

September / October 2022

# Spiritual Link

Science of the Soul Research Centre

# contents

- 4 Yours Affectionately
- 5 Filling the Void
- 7 Something To Think About
- 8 We Are Doing It for Ourselves
- 11 The Real Guru
- 12 “I Am Nothing”
- 14 Did You Know?
- 15 The Three Gifts
- 18 Run for Your Life
- 19 Yoga and Sant Mat
- 22 Receiving His Grace
- 23 God’s Way
- 26 Spiritualistics
- 27 The Master Answers
- 29 Meditation with Gusto
- 32 Keep on Churning
- 34 The Rocking Chair
- 36 As Life Unfolds
- 38 Heart to Heart
- 39 Book Review

## **Spiritual Link**

Science of the Soul Research Centre  
Guru Ravi Dass Marg, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005, India  
Copyright © 2022 Science of the Soul Research Centre®

Articles and poems that appear without sources have been written by the contributors to this magazine.

**VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 5 • SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2022**

# Yours Affectionately

I have received the numerous letters you have written to me. I greatly appreciate your love and devotion but, as already explained in an earlier letter, this love and devotion in Sant Mat has to be absorbed and digested within. Your whole being should be saturated with this devotion, and when the heart is full, no words come out. When we try to preserve this treasure within us and let it penetrate into our very blood and bones, the Lord showers more and more of his grace and blessings on us. On the other hand, if we spend it in emotional outbursts either verbally or in writing, the Lord is not happy to give us more of it.

The mind feels very happy in outward, wordy expressions of devotion because it gives the mind an activity which it likes very much. Thus the mind remains outside in the world, gets more excited, active and restless, and this is what it wants. We, on the other hand, have to turn its face inwards, make it motionless and still at the eye centre. Please remember that nothing counts so much in Sant Mat as simran and bhajan. These are the only things that we need and that will come to our aid in the end.

By writing all this, I do not wish to discourage you from writing to me if there is something important to say. I only want you to keep the wealth of love and devotion safely within yourself and not spend it like a spendthrift. Give more and more time to simran and bhajan every day and you will see what bliss it will bring you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



# Filling the Void

Since the beginning of our existence, humans have been fascinated with the paranormal. Prior to the development of the empirical scientific method, societies believed that forces of nature, such as earthquakes and floods, were acts of the gods and mythical creatures that kept the balance in the universe. To this day, though many books and movies are labelled as 'science fiction'; box office hits in cinemas include plots with fantasy, witches and wizards travelling through the galaxy and alternate universes; we cannot get enough of fantasy because such stories provide a possibility of other realms of existence, where the boring, restraining rules of the physical world do not apply in a conventional way.

It is easy to become sucked into these alternative realities and be awed by them, especially when day-to-day life can be so monotonous. During the COVID-19 quarantine period, many of us have had to follow the same routine day-in and day-out and have been socially isolated from our friends and family. Things can get a bit monotonous at times, and the mind needs to be entertained. Thus, the natural tendency is to escape into some fun TV program, book, or other distraction.

However, this quiet period has also been the perfect time to dive into the practice of spirituality. With time saved from our daily commute and simplified lives, and our basic needs being met, we have had the opportunity to recover some balance and embrace the practice of meditation. Of course, we can kill time by watching TV shows. However, if this becomes an addiction, we lose our balance and waste the precious opportunity to turn our attention inwards.

The mystics always stress the importance of keeping a balance between our worldly and spiritual lives. The constant need to entertain ourselves and fill our minds with media is a product of discomfort. Our souls yearn for a much higher reality than the one we are in, and it seems we will do anything to fill that void: making new friends, attending social gatherings and distracting ourselves are some of the approaches we take. Though these pursuits feel good temporarily, their effects are short-lived, and soon we feel empty again.

*There is something in us which is always disturbing us, something within us which always makes us feel that we are lonely in this world. We feel that we are missing something, and that which makes us feel that we are missing something is nothing but a natural inclination of the soul towards its Lord.*

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

The Masters have provided us with a foolproof method to satiate that emptiness and discover our true identity. They urge us to go within to taste the inner bliss of Nam, or the Lord's Name, which eventually will end all misery and rebirth.

*Sugar, buffalo milk and chocolates, all are sweet,  
But incomparably sweeter  
Is the repetition of the names of my Lord,  
Like pure warm honey melting in my heart.*

Sheikh Farid, quoted in *Living Meditation*

A drop, by merging into an ocean, becomes the ocean. Our soul is a drop of that divine Ocean of Nam. Nam is the essence of our soul. Once we merge with Nam, we become one with the Lord. Nothing is sweeter than the bliss of Nam, and only through the practice of Nam will we feel and be complete. The choice is ours. We can decide if we want to live with the feeling that we are missing something, or if we want to enter the everlasting bliss of the Lord's abode and our soul's true abode.



# Something To Think About

When something is simple, we often find it difficult to accept. The mind goes into overdrive wondering how it can be so simple. There must be a catch, a trick we've missed. Our mind has the knack of making simple things complicated. However, if a situation is complicated, the mind revels in the complexity; yet it grumbles that the problem should be simpler. The human mind makes simple things complicated and complicated things even more complex.

*Concepts and Illusions, A Perspective*

\* \* \*

Some believe that if we have darshan of the physical guru, millions of karmas are erased. How can that be? How can we become rich by looking at a rich man? When hungry, can anybody else eat for us? It is the same thing with spirituality. Misconceptions like this make us try to get near the Master and we think this is devotion, but the only real devotion is to keep our attention at the eye centre. Travelling on the inner path is something only we can do. No one can do it for us. Looking at the outer physical form of the guru or even doing simran does not erase karmas. The only way to burn karmas is by listening to the Shabd.

*from self to Shabd*

\* \* \*

We are proud of our youth, health and beauty – forgetting the Provider who gave them to us. We are proud of our intellectual achievements and professional successes. From where do they come? If they are in an individual's hands, why does the intellectual's intellect suddenly collapse? Why does a prosperous lawyer or doctor unexpectedly find his clients and patients vanishing? Successes are so transient, so much outside our control. They are God's gifts, and He takes them back when He likes. They are apparel in which we strut about for a time. The honours they bring us are only fig leaves that cover our spiritual nakedness. It is not that we should abandon physical, intellectual and professional achievement. The Masters say, "Use all the powers that God gives you, but do not be proud of them; they are not yours."

*Sarmad – Martyr to Love Divine*



# We Are Doing It for Ourselves

*Like a good shepherd who always takes care of his sheep, the Master helps us clear our karmas, helps us wash away all the sins from our soul, until we are pure and spotless and can merge back into the Father. He alone knows what is best for us and regulates our progress according to our efforts and the karmas or layers of dirt that cover our soul and mind.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Saint John*

Sheep may not necessarily like to have shepherds; they would probably want to roam freely, unimpeded by the shepherd, his dog, and his rules. Of course, what the sheep do not understand is that the shepherd plays a vital part in their lives. Not only does he guide them towards green pastures and fresh water, he also saves them from the many calamities that can befall them – from speeding cars to the big bad wolf.

In the above example, the shepherd may at least have some personal gain in the whole process of looking after his sheep. But what does the Master gain from guiding us on the spiritual path?

When we attend to our meditation or perform some seva, we generally say that we are doing it for our Master. We put in a little effort and we think that we have come closer to repaying him for everything he has done for us. But the fact is, we are doing it for ourselves, and that's a good thing.

Every time we take one step towards the Master through our meditation, he takes a thousand steps towards us. Each moment we spend in his service is just an excuse for him to lavish us with more love and more grace.

*Lacking in merit and worth, I am unworthy of your service. But should you accept it, I would become a paragon of virtue despite all my defects.*

Sheikh Sa'di, quoted in *The Spiritual Guide*, Vol. II

Being in his fold is not something we have earned. When the Master, out of his immense love, granted us the gift of initiation, he vowed to always be by our side in his Radiant Form, guiding us and protecting us on our spiritual journey.

The precious Names he gave us carry their own power, and through repetition of these Names and listening to the Sound, we are empowered to face all the difficulties of life, our physical death, and ultimately make our way back to our true home.

At initiation, our Master took on the responsibility for the liberation of our soul. The scroll of our karmic deeds is in his hands. He administers our karmas as he deems fit and he himself stands as an advocate for our freedom, provided we faithfully adhere to the principles of the path.

The Sufi mystic Nizamuddin explains:

*It means that whoever is attached to a spiritual Master knows that on Judgment Day his deeds will be placed in the scales of his Master.*

*The Spiritual Guide, Vol. II*

The relationship that is established with the Master at the time of initiation is not only the most intimate bond of mutual trust, but also an unbreakable pact that lasts throughout this human life and beyond.

Once a disciple saw that Rumi was staying up all night praying, and begged him to take some rest. Rumi replied:

*If I go to sleep, who will look after the many unfortunate sleepers (negligent people)? For I have accepted the responsibility to ask God for all of them and to see that they reach perfection.*

*The Spiritual Guide, Vol. II*

The Master has nothing to gain from asking us to do our meditation; it is we who stand to gain everything. A child's obedience to its mother can never be a form of repayment for her love. Giving us a little insight into what the Master wants from us and for us, Maharaj Charan Singh says:

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



*with yourself. Attend to your meditation. That is the only thing which pleases the Master, and that will please you, too.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

The Great Master would always say that when we do our meditation we are helping ourselves, and at the same time we are gaining our Master's pleasure.

We may sometimes look upon our meditation as an obligation to him, or as a repayment of some sort, but if we really think about it carefully, we are the only ones who stand to gain.

We spare no effort in worldly matters, whether it is for financial gain, physical health, emotional stability, or our family's happiness. Meditation is the only thing that we do for our soul that is real and lasting.

So, whenever we feel impatient, disheartened, or frustrated with meditation, it will help to remember that it is the only thing that is truly worth doing, and that we are doing it for ourselves. And that is exactly what our Master wants too.



# The Real Guru

One time when Hazur Maharaj Ji was answering questions, the floor lamp by his side started to topple over onto him. What did Maharaj Ji do? He didn't do a thing. He just looked at the lamp as if it was falling down in slow motion. When it was about to hit him, the hand of a sevadar appeared out of nowhere, and with a firm grip, got hold of the lamp and stopped it right before it hit Maharaj Ji. Everybody in the audience breathed a sigh of relief. Maharaj Ji seemed amused at the whole thing. Immediately a concerned disciple came to the microphone and said, "Maharaj Ji, we can't let this happen again."

Maharaj Ji said, "We can't?"

"No, Maharaj Ji, the lamp almost hit you. We should fasten the lamp so that it's secure but also illuminates your face so we can all see you clearly."

Maharaj Ji replied, "You're most welcome to try to do whatever you want with the lighting. Anyway, they can't see me."

What did Maharaj Ji mean by saying, "Anyway, they can't see me?"

Maharaj Ji was making the point that the physical form isn't the real guru. Our physical eyes can only see the world of duality. They can't see the real Guru which is Shabd, the higher consciousness, which is formless. If we want to establish a real relationship with the Guru, it has to be at the level of consciousness, not in the physical, not in the intellectual, not in the emotional, but at the higher consciousness level. In reality, the Master is not the body, the personality, the thinking, or even the mind. All these are tools that will be left behind. He is beyond forms. The real Guru is the higher consciousness.

*from self to Shabd*



# “I Am Nothing”

*The purpose of seva is to create humility in us, to help us become one with our fellow humans, to be humble, meek, to fill ourselves with humility, because the Lord created us all alike.*

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

Seva or service in any form, be it with the mind, body, soul or wealth, is integral to one's spiritual life. Many people seek it and are grateful for every opportunity to serve. When we perform selfless service, we please the Lord and grow in our love for him and for our fellow man.

However, as with most group activities, conflict and discord inevitably occur when there are disagreements and differences of opinion. While the objective of everyone concerned may be a common one, it is sometimes difficult to agree, submit, and follow the instructions of a team leader without bringing our own personal views to the forefront.

The ego is at the root of self-importance. It is the cause of our weaknesses and the five passions, namely – attachment, lust, greed, anger and pride. It is the ‘veil’ that stands between the soul and the Lord. The saints tell us that meditation is the only antidote that can annihilate the ego. Hazur Maharaj Ji said:

*When our whole body is filled with love, the ego is gone and only humility and meekness remain. When that love and devotion is not in us, the whole body is full of ego. We have to detach ourselves from the world and attach ourselves to Him. Only by the spiritual practice, only by that meditation, can we kill the ego.*

*Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. III

A question was once asked of Maharaj Charan Singh, “How can I kill the ego in me?”

*Well, brother, that is a very important question. Ego comes with the mind. This is the instinct of the mind. As long as ego is there, the soul can never go back to the Lord. We can drive that ego from within us only when we see that light, when we hear that sound, the word of God, the holy ghost.*

*That power, that audible life stream is within every one of us, here, at the eye centre. We have to withdraw up to the eye centre to merge into that sound, to merge into that light. Attachment to that, automatically detaches us from the senses.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Meditation, therefore, remains the single most important undertaking in the life of a spiritual aspirant. It is the seed that brings forth humility and obedience. It is vital and irreplaceable. Through meditation, we are able to purify the mind and attach it to the light and sound within. When this happens, love for the self is replaced with love for the Lord.

*The more we are in love with the Lord, the more we realize his greatness and the more insignificant we are in our daily life, the more humble we become. The more we are away from him, the more the ego increases and we think 'I am doing it. I am supreme.' When we find the real Supreme, we know how humble we are at his feet. Then the real humility comes.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

The virtues of humility, obedience and love come naturally to those who are steadfast and diligent in their meditation. In fact, incidents of conflict and discord become an opportunity to evaluate one's self – a chance to check the size of one's ego. When put in a difficult situation, we go through the exercise of asking ourselves, "Why are we offended?" and then make an effort to change our thought process. We become aware of our failings and shortcomings and try to improve.

Likewise, we are motivated to work hard at our devotion, giving time and effort to meditation in a disciplined way, with the understanding that without attaching our attention to the sound and light within, there is no hope of eliminating the ego and moving forward on the path.

In this inspiring passage, Baba Jaimal Singh lovingly teaches us the right attitude for every sevadar to imbibe:

*Whatever work you do, believe in your heart that the Satguru is doing it all: "I am not doing anything. Worldly or spiritual work, all is the Satguru's. I am nothing; you are everything."*

*Spiritual Letters*



# Did You Know?

Whenever a satsangi complained to Maharaj Ji about unfriendly or rough behaviour from non-satsangi relatives, Hazur Ji would reply, “Attend regularly to your bhajan and simran with love and devotion. Be humble and loving with everyone and do not enter into arguments about Sant Mat. Leave everything to the Lord.”

*Heaven on Earth*

\* \* \*

It is not advisable to speak of one’s internal experiences to anyone except the Master, and it is positively harmful to speak of them to those who are less developed spiritually than oneself. In revealing secrets, there is the risk of the element of pride coming in, which hinders progress. Strength lies in keeping the secret locked, not in giving it out. Others may benefit, but he who is giving out is the loser.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

\* \* \*

Do not let illness dishearten you. Troubles are tokens of the holy Master’s grace and the result of your own past actions. Continue devotion as far as possible, under the circumstances. This is the duty of the disciple who no longer cares for the changing scenes of mind and matter. Pain and pleasure, honour and dishonour, poverty and wealth –none of these can influence the attitude of his mind. He does not pray that troubles shall be removed, but rather that his heart be always filled with love and gratitude. As Guru Nanak said, “If you send me hunger, I shall be filled with Thy Name. If you send me miseries, I shall enjoy them as pleasures. If you grant me happiness, I shall bow to Thee in gratitude.”

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*



# The Three Gifts

Twenty-four hours a day, the human mind is working. In the hustle and bustle of worldly life it is kept busy, entertained, distracted and sometimes disturbed. Even when the mind is in a state of rest, on some level, it is still subconsciously processing issues, whether it be problems in relationships or responsibilities at work. Then, when we sit for meditation, all those thoughts and emotions make their way to the forefront of the mind.

Thus, for many of us, meditation sometimes becomes more like watching the serial drama of our own life and less about repeating the holy Names. Thoughts infiltrate the mind so subtly that we do not even realize when we have stopped our repetition. As a result, we get frustrated, discouraged, or simply become unmotivated to do our meditation.

But if our intention to meditate is sincere, then we do not need to look very far for the solution to our problems. From the moment we embarked upon the spiritual path, we were given the essential tools to successfully create an atmosphere for meditation and progress on the inner path. We can call these tools the three steps to success in meditation. They are: satsang, seva and simran.

In *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I, Maharaj Sawan Singh explains that satsang meets two needs. First, it creates an atmosphere of love and devotion for the Master, and second it instructs both seekers and initiates in the science of Sant Mat. Listening to satsang with our mind and heart, we slowly gain control over our senses, as the soul becomes absorbed in the company of the saints.

Maharaj Charan Singh would beautifully explain that satsang is like a fence around a crop. Just as the fence protects a crop against damage and loss, so does satsang – it protects the mind from going astray and helps to preserve the fruit of meditation.

The second step is seva. Seva, or selfless service, can be offered by the individual through body, wealth, mind, and soul. Ideally, it creates an atmosphere which dyes the mind with love and devotion for the Master, so that at the time of meditation the mind is prepared for one-pointed attention and concentration.

Seva of the body and wealth are easy to perform. Service with the body rids us of our ego as we begin to recognize the equality of all human beings; and service with wealth helps to eliminate greed and attachment.

Seva with the mind, on the other hand, is more difficult. Maharaj Sawan Singh explains in *Philosophy of the Masters*, Vol. I, that service of the mind requires the disciple to remain ever conscious of the Master's presence within; to obey him with selfless devotion and without pride and to subdue his mind's reasoning and surrender himself to his Master. Pride and ego will never allow the soul to reunite with the Lord. For that union to take place, to become worthy of such grace and mercy, selflessness and complete surrender to the Master in meditation are required. By constantly remembering the Master's presence within, we are controlling the mind from running outwards and then to concentrate at the eye centre.

The Masters explain that as we develop the habit of sitting for meditation for two-and-a-half hours every day, seva of the mind gradually develops into seva of the soul. Seva of the soul consists of withdrawing our soul current from every pore of our body and connecting it to the Shabd within. This connection between the soul and the Shabd can only be achieved when we surrender ourselves to the true Master and win his grace through effort in our spiritual practice.

Simran is the third step to success. It refers to the actual repetition of the five holy Names in complete concentration. The Master recommends that we dedicate two hours of our meditation time only to simran. When perfect concentration is achieved, the soul rises to the eye centre, the gateway to the inner life.

Dhyan and bhajan are dependent on the success of simran, as Baba Jaimal Singh explains to his disciple, Maharaj Sawan Singh, in *Spiritual Letters*:

*Simran's current links up with Dhun, and the current of the Dhun links one with the Shabd – and Shabd is the very essence of the Anami Lord himself. For this reason, if simran is done with love and devotion steeped in the soul's seeing faculty, it brings great joy and bliss. Grace and mercy then descend in full measure.*

In conclusion, the three steps to success in meditation were given to us from the beginning of our journey on this path. They are nothing new. In fact, more than 'steps' they are actually precious gifts bestowed upon us by a benevolent Master to give us the best possible chance at success. It is up to us to realize the value of these gifts and make best use of them so that when we sit in meditation, we can express our gratitude and appreciation to the divine giver and make him proud.





# Run for Your Life

*You have won the first big battle –  
to waken long before dawn.  
Don't fall back to sleep.  
Not now, when you are so close.*

*Quick. Get up!  
Don't stay under the covers.  
Don't get seduced yet again.  
You've fallen into the arms of sleep  
so many nights before,  
and in the morning you always wake up  
feeling the same old way,  
lonely, sorry and ashamed.*

*Quick. Get up!  
Storm the secret gate above your eyes.  
Tear away the veil of shadows and sorrows  
that cloaks the radiant bliss of your being.  
Sail in the ship of Nam across the sea of stars,  
to that distant shore, deep within,  
where your Beloved waits for you.*

*Quick. Get up!  
Stay awake, this night.  
Later, you can sleep all day.  
But don't lose love's jewel  
shining in the stillness of this night.  
Listen! Your Beloved is calling your name.  
Run toward his Voice. Run for your life.*



# Yoga and Sant Mat

When one hears the word *yoga* the mind conjures images of difficult postures and contortions of the body. They are the techniques of the hatha yoga designed for purifying and disciplining the body to keep it healthy. The spiritual yogas (Rāja, Sahaj, Kriya, Asthanga and Dhyān) include none of these hard measures. Their emphasis is on purification of the mind and meditation, to liberate the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death.

So what is yoga? In simple terms, according to the Bhagavad Gita, yoga is: “To be steadfast in the performance of one’s duty and treat both success and failure with equanimity.”

It has many similarities with Sant Mat principles. According to Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, *sukh dukh dono sam kar jaanai a-or maan apmaanaa* (One who realizes that pain and pleasure as well as honour and dishonour are the same). And according to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, *Hukam rajai chalna, Nanak likhiye-a naal* (O Nanak, obey the preordained order/command and walk in the way of His Will).

Yoga is derived from Sanskrit word ‘*yuj*’ which means union of the self (soul) with the Supreme Being.

Patanjali defines yoga as the control of thought-waves of the mind (*chitta-vritti-nirodha*). When thoughts begin to flow, one gets caught in them and the images they project. The turbulence of the mind is, therefore, to be made absolutely still, in order to facilitate the liberation of the soul. According to Ashtanga yoga, one has to go through the following eight steps.

*Yama*: five ethical restraints or a set of don’ts: Do not injure any being either by thought, word or deed; do not utter falsehood; do not steal; do not indulge in acts of passions and lust; and do not become greedy or covetous.

*Niyama*: five positive observances of certain good habits, the do’s. They are cleanliness of body and mind, contentment (*santoshā*), austerity of body, speech and mind (*tapas*), study of holy books, and devotion to God (*Īshvarapranidhāna*).

*Āsana*: a bodily posture suitable for meditation – a bodily state midway between discomfort, which disturbs, and relaxation which causes drowsiness.

*Prānāyāma*: regulation of breath leading to integration of mind and body. Rhythmic breathing quiets the body, which in turn calms the mind. Thus, it is an important tool for mastering the body and quieting the mind.

*Pratyāhāra*: withdrawal of the mind and senses from all sense objects, turning it inward, and restraining it from going outward. Its purpose is to remove all possible distractions and diversions.

*Dhāranā*: concentration, that is fixing the attention at a point a little above the middle of the two eyebrows (popularly known as the *śhiva-netra* or the third eye).

*Dhyāna*: This is deep meditation, when concentration is uninterrupted, like oil flowing from one vessel into another.

*Samādhi*: Total absorption of the mind in the object of meditation. Here all mental activities cease and the *purusha* (soul) realizes its true nature. This is inner illumination – liberation. The last three steps are collectively called *sanyyam* or control.

The first three steps are to purify the body and mind, and the next two are aimed at controlling or annihilating the thought waves of the mind (*chitta-vritti-nirodha*) for facilitating meditation (*dhyāna*). The last three are aids to spiritual experience. The spiritual aspirant need not accept any dogma blindly, nor is he required to perform any rites or rituals. It is an internal practice of meditation, by which the soul is freed from the fetters of *prakriti* (*maya*). Thereafter, the soul remains completely isolated from everything eternally. This is known as *kevalaya* (aloneness) or liberation. It brings an end to all sufferings.

### **Yoga and Sant Mat (teachings of the saints)**

The first three steps, namely, *Yama*, *Niyama* and *Asana* are similar to the Sant Mat principles of honest living, maintaining purity of character, vegetarianism, and abstinence from alcohol and all mind-altering substances (natural or man-made).

As regards *Asana*, the posture – although Sant Mat prefers a spiritual aspirant sitting erect, cross-legged, with the head, neck and trunk upright, it is not dogmatic about it. If physical health has limitations one can sit

erect in any position, midway between discomfort and relaxation or in any position where one can sit still comfortably for a longer period.

Among the eight steps mentioned above, the perspectives of Sant Mat on *pranayama*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* are different. Sant Mat does not advocate control or regulation of breath, and the spiritual aspirant is advised to breathe normally. Sant Mat supports *dhyana*, where one holds attention at the eye centre and contemplates on the form of the Guru. In Sant Mat, the basis of such contemplation is love for the Guru. For this reason it is also called the path of love and devotion.

As per yoga, *samadhi* is a stage in which all mental activities cease and the soul realizes its true nature. This is liberation from *prakriti* (*maya*) and mind. Whereas in Sant Mat it is a state in which the soul gets attuned to anhad Shabd – the creative power – which leads it to realize its oneness with God (*Aham brahmasmi*) and eventually, shining forth as pure consciousness (*so aham*), it merges into God. As such, liberation according to Sant Mat is not just separation of the soul from the web of *prakriti* (*maya*) but merging into the Supreme Consciousness.

Yoga is a rational practice where one is not required to follow any dogma or perform any mystifying ritual. It is of interest to those having a scientific outlook to know their ‘true self’. Sant Mat, however, aims at merging the soul (true self) with the Supreme Consciousness.

The practice of yoga is easy for those who have the required physical ability and are born with the power of concentration; whereas Sant Mat is the path of love and devotion and can be practised by one and all. For following Sant Mat, knowledge of yoga is not essential.

Although yoga and Sant Mat have different concepts and practices, both aim at the same noble cause of freeing the soul from the shackles of mind and *prakriti* (*maya*), leading to self-realization before God-realization. On attaining such a state of union with the Creative Power, one submits to the will of the Lord and accepts all happenings of life – pleasure or pain, honour or dishonour, success or failure – as the divine order and the grace of the Almighty Lord.



# Receiving His Grace

An Explanation by Maharaj Charan Singh

We are helping ourselves when we are in meditation day and night. His grace will also be there. If we refuse to meditate and are always expecting his grace, we do not deserve it. If a beggar is not going to knock at the door, how is the owner of the house going to give anything to him? If a child does not weep, the mother also does not pay much attention. For example, in our country, generally we have maidservants, and one takes the child out to play so that the mother can do her work. If the child weeps and cries for the mother, the maidservant tries to humour him. She tells him fairy stories, or she may give him toys to play with, or she may give him some sweets. She tries to engage his attention. But if the child refuses everything and just weeps for the mother, and wants only the mother and nothing else, the mother cannot resist it. She runs from the house and embraces him.

Similarly, we are all children playing in this world with the material or worldly faces and all that. We are so attached to them and absorbed in playing with them that we do not even think about the Lord. We are away from him. But when we have real longing and devotion for him alone and want only him, we withdraw our attention from everything else. Then he cannot bear it, comes to meet us with open arms and embraces us as he receives us.

Mostly we do not try to meditate for his sake. We meditate for worldly possessions. Even if we meditate, we do not pray to him for his grace, but we pray for worldly things to satisfy our worldly desires and cravings. We want him to fulfill our desires and nothing else. We do not want him for his sake. In Sant Mat we are just to pray to him for him, to merge back into him. When we do our duty with love and devotion, he will also help us. When we are helping ourselves, we will get his help, too.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*



# God's Way

*You, O benevolent giver, are the paragon of generosity;  
I beg for your grace, O Lord.*

Sant Tukaram, quoted in *Voice of the Heart*

We have known many such prayers that ask for the Lord's grace. Colloquially, the phrase "it's God's grace" is often used for sharing any good news or achievements with others. Grace is considered a gift from God. Theology explains grace as an unmerited favour of God. In simple words, grace implies having something good (favour) which we do not deserve (unmerited). But what is unmerited favour?

If we hire an employee who works for us, we are obligated to pay him his wages for the work he has done for us. We are indebted to him, and the salary he receives is not a gift but a payment. But when it comes to God, how can we repay him for all he has done for us? If each breath we take is owed to him, how can we even count the other blessings for which we are indebted to him, such as our daily meals, family, friends or worldly possessions? How can we redeem ourselves from this unimaginably heavy debt? In a way, we do not merit the blessed life we enjoy however humble it may be. The essence of grace is its free bestowal from the Lord to us, the unmerited.

A popular Christian hymn written in 1772 by John Newton, who survived a violent storm when he was aboard a ship, expresses the power of the Lord's grace:

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
T'was blind but now I see.*

According to Sant Mat, one cannot even worship the Lord if not for his grace. We are all blind and lost in illusion. The Lord creates his own love within us. We would never even think about the Lord unless he creates those circumstances, that atmosphere in which we can build our meditation. If that atmosphere is not there, the opportunity is not there. So what can we do? Everything is in his hands.

How does grace work? It is said the Lord's grace works in mysterious ways. There is a story about a wealthy merchant who was very pious. He regularly visited saints to seek divine knowledge, and practised the teachings to the best of his abilities. During one such visit to a saint, he got a message that all his shops had caught fire, causing him a huge loss. The merchant was inconsolable and asked the saint, "I have never done a wrong deed in my life. Why did I have to suffer this loss?" The saint answered, "Why do you cry for something that was never yours? What do you need other than a shelter, simple food to eat, and two sets of clothes to wear? Whatever you had was his grace, what has happened now is also his will. Accept it with all your heart, as this may bring you closer to the Lord."

So, do our troubles indicate lack of grace? On the contrary, they can be a blessing in disguise, because they help us remember the Lord. We remember the Lord more in times of distress than when we are happy. So our difficulties in a sense give us the opportunity to grow closer to the Lord.

Our concept of grace is when the Lord gives us a good life, loving family, comfort, wealth, and worldly possessions, but that may not be his grace at all, as these things may cause us to forget him. On the other hand, that which takes our mind away from the world and creates yearning in our heart to go back to him, is his grace. But these may not be pleasant incidents, pleasant events.

*T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And Grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear  
The hour I first believed.  
Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far  
And Grace will lead me home.*

Grace will lead us home to our true abode, where our true self merges back with the Divine. As soon as we are aware of our Master's grace, we become increasingly aware of the insignificance of our individual existence and contributions in this world. That, in turn, increases our

love for the Master and willingness to obey him, to follow the Sant Mat principles, and to meditate.

*The love by itself is grace. When you love a Master, what more grace do you want? When you develop that love for a Master, that itself is grace.*

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

*Not till He himself takes us into his fold are we redeemed through the Master's grace .... And that grace is showered on us through his gift of devotion and love, which eventually tunes us to him and draws us to our Home to merge with the Lord forever.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Grace is God's way to reach out to us, and we should respond with faith, love, and gratitude. This is the only way we can build our relationship with the Lord and ultimately become one with him.

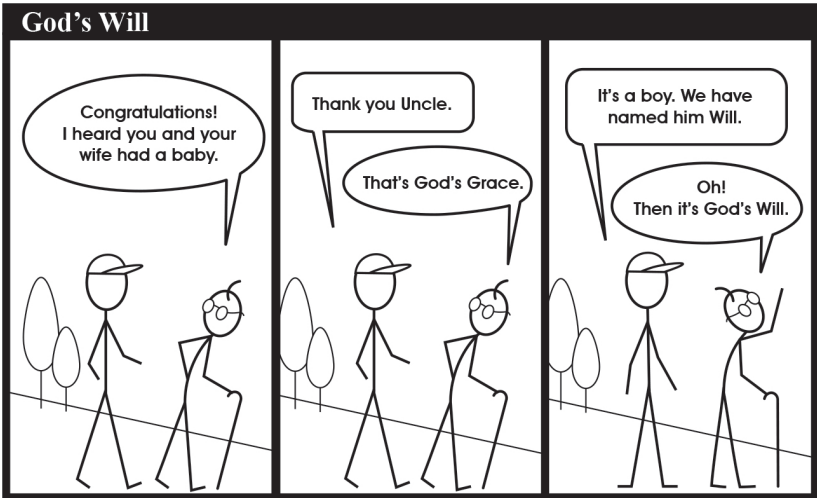
*Blessed with His infinite grace, through meditation, we seek the door, we find it, and we knock.*

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*





# SPIRITUALISTICKS®



# The Master Answers

## A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Maharaj Ji, it seems clear that the lover needs the Beloved. Does the Beloved have any need of the lover?*

A: Yes. Who gives the love to the lover? It is the Beloved who gives love to the lover. The lover thinks he loves the Beloved. The pull in the lover's heart comes from the Beloved always. It gives the feeling to the lover that he is in love with the Beloved. Actually it is the Beloved who has put that pull in the lover's heart. Without that need, why should the Beloved give that pull to the lover?

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Q: *Master, can you tell us how we can increase our love for the Lord?*

A: The main thing is that it is in the hands of the Lord. We get love when he gives it. But when we are attending to meditation, the love comes automatically. And when actual love comes within us, all human qualities automatically come in us like cream on milk. You do not have to fight for those human qualities to get them. They just come. Love brings everything in us. Everybody has virtues in him. But love, the real spiritual love, brings out these virtues.

The difference between spiritual love and worldly love is this: In spiritual love you are not conscious of anybody except the object of your love, except your Master or the Lord. In worldly love you are always conscious of others; there is an instinct of possession, and then jealousy comes in when you are conscious of others. In spiritual love there can be no jealousy, for you have forgotten the whole world; whether it exists for you or not, you are just in him. That is the difference.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Q: *How does one always act as the Master's agent in order to avoid creating karma? How can he force his mind to stop and think in this manner before acting?*

A: We have to submit to his will. And that we can do only if we meditate. The Master's wish is that we should be firm on the four principles, which are prerequisites before we can travel on the path. So long as we are firm on that, we have submitted ourselves to the Master. Then, automatically, our mind develops to that extent that it starts submitting rather than expecting, or not adjusting to a situation. We will submit only if we have love. Without love, we cannot submit to anybody. Love is such a thing which makes one submit. Love drives out ego from us. That love we have within ourselves; it does not come from outside; it does not come from anybody; it comes from within. And when love comes in us, all the good qualities of a human being come up, like cream in milk. All that we have to fight for with ourselves now in order to be good, to be honest, to behave rightly, to do this or that, will automatically come in us when we feel that devotion within us for the Lord. Instead of trying to train our mind to pick up good qualities, one by one, the cream of all those qualities automatically will come in us. When we are devoted to him, we are devoted to everybody. We have no ego. Then we do not want to assert; then we do not want to offend. Automatically all those good qualities are manifested in us.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

Q: *Master, yesterday you spoke about darshan and the helplessness of a disciple being pulled towards the Master. When we are in his presence or reading a book or even in meditation, feeling some fullness, being filled by the Master, is this also darshan?*

A: If you are feeling him, if you are thinking about him, if your attention is towards him, you are always with him.

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*



# Meditation with Gusto

Sometimes we find ourselves with no sense of direction in life. Even though we have a daily routine that includes meditation, we follow it half-heartedly, like a chore that needs to be done. So we ask ourselves, “Will I spend the rest of my life simply going through the motions of waking, sitting in meditation, and then getting on with daily life?”

But when we go through these motions mechanically and unenthusiastically, we are not really putting in much of an effort, are we?

*Mere mechanical meditation will not help unless you live in that meditation, become part of that meditation, merge into the meditation. Your whole life should be that of love and meditation, not just one or two hours of trying to concentrate.*

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

In other words, we need to actually live the Sant Mat way of life. From the moment we open our eyes in the morning till we fall asleep at night, we have to keep our spiritual purpose in mind and carry the same enthusiasm that we did when we first came on the path.

Why did we come on the path? Was it a difficult time in our lives? Was there pressure from the family, or did we actually want to find meaning and purpose to our existence on this earth?

Do we remember how we craved initiation? Let us recall our excitement during the first few months after receiving this precious gift, when we were eager to sit for meditation at every given chance. We would be looking forward to savouring every minute of the bliss and peace we felt. But how many of us still feel the same excitement as we did then?

Why are we not as enthusiastic as before? Perhaps it is because we don't see progress. Progress cannot be measured, nor are we capable of recognizing it. Do we even think of thanking the Lord for the opportunity to do this seva? Doing our meditation is actually for our own benefit. Results are not in our hands, but the effort is.

*We start analyzing ourselves too much: “How much love do I have? Now I have no more faith, yesterday I had too much faith.” Every day we judge*

*ourselves. We are the judge, and we are the accused before the judge. The mind is just always running in a circle like this. This self-analysis doesn't lead us anywhere at all. Self-pity – it depresses us sometimes. Let the Lord judge. Let him know what we need. Our work is to do our duty. Our duty is to knock; it's for him to open the door. We can't take on our shoulders his responsibility also. It is for him to open the door. We have to beg; it is for the householder to give.*

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

Sitting in meditation should not be a chore or a burden that takes us away from the TV or from spending time with friends. We should be looking forward to it with the same gusto as we did during the initial stages.

Even if days, months, years or decades go by, as long as we approach our meditation, the core of spirituality, with a positive attitude, fervour and commitment, it can only get better and give us back more than we can imagine.

As with life, there are ups and downs with spirituality also. There will be good days and bad days. Over time, we learn to take it in stride and if we persist, we will eventually be able to master it. It takes the right attitude and discipline to be able to achieve our ultimate goal. Everything in our lives influences us.

Maharaj Charan Singh says regarding meditation:

*It is not the simran, not the dhyana, not only the hearing of the sound. Meditation is living the life of Sant Mat. The whole of life is a meditation; making the mind pure – that is meditation. Good living, right type of living, living by the teachings, having good relations with everybody, having a sympathetic nature – and also giving your time to meditation. That is all meditation.*

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

Everything we do throughout the day is either bringing us closer to the Lord or away from him. We know when we are doing right and when we are doing wrong. Our conscience always tells us the truth.

If we are disciplined in our actions and thoughts, then we will be building not only the right environment for a healthy, physical and moral life but also one for spiritual growth.

What is it that keeps us going? It is the love of our Master. Every time we see him, hear about him, attend satsang or do seva, we feel his presence, his love. We cherish that and then we go with the right attitude to do our meditation. If throughout the day we are living in his will, we will surely feel his love. That will help keep us going – and doing our meditation with gusto.



# Keep on Churning

Somewhere in the woods one day, there lived two frogs who were the best of friends. One was big, lean and green and the other was tiny, slender and grey, but despite their differences, they got along well. Always going on adventures, they wandered deep into the woods. One day they came across a small barn where they saw a farmer leave a bucket near a stack of hay. Curious, they hopped over to see what was in the bucket. But because the bucket was tall, they couldn't see what was inside, so they just jumped in.

It turns out, the bucket was filled with milk and now they were stuck inside. They couldn't get out because the sides were too slippery. All they could do was swim. So they swam and swam, but no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't get out. After one hour the big frog said to his pal, "Tiny, my friend, there is no use paddling any longer, we are going to drown, we might as well give up. There is no point, no one will come and save us." But Tiny replied, "Hold on Big, keep paddling, somebody will get us out eventually. As long as we don't give up, we won't drown, and we can't die." So, they continued paddling for hours. As the sun started to go down, the big frog said, "I can't go on any longer, Tiny, there is no sense in doing this because we are going to drown anyway. What's the use, I have given up already." The big frog stopped swimming. He gave up, drowned in the milk and died.

Tiny was beside himself with grief at the loss of his dear old friend, but more determined than ever, he started paddling even faster and faster to numb the pain. Suddenly at around midnight, because he had been paddling for so long, he noticed that the milk had turned into butter. So, letting out a joyous yell, he jumped out of the bucket back into the woods. He was alive! He made it! But he was also sad because he had lost his best friend. He knew that he hadn't been able to help his friend because once his friend had made the decision to give up, he was doomed.

The same is true with our spiritual life. As long as we don't give up, as long as we 'keep on churning', we will eventually achieve our goal. Just as the frogs could never have imagined that their constant churning would turn the milk into butter and thus enable their escape,

we too are so limited that we cannot imagine the power of God's grace and what it can accomplish.

The Master is our beloved friend, our greatest well-wisher who is constantly encouraging us to 'keep paddling', not to analyze, not to have any expectations, to just do our meditation regularly and sincerely, and leave the rest to the Lord.

At the end of the day, what else can one ask for? In a world filled with chaos and uncertainty, there is only one thing that we can count on, and that is the Lord's love and grace. But there is only one place where he bestows that grace and where we can receive it – the stillness of meditation. The more time we spend connected to the Shabd, the storehouse of infinite power that created the entire universe, the more strength we receive to keep on churning. That is all the Master asks of us.





# The Rocking Chair

If we take a close look at our lives, we realize that everything that has happened has been for a reason. The Lord has always provided what we needed when we needed it. But despite this, we often find ourselves worrying about the past and the future. We waste so much of our precious time in anxiety over things that may not even occur.

More often than not, there are two main emotions that lead to worry – guilt and fear. Guilt causes us to worry about the past – we want to repent for something we may have done or a do-over for something that may not have gone our way.

But of course we cannot go back in time; we cannot take back words we may have said; and we cannot undo the actions we have already put in motion. So how, then, will worrying help us?

The second emotion that leads to worry is fear. We like being in control of things around us because it gives us a sense of security. But how do we stay in control when we don't even know what is to come next? That is when worry and anxiety kick in. We lose sleep over the prospect of what tomorrow may bring. Yet, we are also fully aware that we cannot change future events, so worrying is futile. We have often heard the saying that worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair – it gives us something to do but it leads us nowhere.

When we worry, we feel helpless, powerless. And these feelings further fuel our fear and anxiety. It is a vicious cycle that we can break only by changing our perspective. The more empowered we feel – the more we sense we have that whatever happens, we will be okay – the less necessary worrying becomes.

Where does the empowerment come from? We need to take a step back and ask ourselves a few key questions: Why are we worried? What are we worried about? Can we change anything by worrying? Chances are, we will be led to the same answer that we have heard time and again – that which is destined will happen. All we can do is prepare ourselves. As the Masters have said, we cannot control the weather but we can dress accordingly for it. If we can just remind ourselves of this simple truth, then what is the need for worry?

Hazur Maharaj Ji explains:

*Worry never did help anyone and it never will. Rather, it puts one in a still more negative condition and depletes one's energy. You will get what is in your destiny, but you must work for it. No one has ever received more than his share, nor can one receive it before it is due; so why fret and worry? Apply that energy to some practical work, with the proper mental attitude. Real happiness and peace are within you, and not in outer objects. So, do your duty in this world and do not fail to carry on your simran and bhajan regularly, every day.*

*Divine Light*

In reply to another question on worrying, Hazur Maharaj Ji answers:

*When we worry, we don't have much faith in ourselves and we also show lack of faith in the Master. If we have faith, we leave the problem to him and will face what comes and let him deal with it. If we have faith that he's dealing with it, let him deal with it. And anyway, worry won't help you, worry won't solve your problem. If it's not going to solve your problem, then why worry? If an actor has been given a certain part to play, then why should he worry? He has to play that part. He has no option – he's helpless. The part has already been written, so we have to play it. So worry is not going to solve any problem at all.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. III*

By keeping these reminders close to our heart, we will be able to get up from our rocking chairs and move boldly towards living a positive life without worry, fear or anxiety.



# As Life Unfolds

Over the years, by following a spiritual path we have learned about the teachings of the saints and received initiation from our spiritual teacher. We attend numerous discourses, participate in seva activities, but most importantly, our soul has embarked on its homeward journey to fulfill its spiritual goal of achieving salvation: merging into its source, just as a drop merges into the ocean.

Meditation is the means by which we are to undertake this endeavour under the guidance of our teacher. This method is based on a foundation that includes three other fundamental principles: following a vegetarian diet, abstaining from alcohol and mind-altering substances, and living a moral and honest life. So after coming this far, we are well aware that we need to practise meditation for at least two and a half hours daily, in order to achieve our goal.

But with so much happening in the world and in our personal lives, we often relegate meditation to the back burner. Sometimes we manage to complete the course, but on other days we simply run out of time, overwhelmed by duties and obligations. We are so preoccupied with our business, managing our family, social commitments, social media, and so forth that we do not make meditation our priority.

So much time has passed in this way, and now we find ourselves still caught in the midst of a global pandemic. Every aspect of the world as we knew it has changed. Aside from the fear that has taken a toll on people's mental health and well-being, there has been a dramatic shift in our day-to-day life, including hygiene practices, social protocols, and our sense of time. We have experienced lockdowns in which we have been forced to stay home and restrict our daily activities to the bare minimum.

The good news is that we found we now have more time. And what kept us grounded in these unprecedented and uncertain times is our spiritual life; our teacher constantly reaches out to us and reminds us in no uncertain terms that in good times and in bad, we have to do our meditation. Well, if we were too busy before the pandemic, we surely have enough time now.

As Maharaj Charan Singh reminds us:

*By spiritual practice we rise so high that we can meet anything, we can know anything. We advance spiritually. Our mind becomes refined, matured, and we can know anything. That is how spirituality should help us, in developing within ourselves. It must make us a better person. If it does not, then it is not spirituality. When spirituality – that is, devotion to Shabd, Nam or the word – grows within us, all the other good qualities of a human being come in us like cream on milk. We do not have to fight in order to learn or to develop those qualities. They come automatically within us. When we have the devotion of the Lord within us, that devotion, that love brings all the qualities within us. It just transforms us; our whole outlook is changed.*

*Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II*

Our karmas continue to unfold. We need to develop both purity and courage to survive in this world. There will be good times and bad times – experiences we have to undergo, in order to evolve and move closer to our goal. The Shabd unravels the coverings of our soul. This helps us cope and develop perseverance as we go through life. Ultimately, we are growing spiritually and learning to acknowledge that life unfolds as the Lord wills.



# Heart to Heart

An old man came hobbling into Beas Hospital using two sticks for support.

I asked him, “What is the problem?”

He said, “Eye problems.”

I said, “Why didn’t you bring your son to help you?”

He said, “I have heard that in Maharaj Ji’s house there is no need of a son or helper. The sevadars in Maharaj Ji’s house will help me.”

He was admitted and the eye specialists operated on him. When he recovered, he bowed to the Guru with whose grace he recovered the use of his eyes, without the help of his sons.

\* \* \*

During the construction of the Beas Hospital, sevadars would unload cement wagons and become covered with cement; even their mouth and eyes. They were seated in front of the other sevadars when Maharaj Ji gave darshan. Maharaj Ji was always pleased to see them. He would say, “These poor fellows are working hard. They do seva with such love, they pay no attention to their body.” No one could believe how many sevadars came to the hospital, even in the busy April/May harvest season. There’s a saying that if the mother of a farmer dies in April or May, they won’t cremate her until the wheat harvest is in. And these were mostly all farmers, yet so many of them came to do seva at the hospital during the harvest season. So great was their love and sacrifice to do seva at the hospital site!

One of the sevadars who often acted as foreman on these projects spoke to Maharaj Ji on a slab day. He said: “Maharaj Ji, today is a wedding celebration at the hospital.”

Maharaj Ji asked: “How?”

He replied, “There are twice the number of sevadars.”

Maharaj Ji answered: “Every day is a marriage celebration in Baba Ji’s house.”

Maharaj Ji would always spend as much time as possible at the hospital on slab days. He would often come immediately after morning satsang, then again at lunch time, then again in the afternoon to give *prashad* (blessed food). So much was his love and appreciation for the sevadars.

*Labour of Love*



# BOOK REVIEW

## Seva

BY LEENA CHAWLA RAJAN

PUBLISHER: PUNJAB, INDIA: RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS, 2022.

ISBN: 978-93-93426-68-0

The Masters say that every contribution in seva, however small it may seem, is equally valuable. Seva is based on love, and love cannot be quantified. The worth of seva is incalculable.

In this book, the author reflects on the challenges, the joys, and the inestimable value of seva (selfless service) for a spiritual seeker. With occasional quotes from the Radha Soami Satsang Beas Masters and the Adi Granth, as well as from such diverse figures as Mother Teresa, Marcus Aurelius, and Mulla Nasruddin, she illustrates how seva is an essential aspect of spirituality. Anecdotes reported by sevadars from satsang centres around the world are woven into the book throughout. Some of these are deeply inspiring, some are cautionary, and some humorous, but all carry a taste of the actual experience of seva – not in some distant past world, but in the midst of today’s complex challenges.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section, titled “Foundations,” addresses the questions: What is seva? What is physical seva? Why do we serve? How do we serve? The overriding theme in these chapters is that the foundation of seva is love, and seva grows love. The author writes:

*As we begin to understand the qualities that make up doing seva with the right attitude of love and service, we realize that this is something we will never be done learning. Each time we peel a layer we find there is more to be discovered – about the Master, about seva, and about the inner journey. There is infinite scope to improve our approach to seva; there are infinite ways to grow in our love. It is the work of a lifetime.*

The second section, titled “Seva of Body and Mind,” makes up the largest part of the book. Its ten chapters focus on the attitudes or way of approaching seva: Dedication, Responsibility, Self-Discipline, Listening, Humility, Attitude of Selflessness, Obedience, Surrender, Love, and Harmony.

The chapter on Listening begins with a quote from Christian theologian Paul Tillich: “Love listens. It is its first task to listen.” The recurring theme

of the book is that seva is rooted in love. The author comments, “To do any seva successfully, we first need to be silent and listen. When we listen with attention and love, we put our ego aside and are essentially saying to another person, “Tell me what you would like me to do; your opinion matters to me.”” She adds, “One of the most sincere forms of showing respect to someone is to listen attentively to what that person has to say.”

Humility is essential to seva. The author describes behaviours many sevadars try to adopt to appear humble. These, she says, are not real humility, which “is the outcome of years of meditation.” Yet, “if we wait to become humble before we begin doing seva, we will never begin. Seva is there to help us become humble.”

Can we be happy when our seva goes unnoticed by anyone? She relates a story about Hazur Maharaj Ji when he was on his evening walk around Dera. When he passed by a man cleaning the roof in an out-of-the-way part of Dera,

*Hazur commented that this was “true seva.” He added, “He selects sites that are not visited by people so he can go unnoticed. That sevadar is a non-demanding type.” The disciple asked him to clarify what he meant by “non-demanding.” Hazur replied, “He does not ask me for anything. It is a unique quality not to ask for anything.”*

The chapter on Harmony brings up the issue many people find hardest in seva: the disharmony that often arises among sevadars. The author comments, “It is easy to love the Master, and most of the time it is easy to love seva, but there are times when we find it difficult to love one another. Yet this is what the Master wants – that we serve together in love and harmony.”

Why is it so difficult to work together? The author says, “We are human: we have faults, we make mistakes. We come from different backgrounds, communities, and cultures. We have different personalities, opinions, and ways of doing things. As a result, we don’t always understand each other, and friction can occur.” Sometimes, she says, we may decide we’d rather work alone. “A sevadar once threw up her hands in despair after a misunderstanding with her team. ‘I can’t do this!’ she said. ‘Please give me some seva that doesn’t require any interaction with people. Working with others is too difficult!’” But, as the author points out, “The purpose of seva is not served if we avoid difficult situations and isolate ourselves. Some of the qualities we need to learn – kindness, patience, and love – can only be developed when we work with others.” She says that in seva “We usually do

not get to choose whom we work with... Our past karmic relationships may make the seva either a smooth road or bumpy road.”

The third section of the book is called “Seva of Mind and Soul.” Its two chapters are Balance and Meditation. In the chapter on Balance, the author says:

*Sevadars face the challenge of keeping three things in balance: meditation, worldly life, and seva. Keeping a balance doesn't mean giving equal time and priority to each one. Meditation is clearly our number one priority. We also have to do justice to our worldly life, which includes earning an honest living; fulfilling responsibilities to family, friends, and community; taking care of our health; and occasionally enjoying leisure activities. Physical seva has immeasurable value, but it is something extra that we do, without compromising on meditation and worldly commitments.*

As Marcus Aurelius wrote: “Nothing earthly succeeds by ignoring heaven. And nothing heavenly succeeds by ignoring earth.”

The fourth and final section of the book is Valuing the Gift, comprised of a chapter on Gratitude followed by an Epilogue. The author shows that seva should be imbued not only with gratitude to the Master, but also with gratitude to the sangat for giving us the opportunity to serve, and gratitude to our fellow sevadars because the “love and dedication of the sevadars we work with is a great source of inspiration.”

She stresses that “Seva is not a right – it is a privilege, an honour, and a responsibility. It is a precious gift from the Master.”

*The nightmare of every sevadar is the very real possibility that we might start taking our seva for granted. When we think that seva cannot carry on without us, or we become arrogant, or approach a seva task as a chore or a hardship, or treat seva as we would a worldly job – this is when we know that we've started to take our seva for granted.*

If we appreciate the gift of seva and stick with it, we may undergo a process she calls a “spiritual metamorphosis,” which she likens to a moth entering the cocoon and coming out a butterfly. “When we come to seva, we walk in the door utterly full of ourselves – full of weaknesses, expectations, and demands. We make mistake after mistake, but the Master forgives each one. He cloaks our faults and says there is no one in the world like his sevadars.”



Continuing her metaphor, she says that being in the “cocoon” of seva can be painful. “Real seva is not always easy. Seva is not a utopia with only nice people and no difficulties. Seva can be messy, seva can be difficult. But in the process, it offers infinite learning, infinite growth.” It is a matter of surrendering to a transformative process that we don’t always understand.

*We become more compassionate, peaceful, patient, and flexible. Slowly, the effects of seva seep into our worldly life, lending the fragrance of spirituality and positivity to everything we do. The Master says we are all miracles if we consider where we have come from and where we are today.*

All of seva is ultimately for the mind: to bend the mind towards the Beloved. Outer seva inspires us to practise inner seva, which is the only seva that can liberate us. And seva of the mind acts as a bridge between outer and inner seva, unifying them.

A true living Master has taken us by the hand and is teaching us how to love – through service to the Lord and service to each other.

