

March 2017

Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre
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VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 3 • MARCH 2017

Do Not Worry

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes?

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”

For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

New International Bible, Matthew: 6:25-34





Generosity

Being a 'good human being' is the foundation of our spiritual journey and few can deny that generosity is an essential quality of a good human being. We may struggle to control the five passions until our meditation evolves to a higher stage, but through our interactions with family and friends, generosity is a virtue we practise daily.

Three separate extracts are presented below. These, whilst very different, encourage us to extend generosity and kindness to those beyond our immediate circle. They make clear that generosity is not dependent on vast wealth. Sometimes, our time, a kind word or smile may soothe a troubled heart far more than any gift or donation. Ultimately, the real beneficiary of generosity is not the recipient, but us. Generosity helps to detach us from all that is material and helps us to realize the infinite life force to which we all belong.

Great Master's advice – Always extend your hand to give

The Great Master called his sons and their families and said, "I have settled you all independently and well. Now you are all earning. I would like to advise all of you, "Never to spread your hand to receive, always extend it to give." His sons said, "By your blessings, it will be as you desire."

Today, every satsangi here knows how much Maharaj Ji and his family give from their farm to the Dera – for the sangat – and how much wealth is given. They have also given very valuable land for the satsang ghar at Sikanderpur, and have yet given more land there, where the Radha Soami Satsang Beas Society are constructing a charitable hospital. Maharaj Ji and they all are true disciples of their Master.

Treasure Beyond Measure

Generosity and Devotion

*I heard there are two ways
To come to the feet of the Master:
One is to repeat the Name of the Lord,
The other is to stretch out the hands in generosity.*

*Beware, when wealth piles up in a house
Or water leaks into a boat
The duty of the wise is to throw these out
With both hands, lest they drown.*

*Are you big boned and strong?
Then spend your strength in devotion to the Lord.
Or are you rich?
Then spend your wealth in charity.
Or perhaps you are wise?
Then offer wisdom to your neighbours.
This is the right use of the gracious Lord's gifts.*

*Give, give, O friend, and then give again
As long as you are alive,
For who will ask you to give anything
When your body has crumbled to ash?*

*On the other side there is no giving or taking –
No shops or shopkeepers beyond the veil.
But while you are here
Take only that which is worth your taking –
True devotion for the Lord.*

Kabir, The Great Mystic

The joy of giving – counsel from Maharaj Charan Singh

Brother, charity should come from the heart. There is no tax which you have to pay. It only concerns your heart, what pleases you to give in charity. That is the first thing. Then it should never be done to blow your own trumpet, as Christ says – just to gain public appreciation and impress people. We should never bargain with the Father – that if I give you one thousand dollars, you will give me twenty thousand dollars in the next birth or thirty thousand dollars in the next birth. That is not charity. That's bargaining with him, trying to make a business deal with him.

We do charity for our own good. He has given us so much surplus, and we want to use it in the service of his creation so that we may get detached from it. Whatever we have earned, we should become worthy of what the Lord has given us. In gratitude we'd like to share with his creation. Charity is not to impress other people, to build our ego, to boost our ego.

People have a wrong concept of charity. They try to blow their trumpets in the newspaper, on billboards so that everybody knows what they have given in charity. And even if they go to a temple or a church, they try to bargain with the Father: I am giving to you today because I have a surplus, but when I need it, you should then give to me. Since they can't take their wealth with them after death, they want to invest now, so that maybe they can get it after death. We're trying to be very clever.

Otherwise we know we have to leave it here. So we try to bribe the Father, cheat him – we'll donate money to you now, and after our death you help us. This is no charity. It's just self-deception. It is your motive and intention with which you give things in charity that matters.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

Miracles

Stories of miracles are found in the texts of virtually all religions, often forming around the lives of past mystics. More than two hundred miracles, for example, are attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels alone. These, like those found in other religions, are often seen to symbolize a spiritual meaning.

Taking the gospel of Saint John in the Bible as an example, it is suggested that when Jesus selects just one sick man to heal at the pool of Bethesda it is symbolic of the few souls (amongst many) that a mystic comes to collect. Similarly, the resurrection of Lazarus, the man who had been dead for four days, suggests the awakening of the soul following initiation. In another story, Jesus attends a wedding feast and, at the request of his mother, turns water into wine. Whilst this may appear strange, changing water into wine may be understood to show how a mystic transforms a seeker's intellectual knowledge of spirituality – which like water is tasteless and cold – into the intoxication of divine knowledge and experience. That this takes place during a marriage feast symbolizes the divine reunion of the soul with God, and for Jesus to convert water into the wine of divinity at the behest of his mother can suggest that mystics act on the orders of the Lord rather than following their own will.

Why perfect masters don't perform 'miracles'

As the mystics are one with God and his creative power, undoubtedly, they can perform any manner of miracles, physical or otherwise. Yet a close reading of spiritual texts reveals that they rarely do. Actually, they view miracles negatively. For instance, in *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh remarks, "It is impossible to describe the reach or power

of the saints ... if the Guru wants, he can make even the stones carry out his work.” But he clarifies that mystics “do not let supernatural or miraculous powers even approach them, much less accept them and use them.” Likewise, Jesus comments adversely upon those seeking faith through witnessing miracles:

The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.

Bible, Mark: 8:11-12

There may be several reasons why mystics do not wish to perform miracles. For one thing, a perfect mystic would never wish to ‘rival’ the Lord. As they have pointed out, the performance of miracles is a path of egotism, of setting up one’s own will in opposition to God’s will, something that is anathema to true mystics. As Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Thus Saith the Master*:

Saints don’t come to do miracles, because it is not their mission to perform miracles. They don’t come as rivals of the Father, neither do they want to exert their own will at all. They want to remain in the will of the Father. So, when a saint would make a show of performing miracles, he would be indicating: the Father didn’t give you this thing, so I’m going to give it to you. They don’t come as rivals of the Father. Saints have eliminated their own will; they live in the will of the Father.

There will never be a dearth of suffering and strife, so even if a mystic should perform a physical miracle, its impact would be

temporal. No saint seeks to solve the intractable problems of the material world. As Hazur Maharaj Ji states in *The Path*, saints come not so that they may create a paradise on earth, but to liberate souls from the prison of the mind and repeated transmigration. As such, the everlasting nature of the spiritual help they give is far more valuable than improving (temporarily) life on the material plane or altering fate karma.

Nevertheless, in a world where spirituality is subsumed by material pursuits, we might wonder why mystics do not use miracles to help them convince us. After all, miracles would attract more seekers and might engender faith. The mystics, however, are not interested in attracting followers as an end in itself. On the contrary, they may deliberately act in ways that offend people, thereby dissuading a following. As Soami Ji Maharaj explains in *Sar Bachan* (Prose), mystics wish to “prevent egoistic people from coming and meddling in their Satsang.” By making themselves the subject of “complaint and hostile criticism”, mystics attract only seekers genuinely interested in spiritual teachings. Nor do mystics perform miracles to develop devotion in their disciples, as this takes place naturally when the ego is slowly eroded through spiritual practice. Spirituality develops through purification of the mind and the cleaning of its myriad impure tendencies, freeing it from the force of ingrained habits. As the mystics explain, this cannot be achieved through simply witnessing a miracle.

The miracle of everything

If saints do not perform miracles, we may reach the conclusion that miracles do not occur. However, by broadening our perspective, we would realize that miracles abound. We tend to take for granted that which is familiar and to overlook the marvel and miracle in the everyday. The beauty and harmony found in the laws governing the

natural world, for example, are nothing if not miraculous. For seekers on a spiritual journey, human life itself and interaction with a perfect mystic are perhaps the greatest miracles of all. Obtained after many lifetimes, the human form is a unique opportunity to end the cycle of birth and death, whilst the rarity of meeting a perfect mystic is highlighted in the following passage quoted in *Buddhism: Path to Nirvana*:

We have no way of knowing for how many thousands of kalpas we have fallen into the darkness or entered the Interminable Hell and endured all kinds of suffering. Nor can we know how many times we have aspired to the path to Buddhahood but, because we did not meet with wise advisors, remained submerged in the sea of birth and death for long kalpas, dark, unenlightened, performing all sort of evil actions.

Secrets on Cultivating Mind

A 'kalpa' is a unit of time referring to a 'world-period'. The Buddha mentioned that if a solid piece of flawless rock one mile long by one mile wide by one mile deep were rubbed with a piece of silk every hundred years, this rock would disappear quicker than a world-period (kalpa). Drawing on the metaphor of the rock and silk cloth, if we can imagine how long one kalpa lasts and then amplify that by many thousands, it becomes clear just how miraculous, how priceless, how valuable it is to become a disciple of a perfect mystic. As the quotation suggests, we may well have desired spirituality in one or many of our countless previous lives, but have not been able to realize this until a mystic shares this knowledge with us.

Actually, the mystics explain that our desire to be reunited with the Lord is instilled in us by him. As Maharaj Charan Singh explains

in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. I, without the grace of the Lord, we would not fall in love with the Master or have the desire to meditate:

Without the Lord's love, we can never get out of the well. We think we worship him, we think we love him, but actually he is the one who is pulling us from within. He is the one who's giving us all this atmosphere and these arrangements so that we can think about him. He's the one who puts us on the path, and he is the one who is leading us, and he is one who is forcing us to meditate and to burn the rubbish that we have collected.... All the love that we find in the Master – it is by the grace of the Lord that we find love in the Master ... he has made us receptive so that we can feel that love for the Master. But for the Lord's grace, we would not feel that love even in the Master. It is all the Lord's doing.

Given all the negative actions we have performed in the past, the fact that the Lord wishes us to come home and has arranged for us to make the spiritual journey, is nothing short of phenomenal. In fact, the value of the unique position in which we find ourselves is highlighted throughout the Sant Mat literature. To stop us from feeling depressed about the karma we are experiencing or being discouraged by our seemingly poor efforts in meditation, the Masters often draw attention to just how blessed we are:

You have been given the passport to go back to your own home where your Supreme Father is waiting to receive you. What greater joy, blessing or bliss can one have in this world of misery and suffering? In fact no other person should be so happy in this world as an initiate who is on the path.

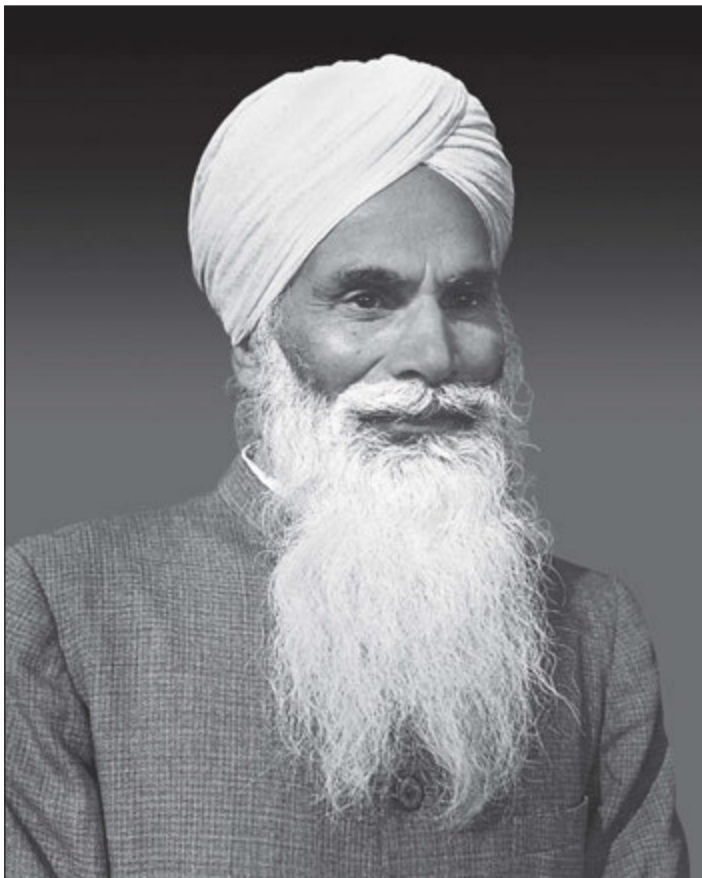
Quest for Light

If the miracle performed by the Lord is that he arranges for the Master to guide us home, the miracle performed by the Master is just as extraordinary. He transforms our attitude and approach to life. No longer do we view the purpose of life in terms of maximizing our individual material achievements, nurturing personal relationships, or even doing charitable work. Whilst continuing to engage in such activities, we work towards the (new) principal objective of our life: the spiritual journey that takes us home to the Lord.

We do not know whether the miracles we read about in the religious texts actually occurred or whether they are just stories. Yet, as the author of *The Gospel of Jesus* beautifully explains, we are living a miracle now:

The greatest miracle of all must surely be that God comes into the physical creation in the form of a man, a human personification of his creative power. The ocean encloses itself in a teapot and enters the sphere of humanity as a Master, bringing with him the supreme love of God and the grace to share it with all who are drawn to him. From being fully engrossed in the world, these souls are then turned around and become eager to find God. Man – born spiritually blind – is given spiritual vision by a Son of God and enabled to see clearly the illusions of this world and the path to God. This is most surely the greatest and most significant of all miracles that can come upon any soul.





Maharaj Jagat Singh

Knock, knock, knock. He hears. If at first you do not succeed in having the door opened from inside do not run away. Go on knocking, knocking so violently as to make him open the door. Simran is the knocking.

The Science of the Soul

Progress and Persistence

When spiritual progress seems from our limited perspective to be slow or even imperceptible, it is easy to become discouraged. As we experience the challenges of life, sometimes we cannot help but feel that our karmic burden is weighing down upon us like a ton of rubble. Not fully realizing the power of simran to blast through this rubble, we wonder just how much longer it is going to take before we break free. Yet, provided we continue to keep the promises we made at the time of initiation, including practising meditation daily, the Master's assurance that he will free us from the cycle of birth and death should give us hope and confidence. Instead of thinking how slow our progress is, we should marvel at our good fortune in having such a friend at our side. Of course, we must try our hardest to free ourselves, but it is the Master who will actually rescue us. We should thus set to work with renewed determination, never forgetting that even the ability to try is a gift from the Lord.

Recognizing the challenges we often experience in following the spiritual path, the Masters imbue their message with encouragement and inspiration, and this article brings together just a few of these motivating spiritual insights. We begin with a few lines from *Sar Bachan* by Soami Ji Maharaj:

The Lord is within you like the fragrance in flowers. The flower is visible but not the fragrance; yet it may be detected by the sense of smell. Likewise, he who possesses the real knowledge which the Guru imparts is able to realize God within himself.

Real Knowledge

Using the flower and its fragrance as a metaphor, Soami Ji Maharaj evokes a beautiful, memorable image to encapsulate the essence of spirituality. He reassures us that the Lord is not residing separately in some distant land, but exists within us, and we are capable of realizing him through the “real knowledge” imparted by a Satguru. The real knowledge Soami Ji refers to is not that which has been discovered by historians or scientists of the past. Such knowledge is limited both because it is confined to the physical realm and because the mind itself is limited in imagination and capability. Real knowledge surpasses the material world; it is spiritual in nature and relates to the absolute, eternal, and immutable truth.

Real knowledge is based on experience and therefore can only be imparted by a perfect Master, described by Soami Ji as a Guru. Such a being is the personification of truth; “the Word made flesh” as explained in the gospel of Saint John in the Bible. The Guru dispels our ignorance and darkness by teaching us the science of mysticism. Upon initiation, he gives us the research methods through which we can search for the Lord within us, enabling us to access a source of understanding that transcends the intellect. We are eventually able to become one with the truth. This union and the mystic knowledge gained as a result is referred to extensively in mystic literature. Take, for example, the experience recounted by a seventeenth-century Christian mystic, Marina de Escobar:

When in deep ecstasy, God unites the soul suddenly to His essence, and when he instills her with his light, he shows her in a moment of time the sublimest mysteries. And the soul sees a certain immensity and an infinite majesty.... The soul is then plunged, as it were, into a vast ocean which is God and again

God. It can neither find a foothold nor touch the bottom. The divine attributes appear as summed up in one whole, so that no one of them can be distinguished separately.

Quoted in *The Gospel of Jesus*

Since mystic understanding and union with God is associated with great joy and inward bliss, what greater incentive is there to practise our simran and bhajan?

The gift of initiation

Informed of the treasure that lives within us, clearly we do not lack an incentive to practise meditation. Yet, try as we might, we are unable to comprehend completely that the Master is truth incarnate, nor are we able to appreciate fully the value of initiation. If we had even an inkling of the glory of either of these truths, we would not still be unwrapping the gift of Nam half-heartedly but would, instead, rearrange our lives to prioritize meditation above all else. As Maharaj Sawan Singh states in *Spiritual Gems*:

Even to be initiated is a great privilege, and perhaps you will realize it by and by. It is no small thing to be set on the right road and have an unerring guide who stands by you in all circumstances.

Each time we attempt our meditation, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of these words. Thanks to the grace of the Master, we have reached a turning point in the endless cycle of birth-death-rebirth and now stand upon the very threshold of eternal freedom. Nonetheless, as we struggle with our daily practice, encountering all types of challenges – lack of concentration, sleep, fidgeting – eternal freedom

seems to be far-off. Indeed, in *The Dawn of Light*, Maharaj Sawan Singh acknowledges the difficulty of the task before us:

There is no task in the world so difficult as spiritual practice is in its beginning, but its end is the most joyful. Hence it is that most practitioners become despondent in the beginning... Many a soul has complained of the difficulties of the spiritual journey, but finding little joy from the perishable joys of this world, it has again taken up this difficult task because it can find nothing higher ... a practitioner should have firm belief that he will surely succeed on this path, and he should go on struggling with faith until his last breath, for no path seems to be better than this. It is better to die in sincere effort than to attain all the worldly success.

Perhaps the most striking part of this extract is the observation that, despite becoming dejected at the lack of ‘progress,’ most disciples are unable to give up their spiritual practice. This resonates with us most acutely because having encountered the Master, few of us could countenance leaving the path. Our love for him – imperfect as it is – enables us to keep persevering with our journey. Moreover, we have reached a stage in the cycle of transmigration that allows us to be receptive to the Master’s message. Although we have yet to experience union with the Lord, perhaps at no other time have we been so willing to take a leap of faith, ready to place our trust in the veracity of key spiritual truths. At last we are able to face up to the law of karma and recognize that happiness cannot be found on the material plane. The yearning we experience is a call of the soul to return home, and at last we can acknowledge that only meditation will fulfil this longing and provide an escape from the cycle of birth and death.

Spiritual liberation

In *Spiritual Gems* Maharaj Sawan Singh writes:

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. But you can hasten the progress or retard it, as you like.

These beautiful and inspiring words further reiterate that spiritual practice should be our first priority. Currently, many of us are at an ‘in-between’ stage. Neither do we wish to leave the spiritual path but nor do we commit to it fully in the sense of making it our first priority. Our meditation practice is sometimes perfunctory and there are times when we become so involved in worldly duties that we undertake these at the expense of spiritual work. However, as the Great Master reminds us, our progress will hasten if we reverse our priorities and make meditation the most important activity each day. The greater the effort, the more the Master rewards us by strengthening and deepening our love for him, enabling us to make even greater effort. This positive cycle eventually culminates in the spiritual liberation promised by the Masters.

Together with our love for the Master, such reassurances play a critical role in keeping us on the path. Without them, we may well give up at the first hurdle since, to reach the heights of spiritual liberation, we must – in the words of an English proverb – try, try and try again.



Watch and Pray

All that a disciple can do is to labour at his spiritual practice and at living the spiritual life. Every effort is rewarded, for the mind records all trends and tendencies. Every positive effort develops a positive habit in the mind and every indulgence in weakness makes an old habit firmer still. Besides, as all mystics have said, whatever steps a person takes toward God, the Lord takes ten or a hundred steps towards him....

A disciple cannot really tell where he is on the mystic path, for there is no measuring scale by which spiritual progress can be gauged. Some souls may even be given mystical experiences because they are weak and need an inducement to generate faith, impetus and spiritual drive. Others may have great faith and conviction but also possess such curiosity that, if they were taken into the higher realms, they would want to explore so much that they would lose contact with the central current of the Word. They are therefore kept in darkness until their degree of purity is sufficient for them to be taken up beyond all potential distractions of the inner journey. Again, a Master knows that some of his disciples are humble enough to receive spiritual treasures, but he withholds inner experiences from others who would just waste what had been given through spiritual pride and a sense of superiority. Nor can outer conduct always be a sure guide to inner spirituality, for even old and seasoned disciples can still be prey to some very obvious human weakness owing to the strong mental impressions of such tendencies from past lives. Spiritual advancement does not always entirely preclude human weakness. For as long as a soul remains in this world, there will always be some degree of struggle.

Again, if somebody is in darkness, he cannot know how close he is to finding the inner light. ...All that a disciple can do is to work sincerely and devotedly, keeping himself in readiness for the coming of the spiritual form of his Master and the start of the journey through the inner mansions. As Jesus said, using a short parable:

*Take ye heed, watch and pray:
for ye know not when the time is.
For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey,
who left his house,
and gave authority to his servants,
and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to
watch.*

*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not
when the master of the house cometh,
at even, or at midnight,
or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.
And what I say unto you I shall say unto all, watch.*

Bible, Mark 13:33-37

No disciple knows when his Master will come to meet him in meditation or when he will come for him at the time of death. Therefore, says Jesus, “watch and pray”. Stay awake spiritually – and at night, too, when the period required for sleep is over, stay awake in meditation. For a disciple can never know when the Master will shower his grace and show himself within.

The Gospel of Jesus

Truth in a Nutshell

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field:

Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Bible, Matthew 13: 31-32

Baptism, Jesus says, is like a mustard seed, which starts off tiny, emerges as a very small seedling, and yet grows into a tall plant, almost like a shrub, so that birds can even come and sit amongst its foliage... What he means is that, to begin with, a disciple may take his initiation very lightly. But if he practises according to his instructions ... he is taken back to God and the sins or karmas, not only of this life, but of millions of past lives are burnt up or forgiven. All this results from the sowing of the seed of the Word. Something apparently small and insignificant grows into something very big indeed.

The Gospel of Jesus

I have said many a time before and repeat it again that once the seed of Nam (sound current) has been sown in a soil (heart) it will sprout one day, grow, become a tree and bear fruit. It is impossible to destroy this seed.

Spiritual Gems

The Sidetracked Satsangi

The Masters have a profound impact on us. Perhaps this comes into particularly sharp focus when we are in their physical presence. Whilst having their darshan, our love for them is heightened and we get an inkling of what unconditional devotion might feel like. As the current of love flowing from the Master touches and reaches our innermost core, we experience an intense joyfulness, a sense of happiness that is uplifting, inspiring, and energizing. Indeed, nothing comes close to the fulfilment we experience in the presence of the Master.

However, as the mystics often remind us, a cup needs to be empty before it can be filled, so if we attend satsang with a mind full of the distraction of life's events, it's hard to taste the ambrosia being offered to us. This was the situation in which I found myself a few years ago. Instead of experiencing the wonderful feelings I had expected, I found myself sitting in satsang and feeling quite flat.

From time to time, events will occur that interrupt our routines and, for a short period, may impede our attempts to place Sant Mat centre stage in our life. As long as one is able to get back on track, there is no long-term harm. However, an unbalanced life is simply not sustainable long-term as it will negatively affect our spiritual development.

The Masters are like a mirror, they reflect what we feel. If we go to have their darshan with an open heart, desiring love and longing, this is what we feel in their presence. If, however, we feel guilty, unhappy, or ashamed of ourselves, then sometimes even the Master's darshan may not override these negative feelings.

For the past few years, I had devoted myself to work and, in so doing, neglected my relationship with the Master. Uneasiness and

unhappiness at doing so was the principal reason I did not experience those lovely feelings of love and joy whilst in his company. As explained in *Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III:

When you are not in a position to please your own self, when you're at war with yourself, [when] you're not happy with yourself ... how can you think that you are happy with the Master or that you have been able to please him? In order to please the Master, first please yourself; attend to your meditation.

In a similar way, Kabir reminds us of the regret we may experience when we die:

*Repeat God's Nam, O my mind,
Or you will repent it in the end....
With what face will you go before Dharmrai,
the divine judge, when he calls you to account?*

Voice of the Heart

When, on the material plane, we become uncomfortable with ourselves for not complying with the Master's wishes, imagine how we would feel if we could see our lives from the spiritual plane. The implications of our lack of engagement would be laid bare. Half-hearted attempts to meditate are not sustainable. Our practice risks becoming a ritual if we compartmentalize it to the morning and become engrossed in worldly activities for the rest of the day. Rather we must make Sant Mat the focal point around which everything else revolves.

The path is narrow and it is easy to become sidetracked without even being aware of it. Out of love for their disciples then, the Masters use different methods to keep them on course. In much the same way that the Masters encourage us to view feelings of loneliness as a sign of the Lord's grace, I like to think that the emptiness I felt on that day was a gift from him. It was his way of reminding me that love is a gift from the Lord and that we should do everything in our power to cultivate it.

The way forward

The Master constantly reminds us that we should learn from our experiences. We cannot change what has happened but we can choose how we wish to behave henceforth. The specifics will vary among individuals, depending on their personal circumstances. For my part, I am trying to follow through with two complementary changes, one involving a change in attitude and mindset and the other more practical in nature.

First, I realized that fear of failure, pride, and ego underpinned my obsession with work. Fear signalled imperfect faith in the Master and, ultimately, an unwillingness to surrender. We often equate surrender with accepting the events that have already occurred, but we may also view it as trying not to control those that have yet to occur. Taking this perspective means putting in our best effort but *no more* and instead being willing to accept that sometimes the results we want may not be in our destiny. We harm ourselves when we neglect our spiritual welfare in order to make ever greater effort in worldly activities; in fact we have little, if any, control over the outcomes.

Second, I thought about how I could practise meditation in the manner advised by Maharaj Charan Singh in *Die to Live*:

Meditation is a way of life.... It must take on a practical form, reflecting in every daily action and in your whole routine.... Everything you do must consciously prepare you for the next meditation.

Towards the end of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, one of the leading characters, Prospero, states that after his daughter's wedding, he will return to "my Milan, where every third thought shall be my grave" (Act 5: Scene 1). By substituting 'simran' for 'grave' and 'every second thought' for 'every third thought', these words can be a reminder of a goal to which we aspire. To help us, we can try to follow the advice offered in *Living Meditation* about how to get into the habit of repeating simran constantly. The author advises us to choose one action that we do every day and make a decision to be entirely in simran when doing that action so that we don't think about anything else. Once we have got into the habit of performing that whilst doing simran, we can move to another action and then another action until most of our day is in simran.

This is life-long work; aspirations do not turn into achievements overnight. Transforming this sidetracked satsangi into a devoted one remains a work in progress. In the meantime, as encapsulated in the following quotation, reading spiritual literature provides reassurance that the grace and support of the Master is unending and is a salutary reminder of the role and responsibility of the disciple:

Our Master is all-powerful and certainly one day he will release us from the bondage of mind and senses, through his infinite mercy, provided we turn not from his door, and practice bhajan and simran to the best of our ability, according to his orders.

The Dawn of Light

The King of Bokhara

Ibrahim Ibn Adham, the king of Bokhara, had a strong devotional inclination but lived in great luxury. This was until a series of unusual events caused him to stop and reconsider his extravagant lifestyle.

One night he was awakened from his bed of fragrant flowers by a noise on the palace roof. He went to investigate and there found a holy man. When questioned, this man said that he was searching for lost camels. Astounded, the king asked how he could expect to find camels on the roof. “In the same way that you expect to find God in your bed of flowers” replied the sage.

A few days later the king was furious to find his bed occupied by a slave girl. The girl responded to the king’s anger by saying, “If, to satisfy my vanity, I provoke my master’s anger by occupying his royal bed for a few moments, how much more will you provoke the Lord’s wrath for all your indulgences in the palace?”

Some months later a Muslim holy man entered the palace, walked past all the dignitaries sitting in the king’s audience hall, approached the king and said, “I want shelter here.”

“Is this a public guest house?” asked the king in some irritation.

The fakir then asked the king to tell him who had lived in the palace before him, and before that who the ruler was, and so on. When the king replied, the fakir said, “Then if this is not a guest house, what is it? One ruler comes, stays for some years and passes away, and then another one comes, and so it goes on. No one lives here permanently.”

As a result of these experiences the king abandoned his throne and travelled to India to seek a master. When he found Kabir and asked to be accepted as a disciple, he offered all the riches he had brought with him as a gift. Kabir told him there was no common ground between a

king and a poor weaver like himself and they would not get along. But the king begged and begged. Finally, Kabir's wife Loi interceded for the king, and Kabir accepted him on the condition that he send back his riches and live as a worker in Kabir's house.

After six years, observing the great devotion and humility with which Ibrahim was carrying out all the manual work, one day Loi pleaded with Kabir to give him initiation. Kabir replied that Ibrahim was not yet ready. But when Loi insisted, Kabir told her to put Ibrahim's humility to a test. The next morning Loi went to the roof, and as Ibrahim was passing by after his usual morning bath, she emptied the sweepings of the house on his head. "Ah!" he cried in great indignation, "if this were Bokhara, you wouldn't have dared to abuse me in this way!" Loi told Kabir, who showed no surprise. "He has not yet completely shed the egoism of his kingship," he said.

After six more years, Kabir told Loi that Ibrahim was now ready for the gift of Nam and asked her to try him again. So the next day she filled up a bucketful of all the dirt she could collect and tipped it on Ibrahim as he was passing by. "O my Lord," he exclaimed in great humility, "I am even more dirty than the filth poured on me, and yet you are so merciful as to take me to the feet of your servant!"

The next day Ibrahim was initiated.

During the days of Kabir, saints used to put spiritual seekers such as Ibrahim to severe tests before accepting them as disciples. Because of modern conditions, which have weakened us in both body and mind, saints now make the path easier for us. They do not ask us to distribute our wealth or renounce our position or business. They tell us to continue performing our worldly duties, but instruct us to keep our mind attached to the Lord while doing so.

As retold in Kabir The Great Mystic

The Ocean of Nectar

*The ocean of nectar is full,
but merely looking at it will not quench your thirst.
A mere glance at the wish-granting tree
will not appease your hunger.*

Saint Paltu

Understanding the philosophy of Sant Mat is not the same as practising it. Going to satsang and reading the literature has made us aware of the spiritual treasure that can be found within ourselves. Nonetheless, as we busy ourselves by keeping a watchful eye over our ‘assets’ – money, property, relationships, skills, health, and appearance – we may find ourselves overlooking our true inheritance.

In this context, Saint Paltu’s exhortation in the verse above is particularly apt. He beseeches the disciples of a true Master – those who come within sight of “the ocean of nectar” – not to stop at the edge but to plunge in; not simply to look at “the wish-granting tree” but to taste its fruit in order to satisfy their spiritual hunger and nourish the soul. In another verse, Paltu Sahib refers to the human head as an “inverted well”. Typically, a well is sunk into the ground to access water. Our head is likened to the well because it can access spiritual water (nectar) but only if we turn our attention inwards and upwards, as the source of the spiritual water is found beyond the eye centre. Paltu Sahib is using vivid metaphors to explain that the spiritual wealth within us – the connection to our Creator – will bring us everlasting satisfaction.

In making clear that merely seeing the ocean of nectar will not quench one’s thirst, Saint Paltu goes on to explain that following the Master’s orders is the means through which we may drink our fill from the ocean. This refers to obedience, living in God’s will, living

in the Master's will, or surrender. They are very nearly the same but not entirely. Obedience comes first, in the early stages of discipleship and is a precondition for surrender to occur at later stages. Obedience simply means that we should do what the Master would like us to do rather than following the dictates of our mind. In *The Master Answers*, Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

Obedience is another word for submission. And submission is another word for driving out the ego. When we are proud or full of ego, we do not like to submit to anybody, we do not like to be obedient to anybody.... When we go to school, we must be obedient to our teacher. We must submit our will to our teacher's will. And we have to practise the same thing when we come on the path, which is obedience to the Master.

The ease with which we may transfer the point of control of our actions from the mind to the Master is illustrated by the story of how Sain Bulleh Shah met his Master, Inayat Shah.

One day, Inayat Shah was in the fields transplanting onion seedlings when Bulleh Shah approached him and asked how God-realization was to be achieved. Inayat Shah answered, "It's very simple. You uproot your attention from here and plant it there – just like the onion seedlings."

A fine anecdote, but what exactly does the transplantation of attention entail in practice? Our first action should be to understand the path of Sant Mat before deciding whether to make a commitment to following it. When we do this, we are taking a first step in following the advice of the Masters. Maharaj Charan Singh, for example, never ceased to emphasize the importance of thoroughly investigating Sant Mat teachings before initiation in order to answer all our intellectual questions. If and when the intellect is satisfied, the next step is to adopt

the Sant Mat way of life. Living in accordance with Sant Mat principles entails abstaining from drugs, alcohol and tobacco, adopting a lacto-vegetarian diet, living an ethical life and, eventually, applying for initiation.

Upon initiation, the time for intellectual activity recedes and we begin obeying the fourth vow – practising meditation daily. Maharaj Charan Singh was fond of quoting the proverb “A rolling stone gathers no moss.” This maxim reminds us that we have been given an opportunity to start gathering a wealth of meditation experience. This is not the same as ‘spiritual experience’ per se, but suggests the experience of meditation – sitting, trying to concentrate, failing, trying again. This in itself is valuable because we learn so much about ourselves and about the mind.

By quoting the proverb above, Maharaj Charan Singh meant that once we start to follow Sant Mat, we should stick to it in order to experience its benefits. If we receive initiation, experiment with meditation and then move on and try another path, we will never deepen our association with Sant Mat. Whilst it is the nature of the mind to crave novelty, it is also natural for all novelties to wear off. Essentially, familiarity breeds monotony. Thus, in order to sustain ourselves on the path, the present Master encourages us to make our meditation practice exciting. He does not mean the excitement of the sort associated with change and novelty, but rather the ability to find the sense of satisfaction that comes from effort, persistence and loyalty.

The advice of the mystics is based on their knowledge of the workings of the world and human nature. Our spiritual goals will be realized by *sustained* practice rather than intense effort, which is often short-lived precisely because it is difficult to maintain such intensity.

Saint Simeon, an early Christian quoted in *The Philokalia*, wrote, “With respect to your spiritual father [the Master] do everything

he tells you to do, neither more nor less.” Taking meditation as an example, we are not usually encouraged to practise more than the recommended time because this runs the risk of taking meditation to an extreme, of it becoming an obsession and thereby resulting in a negative outcome. The term ‘burn out’ refers to a psychological condition characterized by utter exhaustion and lack of motivation following a bout of excessive work. This is why the mystics emphasize a balanced approach to meditation in which regularity is key. It is loving, methodical practice on a daily basis that will, as Saint Palto says, quench our thirst.

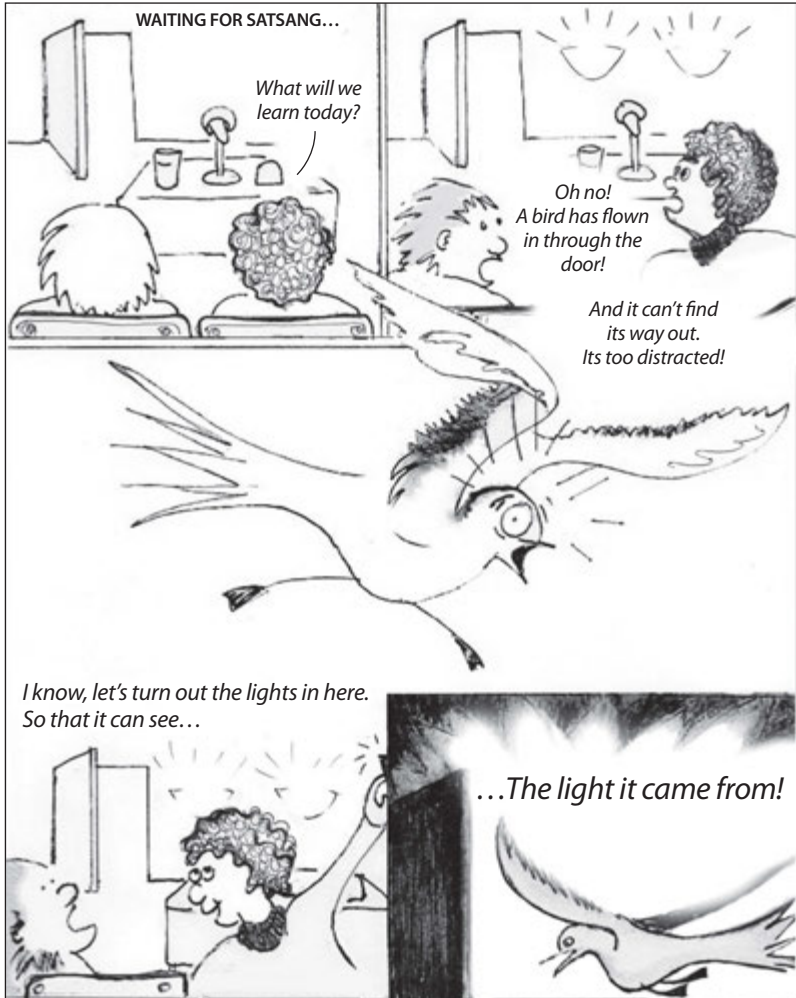
So, if we have made a firm decision not to be satisfied with “a mere gaze”, it is time to fulfil our potential by living the Sant Mat life fully, seeking our Master’s Radiant Form inside and travelling the spiritual path in his company.



While in meditation, do not think about worldly problems. Then the mind will become still. Argue with the mind thus: When you are asleep, you forget all activities of the world. What do you lose at that time? If it does not affect you adversely then, why do you indulge in worldly thoughts now? If you do not recall affairs of the world during meditation, will anything go amiss? Be firm and bring the mind around with determination.

Words Divine

A Lesson from Life



Finding Peace

We seek peace yet we find ourselves looking in the wrong place. As we go through life, eventually we may realize that, contrary to our initial expectations, we find little if any peace from achieving our ambitions. Granted, we may bask in their glory, but the sense of fulfilment is short-lived and may even be tinged with a touch of sadness or regret when reflecting upon the sacrifices made to attain them. If this is the case, where then do we find the peace we crave? Clues are provided in the following quotation from *Spiritual Gems*:

In a place where mind and matter are active, there can never be peace. Sorrows and war of nations, or communities or individuals shall continue. The soul must seek other planes to find peace. To find peace is the business of the individual. Everybody has to seek it within themselves.

Making every moment count

The mystics inform us that we will find peace once we are reunited with our Father, the Lord. This union does not magically occur after death but in life through the practice of meditation. By refocusing our attention inwards, meditation raises our consciousness to the eye centre and beyond. Those of us practising meditation are aware of how slow this process is. Nonetheless, a transformation starts to occur from the outset of our journey. As our meditation practice becomes stronger, we begin to feel some of the peace and contentment we are desperately seeking, and the closer we come to the eye centre, the stronger our sense of fulfilment. As yet though, many of us are still at the early stages in which our dominant experience is of a mind that

is relentless with its demands, doggedly advocating what it wants, complaining about what it does not have, and yearning for what might have been.

A philosopher once asked the Buddha what his monks did all day. The Buddha replied that they walked, stood, lay down, sat, ate, washed and bathed, and swept the floor. How then, asked the philosopher, were they any different from the people of the world? The Buddha replied that the difference was that his monks did these things in mindfulness, guarding their six senses. As all mystics encourage us to be mindful, the first step we are to take upon making a commitment to the spiritual path is to embrace the responsibility for controlling our thoughts, ending the habit of compulsive thinking.

As the author of *Living Meditation* explains, compulsive thinking is the process of abandoning oneself to the inner chatter of the mind. It is a deeply ingrained habit, the effects of which are highly damaging. Compulsive thinking, for example, encourages “worrying, judging, analyzing, building expectations and daydreaming”. The constant obsession with ruminating on the past or planning the future creates desires and aspirations that are indelibly imprinted on the mind. In effect, we are binding ourselves interminably to the creation by sowing the seeds of our own reincarnation. It is only through the master’s grace that we learn to reverse the tendency and turn this habit – through simran – into a strength. This is why simran is a key priority in our spiritual journey.

By repeating simran as much as possible throughout the day, we can overcome the deadly habit of compulsive thinking. For example, we could choose a routine activity requiring minimal concentration and decide to repeat only simran during this time. This would not only help us to live in the moment, but also enable us to establish a pattern of saying the simran without any mental commentary going on in the

background. Once we have developed the habit of repeating simran during one activity such as showering, travelling to work, or eating, we could choose another until we become immersed in simran for much of the day.

The more we repeat simran during the day, the easier it is to do so during our daily practice. The mind, once highly active, starts to become still, allowing simran to raise our consciousness, transport us to the Radiant Form of the Master and thus experience peace and joy as never before.

Effort, the precursor to motivation

When moving house, we make a list of potential places we want to live; we research house prices, create a financial plan and establish a time line. Making a plan helps us to execute efficiently the decision to relocate. Likewise, practising two and a half hours of meditation daily once we are on the path of Sant Mat is, in effect, executing a grand plan designed to take us from the physical world to the world of the spirit.

We may doubt our abilities, but the Master initiated us because he knows that we have the capability to realize our true self. Actually, in executing the grand plan, all that is required of us is to make the effort as it is only this that is within our control. Moreover, making the effort to practise meditation with sincerity and persistence will make a difference to our motivation. Even if our motivation wanes some days, the knowledge that we are doing what is best for our mind and soul should encourage us to sustain our effort. With our effort we show our Master that we care, thereby becoming receptive and worthy of his grace. The more effort we put in, the more grace the Master showers on us. Ongoing effort and the Master's grace will enable the mind to be conquered.

If we make an effort to live consciously in the atmosphere created by meditation in everything we do, then meditation becomes our way of life. Consequently, we enhance our positive qualities, we are more content, humble and, at the same time, detached from the world. In *The Hunger of the Soul*, a diary kept by American vedantist Nancy Mayorga, the writer movingly records her day-to-day experiences in practising the path taught by her guru, Swami Prabhavananda:

The change of character which comes about through the struggle to practise the presence of God is both a means and a result.... You plan your day with careful economy so as to allow the greatest amount of free time possible for meditation.... You see yourself slowly becoming quiet, calm, patient, and aloof, and you wonder at yourself, and you wonder with great secret joy. Because all this seems infinitely right, exactly what you were made for. And there is contentment in your heart, so deep as to be unruffled by surface annoyances.

Even if tangible success in meditation is a long time in coming, the years that we spend trying to walk the path of the Masters are not spent in vain. As Maharaj Charan Singh used to say, every minute devoted to meditation is important, not a single minute is lost, not even the time spent in seemingly unsuccessful meditation. Walking on the path of the masters transforms the disciple slowly but steadily. For instance, by looking back to the time before initiation, we become aware of just how much Sant Mat has changed us. The effect of our effort and the Master's grace is described most beautifully in *The Hunger of the Soul*:

What it boils down to is this – it's up to you to get hold of your mind, control it, quieten it, God does the rest. The years of struggle are simply to control the mind. The rest is waiting in peace and confidence for him to act.

There is a gap between our intellectual understanding of the Lord and our experience. We accept that he is present within us before experiencing that he is. To realize his presence is a life-long quest towards which all our actions must be directed. Following the advice of Baba Jaimal Singh to Maharaj Sawan Singh as given in *Spiritual Letters*, every single activity we undertake can be done with the Master in mind. Putting this into practice, we should try to think of the Master before we begin any action, perhaps by repeating our simran, and then thank him afterwards for giving us the opportunity. In this way, our daily activities unite us with God just as our prayers unite us with him during meditation. As the months and years pass by, we become more aware of the inner Master. We feel his guiding hand and begin to trust in him like a child holding the hand of his father. Our fears disappear and a beautiful inner peace envelops our whole life. As Nancy Mayorga writes of her meditation in *The Hunger of the Soul*:

I was taken deeper and deeper until I realized that God is a beginningless, bottomless spring of bliss and the only thing that can reach infinitely down into that bliss is OM. [i.e., the primordial sound] And then I realized that that very spring is within me, and I began to shake and tremble with joy of it!



The Karma Reduction Scheme

Once, during a question and answer session at the Dera, the Master remarked that it is not just the pleasing things in life that are the Lord's grace, but suffering too. In response, the brother who had asked the original question about the trials and tribulations of life said, "Well, Master, no more grace for me please. I've broken my arm, been sick, lost all my money, and got divorced. I think you've showered me with enough grace – please stop!"

Everybody burst out laughing. The thought arose: if there were a promotional leaflet on tackling adversity, it might look like this:

JOIN NOW! SPECIAL OFFER!

Jump-start your spiritual journey and lighten your karmic load with the mystically certified, tried and tested Karma Reduction Scheme.

GOAL: Tone spiritual muscles, reduce karmic weight gain, enhance your faith in the divine.

THE WORKOUT: Compulsory Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level daily meditation sessions designed to improve your balance and power up your mental resilience. Experience silence and a state of equilibrium as your mental noise recedes.

THE DIET: Sure to prevent any future weight-gain, enjoy a diet low in karmic calories from the programme's specially created menu. Each meal replaces your will with fast-acting, vitamin-enriched, spiritually fortifying divine will.

THE THERAPY: Ride the crazy, nerve-racking, emotional roller coaster train. No getting off until you learn not to worry each time life takes a 180 degree turn.

THE SPECIALITY: Become immune to life's ups and downs with a special dose of divine grace containing the highly potent ingredients of adversity and misfortune. Formulated especially for people on the fast-track scheme to Sach Khand and proven to liberate the soul.

THE OUTCOME: Imbibing love and experiencing only the presence of the divine, your stronger, leaner, spiritually attuned self becomes the eternal optimist.

REVIEWS: “The Karma Reduction Scheme is absolutely amazing! I registered a few years ago and was looking for something that would help me lose karmic weight fast. Life was hard. I was stressed for over three years. Just when I thought I had mastered level one, my mentor would raise the bar and throw another challenge at me. Now I am immune to all difficulties and safe in the knowledge I am on a one-way, fast-track scheme to Sach Khand. The Karma Reduction Scheme was just what I was looking for. I would recommend this to everyone!” – *A once frustrated disciple.*

WHY WAIT? Join now and attend a complimentary workshop on smiling through the tough times together with an invaluable hamper of grace and love. We ask only that you incorporate a fitness regime involving daily meditation.



Living in the Will of the Master

Is Sant Mat a simple path? Few people who have tried to follow it would claim that it is easy. The concepts and guidelines are simple, but the confused and polluted nature of our mind makes practice difficult. Mind creates all sorts of problems. It seems we have an in-built talent for making simple things complicated!

Typically, the word 'pollution' is used to refer to smog and smoke, to the holes in the ozone layer, and toxic chemicals in the atmosphere. But what about the pollution in our minds? The mind is one of our most precious assets but, in its existing state, it is also the sediment that drags us down and keeps us drowning in a fog of perpetual misery. Purification, the removal of all impurities of the mind, is the only way to achieve salvation and end our suffering. There is a way to do this – it is by living in the will of the Master.

Obedience

We know the Master has come to show us what to do in order to advance spiritually. To this end, we are given four simple rules to obey. These entail adopting a lacto-vegetarian diet; using no drugs, alcohol or tobacco; leading an honest life; and practising at least two and a half hours meditation every day. All four are essential, with the last one the most important. Only meditation can purify the mind and remove us from the realm of the physical. This is why it is the one activity that the Master constantly stresses above all else.

When we practise meditation, we are living in the will of the Master because we are submitting to the precepts of spirituality. It is difficult to quieten the mind. It may even be difficult to find the motivation to practise meditation as there is so much to distract us. The outward pull

on the mind is strong and the imbalance of ‘a little bit of meditation’ against ‘a lot of living’ doesn’t make things any easier. Nonetheless, we must persevere as best we can, avoiding the temptation to wait for better circumstances or for the mind to co-operate. As the Master reminds us, we must practise our meditation *despite* the situation in which we find ourselves.

Acceptance

At another level, living in the will of the Master means *accepting* our destiny – that is, being satisfied with, or at least tolerating, the events in our lives that we would have preferred not to experience. However, this is easier said than done. If we look back over our life we can, with hindsight, probably identify things that seemed to be a disaster but turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Such realization comes with the passage of time, but it would have been so much easier if we had been willing to accept, rather than resist, the events of life as they unfolded.

This is where meditation helps. With regular practice, meditation strengthens our ability to face life’s struggles with equanimity. This is essential because no matter how hard we try we cannot change our destiny; nor will our Master interfere even though he has the power to do so. Why not? Why wouldn’t the Master want to spare us from all those events that cause us heartbreak, sorrow, anger or worry?

The Master is the perfect sevadar. Under instruction from the Lord to bring home allotted souls, he performs his duty both quickly and obediently. He will not interfere with the divine laws of the universe, including the law of karma, because karmic debt must be cleared before the soul can merge with the Lord. As our destiny represents a portion of this debt, the Master does not change it by preventing, for example, events that appear to us to be catastrophic, since this would

simply delay our journey. Viewed in this light, we should be grateful they have occurred.

For many of us, however, our meditation has yet to reach a stage where we can experience negative happenings with such equanimity. Until we reach this level, we may legitimately ask the Lord for the courage and fortitude to endure painful events, maybe even the strength to view them as his gifts. Indeed, for Maharaj Sawan Singh, quoting the Adi Granth in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. IV, the mark of a true disciple is the ability to go through his or her destiny cheerfully; such a disciple is rewarded in the following way:

*He alone is a devotee of the Master
Who is content in the Lord's Will.
Within him ring unstruck melodies of bliss
And the Lord himself embraces him.*

If we stopped to reflect fully upon this, we would throw ourselves into our meditation so that we too could experience the 'embrace' of the Lord. However, before this aspiration becomes a reality, we must overcome one of the biggest obstacles standing in our way – the ego.

Eradicating the ego

We could imagine the ego like a glass bottle filled with sea water. If we threw the bottle into the ocean, the water would remain in the bottle, separate from the sea. But, if we were to smash the bottle, the water would merge into the ocean and become one with the sea. In our present condition, it is our ego, our mind and sense of separateness, which encases the soul and prevents it from merging with the Lord. It is what makes it hard to live in the will of the Master.

If, however, we were to eradicate the ego, our separation would end. So, how do we do this? Returning to our starting point, the answer lies in the four simple rules the Master asks us to follow, particularly the one about diligently attending to our simran and bhajan. Obedience, acceptance, and eradicating the ego are all facets of living in the will of the Master. Through these, slowly but surely, we are being cleansed and purified so that we may become worthy of the final reunion.

It seems fitting to conclude with the following prayer. Maharaj Sawan Singh, in *Call of the Great Master*, gave it as an example of how we might entreat the Lord to help us surrender to his will and become one with him. It aptly captures the heartfelt desire of disciples the world over.

*My Lord, I am ignorant, I do not know what to ask from you.
Give me that which you think best for me. And give me the
strength and wisdom to be happy about what you deem fit to
give me, and about how and where you keep me.*

*I have no virtues, no devotion. My actions are all dark
and sinful; I possess no merits and the mind has thoroughly
crushed me.*

*For a sinner like myself, O Lord, there is no refuge but thy
Blessed Feet. Please take me under Thy shelter. I want nothing
more. Make me thy slave that I may become thine and thou
mayest become mine.*



Actions Express Priorities

The Master tells us that the sole purpose of our coming into the human form is to liberate the soul and achieve God-realization. Meditation is the way to develop that deep love so that we can achieve our true objective. When that is the case, then isn't it true that every action we take should be an expression of that love and lead us to that single goal? As Maharaj Charan Singh explains in *Die to Live*:

Meditation is a way of life. You do not merely close yourself in a room for a few hours, then forget about meditation for the rest of the day. It must take on a practical form, reflecting in every daily action and in your whole routine.

Looking at our lives from this perspective and then seeing the things we really do each day, will reveal to us where our priorities actually lie. As Mahatma Gandhi said: "Action expresses priorities." Will our actions take us toward our home? We can all talk a good game, we can make big promises to ourselves, but do we fulfil them? The aphorism, "Words beget words and actions beget actions" is a salutary reminder that words are cheap and easily given, but it is the actions that we take that will shape and guide our lives. We know in which direction we are to travel; therefore our actions should reflect that direction, both to ourselves and to the world around us.

The truth is that none of us really knows how much time we have left in this life. Yet we plan ahead even into the distant future. We behave as if we have all the time in the world. Living in this illusion, we compromise our spiritual fulfilment by focusing too much on the road to worldly success and not enough on the path back to our true

home. Having prioritized our worldly endeavours and given them all our attention, we eventually realize that they do not lead to any lasting happiness; worldly success is fleeting and we remain miserable in this world. Our desires and worldly ambitions are never ending. When we are led by them, then no lasting end point will ever be achieved. All we will attain is a brief respite from the cravings and demands of the mind.

On the other hand, if we can focus on what we should be doing, we will find the peace that we crave, which has so far eluded us. The Master has often said that if we do what the Lord has asked us to do, then he will take care of both our spiritual and worldly needs. This is also echoed in the words of Christ when he says:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Bible, Matthew 6: 33

He says, “seek ye first” – not second or third, but *first*. And when we do this, “all these things” will be given to us. He means that we will then be with the Father, and when we are one with him, then we will have everything. We will have our heart’s desire.

When we consider these points for a moment, why do we delay, what are we waiting for, where is the place for our constantly shifting priorities? When we prioritize our worldly endeavours above our true purpose, then we sell ourselves tragically short. Our precious time is squandered on cheap trinkets when the jewels of devotion could be had if we only put our efforts in the right place. On the other hand, when we live in that atmosphere created through our meditation, then we can be in the world but not of it.

If we choose to make Sant Mat a way of life, it must be reflected in everything we do. We are not just satsangis for two and half hours a day – we need to be satsangis the whole day.

Throughout the day, our actions should flow from that fundamental appreciation of life's purpose and be an expression of our love and devotion for our Master.

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

We shall have to try our best for our living in the world, and then if we don't achieve it, we should leave it to the will of the Lord. The results should be left to him. That does not mean that we should not try to do our best for our promotion and work hard to earn all that. We have certain responsibilities and duties which we must do in the world. At the same time, we should not get so involved in these things that we forget their real purpose. They are just means to a certain end. That end should always be kept in view, and we should try to achieve that end.



Where Would I Go?

*Never could my heart
be separate from you –
nor could I worship
anyone else.*

*If I forget your kindness
then whom could I love?*

*If I pass by your street,
then where would I go?*

Najm al-Din Kubra

INFORMATION ON ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

If you wish to submit an article for publication in *Spiritual Link*, please mail a printed, typed version by post to one of the following addresses. *Emailed submissions will not be accepted.*

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• Articles should focus on the Sant Mat teachings and may also draw on the universal teachings of other mystics. • Articles should not be based on, or discuss, the personaity of the master or the writer. • Articles must be your own original work. If quotations from other sources are included, complete source references must be given. • Articles should be between 500 and 1500 words in length.

If accepted, your article will be edited according to the requirements of the magazine. You will be contacted only if your submission is accepted. Please include your name, age, postal address, and email address with your article.

Book Review



Letters by a Modern Mystic

BY FRANK C. LAUBACH. COMPILED BY CONSTANCE E. PADWICK.

PUBLISHER: MANSFIELD CENTER, CT: MARTINO PUBLISHING, 2012.

ISBN: 978-1-61427-355-4

In the years 1930 to 1932, Frank Laubach wrote a series of letters to his father detailing his efforts to develop a practice of remembering the presence of God at all times. He writes candidly of both successes and failures as he strove to remain in an unbroken state of remembrance throughout his waking hours, and he describes vividly the effect that practice had on his life. *Letters by a Modern Mystic* is a compilation of excerpts from those letters, presented in chronological order. It was first published in 1937.

At the time of the letters Laubach was living on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, serving as a Christian missionary. The first letter, written in January 1930, looks back over the previous year, which he describes as “the loneliest year, and in some ways the hardest year, of my life, but the most gloriously full of voices from heaven.” That year, while living alone, away from family and friends, among people whose language he had not yet learned, he had begun what he called his “experiment of filling every minute full of the thought of God”. Although he felt he had largely fallen short of his ideal so far – and he resolved to work harder at it in the coming year – yet, when he looked back at the past year’s “marvellous experiences of the friendship of God”, he believed “it would have been impossible to have held much more without breaking with sheer joy.”

The people of the island were Muslim, and Laubach found “living in the atmosphere of Islam”, with its emphasis on submission to the will of God, a “tremendous spiritual stimulus”. He began to see that “submission is the first and last duty of man”. He wrote: “I am disgusted with the pettiness and futility of my unled self. If the way out is not more perfect slavery to God, then what is the way out?” He began to focus his efforts on surrender to the divine will: “trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to

the inner voice’, essentially asking wordlessly, “what, Father, do you desire done this minute?”

Laubach went through ups and downs in his efforts to remember God. As he wrote: “If this record of a soul’s struggle to find God is to be complete, it must not omit the story of difficulty and failure.” His letters often record his “failures”, as his attention scattered into distraction. Laubach recognized that he had undertaken something “hard, harder than I had anticipated. But I resolved not to give up the effort.” In one letter, as he stopped and considered his many failures, Laubach poses two questions, which he answers: “(1) Can it be done all the time? Hardly. And (2) Does the effort help? Tremendously.”

Describing his state of mind before he began this “experiment,” he writes, “I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree.” Even though he often failed in his efforts, he still found that ever since he “resolved, and then re-resolved” that he would remember God moment by moment, “it was as though some deep artesian well had been struck” in his soul. Since that time of firm resolution:

Every day is tingling with the joy of a glorious discovery. That thing is eternal. That thing is undefeatable. You and I shall soon blow away from our bodies. Money, praise, poverty, opposition, these make no difference, for they will all alike be forgotten in a thousand years, but this spirit which comes to a mind set upon continuous surrender, this spirit is timeless.

He described the effort of remembrance: “This concentration upon God is strenuous, but everything else has ceased to be so. I think more clearly, I forget less frequently. Things I did with a strain before, I now do easily and with no effort whatsoever.”

I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what so astonishes me, for I never have felt it this way before. I need something, and turn round to find it waiting for me. I must work, to be sure, but there is God working along with me.... I seem to have to make sure of only one thing now, and every other thing “takes care of itself”,

or I prefer to say what is more true, God takes care of all the rest. My part is to live this hour in continuous conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to his will. To make this hour gloriously rich. This seems to be all I need think about.

He began to notice that his effort to remain aware of and responsive to God's presence charged even his physical surroundings with a sacred atmosphere.

The most important discovery of my whole life is that one can take a little rough cabin and transform it into a palace just by flooding it with thoughts of God. When one has spent many months in a little house like this in daily thoughts about God, the very entering of the house, the very sight of it as one approaches, starts associations which set the heart tingling and the mind flowing... so in this sense one man after the other builds his own heaven or hell.

He discovered that "God loves beauty. Everything he makes is lovely. The clouds, the tumbling river, the waving lake, the soaring eagle, the slender blade of grass ... beautiful craft of God!" He often climbed to the top of a hill near his house to watch the sunset, and many of the letters are filled with his awe-struck attempts to describe what was wrought by God's paintbrush.

Soon he began to notice that "people outside are treating me differently".

Obstacles which I once would have regarded as insurmountable are melting away like a mirage. People are becoming friendly who suspected or neglected me. I feel, I feel like one who has had his violin out of tune with the orchestra and at last is in harmony with the music of the universe.

Although, as a Christian missionary, he might have been expected to be trying to convert the local people to Christianity, he found that he had no interest in "changing the name of their religion". He found that there was no real difference between what it meant to be a good Muslim or a good Christian. Both meant living in remembrance of and obedience to God. His work among the local people centred around literacy. The local language had

no written form, so he devised one and set about teaching the skills of reading and writing. As he worked to share this much-needed skill with them, he only wished that he would “see God in them,” and they would “see God in him”.

As he continued his inner work of remembrance, he gradually began to believe it really could be possible – eventually, with effort – to remain “in constant touch with God”. He wrote:

I cannot do it even half a day – not yet, but I believe I shall be doing it some day for the entire day. It is a matter of acquiring a new habit of thought. Now I like God’s presence so much that when for half an hour or so he slips out of mind – as he does many times a day – I feel as though I had deserted him, and as though I had lost something very precious in my life.

As he continued, his belief that “the thing can be done by all people under all circumstances” grew to certainty. In fact, he saw his “experiment” as proving this truth. There was nothing special about him: if he could do it, then anyone could do it.

How I wish, wish, wish that a dozen or more persons who are trying the experiment of holding God endlessly in mind would all write their experiences so that each would know what the other was finding as a result! The results, I think, would astound the world. At least the results of my own effort are astounding me.

Interestingly, after his time in the Philippines, Laubach went on to become an internationally renowned expert on literacy. The system he had developed for teaching reading and writing to the people of Mindinao turned out to be effective in other places where the local language had no written form. Throughout his long career, Laubach never lost his belief that the practice of continual remembrance of God was possible for anyone who resolved to do it. In 1953, decades after the letters in this book, Laubach published a hugely popular brochure called “A Game with Minutes” in which he explained the “game” which begins with trying to remember God one second out of every minute.

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

