

Initiation – Are We Ready?

The Dawn of Awakening

When there is an empty feeling deep within us, which we can't explain;
When things that once gave joy now seem mundane, boring and useless;
When restlessness seeps into our system and we ask questions about things that we were not conscious of;
When the need within us to search for something beyond our present existence becomes a necessity, a passion;
When a knot within us aches to be untied;
When we start looking for something to fill an unexplainable void;
that is the exact moment of awareness! —

That is when we experience a strange awakening that we find difficult to express. We wake up to another part of ourselves, which is new to us. A spark lights within us. We may or may not be searching for spirituality, but knowingly or unknowingly we head in that direction. The potential for inner growth creates a craving within us and draws us to the path. This strong pull and sudden desire is the beginning of our search for the Truth. We could learn through books and discourses, but these can only give us an intellectual insight. We need more. We need a guide, a teacher to direct us because someone has to point the way. So the natural question is: where do we go from here?

Just as a sick man visits the doctor for a cure and is administered medicine for his ailment, we go to the Master, who cures us of the disease of separation from the Lord with the medicine of meditation.

In our search for anything in life, we take one step at a time until we gain personal experience. Understanding comes from familiarity; it makes us more confident and self-assured. It is the same with our approach to spirituality and the Master. We are afraid at first because the concept is unfamiliar and may seem strange. We want to know more and yet we are unwilling to take the first step. Our questions indicate our desire for God-realization, yet we find it difficult to head in that direction. But once we understand how to attain our heart's desire, our fear slowly gets replaced with eagerness. The awakening within urges us to find a teacher who will point the way!

Someone to Point the Way

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
Without the Way there is no going;
Without the Truth there is no Knowing,
Without the Life, there is no living.
I am the Way which you must follow;
The Truth you must believe;
The Life for which you must hope for.

Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*

Jesus explains: "I am the Way." Only a living Master has the key to reveal the "Truth," the way to attain self-realization. Without "Knowing," without personal inner experience, there can be no faith, belief or attainment. Without "Life" – meaning eternal life or bliss – our liberation, which he calls the "life you must hope for," is not possible. And liberation cannot be attained without someone to show the way.

Physically the Master is as human as we are. But here lies the big difference – on the spiritual level, he has traversed the path of Truth, experienced inner bliss, and realized the

ultimate by going deep within himself and connecting to the Shabd – the Word or Logos, the divine spiritual power. Only a God-realized soul can show us the way within.

The Master introduces us to the method of attaining God, of going within ourselves through the practice of meditation and connecting our soul to the Shabd, thus permanently removing us from the clutches of birth and death. We are shown the path of divine realization, which frees us from worldly bondage. The Master takes us from darkness to light and liberates our soul by merging us with the Absolute, the Ultimate. Without the Master there is no God-realization.

The impact of a spiritual guide is to extract seekers from the external phenomena in which we currently immerse ourselves and take us to the height of spiritual attainment. The Master is supreme, all pervading and all encompassing. He is the key to all existence; he embodies the whole.

A story is told of a Master who would often repeat at the end of his discourse “remove the self, and realize the truth.”

The disciple was compelled to ask him one day: “Master, if this is so, why don’t you remove the self for us and just explain the pure truth?”

The Master smiled and asked the disciple to get him water to drink.

The disciple brought a glass of water and placed it in front of the Master.

“What is this?” asked the Master.

“This is the water you asked for,” murmured the disciple.

“But did I ask for a glass or for water?” the Master asked.

The disciple was confused.

“Never mind,” the Master explained softly. “Just as you cannot bring water without a vessel, so too, the Master cannot express the truth except through the teachings.”

The teachings are the vessel that allows us to come in contact with the inner truth, the divine reality. The teachings are of paramount importance in helping us reach our objective, but without a Master how will we know the teachings? While the outer form of the Master may change, the teachings and the truth they represent remain constant. Only the Master can give the true teachings, since the Master and the teachings are one.

What Is Initiation?

The word “initiate” is derived from the Latin word *initiare*, which means to commence or start something new. The word “initiation” therefore implies that one is being introduced to a new practice or technique. On this spiritual path, when the Master or one of his representatives instructs a seeker on the discipline of meditation, it is referred to as “initiation” or receiving *Naam*. In meditation, the disciple learns to still the restless mind and reconnect his awareness to the Shabd, which is the essence of the soul.

It is unimaginable that of all the billions of people in this world, only a few select souls at any given time are ready for initiation and release from the cycle of birth and death. Initiation is clearly the beginning of a new life bestowed only to those whom the Lord selects for his grace.

Jesus Christ said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27)

Those souls who have been chosen or “marked” will hear the “voice” of the shepherd. They are fortunate to have, through initiation, the opportunity of being connected to the true reality and being released from the cycle of birth and death.

A Punjabi religious quote says, “*Daana sir daan, Naam daan.*” This means that the highest blessing of all, “*Daana sir daan,*” is the bestowal of “*Naam daan,*” meaning initiation by the Master. It is with the gift of *Naam daan* that we are able to go within ourselves and reach higher realms of consciousness through the Shabd.

Through initiation the Master awakens us to the illusions of this materialistic world. He awakens us from our deep slumber by showing us the way to the Divine. At initiation the Master introduces to the seeker the method of meditation by which he or she can connect to the Word, Logos or Shabd. The Master transmits the essence of his own direct experience of this inner reality.

Through their teachings and experience, the Masters show us how to merge our soul back into its source. They assure us that only through meditation can the mysteries of the inner realms be revealed.

Initiation, then, is establishing a link between the Master and disciple. This link or connection takes place on a spiritual level. The Shabd form of the Master is actually doing the initiation. The Shabd Master has no limitations and is with the disciple no matter where he or she is. That is why initiation conducted by either the Master himself or by one of his representatives is the same. There is no difference. The real initiation takes place within. The purpose of the outer initiation is only to explain to the disciple the technique of meditation and to instill a strong sense of commitment.

It is only through a Master that we will gain inner knowledge. At initiation the Master lights the flame of awareness in us and assures us that he will take us to our final abode through our practice of meditation.

The purpose of human life is God-realization. However, we first need to achieve the realization that we are the same essence as God. Self-realization comes before God-realization. We came from God and our ultimate destiny is to return to him. The end, and the means to the end, is through meditation – the timeless science which leads to ultimate union with God.

A New Birth

Fundamentally, initiation means a rebirth; we become detached from the attractions of the material world and are reborn into a path of spiritual devotion through meditation. As the Bible says: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

The inward and essential part of every being is the spirit, or soul, and the external part is our physical self. The spirit is not subject to change and destruction, while the external is. That which we can perceive, which appears to be living, will one day decay and die. We are unaware of the reality of the spirit, which lives forever, because it is covered and hidden under a garb of matter. The spirit or soul is of the same essence as the Shabd, the Word of God, which is the sustaining power of creation and gives life and form to everything. We are reborn when the Master reawakens our consciousness to the Shabd within at the time of initiation. It is then that we cease to identify ourselves with the body and realize that our true identity is spirit, or Shabd.

The Bible clearly explains: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23) To see the kingdom of God we need to be reborn of the “incorruptible” seed, which is not subject to change, decay or death. Through meditation we attach ourselves to the Shabd or sound current that “lives and abides forever.” We are reborn in spirit through initiation. The Word of God, the Shabd, is indestructible and incorruptible.

In the Beginning Was the Word

The Bible says: “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the word was God.” (John 1:1) In different religions, this Word of God is referred to by various names: Kalma, Shabd, Logos, music of the spheres, sound current, audible life stream, Tao, Akash Bani. All these terms, which have been coined by human beings at different times and in different cultures, refer to this inner sound, which is the core existence of the creation and the essence of every individual soul. This sound is revealed by the Masters from within themselves. It is the source of their revelation and therefore they are able to teach the same truth through personal experience.

Hazrat Inayat Khan said: “The knower of the mystery of sound knows the mystery of the whole universe.” The Masters’ inner knowledge and experience makes them the “knowers of the mystery of the sound.” This sound or Shabd resonates continuously in our being, in our soul, but we are unable to hear it because our consciousness is not focused, not centred. We are so absorbed in worldly pursuits and attached to the external glitter of the world that our awareness of the Sound fades away.

Divinity has always been an inherent part of us, but it has been buried and covered with layers of cravings and negative thoughts. Spiritual attainment is adapting to higher aspirations

and thought, becoming aware of the higher self. It is the path of uncovering the soul from beneath various layers of dirt.

During meditation, when the mind is still and focused, the Shabd slowly becomes clear, distinct and audible. We can develop the ability to disengage from the chatter of the mind, discard and abandon our mental attachments, and go beyond the mundane to follow the Sound during the deep silence of meditation. The melody within us is elevating and defies the logic of the thinking mind. It cannot be expressed in words – it must be experienced.

The Living Word

Aristotle wrote that it was actually experience and not knowledge gained that allowed the initiate to comprehend the secret meaning of the mysteries. Zen teachings emphasize: “Study the living word, not the dead word.”

The “dead word” means the learning we get from books and scriptures, which is superficial knowledge and is not based on experience. Books can only give an explanation or information; they can motivate and inspire us, but they cannot give experience. Words are not required for attaining inner truth; instead, the mind must be silenced during meditation. So ultimately what good is book knowledge?

Only a living Master can convey the living word of God, the Shabd, to us through initiation. Therefore we are encouraged to get the living word from a living Master, one who through personal experience can show us how to connect to the living word of God. Initiation is a mystical spark bestowed by a living Master to his disciples, igniting the dormant spiritual energy within us.

Concentration

Our spiritual journey starts with our ability to concentrate at the eye centre. During our meditation time, we have to let go of our worldly desires and burdens: home, office, spouses, children, pets, everything! This is our special time with the Master, and no other thought should distract our attention. Never mind the noise outside our room, whether the washing machine is on or the milk is boiling over or the dog hasn't been fed. We can never have the perfect situation for meditation; there is no such thing. The only perfect time is our time in meditation because that is our only time alone with the Master.

Meditation is the method by which we can detach ourselves from this chaotic world – by attaching ourselves to Shabd within, with single-mindedness and one-pointed concentration. Meditation should be done without motive, thoughts or expectation. The mind should be shut watertight to all activities outside. An uncontrolled, erratic thought-flow is mental indulgence, and to reverse it takes concentrated meditation. The purpose of meditation is to lose oneself in the experience of Shabd by extinguishing all thoughts, desires and passions.

Stilling the Body

For concentration it is necessary to sit absolutely still, in a naturally comfortable way as shown during initiation. The body will do its best to constantly remind us of its presence and draw our attention back to the external world. With our spine straight and eyes closed, we need to bring our attention to the eye centre with simran.

Stilling the body no doubt is difficult at first, but practice makes perfect. If we were held at gunpoint and told not to move, would we dare twitch? Fear would freeze us and turn us into statues. That is the same resolve required during meditation, though our stillness should come from perseverance, not fear. When we set out with a firm resolve to achieve our goal, we are already halfway to success. There can be no half-hearted effort in spirituality, it's everything or nothing; it's a “do or die” situation. That is why Kabir Sahib states: “The spiritual path is for heroes and not for cowards.”

And wouldn't it sound ridiculous if we said that we could not discipline ourselves to sit still for a couple of hours each day? Has anyone achieved a reward without hard work? Doctors, lawyers, scholar, painters and musicians put in countless hours, days, months and years of dedicated work and perseverance to achieve their goal. They don't just sit back and make grandiose plans for becoming experts in their field. They work to achieve their success.

Simran

The inner journey begins when we collect our attention at the eye centre with the repetition of simran, the five names given to us at the time of our initiation. This process of repetition slowly calms the wavering mind, stilling and silencing it through the power of the words given by the Master. With the repetition of simran, the mind empties itself of chaotic thoughts and keeps it silently and solidly focused at the eye centre. Simran helps us retain one-pointed focus.

Simran should resonate within us 24/7, even when we are not in meditation. It is a shield against negative thoughts and helps us to think positively. The power of simran given by the Master is the key to success in following the path and attaining spiritual illumination.

When all thoughts cease to exist, when there is emptiness and darkness, when the mind becomes desireless and self-awareness is dissolved, the “I”, the ego, dissolves. Without the “I” the mind becomes fathomless, limitless and egoless. In the silence of that state of deep concentration, all extraneous thoughts are eradicated; the mind and intellect submit to the power of the simran.

Light and Sound

The Shabd manifests two qualities within – light and sound. This is why the Shabd is often referred to as the audible life stream or sound current. The light helps hold our attention, our focus. Christ said: “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” (Matthew 6:22) When the concentration is solidly rooted at the eye centre by means of simran, a faint, distant melody is heard. Sometimes it is preceded or accompanied by flashes of light. In the silence of the mind, the light and the melody become clearer, louder, brighter and irresistible. The mind starts to be irresistibly attracted to the light and sound.

This is how the inward journey of the soul begins. The light and sound attract the soul, give it focus and direction, and eventually pull it upward. At this point the Radiant Form of the Master engulfs the soul. The Shabd, the light and sound, awakens the soul. We are reborn, as it were. This is what is referred to as “dying while living.” When the mind and body are fully concentrated, the soul awakens and experiences total bliss. The infinite magnitude of that experience is beyond human comprehension.

Love Between Master and Disciple

No other love is as deep as the love between Master and disciple. It sinks into the very core of our being, in our nerves, pulse and bloodstream. No other love compares, whether it is the love of a mother for her child, one spouse for another, one sibling for another, or even the love of a friend. These human relationships are born, grow, change and then slowly wither away. Even the loss of a dearly loved one ceases to ache with the passage of time. None of these bonds are permanent. Human relationships continuously change – that is the very nature of being human.

In comparison, our love for the Master encompasses our entire being, and it remains constant. When we transcend our love for the physical plane to the pure love for the Master, we rise above changes, expectations and demands. True love involuntarily and without hesitation wants to give, submit and surrender. This kind of love is possible only with the Master because he has no motive, no demands, no expectations – he only gives, gives, and gives.

Through his love the Master inspires us to surrender to him in meditation and eventually reach the inner Shabd Master. Our love for the physical Master should motivate us to meditate with total dedication and one-pointed focus to connect our soul to the Shabd, the formless true Master within, and attain the Truth. The consequence of our love for the Master is our attempt to live in his will or *hukam* – to do our daily meditation and strive to make it a part of our daily lives.

Attachment – The Source of Our Pain

Children, parents, spouses, wealth, property – nothing belongs to us, nothing is forever. All attachments are illusions. When the final moment comes, when death knocks on our door, neither our relationships nor our material possessions accompany us. We leave alone and empty-handed. All that we have so laboriously and proudly collected and achieved in our lifetime, the titles attached to our names, the name-plates outside our homes, the companies

bearing our name, sons and daughters to carry on the family name – all gets erased, washed away. There is no belonging of any kind in this transitory world – everything and everyone perishes.

All these attachments, while initially bringing us happiness and joy, eventually betray us with their impermanence. We experience pain because we look for happiness where it does not exist. Trying to find eternity in the material world is like trying to stop a river whose very nature is to flow. We seek outer love, which remains transitory. We want that love to be undying, but how can we attain undying love from something temporary and impermanent?

There is only one attachment that is imperishable and immortal – our attachment to the Truth, the Shabd, which is eternal. This can only be achieved if, through meditation, we slowly rid our mind of its desires for the false promises of this world. As our concentration improves, our mind will start attaching itself to the Shabd within and consequently will start detaching from the objects and desires of the world. If there is a hole at the bottom of a jar of water, the water will leak out. Similarly, if there is the smallest tinge of attachment in us, our attention will be drawn out. Our focus will wane. Our priorities will change. Instead of heading straight, we will go backwards. These desires will hold us back from our course. If we do our part, our meditation, then the Shabd will automatically do its part, by pulling our consciousness away from the distractions of this creation and attaching it to the higher realms of Truth and understanding within.

Ego – The Source of Our Feeling of Separation

We are propelled into this world by our ego – by our need to define ourselves as someone special or to satisfy our need for status and material possessions. Sri Ramakrishna explained the intensity of destruction caused by the soaring ego in these lines:

The ego of a common man is easier to fade away
Than the ego of a sage, which is hard indeed to wear away.

The ego is like an empty glass that dips itself into the ocean and after emerging filled to the brim, cries out: “I am the ocean!”

Who are we really? The Bible states: “Dust you are and to dust shall you return.” (Genesis 3:19) If we can understand the depth of these words, the realization will dawn on us that our swollen concern for ourselves, our arrogance at our own self-importance, constitutes the worst threat in our life.

Our ego is fed by the mind. It is an illusion caused by our ignorance. Ramakrishna also said that the ego is “like the glow-worm who after dusk thinks he is giving light to the world. But when the stars begin to twinkle, the light of the glow-worm is humbled.”

Only if our mind is empty of self will it be ready to receive. In the empty mind there are many possibilities, in the egoistic mind there are few. The greatest possible enjoyment is found when we reduce our ego to zero. As Swami Parmananda taught:

It is the ego that is the great bar to spiritual progress. If you want ego, then you can't have God. If you want God, then you must be crowned with humility.

Maharaj Charan Singh said:

There should be no spiritual ego. We know our reality, where we stand. I don't know what we are proud of. So there should be no spiritual ego at all. That is also ego, and unless we are able to eliminate all types of ego, it is very difficult to make proper progress.

Karma – The Inescapable Law

When all is said and done, it is our karmas that keep us prisoners in this world. All our actions are recorded in our spiritual account of credits and debits. Our good deeds will bring us good

results; the bad things we have done will bring an appropriate punishment, which we will have to suffer. We might ask what happens to all our karmas at the time of initiation. Are our karmas wiped away? Do we get a clean slate? Will the Master protect us from bad things happening to us in the future? Has the Master taken our karmas on himself and now we are free of them? No!

However, the Master does take control of administering and dispensing our karmas. We will still have to go through our karmas and reap their rewards or punishments. But the Master is our benevolent benefactor whose sole concern is the spiritual welfare of the disciple. Through his grace and support he can make a hammer blow feel like a pinprick. He gives us perspective and understanding, and he helps us find the courage to face difficult situations with confidence and equilibrium. In short, he enables us to go through our karmas without losing our balance and focus. Maharaj Charan Singh used to say that the Master does not remove the thorns of the world but he provides us with thick-soled shoes so that the thorns do not harm us. When we are faced with adversity, the Master's grace is there for the taking; we only have to turn to him for help and comfort.

The Vow Factor

For anything that we do in life, even the simple things, we need to adapt to a particular decorum; abide by rules, codes, duties, regulations, and laws. We may own a car and know how to drive, but we are still required to abide by traffic regulations. We may believe we are totally independent and liberal, but we still need to live by social norms. Even in Sant Mat, to achieve our goal we need to adhere to some form of discipline by following the Sant Mat teachings. The four vows we are asked to take prior to initiation will help us live a life with a minimum amount of karma. They are:

- Adhering to a vegetarian diet – no meat, fish, eggs or any substance containing their essence. Just as we cannot give life, we do not have the right to take life. We hear people talk about their love for their pets; yet the same lovers of pets, who condemn cruelty to animals, kill other animals for their meals. There can be no justification for destroying a life for our personal pleasure. The killing of any living being brings a heavy load of karma. It says in the Bible, “As you sow, so shall you reap.”
- Abstaining from tobacco products, alcohol, and mind-altering drugs. They are a deterrent to meditation. All bad habits should be avoided. Habits make grooves or impressions on our mind, so it is better to create good habits rather than indulge in bad habits which will only increase our bad karmas. The effect of alcohol and recreational drugs makes our already unstable mind more unstable and unfocused. So how can taking such substances help us to control the mind – to sit still and focus our attention during meditation?
- Living a principled, moral and ethical life, including no sexual relations outside legal marriage. We cannot separate our actions in the world from our spiritual responsibilities. They are intertwined. Unethical behavior will only hurt us and take us away from our goal and we will incur more karmas. Only with a clean, clear conscience can we still our mind during meditation. When we commit actions that are contrary to the laws and norms of society, this results in a confused mind. And how can we bring that confused mind under control during meditation? If we have hurt someone or cheated someone, how can we meditate with a clear conscience?

While sexual relations within the confines of a legal marriage are acceptable, it must be understood that sex was intended for the procreation of the species. Sex for pure indulgence, for sensual gratification, takes us away from our goal. The more we indulge our lower tendencies the more we slow down our spiritual progress. With effort and mutual understanding we must try to gain control of this tendency.

- Meditating for 2½ hours every day. We need to discipline the body and mind through

the meditation practice and through simran. Simran silences the mind and creates an opportunity to experience the Shabd, the voice of God calling us from within. Sitting each day at a fixed time conditions our mind and body to accept our daily routine of meditation. Constant repetition of the simran throughout the day whenever possible also makes it easier to focus the mind when we sit down to meditate. When we focus at the eye centre, our attention moves away from worldly thoughts.

We should understand that controlling the mind is a lifelong struggle. The mind is used to having its way and resists being tamed. We should not expect overnight success and we cannot force our way inside. Slow and steady wins the race. Progress is being made with our every effort, even if it is not apparent. Rest assured that the benefits of our meditation keep accumulating and are held in trust for us. When the Master feels we are ready, when he feels that we have become spiritually mature, only then will he distribute our spiritual wealth to us.

Think Before You Leap

Before undertaking the spiritual quest we should ask ourselves, “Are we really ready to make a lifelong commitment?” Initiation and the vows we promise to follow for the rest of our lives are not a casual commitment. Are we prepared to make a substantial lifestyle change? Are we prepared for all the practical problems that following these vows may create? You may face awkward moments with family, friends, and work colleagues who will not understand the various do’s and don’ts you are newly adopting, which following this spiritual path entails. Some whom we thought were our friends will drift away from us. We will naturally start to gravitate towards like-minded people. We will become conscious of those who influence us towards our goal and those who influence us in the opposite direction – the point being that initiation is the start of a life-changing experience.

Getting up in the early morning to do our 2 ½ hours of meditation means for most a lifetime of less sleep. Sleeping late in the morning becomes a rare luxury. While we are instructed to live a normal life in the world by earning a good living, meeting the responsibilities of family, work, and community, at the same time we must always keep our eye on the goal, our spiritual practice. We must orient our mind to our “spiritual North” so that our mind, like a compass, always remains quietly one-pointed towards our spiritual pursuits. We should try never to lose our balance even when life pulls and pushes us in many directions. It takes great effort and perseverance to maintain an inner spiritual focus. A good example of how disciples should live their life is illustrated in the following story:

King Janak, who was a God-realized saint, knew that Sukdev, who had come to him for initiation, still doubted that a king could be a saint while surrounded by all his palatial wealth. So King Janak ordered his officials to arrange for a festival day throughout the city. Festivities, dances, plays, special foods, and spectacles of all kinds were to be held to entertain Sukdev.

When everything was ready, King Janak invited Sukdev to enjoy the festivities that had been prepared in his honour. But just before he set out, the king made this request: “Sukdev, it is my wish that you carry a cup of milk filled to the brim wherever you go today.”

King Janak then gave the officer in charge of Sukdev’s escort the following instructions: “Take Sukdev through every part of the city. Let him see everything and miss nothing. We must honour our guest in every way possible. But if Sukdev should spill a single drop of milk, my orders are that you should behead him on the spot.”

Accompanied by the king’s guard of honour, Sukdev went through the city, and late that night returned to King Janak’s palace. The king asked him: “How did you enjoy the entertainment? Did you find fault with anything?”

“O king, as matters turned out, I saw nothing at all of the show,” Sukdev replied, “for at every moment all my thoughts were concentrated on this cup, in fear that I should spill a drop and lose my life.”

King Janak smiled. “Sukdev,” he said, “that is how I live in the midst of all this luxury and grandeur. I see nothing, for at every moment my thoughts are concentrated on the Lord, lest I too should lose my life.”

“Imagine,” the king went on, “that the cup is death, the milk is your mind, and the festivities are the ephemeral pleasures and splendours of the world. I pass through this world with great caution, so that the milk of my mind does not spill or get agitated, and all my attention is concentrated on the Lord. Even a moment spent not thinking of Him would mean certain death.”

This is, of course, a very high ideal, not something that can be achieved overnight. However, as Maharaj Charan Singh used to say, “This path is not tea at auntie’s.” It is a path that requires inner strength and determination. However, we should take comfort in the knowledge that whomever the Master initiates has the ability to follow the path and achieve their goal. He would not initiate us if we couldn’t do it. As Baba Ji says: You can do it! So just do it! The Master is there for every disciple 24/7 to give support and inner strength. We just have to remember him and lean on him. The Master and our meditation are the anchor of our lives. They keep us from drifting into dangerous waters and give us the needed stability to weather any storm. An ocean of grace and love is always there for the taking. We only have to remember to look within to realize it.

One Last Thought

Let us ask ourselves:

- Why do we want initiation?
- Have we understood what it means to be initiated?
- Are we taking initiation under family pressure?
- Are we under the misconception that initiation will solve our worldly problems?
- Have we read enough books to give us a fair knowledge about the teachings?
- Have we attended satsangs?
- Have we cleared all our doubts about the path?
- Are we ready to make the commitment?
- Do we have the perseverance to stand by our resolve?

In preparation for initiation, we can start with our:

- Attitude** – Make the shift to positive thinking;
- Behaviour** – Reflect our intention in our actions;
- Clarity** – Foster a habit of clear thinking;
- Dedication** – Make a firm commitment and resolve to attain our goal.