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Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

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Spiritual Link

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Yours Affectionately

A Letter from Baba Jaimal Singh to his disciple, Sardar Sawan Singh

My son, whenever you are free from work during the day, always do your simran and bhajan immediately, so that no time is wasted. When an individual is free from work, he starts recalling and regretting old incidents, saying to himself, “Had I known, I would have done like this.” This is all false, because every event takes its predestined course. Nothing is gained by feeling sorry later on. Similarly, time is wasted in gossiping about people’s joys and sorrows, or in criticizing or praising them, which gives neither spiritual nor material benefit. Every breath we take and every morsel we eat is apportioned. Time is not to be wasted in pursuits that further neither worldly aims nor spiritual goals.

Simran and bhajan are not to be neglected even while doing worldly work. Nor are you ever to become lazy. Keep the attentive faculties of surat and nirat, and the mind’s inherent sense of longing, alert to the Shabd-dhun. If day and night the longing to hear the Shabd-dhun is there, then even during work the mind will remain unsoiled. Then whenever you are free, the thought of meditation alone will arise in the mind. Whether through sheer determination or with love, you must listen to the Shabd-dhun every day. This time will never come again. So do your meditation daily – not a day is to be missed.

Spiritual Letters





A Special Occasion

As human beings living in the world, we celebrate many occasions during the course of our lives such as birthdays, anniversaries and weddings. And on these special days, we usually throw parties, go out for dinner or buy gifts for the ones we are honouring.

On a spiritual level, however, the saints tell us that for the soul, there exists a special occasion of a different kind. They say that when one meets a perfect living Master and receives from him the gift of Nam, it is the greatest celebration for the soul.

After being helplessly caught up in the maze of this creation and stumbling through different life forms, the soul has finally been given the opportunity to go back home. The soul does not know why she has been given this amazing grace from the Supreme Father but it is a time to rejoice, for at last the Saviour has come to set her free.

The celebration of this special event is unlike any other in the world. It begins at the time of initiation and lasts an entire lifetime. And the merriment takes place not on the outside, but on the inside, within the heart of the disciple. For as he travels on the inner path and withdraws his consciousness to the eye centre, little by little, love for his Master deepens, creating within himself a sanctuary of peace and happiness.

But having said that, it must be mentioned that true discipleship is not always an easy affair. Just as there are times of peace and joy, there are also times of struggle and pain, when a disciple's faith, patience and strength of will are pushed to the limit; when he does not understand why things happen the way they do. During these times one does feel compelled to ask the questions, "Does my Master know what I am going through? Is he really there?"

Sant Mat teaches us that asking questions like these is like asking a mother, “Do you know that you have a child?” Just as every mother by virtue of giving birth to her child automatically has a connection to the child, so does the Master have that same connection with each and every one of his disciples.

The Master’s true form is the Shabd and the soul of the disciple is a spark of that Shabd. When the Master initiates the disciple, he places his Radiant Form at the eye centre of the disciple and reconnects him to that Shabd, giving him a new birth. At that point, he becomes the disciple’s spiritual father. And just as a physical father gives his child physical features, the Master sculpts the disciple. He straightens what is crooked, brings to light all that is shadowed, and chips away at the coverings on the soul until it glows in its original beauty.

Through his inner presence, he guides, protects, and purifies the disciple until he is fit to be taken back to his true home. The physical body of the Master and the disciple will one day perish, but the soul will never be abandoned by the Shabd. Once the soul has been inwardly linked by the Master, nothing and no one can ever sever that connection.

But just as in every relationship one gets whatever one puts in, the bond between Master and disciple depends on how much the disciple gives of himself. It is to this ‘giving of the self’ that the Master responds by showering his grace upon the disciple. And thus a relationship of faith and love starts to develop.

But this is only the beginning. Discipleship is a constant ‘work in progress’. One is not only a disciple when doing seva or when meditating. The fragrance of discipleship lasts 24 hours a day, and everything one does to nurture that relationship with the Master keeps it that much stronger and alive. So the harder the disciple works, the more

grace the Master bestows upon him and ultimately the quicker is one's spiritual progress.

For hundreds of thousands of years, many a soul has struggled and striven to rise above the darkness of the mind in its quest for eternal freedom. But without the compassion and grace of the perfect living Master, the redeemer in human form, it is just not possible. Thus, being a disciple of a perfect Master is not only a precious privilege, it is truly the only occasion worth celebrating. For the very moment the Master touches the souls of his disciples, it is only a matter of time that with the light of a thousand suns, he will take them home.



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. He should always keep his final goal in sight - the treasures, the joys and the bliss that await him in his true home.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

Something to Think About

Why does our search for the Lord prove fruitless? First, he is not to be found where we seek him. And he cannot be grasped by the intellect with which we want to grasp him. He cannot be seen with the eyes with which we want to see him. The so-called guides that we take cannot lead us to his abode. We cannot find him unless he himself comes to us in the Master's garb and opens our inner eyes.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*



God is nearer to you than anything, he is not far away. But it is a rare devotee, a gurmukh, who gives up his own way of thinking, receives instruction from a Guru and goes inside. For gurmukhs like that, he is near, whereas for those who don't go inside, he is far away.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*



Every time you repeat a Name attentively, you are trying to rise up, and sooner or later the eye focus will become the headquarters of your attention. Patiently persevere, avoid hurry, and with a calm mind sit in the spiritual exercises. The determination and faith should be so strong that even if nothing comes out of it until the last moment of life, there is no wavering of faith.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *The Dawn of Light*

Comfortable in Misery

To a caged bird, captivity is the usual way of life. And similarly for us human beings, living in a world of impermanence, change, life, death and deceit has also become the usual way of life.

The nature of this world is such that happiness here will always be diluted by fear, comfort will always be severed by distress, and life will forever end in death.

Yet, we conveniently turn a blind eye to the truth, and try to make the most of what life has to offer us – thus trying to live comfortably in our misery. Rabindranath Tagore has beautifully said:

He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.

Gitanjali – Song Offerings

When we look at a walnut, all we can appreciate is its shell. But the real essence of the walnut, the real fruit, is the kernel which is enclosed in that shell. Similarly, our reality is our soul and not the body or the mind, which enclose it and keep it bound to this creation.

Our soul has been held captive in this creation for countless ages, lulled into believing that this is what our existence is all about. No doubt some of us may be actually happy under the given circumstances, but that does not change the fact that we are still prisoners. Maharaj Charan Singh explains our predicament when he says:

*Worldly achievements can never give you permanent happiness.
From a C-class prisoner you will become an A-class prisoner.
Instead of iron chains you will be bound with golden chains. All
the same, you will remain a prisoner.*

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. I

The mind has actually settled down quite well in this prison, and continuously endeavours to make it a more comfortable place to live in, but the question is, for how long can we camouflage the pain of our soul?

Tucked away deep within us there is a longing for permanent peace, happiness and the comfort of our true 'home sweet home', and no matter how much we ignore, disguise or anesthetize this feeling, the truth is that we will never be able to escape it.

If it wasn't for the Masters who re-introduce us to the concept of freedom through their writings and who inspire us to seek it through their own living example, we would have continued to live comfortably in our misery.

We know now that life does not have to be an aimless shot at finding happiness; it can instead become a concrete and well-directed endeavour to attain our goal provided we are ready to work for it.

It is easy to follow trends and do what everyone else in the world is doing; it is easy to find things to keep busy with in order to ease the pain. But it takes courage to face the reality, it takes courage to accept it, and it takes even more courage to take the steps to fix it.

Compromising with misery is undoubtedly the smooth ride down the slope, and fighting for freedom the difficult up-hill fight. The first will keep us drifting in this labyrinth of birth and death, while the other will lead us to union with God.

Maulana Rum says:

*All worldly people are prisoners, awaiting the stroke of death;
save for that rare brave one, who in the prison hath his body,
but in heaven his soul.*

Mysticism, The Spiritual Path, Vol. II

We have wasted enough time ignoring the plea of our soul, giving in to the dictates of the mind. It is now time to break free from our bondage. Master has confidently unfastened the doors of our prison-cell and is offering us his help; all that is left for us to do is escape.

If we do take the plunge, then we must also have faith and believe that with our Master's grace, true comfort will no more be a distant hope but a forthcoming reality.



God has planted in your heart the desire to search for him. Do not look at your weaknesses but focus on the search. Every seeker is worthy of this search. Strive to redouble your efforts, so that your soul may escape from this material prison.

Rumi, A Spiritual Treasury

Ego – The Disease

The fact that we are here is a clear indication that we are victims of the disease of ego, and the disease of ego will go from us only when we are attached to the Word, to Shabd or Nam. That drives ego from us and creates humility within us. This Shabd or Nam drives out the I-ness from us, what we call I, I, I. Then we just becomes Thou.

For example, when we are in love with someone, we never like to do what we want; but we like to do what he or she wants. We are always in readiness to please the other party, crushing our own views, fighting our own views, adjusting them to the other one. The same principle is in meditation. When we merge into the Shabd, when we fall in love with our meditation, with devotion to the Lord, to the Master, slowly and slowly and automatically this I-ness is being driven out of us. We take pleasure in merging, in blending into him, rather than making him bend to our dictates. This ego is automatically driven out.

Without attachment to him you can never be detached from anything in the world. Attachment to worldly possessions, attachment to worldly faces is ego. First we always look at things and a distinct impression comes in. Then we want to possess them. In order to possess them we work hard. Then we find that we are a slave to them. For example, a spider has woven its own web happily, and when it has woven it so beautifully, it finds that it has become a prisoner of it and cannot escape out of it. And that is what I think we are doing. We are making so many scientific investigations for modern worldly achievements, working hard day and night; we are weaving our own net and ultimately when we get all that, we find how much a prisoner we are of these things. They have possessed us. They have taken us and we have no more freedom. Then we find it difficult to get out of that net. That is ego. We can break that net only by Shabd, meditation or Nam.

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

Coping

Being trapped in today's fast-paced materialistic existence, many of us cannot help but feel the overwhelming pressure of our individual circumstances and responsibilities. Consequently, we are prone to feeling anxious and stressed. It is not at all unusual to hear about children, students, housewives, professionals and the elderly falling prey to this state of mental confusion and frustration. When the mind is unable to cope and becomes distressed, it is difficult to stay calm and composed especially when overwhelming waves of panic hit us.

The Masters explain to us, however, that anxiety or constant worry shows a lack of faith in the Supreme and an absence of a sound understanding of the karmic law that governs this creation.

The mystics maintain that the mind is our greatest impediment to self- and God-realization. And yet, though it is our greatest enemy in its restlessness and capacity to create chaos and misery, it can also be our greatest friend – if it is directed toward achieving our spiritual goals. After all, it is the mind that falls in love with the Master and persuades us to sit for meditation. It is imperative, therefore, that we come to terms with its contrasting natures so that we can learn to manage it, bring it under control, win its friendship and eventually turn it into our ally.

By turning inwards, by exploring and experiencing the spiritual reality of inner life, we can gain the strength of character to remain sane even if the entire world were to go crazy around us. Problems in life will always be present – it is the nature of

the realm of Kal – but the support we get from meditation will make us increasingly able to deal with the ups and downs of daily life.

Living Meditation

The Masters have advised us that meditation is the cure, the ultimate solution, but we have to practise it, we have to live it. It is no quick fix. The stress and challenges of our worldly environment make it essential for us to integrate our meditation practice into our everyday life. There should be no real separation between the two. Meditation should take a practical form in our lives, reflected in our every action and in our routine. By applying ourselves to the teachings, we gradually build the atmosphere for our daily meditation. Meditation enables us to cope with the weather of life whilst maintaining equanimity and balance. We cannot alter the course of events that are dictated by our destiny, but by attending to meditation, we can remain happy and relaxed as we go through it. In a reply to a disciple, the Great Master writes:

It is only when we sit in meditation that we begin to discover the power, the waywardness and the obstinacy of the mind. The mind that has been running wild ever since we came into the wheel of life and death will take time to yield. You are just beginning the fight against it. It is a lifelong fight; and the reward is, if one conquers his mind (makes it motionless in the eye centre) he wins the world.

Spiritual Gems

As disciples, even during these stressful and chaotic times, we see a silver lining emerging: our faith in the Master brings forth the desire to attend to our meditation. When we remember to turn to him, we realize and feel the comfort of his presence. We manage to cope with whatever circumstance we have to go through. And instead of looking at it as a negative experience, we accept that it is part of our evolution and we try to pick up a lesson or two along the way and move forward.



*The Master is always with you to help,
guide and protect you at every step.
Just turn to Him and realize His constant presence.*
Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

Did You Know?

When the devotee merges himself in the Shabd or the Word within, the Word gives him such energy and freshness that he has hardly any need for sleep.

Heaven on Earth



In no other position is the link between mind and body as clear as it is in our meditation posture. When we are depressed or lazy our back is hunched over and our head is hanging down. If we make the effort to sit upright, we shake off laziness and even pessimism. When we sit upright, it is difficult to have self-pity or to be negative.

Living Meditation



Love for the Master comes by having darshan inside, by seeing him inside. It is then only that the feeling of real love springs up. In the beginning we have to practise it more or less. If we carry out His wishes and commands, and follow his instructions faithfully, a feeling of confidence and love springs up, and it also leads to darshan inside, which further promotes and strengthens this love.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

True Love

*And what is it to love but for the lover to absorb
forever the Beloved so that the twain be one?*

The Book of Mirdad

Love, such a short word, quite easy to say, and yet impossible to describe. The word has become such a cliché that we use it to express various actions, identifying it with almost any pleasant feeling towards anything or anyone. The true depth behind this four-letter word is lost.

What is love? The words of Hazur Maharaj Ji still echo in our ears today. He used to say, “Love is losing your identity, merging into the Beloved and becoming one with him.” Our attention directs itself solely on the Beloved, not out of force but out of helplessness. Love entails living our lives for him – making choices that will lead us to him. It is consciously being with him throughout the day while doing our daily activities and then looking forward to being with him alone in solitude. It is yearning for him; longing for him so much that the soul loses itself in him.

The question is: why don't we feel this way? Why is it so hard to lose ourselves in his love? Why do our thoughts constantly run elsewhere when we sit in meditation? This is because our focus is still in this world. We love ourselves more than anything else. The love that we know is selfish. We cannot even understand the concept of completely forgetting ourselves for someone else.

Moreover, we do not truly know the Master. We believe in the teachings, we believe in the Master and in God, but we think he is separate from us; one who is far out of our reach. That is why we do

not know him. How can we realize him if we do not know him? Love is the most important aspect in achieving our goal. Indeed, we are totally in love with the Master's physical form, but it is the Shabd – his true form that we need to be in love with.

So the question becomes: how can we love him in the truest sense? First of all, we have to know him. We have to experience the Shabd. The saints tell us that the only way to truly know him is to first know ourselves.

What we see on the outside, what we understand ourselves to be is our ego. Meditation, however, brings us deep within where we get to know our real selves – the soul. And just like a needle that is attracted to the magnet, the soul, upon realizing itself, will instantly merge into its source – the Shabd. This is what Hazur Maharaj Ji is trying to tell us that we have to love the Lord so much that we lose our identity, our ego, and merge into him to become one with him.

Only meditation can awaken our love for the Shabd. It enables us to realize his immense love for us. And every single day, as we sit with him in meditation, we will grow to experience this love. We may not feel it instantly, but over time, it will gradually strengthen our love in the truest sense. Ultimately, it is only through one-pointed devotion that the soul can rise upwards and commune with Shabd.

The only way to strengthen love is by meditation. There is no other way, because the love which we get by experience cannot be compared to any other type of love. You can build love and devotion only through meditation, not otherwise. Meditation builds everlasting love.

He is the One who is behind the screen, and the string is absolutely in his hands. He makes us dance in his love and devotion, and we are just puppets.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

There are times when we become anxious, especially when we meet the Master in the physical form and we ask, “Why can’t we feel the longing that the saints talk about? Why don’t we feel that intense love even after sitting for so many years every single day?” If we could only understand that it is the Lord who is making us anxious to feel that longing. It is he who is pulling us, prompting us to try to go within and meet him.

So you can say, ‘I am doing the meditation’, provided you are doing it. ‘I’ only comes when we don’t do it. When we truly meditate, then ‘I’ just disappears. Then we realize His grace, that but for Him how could we ever think or even attend to it. Then there is no ‘I’, there is nothing but gratefulness – everything in gratitude. Then we know our insignificance.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

That is when we let go of our ego. Nothing in this world will matter because then we will be secure in his love. Whether it is the sun shining or a storm shattering our lives, we will know that it is the Lord pulling us towards him. Ultimately, it is this love that will help us to rise to the level where we can experience that true longing where we lose ourselves, merge into him and become one with him.



That Blessed Moment

I have fallen in love with your beautiful form, Master!

*I am heartbroken, stunned –
beside myself with yearning.*

*With a single look you have left me mystified,
like Majnun bewitched by the beauty of Laila.*

*I only know that I am in pain,
I know no remedy except your sweet words –
the balm for my aching heart.*

*Your radiant face has brought such light
to the darkness of my heart
that it would put to shame
thousands of suns and moons in the sky.*

*The heavens have ordained it so
that lovers' devotion at the feet of the Beloved
sets them apart in the eyes of the world.*

*Worldly passions have completely left me
as yearning for darshan has filled my heart.*

*How fortunate was that blessed moment
when I bowed my head at the feet of my Beloved!*

*My soul ripped the moon apart
and I flew towards heaven,
hearing fascinating sounds, enchanting melodies.*

*Both the temple and the mosque
then became symbols of infidelity.*

Soami Ji, Sar Bachan Poetry

Over the Years

Over the years, our joys and sorrows have taught us that nothing is permanent and everything is subject to change. These experiences lead us to search for the truth and reflect upon the purpose of our existence. Looking back, it becomes clear that these events in our lives are the Lord's way of bringing us towards him.

The number one sign of his being merciful to anyone is that he creates in the disciple dissatisfaction with the worldly routine and a longing to seek the truth. The second sign is that he brings him in touch with a Master. The third sign is that the Master imparts to him the secret of the sound current. The fourth sign is that the initiate works diligently and faithfully on the sound current and starts his spiritual journey.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

When we begin our spiritual journey, we become aware of the power of Master's love, and the wisdom of his teachings. Our interests begin to change. Our possessions and desires for worldly objects no longer hold the same appeal and grip over us. Social gatherings which we were once so enthusiastic about are not as fulfilling. Instead, we begin to enjoy dedicating more time to satsang and seva and being in the company of the Master.

Then come the challenges. There are days when we feel dry and empty, and other days when we feel lifted by the Master's grace. But as time goes by, we learn that each step is a necessary phase that contributes to our spiritual growth. We realize that spiritual progress

cannot be measured – it all depends upon the Lord’s grace, and all we can do is to put in our best efforts.

God considers a soul’s advancement and progress, but takes no account of time. One soul may have achieved more in six months than another in twenty years, since, as I have said, the Lord gives at his own pleasure, and to him who is readiest to receive.

The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila

As life continues, we recognize the precious blessings that the Lord bestows upon us. Being in the presence of the Master, having the opportunity to visit Dera, attending satsangs and having the privilege of participating in seva are all his gifts.

If we reflect on what our lives would have been like if we did not have a Master or a spiritual path to turn to, where would we be today? What if we did not have satsangs, seva or meditation in our lives? As a satsangi wrote:

Deeply moved, I realized that without Sant Mat I would never have been able to make any sense of my life or all my spiritual longing and striving. I would never have known who the inner guide was, who led me from my youth, who took me into the desert and who made me walk over the ridge. Without the Master, I would never have known whose gaze had supported me when – figuratively speaking – I had to go over the sharp edge of a sword. Without Sant Mat, the mystery of the universal Christ and of God’s plan for the salvation of souls would not have been revealed to me.... Without initiation into the path of

the Masters, I would never be able to experience, one day, the highest aspirations of my religion: the awakening of the soul in God, the true resurrection from death to eternal life and the union of my soul with the Holy Spirit, the audible Word.

Adventure of Faith

In this world of pain and suffering, we are fortunate that we have a Master who guides us through our everyday lives, who gives us the strength and encouragement to realize the true purpose of life. As the years go by, we become grateful for everything the Master does for us, and we learn to show our appreciation in the deepest, most meaningful way – by living the teachings and sincerely attending to meditation.



*My God, in whom is my delight, my glory, and my trust,
I thank you for your gifts and beg you to preserve and keep them for me.
Keep me, too, and so your gifts will grow and reach perfection
and I shall be with you myself,
for I should not even exist if it were not by your gift.*

Saint Augustine, The Confessions

From Mechanical to Magical

As we go through our daily lives and struggle to keep the discipline and regularity in our meditation, there is a tendency to approach our spiritual practice in a mechanical way – similar to approaching a chore that needs to be over and done with so that we can move on to the rest of our busy day. In fact, as we try to sit still, we literally have to fight off the endless thoughts that bombard us mercilessly.

While we appreciate the value of mechanical meditation in promoting routine and developing the habit of concentration, we often wonder how we might infuse it with the feeling of love and devotion for our Master. Maharaj Charan Singh advises:

Our approach to meditation should be that of gratitude. The Lord has given us the opportunity of this human form and then the environment in which to attend to meditation. So we should always approach meditation with gratitude.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

Indeed, the feeling of gratitude is a great boon in creating a loving atmosphere for meditation. When we pause to consider all the priceless blessings that we are so privileged to have – this precious human form, initiation in the path of Sant Mat, a perfect living Master and, with the Lord's grace, our eventual freedom from this world of illusion and this miserable cycle of life and death – we cannot help but be humbled by our good fortune.

This spirit of thankfulness touches our hearts to the core. It dawns on us that this magnitude of love is unique and extraordinary, so unlike any love we have experienced, and totally unmatched by even

the summation of all the love we have known. It invokes and inspires in us a feeling of reciprocity – a strong desire to love him back the way he wants us to: through loving meditation.

And, this is where the magic begins – with the sense of thankfulness for all that grace that has been bestowed on us. Our meditation becomes more meaningful, more heartfelt and more sincere. What we once considered a chore, we now consider an opportunity to express our love. Furthermore, we carry the atmosphere of our meditation throughout our days, throughout our nights and throughout our entire lives. Over time, we are transformed into true lovers of the Lord.

We learn to see the Lord in his creation – in everything and everyone. We become kind, loving and helpful in a universal way because we see the Lord in one and all. We develop good qualities like cream coming from milk, and our love and devotion for our Master grows day by day.

It is in quiet appreciation that we comprehend all this magic which revolves around an internal change, an undeniable awareness of Master's love and grace. Because our life remains on its destined course, we will continue to be challenged by the ups and downs that come with worldly living, as well as the highs and lows that are a part of our spiritual journey. But it is this approach of gratitude that brings the key ingredient of love into our meditation and to the rest of our daily life.

Furthermore, our hearts learn contentment. We stop protesting about all the things that we cannot have, understanding that what the Master has not given, is not meant for us, not good for us, and in the final analysis will not be to our advantage. We simply remain happy in his love.

To love is nothing but to give thanks. It is all his grace that he gives us his love, he gives us his devotion, and our words are too inadequate to express that feeling, that depth, that gratefulness to the Father. It is impossible.

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

Undeniably, how the Master's grace affects our lives is impossible to articulate. But it is definitely possible for us to respond to it. With a heart filled with gratitude, we can sweeten our meditation, turning it from mechanical to magical.



He lays no great burden upon us – a little remembrance of him from time to time, a little adoration; sometimes to pray for his grace, sometimes to offer him your sorrows, sometimes to return him thanks for the benefits he hath bestowed upon you and is still bestowing in the midst of your troubles.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *When we are initiated, we are told that the Master is with us from then on. What I want to know is, does the Master know everything that goes on within our mind or within our actions, or is his attention only drawn to us in a spiritual way when we are meditating? He does not really watch all that is going on, does he?*

A: I think that perhaps it would be better if he did not watch all that we do. Unfortunately, he watches all that we do. Do you not think that God exists everywhere and that he is within each one of us, and watches every one of us, what we do?

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

* * *

Q: *I suppose, Maharaj Ji, that any satsangi who does his meditation daily, diligently and devotedly for two and a half hours or more in the morning hours can reasonably expect to reach his spiritual destination?*

A: Definitely. You see, you not only make spiritual progress within, but with regularity in meditation and living the Sant Mat way of life, your whole attitude and approach to the world and worldly problems changes. The time comes when you feel you're not attached to anybody at all. And that is the main factor in our not coming back to this creation at all, no matter how little progress we have made within. Our whole attitude and approach to life changes by meditation, by living this way of life, and automatically we get detached from everything. And that detachment pulls us out of this creation.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III

Q: *When a body is dead, if we say some prayers so that the soul may hear it, and to help the soul, does the soul hear us?*

A: No, the soul does not hear our prayer. These prayers are said for the benefit of the bereaved ones. All that we do is to console those people whose relatives or friends have left them. Practically, we can do nothing for the departed soul. It has to answer for its own karma. All the ceremonies, prayers and things that we do after anybody dies are, in fact, to console the survivors and ourselves, and not that departed soul. We do not help the dead at all. His or her karma will take care of that. Generally when we pray for the dead, I think we are praying for ourselves to be able to bear our loss and separation. We do not help the departed at all.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Will we gain credit even when we're not hearing the Sound?*

A: Any minute you spend in love and devotion for the Father is to your credit. It's a stepping stone. You are making some progress – maybe at an ant's speed, but you are making progress. Any little bit of love and devotion for the Father is to your credit.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Is there suffering in the astral plane? Or is this the plane for offsetting our bad karma?*

A: There is no physical suffering there. Mental suffering is there, in a sense that we are away from the Lord. Physical suffering is only in the physical body.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III



Escaping from the Cold

There is a great feeling of comfort and warmth sitting at the feet of the Master, listening to his soothing voice expounding upon the teachings of the path. This is the one unifying moment where seekers and disciples from different races and backgrounds congregate in the search for truth.

Satsang or 'association with the truth' is a common aspect of almost every religion or spiritual path. It is the supreme method by which the Masters gather their flock of disciples so that they can personally teach them to understand the truth and show them the way back to their true home.

Satsang is a unique boon which the Master distributes free to both the learned and the ignorant. His overpowering grandeur, his refulgence and magnetic force attract each person according to his merit, with the result that he becomes oblivious of the world.

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

The Master's words carry the weight of authority and compassion, for he speaks from his own experience and lovingly awakens our sleepy souls out of their slumber. Like a protective father teaching his child, he explains the path in a manner that is simple enough for us to understand. He brings the teachings down to our level, using metaphors and analogies that we can relate to in our everyday lives. He knows us and he understands our weaknesses.

But because he loves us, he sees only what is best in us. Like a diamond cutter who can see the sparkling diamond in the rough, he sees the ultimate potential of our souls.

In the book *In Search of the Way*, Flora Wood recalls a satsang by Maharaj Sawan Singh:

When you look at a tree, you realize it has sprung from a tiny seed (and here the Master gestured with his beautiful and expressive hands to show its smallness) and the little plant has grown slowly, slowly into a shady and spreading giant of a tree, which if you consider it, was all wrapped up in that small seed-case waiting to be developed; but if you had been told beforehand that this little seed would develop into such a gigantic tree, you would never have believed it possible. In a like manner, the soul and the Word are wrapped up within the body and mind of man, waiting to be developed by a true Guru....

Literally our only hope is when in human form, we find a guide who knows the way out of this maze and learn the technique from him of withdrawing our attention to the third eye (and here the Master gestured again with his gentle hand to a spot between the eyes) where we will contact the music of the audible life stream, the source of life itself. We will slowly, by ardent and assiduous practice, learn to discriminate and begin to see, in some small measure, the path our Satguru is trying to show us. At first, due to the jangle of our worldly life, we cannot discern the full glory of the harmony within us; but it is there, just as surely as fire is latent in wood, which, on being rubbed in the correct manner, springs to life.

The whole secret lies in devoting ourselves so wholeheartedly to our Master's instructions that we not only resemble him whom we love, but literally become him!

Maharaj Sawan Singh explains that there is the 'outer' satsang, which acts as a fence around the crop of meditation and helps the disciple to follow a spiritual mode of life. But the ultimate aim is to attend the 'inner' satsang, which is when the soul unites with the Lord by means of meditation.

Outer satsang is an effort to kindle a fire, while the other (inner satsang) is like sitting near a fire and escaping from the cold.

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

The child means everything to the Father, and because of this supreme love, the Master takes every measure to reach out to his sangat, his children. He gives us the benefit of that outer satsang, so that we can have the strength and fortitude to strive for the inner.

He lifts up our spirits as he assures us of the ultimate reunion with the Supreme Lord, when the outer culminates in with the inner – its ultimate purpose.



*In one side of the scale, my friend,
Put all the joys of heaven and the happiness of liberation;
But all of them combined together will be outweighed
By a moment's bliss of satsang.*

The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas

Staying Close to the Lord

There was once a preacher who was travelling on a boat. Someone told him that on a nearby island there lived three hermits. The preacher requested to be taken to that island and upon arriving there, he was welcomed by the three men. The preacher inquired as to their method of praying. The three men answered that they did not have any special prayer. They just asked the Lord for his mercy. The preacher was appalled and claimed that this was no way to pray. He then graciously told the three men that he will teach them how to pray. They were extremely grateful but commented that as they were ignorant they might not remember it.

With great patience, the preacher taught them the prayer and took leave. It was night by now and the boat, far from the island, was engulfed in darkness. All of a sudden, the preacher and boatmen saw three pillars of light advancing, riding the waves.

As it grew closer, to his great amazement, the preacher recognized the three hermits, whom he had taught the Lord's prayers, surrounded by bright light. The three hermits greeted the preacher and asked him to remind them of the prayers as they had forgotten.

The preacher was dumbfounded. He realized that those close to the Lord do not need a 'set prayer' to recite as they were forever in the Lord's presence.



Know Thyself

Know thyself – probably the novice’s foremost pointer on the spiritual path. Spiritual teachers from all backgrounds have explained that we are not the body. The ‘being’ that we truly are is merely using the body as a vehicle to operate on this physical plane. We are just ignorant of it.

Nevertheless, it can be almost impossible to fathom that the body that we so love and adorn is really not us, and furthermore that it is not invincible. The ever-popular Rocky series of movies from the eighties and nineties tell the story of a boxer and the challenges he faced throughout his career. Recently a group of fans had expressed their desire for another Rocky movie to be made, to which a comedian remarked that in this next movie, Rocky would now be challenged by arthritis and rheumatism. We don’t have to look too far to see what time and the aging process does to the physical body. Sometimes the wake-up call comes when one has to experience the failure of an organ or weakness in some part of the body while witnessing life going on effortlessly for others. The proof is all around us. Clearly, we are not the body. It is just a matter of time when we realize this, and how this realization happens.

The eternal question “Who am I?” has radically changed the lives of those who have dared to ask it. Sinners have turned into seekers, and seekers transformed into saints. In the words of René Descartes:

I think, therefore I am.

The Descartes model is widely regarded as an axiom for a number of studies in philosophy. It explains that our existence is validated by our ability to think, thus establishing our identity.

Mystics, however, challenge the fundamental statement itself by asking the simple question: who or what is doing the thinking to begin with? The thinking faculty is purely attributed to the mind. Saints have further explained that the mind itself is a temporary entity that comprises random thoughts and emotions, allowing us to rationalize and then function with a relative sense of order in this realm. The mind, like the body, is subject to change. It cannot be our true identity. Understanding that our true being precedes our ability to think, a more accurate statement might be: I am, therefore I think.

Saints expound on the 'I am' concept, explaining it to be our true self – that which cannot be comprehended by the mind. The mind itself is limited to only what it can contain. Hence, it is not possible for the mind to contain the self; for the true self, the mystics tell us, is eternal – with neither beginning nor end. In fact, it is the God element in each of us.

*If you lose yourself on this path, you will know in certainty:
He is you, you are He.*

Fakhruddin 'Irâqî, as quoted in *The Paradoxes of Love*

Perfect Masters come amongst us as beacons on this path of spirituality and rediscovery of the self. The technique they prescribe is that of guided meditation. They further advise that we apply common logic as we would do when taking on any task – to ensure clarity in our objective.

When the mind is in control, our attention is concentrated at the eye centre and our consciousness is connected to the divine melody within. Mystics therefore explain that the key is to remain focused through meditation. In order to understand 'oneself', we should think very deeply about what this word means – 'oneself' – implying that there is only 'one self'. No duplicity, no duality – nothing but the One.

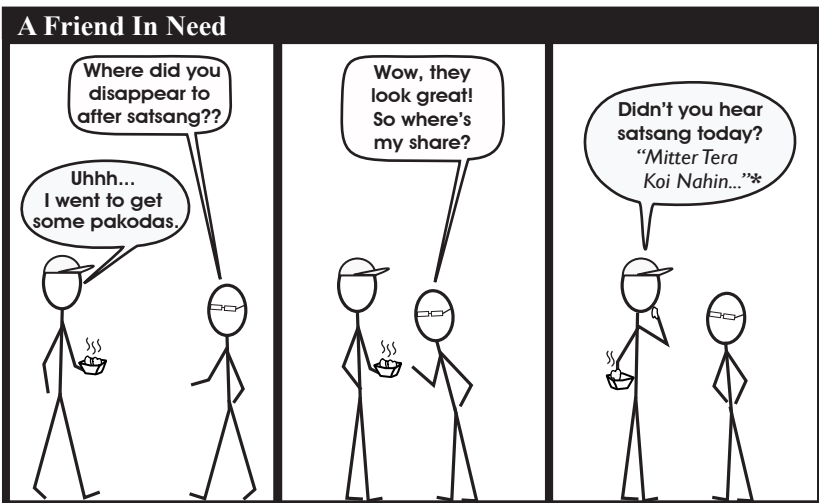
When we have directed our attention at one point within the body, away from the outer world and gathered it to summation, we come into focus and are ready to experience the truth of our Being.



*When Truth has taken hold of a heart,
She empties it of all but Herself!
When God attaches Himself to a man,
He kills in him all else but Himself.*

Mansur al-Hallâj, as quoted in *Love is a Fire*

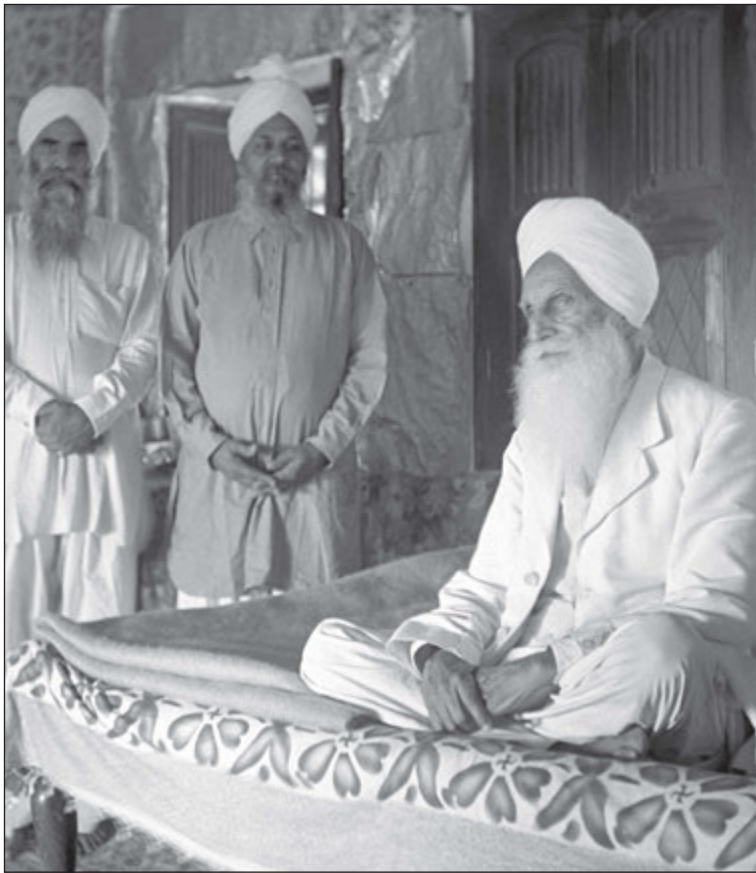
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* "You have no friends in this world"
Soami Ji Maharaj

The Love of a Perfect Disciple

Day after day, Maharaj Sawan Singh's love for his Satguru, Baba Jaimal Singh, grew deeper. For Maharaj Sawan Singh, meditation became his prime occupation in life, and Baba Ji's darshan the only desire of his heart. The letters he wrote to his beloved Master were full of love and longing.



Maharaj Sawan Singh

“The yearning for your darshan torments me day and night.”

“Without seeing you, I am restless like a fish out of water.”

“I do not ask even for Sach Khand. I beg only for the boon of devotion and faith, and love for your lotus feet.”

So intense became his love and longing for the Master that he would earnestly beg Baba Ji to permit him to give up his government job and come to stay with Baba Ji at the Dera, for his work did not give him time for meditation and kept him away from the Master.

But Baba Ji would reply, “Have no worry. You are always with me, not far.” And he would tell Maharaj Ji to continue with his government job, looking upon himself as the Satguru’s agent and keeping in mind that the job he was doing was also rendering service to the Master.

Accepting as Baba Ji’s will the torment of separation from the physical form, Maharaj Ji continued with his service as an engineer but increased his time in meditation. His entire free time was devoted to spiritual pursuits. He slept very little. If sometimes sleep tried to overpower him, he would meditate while standing. He had a staff made that was five feet long, with a crosspiece for the elbows, which he would sometimes use for doing bhajan in a standing position when he felt sleepy.

Even during the early days after initiation, Maharaj Ji’s inclination was mostly towards his meditation. Though he was scrupulously regular and strict in his official duties, he had little interest in any other activity. Sometimes Maharaj Ji would tell Banta Singh to saddle his horse, as he usually enjoyed going out for a ride. While Banta Singh was out saddling the horse, Maharaj Ji would take up a book and casually read a few devotional hymns. He would be so overcome with longing that he would sit in meditation, the outing forgotten.

Heaven on Earth



The Master Sculptor

In this scheme of creation, every human being has in some way or another been touched by the wave of adversity. No one has been spared from the bitter-sweet taste of its effects. Whatever form our trials may take – sickness, financial burden, the loss of a loved one or rejection – we tend to consider them as setbacks in our life. More often than not, these painful trials leave lasting scars and the grief never seems to fully subside.

Caught in the whirlwind, we are then overtaken by the all-consuming force of worry. Like serpents, worry and fear creep into our minds and create havoc. We live in a state of frustration that is never relieved. A dark and bleak image of the future is envisioned and the present moment is clouded with the shadow of yesterday. We tend to question the existence of God and wonder if an all-powerful God, a so-called beloved Father, could have abandoned us or acted arbitrarily in our time of need.

However, God's perspective is not the same as ours. Our life can be viewed as a tapestry. From man's restrictive standpoint, life seems irrational and without design. But viewed from above, from God's vantage point, every twist and turn in our lives has a purpose in the grand design.

Our Lord and Saviour lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty: "Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray and be deceived. This is the only

true stairway to paradise, and without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven.”

Saint Rose of Lima, as quoted in
The Wisdom of the Saints: An Anthology

Faith is the vital facet in our relationship with God. It is the trust we exhibit when we are thrown in the raging, stormy ocean of life's hardships and yet cling on to our battered plank of conviction with stiff, weary arms. It is this little flickering flame of trust that tells us that there is an invisible God who promises us spiritual liberation from the trials of this life. It is the spiritual mortar that strengthens our endurance against tempests. The more we turn our mind and heart toward a positive awareness of God, the more God reveals himself to us. Such is his kindness and mercy that he cannot bear to see his children suffer. He stands by us full of affection, grace and courage if only we stretch out our hand to reach him. Once we are convinced that we are children of God and realize the vast immensity of his love, we will never be defeated by any hardship.

Do not look forward to the trials and crosses of this life with dread and fear.... Do you but hold fast to his dear hand and he will lead you safely through all trials.... The same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day of your life. Either he will shield you from suffering, or he will give you the unfailing strength to bear it.

Saint Francis de Sales as quoted in
A Collection of My Favorite Prayers

Every trial, setback or adversity enters our life with a purpose. Nothing happens to us without God's approval. He is sculpting us to refine us into what he wants us to be. Just as the clarity and the brilliance of a diamond is brought about through friction, God wants

us to be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, thus revealing our true identity. All that we suffer and all that we withstand purifies our heart and expands our soul. Rabindranath Tagore clearly understood that adversities were a necessary ingredient in the purification of the soul when he pleaded:

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it.

Fruit Gathering

In the same light, the great mystic poet, Rumi shared his sentiments by saying:

What hurts you, blesses you. Darkness is your candle.

As quoted in Letting the Light In

It is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation that we are able to realize our own weakness and acknowledge the manifestation of God working in our lives.

Welcome the moment of suffering, for it reminds you of the Lord. It comes through his grace, not otherwise. So do not get perturbed in suffering.

Baba Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters

In the hands of the master sculptor, every weary soul is completely renewed and totally transformed. The metamorphosis takes place and the soul radiates in its own brilliance. Lying in the bosom of his Beloved, comforted by the embracing arms of his affectionate Father, he is welcomed into the eternal sanctuary. He is exalted forever and his heart is purified. No storm, sorrow or fear can ever submerge him again.

Repartee of the Wise

A group of disciples once complained to their Master about the difficulty of meditation and begged him for a quicker way to attain salvation. The Master replied, “Sure, there is an easier way to reach the Lord and this does not require to do much at all. Your only requirement is to remember to meditate with love and devotion for a few hours on the day before your death; this will guarantee that you will be saved forever.”

The disciples were delighted at this short-cut solution, but after a little while, it dawned upon them that there was no way for them to know when their moment of death would be. So they approached their Master and asked by which means would they know which day was, in fact, their last.

Their Master replied that they could never know and so to guarantee their salvation, they would have to treat each day as though it were their last. They would have to sit every day with love and devotion, just in case tomorrow was their last day.



The Sufi Master, while being gracious to all the disciples, could not conceal his preference for those who lived in the ‘world’ – the married, the merchants, the farmers – over those who lived in the monastery. When he was confronted about this he said, “Spirituality practised in the state of activity is incomparably superior to that practised in the state of withdrawal.”

Legacy of Love

How Much Before It Is Too Much?

In the Gospel of Matthew, a rich young man asks Jesus what actions bring eternal life. First Jesus advises the man to obey the commandments. When the man responds that he already observes them, Jesus adds: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. When the rich man heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

The Masters are not making a judgment by saying that the materially rich people cannot return to God. We are simply encouraged to reduce the importance of monetary wealth in our lives, if we want to surrender our true self to the Lord. When we rely on our money, we think of it as our greatest strength. In this false confidence, we forget that it is the source of more desires and attachments, and our greatest spiritual weakness.

Some would say that the incessant need to have more and more material assets comes from unselfish motives – that we are responsible to meet the needs of our families and ensure their security. It is true that while living in this creation it is our moral duty to create an environment supportive of our family’s spiritual and worldly development. Also, in principle, there is nothing wrong with being wealthy. From a spiritual point of view, it is true that having worldly karmas in this life is probably a result of good actions in a previous life. It is our good karma that has brought us all our worldly comforts. We cannot run away from the fruit of our good karmas, just as we must face the bad.

The problem arises when we give in to temptation and lead extravagant lives, instead of just living simply. Why? Why do we do this to ourselves? Why do we need more and more money?

There is a saying that goes, “People are funny. They spend the money they don’t have, to buy the things they don’t need, to impress the people they don’t like.” And alongside the tiresome task of impressing people and saving face in our societies, we risk disappointing our Master. Because often in the pursuit of looking better or having the best, we feed our negative passions. The more possessions we have, the more possessed we are by them. So much so, that:

One who thinks of nothing else but money and making money gradually becomes hard of heart, and even takes on a facial expression of relentless driving force. Such a person is pitiless. Nothing counts but money. He drives other men, even women and children, in his factories, grinding wealth out of them. He goes on grinding more gold out of them. Pity, love and kindness have long ago departed from his mental processes. He can see nothing but profits.

The Path of the Masters

When money starts to flow in abundance, often instead of supporting us, it starts to tie us down, and we lose our peace of mind. Ironic? Tension is the new make up we put on our faces to beautify our image and our standing in society. No one appears relaxed. The smile on our face disappears, amongst many other things. We lose patience with our children; husbands and wives become frustrated with each other; and envy creates animosity between brothers. Instead of looking at credits and debits on our balance sheet, we really should be looking

at adding the positives in our lives and getting rid of the negatives in order to strike the perfect balance. Maharaj Charan Singh has said:

If our wealth is lost, the loss leaves behind it broken hearts and great distress. Earned with much pain and trouble, it still fails to bring the much desired happiness.

Divine Light

So how do we rise above the surplus and the deficits of our cash flow? How do we stop this cycle of wanting more and more? How can we focus on using money as a tool, instead of making it our goal? And more importantly, how can we maintain the desired worldly happiness that our wealth should, and does provide us? Saint Kabir says:

When water increases in the boat or wealth in the house, to take it out with both the hands is what the wise do.

As quoted in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. III

Parting with a small portion of our money on a regular basis reminds us from time to time that we actually own nothing. We are just temporary caretakers of the material wealth that God has given us and this wealth can be taken away from us at anytime. Giving away some of our material assets liberates us and strengthens us. And if we truly believe that nothing belongs to us, then we will not miss it if we ever lost it.

Like all necessary evils, worldly fortunes can only be enjoyed when there is a balance. Our condition becomes like the child who weeps when he loses his father's hand at a mesmerizing fair. The child was only able to enjoy the fair when he had the security of his father's hand. In the same light, Maharaj Charan Singh explains:

We enjoy peace and happiness in the world only as long as we constantly remember the Lord and are devoted to him.

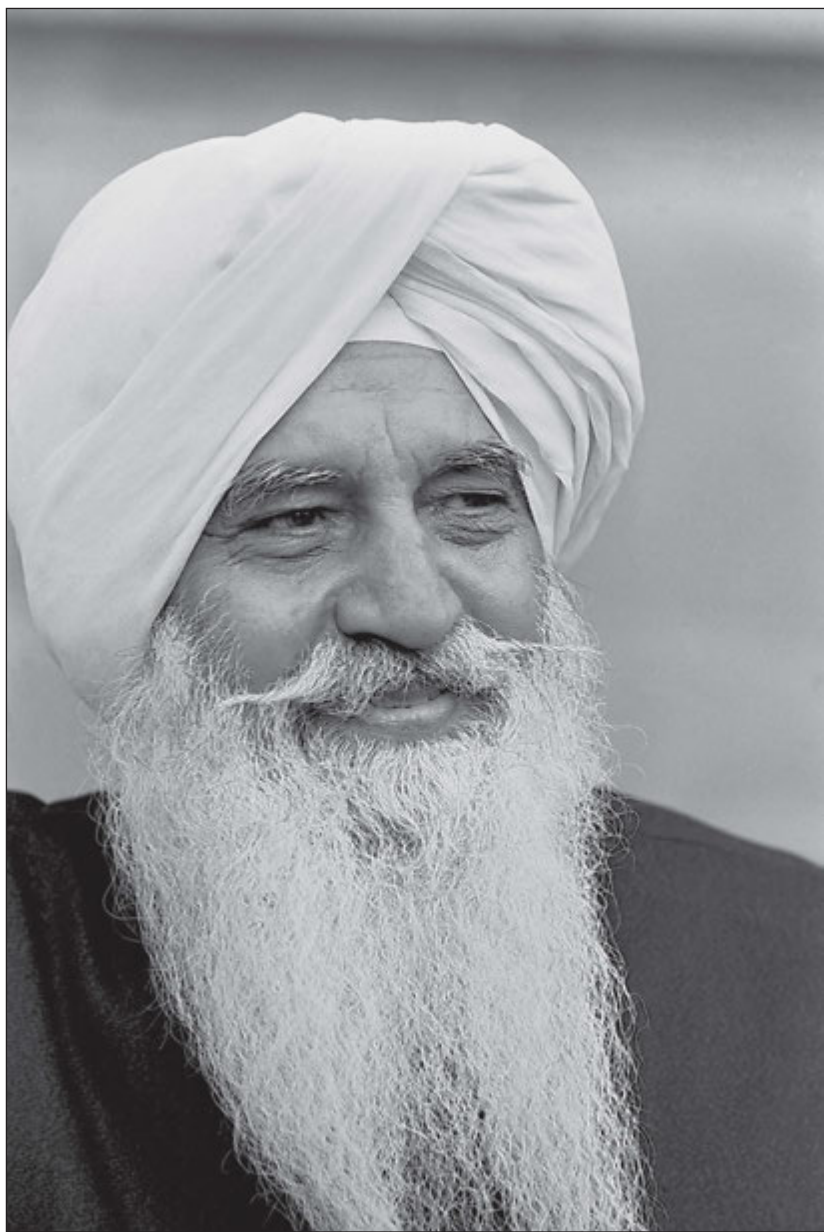
Divine Light

That is the test. If we are able to strike the equilibrium, keeping the Lord and his bounties in our mind all the time, we will not be distracted by our material gains and, at the same time, we will truly be able to enjoy the fruits of our good karmas. If we stay devoted to him, we will be able to enjoy this fair. But, if we let go of our Father's hand, the very fruits of our good deeds will become a burden that we will have to carry around. It is commonly said, "with great power comes great responsibility". It is up to us to choose what we do with our riches. It is up to us to let go of our Father's hand or keep holding on. It is up to us to decide whether we want to enter the Father's real treasure house.



*Wealth and relations, so valued here,
Avail us not when death draws near.*

Soami Ji, as quoted in
Discourses on Sant Mat



Maharaj Charan Singh

Heart to Heart

Once, Soami Ji had decided to sit in meditation in a small room for two or three days and had told his disciples not to disturb him until he came out. He bolted the door from the inside and sat in meditation.

The very next day Baba Ji arrived in Agra on three days' leave.

Whenever he came to Agra it was his practice first to meet Soami Ji, bow to him, and then to attend to other things. Upon reaching Panni Gali, he was informed of Soami Ji's orders. Baba Ji said nothing but sat in meditation for two days without eating or drinking anything. A few satsangis urged him to have the Master's darshan by climbing to the ventilator with the help of a ladder, as his leave was to end that day. But Baba Ji refused, saying that one should never disobey his Master's orders. After only a short while, Soami Ji Maharaj came out of his room, and when he heard of Baba Ji's devotion and implicit obedience, he embraced him warmly. Then he gave him parshad and sent him off in time to catch his train back to Jhansi.

Heaven on Earth



In a letter to one of his friends, Maharaj Charan Singh once wrote:

Please do not feel I am ignoring both of you, and that you do not command my love and friendship any more. Whoever has made way to my heart will ever stay there.

Treasure Beyond Measure

Book Review

A CASTING OF LIGHT BY THE PLATONIC TRADITION

ADAPTED BY GUY WYNDHAM-JONES

PUBLISHER: THE PROMETHEUS TRUST: WILTSHIRE, UK 2012.

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A Casting of Light presents a selection of writings by Plato and other philosophers in the ancient Platonic tradition, as translated by the English mystic Thomas Taylor (1758-1835). Taylor's translations, while scrupulously faithful to the original text, bring to light the deep spiritual essence of the Platonic writings.

The editor of this volume, Guy Wyndham-Jones, presents his selected passages in the format of short verse-like lines. This format not only makes comprehension easier but also sets a contemplative mood, inviting the reader to pause and reflect. He divides the selections into four sections, titled The Morning, The Afternoon, The Evening, and The Night, suggesting their use for one's contemplative practice during those parts of the day. The original sources of all quotes are listed at the end of the book.

A spiritual seeker can draw powerful inspiration from this anthology. Passages from Platonists and Neoplatonists (as later philosophers in the tradition are known) such as Plato, Iamblichus, Damascius, Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus inspire the reader to turn away from knowledge of the material world and seek the inner stillness that leads to communion with a reality beyond words. Proclus, for example, speaks of the stillness which leads to *anagogy*, a word with Greek origins meaning spiritual uplift, a lifting up to the heavenly realms:

*Let us now, if ever,
abandon multiform knowledge....
Let not only opinion and phantasy
be at rest,
nor the passions alone which impede
our anagogic impulse to the first,
be at peace;*

*but let the air be still,
and the universe itself
be still.
And let all things extend us
with a tranquil power
to communion with the ineffable.*

To access the mystical depth of the collected texts, however, the reader must be aware that the words *reason* and *soul* are here used with meanings differing from those in common use today. *Reason*, as used by the Platonists, stands for intuitive understanding and the direct vision of reality, a level of spiritual perception existing only in a state of inner stillness. *Soul* (as the Greek word *psyche* is generally translated) refers to a level of consciousness lower than reason, the turbulent mental states prevailing before inner stillness has been achieved. For readers accustomed to using the word *soul* to denote a higher, eternal reality, and *reason* to mean a faculty of the cognitive mind, this can be confusing. Consider the following passage from Porphyry in which he speaks of the soul attaining stillness, becoming reason itself, and ultimately becoming one with the all:

*The worthy soul becomes reason itself,
and what it is in itself
it demonstrates to others;
but in respect to itself
it is sight;
for it is now collected into one,
and perfectly quiet,
not only so far as pertains to externals,
but with reference to itself,
and is all things within itself.*

This anthology offers a new perspective on ancient philosophy. Centuries of scholarly writings which interpreted philosophy as a purely intellectual endeavour, combined with early Christian writings

criticizing the philosophers as pagans, have obscured the fact that many of these philosophers were mystics seeking to realize a divine reality they understood as One. While they inevitably used the common religious language of their time, that of pagan polytheism, their chief purpose clearly was to explain the inner mystic path leading beyond language and concepts to direct perception of the divine.

The following passage by Sextus, the Pythagorean, speaks of the dangerous trap of confusing God's name, a concept shaped by our limited experiences, with the infinite and indivisible reality of the ineffable One. When one names an object, two entities come into being: the one giving the name and the one being named. Naming involves superiority to that which is named. But as to the divine, such a claim to superiority is false, and surrender to the divine requires giving up the desire to name. For us to fix names and terms for spirituality and the divine realm is therefore logically absurd.

*Do not investigate the name of God,
because you will not find it.
For every thing which is called by a name,
receives its appellation from that which is
more worthy than itself,
so that it is one person that calls,
and another that hears.
Who is it, therefore,
that has given a name to God?
God, however, is not a name to God,
but an indication of what we conceive
of him.*

This passage is one of many in *A Casting of Light* opening a window into a world beyond words and names, accessible only to those who have developed inner spiritual sight.

Thomas Taylor, in addition to his many works translating the ancient philosophers, also composed hymns and essays of his own inspired by the Platonist philosophers, and Wyndham-Jones has included a few of these.

Drawing upon a passage in the *Phaedo* where Plato called philosophy “the greatest music”, Taylor likens “true philosophy” to a melody that one encounters in solitude:

*The lyre of true philosophy
Is no less tuneful in the desert than in the city;
And he who knows how to call forth
Its latent harmony in solitude,
Will not want the testimony of the multitude
To convince him that its melody
Is ecstatic and divine.*

The Prometheus Trust plans to produce a series of anthologies of similarly formatted selections. The *Song of Proclus* containing excerpts from the writings of the 5th century Neoplatonist philosopher, Proclus, is already available for purchase. The next volumes in the series will focus on Plato, Plotinus and Thomas Taylor. These volumes can be ordered directly from the Prometheus Trust, <http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk>.



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

