet. You neglected to examine the wrapper.

It is precisely the same with our second promise of a life without alcohol or drugs. Don't think that the occasional glass of wine is harmless. We have been told that, as initiates on this path, we will reap the consequences of wrong decisions in extra measure compared to our fellow man, because we should know better.

Still on the rules for this path, the third promise we made was to live a moral and upright life. This is really a subject of great difficulty and fraught with disagreement. It is indeed a minefield with little hope of getting across without some form of injury.

How should we be dealing with our fellow man in our day-to-day lives?

In *The Book of Mirdad* the Master tells the Companions:

*So think as if your every thought were to be etched in fire upon the sky for all and everything to see. For so, in truth, it is.*

*So speak as if the world entire were but a single ear intent on hearing what you say. And so, in truth, it is.*

*So do as if your every deed were to recoil upon your heads. And so, in truth, it does.*

In other words, think, speak and do responsibly, because the consequences are your responsibility.

Maharaj Jagat Singh gave this warning:

*Never speak ill of others. It is a great sin ... A wound inflicted on the body with a sharp weapon heals up in time, but not so the wound that the tongue inflicts on the heart of a man. Beware of hurting the feelings of any living being.*

*The Science of the Soul*

Perhaps a good maxim here would be to watch everything that goes either in or out of our mouths. We can reflect on the message given to us by Baba Ji, when he says we have learned how to “do” but forgotten how to “be”. We all rush around, meeting deadlines and chasing our own tails. We would be better off prioritizing our actions and slowing down. Our ability to live a moral and upright life would be greatly enhanced.

We now come to the most difficult part of this path: to do at least two and a half hours of meditation per day for the rest of our lives. The whole purpose of sitting quietly and doing simran is to get to the eye-centre.

In *Living Meditation* we're told:

*We struggle in meditation because our attention is not concentrated in simran; it is thinking about the world. From the moment we were born, the mind has come out of the eye focus and has been working outside. The outward tendency of the mind has become a deep-rooted habit. We have to struggle to reverse this process if we are to concentrate our attention at the eye centre.*

We know that our ultimate goal is God-realization. But our first goal has to be reaching the eye-centre – making our mind motionless

and collecting our scattered attention at the eye-centre. We read further in *Living Meditation*:

*The fact that it is a more humble goal than the ultimate goal of God-realization doesn't make it less necessary or any easier. To achieve it we will need to concentrate all our attention, love, devotion, energy, intelligence, skill and effort on the task. To reduce and still our thought-waves by means of simran at the eye-centre – this has to become our main concern and challenge in life.*

Sadly, here too there are no grey areas. There are no compromises. The responsibility rests with us. If we don't sit for meditation we will stagnate on this path. We talk glibly about the soul and God and going home. We bandy about terms like "self-realization" and "God-realization". What do we think we are doing? Aren't we just fooling ourselves?

We have been born into this creation again and again because of the law of karma. Kal was instructed at the outset to keep souls in the lower realms of creation. No problem. Enter the universal law of cause and effect. Karma is born! It's so easy – make the individual soul responsible for every action. The system then becomes self-perpetuating, with no hope of escape unless some intervention takes place.

Whatever we do, whether good or bad, has to be paid off. Unfortunately, we have kept creating more karmas than can be handled in a lifetime. We now have a situation where each soul is accumulating karmas at such a rate that they need to be stored in an account which has to be paid in full before the soul can be released from this prison. Sometimes the chains are gold and

sometimes the chains are lead. But they all shackle us to our karmas.

Each time the soul is born it is allocated a set of karmas from the vast store in the account. These constitute the destiny of this life. They have to be lived in order for them to be eradicated from the stored account.

This is where responsibility comes in: We created these karmas and only we can erase them. It's no good trying to blame anyone else for our predicament. The Guru has told us quite emphatically that he takes over the administration of our karmas at the time we are initiated. He has also said that he will not remove our current karmas, but that he will give us the help we need to endure them.

Of course, merely by living we have to interact with the world around us and are therefore performing actions. As we know, that leads to the creation of fresh karmas that will be added to our account. Our responsibility in this regard is to tread lightly and be mindful of our thoughts and actions.

Okay, a lot of words and theories so far. Practically we need to realize that we have to take the responsibility of making the necessary changes to get out of here. We have to follow the Guru's instructions and in particular we have to meditate as we promised.

We are totally responsible for either success or failure. So, let's go for it – and enjoy our meditation!





# Love Is Supreme

*All faiths say that love is supreme,  
and declare it to be higher than the practice of yoga,  
for love generates detachment,  
and all renunciation arises from love.  
From love and devotion arise knowledge,  
illuminating everything around,  
and destroying ignorance.  
Rare is love, and very difficult to grasp.  
Love is obtained only  
when the Lord chooses to bestow it.  
The Lord is bound only by love and devotion,  
so all the scriptures declare.  
If love awakens in the devotee's heart,  
then the Lord remains always nearby and visible.  
Know for certain that love  
is the crown jewel of all practices, O Charan Das.*

*Jap Ji*



*The mesh of illusion is cut asunder  
And the ocean of life evaporates,  
When one is attuned to the Name of the Lord.  
Tukaram, Saint of Maharashtra*



*Maharaj Charan Singh*

# To Everything There Is a Season

*To everything there is a season  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die;  
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;  
A time to kill, and a time to heal;  
A time to break down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
A time to get, and a time to lose;  
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
A time to rend, and a time to sew;  
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
A time to love, and a time to hate;  
A time of war, and a time of peace.*

Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8



*Time changes and will go on changing, but Nam does not change.  
The current of Nam goes on as usual.  
It is Nam which changes the times and brings about all changes.*

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

# Just Please Him

Out of the infinite grace of the Lord we are blessed with the satsang of a true Master who instructs us on how to meditate so that we can reach his inner Radiant Form. We have been in this creation since the very beginning – for so long that even in our wildest imagination we cannot begin to comprehend this time span. We have incarnated into every possible life form, often going through pitiful and heart-rending suffering.

Unknown to us but out of the incredible mercy, compassion and grace of the Master, we have been pulled, prompted and pushed, slowly and slowly, to that astounding moment when we found ourselves in a human form and face to face with him.

Once we have received initiation from the Master, our escape from this vale of tears is assured. In return he asks only that we mould our lives to the teachings and do our daily meditation as instructed. Where could we ever find a better deal than this? So little expenditure – so much profit!

Why then do so many of us seem to have a problem giving full time regularly to meditation? Surely we realize the incredible good luck that has come our way? Finally, after aeons of struggle and out of zillions of souls, we have been selected to go back to the Father and escape the suffering and pain of this creation forever. Why delay? Perhaps because our effort and commitment to meditation is lacking, and, as there are no apparent signs of progress, we have just packed it all in, given up.

Do we really want to be dragged to Sach Khand behind the bulldozer when, as Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Quest for Light*:

*Meditation has the power to burn out our karmas of millions of lives.*

And as he advises us:

*We should never slacken our efforts. Every moment that you give to meditation takes you nearer to your home and brings the Lord's Grace upon you.... Please remember that we do not meditate in order to hear this or to see that but just for the love of the Lord and because our Master wants us to do this. We are not concerned with the results. Our duty is to do what we have been asked to do. The credit of meditation is never lost and the reward becomes apparent only at the proper time, known only to the Master.*

How wonderful – we have nothing to worry about. The Master will bank and multiply even our smallest efforts. We just have to make that effort. All we have to do is sit quietly and do our simran with our attention at the eye centre, totally relaxed and happy.

Just try it. One gets such a tremendous feeling of relief knowing that he takes responsibility for everything. Our duty is simply to sit and repeat the names at the eye centre and leave the rest to him. What could be easier? Maharaj Charan Singh said that even our strong and sincere desire to meditate is credited to our account.

Come on then, let's buckle down and do our meditation and please our Master with our loving effort. As Baba Ji says, we can all try harder. If we pause and think about this, we realize it is actually in our power to please our beloved Satguru. Isn't that an exciting thought?

Our Masters have repeatedly said that it is our meditation that pleases them. For forty years Maharaj Charan Singh begged us to do our meditation, and for the past twenty years Baba Ji has done the same, trying to make us realize the urgency and importance of doing our part. If we have been lacking in this duty, then let us resolve to please him from now on. Surely he deserves our obedience?

Baba Ji was once asked if it was possible to take the atmosphere of love and devotion we experience at Dera back to our home countries. He gave us a beautiful explanation. He said that while we are talking to him we are looking at him and we see him, but if we were turned around, we would no longer see him. If we don't see him, he hasn't gone anywhere – it is we who have turned our faces away from him.

Therefore, let us bring his presence into our lives every moment through constant simran – constant remembrance; let us keep our faces turned towards him so that we can feel the divine presence with us every moment of our lives. This will please our Master. Let us do our meditation, giving full time every day, and he will look after the rest. There is no short cut. It is our meditation that will please him.



*Master's Radiant Form is near your eyes.*

*Just lean within and see him.*

*Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light*

# Always Do Your Best

Regardless of the quality, keep doing your best – no more and no less than your best. If you try too hard to do more than your best, you will spend more energy than is needed and in the end your best will not be enough. When you overdo, you deplete your body and go against yourself, and it will take you longer to accomplish your goal. But if you do less than your best, you subject yourself to frustrations, self-judgment, guilt, and regrets.

Just do your best – in any circumstance in your life.

There was a man who wanted to transcend his suffering so he went to a Buddhist temple to find a Master to help him. He went to the Master and asked, “Master, if I meditate four hours a day, how long will it take me to transcend?”

The Master looked at him and said, “If you meditate four hours a day, perhaps you will transcend in ten years.”

Thinking he could do better, the man then said, “Oh, Master, what if I meditated eight hours a day, how long will it take me to transcend?”

The Master looked at him and said, “If you meditate eight hours a day, perhaps you will transcend in twenty years.”

“But why will it take me longer if I meditate more?” the man asked. The Master replied, “You are not here to sacrifice your joy or your life. You are here to live, to be happy, and to love. If you can do your best in two hours of meditation, but you spend eight hours instead, you will only grow tired, miss the point, and you won’t enjoy your life. Do your best, and perhaps you will learn that no matter how long you meditate, you can live, love, and be happy.”

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*

# Emptiness

*An empty vessel is beautiful because it's empty. Fill it and you can no longer see the vessel, but rather its functionality. Become empty and you'll see your own beauty, not merely your functionality.*

Daniel Levin, *The Zen Book*

What is emptiness? The dictionary defines it as void, vacant, or a vacuum. We talk of the vast emptiness of space; or we may equate emptiness to a feeling of loneliness – as in “After the Master left I felt a terrible emptiness.”

Usually, we tend to equate emptiness with nothingness. But how can this be true of spiritual emptiness? We are taught that Shabd is everywhere and fills all space with its vibration; therefore emptiness is neither a void nor a vacuum.

When the Masters tell us to empty ourselves they are simply telling us to still the mind, to stop the incessant inner chatter; to drop the emotions, moods, feelings and associations, the constant thought process that is associated with the mind.

Generally we refer to any activity that goes on in our heads as the mind, but all activity – whether movement, sensation or thought – is a function of the brain. The neurons in the brain are chatty little cells that love to talk to one another. They constantly pass messages, in the form of chemical molecules, back and forth to one another across tiny synapses. These molecules are associated with our emotions, such as fear, joy, anxiety, and even with our attention. When these neurons connect they form a strong bond. They pass the same sort of messages back and forth reinforcing this bond, which becomes a habit.



These are the habits Dr Johnson speaks of in *The Path of the Masters* when he says:

*Habit is the chief method of mental action. Habits are likened to grooves in which actions run. The first thing which mind does, after it is agitated and brought into action, is to establish a groove, which we call habit.... After many repetitions, the mind runs on very smoothly in its grooves and enjoys it.*

These habits are built up over a lifetime. Through constant repetition we systematically reinforce our emotions, thinking and beliefs in the neuronal pathways in our brains. Every feeling, action, sensation and emotion is a conditioned reaction we have learnt.

Mental repetition is mainly one of two kinds. Either it is something we want to happen, such as when we focus on our wants, or it is something we don't want to happen. When we constantly repeat the same thoughts of things we are afraid of, we build a connection of fear in our brains. Similarly, the more we tell ourselves we can't meditate, the stronger we make the connections between those little neurons and the less likely we will be able to meditate – whereas consistent practice builds a constructive habit that not only weakens old neuronal patterns, but builds strong new patterns.

So, where does the mind fit in to all this? The mind is totally elusive and almost impossible to describe. We can't identify the mind like aspects of our physical body, yet – because we think, we feel and we experience emotions – neither can we deny its existence. The mind creates our sense of self. It is our consciousness, our awareness.

It is the consciousness we call mind that interprets the activity of the brain – our ability to reflect on our own perceptions. Mind is the inner, personal observant self. It is the background on which the activity of the brain is displayed. Just as the night sky provides a canvas

for us to appreciate the beauty of the stars, so the mind provides the canvas of consciousness through which we are aware of the brain's activity.

We generally refer to this combination of brain activity and awareness as 'mind'. And to take it a step further, Dr Johnson tells us that Shabd is the motive power of the mind. Every activity in the universe is the result of Shabd working through many intermediate substances.

So the brain provides the functions that enable us to exist in this world. It is our thinking and reasoning powerhouse, while our mind is the consciousness that makes us aware of our actions.

In essence, therefore, the mind is empty. It is a vessel we fill with impressions, and ultimately all we see is its functionality, not its beauty. All our efforts on the spiritual path are simply to develop the ability to ignore the passing show of mental activity and to look to the beauty of the emptiness beyond.

We talk of the vast emptiness of space, yet science tells us that space is anything but empty. Rather it is filled with a limitless number of minute particles that are smaller than an atom and in constant motion. This movement creates the opportunity for anything to be created or dissolved. Similarly, a mind resting in meditation, empty of thoughts and activity, is full of possibility, for anything may appear, transform or simply fade away.

When the Masters speak of emptiness they are not speaking of nothingness but rather of the vast emptiness beyond our thinking, forms and ideas – the awareness of a sense of possibility, a sense that anything can arise, anything can happen.

It is the conscious awareness of this emptiness that we want to embrace, and meditation is the technique we practise to achieve this.

So, how does it work? Well, firstly we have to perfect our simran.

*Simran is used by all the world in one form or another. It simply means concentrating the attention upon one thing, then going over and over it, until it is made a part of the very fibre and substance of one's being.*

*The Path of the Masters*

Repetition occupies the thinking process. If we want to reach the door of the house but the guard dog is on patrol, we throw the dog a bone and walk to the door. Similarly, if we want to experience the emptiness within, we throw simran at the mind, and while it gnaws away at the repetition we have the opportunity to open the door, to stand on the threshold of the vast emptiness beyond.

The power behind consciousness is Shabd, vibrating at different levels of consciousness. Each word in the simran is associated with a particular range of conscious vibration, depending on the inner stage with which it is associated. It therefore has the potential, when used correctly, to alter our own vibration – our own level of consciousness. But the main purpose of simran is simply to focus our consciousness at the eye centre. Any other benefits, whether tangible or subtle, that occur during proper repetition are not the reason we do simran.

Dhyan is an aid to hold our attention at the eye centre, because it is very difficult to hold the attention in that emptiness. Maharaj Charan Singh said that dhyan means thinking about the Master, visualizing his form so that we feel we are in his presence. Simran and dhyan are the way we work with our mind rather than have it work against us.

Meditation is actually a very simple exercise. We complicate it because we become fixated with trying to stop the mind from producing thoughts, which is its natural occupation. We may as well try to stop our heart from beating. Meditation is not a war zone in which we fight the mind. Rather it is a process of resting the mind

in its natural state, in which we are simply aware of our existence, thoughts, emotions and sensations. When we don't attach meaning and emotion to our thoughts, when we don't engage them, it's easy to let them go, it's easy to just let them drift across the emptiness beyond – and then get back to our simran. We don't have to be a slave to whatever the mind produces. Rather, the mind should be our friend along an incredible journey, travelled with peace, harmony and joy.

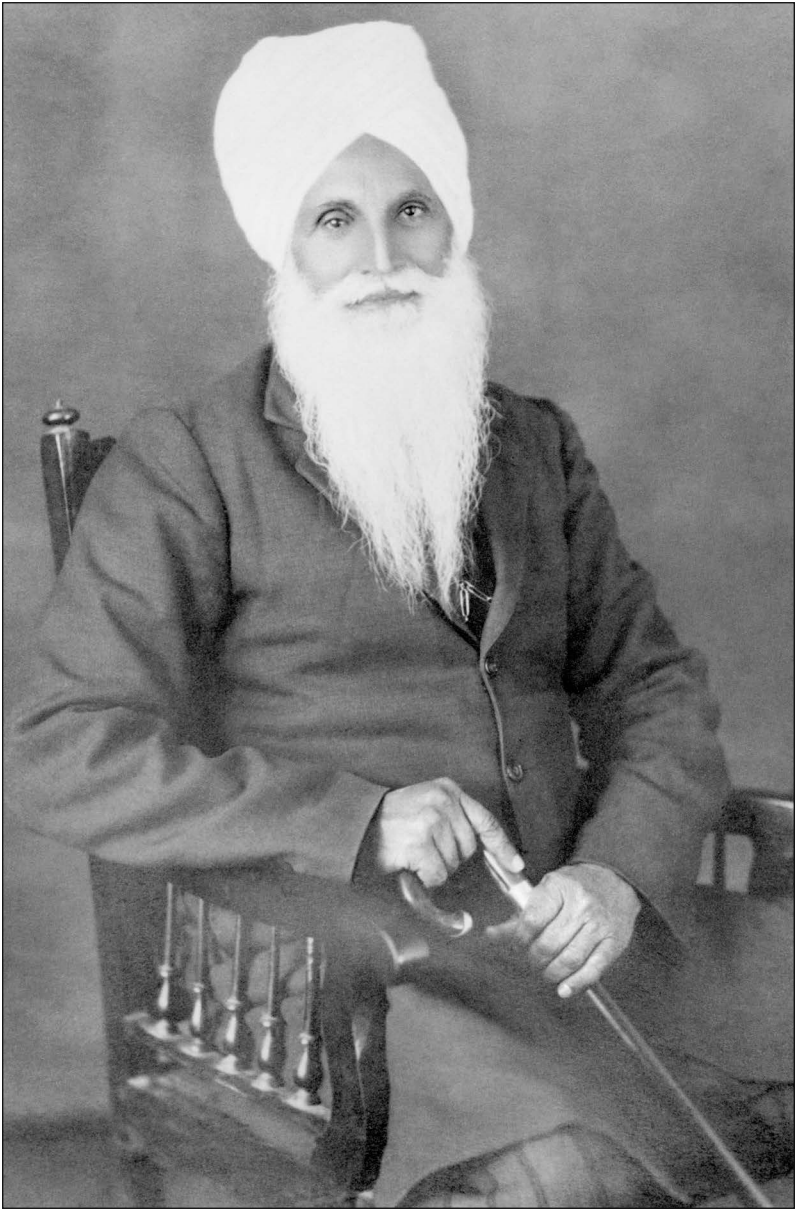
We are neither body nor mind. We are simply destined to assume a particular form and functionality. As long as there is a body we have form. Without the body – we just are: we are formless. Forms are veils – illusions – separating us from emptiness. Even the Master's physical form is not his true form, which resides in the emptiness of formlessness. In *Legacy of Love* Maharaj Charan Singh gives us a beautiful message. He says: "May your love of the form culminate in the love of the formless."

Shabd is the seeming emptiness that remains when all forms, whether spiritual, mental or material, have been discarded. We stand on the threshold of the experience of emptiness, of entering into nothingness, if we would simply allow ourselves to look beyond the mind to the shining essence of our true nature – the beauty of emptiness.

Rumi says: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing there is a field. I will meet you there."

The real point of meditation is to wait for the Master in Rumi's field – to rest in bare awareness, whether he comes or not – just simply to be there. Whatever comes up, just be open and present to it, and let it go. The aim is simply to rest in that vast emptiness – waiting for his radiant light to guide us home.

How much simpler could the process of meditation be?



*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

# The Subversive Mind

Nowadays people are very concerned about terrorism, and as a result of mindless acts of terror, there is increased security everywhere we go. This theme was touched on during a talk at the Dera, where the speaker's message was that we need to build our faith by increasing our contact with our inner Master through meditation.

When her talk was finished, instead of the usual practice of asking if there were any questions, Baba Ji took the microphone and in a very solemn voice said that he was considering whether or not to talk to us about a very serious problem. On reflection, he said, he felt it had to be shared with us. He cautioned us not to be afraid, but said that there was a terrorist situation at the Dera.

At this point, as one can imagine, the atmosphere became very tense. He said that they had received information that they were the target of a terrorist plot. Then as everybody experienced a feeling of alarm, Baba Ji went on to reassure us saying we should not worry as they had very good security and had managed to identify the terrorist organization behind the plot, which he said was called M-I-N-D. He said that we have a very good weapon to defend ourselves against it – the Shabd – upon which everyone burst into very relieved laughter.

Baba Ji's words have been paraphrased, but they bring home to us the power of the mind and its terrorist activities against us. No one wants to live under the threat of terrorism, yet that is exactly what we impose on ourselves – we fill ourselves with terror through our own misguided thinking.

Immediately we perceive a conflict situation we develop a battle plan, identifying the terrain, the strategies and tactics to be employed.

We choose the weapons of war: fear, worry, hurt, anger or whatever negative emotion we select. We load the weapon with poorly made ammunition: disinformation, misinformation, injustice and irrational thought, and then we command the onslaught against ourselves as we persistently fight ourselves. And then we wonder why we find life a constant battle!

Why does the mind find misinformation, disinformation and gossip so attractive? Why do we find the weapons for seeking the truth, our simran and bhajan, so unappealing? We crave excitement, and the ego thrives on a prolonged and difficult struggle – a constant battle of wits. From the moment we wake in the morning until we fall sleep at night, the churning chaos of the mind is thrust on us as it runs riot.

We need to take control of our thoughts and thinking so that we can live a life of peace and calm. The Masters give us simran and bhajan, very effective weapons to counteract our own mental terrorist activity – if only we would use them correctly and effectively.

Through the practice of simran we learn to do our worldly tasks while we simultaneously remain focused in our centre. During our ordinary daily activities we should try to continue the task of constant, unrelenting repetition, trying not to allow distractions to break our rhythm. We must focus on what we are doing. We should also never give all our attention to the mind and the external world, but hold back on some of our precious attention, keeping it focused within. At first this will take a huge amount of effort, but the Masters assure us that as time goes on, it does become habitual and automatic, requiring less and less effort until finally it becomes effortless, moving under its own momentum.

We need to be conscious and aware of this process so that we do not allow the attention to slip away and let the mind take over again.

We must learn to keep that inner door ajar so that immediately the mind sounds the battle cry, we can call on the Master for help. Baba Ji has said that in the face of adversity we forget the Master. Sadly, when we need his help the most we close the door – we shut him out and stop our simran.

It is possible to control and reduce our negative thoughts and emotions. It is possible to create and increase our positive thoughts. It is possible to keep our simran going and to reach the ultimate nature of mind, which is pure. It just takes a little awareness and effort. As a Tibetan Buddhist master wrote:

*The mere recognition of awareness will not liberate you. Throughout your lives from beginningless time, you have been enveloped in false beliefs and deluded habits. From then till now you have spent every moment as a miserable, pathetic slave of your thoughts! And when you die, it's not at all certain where you will go. You will follow your karma, and you will have to suffer. This is the reason you must meditate, continuously preserving the state of awareness you have been introduced to.... But if you do not meditate and get used to it, you will be left like a baby on a battlefield: you'll be carried off by the enemy, the hostile army of your own thoughts.*

Dudjom Rinpoche, *Counsels From My Heart*





# The Invisibility Cloak

In recent years the series of popular Harry Potter books have grabbed the imagination of the whole world and been widely read by children and adults alike. They have become what are perhaps some of the best-known fantasies ever written.

Anyone who knows anything about the magic of Harry Potter will tell you that this young wizard has a cloak that he uses – an invisibility cloak. And when he covers himself with it, no one knows he is there. He can observe what people are doing and he can listen to their conversations, but he remains invisible to them.

We too are living our own amazing story: the story of a soul on its way to God-realization. Although our story is one of sublime truth, it also has a definite ring of fantasy about it, because it is about the greatest miracle of all. And in our story there also exists an invisibility cloak.

We know that the Master placed his Radiant Form inside us when we were initiated. We are striving to reach a point in our meditation where we will meet that form, where we will be able to see it. But we ourselves have woven the invisibility cloak which covers the Master's inner form and hides him from our inner vision. We have woven it from the yarn of karmas of untold lives, a lack of concentration, insufficient dedication and regrettable lapses of commitment.

And now the only way to unravel that cloak is by using the methods the Masters tell us about: constant simran, total dedication to the path, living in his will and commitment to the four principles given to us when the miracle of our initiation happened – with extra-special attention given to the fourth principle: regular and devoted meditation, the one where we are most likely to slip up. The invisibility

cloak will not be able to withstand this way of life indefinitely. Sooner or later it must and will dissolve and Master's Radiant Form will become visible.

In the meantime, let us always remember that he is there, even though we cannot see him. He sees us, every second of every day. He is aware of our acts, he knows our weaknesses and he is even aware of our thoughts – in itself a scary thought! But it is comforting to think that he also knows when we are sincerely trying. He knows of our struggles, and welcomes even our failures.

So let us try to act as we would if we could see him standing next to us – because he is. And let us try to live the kind of life that he expects his disciples to live. Every little effort we make, every time we chase an unworthy thought from our mind with simran, every time we feel love for him, we are coming closer to the day his invisibility cloak will disappear and we will be able to bask in his radiance.



*It's a very strange thing – I can tell you a little from my personal experience also. First, we have no love for the path, we have no love for the Master. The Master forces us to love him, he creates love for the Lord in us....*

*And when that love arises in us, when we become a victim of that love, then he conceals himself. Then it's a game of hide-and-seek.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

# Essence

Sant Mat is about essence, or truth or love: words synonymous with what we mean when we utter the word 'God'.

There is only one Word worthy of our full attention and constant remembrance – a Word that we comprehend not through learning but through direct perception. This Word is Shabd, also referred to in the Bible as the Word. It's also called the Kalma by Muslims, the Tao by the Chinese, the Holy Ghost by Christians and the Holy Name or Spirit by Jews.

All other words are merely containers which each one of us will fill with our own wine – a product of our limited understanding, cultural background, geography, personal history and above all, past sanskaras – the experiences we have collected.

Mystic philosophers through the ages have taught the same truth about the essence of the Word; this essence can be experienced by all people through direct perception, which is the only worthwhile communication. Direct perception is a faculty of the soul which is above the intellect and beyond semantics. In other words, what we experience through direct perception cannot be conveyed in ordinary language. One can only experience it for oneself and it is impossible to communicate it to someone else.

Mystics, all of them perfect living Masters, have all declared the same truth:

- there is only one God, who is the essence that we call life, life-force, spirit, Shabd or all the myriad names we may find for God;
- this essence is in everything;

- essence or God can only be found through stillness within one's self through the practice of meditation, sometimes termed "to die a living death";
- this meditation requires initiation by a perfect living Master and submission to him. Then it is just a matter of practice.

In Sant Mat everything one could ever hope for begins and ends with the perfect living Master. He teaches us to become vegetarians and to abstain from alcoholic drinks and recreational drugs as we try and live a moral life and give one-tenth of every day to meditation. Soami Ji says in *Sar Bachan*:

*Leaving everything else aside, one must implicitly obey the Sat Guru of his own time, and faithfully follow his instructions. This will lead him to success. This is the long and short of everything.*

All saints bring the same message – that this world is not perfect, that it will never be perfect and that it is not our home. Those souls who are marked will eventually be led to the presence of the perfect living Master of the time and be initiated into the path of eternal liberation. For initiates on the path, nothing else remains. Baba Jaimal Singh reiterates time and again that it is only the pralabdh, the fate karma for this life – or, in other words, the giving and the receiving – that has to be dealt with. Our sole purpose for being here is to meditate and grow spiritually. He says:

*The compassionate Hazur in his Shabd form is always with you. ... The disciple should not do what his mind dictates, but should remain within the will of the Master. Worldly duties have to be carried out, because when the fruit is ripe, it drops automatically from the tree....*

*If after being born in a human body one meets a perfect Sat Guru, then everything is accomplished. This is the fruit. To stay within the will of the Sat Guru is the ripening of the fruit; to attend daily to meditation to the best of one's ability is watering the tree; and to merge in the Shabd-dhun is the ripening and the falling of the fruit.*

*Spiritual Letters*

The Greek philosopher Plotinus says the following about death:

*There is no death of anyone save in appearance only, even as there is no birth of anyone, but in appearance only. For when anything turns away from its essence to assume a nature, there is the notion of "birth", and in the same way when it turns away from the nature, to the essence, there is the notion of a "death", but in truth there is neither a coming into being nor a destruction of any essence, but it is only manifest at one time and invisible at another.*

*This manifestation and invisibility are due respectively to the density of the material assumed on the one hand, and to the density of the essence on the other.*

As quoted by Roger Lipsey in *Coomaraswamy, His Life and Work*, Vol. III,

This essence is the Shabd and every individual soul is a particle of the Shabd, just as a drop of water is the same as the ocean. In essence water is the same wherever it is found, whether in India, Alaska or elsewhere. It might be somewhat polluted, but it can be purified. Similarly, electricity is the same wherever it is found. It could be weaker or stronger depending on the amperage, but if one presses the switch the light will shine. Gold, no matter how much filth covers it, remains pure beneath the dirt.

As unworthy as we are, it is the Master's love that has finally brought us to the path. He will find every one of his marked souls and pull them into his fold when the time comes for that soul to start its journey home. With initiation the process of purifying the water, of cleansing the gold, starts. All he asks from us is to follow the principles and to try our best to do our simran – repeating the five holy names he gives us. Simran is our lifeline, for as he often says, “I am closer to you than breathing”.

We may feel hopeless and desperate when we read how difficult it all seems, and we get tied up in knots worrying about our progress on the path, even though the Masters assure us time and again that the results are not in our hands and we should just try to do our best. As Baba Ji asks us, just sit and do nothing. It is the Master's love that is doing it all.

It is all love and love conquers all. God's love for us will make this personal miracle happen. But sadly, it seems, we have no concept of what this word “love” really means. In the Sant Mat sense, it is the love of the Master for his disciple.

The Great Master once said that if one could look down from a great height to this creation, one would see that it is nothing but a gigantic rubbish dump. If you put a child on a rubbish dump, it will inevitably get thoroughly soiled, and it will be quite a task to clean it. We are now in the process of being cleaned, and this is being done with a love which is beyond human understanding.

Gradually we will become aware of the Master's presence at all times and see him everywhere, for there is nothing but the Master; he is all there is and everything is in his hands.

At initiation his Radiant Form takes its seat within the disciple, from where he administers our whole metamorphosis. Slowly but surely and imperceptibly the merging process starts, and eventually the drop once more disappears into the ocean of pure love.

Maharaj Charan Singh used to say that love is within us and is not to be found anywhere outside. The love and recognition that we seek from the body Master is already within us. Our souls are already in love with the Lord. His gifts can be had here and now at the eye centre. We only have to believe and look.

The Masters repeatedly tell us we must meditate. However difficult or impossible it might seem at times, meditation is the only way. And as Soami Ji promised, he himself will see that this meditation gets done, for it is his love that does it all.



*Q. So the real form of the disciple is the same as the real form of the Master?*

M. What is the real form of the Master? Shabd. And what is the real form of the disciple? Soul. And what is the difference between soul and Shabd? It is the level of consciousness. The real form of everybody is potentially the same. Potentially everybody is God because we have the capacity to become God. So the real Sarup of every disciple is ultimately that of the Master because he will merge into the Master and become the Master, and after becoming the Master, he will become the Father.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Heritage*

# Enlightenment

We are privileged to have the words of great souls who have risen to the ultimate spiritual heights to become one with the Divine, and who have been willing to share something of their experience with us.

The seventeenth-century saint Tukaram spoke openly of his enlightenment. In the book *Tukaram, Saint of Maharashtra*, we read his ecstatic proclamation of his uniting with the Supreme: “I have merged in Him!” He further declared:

*Divine joy is seething through my entire being  
And all my emotions are unified in the Lord  
As the rivers meet in the ocean.*

During a question and answer session with his disciples, an Indian spiritual teacher and philosopher Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj Ji revealed that he himself had become one with the infinite ocean of consciousness, beyond existence, space and time. A questioner asked how he'd achieved this:

The Master replied:

*I did my best to follow my teacher's advice and in a comparatively short time I realized within myself the truth of his teaching. All I did was to remember his teaching, his face, his words, constantly.*

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, *I am That*, Part 1



# Pride – The Powerful Passion

Pride or ego is reputed to be the most powerful of our passions and the very last to leave us. The most dangerous aspect of pride is its subtlety. It has been described as a black ant on a black rock in the darkest of nights. This description is meant to convey the invisibility of pride.

The Masters often warn us that pride is so subtle that even thinking we are humble is a form of pride. Pride is vanity and it is also the awareness of the self, the I-ness – not the true self or the soul. Pride is about preserving the self that we are familiar with.

Pride is about self-interest and self-importance. It manifests in the form of us talking about ourselves, our achievements, our experiences, our successes, our failures, and our family. It also manifests in thinking that we are right and others are wrong. If someone offers us good advice, instead of assessing whether we should follow that advice or not, our pride steps in and we may question their right to give us advice. For example, if someone advises us to avoid watching violence on television as it might affect our meditation, and if we enjoy this type of programme, we are likely to challenge that person angrily.

Why do we often shoot the messenger? The messenger only conveys the message. Let us value the message and not condemn or judge the messenger. Let's rather analyse the benefits of the message and take positive action.

Perhaps we are afraid of the truth because it strikes at the heart of our habits and practices and reveals our true character and weaknesses. It is our pride, our ego and our notion of always being right that stands in the way. This is the very reason that people never learn from their mistakes.

Pride prevents us from improving ourselves because we make the fatal assumption that we are right. The Masters tell us that pride's fundamental assumption is its own infallibility. We don't listen to others and won't take any advice or criticism. The moment someone criticizes us we defend ourselves to prove we are right. Pride is that part of our thinking that makes us feel more important than others, and that we are right while others are wrong. Many ascetics, holy men, and swamis have, after years of sacrifice and deprivation, succumbed to the subtle passion of pride, despite their years of seclusion and discipline.

Pride is subtle – it cannot see itself because it sees nothing but self. It can never see its own imperfections. It sees its own shortcomings reflected in others while it imagines itself perfect.

Another subtle manifestation of pride is when we tell others what to do without being asked for our opinion. The big assumption is: "I am right!" This assumption leads to arguments, fights, disputes, wars and bloodshed. Yet its opposite – humility – leads to sharing, caring and serving.

We must not be afraid of the truth or the ideal, even if we are not practising it. We must remember that we are here in the creation because we are all imperfect and that we are all striving for the same goal.

Maharaj Charan Singh once said that Sant Mat presents the ideal so that we can strive for it. It doesn't mean that those who follow Sant Mat always practise the ideal. We are all struggling souls and we are all striving to achieve the ideal. But if the ideal is not presented to us, what will we strive for?



# The Final Journey

It is the divine genius of creation that the Love Stream, God-in-motion, is a current of the purest, most intoxicating love-light. It is the distillation and concentration of all romantic loves multiplied to infinity.

Just one taste of this love and the mind is utterly smitten and cannot get enough of the bliss. It now automatically lets go of all the lesser pleasures that so distract it from the divine, much like a small child who, when offered an opalescent pearl, automatically throws away the grubby little stone that she has been clinging to for ages.

Attaching yourself to the Real, you automatically detach yourself from the unreal. Never the other way around. Having taken hold of the Greatest Love and let go of lesser loves, the soul at last mingles again with its own kind. Day by day the mind is purified and illumined in the great River of Love.

And as that barrier is cleansed and made transparent to the love shining within itself, it experiences an even greater sensitivity to the pull of love, an even greater rapture, and is set on fire with a longing to merge back into the source of this intoxicating love.

In this way the soul journeys along an ever-increasing continuum of love back to the source of all love.

All those who have made the Incredible Journey say the same:

*In the beginning there is love.*

*In the middle there is love.*

*In the end there is love.*

*It is all love.*

Henry Mann, *Love Stream*



*Maharaj Sawan Singh*

# Seeking Happiness

Nasrudin saw a man sitting disconsolately at the wayside, and asked what ailed him.

“There is nothing of interest in life, brother,” said the man; “I have sufficient capital not to have to work, and I am on this trip only in order to seek something more interesting than the life I have at home. So far I haven’t found it.”

Without another word, Nasrudin seized the traveller’s knapsack and made off down the road with it, running like a hare. Since he knew the area, he was able to out-distance him.

The road curved, and Nasrudin cut across several loops, with the result that he was soon back on the road ahead of the man whom he had robbed. He put the bag by the side of the road and waited in concealment for the other to catch up.

Presently the miserable traveller appeared, following the tortuous road, more unhappy than ever because of his loss. As soon as he saw his property lying there, he ran towards it, shouting with joy.

“That’s one way of producing happiness,” said Nasrudin.

*Idries Shah, The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin*



*We should be happy under all circumstances,  
means if you adjust to a situation, you will be happy  
whatever the circumstances.*

*Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live*

# Love – The Inner Voice

Romantic love is the limited point of reference from which most of us attempt to understand divine love, the law of God.

It is this physical love that leads us to believe we understand what love is, but actually we haven't a clue about real love and truth. Spiritual love is very different from physical love, and it is through our meditation that we begin to understand this difference. This is the time when we listen for the voice of God and seek his divine love within.

Maharaj Charan Singh tells us in *Quest for Light* that simran and bhajan are the only things that will ultimately put us in touch with the voice of the Lord that is ringing within us. Therefore the best part of our day should be when we meditate, when we communicate with God, calling his name and listening for his reply. It is a state of oneness that we are trying to achieve, in which we merge our love in him. The Masters talk of the drop merging back into the ocean of love: losing one's identity and becoming another being. But why would we want to lose our identity?

This idea is touched on in the movie *Avatar*, in which a trained marine soldier gets to learn and experience what it is like to be able to connect, feel and communicate with every creature: plant or animal, bird or beast, as though he were interacting with human beings. This experience changes him to such an extent that he wants to leave his old identity and body behind. As his values, views and understanding change, he finds that his old identity has no more significance or importance to him.

This is the crux of our meditation: to lose our identity, to transform ourselves into the divine and merge back into the ocean of his love.

This is the ultimate experience of love and joy that the Masters speak about. They tell us that happiness and bliss are within us, but in our ignorance we look for happiness outside ourselves, in fleeting worldly pleasures.

If we lose something inside our home, we will never find it if we look for it outside. Similarly, we must look inside ourselves for the answers we seek. Having searched everywhere and not found God anywhere outside, we finally realize that the place to look for him is in the darkness within, in the inner stillness – through meditation.

If we would only put into practice what the Master teaches us, we would find the answers; we would discover the truth within through our own inner enquiry. For it is only when we turn within and look for the Lord there, that we will begin to experience what true love is.

Love is more than a feeling or an attitude; it is more than a bond in a relationship. It is the nectar of the universe: one Sound, one Word, one Logos, one Shabd, one God – Oneness, the ultimate union.

In *Adventure of Faith* the author offers this advice:

*Preserve your heart's capacity to love, for you know not whether God will one day ask you for your undivided heart.*

Our Master has taught us how to meditate: how to listen, look and commune in the stillness within our own selves. Through meditation we learn to trust our own intuition and to experience without any doubts, not only the inner voice of God, but also the light and love of Oneness.

It is through unshakeable faith that we will reach the stage where we are willing to give up this entire physical creation, simply leave it all behind for those great mines of bliss and happiness within.

Maharaj Charan Singh has told us that this is a path of love, and love only. In *Quest for Light* he tells us how to develop that love, saying:

*The more you are attached to Shabd, the nearer you will be to the Master and the stronger shall be your love for him. The more you will love the Master, the more will the love of God grow in your heart....*

*The best way to develop love for the Master is to devote your time to simran and bhajan. The more time you spend in the spiritual exercises with faith, love and humility, the greater will be your love for the Master and God.*



*Within the mind's eye  
My love doth ever lie.  
Each moment to my gaze  
His glory is ablaze.  
Whoso with His splendour is stricken so,  
Forgetful of himself doth verily grow.  
Sarmad, as quoted in  
*Discourses on Sant Mat, Vol. I**



# Book Review



## The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

BY SOGYAL RINPOCHE, EDITED BY PATRICK GAFFNEY  
AND ANDREW HARVEY

PUBLISHER: SAN FRANCISCO: HARPER COLLINS, 2002.

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In this book Tibetan Buddhist Lama Sogyal Rinpoche addresses squarely a topic that most people avoid, the topic of death. He says that when one faces death, one's frame of mind is of critical importance. To approach death with equanimity and a spiritual orientation, rather than going through the anguish of clinging to a life that is being ripped away, takes a lifetime of spiritual practice. Accordingly, the first major section of the book is entitled "Living." In this section, the reader is treated to a remarkably succinct and clear presentation of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and spiritual practice.

The next major section, entitled "Dying," focuses on the actual process of dying. Sogyal Rinpoche offers insights from Tibetan Buddhism on how an individual can adopt the best attitude and approach to death. He also gives advice for those who are with a dying person on how best to help that person. His descriptions of both the process of dying and the meditative techniques that help the dying person are quite detailed, but the most essential point is summed up when he says:

*In all religious traditions it is held that to die in a state of prayer is enormously powerful.... To create the most positive possible imprint on the mind-stream before death is essential. The most effective practice of all to achieve this is a simple practice of Guru Yoga, where the dying person merges his or her mind with the wisdom mind of the master, or the Buddha, or any enlightened being. Even if you cannot visualize your master at this moment, try at least to remember him, think of him in your heart, and die in a state of devotion. When your consciousness awakens again after death, this imprint of the master's presence will awaken with you, and you will be liberated. If*

*you die remembering the master, then the possibilities of his or her grace are limitless.*

The third section of the book is entitled “Death and Rebirth.” Here Sogyal Rinpoche describes the various stages that a person passes through between death and rebirth. As he describes each experience a person faces during this transition, a recurring theme is the need to maintain a calm, disinterested poise. One can only too easily be caught up in fascination with or fear of the sights and sounds encountered.

Whether or not this description of death intrigues you, it is easy to see the connection between the state of mind he is recommending and the lifelong practice of meditation. Sogyal Rinpoche recounts an incident when, as a young disciple, he was meditating in the company of his lama:

*Then one day, when I was receiving the teaching and practicing with him, I had the most astounding experience. Everything I had ever heard about in the teachings seemed to be happening to me – all the material phenomena around us were dissolving – I became so excited and stammered: “Rinpoche ... Rinpoche ... it’s happening!” I will never forget the look of compassion on his face as he leaned down toward me and comforted me: “It’s all right ... it’s all right. Don’t get too excited. In the end, it’s neither good nor bad ...”*

His lama taught him that inner experiences can be traps, if one gets attached to them. “You have to go beyond them into a deeper and more stable grounding: It was to that grounding that his wise words brought me.”

Throughout this discussion of living and dying, Sogyal Rinpoche weaves in the story of his childhood in Tibet and his years of discipleship. This story greatly enriches the book. We get a taste of the love between master and disciple and of the warm, human dimension of this spiritual path. He says of his lama, “Jamyang Khentse is the ground of my life.” Expressing the profound effect of this relationship, he says, “Had I not met my master Jamyang Khyentse, I know I would have been an entirely

different person. With his warmth and wisdom and compassion, he personified the sacred truth of the teachings and so made them practical and vibrant with life.” Speaking of his master’s kindness, his many small acts of tenderness and generosity, he writes:

*In my tradition we revere the master as being even kinder than the buddhas themselves. Although the compassion and power of the buddhas are always present, our obscurations prevent us from meeting the buddhas face to face. But we can meet the master; he or she is here, living, breathing, speaking, acting, before us to show us, in all the ways possible, the path of the buddhas: the way to liberation.*

The author stresses that devotion is the key to making the heart receptive to the transmission of blessings from the master. A Tibetan saint expressed this point with vivid imagery: “When the sun of fierce devotion shines on the snow mountain of the master, the stream of his blessings will pour down.” This is illustrated by the experience of Jikme Gyalwe Nyugu:

*For many years he had been doing a solitary retreat in a cave in the mountains. One day when he came outside, the sun was pouring down; he gazed out into the sky and saw a cloud moving in the direction of where his master, Jikme Lingpa, lived. The thought arose in his mind, “Over there is where my master is,” and with that thought a tremendous feeling of longing and devotion surged up in him. It was so strong, so shattering, that he fainted. When Jikme Gyalwe Nyugu came to, the entire blessing of his master’s wisdom mind had been transmitted to him, and he had reached the highest stage of realization, what we call “the exhaustion of phenomenal reality.”*

Sogyal Rinpoche points out that it is ultimately the “inner teacher” that the disciple must focus on. He recounts the way his teacher Jamyang Khyentse explained this point, saying that from beginningless time our true nature has always been Buddha-consciousness, but aeons ago we became obscured.

This true nature, however, our Buddha nature, has never completely surrendered to the tyranny of ignorance; somewhere it is always rebelling against its domination. Our Buddha nature, then, has an active aspect, which is our “inner teacher.” From the very moment we became obscured, this inner teacher has been working tirelessly for us, trying to bring us back to the radiance and spaciousness of our true being. Not for one second, Jamyang Khyentse said, has the inner teacher given up on us.

He went on to explain that for many lifetimes we have hungered and longed and prayed, until our karmas became purified enough for the miracle of meeting the outer teacher to take place:

*The inner teacher, who has been with us always, manifests in the form of the “outer teacher,” whom, almost as if by magic, we actually encounter. This encounter is the most important of any lifetime. Who is this outer teacher? None other than the embodiment and voice and representative of our inner teacher. What else could explain why we feel so strongly connected to him or her?*

Sogyal Rinpoche elaborates on the relationship between the inner and the outer teacher, saying that:

*... the master’s task is to teach us to receive, without any obscuration of any kind, the message of our own inner teacher, and to bring us to realize the continual presence of this ultimate teacher within us.... Not only is the master the direct spokesman of your own inner teacher, he or she is also the bearer, channel, and transmitter of all the blessings of all the enlightened beings. That is what gives your master the extraordinary power to illuminate your mind and heart. He or she is nothing less than the human face of the absolute.*



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