

Spiritual Link



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Yours Affectionately

I am pleased to read your letter and appreciate your devotion and the idea of dedication to Sant Mat. But you know that we can give away only those things that belong to us, and here is the thing. We constantly think and talk of our mind as if it belonged to us, but the truth of the matter is that in 99.9 percent of the cases we are under the grip of the mind. We discover this painful fact when we are advised to do something which the mind does not accept. Then the struggle begins. The supreme mystery lies within us, but the mind rebels and refuses to go in or does so only for a short while because it is accustomed to enjoy the phenomenal sensual world.

The first step, therefore, is to go in by simran or constant repetition of the holy Names, which are given at the time of initiation, and to withdraw if not all the body consciousness, then as much of it as possible to the centre between the two eyebrows and then catch the divine melody, the Shabd or the Word, which is ringing in all of us.

You can serve me best by serving yourself, that is, by cultivating a detached outlook and attending to the spiritual practices known as simran and bhajan, which will be explained to you at the time of initiation.

Your devotion and your determination are praiseworthy. Please remember that the Satguru himself steps forward to help such people when difficulties arise, if they keep up their struggle with faith.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Light on Sant Mat*

Away from the Discords of Earth

I wish I could really describe him to you or tell you of my impressions. But did you ever try to describe a beautiful sunset? There is a sort of spiritual radiance which no words can describe, but which gives one a feeling of deep peace, as if the discords of earth were no longer possible in his presence.

With the Great Master in India

The coolness of the shade can be appreciated best after one has been standing under the scorching sun, just as the comfort of an embrace is best appreciated after one has experienced dejection or a heartbreak.

For those who realize that behind the glamour and glitter of the world there is impending disillusionment, suffering and uncertainty, there is no greater blessing than being in the safe haven of the Master's presence. The equanimity, inner calmness and sense of detachment from the world that he radiates, envelops us and helps us to rise above our own insecurities.

Our Master, however, cannot always be with us physically. This is why he constantly urges us to turn within to the deepest core of our being, to that safe haven within. Hazrat Inayat Khan says:

To attain peace, what one has to do is to seek that rhythm which is in the depth of our being. It is just like the sea: the surface of the sea is ever-moving; the depth of the sea is still. And so it is with our life. If our life is thrown into the sea of activity, it is on the surface; we still live in the profound depths, in that peace.

The Sufi Message, Vol. I

The influence that the world has on us is directly proportional to the attention we give it, therefore if we want to minimize the impact of life's difficulties, then all we need to do is withdraw our attention and bring it back to its source. The mystics tell us that once we withdraw that attention away from the world and focus it at the eye centre, we will be able to return to the profound and peaceful depths of our being. We discover a different world therein, but one that is surely more familiar to us; with the nostalgic sound and reassuring brilliance of our true home.

Once you get to my Radiant Form, then I will never be able to go away from you: I will always be with you.

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

The Master knows that as we pay off our karmic debts in this life we will surely need an anchor or a strong support to help us withstand the difficulties we will face. This is why he constantly nudges us to move towards our inner sanctuary; towards the Shabd within. We are too weak, we are lacking time, and we desperately need that support – thus we must give meditation top priority.

When we feel lacking in motivation to meditate, when we feel caught in a monotonous routine of dragging the attention back to the eye centre, we can try to remind ourselves of that feeling of solace and respite that we experience when we are with our Master. Because all we ever need to do is to bring our attention and focus to the eye centre.

With practice, we will be able to hold the attention and still the mind. Instinctively, we will know that Master is there; right behind the veil, and even though we may not see him or hear him, we will be able

to feel his presence. Because the truth is that he never leaves us, he is always there waiting for us – away from the discords of the earth.

A sister once asked Hazur: “What can we do to keep the wonderful atmosphere there is now when you are here, when you are not here?”

Hazur answered: “Sister, don’t send me away. Keep me here! Are you sure that I am not here when I am not here? If we can just believe and understand that we are never alone, that our Master is always with us, we are never without him, then the atmosphere would always be the same.”



Our Master is within us and he remains within us. He watches us, he guides us, and he takes us back to the Lord. So the initiate should never feel that his Master has left the physical form. The Master never leaves a disciple.

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

Something to Think About

The one thing all of us on the path of Sant Mat have to understand is the value of humility. Meekness and humility are great virtues on this path and unless we acquire them and do away with our ego and pride, progress is most difficult. Our ego and pride stand in our way and make the mind powerful and strong. It is humility which will rid us of our ego and self-importance. All saints teach us this lesson in their writings. What is our value after all? What is the individual's value in this vast creation that the Lord has created? Billions of universes like ours lie within man, the microcosm in this macrocosm. Our existence, that of the individual, has absolutely no value and we should not attach much importance to ourselves. The path of the saints, which is the path back to the Lord, is for the humble and the meek.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*



Suppose you are standing before your superior officer, who has called for your explanation for some dereliction of duty. Would you go to sleep at that time? Suppose again that a patient is told by his doctor that he has only a few more hours to live. Will the patient go to sleep? We go to sleep while meditating because we are not afraid of death (which is sure to come) and because we do not realize that we are standing before the throne of our Lord, the highest of all the officers. If we had any fear of or love for the Lord, we would never go to sleep. Always remember that death is coming and we shall have to render account for every breath that is wasted.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, as quoted in *Call of the Great Master*

The Value of the Lord's Name

Kabir, the great mystic, conveyed his teachings largely through his beautiful poetry. Some of Kabir's verses urge his readers and listeners to understand the value of the Lord's Name and be in constant remembrance of it; therein, he explains, lies the secret to salvation.

*Between attachment and attachment lies great distance.
Attachment to the world is truly a curse
But beyond all value is that attachment
Which transports you across the ocean of this world.*

Kabir, The Great Mystic

We are addicted to the world. Our list of addictions does not stop at fine clothes, fancy houses, the latest gadgets; we are also addicted to our constant flow of thoughts. This form of attachment to our thoughts is likened to 'worldly simran' – thinking and contemplating on the world and its objects, drawing mental pictures of what we are thinking. At the time of death, these same impressions appear before us, which have been repeatedly replaying during our lifetime and are the very cause of our rebirths – this is the root cause of all our sorrow and suffering.

*The primordial Name is the philosopher's stone,
The mind is rusty iron;
It is transformed into gold with one touch of the Name
And all its chains of attachment are shattered.*

Kabir, The Great Mystic

When saints and mystics come into our lives, they impart the knowledge of spiritual simran to us – which is the remembrance of the Satguru, of God, of home. In *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh refers to the words as: “The repetition of thoughts of the journey within.”

Saints further tell us that the Lord and his Name is eternal and that contemplation on his Name will dissolve all our previous impressions. Our soul is already the particle of the Lord and wishes to merge in him. The mind, on the other hand, keeps the soul chained to this karmic wheel of birth and rebirth through its endless ‘worldly simran.’ Maharaj Sawan Singh writes in *Spiritual Gems*:

The rust of attachments and impressions is removed by repetition. The repetition of thoughts of the journey within replaces our everyday thoughts. Then the mind, instead of wandering outside, begins to take rest and peace within; and when it goes in, the spirit also goes with it.

It is important for us to understand the purpose of this spiritual simran. Simran of the Lord’s name empties us of all thought of the world and stills the mind. Reaching Master’s astral form within is the real work of simran. Our actual spiritual journey starts here; till then simran is doing its field work – collecting all of our consciousness which is spread throughout the senses of the body and out in the world, gathering it slowly and steadily at the eye centre. Once the mind is stilled and fully concentrated at the eye centre, we experience light, sound and then God.

However, the mind does not take to simran easily, because it knows that the repetition of the holy Names means its own annihilation. It is not easy to reach the eye focus and stay there. We cannot reach there

by force and the process is slow. Only perseverance will bring results. Maharaj Jagat Singh writes in *The Science of the Soul*:

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

Guru Nanak writes:

Ceaseless simran is the ladder by which to reach the mansion of the Lord. Were the tongue to multiply into many tongues and each were to repeat his Name, it would still be inadequate.

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

The kind of perseverance Masters speak about is the simran which is done with every breath – while sitting, standing, walking and eating. One has to do simran with one-pointed attention. The habit of simran should be so firmly established in our minds that it starts to play automatically and effortlessly in our subconscious. Initially, building the habit of simran may feel like a tug of war between our thoughts and repetition of the names. But it is a trick which we need to master even while attending to all our other work. The secret of the trick lies in going through the world with the mind as concentrated as if you were carrying a pitcher full of water on your head, ever careful that you must not spill even a drop.

We will experience many failures before we master the practice of simran. But we can always try to remember these words of encouragement:

*Each time we let go of our thoughts and go back to our simran,
we win a heroic and courageous victory.*

Living Meditation

Kabir explains to us the ultimate value of simran:

*All happiness rests in ever-repeated simran,
All sorrow and suffering is removed by simran.
Kabir declares with utmost force and clarity:
Practise this simran and be one with the Lord.*

The happiness which Kabir talks about is not the happiness that dissipates when we face trouble and pain in our lives. It is the everlasting inner joy and bliss that comes from being intoxicated with the loving remembrance of the Lord's simran. In *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh describes the Lord's Name as the rendezvous of all beings; the cure for all sorts of ills. He ends the letter by quoting Guru Nanak:

*The whole world is miserable.
Only he is happy who has taken to Nam.*



The Modern Disciple

There was once a disciple who lived in the forest with his Master. One cold dark night, it was raining heavily and the roof began to leak. The Master said to his disciple, “My son, climb up onto the roof and find where the rain is coming in. Do whatever you can to stop the leak.”

Now, the disciple wanted to follow his Master’s wishes but he thought to himself, “It is cold and dark out there and I shall get very wet. I could easily slip and fall and break my leg, and anyway I do not think I wish to go out there at all.”

“Master,” he said, “if I go up on the roof, I would have to go higher than you. I couldn’t possibly do that, it would be most disrespectful!” The Master said nothing, but went quietly outside into the rain, climbed onto the roof, and mended the leak himself.

When he came down he noticed they had run out of firewood. So he said to his disciple, “My son, go out into the forest and collect some wood for the fire.”

Now, again, the disciple wanted to follow his Master’s wishes, but thinking of the forest, he felt afraid. “It is so dark out there, and there are wild animals. I could easily get hurt. I could even be eaten alive.” His mind raced around, looking for a way out. “Master,” said the disciple, “to leave you and go out into the forest, I would have to turn my back on you. I couldn’t possibly do that, for it would be most disrespectful.”

Again the Master said nothing, but went quietly out into the forest, and collected some wood for the fire. When he returned with the wood, it was time to prepare the evening meal. He cooked it,

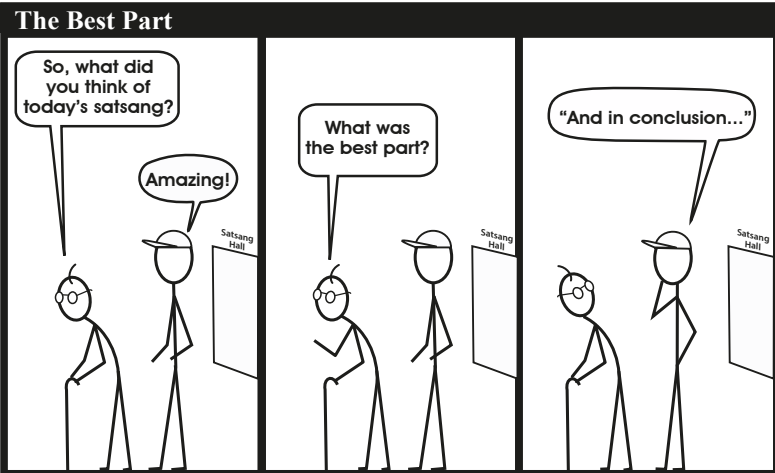
and when it was ready, he called to his disciple, “My son, the meal is prepared, come now and eat.”

At this, the disciple came running and threw himself at his Master’s feet, saying earnestly, “O my Master, please forgive me! Twice I have disobeyed you. I could not possibly disobey you a third time. This time I will certainly do as you bid.”

Tales of the Mystic East



SPIRITUALISTICKS®



Tuning In

Meditation allows us to tune in. During initiation, we are taught to withdraw the rays of our attention that are spread outwards in the creation to the eye centre, which is the portal to the inner regions. This is an arduous task because we have to undo the old habit of focusing outward instead of inward. The good news is that even outward the attention shifts from object to object. That means the attention is used to detaching itself from one object of focus to another. On the inward journey, we give our attention something nobler to focus on.

Because we are used to inner dialogue, we are given the tool of simran, which is the repetition of names associated with the inner regions. Even outward, our thoughts are accompanied by forms. So, in addition to simran, we are taught about dhyan, or contemplation, during which we focus our inner sight on the darkness or light within. The repetition gives our attention a way to engage with the inner world, and the contemplation gives our attention an inner visual to use as a focal point.

During the meditation practice, we are often overcome by sleep which, as a matter of fact, is an encouraging sign. Sleep suggests that at least the attention has withdrawn from the outside world. However, as sleep overtakes us, the attention that has collected starts to drop. Simran and dhyan help us hold our attention at the eye centre rather than letting it slip.

The practice of simran and dhyan is followed by bhajan, or listening to the sound current within. The Sound is always there; it is the attention that does not reach it. We must keep the attention at the eye centre in order to experience the light and sound within.

There is no other way to go back to our home except to catch hold of the voice of the Lord from within ourself and let it pull us up to the place whence it emanates.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

This practice of meditation is natural because it is a process of attaching the attention to something within. In fact, the process is more natural than we realize because even in worldly matters when we want to remember something, our attention automatically comes to the point in between our eyebrows. When we close our eyes, we are already in the darkness within. The key is to feel the Lord's presence in that darkness so that our attention has an object to focus on.

When you close your eyes, you are automatically there where you should be, and you have to be there, you have to still yourself there.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

At first, the concentration at the eye centre is a mechanical process. The quality comes from the quantity of time we dedicate to it. When the habit of concentration at the eye centre is formed, the mind will more easily – and eventually automatically – return to this point. Automatically does not mean instantly. Automatically means the concentration will come of itself as long as we dedicate the allotted time to the practice with sincerity. In addition, if we practise simran and dhyan throughout the day, it helps form the habit more easily.

The pleasure of that Word or Light is so great that the attention automatically stops going down to the senses.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *The Master Answers*

Initially, we perceive meditation as a cumbersome duty, but actually it is a privilege. Not everyone seeks or receives such a life-sustaining tool. When we tune in, we take a metaphysical break from the creation, and then we can return to it renewed and aligned. The shift in perspective helps us engage in our worldly affairs more effectively. With our spiritual goal in mind, we can make wiser choices. Most of all, the practice helps us fall in love with the Lord through the form of the Master. This tuning in helps us reconnect with the Lord and cultivate a relationship with him. We can thus seek inspiration and empowerment from his presence within.

Everything in nature, in life, has a natural course of time in which to evolve, for example, the opening up of a rose-bud or the growing up of a child. Similarly, our meditation practice develops gradually. We are undergoing a process of spiritual awakening. Progress is not perceptible on a day-to-day basis, just as we cannot zero in on exactly when a tadpole becomes a frog or a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. But we know that each day counts.

If results in meditation came easily, our spiritual experience would not have any depth to it. If our patience and perseverance were not tested, the results would feel empty. We would not be humbled by the fact that despite our worldly achievements, we struggle with the simple task of remembering the Lord. It is the struggle that offers us an opportunity to contribute something to him who has everything. Without struggle, we would not learn to surrender when our efforts fail. We would not learn to accept that his grace blesses efforts. We would not taste the serenity of faith. In short, through the inward journey we receive the gift of getting to know him.

*Faith is to believe what you do not yet see;
The reward for this faith is to see what you believe.*

Saint Augustine, as quoted in
The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations

As long as the effort is sincere, the benefits of meditation will be felt despite no visible signs. The progress is measured by the extent of concentration not the sights or sounds experienced within.

While the practitioner meditates to reach the eye centre, the inward journey actually starts at the eye centre. We are making our way to the starting point. The Master, in his Radiant Form, is waiting at the eye centre to accompany us further. It is the eye centre which Christ referred to as the door that we have to knock on and “it shall be opened unto you.” Once the door is opened by the Master, we begin the real inner journey back to the Father, back to our true home, accompanied by the Master.



When you go above the eyes, then the Guru will meet you in his Radiant Form, and when you reach Trikuti, the Guru will accompany you in his Sound form, even up to Sach Khand. Fly upwards upon the wings of faith and love so that you may talk to him every day and be with him always. This will come gradually, so you need not despair. Perform your devotion regularly, and one day all these powers shall be yours and you shall reach your true home.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*

Eggs?

You have asked me a very pertinent question about the eating of non-fertile eggs and have tried to rationalize that unfertilized eggs are vegetarian food. God made eggs for conveying life; so every egg, whether fertilized or unfertilized, has a potential life factor. Besides, as you must have read in *The Inner Voice*, an egg, whether fertile or infertile, is a food which excites animal instincts, interferes with concentration and thus works against our spiritual progress.

In this connection, I might at the outset tell you that we recognize that on this earth, life subsists on life. The big fish eat small fish, the wild animals eat smaller game, and the smaller animals eat insects and plants. None of these living beings appear to survive on stones or sand. Therefore, in the scheme of things, we recognize that life must subsist on life by extinguishing other life which is used as food. However, the extinguishing of life for nourishing our life affects the structure of our mind. Although operating from a focal point between and behind the eyes, our mind is scattered all through the body as well as the entire world outside, of which the mind gets awareness through sense perception.

Saints and sages who have achieved practical realization have all given indication that the path to God or to self-realization lies within ourselves and that we must collect our attention within, at the eye centre, rather than scattering it without. Our attention being the only available part of our consciousness which we can manipulate, our spiritual practice requires the concentration of attention at its natural focal point, which is between and slightly above the eyes.

Food, like actions, affects the mind and therefore its capacity to concentrate at its natural focal point. Killing a man causes a more severe mental reaction than killing a goat. Similarly, killing a goat causes a more severe mental reaction than plucking an apple from a tree. Concentration of mind would therefore be, as a rule, proportionately more difficult in the case of a man who has committed murder than in the case of a man who has killed a goat or one who has plucked an apple from a tree. The reason is that the manifest form of life in a man, in a goat, and in an apple tree has different degrees of consciousness or awareness. Accordingly, the extinguishing of life in each of them causes varying degrees of mental reaction, and therefore obstruction to spiritual concentration of the mind.

The food we eat also implies the extinguishing of life of the category to which the food belongs. Thus the eating of animal food (flesh) makes spiritual concentration more difficult than the eating of fish and fowl, while the eating of fish and fowl (including eggs) makes spiritual concentration more difficult than the eating of plants (vegetables and fruits). It is for this reason that we recommend all practitioners on the spiritual path to extinguish life of the lowest degree for their nourishment. In other words, we recommend a strictly vegetarian diet.

You have drawn a distinction between the fertile and non-fertile eggs. In fact, nature has made an egg for the hatching of the chick. The mere fact that life is prevented in the egg by artificial means does not make the egg a different category of food. You have said that a non-fertile egg has no life. That way you could also say that a goat that is already killed has no life and similarly the rooster dressed up for sale in the grocery store has no life.

The question is not whether the food has life at the time when you eat it, but whether it was intended to be a vehicle of life, and the

category of life to which it belongs. The laws of nature are fairly obvious and those which are not so obvious are being made obvious by the work of man, and it will not be difficult to see how nature has made the egg as much a vehicle of life as a hen or a rooster.

I would, therefore, recommend that eggs, whether fertile or infertile, being an 'exciting' food and of the category intended for conveyance of life, should be avoided in order to successfully practise the spiritual methods of concentration and realization.

Divine Light



On this path, the food and the drink rule is very rigid and no exception can be made in this respect. It is not hard to live on vegetables, fruits, etc., and abstain from the forbidden drinks for the prize we seek. This is no sacrifice for achieving God-realization. We are prepared to sacrifice many more precious things for worldly attainments and achievements. Why not make some sacrifice for the good of the soul?

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

The Bold and the Beloved

When we talk about love stories, the ones that immediately come to mind are the old classics. There is an element of romance, purity and truth that does not exist in today's movies or love songs and perhaps even relationships. Similarly, one would wonder if the saints feel the same way about their disciples. Do we come under the 'old is gold' category, or would we be painfully categorized as 'modern day disciples'?

Madness in love, sincerity in devotion, and loyalty in action are qualities we can find in the stories of saints like Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid, Guru Angad Dev, and Rumi. These ancient love stories have found their way to this present time, because they carry with them the fragrance of a rare romance.

There is a difference between romance and love. Love is a feeling. Romance is the way we express that feeling. A romantic loves fearlessly, without concern for shame or disgrace. Romance has the essence of being vulnerable, of being soft.

These are the elements that one relates to and is undoubtedly refreshing in an age where love has become practical and convenient. Love is still present today, but the courage to be romantic is hidden deep in history. The greatest love stories have the elements of pain, sacrifice, separation or all three. A lover's heart, when tested to painful degrees, leads to transformation and the occurrence of a divine romance.

One can find inspiration in the poems of Rumi or Bulleh Shah. A love so intense can be experienced in present times, if one chooses to remember that we too are already in an extremely romantic

relationship with our Master. The only thing lacking is the courage to let this love absorb us, disrupt our very core. But if we are not open to change, then true love will never grace us.

The story of Shams-i Tabriz and Rumi is probably one of the most beautiful love stories in the history of Persian saints. The first time Shams-i Tabriz, a wandering Sufi dervish, came into contact with Rumi, a Persian scholar, a mystical event transpired. With their friendship, all titles of teacher and student, master and disciple vanished and a divine romance was born. After a period of spiritual revelations, Shams-i Tabriz disappeared and Rumi wandered in disbelief that his companion was gone.

After a lot of searching and wandering, Rumi, consumed by the remembrance of his Master, became the embodiment of Shams-i Tabriz, and hence felt his presence everywhere. Due to the pain of the absence of his beloved, Rumi filled his writings with words of love about his Master. Today, volumes of books of Persian philosophy document Rumi's love for Shams-i Tabriz.

Rumi's poetry is in essence conversations he continued to have with Shams-i Tabriz after he had disappeared. The verses are sealed with mysterious secrets of what it feels like to be one with a Beloved, in his true form. They speak of a transformation so miraculous that not a single element of the previous identity remained. Rumi's poetry holds up a mirror that reflects the infinite glory of what we can become.

A person transformed through the agony of separation and sacrifice is like no other. He makes his mark and stands undeniable in the Lord's court as an example, a beacon, a frame of reference. He rises above all and shines brightly in his new form.

What do we do to grow our love; to shine, to separate ourselves from the mediocre love stories? Is our love the kind that can conquer the Master's heart, command his will, and perhaps even go down

in history? Or is it the lackluster cover over a beautiful soul? Do we welcome pain as we welcome joy? Do we perceive the loss of title, income and health as an opportunity to expand exponentially towards our spiritual goal? Do we welcome the opportunity to experience a love like no other?

Shams-i Tabriz, who was responsible for turning the man Maulana Rum into the mystic Rumi, spoke numerous times about true love. He said:

The mystics have been through untold hardships and spiritual discipline; their hearts shredded to pieces and ripped from their chests. They sacrificed kingdoms, pomp and glory, and their very lives. To them, neither life nor wealth holds any value, though their Beloved is impermanent. Love for the eternal and imperishable, undefiled, pure and flawless, God demands much more, far more.

Shams-e Tabrizi, Rumi's Perfect Teacher



The Master Answers

A selection of questions and answers with Maharaj Charan Singh

Q: *Maharaj Ji, sometimes in meditation questions come up that demand a lot of attention. And often we offer those questions up to the Master inside. Will the Master answer those for us, in the sense that during the next day the answer might become clear, or someone speaks to you and all of a sudden your answer presents itself?*

A: You see, actually we waste too much of our time thinking about all these things at the time of meditation. We should attend to meditation. Meditation is nothing but seeking the solution to all these problems which are tying us down to this creation. Meditation helps us to detach from all the problems of this creation. That is a positive approach, rather than trying to find every little answer to every little problem. If you sit for a couple of hours, and for one and a half hours you are just talking to yourself, then the mind won't become still. It rushes out with all the questions, all the worries, all the problems. Leave those to the Lord to deal with. Just attend to meditation. Because your thinking is not going to solve any problem at all – it will rather complicate it. If you brush the problems aside and attend to meditation, solutions automatically will be there.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Master, how can we possibly clear all our karmas?*

A: By meditation. That is the only way. You see, brother, the Lord's grace is not lacking; our efforts are lacking, our sincerity is lacking, our faith is lacking. The Lord's grace is not lacking.

He is more anxious to pull us than we are anxious to go back to him. But for that we would not be on the path at all today. It is because of his pull that we find ourselves on the path.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Would you advise us on whether or not it is good to go to sleep after meditation in the morning?*

A: Whatever atmosphere of happiness and peace we have built within ourselves during meditation, why lose it by sleep? Why not live in that atmosphere the whole day and cheerfully face the ups and downs of the day? We definitely gain something of happiness by meditation, and we should want to enjoy that peace and bliss the whole day. That is the only idea, not that we lose the effect of meditation if we go back to sleep.

Spiritual Perspectives, Vol. II

* * *

Q: *Does the Master protect the disciple from falling for temptations inside?*

A: The greatest protection the Master has given us to save ourselves from these temptations is meditation, and we should try to make use of it. If you have to fight an enemy, and you have been given a sword or pistol but you don't use it, then it is your fault. The Master has armed you with a 'sword' and a 'pistol' (meditation) to face the enemy, and now you should be prepared to face the enemy with these weapons. Attend to your meditation and you will be able to face these enemies.

Die to Live

Remember Him

Soami Ji says that we are so attached to the creation and love it so much that we have forgotten the Lord, forgotten our true home, and forgotten who we really are.

Living Meditation

The Sufi mystic Rumi said that our situation is similar to that of a servant who is sent by a king to a country to accomplish a specific task. The servant goes to that country and does many wonderful and amazing things, and then returns to the king. Back at the king's court, the king asks him, "Did you do that task I sent you to do?" The servant answers, "My lord, please, first let me thank you. The place you sent me to is a wonderful place. I met a beautiful lady and I married her. Then we had children and with them my responsibilities increased, so I opened a shop." The king interrupts him and says, "But what about the task that you were sent for? Did you or did you not perform that specific task? I didn't send you to get married, to have children, to make money or to get entangled in other types of affairs." The subject bends his head down in shame and says, "I am sorry, my lord, I forgot..." The king replies, "How could you have forgotten the only thing you were sent to perform? You will have to go back and do it again." And that's how we keep coming back into this world.

What is that only thing we were sent to perform?

The saints remind us that the only thing that matters in this world is our relationship with the Lord. For some divine reason, we are spiritual beings going through a human experience that revolves around the need to reconnect with the Lord. In fact, one of the origins

of the word 'religion' is thought to be the Latin word 'religare', which means to 'tie' or 'bind'. This suggests that the purpose of religion is to recover our link with the Lord.

In fact, so essential is God-realization that the author of the book *Living Meditation* writes that if we were to forget everything else and remember this one essential thing, then everything would be fine in our life. If we did a thousand other wonderful things and forgot this one essential thing, we would, at the end of our life, have done nothing whatsoever.

Even the Bible asks us to consider for what has a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul (*Matthew 16:26*). And Brother Lawrence suggested that we count as lost each day that we have not used in loving God.

Because we can only build a relationship with someone we have seen, we seek the company of the mystics or saints, who fill us with love and devotion for the Father. Thereby, our love for our Master is transformed into the love of the Lord. Jesus assured his disciples, "I and the Father are one."

The teachings of the saints further indicate that this remembrance of the Lord is for our benefit and in our own interest.

Life is full of perils and hidden reefs, on which we shall make shipwreck without the continual succour of the grace of God. Yet how can we ask for it, unless we are with him? How can we be with him, unless our thoughts are ever of him? How can he be in our thoughts, unless we form a holy habit of abiding in his presence, there asking for the grace we need each moment of our life?

Brother Lawrence, *The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence*

To maintain remembrance of the Master, the Lord and the teachings, we have several avenues, for example, satsang, seva and trips to the Dera. Satsang reminds us of the teachings and helps us realign our priorities. Seva cultivates an attitude of doing action in his name. Trips to the Dera place us in an environment that is infused with association with the Master.

But the ultimate tool of remembrance is meditation. In meditation, we engage in simran, which means remembrance. By repeating names that are associated with the Lord, we focus on him. The practice of dhyān and bhajan help us see the Light and hear the Sound that will lead us back to the Lord and our true home.

When we hold his hand, when our attention is towards him, we can go through this life without losing much of our balance. If we have absolutely forgotten him, then we live miserably in this creation. But if he is our focus, if he is our destination and we are trying to achieve that destination, then we can breathe in peace. Then we have consolation, contentment that we are going towards our home.

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

Initially, our remembrance is sporadic and half-hearted. Our meditation is infused with thinking. Given how easy our forgetfulness is, how persistent must our remembrance be to overpower it? That is why we are encouraged to give our full time to meditation. It is the minimum amount of practice that can help us build this habit.

Prayer is a language of love from the heart to the Father, and nobody exists then between you and the Father. You are not conscious of the world when you pray to him. He exists and

you exist. That is real prayer, and that is only possible at the time of meditation when we try to forget all that we are and where we are.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*

Moreover, it is through this remembrance that we show our gratitude. When we do not remember loved ones enough, their usual complaint is that we do not appreciate what they have done for us. So it would make sense that if we see our whole life as a gift from the Lord, a life spent in his remembrance would be our return gift to him.

For what have you to lend? Is not your very life a gift? Were God to charge you interest for the least of his gifts unto you, wherewith would you pay?

The Book of Mirdad

Because the Master knows how thick the fog of forgetfulness is, he does not hold our weaknesses against us. He inspires us and tells us repeatedly that we can do it, otherwise we would not have been initiated. At the end of our lives, we need not be able to say that we always remembered him, but that we never stopped trying. We do this by resolving to try again each new day.

I will delight in your statutes: I will not forget your Word.

Psalms 119:16



Did You Know?

When we meditate on the Word according to the instructions of the Master, false love for this false world leaves us, and true love and longing for the true Lord develop within us. But until we go to a true Master and meditate on the Name, we cannot free ourselves from our attachment to this creation, nor can we develop love for the Lord. That is why devotees and lovers of the Lord, the saints and true Masters, explain this technique for meditating on the Name. If you examine the writings of any saint, you will find that they all praise the Name, in verse after verse and page after page. The Name they praise is not a written word, but the creative power that gave birth to the entire creation and supports all the countless regions and universes.

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

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All unhappiness in life is the result of our attachment for people and things of this world. Where there is no attachment, there is no misery. It may be attachment to some person, place or thing, or to any unfulfilled desire. The greater our attachment to these people or things, the greater the misery in the end. It is for this reason that we are advised by the saints to detach ourselves as much as possible from the people and things of this world and attach ourselves to the voice of the Lord within. The greater our attachment to this divine melody, the more we become detached from that which holds us back and keeps us bound here.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Quest for Light*

The Magic Sauce

After fumbling for the chilli sauce on the shelf, my wife responds, “It’s not here; we must have run out.”

Impossible, I say to myself and go back to the shelf that she just looked through. There it was, towards the back, tucked away – my favourite chilli sauce. Perfect!

It just so happens that I am over 6 feet tall and a good 12 inches taller than my wife. The sauce was there. She just could not see it.

Similarly, when we approach a path of inner search, we can at times hit a faith roadblock. The scriptures mention levels of awareness that are, in theory and in practice, within the reach of one and all. The discourses we hear in satsang corroborate these magnificent states of happiness and bliss within. And yet here we are, grappling with our frustrated attempts, our limited vision of reality. It makes us wonder why and how the Lord enjoys his game of more ‘hide’ and less ‘seek’.

How much faith is required before we are afforded an inkling of these higher states of consciousness? It seems that in spite of our efforts, our long hours of meditation, our unceasing devotion to the path, the objective seems as elusive as ever.

Are we simply unworthy? A bad disciple? The result of a faulty design? Unfit for this path? No, no, no and no. In reality, it is our vision that is at fault. Put better, our lack of it.

Faith can only take us so far. Faith, like belief, can bring us to the threshold. After that point, we either dive into the joyful world of experience or we turn around and go back to where we came from. The path of spirituality, as taught by a true Master, is a path of experience based on a platform of faith. It is not a path designed to build our faith based on the experience of others.

In *A Wake Up Call: Beyond Concepts and Illusions*, the writer explains the meaning of the Indian term *puran sant satguru*:

The literal meaning of 'puran' is complete, nothing lacking. He is a 'complete' Master because his realization is complete instead of partial.

The long and winding road to our objective is to make us more complete – in the most subtle sense of the word. Complete in our focus, inner vision and approach to life – which at present for many of us, is not complete. However committed to the path and its teachings we may think we are, we lack the completeness that is fundamental for spirituality to take root and grow deep within our psyches.

We have brushed aside the very teachings that expound the building blocks that will make us complete. There is only one way that will take us to our objective, lift us out of this fog of illusion and make us whole; and that is to surrender.

Aha! But isn't that what we practise day in and day out in our meditation? Maybe. What is lacking is our ability to hold on to the right perspective – no matter what. The operative phrase here is 'no matter what'. When the Masters clearly tell us that we are already there in the darkness, where we are meant to be, what do we do when we get up from sitting? We evaluate and measure, thereby inviting our mind to analyze the depth and validity of the experience we just had. Instead of absorbing what we just went through, we mull over it, analyze and come up with our own conclusions. The mind churns out its all too familiar meditation statement, like a weather report, which it then promptly interprets for us: Today's session – mediocre, with vague attempts to concentrate: seven out of ten. Yesterday: frustrated outbursts of focus with no signs of light in the horizon: six out of ten. And so on.

Analysis to paralysis

Where is the perspective? Why do we feel the need to put in our two bits of reality when we are clearly told what we need to do? We are lovingly asked to stop the analysis and the evaluation. To simply just be and to just enjoy the darkness.

This brings us back to the central issue of this path: surrender. Masters have stated that surrendering is difficult, and that the shortcut to reaching our goal of spiritual realization is through meditation. It is our effort in meditation that will enable us to surrender and gradually increase awareness.

To surrender, we need to understand that to a large degree we must accept that which we are confronting. We need to accept the darkness, the silence, the void. Accept it for its entirety, and let go, above all because the Master tells us that it is the means that will provide us with the experience.

The ethos required to keep the proper perspective is a combination of time, dedication and interest – all of which we are happy to forego to attend to what we consider ‘important’ worldly tasks.

Ultimately, it is a question of perspective – ours or the Master’s? Like the bottle of chilli sauce in the back of the cupboard, the reality of our inner spiritual home has already unfolded itself for us at the third eye. It is already there, where it should be.



Though there be thousands, there is none other than the One.

The ‘many’ are imaginary.

Only the Ocean of unity is there, though in waves.

There is no place for duality.

Reality and Essence are not separate from the waves.

Jalaluddin Rumi, *Masnavi*

A Farewell Interview

The author of *Adventure of Faith* recalled the time when her stay at the Dera was coming to an end:

Finally my time in the Dera ran out and I was granted a farewell interview with the Master, who received me with his usual kindness. I sat facing him at his writing table and he looked at me silently for a while. Finally, I asked him for some guidelines for my work for Sant Mat in Germany. He referred me to his representative there and then said, "Give satsang, help the people." He also spoke of the need to integrate the writings of Christian mystics into the literature of Sant Mat, and said that I should write down how I came to the path of the Masters. He also asked me whether I would return to my monastery, and I answered that I was not sure what I should do there, but that I would go first to see my mother in Munich. "Yes," the Master said, "we should look after our parents." These words of the Master were to be a pointer for the future, when I actually would have to nurse my mother.

We also spoke about the fact that, after twenty-five years of living in the 'desert', I would now be returning to the world and, on top of that, to the centre of a big city. The Master looked at me lovingly and said, "Don't be afraid. Do your work with a detached mind and don't get involved in things, but keep your mind above them." Then I said that I did not know whether and when I would be able to come to the Dera again. Hinting at his visit to Germany, planned for 1975, but without telling me about it, the Master said, "If you cannot come to me, I shall come to you."



Protection with Every Breath

An infant cries over a sudden noise, while a child wails when his toys are snatched away. As students, we may have fretted when we failed an exam. As teenagers, we may have cried when rejected by our peers. As adults, we may have complained when we missed getting the ideal job.

At different phases of our lives, almost all of us have experienced these low moments. We were told not to be perturbed by such things. Our elders would pacify us and advise us not to waste our tears over such matters. As adults, we have seen and gone through many challenging issues be they financial, marital or health. Many of us may have already experienced the devastating loss of a loved one. Therefore, everything else should seem trivial to us. But still, we allow ourselves to be disturbed by disappointments we should be able to accept with forbearance and understanding. More often than not, we expect everything to run smoothly: with our health, in our relationships, and so on. Any small hiccup along the way leads to so much stress.

Our heart turns green with envy when someone sweet-talks and tries to influence people we love. Our mind races in anxiety when a colleague at work steals an idea we were just about to present to our boss. We barge through the door of our lawyer's office when someone threatens to seize our property. When destiny takes away anything we think belongs to us, all hell breaks loose in our hearts and minds.

At that point, we feel the whole world has turned against us and that we are being mistreated by everyone. Many have spent the better part of their precious lives in the throes of depression, dwelling on self-pity.

So much of our vital energy turns into negativity, and all because we fail to understand how our destiny has been structured from birth.

In reply to a disciple's letter, as quoted in *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh writes:

The disciple's material welfare and his success or failure in business ventures is a matter of karma. Before he was born, his life course was all chalked out. The number of breaths he is to take, the steps he is to move, the morsels of food he is to eat, his pain and pleasures, his poverty and riches, his success and failure, were determined beforehand. He himself was the maker of his fate. What he had sown he is reaping now, and what he will sow now he will reap hereafter. If he remains worldly now, he will come back to this world, but if he changes over to the Master and the Word, he will go where the Master goes and where the Word comes from.

The Masters teach that we ourselves are the makers of our fate. The more we turn our attention towards positive thinking and towards our Master, the more we are bound to make progress in our meditation. More important, when we understand and realize the true essence of our Master's guidance and protection, we will no longer obsess over the opinions of others and what others may think of us. It is through meditation that our will-power will increase to a level where we will not feel or react to our karma whether it be favourable or adverse. This is why the Masters prescribe meditation as an antidote to karma.

Kabir says that if you have a big stack of hay, it takes only one match to burn the whole lot. Similarly, one little portion of Nam or Shabd, an atom of it, burns thousands and millions of our karmas.

If due to our good karmas we give ourselves to the sensual pleasures and all worldly achievements, we forget the Lord. If due to our adversities, our bad karmas, we worry, we weep, we cry and are full of self-pity, our thoughts again get scattered in the world, so we can never meditate. Then when are we going to meditate, because good and bad will always be here as long as we are in this body?

Maharaj Charan Singh, *The Master Answers*

Whether the state of our mind is positive or disturbed, we look for excuses to avoid meditation. The daily time we allot to meditation is important, it helps us develop a positive outlook, mental balance and courage to face the challenges of our day. In a letter printed in *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh lovingly encourages his disciple Babu Sawan Singh not to let go of the practice of hearing the inner Sound, not even for a day, even though Babu Sawan Singh at that time was in great pain from his fractured leg.

My son, please do not mind this suffering. Since both pain and pleasure result from our past actions, they are bound to happen. So endure the pain as it is good for you – it will last only a few days. Even in your present condition, hold fast to the Shabd-dhun all the time. For one the sensation of pain will decrease, and secondly, the mind and soul will not become distressed. Also, the sins which cause the suffering will continue to be erased. The Satguru in Shabd form is always by your side; he is protecting you at every breath.

These crystal clear words from the Masters show us how important it is to stay resolute in our faith in the Master and to accept

whatever destiny has in store for us. Baba Jaimal Singh assures his disciple, “The Satguru in Shabd form is always by your side; he is protecting you at every breath.”

We can learn from these saints that it is of no use to waste our tears, time and effort in the trivial pursuits of this illusionary world. The constant snowballing of our worries and fears can indeed be curbed when our mind is quieted and strengthened with the repetition of the five holy names. Every saint was first a courageous disciple. Saints demonstrate their faith in their Master despite whatever difficulties they may experience in life. Therefore, like our beloved Master, let us be the kind of children who never cry or complain but instead let us use our precious breaths to repeat his name.



*I warn you, don't be tied to the miseries of the world,
nor seek happiness in mountains or forests.*

*I warn you, see this world as a great mirage,
and yourself – froth of a bubble, wave of the ocean.*

Sarmad, Martyr to Love Divine

The Lighter Side of Wisdom

Sardar Bahadur would never lose his sense of humour. I remember one day – you see, he used to drink cow’s milk at breakfast time. And that morning, cow’s milk was not available, so the servant, Manohar, mixed a little water in the buffalo’s milk to make it look like cow’s milk. Sardar Bahadur could taste the difference and asked, “Is this cow’s milk, Manohar?” And Manohar reassured him with great confidence that it was.

Sardar Bahadur, with a slight smile on his face, turned to me and said, almost in my ear, “And still he says I am all-knowing.”

Spiritual Heritage



When my daughter was very small, her mother asked her, “Why are you not studying today?” She said, “Papa said in the satsang today, ‘Never obey your mind.’ And my mind says I should study, so I’m not going to.” This is how we justify it!

Legacy of Love



Once a satsangi came to Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Ji and said, “I am a sinner. I am a wretched fool...” The man continued in this vein, using disparaging terms about himself to describe his faults. Sardar Bahadur Ji smiled and said, “My friend, you have criticized yourself and used strong words to vilify yourself. But the real indication of your humility would be when someone else says the same things to you and you do not feel annoyed.”

Heaven on Earth

The Progress Report

Goals – we all have them, and we are all conditioned to work towards them. In a result-oriented world, we rarely embark on anything that does not yield a tangible outcome. As we work towards that outcome, we are also given some sort of indication that tells us how far we have come and how far we still have to go. For students, this indication comes in the form of a report card. For those employed, it is usually an evaluation. In one form or another, we do receive a progress report of some sort. And that progress report becomes the basis for how much effort we put in because we clearly see the distance between our current situation and our goal.

In spirituality, there may be times when we find ourselves searching for a similar indication. As we sit in darkness for hours, days, months, and years, we are sometimes inclined to ask: How far have I come? How far do I have to go? Will an extra minute or an extra hour finally bring me where I am headed? Wouldn't it be added motivation if my destination were in clearer view?

When we find ourselves looking for results, it is important to remind ourselves that we can only measure progress if we are aware of how far we have to go. In a question and answer session, Maharaj Charan Singh said, “We can only measure when we know how much we have yet to cover and how much we have already covered – only then can we know.” In our situation, we are not even aware of how long we have been stuck in this creation. How then can we even begin to account for the mountains of karmas we have accumulated?

The path we have chosen is that of love – unconditional love. And in love, there are no calculations. We sit for our meditation because we are motivated by love, because we want to make our Master happy.

And when love is the motivation, there is no need for evaluation. A mother does not need a progress report to tell her how good she has been to her child. She continues to do all she can out of love for her child. Maharaj Charan Singh Ji explains:

Calculated meditation won't take you anywhere. It is not wages you are demanding. You are meditating because you are in love with him, you want to become one with him. A lover never loves because he wants the wages of his love. If a lover wants the wages of his love, he is not a good lover at all.

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However, even after reminding ourselves of this, as human beings, we cannot help but look for progress. What then would be a source of motivation for us? It is true that we can never know how far we have come and how far we have to go. But we can notice changes in our attitude and how we face our daily lives.

By meditation, we definitely know how much our attitude has changed towards the whole creation, our environment, our relations. Through meditation, our own attitude changes towards everybody, and we feel that bliss and happiness within ourselves.

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This change is our progress report. The goal is to sit without any evaluation or calculation. The aim, as the Masters have repeatedly said, is to channelize not analyze. To reach that point, unceasing meditation allows us to bring about the positive change in our attitude, which in turn strengthens our love for the Lord.



Passing Through the Three Gates

Every day we speak thousands of words. And although we know that as human beings we should always address each other with love, respect and kindness, we still find ourselves caught up in situations where unkind or bitter remarks slip out. We forget about the impact our words can have on our fellow beings. It is only in hindsight that we shake our heads in disappointment and ask ourselves how we allowed such words to escape from our lips.

The truth is, it only takes a few seconds to verbalize our thoughts, but even if we had an eternity, we could never take back words that have been spoken. Just as it takes time and effort to build a sand castle but only a second to destroy it, likewise, relationships built over time with love and respect can be destroyed in the blink of an eye by a reckless slip of the tongue. And very often, no number of apologies or sincere efforts to make amends can heal a heart that has been injured, not to mention the effect it would have on our spiritual wellbeing. It is for this reason saints and mystics remind their disciples to always think before speaking.

A wound inflicted on the body with a sharp weapon heals up in time, but not so the wound that the tongue inflicts on the heart of a man. Beware of hurting the feelings of any living being. This should be given as much importance as the vows of abstinence from meat, etc., that we take at the time of initiation.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

There is a Buddhist saying that may sound familiar to us:

*Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates:
At the first gate, ask yourself, is it true?
At the second gate ask, is it necessary?
At the third gate ask, is it kind?*

This adage encourages us to:

1) Speak words that are true

Every sincere seeker knows that when we are not speaking the truth – and this applies to exaggeration and ‘half-truths’ – we are actually committing an act of deception. And while we may be able to deceive others, we can never deceive the omniscient and omnipresent Lord. Nothing is hidden from him. Every act of deception is a sin and will eventually need to be accounted for.

One should not only speak the truth but adopt truth as a way of life. A disciple should idealize truth in his thoughts and make it an integral part of his character. One whose consciousness is imbued with truth is straightforward and honest in his dealings and is consciously in tune with the Lord at all times.

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

2) Speak only when necessary

The mystics explain the fruitlessness of engaging in endless discussions and suggest that it is nothing but a waste of both physical and spiritual energy. With our hectic lifestyles, it only makes logical sense to conserve our energy and channelize it towards our spiritual life. Moreover, habitual and excessive talk lead to slander and arguments, thus adding fuel to our own ego, thereby creating disturbance in our meditation. For this reason it has often been said that, “In the war of ego, the winner is actually the loser.”

Much physical and spiritual energy is dissipated by talking. Silence is golden. Speak as little as possible. Open your lips only when it is most necessary. And when you must speak, do so in the most kind and gentle manner. Never lose your temper over anything. You are not running this world. Leave that to Him whose function it is to do so. If a person behaves in a stupid fashion, you need not copy him nor adopt his ways. Always keep your tongue (the two-edged sword) under control.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

3) Speak words with love and kindness

Speaking words out of anger, reacting to situations, passing judgments on others and making rude remarks hinder our own spiritual development. Saints remind us that it is our duty to keep custody of our own tongue. While we do not have much control over what others may say to us, we should be able to have control over ourselves.

The Lord loves the humble and the low. Beware of injuring the heart of any man. God lives there. To those who break another's heart, the gates of heaven shall ever remain closed. Always speak gently, lovingly and selflessly. The higher the position you hold, the humbler your mind should be. A sweet word never costs anything, but wins the world.

Maharaj Jagat Singh, *The Science of the Soul*

Mystics remind us to pay heed to the tricks of the mind, as the mind is very clever in coming up with justifications such as: “We are only human, we are bound to make mistakes. Do not worry too much; you can just repeat several rounds of simran to wash away the karmas. The Master says that we must also not be doormats.” However, the fact is, if, while we are attempting to eliminate our current karmic debt,

at the same time we are accumulating new debt, then naturally our spiritual progress will be impeded.

Saints remind us that the tongue was given to man to heal and uplift and not to hurt and humiliate. True masters serve as our examples. They only speak the truth and they do so with gentle loving-kindness. They are in tune with the Lord and their words reflect his purity and goodness.

On the flip side, what happens if we are on the receiving end of harsh and unkind words? There are many paths for us to pursue. We can remain silent and thank the Lord for giving us another opportunity to develop patience and forbearance. We can remind ourselves that this life is only a dream and such trivial matters have no significance in the grand scheme of things. We can let it go; forgive and forget and feel lighter and happier. And lastly, we can always put our loving Master in our thoughts and think about what response would please him, and then simply continue with our simran, using the opportunity to deepen and strengthen our relationship with him.



*In futile discussion is much poison,
In much talk is great mischief.
Keep your mouth shut, suffer all in silence.
And remember the Name unfathomable.*

Kabir, The Great Mystic

Heart to Heart

A disciple once asked Hazur Maharaj Ji why he liked photographing flowers so much. He replied:

Flowers are your best friends, always smiling. You can stand before them weeping and they will be smiling. They were made for that – so many colours and shapes, different expressions and shades. Nature wants us to enjoy these innocent pleasures.

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Well you know Hazur loved roses. You are all his roses and he gave me the seva of head gardener to look after the garden and his roses.

Baba Gurinder Singh, as quoted in *Equilibrium of Love*



Master's grace is always there. He doesn't withhold his grace after initiation. A gardener does his best to see that a tree yields fruit. He puts the right type of nutrients in the soil and waters, cuts and prunes the tree because he's anxious for it to yield fruit once he has taken responsibility for it. The Master is always anxious that the disciple should go – the sooner the better – back to the level of the Father. When he's so anxious, he doesn't withhold his grace. We have to make use of that grace by becoming receptive, and meditation makes us receptive to his grace. Whenever we attend to meditation, that's a special occasion to get the grace.

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



Waiting for God

BY SIMONE WEIL, TRANSLATED BY EMMA CRAUFURD

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Simone Weil was born in Paris and died in Ashford, England in 1943, at the age of 34. She was raised in a secular and agnostic Jewish family, and became a philosopher, teacher, essayist, poet and dramatist, as well as a social activist. Because she experienced inner visions of Christ, she chose to study with a Catholic priest, Father Perrin. Weil's visions, along with her philosophically trained mind, led her to both appreciate and critique organized religion. As she died so young, her first works were published posthumously in 1947.

Weil's *Waiting for God* became one of the most influential and treasured books in twentieth-century Western spirituality. Few mystics in the modern era have had so wide and appreciative an audience. Her powerful writings have been read and valued by intellectuals and theologians, atheists and Catholic priests, revolutionaries and monastics. The French existentialist philosopher Albert Camus said that Simone Weil was "the only great soul of our time." What makes her writings stand out is that she expresses her spirituality in a way that modern readers can understand and sympathize with. She is not locked into any organized religion, and welcomes the insights of science and the arts. Her God is universal and available to all.

Waiting for God is not a single work, but a collection of diverse letters and essays selected by an anonymous editor, with an introduction by Leslie Fiedler summarizing Weil's life and work. The first section of the book is a collection of Weil's personal letters to her spiritual director, Father Perrin. These letters eloquently display Weil's humility and sincerity, and include Weil's own telling of her spiritual biography. Throughout the letters are sprinkled with her startling insights. "Why should I have any anxiety?" she writes. "It is not my business to think about myself. My business is to think about God. It is for God to think about me." Her desire, in all her writings, is to stay true to

what she believes is God's will for her. Despite Father Perrin's strong belief that she should be baptized into the Catholic faith, she insists that her salvation is possible outside the closed system of Christianity.

Next come her essays: dense, complex, uneven, and yet often stunning in their brilliance. Using her training as a philosopher, she first inquires, often in academic detail, into the myriad ways that human beings get lost in the world. Then, using logic, clear thinking and astonishing insight, she argues that God uses our confusion, pain and imperfections to set us right. Prayer, for Weil, is the path back to God, and she defines prayer as "the orientation of all of our attention of which we are capable towards God." In various essays, she tackles the subject of extreme suffering, claiming that even this is a precious gift from God. By shattering our ego, pride and sense that we are at the centre of the universe, suffering allows us the possibility to understand, in our flesh and in our minds, that we are nothing, and that God is at the centre and is everything. In her essay on 'The Lord's Prayer', she captures the deep mystical meanings behind every phrase. In her longest essay, "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," she describes how we can experience God's love through the love of neighbour, art and beauty, and religious ceremony. But she offers an unusual definition of religious ceremony: "The recitation of the name of the Lord really has the power to transform the soul. Religion is nothing else but this promise of God. Every religious practice, every rite, all liturgy is a form of this recitation of the name of the Lord."

As the title of the book *Waiting for God* implies, some of the most exquisite and intense passages in the letters and essays describe the experience of waiting for spiritual experience. This may seem ironic in her case since her direct, personal and mystical encounter with God came early and often throughout her brief life. She writes of longing for God as a deep hunger in the soul:

In the period of preparation the soul loves in emptiness. It does not know whether anything real answers its love. It may believe that it knows, but to believe is not to know. Such a belief does not help. The soul knows for certain only that it is hungry. The important thing is that it announces its hunger by crying. A child does not stop crying if we suggest to it that perhaps there is no bread. It goes on crying just the same. The danger is

not lest the soul should doubt whether there is any bread, but lest, by a lie, it should persuade itself that it is not hungry. It can only persuade itself of this by lying, for the reality of its hunger is not a belief, it is a certainty.

She speaks of a patient waiting in meditation, a “letting-go” that is more strenuous and difficult than any muscular effort. She tells how hard it is to wait, immobilized in the darkness for long years.

It is the waiting or attentive and faithful immobility that lasts indefinitely and cannot be shaken. The slave, who waits near the door so as to open it immediately the master knocks, is the best image of it. He must be ready to die of hunger and exhaustion rather than change his attitude. It must be possible for his companions to call him, talk to him, hit him, without even turning his head. Even if he is told that his master is dead, and even if he believes it, he will not move. If he is told that his master is angry with him and will beat him when he returns, and if he believes it, he will not move.

In some of the essays, her writing is so intellectual, rarified and obscure that a reader might feel unable to comprehend it. But then in the middle of that complexity comes a passage that speaks clearly to any spiritual seeker:

We do not turn toward God. How could we do so when we are in total darkness? God himself sets our faces in the right direction. He does not, however show himself for a very long time. It is for us to remain motionless...without averting our eyes, listening relentlessly and waiting, we know not for what; deaf to entreaties and threats, unmoved by every shock, unshaken in the midst of every upheaval. If after a long period God allows us to have an indistinct intuition of his light or even reveals himself in person, it is only for an instant.

Readers who appreciate this book will also find deep spiritual wisdom in Weil's book *Gravity and Grace*, a collection of excerpts from her personal journals. In these powerful excerpts, Weil does not idealize the life of a seeker,

or minimize the cost of discipleship. Instead, she offers a stunningly honest commentary on what she called “gravity,” the pull of the material world and of the ego that holds us back on our spiritual journeys. She believes that what moves us forward is “grace,” God’s pull on the soul.

In the realm of spiritual writing, Simone Weil’s voice is unusual in its brutal honesty about human limitations, her unrelenting dedication to the inner life, and the clarity of her observations about the human struggle to find union with God.

God alone has the power to name himself, His name is unpronounceable for human lips. His name is his word. It is the Word of God. The name of any being is an intermediary between the human spirit and that being; it is the only means by which the human spirit can conceive something about a being that is absent. God is absent. He is in heaven. Man’s only possibility of gaining access to him is through His name. It is the Mediator. Man has access to this name, although it also is transcendent. It shines in the beauty and order of the world and it shines in the interior light of the human soul. This name is holiness itself; there is no holiness outside it... To ask for that which exists, that which exists really, infallibly, eternally, quite independently of our prayer, that is the perfect petition. We cannot prevent ourselves from desiring; we are made of desire; but the desire that nails us down to what is imaginary, temporal, selfish, can, if we make it pass wholly into this petition, become a lever to tear us from the imaginary into the real and from time into eternity, to lift us right out of the prison of self.



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