

April 2014

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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I Can Do Nothing

*I want to devote myself to you, but I lack love –
All my attempts to sit at your feet have come to naught.*

For some reason my mind is out of control.

When I wish to do good deeds, I lack will power;

When I wish to give in charity, I lack the means;

I do not know how to honour priests and guests.

I have no mercy for my fellow humans in my heart,

Nor can I do anything for them.

I do not know how to surrender to my Master,

Nor how to serve the saints.

I cannot perform rites and rituals,

Nor can I renounce the world.

I cannot go to dwell in forests,

Nor can I control my senses.

When I wish to make pilgrimages, my heart is not in it;

When I wish to make vows, I do not know how.

Even though I say that God resides within me,

The feelings of 'me' and 'you' still remain.

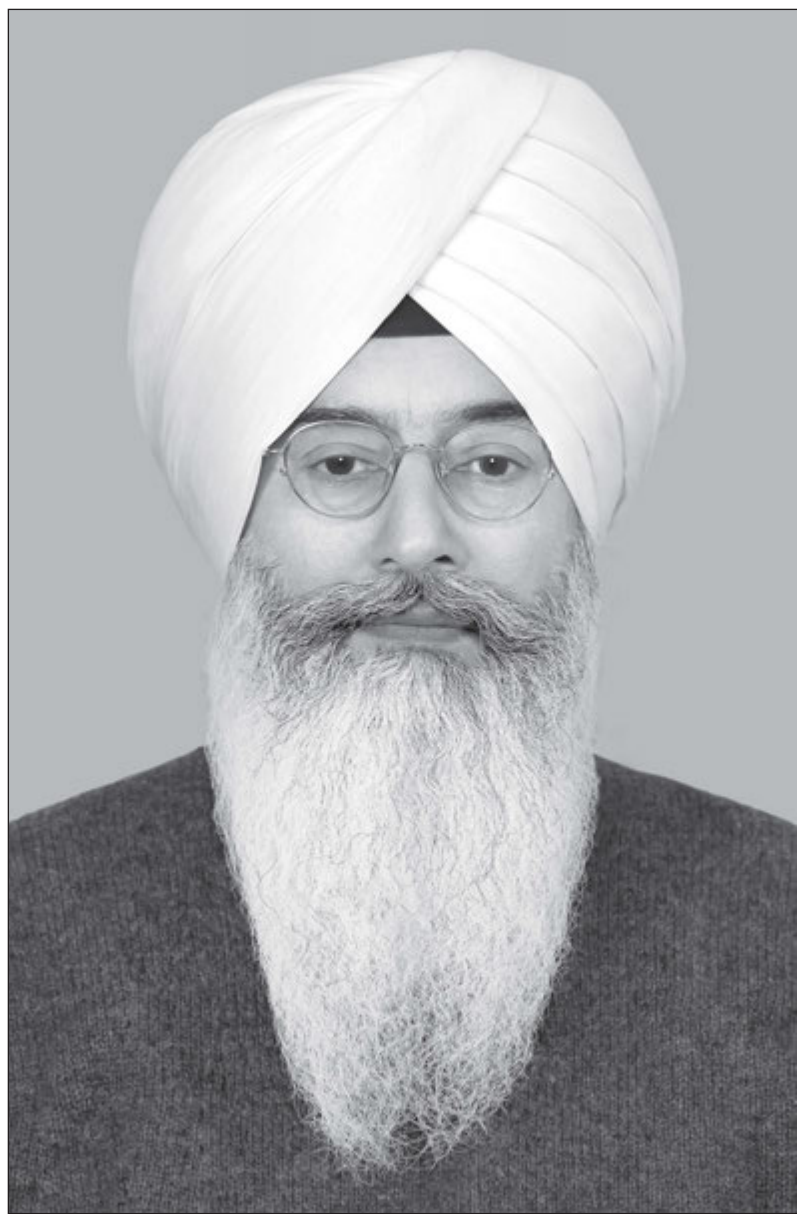
All these weaknesses have led me to surrender to you.

I have no more worries now, says Tuka,

Since I have no need of past merits

And I have become your marked servant.

Tukaram, The Ceaseless Song of Devotion



A Thankful Heart

In an informal discussion somebody once asked Maharaj Ji what quality he liked most in a satsangi, and he answered: “a thankful heart”. He might have said: devotion, or obedience, or discipline. But above all these he valued thankfulness. Are we thankful enough for being on this path? Have we even really thought about what it means to be a disciple of a perfect Master? Do we appreciate the fact that our long search – perhaps many lifetimes of searching – is coming to an end and we are on our way home?

Great Master, whose gift for lyrical expression could take one’s breath away, once wrote to somebody:

Your face is towards the light. Let nothing hinder or discourage you. You shall drink of the Living Waters, and be thirsty no more. No matter what may be your difficulties and deficiencies; they shall all be overcome, and the divine Shabd whose music never ceases within you shall sooner or later bear you upon its loving waves back to your original home. Have no fear or doubt. So long as one’s face is turned uncompromisingly towards the Sat Guru, he is on his way to perfect realization. ... No one can say just how long it will take. But it must be.

Spiritual Gems

It must be. It will happen. How can we not be overwhelmingly thankful for such a promise? And let’s think about how few people are chosen for this privilege. Perhaps one in a million. Can we have the slightest idea what a tremendous privilege has been conferred on us? To have found a perfect Master, and to have been accepted and

initiated by him, has to be the most important development in all our existence, right from the time that our souls were separated from the original one Being. There's no other event in all our many lives that even comes close.

And every single one of us must have wondered at times: 'Why me? What have I ever done to deserve this?' This is a mystery, one of the unanswerable questions of Sant Mat. Only the Creator knows whom he marks and why.

In *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II, we're told that without the grace of the Lord we would never be able to escape from here. In fact, nothing we have ever done would be enough to qualify us for this grace. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us quite frankly:

We have done nothing. A man can never do anything to deserve all this. We can never do anything to deserve his love. He just gives it and gives it. We are too small fry to even invoke his grace, because we are so helpless as humans in this creation. It's all his grace. If the Master won't come with his grace, then who will? It is nothing but his grace that we get so much pull and love for the Lord from within.

Even if we've been model satsangis right from the start; even if we've never missed a day of meditation and always given our full time, and even if we've been scrupulous in sticking to the principles, even that is not enough to make us worthy of this privilege. There's another reply to a question in which Maharaj Charan Singh strips away any possible illusions that we might deserve this:

If we look within ourselves and think we have become worthy, we never become worthy. We have been here in this creation

for generations and generations, and we have been collecting so many karmas every time we have been here. If we must account for all those karmas, it will be impossible to become worthy of the Lord. There would be no end to them. So what we need is the Lord's grace, his forgiveness, nothing else.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

We can only be thankful to him for having chosen us to go home. It's been a long, long journey, but it's coming to an end. Let's remember this when we struggle with our meditation, when we complain about how long it's taking for us to see any results. In the bigger scale of things it's probably not taking very long at all. But still we keep complaining about how long it's taking. Maharaj Charan Singh once put it into perspective:

Sister, the reason is very clear. Can you know when this creation came into being? Can we calculate when this creation started? Since then, we have been here in this creation. We can't even extend our imagination to grasp how long we have been here in this world and how many karmas we have been collecting in every life and how much of a load of that dirt we have collected – and we want to burn it just in a second, comparatively? Naturally it has to take time. The bigger the heap, the more the time, so that is why meditation takes so long.

Die to Live

Meditation does take long. We've all discovered that. We've been programmed to expect quick results from any effort we make. But this doesn't happen on our spiritual path. It can't. We have to undergo such profound changes to make ourselves fit to handle what's going to be

given to us. We have to be slowly transformed from lowly humans to become pure enough and evolved enough to come face to face with God. We can't expect to rush this process. We should just feel humble and very grateful that we have been marked. We should just accept that we are among the fortunate few, and show our gratitude by doing what he asks of us – most of all, by doing our daily meditation.

Even if we're still heavily burdened with karma, we just have to show that we love him, by being obedient and doing what he asks, and we can be forgiven anything. There's a wonderful answer on the subject of forgiveness from Maharaj Charan Singh in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. II:

You don't have to ask the Father at all. You have only to love him, and you are automatically forgiven. ... You have just to give yourself to him, and then he gives you everything. ... He makes you God; he makes you the Lord.

But of course the important thing here is obedience. We have to show our gratitude to him by doing what he asks of us, no matter how difficult we may find it and no matter how long it takes. How else can we show our appreciation?

Although meditation can be a real struggle, making an effort is offering our thanks to the Lord for what he's doing for us, whereas not trying and just giving up is being ungrateful. The work we put into our meditation is our only meaningful way of saying thank you, of proving that we're grateful for this tremendous grace and of trying in our inadequate way to give something in return. All he wants from us is our meditation. We have nothing else we can give.

If we're not working at our meditation, perhaps it means that we don't appreciate what we have; that we don't understand the

magnitude of this path and what it's giving us. Let's go back to Great Master, who tries to explain its grandeur and significance when he writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

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. ... 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. ... Your getting Nam means more than if you had inherited a million dollars, or many millions. You are one of the lucky sons of Sat Purush, and he has chosen you to get Nam and go with the Master to Sach Khand. You must reach there. Nothing can prevent you.

And then he adds: “But you can hasten the progress or retard it, as you like”.

Let's try to hasten the process. Let's work at our meditation – with commitment and patience and as much humility as we can, without expecting or demanding anything in return. Let's just sit, every day, for as long as we can manage, in a spirit of love and deep gratitude, knowing that only this meditation and his grace can help us to attain our eventual goal of going home to our Source.



Making a Lifestyle Choice

Once we have been initiated into the Sant Mat teachings, meditation should become our priority. That said, it is generally due to dwindling enthusiasm that we come to realize this is not actually the case. Initially we start off with great keenness and our days are filled with joy, because we have a living Master guiding us and meditation is an exciting challenge. Every gap we can organize in our day we sit quietly and do our simran.

We are so eager to withdraw to the eye centre and open that inner door. But slowly, as this euphoria peters out, the realization of the monumental task we have undertaken dawns on us, and before we know it our spiritual life becomes part of the unending battle of existence, frequently being pushed to the back of a demanding queue.

Time and again we take stock of the situation in an attempt to bring our spiritual commitment to the fore. And it works, for a little while, but then our daily responsibilities once again push it out. It becomes a continual struggle in which the mind and life itself more frequently win the battle for our attention. This process can become very disheartening, as the times of exuberance and joy seem to get fewer.

Still, meditation is vital in our spiritual quest. In fact, it is our real spiritual quest. If we don't meditate then our life is simply a charade – we present a false image of ourselves as we, so to say, 'play act' at spirituality.

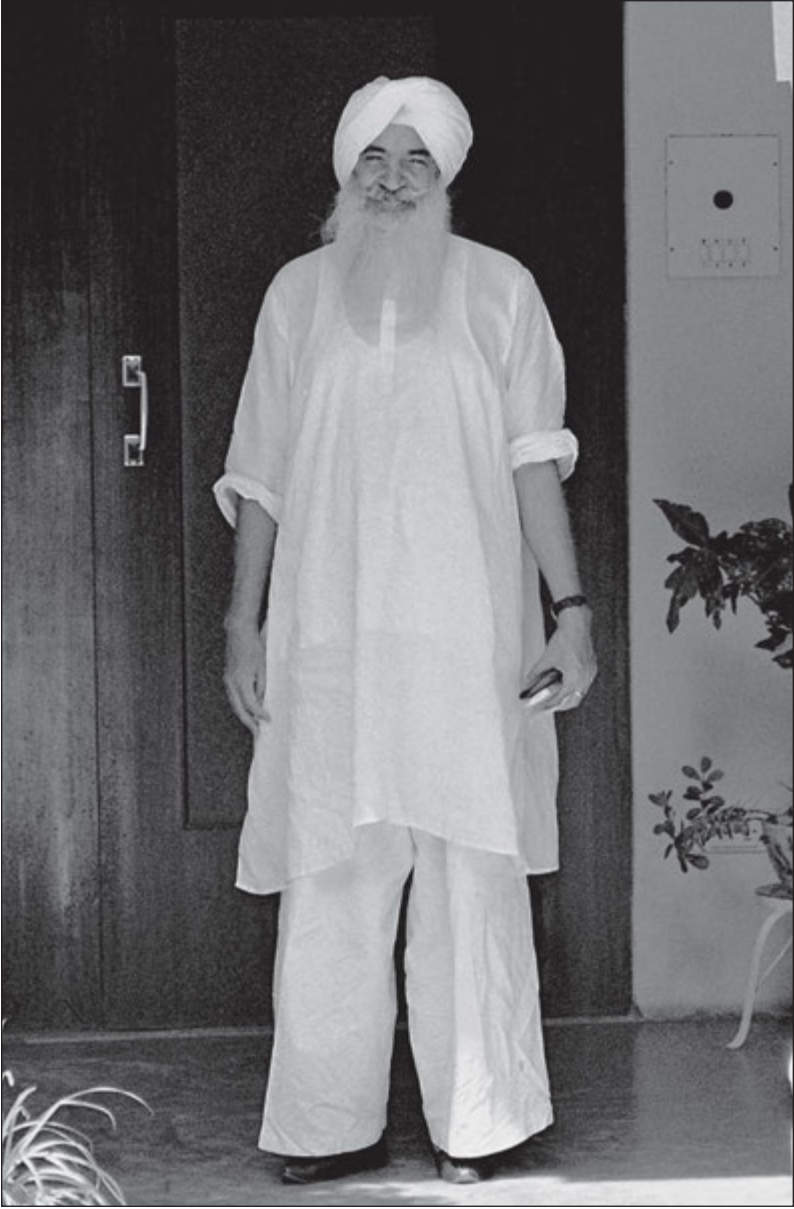
It's true that we all want to be better initiates than we are. There is always room for improvement in our spiritual life, and we each know in our hearts exactly where that improvement should be made. Our difficulty may be, though, that our lifestyle is just not conducive to spirituality and therefore doesn't support our meditation practice.

Sant Mat is a lifestyle choice. When we requested initiation, we made a lifestyle choice. We follow a vegetarian diet, we lead a moral life, we don't indulge in drugs or alcohol, and we attend to our simran and bhajan. Once we have made this choice, going forward is defined and structured. However, many of us spend our lives creating unnecessary obstacles to our spirituality and especially to our meditation.

Perhaps part of the problem is that we separate meditation from the rest of our lives. We relegate meditation to a box which is to be opened in the early hours of the morning, a task to be done when the rest of the household sleeps. This turns it into a chore. But spirituality is all-encompassing. Our lifestyle should form the foundation on which our meditation grows. It's like soil – either barren and dry or nutrient-rich, able to support the life and growth of plants. If our daily life is spiritually barren, how can we expect to get up in the early morning and sit in any meaningful meditation? But if our daily life is spiritually rich, then our meditation will flourish and grow. So the more our life reflects our spiritual path, the richer our meditation will become. The richer our meditation becomes, the more our inner spiritual life will become a reality. Therefore, living the life of a satsangi will become less of a charade.

The Sant Mat activities in which we participate are all part of building our daily life on a sound spiritual foundation, whether doing our simran and bhajan, doing seva, attending satsang or any other aspect of the path. We need to make the Master and his teachings part of our day, for that is the only way we can ever hope to achieve the end – successful meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh said that whatever time we devote to simran is to our benefit. He says that not a single moment of meditation goes to waste: it is taking care of thousands and thousands of karmas.



Maharaj Charan Singh

Every Sant Mat activity and thought that takes us towards the Master strengthens our foundation. In *Die to Live* he says:

Any minute we devote to meditation is to our credit, and we definitely have the effect of that meditation in one way or another. Whatever time you give to simran – whether moving, walking, sitting – and whatever books you read on Sant Mat, or satsangs you hear, they are all to your credit.

Saints and enlightened beings from every spiritual discipline – whatever path they followed to enlightenment – have all stressed the importance of constant remembrance of the Lord’s name, and the fact that our daily life must reflect our spiritual aspirations. But how often we forget our simran!

Our lives are fragmented. We are pulled one way and pushed the other by the expectations of our family, friends and our work. There are so many tasks to attend to, so many demands to respond to, that we feel fragmented. This happens when the mind or the ego determine our day. Then our simran, our thoughts of the Master and our spirituality, do not permeate our attention and our daily actions. Without the thread of spirituality, there’s no cohesion in our daily life.

But any attempt to repair twelve hours of fragmentation with about two hours of meditation is not going to work. While we may get some inner peace, our focus may still be more outward than inward, and meditation will not be the uplifting experience it is meant to be. It will therefore not have the spiritual value it should. We need to ensure that our Sant Mat lifestyle is on track – spiritually rich and supportive. It’s what Maharaj Charan Singh calls “creating the right atmosphere”. In *Die to Live* he says:

That atmosphere which you're building by leading a noble life induces you to meditate. ... We must daily continue to build that atmosphere in which we attend to meditation with ever growing love and devotion. We must become strong on the path and mould our lives according to the teachings.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century French monk, called this lifestyle support “the practice of the presence of God”. In his book of the same title he writes:

During our work and other activities ... we should stop as often as we can, for a moment, to adore God from the bottom of our hearts.

We have such a beautiful Master that one would think his image would constantly be embedded in our mind – like a screen saver on a computer – always there, the background of everything we do in our daily lives. But it isn't. Instead we clutter our memory and our mind with so much useless information that it is difficult to think of him even occasionally during the day, and it is just as difficult to remember to do our simran. It is truly an indication of the immense power and force of the mind and the ego – the enemy we face every day on the battleground of spirituality. In his book *Meditation*, Jiddu Krishnamurti writes:

Meditation is really very simple. We complicate it. We weave a web of ideas around it – what it is and what it is not. But it is none of these things. Because it is so very simple it escapes us, because our minds are so complicated, so time-worn and time-based.

We can compare meditation to a cut diamond of extreme value, with numerous beautiful facets. As the diamond cutter works carefully and tirelessly over a long period of time to bring out the inner beauty of the diamond, so too the Master works patiently and lovingly with us, to bring out our inner light and beauty, through our practice.

It's easy to forget the value of meditation as we battle to control the mind, while at the same time the senses overwhelm us as they coax us into the ever-present pleasure of worldly entertainment. Probably the biggest stumbling block we have when we meditate is that there is no entertainment value in it. But if we want to turn the charade of being a satsangi into reality, we need to change our attitude to meditation.

For whatever reason, destiny has kindly dropped us in the lap of the Master, and we now find ourselves facing an exciting spiritual opportunity. It is up to us to make it a reality, by choosing to follow a rich and supportive spiritual lifestyle that will enhance our meditation practice.



*Birds land in a garden
and soon fly away --
this is the way to live in the world
till the rope of destiny unravels.
A wayfarer comes to the inn for a night,
then gets up and goes in the morning.
Leave yourself in the hands of the Lord,
says Eknath, then you'll be fearless and free.*

Ekknath

As included in *Many Voices, One Song*

Becoming a Satsangi

One does not become a satsangi simply by being initiated. One must mould his life in accordance with the principles of satsang. Every thought, speech and action must conform to them. Actions speak louder than words. Thoughts are even more potent. A satsangi's daily conduct must bear the hallmark of excellence and must reveal that he is the follower of a true Master.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

As the Master says, merely by getting initiated does not mean that we are now a satsangi and there remains nothing left for us to do. The very word 'initiation' means to start something, to set something in motion. There is a strong implication of actions that require follow-through. Just by getting initiated we received the tools for doing the job; the job itself is far from done.

When we start out as new satsangis, our minds are still in the mould of the worldly life. We are still in the habit of seeking our pleasures and solace from things in and of this world. As such, we have not yet imbibed the values and perspective that the Master has, and to which we should aspire. What have we actually benefited from getting initiated?

The Master has, in fact, taught us the true value of this human life. It is not for mere enjoyment of the sensual pleasures. It is not for the mere accumulation of worldly wealth and possessions. We have received this human birth after many incarnations in the lower species, and it is only by the greatest good fortune that we now find ourselves blessed with this human form, because it is only in this form, the Master tells us, that we can aspire to spiritual liberation.

So, having had the good fortune to have a human birth and initiation from a perfect living Master, we now need to put what he has taught us into practice. Our every word and deed should be consistent with his teachings. When we act or even think differently, we may well feel a sense of inner discord, because when we behave in a fashion that is not consistent with Master's teachings we are not aligned with Truth, and are heading down the dark street of mind and maya. We should instead be heading towards the growing light of increasing consciousness that is the result of doing the spiritual practice he has taught us.

Following the path is not merely adopting a vegetarian diet, abstaining from alcohol and drugs and living a good, honest life. It is not just spending hours alone meditating according to the instructions given us at the time of our initiation. It is so much more than that; it is a journey into the unknown.

It is a scary business, certainly not for the faint of heart. We have to be prepared 'to boldly go where no man has gone before'. That's certainly what it feels like, at any rate. Of course many, many brave souls before us have ventured out into this particular wilderness – armed only with faith and simran. Great courage is required to leave all that is comfortable and familiar behind us and journey out beyond the bounds of our limited experience and feeble intellects. We are bound for a vastness that is currently beyond our comprehension, for a light so bright that these mortal eyes would be permanently blinded by it!

Yet in our depths a memory is stirring; an imprint in the very fabric and substance of our being, that now strives and stretches like an embryonic hatchling, struggling with the confines of a now-redundant shell. The cracks are appearing, and it seems to us that it is our life that is disintegrating. But actually what is crumbling is the false limitation

of many lifetimes' worth of illusory perceptions about ourselves, life and what it all means.

It is these layers of illusion that have been our prison cell, and are now finally starting to come apart. This process, although it can cause us to feel that our whole world is crashing down around us, is actually stripping away an accumulation of material-based assumptions about reality in order to reveal the Truth that lies beyond. This puny, frail human entity whom we believe ourselves to be, will soon be replaced by a new transcendent being that is beyond all of the limitations that currently describe our world.

At the centre of this process, the wheel of simran is turning; this ongoing repetition, this persistent affirmation of the Master's world. His higher reality is wearing away, like a constant abrasion, the layers of our fond delusions. Soon our darkness will be expunged by the great light of the inner dawn, by the rising of the spirit above the murky clouds of worldliness and the fog of our confusion. Like a phoenix, we shall rise from the ashes of our former lives into new life, one unbounded by the frailties of flesh and the aberrations of the intellect.



One of the benefits of the teachings of the Saints is that a disciple crosses the gate of death in a state of happiness and thus conquers it.

This is the experience of all disciples who have been blessed with the grace of the Master.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Dawn of Light*

His Will Is His Greatest Gift

The path of Sant Mat is often described as a path of love, devotion and meditation. It is also called a path of surrender and submission – which may seem less appealing to those of us who are attracted by a more laid back notion of love.

There is no doubt that the concept of surrender is difficult. Perhaps it is something we would rather not delve into too deeply when thinking about Sant Mat. Surely it's enough to say we love the Master and to be, more or less, trying our best in meditation? Do we really need to examine those difficult words – surrender and submission – in anything other than a casual and peripheral way?

The answer to those questions is going to depend upon what we want to achieve on the path. It's going to depend upon our own personal goals. Perhaps we'd prefer to simply trundle along sweetly without any major inconvenience to our worldly life – doing our best but in a casual kind of way; while trusting implicitly, of course, that our Master will pull all the right strings on our behalf at the time of death. However, if we sincerely wish to do our part – be obedient to our Master and learn to love him from the very depth of our beings – then we are going to have to face up to those words and make them part of the very fabric of our lives. The greatest act of love is to surrender willingly and completely and live in someone else's will.

Every perfect Master has been an example of humility and surrender. Our literature tells of mystics who have embodied these qualities and urged others to cultivate them. Marvellous examples are to be found in the letters that Baba Jaimal Singh wrote to his disciple who would later become the Great Master. Almost without exception the letters are addressed to “*My obedient son, Babu Sawan Singh*”, and

one of the most frequently recurring themes is that of submitting to the will of the Lord. He constantly urges his disciple to accept whatever comes his way with meekness and gratitude; to see himself as insignificant in the greater scheme of things.

In *Spiritual Letters* Baba Jaimal Singh Ji says:

Whatever is to be done has already been done, and that is what will happen – man does not do anything by himself. Believe implicitly, my son, the Satguru has told us that man does nothing – only the means for doing appears to come through him. ... Whatever is to happen has already happened.

Here Baba Ji Maharaj is telling us so clearly – “*man does nothing*”. We, in fact, are not the movers and shakers we so fondly imagine ourselves to be. We do nothing other than that which has been given to us by the Lord to do. He says we are merely the “*means for doing*”. This is not to demean our efforts, skills and talents. It simply means they all come from God in the first place. He limits our freedom of choice, and then he uses us as his means of keeping his creation going.

So, does this mean that we are merely puppets dancing on a string? Actually, yes. The Lord is the giver and doer of all. We have been given a part to play. Through all levels and forms of creation we are all dancing to the Lord’s tune. How then can we claim to be responsible for our own accomplishments? Puppets do nothing other than what is allowed by the hand pulling the string.

The mind may then come up with its standard retort: “If he is the doer, then why do I need to make any effort in any direction at all, especially meditation?”

The answer is complex, but may be something like this: we have been given the mind to use as our own specialized tool at this level of

creation, and the Lord wants us to learn to use it with intelligence and discrimination. He wants us to realize for ourselves that he is the doer, not us. He wants us to come to our own conclusion that he is everything and we are nothing. He wants us to use the mind as a vehicle in our search for surrender to his will. He wants us to make the effort and then learn to accept whatever the outcome may be. This is what surrender and submission are all about; and he wants us to appear to choose it for ourselves.

However, it isn't a quick or easy task – it's a life-long struggle. There are a number of things we can do, though, to try to live in his will and surrender our egos to him. First and foremost of course, is our meditation. Second is our attitude and our approach to life as reflected in our thoughts, words and deeds, and thirdly, we must really use our simran.

We know that Master wants us to meditate. If we follow his will then we are, in effect, following the Lord's will. If he tells us to meditate and we at least try, then we are beginning to live within the will of the Lord. And along with this, we need to cultivate an attitude of acceptance and gratitude. In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, Great Master tells us:

The Lord has created us. He loves us. He may make us rich or poor, well or ill, happy or unhappy. We should be happy in whatever way He keeps us. They are all His bestowals.

We are just playing a part in the Lord's play. What is more, an initiated soul has also been assured that his part is finite. It will come to an end and the soul will return to its source. Surely this should make us dance for joy? Surely we should not be dragging our feet, moping, questioning or doubting. Is this not a good time to say: "I believe you are in charge and I am grateful – for everything you have sent, and still will send, no matter what it may be"? In *Philosophy of the Masters*,

Vol. IV, Great Master quotes Rumi who puts these words in the mouth of a disciple:

*O Lord! How long will it be
That You keep me entangled in the world?
He said, Silence!
You will go where I will.*

And later, at the end of the work, the disciple is able to say:

*Except what You wish me to know, what do I know?
Except what You show me, what can I see?
I will live like this, if You wish it.
If You keep me in some other state, I will live like that.*

We can cultivate this kind or attitude of surrender if we keep watching and choosing our thoughts. We have to try to keep saying: “Thy will be done” not “my will be done”.

But the soul has been subservient to the mind and ego for so long that it may not easily accept the path of submission and surrender. And so we might get despondent and frustrated and be tempted to give up the struggle. Frustration is natural, and so are lapses. Still, we need to try to cultivate an attitude of acceptance moment by moment. We can prune out the ego, the thoughts of doubt and negativity as they appear, and replace them with grateful and cheerful thoughts. Even in the face of seemingly bad or negative destiny, we should remain cheerful, grateful and conscious that everything, down to the minutest detail of our lives, comes from the Lord.

And he does not leave us weaponless in this effort. He has given us the gift of simran. The repetition of the five holy words is the method

our Master gives us to help us train the mind and bring the ego into an attitude of surrender and submission. It is our refuge in times of deepest despair and struggle. Simran is our shout of gratitude and our cry for help equally. We can have no better response than to turn to our words – simran is our act of surrender.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, the Great Master says:

By practising the Name given by the Master, the feeling of egotism is banished, and a devotee begins to understand the working of the Divine Law. He bows to it and sees it at work in all. He constantly observes it and ultimately merges in the Lord.

Does that not make the Lord's Will his greatest gift? Is it not a profound relief to know that simply by practising his Name – by working on our simran and doing our meditation – we are not only learning to surrender to him, we are being prepared to merge into him?



*The love of my Beloved has taken abode in my heart,
And a gorgeous splendour endowed with fragrance
prevails within me.
All my shame and worldly shyness are gone,
And my heart longs for the Beloved
as a rainbird longs for a swati raindrop.
I am your bride and you are my dear Beloved.*

Dariya Sahib, Saint of Bihar

The River and the Holy Secret

An extract from “With a Great Master in India”

And so this afternoon when the Master had gone, this disciple turned and walked toward the jungle and the river bank, where he sat down to think. His head was literally dizzy with the magnitude of the problem. We know that the Master is able to do any sort of a miracle that he may choose to perform, but he is himself the supreme miracle. We know it is so, and yet we ask how can it be? We know he is the superman toward whom all philosophy points, as the goal of evolution. We know he is the embodiment of the noblest human inspirations. But when you stand face to face with the living Master himself; when you grasp his hand; when his gracious smile and loving words make your own soul glad with an inexpressible delight; all philosophy vanishes from your mind and just the joy of his living presence remains.

We sought the river bank where in solitude we could think; where we might quiet the surging tumult of thoughts that came unrestrained. So we sat down and asked that calm and emotionless river to tell us of the mystery. This river that comes down so quietly from the snow-covered Himalayas. Glancing northwards, we can see those majestic old hills, those age-old sentinels, towering in their superb grandeur over the region of the Punjab, their pure sunlit summits pointing always to the highest heavens. From their feet flows this slow rolling river, this ancient river that for ten thousand generations has kept its silent way, to empty at last into the Indus and the Arabian Sea.

We begged this river, so hoary with years, to unlock the holy secret and explain to us the perpetual miracle of the Master himself. And the river replied, ever so gently and without the use of clumsy words:

As the river flows on forever, regardless of the ways of men, so flows the love of God. Be as constant in your devotion to the Master as the river is in its course, and his love will carry you to the Supreme Ocean as surely as the river flows to the open sea.

But, a little disappointed, we said: “Venerable stream, I knew that already. You talk like a preacher. I asked you to tell me more of the divine mystery of the Master himself.” And then, the river replied:

*Oh, little soul, why does the drop try to swallow the ocean?
Only when you have become a Master yourself, can you
comprehend a Master.*

And then, while the night fell over the valley of the Beas as silently as a feather drops from the sky, this lonely disciple took his refuge and returned to the solitude of his own room, but pondering still over the sublime mystery.



*To be full of things is to be empty of God.
To be empty of things is to be full of God.*

Meister Eckhart

Impressions on the Mind

In the glossary of *Sultan Bahu* karma is defined as follows:

Action; the law of action and reaction; the fruit or result of past thoughts, words and deeds; also new actions. Karmas are not only isolated acts beginning and ending in themselves, but form a stream of causation, each one being at once an effect and a cause. This stream leads to an unending cycle of births and deaths.

The law of karma is integral to the mind. Consequently the effects of karma are felt in all the regions of the creation where mind rules and is dominant. We generally equate this powerful force with the biblical law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”, but this exacting principle is not necessarily a spiritual law; rather it was used to explain the law of retribution, where a person who had injured another person could be similarly injured in return.

Karma is not simply retaliation and retribution. It is more subtle and far-reaching than physical compensation alone, for it must also satisfy our *sanskaras* – the more binding aspects of our interactions. This is why Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that it is not the things themselves, but the reaction they produce on us that really matters. It is this reaction that creates the far-reaching and undetectable effects of karma that bind us to the creation and its inhabitants.

Sanskaras are the impressions or imprints left on the mind by experiences in previous lives. These impressions are accumulated and carried forward from life to life, and they determine the identity and quality of this life. When we look through a lens, everything we see is conditioned by the quality and function of the lens. Similarly,

our sanskaras are the impressions that shape our current life; they are the lens through which we view the world around us, because they determine our nature, responses and states of mind. Everything we do or perceive is conditioned by these impressions. Simplistically put, two people will give very different accounts of what happened when witnessing the same event, because their individual sanskaras cause them to interpret aspects of the event in different ways.

Our actions and reactions, even our thinking and desires are constantly being conditioned and manipulated by our sanskaras, so that we react in a particular manner, or in a given situation we expect a certain result. It is such a subtle part of our thought process that we are not even aware of this mental conditioning. Maharaj Charan Singh explains that sanskaras are tendencies resulting from past karmas.

Every experience and perception in life starts with a thought. Our thoughts, conditioned by our sanskaras, have a very powerful effect on us. Continually thinking in a particular way causes a deep groove in the mind, which we know as a habit. When we constantly mull over events, we embed the impression of those events into our minds.

The one-sided mental conversations we repeat *ad nauseam* are merely fabrications of our imagination, as are the imagined actions we repeat over and over to ourselves. The mental grooves formed by these fabrications leave new imprints on the subconscious mind. This is clearly explained by Maharaj Charan Singh when he says:

The subconscious mind consists of whatever memory we have in this life – all our impressions that we have collected in this span of life. ... It is not about past lives. But the mind is carrying all the past karmas, all the sinchit karmas.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

However, with right thinking, the correct use of simran and adopting the right lifestyle, we can and should clear many of these current impressions in this life.

These impressions and sanskaras are so subtle that we are unaware of them. We tend to view karma in terms of the physical aspects of our lives, such as our relationships, homes, careers and environment – the world we perceive through our five senses. We can relate to, emotionalize about, and feel these physical aspects of our existence, and we imagine that due to the strength of some of these associations, we are able to determine some kind of karmic pattern. But at this level we cannot know the outcome of past relationships, or the factors which may determine the seeds for future lives – if any! Karma is not simply our physical attractions and the literal explanation of the concept of ‘an eye for an eye’. Maharaj Charan Singh clearly explains that it is the lasting and deeply engrained impressions on the mind that are far more binding. He tells us:

Individual karmas do not determine our future. It is the accumulated effect of those karmas that we have to go through. Not in the same way and not in the same kind. For example, if you have killed a thousand chickens in one life, you do not have to come back a thousand times to be killed by them. In one life, you can have a thousand pricks, painful pricks. And that will account for the killing of those chickens. So it can be cleared in many ways.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

By focusing on the physical, tangible side of karma, we often forget that our thoughts and desires are as binding as the physical aspects of our lives. The real far-reaching effects of karma are the impressions



Maharaj Charan Singh

that lie beyond our physical interactions, as explained by Maharaj Charan Singh:

Sanskaras are deep impressions on the mind; karmas are actual actions that we have done. The desires we create in our mind – our wishes – they create deep impressions on our mind, and then actually they become karma for the next birth.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

We need to be far more conscious of our thinking because this habit, this deep groove of repetitive thinking, becomes the basis of our desires, and our desires create our suffering. We are familiar with this because it is something we experience in this life. We may not know the original seed that sprouted the desire, but we are certainly aware of the effect – whether it is joy or suffering – that results from it. Maharaj Charan Singh writes:

All these desires are nothing but strong thoughts. These strong desires – even if no action follows – they are all grooves on our mind. And those grooves pull us back.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

The mind is not looking only for satisfaction. It is very effectively performing its duty of making us act according to the impressions and tendencies created for this life. In this respect it is truly a faithful servant, dissipating all its energies outwardly. It doesn't think about its own source unless the impression is there, and that is the purpose of our simran and our meditation – to create the spiritual impressions that pull the mind inward. The Master gives us the opportunity, but it is up to us whether we use it or not. In *Mysticism, The Spiritual Path*, the author, in his definition of kriyaman karma, clearly indicates that we have this choice:

This is that action which a person performs by his free will. When it is left to him to determine what he will do, and what course of action he will adopt, when it is within his control to decide one way or another, then it is known as Kriyaman karma.

This means that within the scope of our limited free will, we can choose to either sow impressions of spirituality or to continue sowing worldly impressions. An understanding of the subtle aspects of karma should make us conscious of this and of the incredible gift the Master gives us when he initiates us and gives us our simran.

When done correctly, simran nullifies our worldly thinking. It eases out the deep grooves already created on the mind by not reinforcing them, and they lose their effect. Simran also changes what we think about. By turning our thinking toward spirituality, we think less about the world and our desires, thus creating fewer worldly impressions that would need to be satisfied. The Masters tell us that the effects of these impressions can be cleared by our meditation. The power of simran is that it changes our desires by changing our thought processes. To explain how simran cleans our thoughts, Baba Ji uses the example of red ink dropped into a glass of water: if we keep adding clean water to the glass the water will eventually become clear.

It's up to us whether we do simran during the day or not. If we forget to do our simran, we cannot blame the Master. After all it is we who create the binding impressions. It is our choice. It would be to our advantage to follow the Master's advice and use our simran to change the impressions we embed in the mind. Simran directs us to spirituality, and these spiritual impressions lead us to the Master.

Divine Music

From our limited human viewpoint, one of the most significant characteristics of the Word of God must surely be that it can be heard when a person practises the correct spiritual exercises or sometimes even spontaneously for brief periods when the mind is quiet and deeply concentrated. The Word is heard in the form of the most beautiful music. It is the primal and pristine music of creation's dawn, of the beginning of everything. It resounds unceasingly within every particle of creation and within every soul. It is awe-inspiring, breathtaking and blissful. And it automatically instils in its listeners a sense of true worship, something quite different and a million times deeper and more real than the feelings any ritual or ceremony can generate. This is the Voice of God, the divine Sound, the divine Music, the real Music of the Spheres which keeps the universe and all souls in existence. It is the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. ...

In life, our highest or most inspired moments are often those of complete absorption in something. Depending on the person, it may be beautiful music, the pageants and wonders of the natural world or some other experience of the five senses. ... The sights, sounds and phenomena of this world are of limited duration. The music of the Word, the divine Music, however, goes on and on, for as long as creation lasts. The music of this world is created by making vibrations in the air. The divine Music is created by God, as His Primal Vibration by means of which He fashions and sustains His creation. External music is heard with the outer ears. The divine Music is heard with the 'ear' of the soul, the hearing faculty of the soul.

John Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus*

The Fragrance of Meditation

For the majority of us meditation is a slow process. We go through so many stages, so many ups and downs. Sometimes we waver and perhaps even stop meditating, or we may experience extreme difficulty in attending to the task. At other times we feel filled with devotion and eagerness to sit and enjoy the benefits of meditation. Mostly it is somewhere in between as we labour along, seemingly achieving nothing. Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that we make progress very slowly – that in meditation we always make progress, but slowly.

So what, truly, is the benefit of this labour of love as we go through months, years or a lifetime with no inner spiritual experiences? Maharaj Charan Singh answers our question when he says in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

Meditation changes the very attitude of our life. That's different from what we achieve within and how far we still have to go, but meditation definitely changes our attitude towards life. You see, even if we don't experience anything within, but we attend to meditation, we at least can enjoy the fragrance of meditation, if not the experience of meditation. A blind man goes to a garden full of scented flowers. If he can't enjoy the beauty of the flowers, at least he can enjoy their fragrance. So meditation changes our outlook on life ... and if one is lucky enough to enjoy the experience, there is nothing like it.

This process is essentially the cleansing of the cup and the emptying of all the filth and dross accumulated over eons so that, when the Lord wills, he may fill it with his fragrant nectar.

The awareness of this fragrance urges us on. It encourages us to breathe its sweetness ever more deeply into our spiritual lungs. Just as inner vision and inner hearing have nothing to do with the physical eyes and ears, so this fragrance of which the saints speak has nothing to do with the physical sense of smell.

As the soul travels along the inward path, it slowly awakens to its true identity, and this fragrance becomes more and more subtle, more profound and more evident, both within one's being as well as in all creation. Most importantly, the pull and attraction towards one's Master becomes overwhelmingly strong because he is the source, the very powerhouse of this essence.

This exquisite fragrance is also referred to by the Sufi poets, usually in connection with gardens or the gentle morning breeze, as in the following extract from *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*:

In Sufi poetry, wind and breeze serve to signify God's grace and His help. Metaphorically, they bring 'messages' to the lover from the divine Beloved. More specifically, the wind is the creative Power, the Spirit, the Breath or the Fragrance of God, 'breathed' into the creation to give it life and love. Hence, Rumi says:

*O you lovely breeze blowing from the prairie of love:
blow upon me that scent
of the flower garden I desire.*

The Sufi poets frequently compare a fresh breeze that cools a dry and barren land to an inner breeze - the "breath of God". This breath brings the intimate fragrance of the divine presence to the consciousness of the mystic during meditation. It carries a message which the

poets refer to as “the sweet fragrance of spirituality”, which comes from the divine Friend to the mystic.

Accordingly, in *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, Hafiz says:

*O dawn wind! Should you happen
to pass by the land of the Friend,
bring a fragrant waft of air
from the perfumed tresses of the Friend.
By my soul, I will surrender my life (ego) in thanks,
if you bring me but a message from the Friend.*



*God Almighty has a fragrance that can be sensed,
similar to smelling musk or ambergris,
but its loveliness cannot be compared to musk or ambergris.
When he wants to manifest himself, his fragrance comes first,
as an introduction, causing a man to become totally drunk.
In my youth, this fragrance caused me
to turn my face towards the essentials (spiritual knowledge).
I would ask myself, What is the sense of eating or sleeping?
Unless I can first see God who made me this way,
or until he talks to me without an intermediary
and I can ask him different questions to which he replies,
how can I eat or sleep?*

Shams-e-Tabrizi, Rumi's Perfect Teacher

Dream, Think, Do!

The 17th-century French philosopher René Descartes coined the phrase: “I think, therefore I am”. An artist once humorously portrayed this philosophical idea in a cartoon strip showing a young man pushing a wheelbarrow as he searches for the edge of the world. When he finally reaches it, he tilts the wheelbarrow to dispose of the contents: absolutely nothing – the wheelbarrow was empty. In the next picture he sits down on the wheelbarrow, on the edge of a void, with a happy contented face, and the words in the balloon above his head read: “I dream, therefore I am”.

We all dream, not only when we sleep but also when we are wide awake – as when daydreaming, indulging in wishful thinking, or constantly desiring one thing or another. We are very seldom at peace or satisfied with what we have. The mind is capable of raking up the strangest thoughts and desires while building imaginary castles in the air. Yet every seeker after truth will begin to realize that we are guests in a world that we do not comprehend. Somehow we survive; we live and stumble on, each one resolutely pushing his own wheelbarrow.

We are vulnerable, we are ignorant, we are filled with fears, doubts, feelings of insecurity and loneliness. These feelings are often sparked by a multitude of questions, such as: Who am I, where do I come from and why am I here? Why am I not a stone, an insect, a plant or an animal?

Our dream may be a desire for the knight on a white horse to come to our rescue, to bring the answers to all our questions, and to fix everything that is wrong in our lives; to sweep us up and take us away with him to a place where everything is perfect, where there are no problems, just love, peace and contentment – perfect bliss.

A myth, one might think. Well, not so for satsangis, for not only is this possible, but it actually happens. The perfect living Master is the knight on a white horse of Shabd. This is the power he uses to slowly fix all the mistakes we have made during every incarnation that we have had to endure.

Our dream of perfect bliss is really associated with the soul. Saints tell us that the soul is unblemished and constantly longs to merge back into its source – and this merging is the ultimate dream.

Motivation is sparked by three activities: dreaming, thinking and doing. First we have a dream – a desire we want to achieve. Then we think through the process of achieving it. The mind uses the faculties of imagination and inspiration to activate the thinking process. Thinking provides the analytical brain power that is necessary to cultivate the dream in the mind, and finally, this leads to the practical aspect, which is action – the doing, which is necessary to fulfil the dream.

Having formulated the dream – in our case, our spiritual liberation – the thought process kicks in. To satisfy the thinking process we must gather knowledge about our dream. We start with books, we attend satsang and we have discussions about the path. In the process we may wade through libraries full of possible explanations, scientific, spiritual or any other kind. Similar to the growth of a child, our assimilation and understanding of the material at hand will continuously change. This research will shape our own landscape, a subjective personal reality – not necessarily the truth. Like the destitute groping around on trash heaps, the seeker struggles through collected philosophies and histories of the past – the debris left by historians and misguided spiritual leaders, blinded by dogma, ritual and all the trappings that hide the truth: the blind leading the blind.

And then the greatest miracle happens. The seeker, at his wits' end, is led to the astounding truth and the penny finally drops: what is past is gone forever, and what we seek is right where we are and is within

us, for the physical body is the temple of the living God. It will not help to search outside when that which is to be found is inside. No matter how many books we read on the life and history of past saints and saviours, or how many pilgrimages we make to their graves to prostrate ourselves before their relics or to kiss the lifeless feet of their cold stony images, these dead saints will not be able to help us.

We need a perfect living mentor, someone we can see, touch and converse with; someone who can ignite our soul – who can pull the switch and turn on the light which is dormant within us. Academic knowledge is like having a map showing the whereabouts of the proverbial buried treasure and not using it. What we want is what the Master offers – personal experience.

This entire process happens in spite of ourself, for the real inspiration comes from within, instigated by the Creator himself through his Shabd presence – for every soul is Shabd in essence. As the Shabd, like the Creator, is love in essence, the relationship between the soul and its Creator is one of love.

But to love can also mean to suffer, and at times this wonderful dream might feel like the worst nightmare ever – we have to pay in order to clear our karmic account. At initiation the Master takes on the arduous task of purifying us so that our dream can become a reality. Our relationship with Kal, the ruler of this creation, is settled and the balance of our karmic debts will be dealt with under the direction of the Master. It will only be a matter of time before all the stored karmas from our previous incarnations and transmigrations will be paid off.

Don't we all dream of pushing an empty wheelbarrow in preference to the heavily loaded one we now have? Wouldn't we all like to sit on the edge of that void unencumbered by our heavy load?

And so we finally come to the practical part of our quest – the doing. The dream cultivates faith in us when we find the Master. To think leads to the quest: to gather all the necessary information

about the Master and his spiritual path. This leads to knowledge and understanding. Now the disciple must take action – the doing, or becoming – so that the process started by the dream will eventually become a reality.

Having found the Master and more or less satisfied our intellect, we have to take the plunge and apply for initiation. This is the start of a lifelong struggle – a fight to ‘die while living’ and conquer the five senses by withdrawing the consciousness to the third eye. This is why the Masters teach their disciples to practise – to do, for without action the dream will never become a reality, the soul will never find freedom. The Masters’ constant request is: “Please do your simran and bhajan”.

It is a slow process, this steering the soul towards its destined home. And once the seeker is initiated by the Master the process is unstoppable. Neither can an initiate resign from the path, for the Master is responsible for ensuring that the dream becomes a reality – that the soul returns home.

In *Die to Live* Maharaj Charan Singh tells us that through meditation we fulfill the very purpose of human life:

Through meditation we become worthy of his grace and receptive to his love. We build and grow the love and devotion which he gives us to carry us speedily towards our goal. ... It is through meditation, by his grace, that we develop an intense longing to return to our source. The effect is truly a miracle! We turn from the world, and with the same intensity that we once ran towards it, we now run towards the Father.

To conclude, let us return to the cartoon strip and redesign it. The disciple is pushing his wheelbarrow which is overflowing not only with karmas and desires, but also with books, philosophies, credos,

religious dogmas and rituals, incense, prayer rugs, blessed shawls and all sorts of relics, as well as sentiments and emotional paraphernalia. Utterly exhausted he reaches the end of his world. He hesitates for a long moment and then, with gusto he shoves the wheelbarrow with all of its contents over the edge. Released of this heavy burden he looks up and with a tremendous cry of sheer joy he confirms: “I’m free, therefore I am!”



*Be cheerful, Sir:
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Our Essence Is Love

Before the industrial revolution, life was much more uncertain than it is now. People were reliant on each other. They were largely ignorant of the workings of nature and were more vulnerable to its forces – whether natural disasters or illness. They realized their vulnerability, and submission and devotion to God were far more commonplace. As they looked for protection and help, they would frequently visit churches and places of worship.

Even now those exposed to the forces of nature tend to look to God for protection. A veteran sailor was asked if he believed in God. His answer was: “Sonny, when confronted with a storm on the high seas, there is no such thing as an atheist”.

Today, however, technology has largely empowered the individual. Science has advanced incredibly, and we have a better understanding of the workings of nature and our own bodies. For many, Sunday worship has been replaced with visits to shopping malls. Atheism is commonplace and the majority of the world’s scientists openly challenge the existence of God. So today, some may feel less need for God if they have every comfort, and if it appears they are in control of their lives.

But are we really in control? Do we even know where we will be next year, tomorrow, one hour from now? In the wink of an eye we can lose everything, and be thrown into the deepest despair. The Saints tell us that we are actually utterly ignorant and under the control of a very subtle entity called the mind. It is so subtle in fact that without being told about it, we may remain completely ignorant of it.

It is the mind that keeps us trapped in this dark world, ever more tightly bound by actions committed under its influence. Only a perfect living Master can show us the way out of this darkness and turn our

faces towards the light, towards our supreme Father. As Jesus told his disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 16:6).

The Masters teach us that it is through the practice of love and devotion that we are able to move from darkness to light. And this resonates with what we already feel inside, for within us there is a loneliness, a sense of longing. Unfortunately, our mind interprets this as some kind of shortcoming in our lives and we seek to remedy it by pursuing worldly pleasures. Some of us turn to enjoyment and care of the body to fill this gap in our lives. At some point we have all experienced the pleasure of being a slave to health and fashion, along with the enjoyment of worldly entertainment, but did this bring us the happiness we sought? Was the happiness permanent? Was the longing and loneliness inside replaced with everlasting joy?

Perhaps then, happiness lies in the psyche, our mental and emotional condition. Yet, our civilization has never had so many psychologists and psychiatrists. Antidepressants are the largest-selling drugs on the market today, and yet suicides in developed countries have reached an all-time high.

Perhaps the answer to our quest for happiness lies in the intellectual world. Is it possible that study will show us the way toward happiness? Today, there are more people with Ph.D. degrees than were awarded in the previous two thousand years. Man has searched the depths of the ocean, travelled into outer space and painstakingly studied space with powerful telescopes. We even dissect atoms, but to what spiritual benefit? The fruits of these pursuits have been technology and a greater consumerism – but not a path to God. Einstein famously commented: “It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.”

Baba Ji says that we have increased our knowledge, but what we need is understanding. We need to understand what this inner loneliness and longing means, and where it is trying to lead us. The mystics explain that it is a very precious gift from the Lord, which should be cherished because it is the Lord's way of calling us back to him. While the mind and the ego lead us to the external world, the saints say exactly the opposite – that we should seek within our own bodies for an answer to this longing.

Back in the sixth century BCE, the Chinese mystic and philosopher Lao Tzu wrote: “At the centre of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want.” In the complete stillness within, we will find out who we are. We will discover that we are not body and not mind, but something of indescribable beauty – we are soul. This leads us to the question: What does the soul want?

Soami Ji tells us how to satisfy the soul's longing:

*Hold fast to bhakti, O ignorant one,
and give up all your 'wise' pursuits.
Call it devotion, adoration or love;
the three differ in name, not in form or essence.*

Sar Bachan Poetry

We need to devote ourselves to bhakti – we need to walk the inner path to which the Masters call us. It is this inner realm that we seek, the realm of pure spirit, for in truth we are spirit and this is what the soul wants – to return to the realm of purity. The Masters tell us that our real essence is much finer and more beautiful than anything in this world.

In the Bible's book of Genesis it is written that God created man in his own image. This refers to the pure spiritual essence within us. The Masters explain that we will not find the happiness we seek through

our physical, intellectual or emotional faculties, as these have been designed for the purpose of allowing us to function in this world. The Masters tell us that perfect and constant happiness can only be found within, and that only our soul – our true self – may experience this.

We may find it strange to learn that we are this unimaginably beautiful soul, and that our very essence is in fact pure bliss, joy and love. If we look at the world today this seems hard to believe. But if we spend just a few moments in the company of one who has developed his spiritual faculty to the full, such as the Master, a whole new perspective dawns on us. He is so filled with love that it automatically permeates those around him and we are able to feel it. This is not an experience of the body or the intellect, and cannot in truth be explained with words. Rather we start becoming aware of a spiritual quality within us that resonates with that of the Master.

If we are made in God's image, then our image is pure love. Soami Ji writes in *Sar Bachan Poetry*:

*In fact, your own real form is also love,
so you may accept all beings to be of the same essence.*

The very first experience we have of this kind of love is one of comfort, rejuvenation and a sense of peace and joy that cannot be described. This is a love that grows and grows, and the happiness we experience in our innermost being will also expand, if we allow it to do so through the practice of our meditation.

So how has our true essence become so obscured, and why have we forgotten the Lord, who is said to be closer to us than our own breath? What has brought on this strange state of affairs? As Soami Ji asks in *Sar Bachan Poetry*: “How could you, a conscious entity, get so embroiled in a world that is inert and is but an illusion?”

We have effectively merged ourselves in this material world, and identified with its dirt. We are in a state that Maharaj Charan Singh refers to as “not living, but existing”. The worst of it is that we think we are having a jolly good time, while we are completely unaware of the prison in which we are confined. But when we eventually remember the Lord and put in the effort to find him – when we begin to pine for him – he hears our call and arranges for our return to him. Then he sends his beloved sons, the perfect living Masters, to fetch us home.

The Masters are an example for us because they embody the teachings and live in accordance with the Lord’s will. They serve all of mankind in many ways, and ask for nothing in return. If we take the time to study them we find perfection, balance and harmony in everything they do. They give us the confidence to follow the path and to seek our true home.

But when will we heed the Master’s advice? The Lord has done so much for us. He has given us many precious gifts; he has given us this life; he has brought us into the company of a perfect living Master; and he has given us the ability to comprehend and accept the Master’s teachings. The great good fortune of having met the Master is something which cannot be described in words. Maharaj Charan Singh says that we can never, by ourselves, traverse the uncharted terrain of the inner path. We owe everything to the immeasurable grace of the Master.

It is now up to us to take action to live in accordance with our Master’s teachings, withdraw our attention to the third eye, become pure divine love, as he is, and to return to where God himself resides.

What Do We Know?

Baba Ji has mentioned that often when we tell something to another person, they say “I know”. But what do we actually know?

Perhaps we should think about our own situation and how we filter the information the Masters reveal to us through our own thoughts and opinions. This makes two things happen. Firstly, we think we know so we don't listen carefully, and we may get an incorrect message; or secondly, we change the information to fit in with our belief system, and again we get the wrong message. Baba Ji illustrates this by saying that he is always amazed at how many versions of his answers there are by the time we get to the dining room after the evening meetings.

It is important to come to Sant Mat with an open mind, so that we can act on the information given to us and make the best use of it. This may also explain why simple people who live a lifestyle that is also simple and are unencumbered by preconceptions, appear to be more receptive to the Masters and their message, and are therefore able to make good inner progress.

At an evening meeting a scientist said to the Master that he had difficulty accepting that there is a God running the creation – to which the Master replied that we should just think of God as the energy that keeps it all going. Of course we call this energy Shabd: Shabd that is in every speck of the creation and is present in all forms of life in the world. Without it the creation would not exist.

Perfect living Masters have already walked the spiritual path successfully and are able to give us very important information – information that they have from first-hand experience – and so they really do know. They tell us that there is a God, Creator, Lord or

Supreme Being – whatever name we care to call him – and he controls every aspect of the creation, including our individual lives.

Our soul is that part of us that gives us life. It is a spark of the Supreme Being within us. It is in fact the very core of who we are, but we are not aware of this part of ourselves, this inner being, or drop of the ocean of the Lord himself. Therefore, to find the Lord, we have to look within the body, within ourselves, and not anywhere outside. The Lord is not some benign old man sitting on a cloud somewhere. He is right within us. And he knows more about us than we know about ourselves.

The Masters tell us that to be born as a human being is a very special gift from the Lord, because it is only as a human being that we can make an effort to find him and know him. Only man has the sense of discrimination, which gives us the ability to think, analyze and take decisions, and we should use these gifts to find him.

The Masters emphasize time and again that the Lord is responsible for our welfare and everything that happens to us. If he has the power to give us what we ask for, then surely he has the power to know what we need and what is best for us. Everything is in his hands.

The Masters know this to be true and work tirelessly doing the Lord's will, by encouraging us and pulling us from within. Because they have achieved oneness with the all-knowing Lord, they also know all about us and what we do. But we, as limited human beings, have difficulty in accepting these facts. To us they are only concepts or theories, because we have not reached that level of being where we are able to experience them as the truth. We simply don't *know*. It is because of this limitation that our minds tell us that all this is impossible. If we are not careful we may miss a remarkable opportunity, or give the teachings a low priority in our lives, which will delay our progress on this spiritual path.

Maharaj Charan Singh often said that the path is very simple to understand but very difficult to follow. The main reason for this difficulty is due to the mind, because it is a dominant part of our make-up. The mind or ego separates us from everyone else, creating our individuality. Under the influence of the senses, the mind encourages us to do those things that give us pleasure, but often these are bad for us and can get us into all sorts of trouble. Mainly however, it is the mind that prevents us from accepting all that the Masters have come to tell us.

Fortunately, the Masters are aware of the mind's trickery, and suggest that we just give the path a try. They tell us it is not necessary to accept everything. Once we have taken the first step and received initiation, all we have to do is follow the Master's instructions to the best of our ability. Once we are accepted by the Master, we are on the path. Our destiny is now in his hands and, regardless of what we know or don't know, he will take us home.



*Himself the lover, himself the essence of love,
the Lord is himself the recipient of his own love.*

Jap Ji: A Perspective

Book Review

Many Voices, One Song: The Poet Mystics of Maharashtra

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From the twelfth to the seventeenth century, Maharashtra was home to a large number of mystics who practised and taught the path of devotion. Along with hundreds of other mystics throughout India in these centuries, these mystics have become known as ‘bhakti saints,’ in that they taught that the highest and surest means of salvation is that of bhakti (devotion), meaning complete submission to and overwhelming love for God. *Many Voices, One Song* presents fresh English translations of a selection of their poems.

The mystics of Maharashtra composed their verses in a form called abhang, meaning ‘unbroken’, ‘ceaseless’ or ‘indestructible’. As the introduction to the book explains:

Abhangs are short yet rich with meaning. Straightforward and simple, they can be easily understood by everyone. Abhangs were sung – often to the accompaniment of simple instruments – in temples, at festivals, on the road, by women as they went about their work at home, and by labourers in the fields and towns. As they appealed to the heart as well as the mind and were easily memorized, soon they were on everyone’s tongue.

Even now, centuries later, these abhangs are “still sung in villages and cities throughout the region and across India.”

In many ways the poems speak for themselves and need no explanation. As songs of love and devotion, they seem simply to pour out from an overflowing heart. For these saints the relationship with God was intimate and personal; they lived with him both within and without as their dearest friend and closest confidant. For example, they depict God as “working side by side with them, participating in all their labours.”

Janabai (thirteenth century) – an orphan who worked as a maid-servant – experienced the Lord’s presence so intensely that she felt he was not merely helping her with her tasks but had taken on her form, the form of a woman, and was doing her work:

*You leave your greatness behind you
to grind and pound with me.
O Lord, you become a woman,
washing me and my soiled clothes.
Proudly you carry the water
and gather cow dung with your own two hands.*

Janabai went so far as to say:

*I eat God and drink God,
I sleep on God.
I give God and take God –
all my actions are with God only!*

The bhakti saints also preached that devotion for the guru is the means to devotion to God. A particularly moving pair of poems conveys this entire teaching. Chokha Mela (thirteenth to fourteenth century) said of his Master Namdev:

*Blessed is this golden day, for today I met Namdev.
He has granted me what was mine,
he has delivered to me my heritage,
he has endowed me with the treasure of love divine.
He has unfolded the vision of God within me –
the difference between ‘me’ and ‘you’ has vanished.*

And Namdev then spoke of his disciple:

*Chokha is my very life –
oh, what devotion he has,
oh, what devotion!*

*I have come to this world for his sake.
Those who contemplate on my Chokha
are saved from calamity and transgression.*

By merging into their Master, saints tell us, they merge into God. Bahinabai (1628-1700) suffered beatings and abuse from her husband for accepting the low-caste Tukaram as her guru. Through devotion to Tukaram she merged with the One:

*My master, lord and king – my very life –
I'll keep my head bowed at his feet,
and he'll make me remember his Name.
I'll watch for him within my heart,
and he will appear.
The moment he shows himself to me
two will dissolve into One,
and Maya will know I am lost to her.
Showers of nectar at last – happiness, bliss!*

Another theme that runs through these poems is devotion to Nam or the Name of God. Narhari (thirteenth century) used evocative imagery to point out that all else is unreal, only the Name is real:

*A painter strokes his brush on a wall –
this is the world, nothing real here.
Children build houses of sand,
then knock them down and go home.
Everyone does their work here –
they love it as their own
so they take it to be true.
If you really want to achieve something real,
just repeat the Name, says Narhari,
and stay close to the mystics.*

The bhakti saints of Maharashtra came from different social strata, from Gora Kumbhar who was a potter or Savta a gardener, to Bahinabai

and Dnyaneshwara of Brahmin caste. Mankoji Bodhla (1594-1694) was a hunter and a fighter, known for his skill with weaponry, who became gentle and peaceful through contact with his guru. He sings:

*The guru –
treasure-house of knowledge, mountain of courage –
he will ferry your boat to freedom
if you practise his simran.
He is the force of life at the core of creation.
Where he is, there is liberation.*

The bhakti saints were revolutionary in their time, in teaching that all people regardless of caste were equally able to attain union with the Lord through devotion, and also in writing in the local language Marathi, at a time when the priests taught that only Sanskrit could be used for worship. Eknath argued, “Can we say that God created the Sanskrit language, and that Marathi was created by thieves? In whatever language we praise God, our praise is equally welcome to him, for God is himself the creator of all languages.” A scholar who could write in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, and Kannada, Eknath composed his abhangs using simple imagery any farmer could understand:

*The crop of love is ready,
stored so high it touches the sky.
A field was found and judged fit;
only then was the seed sown.
With master’s grace it easily grew.
I’ve been growing love
for my master, says Eknath –
now God is the crop that fills the cosmos.*



