

The Inward Journey of the Soul

(Chal Hansa Nij Desh)



Swami Vyasanand Ji Maharaj

The Inward Journey of the Soul

(Chal Hansa Nij Desh)

By

Swami Vyanand Ji Maharaj

Translated and Edited from Hindi by

Veena Howard, Ph.D.
USA

Copyright © 2014 by Santmat Society of North America™
All rights reserved

Swami Vysanand Ji Maharaj

Contact Information:

Maharshi Mehi Brahma Vidhyapith

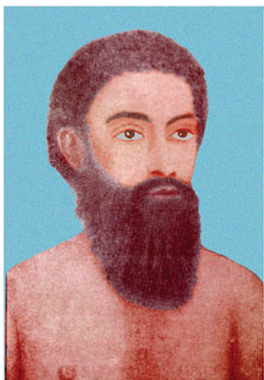
Near Geeta Kutir, Gali No. 3,

Haridwar (Uttarakhand), India

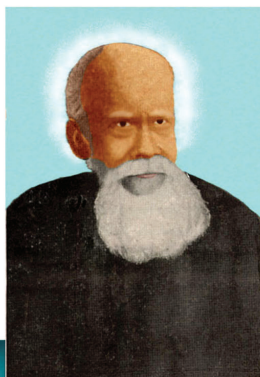
Cell phone: 09219980695



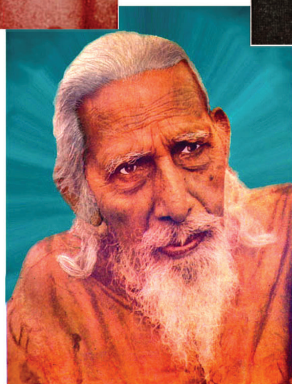
Swami Vyasand Ji Maharaj



Sant Tulsi Sahab
1763-1843



Baba Devi Sahab
1841-1919



Maharishi Mehi Paramahans Ji Maharaj
1885-1986



Maharishi Santsevi Ji Maharaj
1919-2007





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Words of Blessing from Swami Vyasanand Ji Maharaj	9
Acknowledgements	11
Translator's Preface	12
Foreword	15
Endorsement	17
Swami Vyasanand Ji Maharaj (A Short Biography)	18
Introduction	24
1. The Traveler of the Subtle Inner Path	27
2. The Divine Reality (God) in Santmat	33
3. Worthiness of a Seeker	39
4. The Mantra of an Accomplished Teacher	49
5. Without Essential Information no Meditation (Necessary Knowledge Prior to Meditation Practice)	67
6. Resolute Practice	79
7. Bhakti: Devotion and Love for the Divine	149
8. The Merits of Past Lives	157
9. The Will of the Divine	165



WORDS OF BLESSING FROM
SWAMI VYASANAND JI MAHARAJ

Sanskrit is the oldest language of the world. [It was also known as the “mother” of all languages.] However, in due course of time its pristine status has become unknown and even has been undermined. Hindi is indeed the national language of India, but it is only in legal documents; the reality is quite different. There are many States within Hindustan (India) in which the speaking of Hindi is looked down upon. Some even find joy in disgracing the national language. Unfortunately, in our own country, we have become impoverished with respect to our Hindi language. In our present world, English is the only language that has been widely accepted and spoken by the people of this world. English has secured its status as the language of our modern world. Today, people can spread their ideas through this language to the far corners of the earth. These English-speaking individuals can take the pearls of their philosophies and weave them into the necklace of the hearts of people of any country.

India has been the leader in spiritual knowledge, and, I believe, it will also hold the same status in the future. However, only those saints and teachers who are proficient in English are able to take

their teachings abroad. Our honorable Gurudev Maharshi Mehi (Mehi is also spelled as “Mehin” meaning “subtle,” “refined.”) said: “I am so firm in my philosophy (of *Santmat*, also spelled as Sant Mat) that no one can shake my faith. Those who will read the philosophy expounded in my books will also realize the truth and become firm in their conviction—this is my belief.”

It is my regret that our Guru’s teachings, due to the limitation of language, could not reach Western countries. Now, our institution of *Santmat* is seeing a ray of hope in this direction. I believe that through this medium the Divine vision of our Gurudev could be realized. This ray of light is our scholarly sister Shrimati Veena Howard. Through her, the seminal books of *Santmat*, including *Philosophy of Liberation* and *Harmony of All Religions*, have been translated into English, and they have reached different regions of the world. In the series of translated books on *Santmat*, now my book, *Chal Hansa Nij Desh* has been included. She has translated and edited the book, and it is published with the name, *The Inward Journey of the Soul*. The seekers who read this book will find the methods of how the soul transcends various realms of consciousness in the mystical journey within and reaches the ultimate state of Divine realization.

I give my thanks to sister Shrimati Veena for her efforts and also pray to my honorable Shri Satguru Maharaj that in future such important works would continue to be performed through her. I give my blessing to Mr. Don Howard who provided diligent support in this endeavor. I also give good wishes for the spiritual progress of their daughters Mira and Gita.

Vyasanand—Feb. 22, 2014



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer our special thanks to friends and fellow seekers who have assisted in the translation and publication of the book, *The Inward Journey of the Soul*. Our special thanks to James Bean (Maine, USA) for his suggestions and proofing the book. I thank Neerja Suman (Delhi) for her initial draft of the biography of Swami Vyasand Ji Maharaj, Pawan Agrawal (Jaipur) for his gracious assistance in the printing of the book, and I am grateful to my brother Charlie Lal (USA) for his encouragement with this project. My deepest gratitude to Mr. Don Howard (USA) for providing his unwavering support with this project.

We are extremely fortunate to have this knowledge compendium of *Santmat*, which Swami Vyasand Ji Maharaj has graciously produced for the seekers of the Divine. I am especially grateful to Swami Ji for his brilliant effort in producing this, and also for his patience and grace in guiding me through this process of translation.



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

In his book, *The Inward Journey of the Soul*, Swami Vyasanand Ji Maharaj provides a superbly detailed account of the various essential elements for success in the inward path to union with the Divine Reality (Supreme Being, *Paramatman*). The components of the inward spiritual path have been elaborated by learned and accomplished Sants of the *Santmat* tradition, including Maharshi Mehi Parmahans Ji Maharaj and Maharshi Santsevi Maharaj. However, there existed no volume that provided a detailed and systematic elucidation of these elements. Grounded in the fundamental teachings of his Guru Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj and the principles of *Santmat*, Swami Ji creates a meticulous guide to help the seeker on the inward path that has no signposts.

Swami Ji identifies seven elements—not necessarily consecutive, but rather interdependent—that are crucial to a seeker for understanding and undertaking the inner journey for the attainment of Absolute Peace (*Shanti*) and realization of the Divine. He creatively equates these with the seven elements necessary for a farmer to attain success in farming. Of course, these seven elements

can be fundamental to success in any field, including scholarship and business. These seven elements include worthiness of a student, a *mantra* [initiation] of a qualified teacher, necessary knowledge, resolute practice, devotion, merit of past lives, and the will of God. Swami Ji methodically takes the reader through the requirements, pitfalls, and signposts that are extremely valuable for a seeker.

This translation was undertaken to render the original Hindi exposition, *Chal Hansa Nij Desh (O Soul-swan! Return to Your Abode)* into a widely accessible English version. The title of the book, *The Inward Journey of the Soul*, has been selected to convey the essential substance of the book. The task of a translator is always a difficult one, but this text presented even more challenges with its frequent references to the Indian religious mythological characters and poetry of various sants in a variety of languages. These languages include Sanskrit, Hindi, Gurumukhi, Avadhi, Urdu, and other regional vernaculars of Northern India. Many terms in the original languages have no equivalent in the English language, and therefore required explanations from the editor. Furthermore, it has been challenging to replicate Swami Ji's lucid, oral style imbued with metaphors from Indian religious texts and traditions into English.

The primary task of this translation has been to preserve the voice of Swami Ji and thus render a translation that remains faithful to the original. This book was initially written for the native people of India and, specifically, for those who would already have some familiarity with the principles of *Santmat*. But in the course of development, and for the purpose of making it accessible to a wider audience, we have added many explanatory notes.

Swami Vyasanand Ji's concern has been to reach people from

all walks of life, especially the underprivileged and illiterate masses who reside in the deep villages of India. Accordingly, the style of the book follows the oral tradition, in which repetition of ideas is frequent and desirable. In this translation some editorial license had to be taken to make the text accessible to the western mind. All editorial decisions have been made for the purpose of clarifying the original intent of the author. In a few cases the editor has applied the comments suggested by readers and students.

We offer this translation at the holy feet of Swami Vyasananand Ji Maharaj on the occasion of the 10th Annual International Satsang Mahadhiveshan in Kurukshetra, India, March 2014. We are deeply grateful for his monumental endeavor in producing this momentous treatise. This would serve as a guide to those who are committed to treading the path to the Divine. This monumental task would not have been possible without the encouragement and loving guidance of Swami Ji. When we felt disheartened, he gave us reassurance that helped us to continue with this arduous task of translation. He patiently answered all our questions and elaborated on the issues that were unclear to us. Without his divine assistance and blessings, it would not have been possible to produce this translated and edited version of his book. We take the responsibility of any shortcomings in this translated version of the book and ask Swami Ji's forgiveness.

Veena Howard, Ph.D. (USA)



In Swami Vyasand's work, *The Inward Journey of the Soul*, one will find not only sagely advice for the seeker of Truth but a roadmap of experiences and distinguishing milestones along the spiritual path. Both the depth and breadth of the meditation path is expounded in fascinating and full detail. This detail will not be found in any single *Santmat* publication. In fact, there are details and explanation that may not be found in any other *Santmat* publication. It is safe to say this is a huge contribution to the understanding and practice of *Santmat* and offers some rare and unique facets of *Santmat*. In a sense this is a compendium of many of the salient elements of *Santmat* which to date have not been found in any single volume. Swami Ji accomplishes this using a systematic yet easy to understand explanation of essential components of the path of *Santmat*.

Through this book Swami Ji Vyasand seeks to present a path that will instill understanding instead of confusion, establish trust in place of doubt, and replace ignorance with knowledge. This volume will serve as a primer for practitioners of *Santmat* and provide an in depth outline to those simply studying *Santmat*. It points the

way beyond a mere surface understanding of *Santmat* which could be possible by a simple intellectual analysis of its ideas. But even more deeply, Swamiji's intent is to invite fellow human beings to realize the Divine Reality by walking on the path tread by the great saints, seers, and prophets.

Don Howard (U.S.A)



As with the earlier publications, *Harmony Of All Religions* (Sarvadharmā Samanvy), by Beloved Swami Santsevi Ji Maharaj, and *Philosophy Of Liberation* (Moksha Darshan), by Sant Maharshi Mehi Paramhans, with this new book, *The Inward Journey of the Soul* by Swami Vyasānand Ji Maharaj, I am learning new things about the teachings of the Sants, and am grateful to be able to access this advanced wisdom. It is indeed an impressive book providing much needed depth and detail about *Santmat* principals as well as meditation practice. It makes a huge contribution to understanding this Path more clearly, which is especially necessary for Westerners interested in the Sant tradition, not being fluent in Hindi, to fill in the lacuna or blanks in our understanding. As with the NASA space probes encountering distant worlds—planets and moons, transforming fuzzy objects into clear view, revealing surface features with sharp resolution, as a result of encountering this book, may spiritual seekers and *satsangis* around the world come away with a much clearer understanding of the teachings of the Masters.

Jai Guru, James Bean (U.S.A.) Spiritual Awakening Radio



SWAMI VYASANAND JI MAHARAJ
(A SHORT BIOGRAPHY)

Swami Vyasanand Ji's life-story reads much like many of the lives of sages and Sants of spiritual traditions of India. Even his name is suggestive of his connection to the ancient spiritual wisdom taught by the prominent Sage Veda Vyasa. In the year 1967, Swami Ji was born in a Brahmin family in the village Aliabad, in the district of Bhagalpur, Bihar. His parents Shrimati Savitri Devi and Shri Dashrath Jha had five children of whom he was the third.

As a child he had a brilliant mind and possessed a charismatic personality. Even at an early age, his presence emanated a sense of purity and holiness. Since his early childhood, he took an interest in a spiritual life; he especially yearned to be in the company of Sants, yogis, and sages. He found great delight in associating with saints and listening to their teachings (*satsangs*). Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj (*Santmat* tradition of Bihar) frequently visited the village Aliabad, and Swami Ji got the opportunity to meet him. Swami Ji recalls the most auspicious meeting when he was only twelve years old. It must be the result of the last life's good *karmas* that at such a young age Swami Ji was so deeply affected

by the *darshan* (“seeing” a holy person), which left a profound and lasting effect on the course of his life. After meeting the great Sant Maharshi Mehi, he devoted himself to the study of the teachings of *Santmat*. He visited Maharshi Mehi’s *ashram* in Kuppaghat, Bhagalpur, Bihar and took joy in listening to *satsang*—associating with monks and listening to the teachings.

On October 30, 1982, at the age of fifteen, he received *diksha* (initiation into the teachings of *Santmat*) from his Guru Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj. Deeply motivated to tread the inward path as taught by his Guru, he decided to wholly devote his life in search of the Divine. A few weeks after receiving his initiation, he decided to leave home. This event is reminiscent of the life-story of his Guru Maharshi Mehi himself, who also left his home at a young age in order to devote himself to *sadhana* (meditation practice) of the inward path to God realization.

Swami Ji’s mother and brother searched and found him in a nearby *ashram*, and persuaded him to return home. Swami Ji honored the request of his elders, but promised the monks before leaving the *ashram* that he would return in ten days. After returning to his home, his mind remained firm in the intent to seek the Divine, and his will only strengthened. As he promised, after ten days, he left his home, never to return again to the life of worldly attachments. This time, he decided to travel far away from his parents’ village and went to the *ashram* of Shri Shridhar Baba Ji Maharaj. Shri Sridhar Baba was among the highly accomplished disciples of Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj. Swami Vyasanand Ji started *sadhana* (meditation practice) under the guardianship of Shri Shridhar Baba and made rapid progress. Shri Shridhar Baba Ji encouraged him to continue his education emphasizing that sants should also acquire

the necessary education. Swami Ji enrolled himself in Goswami Lakshminath Paramhans Sanskrit College. He attended classes in Sanskrit and other subjects and continued his *sadhana* at the Ashram.

He also spent some time with Sant Shishu Baba who was another accomplished disciple of Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj. His *ashram* was located in a small village, Khokshi Shyam, Bihar. Senior monks of the tradition were impressed by Swami Ji's sharp mind and single-minded dedication to *sadhana*. It is not surprising that Swami Dharendra, a senior monk of the *Santmat* tradition, gave him the name, Vysanand—"the delight of great Sage Vyasa." On October 31, 1989, Swami Ji received the *diksha* of *Nadanusandhan* (the technique of Sound Yoga) from the prominent disciple of his Guru Maharshi Santsevi Paramhans Ji Maharaj. Maharshi Santsevi Ji Maharaj dedicated his life to sustain the sacred flame of *Santmat* after Maharshi Mehi left his physical body. Swami Vysanand's love and deep reverence for Maharshi Santsevi Ji Maharaj is evident through many reminiscences that he shares with his followers. Not only did Maharshi Santsevi Ji initiate Swami Ji in the highest yoga of Sound, but also conferred the yellow ochre robes of monkhood on him. This was a critical event in his life, which marked the beginning of his complete renunciation of connections with the material world, and his life as a monk. Later, Maharshi Santsevi Ji also gave Swami Vysanand the authority to initiate on the path of *Santmat*—a responsibility that he is carrying out with dedication and dynamism.

In search of a secluded, holy place for meditation, Swami Vysanand journeyed to the Himalayan Mountains. He did intense *sadhana* in the mountains and on the bank of holy river Ganga. Food was always scarce, and he was literally in the hands of divine

mercy. Many times inspired by the divine grace, people would show up to offer him food just as hunger was nearly overpowering him. He also managed to learn to make flat bread out of a variety of grain flours. He would mix all the flours together with water and form a ball of dough for large flat breads. He would then hang the bread from the roof of the hut to preserve it. He ate a piece of bread only when hunger arose. Thus, he could meditate for many weeks by sustaining himself on small soaked pieces of the hardened bread. This allowed him to continue his *sadhana* uninterrupted. His *sadhana* advanced at a very rapid pace under these austere conditions. He recounts that these were very blissful times. As colder weather approached he would come out of the mountains and come down on the banks of the river Ganga. He would again return to the Himalayas as weather became warmer often changing the location of the place of his *sadhana*.

On one occasion after his intense meditation retreat, he had a chance to have *darshan* of Maharshi Santsevi Ji Maharaj. At that time, Maharshi Santsevi Ji Maharaj asked him in addition to tending to his own intense *sadhana*, to spread the teaching of *Santmat*. Swami Ji followed this command, and also continued to retreat into the foothills above Rishikesh, and built a small hut to continue his *sadhana*. A few men from a nearby village began to visit him and offer him food. Since his hut was on the side of a mountain, a government official asked him to vacate the hut that was on government land. As he was contemplating the course of action, a close disciple, Shri Pavan Vasishtha offered to purchase some acreage in the remote Himalayan foothills in Dwara village, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. This would provide a permanent solution and a secure place for Swami Ji to continue *sadhana*. In 1997, Swami

Ji agreed and constructed a very small mud hut with a thatched roof (which he still uses as his room when he is in Dehradun) on the land. This would later become the present day *ashram* in Dehradun. Devotees from all over India visit this pristine *ashram*, which is imbued with intense spiritual vibrations.

Swami Ji's move to Dehradun commenced a new chapter in his mission of the service of *Santmat* where scores of nearby villagers came to listen to his teachings. The glorious experience in *sadhana* reflected radiance on the face of Swami Ji. His *darshan* was powerful and presence pleasing, and, not surprisingly, the people began to realize they were in the presence of a great *mahatma*. As word spread about the great yogi so also his followers grew in size. To accommodate and spread the message of *Santmat* Swami Ji devoted more and more of his time to teaching. He established an *ashram* in the holy city of Haridwar in 2000. Subsequently, his followers are constructing *ashrams* in various places, including *ashrams* in Bangalore (Karnataka), Mourmandi, (Punjab), Fatehgarh (Punjab), and Jammu (Kashmir). All of these *ashrams* may be in different states, but share the same features: similar daily routines are practiced and their central halls are adorned with large *murtis* (statue) of Maharshi Mehi reminding the devotees of the continuousness of the holy stream of tradition.

Swami Ji's followers are spread out throughout India. He travels extensively and is taking the message of *Santmat* to all corners of India—Kanyakumari to Kashmir, Mumbai to Bengal. He emphasizes the importance of steadfastness in moral conduct and the practice of meditation for the inward journey of the soul. Although Swami Ji travels constantly, keeping a schedule that is truly beyond normal human capacity, he, nevertheless, always

appears fresh and his face shines usually bearing a divine smile. He practices what he preaches, lives a simple life, and dedicates himself to *sadhana* and the service of *Santmat*. He owns no cars, or any other material things for his personal comfort. He keeps his residence in the original mud hut, eats in the common dining hall with all guests and *ashram* residents, and welcomes visitors of all castes, religions, and status. He closely follows the moral conduct as prescribed by his guru and is humble and easily approachable to all. Those who have spent time with him consider it to be the highest blessing. His *darshan* is divine grace itself.

Swami Ji is a prolific writer and speaker. His public talks capture the hearts of listeners and inspire them to dedicate themselves to the inward path of God realization. He has written a number of books expounding the theoretical and practical aspects of *Santmat*. He has also composed poetry similar to that of his Guru's poetic writings and other sants of the Sant tradition. In his writing and lectures, he connects *Santmat* to the wisdom found in the *Vedas*, other religious texts, and teachings of Sants. He is an important link in the lineage of *Santmat* of Bihar, and is carrying the torch of teachings to every corner of India in order to bring the light of spiritual knowledge with the principles of *Santmat* tradition.



INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of creation, every living soul in this transient world has been going through various afflictions. Each soul imprisoned by the darkness of ignorance, within the nine-gated body (the body has nine orifices, therefore, it is known as “nine-gated”), endures the cycles of death and rebirth. The captive soul experiences three kinds of suffering: physical, mental, and countless afflictions caused by natural forces and subtle inner passions. The soul is consumed by the conflagration of the desires of the five senses; it is trampled by the mind that is livid like an elephant in rut. Distractions such as greed, lust, and attachment haunt the soul. They are like robbers that deprive the soul of its peace. Sadly, in spite of being a child of God the soul thinks of itself as a slave of the senses and sense organs, and is lost in the quagmire of sensory desires and temptations. In such conditions, the soul is very restive and frantically searches for truth and tranquility. Having witnessed this state of humanity, the Saints say: “O Soul- swan! return to your home; return to your Divine abode (realization of the Divine within) where the infinite sea of tranquility and joy is brimming. There you will attain eternal joy.”

How is it possible for the soul to abandon this illusory world of suffering and return to its true abode? How can the soul attain freedom from the bondage of this world? This book provides a systematic analysis of the techniques to accomplish this aim, as they have been laid out in *Santmat* (the teachings of Saints). Undoubtedly, it is not an easy task to elaborate on this subject. *Santmat* has a methodology, which is consistent with the *Vedas* and *Shastras* (scriptures), and is the path to ultimate freedom, subtle and profound. And it is not possible for a meager person such as myself to elaborate on such a subject. However, by the grace of my guru I am able to undertake this effort.

This is my conviction: This book will serve as a guidebook for the seekers of this path. It outlines the seven essential components for this inner journey to ultimate peace and will be a useful tool for the traveler of this path. My analysis is inspired by the grace of my Satguru Maharshi Mehi. “I have nothing in me; all is yours. I surrender all to you—what then is left of mine.”

In the service of *Santmat*

Vyasanand



CHAPTER 1

THE TRAVELER OF THE SUBTLE INNER PATH

In the words of Sant Tulsi Das: “The Creator has made a world imbued with positive and negative energies and attributes. But the wise (Sants) only take the good and leave the evil.”

The quintessence of Sainthood lies in that the Sants only focus on positive actions and pure attributes. Common people, however, are involved in both positive or negative actions and thoughts. Those lacking wisdom altogether focus exclusively on the negative and upon materialistic desires. But those who are constantly immersed in devotion to the Divine are aligned with the truth. Those souls immersed in the elixir of truth and devotion are known as Sants (variably described as mystics, prophets, and masters). Sants focus on spiritual qualities and are seers of the reality of consciousness; they taste the Divine joy. The path followed by all the Sants and their teachings is given the name “Santmat” (it is also spelled as Sant Mat).

From times immemorial, numerous Sants have appeared on earth. These Sants were born in different countries and social

classes; spoke different languages; and were of different gender and ethnicities. However, the underlying principle or the truth of their teachings has always been essentially one.

In spite of the variants in their origins, the goal of Sants is one: realization of the Divine and the attainment of the state of absolute joy and peace. Having considered the perennial wisdom found in their teachings, we can say with certainty that the underlying teachings of Sants are essentially in agreement.

The question arises: What is this essential teaching? The answer is: The Divine Reality is one and the path to realize that Reality is within each of us. The path is not found in the nine gates (i.e. through the sensory organs) of the body but only through the tenth gate (the third eye or the spiritual eye). The body cannot tread this path—only the inner consciousness along with the mind, intellect, and ego principle can travel this path. However, during the last and final stages of the inner spiritual path, the conscious soul alone journeys and reaches the Divine. This path is very subtle. Sant Mehi described it as being, “more subtle than even the point of the needle.” Sants unanimously agree that the path to the Divine can be taken up by any human being belonging to any caste, social status, gender, ethnicity or country.

To say that the path to the Divine can only be accessed by individuals with certain specific abilities or aptitudes is against the teachings of the scriptures and Sants. The great sage Veda Vyasa says, “Even a man or woman of lower caste, if they have in their hearts the desire to follow the spiritual path, they will reach the highest states through the path of meditation.” Further, “If an opportunity to receive knowledge from the person of any caste, including the lowest caste, arises, true seekers must accept it with

faith. An individual who maintains a firm conviction in the teaching goes beyond the death (also ignorance).”

Many Sants like Sant Tulsi Das, Goswami Lakshminath Paramhans, Sant Kabir, Sahib Surdas Ji, Sant Tukaram Ji, and Shri Maharshi Mehi unanimously pronounce that all human beings—irrespective of gender, age, occupation, and race—have an equal right to follow the inner path to the Divine. This view is verifiable by the fact that many Sants and sages, including Sant Kabir, Sant Ravidas, Sant Garibdas were born in ‘lower castes’ and in the lower strata of their society. Many ancient sages like Vyasa and Narada also have unusual births. Sant Tulsidas emphasizes that physical conditions, including birth in lower caste, poverty, and a lack of bodily beauty do not inhibit the progress of the soul. Sants declare that we are all children of one Supreme Being, God. This Divine Being is all compassionate and generous and does not have preference for any persons on the basis of their birth, class, or gender. However, there are certain disciplines all seekers must follow in order to tread this inner path to realize the Divine.

According to Maharshi Mehi, “There are a number of necessary observances required to tread the spiritual path.”

Observances: Complete faith in one Divine Being, determination to realize the Divine within, service to the guru, *satsang* (association of the Sants and the study of scriptures), and steadfast meditation.

Prohibitions: Use of intoxicants, practice of adultery, lying, violence (causing suffering to other beings, eating the flesh of animals), and stealing.

According to the *Srimad Bhagavata Purana*, truth, compassion, austerity, purity, tolerance, discernment, control of the mind and senses, non-violence, sensory control, detachment, self-study,

simplicity, contentment, and detachment from desires are all essential codes of conduct for the practitioner on this path. This text also prescribes practices, including listening to teachings of the scriptures, chanting of sacred *mantras*, service of the Divine, and worship. Many scriptures and teachings of Saints prescribe various forms of discipline and observances that help the practitioners purify their minds.

The great devotee Sant Prahlad described ten means for the attainment of *moksha* (liberation): “observance of silence, celibacy, listening to scriptures, austerity, self-study, adherence to one’s own *dharma* (duty), expositions of scripture through careful analysis, solitude, *japa* (recitation of *mantra*) and *samadhi* (deep meditation).” He prescribed six methods for serving the Supreme Being: obeisance, praise, dedication of all actions to the Divine, prayer, contemplation of the holy feet of the Supreme Being, and hearing narratives about various holy acts of God (in the lives of various devotees or Saints). Any conduct opposite to the above-described methods is prohibited.

Thus, scriptures and Sant literature offer guidelines with regard to disciplines and prohibitions. According to these writings, an untouchable (*chandala*) who is devoted to the service of the Supreme Being is superior to a *Brahmin* (a person from the priestly class). Such a *chandala* with his/her devotion and dedication to the Supreme Being purifies the entire clan.

According to the *Dharmashastras* (Law Books), “all are born *shudras* (the lowest caste).” (One rises upward through the inward spiritual journey.) The caste system is based according to one’s qualities, actions, and *samskaras* (imprints left on the soul due to previous or past life experiences). The reality is, social status, birth,

or social class (caste) does not determine the quality of a person; but, rather, one's comportment determines one's true status (i.e. caste). Death is a great equalizer. At the time of death, when the soul leaves the body it becomes isolated from all that was connected to the body, including relatives, sons and daughters, caste and status, wealth and wisdom, honor and power. Then, why discriminate against other human beings on the basis of these transitory, material things?

The inner path is accessible to all human beings, but certain disciplines, as cataloged above, are to be followed as also prescribed by the Sants for entering this path. An observance of these disciplines is absolutely essential for the seekers of Divine Reality.

O seeker, if you want to become a pilgrim on the spiritual path then do not transgress the disciplines and rules prescribed by the Sants and scriptures! Without following these necessary provisions and disciplines you will not be able to travel upon this inward journey, and will not attain success in achieving the highest goal.



CHAPTER 2

THE DIVINE REALITY (GOD) IN SANTMAT

Santmat emphasizes a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. According to the teachings of the Sants, it is essential to have faith in the existence of the Eternal, Infinite Reality. As is evident, all created beings of this world are dependent upon one another for their existence and sustenance. However, the element that is the First Cause is not dependent on any other thing and is self-existent—beyond creation and destruction.

This First Cause or Source is the Lord of all creation and is therefore called the Supreme Being. Time and space are created but Divine Reality is uncreated and eternal. The Supreme Soul pervades all and yet transcends material creation; it is beyond the confines of time and space. It cannot be destroyed; it is infinite, and indestructible. It cannot be grasped by the senses and is beyond the reach of the senses. It does not have any form, color, depth or breadth. It is not the subject of thoughts or the senses. According to the *Kena Upanishad*, it is the “eye of the eyes, ear of the ears, and mind of the mind.” Having understood this, a persevering man

or woman becomes immortal. This Reality cannot be limited by, or reduced to, thoughts of the mind because it is the very source of the mind. It cannot be seen by the eyes because it is the source of seeing. It cannot be heard by the ears, because it is the source of hearing. All senses derive their power through the source, the Divine Reality.

The Divine Reality is beyond the confines of this transitory creation. A part of the Divine, when it comes in contact with material reality, becomes an individual soul or *jiva*. Material nature is impermanent but the individual soul is a part of the Divine. Even though it is conscious and pure in essence, it becomes dependent on material things. The Divine Being is without any material confines and is beyond the qualified and unqualified nature. It is beyond the three *gunas* (material attributes that are essential to our existence in this creation): *sattva* (truth, purity, and lucidity), *rajas* (action, passion, and excitement), and *tamas* (dark inertia, sloth, and passivity). These three *gunas* permeate the entire creation, but the Divine is beyond them.

The following is a brief explanation of the relationship of three *gunas* with the creation:

- ❖ From the power of *sattva guna*, the essence of mind, intellect, emotion, and ego (I-principle) are created.
- ❖ From the power of *rajas guna*, the five senses of knowledge (eyes, ears nose, tongue and skin) and the five organs of actions (hand, feet, mouth and two organs of excretion) are created.
- ❖ From the power of *tamas guna*, the five elements (earth, fire, wind, water and ether) and the five subtle elements (form,

taste, smell, touch, and sound) are created.

- ❖ From *sattva guna*, the universe, permeated by sound and purity, emerges.
- ❖ From *rajas guna*, arises light, the source of action.
- ❖ From *tamas guna*, emerges darkness, the source of passivity and rest.
- ❖ From *sattva guna*, the covering of the sound is created.
- ❖ From the *rajas guna*, the layer of light is created,
- ❖ From *tamas guna*, the covering of the darkness is created.

The Divine Reality is beyond all these three *gunas* (three creative attributes of the material substratum).

By nature, all the material elements created by the three *gunas* are unstable, but Divine Reality is beyond them and is, therefore, constant. All the objects created by the three *gunas* are within the realm of time and space, and, therefore, are bound to come to an end. The Divine is beyond these and is eternal. It is unmanifest, infinite, and without afflictions. It is the source of infinite peace and joy, the abode of Divine knowledge, and the overseer of the universe. The Supreme Being resides in every heart and is omniscient. It is the source of truth, knowledge and bliss. The tree of joy arises out of the Supreme Being. It cannot be grasped by the mind and the senses. The Supreme Being is called by various epithets because of its multi-faceted manifestations. It cannot be compared to any created substance and is unparalleled to any conceptions of the best in the universe. In essence, Divine Reality cannot be conceived by the senses, the mind, or the intellect.

There are numerous ways to describe the transcendent and immanent glories of the Supreme Reality. Just as comparing the

sun to millions of fireflies would be a kind of mockery of the sun, comparing the Supreme Being to any objects of its creation would only display our ignorance of the nature of the Divine. A question arises: If God is omnipresent then what path can be taken to reach the Divine? An answer to this may be as follows. It has been stated that the Divine is omnipresent, then, how can there be any distance between the Supreme Being and the individual soul? But then, there arise more questions. If there is a way to reach the Divine, then, what kind of pathway is that? Who is the traveler of this path and how to begin on the path? What kind of hindrances might the traveler face on this path, and what kind of assistance might be helpful in overcoming those hindrances?

Answers to these questions need much deliberation. First, God is omnipresent; therefore, we do not need to go anywhere to find the Divine. Second, God transcends the material world and is subtle; therefore, God cannot be grasped by the mind and the senses. We need a subtle instrument to realize the Divine just as a small wristwatch requires miniature instruments to accomplish the work of repair. God is like a subtle machine and the senses are like big tools, which are unsuitable for realizing the subtle Divine machinery. Only through the instrument of the pure conscious soul is it possible to realize the subtle form of the Divine.

A question arises: the senses are unable to grasp the Divine, but why does the soul—which is conscious and subtle—not have the direct experience of the Divine at all times? The answer is this: The sensory sheaths cover the individual soul. Just as a colored pair of glasses obstructs the true color of reality, in the same way, the physical and subtle senses obstruct the true nature of the Divine. Even though Divine Reality is close to us, we are unable to see it

due to these obstructions. Many Sants have described this condition through metaphors.

Sant Kabir and Sant Tulsi Das describe the soul as being hidden by a veil or screen of concealment made up of the three layers of darkness, light, and sound. Sant Paltu Sahib cries out: “Lift the veil and *Khuda* (God) will reveal himself.” Sant Tulsi Sahib explains that the human condition is like someone with an eye disease (cataracts), which clouds their vision.

Maharshi Mehi says: “Three covers of darkness, light, and sound encumber the soul. We need to lift this veil in order to have the vision of the Divine.”

In the Vedanta tradition, this covering or concealment is called illusion. Many layers obstruct the vision of the Divine and it is no easy task to remove the coverings. The path that leads us to go beyond these three layers lies within us. However, it is necessary to follow the teachings and methods given by a *Satguru* (true spiritual teacher) to accomplish this task. Given the nature of the Divine, it can only be realized by the soul. When the soul goes beyond the senses and the realm of three *gunas*, it becomes purified and attains readiness to experience the Divine. Only by getting rid of all the layers of obstructions can the soul experience its own true nature.

The Supreme Being is one, and, it is by isolating oneself from all other bondages that one can realize this Reality. Through meditation all the coverings and layers are gradually removed and the soul becomes one with the Divine. This requires a specific regimen or *sadhana*. As the soul travels on this path within, it begins to shed the sensory layers and the distance to the Divine begins to diminish. The path will be completed upon the accomplishment of this task, eliminating the distance between the Divine and the soul.

SEVEN ELEMENTS AND THEIR COROLLARIES FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

A skilled farmer pays attention to the seven fundamental components for the purpose of attaining success in agriculture. These seven elements are: fertile land, good quality seed, an understanding of the farming occupation, hard work, perseverance, financial provisions, and favorable natural resources. In the same way, for success on the spiritual path, a practitioner must fulfill seven requirements: eligibility or worthiness, *mantra* from an accomplished guru, knowledge of the methods of practice, steadfast practice, devotion to the Divine, predisposition to *sadhana* owing to good past *karmas* (innate aptitude), and finally the grace of the Supreme Being. The following chapters analyze each of the seven farming corollaries for spiritual success. Seven Chapters:

- ❖ Chapter 3: Worthiness of a Seeker
- ❖ Chapter 4: The *Mantra* of an Accomplished Teacher
- ❖ Chapter 5: Without Essential Information no Meditation
- ❖ Chapter 6: Resolute Practice
- ❖ Chapter 7: Devotion and Love for the Divine
- ❖ Chapter 8: The Merits of Past Lives
- ❖ Chapter 9: The Will of the Divine



CHAPTER 3

WORTHINESS OF A SEEKER

A serious seeker has to prepare a fertile ground within his or her inner Self. The prerogative of God-realization and attainment of the vision of the Divine only belongs to the *atman* (inner Self) or consciousness within the body. However, it is not possible to accomplish this while engrossed in the distractions of the mind and the body. It is only possible by freeing us of these distractions while living in the body. To liberate us from the sensory distractions is not an easy task. However, it can be achieved with the grace of the *Satguru* (true teacher). For this, a practitioner must be determined, morally upright, and follow the instruction of the guru. Without these, it is impossible to obtain the grace of the guru. The practitioner can only diligently perform *sadhana* (literally, exertion to attain an objective, meditation, spiritual practice), but only the grace of the guru yields success in the endeavor.

To attain the due rewards of *sadhana* it is important to follow the gurus' instruction vigilantly and steadfastly. Resolve means: not wavering from the path in any situation. In spite of many tests

given by the guru, our mind must never lose faith and confidence in the guru. Without going through trials, it is not possible to achieve success. Fearing that practitioners, having made progress in *sadhana*, might be tempted by the ego, the guru gives them many tests. In short, the tests are threefold: pertaining to mind, speech, and actions.

Mental tests:

1. After providing a momentary extraordinary spiritual experience, the guru takes that experience away.
2. Even though the practitioner is ready for an experience, the guru withholds the experience.
3. Status, wealth, and relatives and friends are the enemies of the *sadhak* (practitioner). However, due to ignorance the *sadhak* considers these his or her allies, but actually on the spiritual path they are the nemeses. The guru creates a detachment in the mind of the *sadhak* from these distractions.

Verbal Tests:

1. Even though the *sadhaks* are worthy of praise, the guru does not praise them.
2. Even though the *sadhaks* are without blame, the guru may say harsh words to them.
3. The guru may even humiliate the *sadhaks* in order to test their patience and humility.

Action Tests:

1. The guru may also ask the *sadhaks* to leave his or her service.
2. Instruct them to leave the *ashram*.
3. In this way, take away the *sadhaks*' livelihood.
4. To expedite the process of purifying the *sadhaks*, the guru may choose to use harsh methods of chastisement.

The guru's treatment may appear to be harsh. However, the guru's intent is to make the seeker worthy of spiritual development. The guru's actions of subjecting the disciple to tests for purifying him can be explained through the following examples: Just as gold is purified through high heat; just as a potter shapes a lump of clay with the force of his hand, or uses high heat for making a vessel for carrying water; just as a sculptor with his skill remodels an old home and transforms it into a magnificent mansion; just as a weaver turns cotton into a well-designed piece of cloth suitable for giving warmth; just as a builder with his skill creates a beautiful home from raw materials; and just as a carpenter takes raw wood and shapes a beautiful bed, the guru molds the *sadhak* to make him or her pure and without worldly desires. This is all done for the purpose of helping the *sadhak* prepare for the realization of the Divine. Thus a student, who is successful in these trials, becomes ready to travel upon the path to the Divine. This is called the determination of the student.

To create resolve in seekers, the Sants give specific guidance:

- ❖ First, keep a diligent meditation schedule as instructed by the guru.

- ❖ Second, leave all desires except the yearning for seeing the Supreme Being.
- ❖ Third, keep in mind the reverence of the guru.
- ❖ Finally, observe instructions of the guru as the highest duty and consider the guru as the dearest of all.

Students who can follow the above instructions are qualified to follow the path.

For success in meditation it is important for a *sadhak* to be cautious in the following ways:

- ❖ Following the example of a crow: be repetitive (always at it, never giving up), always remaining vigilant and attentive in *sadhana*, and in following the guru's instructions.
- ❖ Have concentration similar to that of a crane: always be attentive at listening to the teaching of the guru;
- ❖ Nap or sleep similar to that of dog: be willing to follow the instructions of the teacher without laziness;
- ❖ Eat less: cultivate a sense of detachment from all physical pleasures and bodily desires;
- ❖ Finally, detachment: indifference to the joys of home and family relations.

It is important that a student should cultivate these qualities. Without the grace of the teacher, progress on the spiritual path and attainment of the Divine is not possible.

A seeker should pay attention to five factors:

1. Receive the teachings of the guru with great attentiveness.

2. After listening to the teaching, learn the esoteric techniques (*diksha*, initiation) from the guru for treading the spiritual path.
3. Make a diligent effort to succeed in the tests presented by the guru.
4. Joyfully endure the trials and obstacles on this arduous path.
5. Cultivate patience and perseverance.

Just as a traveler withstands the pains of the journey and calmly endures the delays of the train and discomforts of the railway station, in the same manner, the spiritual traveler on the Divine path, although not seeing the Divine for many years, does not waiver from the path. Rather, the seeker endures the delay, and keeping faith in the guru's words, enthusiastically waits for the moment of Divine realization.

Infinite knowledge is like an ocean with unlimited water. The ocean makes its water available to anyone who wishes to draw from it. However, the person who wants to draw water from the ocean is only limited by the capacity of his vessel for carrying the water. It is not the fault of the ocean if humans are limited in their capacity to draw water. Those who have bigger vessels have the capacity to carry the most water. In the same way, humans vary in their capacities to draw from the Divine Ocean of knowledge.

In the words of Sant Maharshi Mehi: "All the Sants are said to be impartial and are equally compassionate toward all beings and their grace showers like the rain, equally on everyone. Nevertheless, just as the flowing rainwater gathers only in the deep hollow places, the grace of Saints gathers in the hearts of those disciples whose hearts are emptied from worldly distractions and whose devotion is deep. They are ready to receive the grace of the guru. Furthermore,

a devotee through service becomes eligible for the guru's grace and not surprisingly attracts the teacher's grace. Those who are careless and do not tend to the vessel of their hearts are able to hold only a little that the guru offers. Others, who are diligent in caring for the vessel, gain benefit by attracting the grace of the guru. In the teachings of Sants, this is the secret of serving the guru and following his teachings. Those who learn knowledge from the guru become humble and grateful and the devotion to the guru arises in their hearts naturally and effortlessly."

The seeker is like a vessel. Some vessels are small and hold very little substance. Other vessels are deep and wide and can hold large amounts. And still again, some vessels are very shallow and hold almost nothing. In this way, a seeker attempts to make himself or herself like a deep and wide pot which is capable of holding a great deal. Just as a sculptor chisels stone with sharp tools in order to make a large vessel, in a similar way, a practitioner fashions his heart with the hammer of moral conduct and makes himself worthy of the guru's grace.

It is said that on barren land a seed cannot be grown. In the same way, in the hearts of spiritually unfit individuals, the guru's grace cannot come into fruition. However, it is my experience that persevering and skilled people can make even barren land fertile by using several techniques. The farmers' various techniques include: replacing the arid soil with new topsoil and replenishing it with good fertilizers. The result: the land yields abundant crops. Similarly, a self-centered and dry-hearted individual who perseveres in digging deeper within through meditation, replacing the arid soil of the ego with the topsoil of surrender, watering with guru's grace, using the fertilizer of humility, and planting the seed of devotion, is able to

get success on the path of spirituality. The result: the practitioner experiences the deep delight in his/her inner experiences during meditation.

Nonetheless, a practitioner's fertile field of meditation always encounters the danger of being withered by the warm winds of the ego. Therefore, it is important to continue following with determination the path of *sadhana*; only then is this danger averted. Idleness is another danger on the path of meditation. According to Sant Kabir, there are two important things that need to be remembered: humility and surrender. Always keep the guru gratified. Even though these two may not appear to be virtues, on the spiritual path these two are indeed merits and strengths. These two virtues assist the practitioners to rid themselves of ego. Once the guru has accepted a disciple, how can any harm approach the seeker?

“Dear seekers, for all the above-stated reasons, even if you have no assets, do not act destitute in front of fellow human beings. However, even if you are endowed with abundant wealth; you should become humble in front of the guru and completely surrender yourself. The pride of frivolous wealth and status destroys *sadhana* (inner practice) and its due results.”

Regarding the worthiness of a seeker, the *Tripadvibhuti Mahanarayanopanishad* expounds: “A tranquil, restrained, detached, pure devotee of the guru who is committed to spiritual discipline should approach a realized guru with humility, and ask for the secret of spiritual teaching. The seeker must humbly request the path of the esoteric knowledge of the truth.” In the *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* it is also said that: “Knowledge should be sought by approaching realized seers of the Truth. Those teachers will impart

the knowledge to a seeker who is humble, pure hearted, and eager to learn the essence of knowledge.”

The scriptures tell us to respect our elders. The guru being the highest of our elders (in wisdom; knower of the Divine knowledge) is worthy of the utmost respect. The praise of the guru is sung by religious texts and Sant traditions. The *Satguru* is deemed higher than gods and other celestial beings. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are in the service of a *Satguru*. *Satgurus* are the embodiment of the Divine. All natural and Divine forces are under their control and death has no power over them. The *Satguru* embodies the secret of Divine knowledge and the student should recognize the guru as such and not think of him or her as a common person. Discontentment of the *Satguru* is to be avoided at all costs, as doing so jeopardizes the progress of the seeker. It is important to have a disciplined life to pursue the path of truth. Moderation in all aspects of life is essential. Only consume as much as is necessary for survival. Those who live in the service of the guru should be most attentive to all of the *Satguru*’s needs, always showing the utmost respect and humility. A devotee must always try to stay in good health and be ready to serve the guru happily. A student must abide by the behavioral and moral codes for serving the guru, as expounded in the scriptures. Specific instructions include taking care of every need of the *Satguru*, following disciplined conduct in his/her presence, paying attention to their every need, adherence to deep humility and dedication.

It is important to follow moral conduct in taking up the spiritual path. Serious seekers must guard their conduct with diligence. The practice of a comprehensive control of the senses (speaking truth, non-violence, avoiding intoxicating substances, and adultery) is

essential for the practitioner. An observance of celibacy is said to increase *tejas* (brilliance) in human beings. A monk should discipline himself and guard his thoughts in the presence of women. Be aware of his conduct in the presence of women disciples. It is advised to not to engage in any playful conduct with women because it presents the danger of distraction from the path of spiritual practice. This is why that scriptures underscore the importance of stricter moral disciplines for monks and nuns. The spiritual endeavor must be guarded by the fence of moral disciplines. According to sacred narratives, temptations distract even great sages, who can lose the powers of their austerities and deviate from their spiritual path. Many great sages fall from the height of spiritual accomplishment due to their allure toward women. Therefore, a practitioner must always remain vigilant.

A seeker should follow strict moral disciplines so that the occasion for temptation does not arise. This requirement is explained in the commentary by Param Sant Eknath Ji Maharaj. It is also important to observe other moral disciplines. The one who speaks untruth is considered as a partial atheist since he tries to conceal things while understanding that God is omnipresent. In other words, the seeker believes that the Supreme Being is present everywhere, but in actions does not display that belief. Therefore, those who speak untruth can never be worthy of this path. An individual who steals the property of others is known as a thief. Those who cause harm to other living beings in word, thought, and speech are considered to be violent. The substances that weaken the memory are known as intoxicating. Those who consume such substances are considered to be addicted. A man or woman who seeks the enjoyment of another person's wife or husband is known as an

adulterer. Indulgence in any form of sensual pleasures is a roadblock to progress. It is impossible to obtain the grace of the *Satguru* without the diligent practice of these disciplines. Therefore, in order to become worthy, serious seekers must carefully pay close attention to avoid the five great sins—lying, stealing, violence, adultery, and consumption of intoxicating substances—and guard their conduct in order to cultivate worthiness for treading the inward path to the Divine.



CHAPTER 4

THE MANTRA OF AN ACCOMPLISHED TEACHER

Just as high quality seed is the second requirement of success in agriculture, similarly, acquiring a *mantra* (sacred syllable, sound, word, or phrase that is given by the guru during initiation) from an accomplished teacher is an important component to prepare the practitioner for progress on the spiritual path.

High quality seed means the best premium seed; it is not moldy, nor is it damaged by insects. Poor quality seed does not have potency, and will yield inferior crops. The seed should be kept in the protection of a skilled farmer; and must be kept in a dry environment so that it stays potent. It is important to invest in high quality seed because the quantity and quality of crops depends on the potency of seed. Inferior quality seed, even though less expensive, yields immature sprouts and does not produce good crops.

The above seed analogy can be extended to the *mantra* of an accomplished guru. A qualified student can be likened to an enriched field. The *mantra* of an accomplished teacher can be compared to the seed for cultivating the inner path to the Divine. If the guru is

imperfect—filled with the impurities of anger, greed, attachment, passion, hatred or jealousy—then the potency of his or her teaching will also be corrupt, ineffective, and even damaging. If the guru's mind has been saturated by these passions then the *mantra* given by such a guru will be like the low-grade, damaged seed that is unable to yield a good crop. If the guru does not follow moral rectitude and has not transcended the sensory desires, then the *mantra* will not be potent or effective. In fact, the guru's conduct influences the progress of the student. A corrupt, deceitful, and materialistic guru will negatively influence the student. Students of a debased and immoral guru live under the shadow of *tamo* (or *tamas*) *guna* (dark, negative tendencies), and they cannot ascend on the divine path of devotion. If the guru is engrossed in the pleasures of the senses, then it is not surprising that the disciple will also yearn for sensual enjoyments. Just as the holy water of the river Ganga once poured in a wine bottle is considered unholy by sages and saints, in the same way the sacred name of the Divine becomes impure when it reaches in the heart of a morally corrupt teacher. This can be illustrated through various examples. Just as a seed when roasted in a pot filled with hot sand loses its potency, similarly a *mantra* that resides in the heart of a teacher burning with the heat of worldly desires becomes bereft of its life force. Such a *mantra* cannot sprout in the inner-heart of the disciple, and remains devoid of life. Just as a seed placed on a dry rock does not grow, in the same way a Divine *mantra* of God placed in the devotionless heart of a guru does not advance. Just as a log carried by the waves of a river is repeatedly pushed to the shore, similarly, from the heart of a guru that is overwhelmed with the waves of mundane desires the power of the *mantra* leaves even though it once dwelt within.

Just as a rope burned by fire, despite sustaining its shape, loses its function, in a similar manner, the *mantra* given by the guru whose heart is incinerated by the flames of lust does not alleviate the suffering of a student who recites it (even though it appears to be a *mantra*). The discerning seeker should avoid such gurus whose *mantras* lack potency and are unable to yield results. They would in fact adversely affect the student.

The quality of new seeds is superior; therefore the seeds yield plentiful grain. Although old seeds sprout, the quality of such crops is inferior—the yield is scant. The old seed can be likened to the *mantra* of a guru who does not use his *mantra*. A guru who himself does not recite the *mantra*, but imparts the *mantra* teaching to his disciples, his *mantra* would not be potent like a dry, inferior seed. The disciple would not make the desired progress in the practice of meditation. The guru should practice what he is teaching. The guru must be a practitioner of *mantra sadhana*. If the guru does not practice, then the seeker also does not make progress, as if the *mantra* had become stale. The guru who continues to recite the *mantra* in daily activities, keeps his *mantra* potent. In other words, the guru who even when eating, drinking, sleeping, awakening, talking, and working always repeats the *mantra*, his *mantra* will yield greater results, like a new and healthy seed, in the heart of the student.

Sant Surdas says: “In all activities of the mind, speech, and body, accomplished gurus continue to keep their minds on *mantra japa*, and instruct their students to do the same.”

There is life force in the *mantra* given by such a guru that helps awaken the students’ dormant inner consciousness. By constant repetition of the *mantra*, the deity associated with the *mantra*

becomes satisfied, and through the medium of *mantra*, the deity imbues the practitioner with divine energy. In this way the *mantra* becomes wish granting, and the mantra given by an accomplished teacher gratifies all desires of the seeker. In essence, the *mantra* should be for constant practice, not merely for having the satisfaction of receiving initiation from the guru.

There is a story that illustrates this point. In a certain village there were two disciples of the same guru. One day the guru visited that village. Both disciples became very happy to see their guru. Each invited the guru to his home one after the other. During his visit, the teacher gave each student one handful of chickpea seeds. The guru told them that he was leaving for a pilgrimage, and upon his return in twelve years he would like to have the seeds returned to him. After instructing them in this way, the guru left the village. Both disciples considered the predicament of keeping the handful of seeds safe for twelve years. One of the disciples put the seeds in a silk cloth, tied it tightly, and put them in his golden safe. The other disciple took the seeds and planted them in fertile soil. In due time, the small handful of seed became several bushels. He again, the following year, planted the seeds in the field resulting in an increased amount of yield. He continued this process for the full twelve years, and in the end he had accumulated a huge store of chickpeas. The guru returned after twelve years and first went to the disciple who kept the seeds in a safe. The disciple was very happy to see his teacher. When the guru asked for the seeds to be returned, he brought out the handful of beans from the safe and gave it to him. When the guru opened the silk covering, the seeds had molded and become rotten; the disciple was sad, explaining he had tried his best to keep them safe. The teacher was disappointed

and told him he was foolish, as the grain can only be saved when planted and that is how to preserve seeds. Afterwards, the guru went to the other disciple's home. Again the teacher asked for the seeds to be returned. The disciple took him to his storage house where the seeds were stored. The guru was surprised to see the huge amount he had at hand. The student told the teacher how he had done this. The teacher lauded his keen intellect and blessed him. The moral of the story is: meditation grows with use and practice. *Mantra* practice does not yield results from simply learning the technique and the syllables. To be fruitful it needs to be practiced.

Even though the seed of the *mantra* can never be destroyed, without practice there will be no fruit or results. Sage Patanjali writes in the *Yoga Sutras*: “*Mantra* repetition yields supernatural powers.” Therefore, the *mantra* is known as the wish-fulfilling tree (*Kalpa vraksha*) which yields desired results.

The scriptures speak of the glory of *mantra* repetition. However, magnificent effects of the *mantra* do not manifest in disciples who are initiated by gurus who themselves are wanting in the practice of *mantra*. When the student is constantly engaged in tending the *mantra* in the field of his or her heart, the *mantra* yields miraculous fruits in the life of student, who has been likened to a farmer. Otherwise, the *mantra* becomes lifeless like a dried and damaged seed. In essence: The guru who is constantly engaged in reciting the *mantra*, his *mantra*, like new and good quality seed, sprouts and flowers in the field of the heart of his disciple. In other words, it fulfills the desires of the student. Therefore, Sants compare such a *mantra* to new seed or describe it as wish-granting.

The *mantra* that is imbued with conscious energy is the source through which a practitioner finds relief from suffering and attains

peace. The meaning of *mantra* repetition is this: calling out to the deity associated with the *mantra* in a loving and faithful manner. The *mantra* practice is considered perfected when the deity associated with the *mantra* manifests himself or herself in front of the *sadhak* in meditation. Through *mantra* repetition the deity appears in front of the practitioner, and the deity transmits the divine energy into the practitioner. In other words, the devotee becomes imbued with the divine qualities, and, as a result, acquires supernatural abilities with regard to action, speech, and the eight supernormal powers.¹ Until the *mantra* practice as described above is achieved, the true power of the *mantra* remains dormant. However, through daily diligent practice the inner heart of the practitioner becomes purified and the *mantra* becomes alive and conscious. However, if in the guru's heart he has not realized the miracle of the *mantra*, then how can the guru transmit the powerful effect of the *mantra* to his students?

As we discussed earlier, a seed must be kept in the protection of a qualified and capable person. What is meant by this analogy is this: the *mantra* must be under the guidance of a qualified accomplished guru. The guru must reflect within himself to see if he is taking care of the seed of the *mantra* through a constant practice. He should consider the following possible digressions during practice:

-
- 1
- 1) *Aṇimā*: reducing one's body even to the size of an atom,
 - 2) *Mahima*: expanding one's body to an infinitely large size,
 - 3) *Garima*: becoming infinitely heavy,
 - 4) *Laghima*: becoming almost weightless,
 - 5) *Prāpti*: having unrestricted access to all places,
 - 6) *Prākāmya*: realizing whatever one desires,
 - 7) *Iṣṭva*: possessing absolute lordship, and
 - 8) *Vaśṭva*: the power to subjugate all.

1. Whether the mind wanders during *mantra* repetition;
2. Whether during *japa* the consciousness remains centered or is scattered;
3. Whether during *japa* sleep ensues;
4. Whether during *japa* negative thoughts about others arise;
5. Whether while doing *japa*, we are needlessly engaged in gossiping with others;
6. Whether or not while doing *japa* we are restless and don't keep our body still;
7. Whether or not we are sitting in a posture that is respectful to our guru and other elderly beings;
8. Whether or not we think about unnecessary thoughts about other men or women;
9. Whether or not our mind is one-pointed and is not distracted by mundane thoughts;
10. Whether or not while doing *japa*, our body, mind, and senses are restless, etc.

A guru himself should avoid these imperfections and distractions and must also pay attention that the student does not stray from the object of concentration.

A farmer keeps seeds in an airtight environment because the air and moisture destroy the seeds' potency. In the same manner, the guru who gives the *mantra* protects his teaching from the dangers of ego, and the entrapments of acquired supernatural powers and praise. Otherwise, like the seed that is exposed to air and moisture, his power is also destroyed. An accomplished teacher has the ability to protect the potency of the *mantra*. Other teachers, who are not accomplished in their *sadhana*, become the slaves of greed,

selfish desire, and temptations to engage miraculous powers. These eventually will destroy the power of the *mantra*. Consequently, the teaching of the incompetent teacher becomes ineffective, and even an insignificant being cannot benefit from the teaching of such an incompetent and corrupt guru. This is the reason that Sants who have kept their power protected—their honor and acclaim is celebrated in this world even many years after their passing away from the world. Those individuals who, after gaining a small amount of supernatural powers, begin to show miracles, become popular and acquire recognition and honorific titles (such as world renowned “Sadguru,” “Jagadguru,” “Yugpurush, Brahmanda Guru,” “Paramhans” “All-knowing,” “Brhamarishi,” “Vishwa Guru,” “Shri Shri 108,” “Shri Shri 10008,” “Avadhu,” etc.) find that their fame evaporates and is not long lasting.

Just as sunshine melts away snow, and just as the wind blows out water bubbles, similarly, through the display of supernatural powers these teachers’ spiritual power is wasted. Within a short time they become corrupt; their honor and titles vanish. Those who take a *mantra* from these fallen gurus also experience loss, and roam around in the endless cycle of death and rebirth.

A guru in whose heart the wind of sensual desires has entered, the flame of the *mantra*’s power extinguishes. A *mantra* given by such a guru with a dark inner self (devoid of the light of the *mantra*) cannot be beneficial to the student. Today’s counterfeit gurus in one moment promise a student to awaken his *Kundalini Shakti* (spiritual energy), and soon after ask for money for their *ashram* building projects. In a moment they seek to help the student attain self-realization, and in the next moment they trap them in the material illusion of the world. These gurus are ever-changing,

like a chameleon: at times in spiritual bliss and in the next moment engrossed in the senses. They may brag of their wealth and soon beg for money. At times silent, and other times annoyed. The *mantra* given by these false gurus to their students becomes ineffective

The guru should always be vigilant about the power of his *mantra*, lest he lose its potency. The guru should be attentive and protect his power from any temptations and distractions. He should also be aware and protect the *mantra* power of his students.

A farmer uses pesticides to protect the seed from insect infestation. In the same way, while doing *mantra japa* the mind may also get infested with salacious thoughts. Subsequently, if the practitioner pays attention and tries to protect his mind from these thoughts, he can overcome these distractions. The student should keep focus on the target as described by the guru and forcefully repeat the *mantra*. Through intent focus, the student's mind gradually begins to quiet down. This process can be likened to the use of pesticides by the farmer to disrupt the infestation.

The guru who is the prey of sensory distractions during *mantra* practice, yet still gives a *mantra* to students, is essentially giving verminous seed that cannot sprout and cannot produce the desired effects of meditation in the heart of students. In other words, the *mantra* given by the guru whose heart is filled with impure thoughts cannot remove the impurities in the heart of a student. If the heart of the teacher is pure, so is the *mantra* of that guru. If the *mantra* is given by the guru who has inner spiritual power, then the *mantra* is imbued with power. If the guru's character is pure, then his *mantra* has purifying power and is effective for the student. However, it is hard to find such a *Sat Guru*. Many lifetimes of good *karmas* lead to *satsang* (spiritual teachings). Many lifetimes of *satsang* results

in the attainment of a *Satguru* (an accomplished teacher, a true guide), and many lifetimes of serving a Sant leads to attaining the world-fear-dispelling *mantra* of such a true teacher.

Many ordinary gurus may be found roaming around in cities and villages and a *mantra* can be obtained from them. However, these gurus often do not require their students to make lifestyle transformations, nor do they require them to observe strict conduct by avoiding moral sins or spend time in meditation. They sometimes make such unrealistic claims, such as receiving their *mantra* initiation will result in enlightenment in three days. In Mahatma Gandhi's words: "An unqualified teacher of material sciences might not be so detrimental to the success of a student; however, if the spiritual guru is not qualified, then the student cannot achieve the goal nor have success." In the words of Maharshi Mehi: "Through *satsang* find a true guru. Without the knowledge attained from a true guru the path is difficult to tread." Thus, many Sants emphasize the importance of choosing an accomplished teacher.

In these present dark times it is very difficult to differentiate between a truly accomplished guru and a false teacher. For most people, unfamiliar with spiritual paths, such discernment is challenging. One reason for this difficulty is that it is critical to spend time around a guru to ascertain his worthiness. Those who are able to easily recognize an accomplished guru are rare. The question then is how to recognize an accomplished guru and one who is not accomplished, or worse, one who is corrupt. The difficulty is that most, being mesmerized by worldly attractions, judge gurus by outward display of material miracles, which are a wholly inaccurate measure. The true gurus live a simple life and morally upright lifestyle; they stay away from the pomp and show

of the display of power. For example, they do not have expensive cars and opulent *ashrams*. They do not show favoritism among their followers. They do not wear rare beads, nor adorn their heads with gleaming head-marks. They do not own ironed *kurtas* (long tunics) nor laced *dhotis* (a wrapped garment). They do not decorate their heads with headbands, nor do they have embellished shoes. These gurus have modest furnishings and modest seating. The food eaten is also adequate but not gourmet. Honorific titles are shunned by the true guru. The true guru does not impart special blessings and does not guarantee to instantly show God or awaken supernatural powers. True gurus do not display their supernatural powers, nor give medicines for cures, nor do they show miracles. They do not pretend to be in Samadhi nor do they put on a public display of fasting. They do not cling to a particular caste and do not favor religious customs. They do not care about their appearance nor try to impress others through their outer appearance. They are not affiliated politically with any groups. They do not beg nor hoard money and do not take money earned through immoral means (black money). They favor neither the rich nor the poor, and especially do not berate the poor. There are no long lines to see them nor is special permission needed for their audience. They are easily accessible. They do not gossip nor speak ill of religious establishments. They are deferential and diffident about their admirations. They do not mourn their loss nor are they jealous of seeing the good fortune of others. They do not consume prohibited foods (tobacco, alcohol, animal products, etc.), nor do they instruct their followers for their consumption. In other words, the true guru is not involved in the outer display of material powers. The true guru considers wealth as dust, pleasures as thorns, personal prosperity as evil, pride as

a curse, self-admiration as a scorpion bite, and adultery as deadly poison. Even the heavenly pleasures are rejected by them as well supernatural powers. They consider such powers as robbers or thieves, which lead a practitioner astray from the path of inner practice.

The realized gurus do not aspire for anything of this world. Their senses are under control, their mind is unwavering and pure. Ignorance cannot take hold of them as they live beyond the ambit of the three *gunas*. They do not commit sinful acts and have no selfish aspirations. They are steadfast in their conviction and conduct. They are firm in their principles and morals. They observe inner and outer purity, and reside in the inner temple of joy and contentment. They are the storehouse of infinite knowledge and are truly learned. They live a simple life and they represent the essence of truth. They are all knowing, wise and true yogis. Their essence is the renunciation of a sage. They are always vigilant and honor others. They remain humble while giving praise to others. They are patient and peaceful, treating all equally while being skilled on the path of devotion. They are the essence of all good qualities. They are beyond the sorrows of the world. They are firm in their conviction. They are filled with humility, faith, and charity. They have friendliness toward all beings and are compassionate to all beings. They hold pure love for the Divine and become humble upon hearing their own praise. They are delighted by the admiration of others. They do not engage in immoral activities and their conduct is candid and sincere. They love all equally and have great regard for all the great teachers and sages. They hold the true knowledge of all scriptures and tread the path of truth. They spend their time teaching and helping others. They regard praise and criticism alike and commit themselves to

teach the spiritual path to others. They are fearless, and feel the pain and joy of others. If a person wrongs them they still wish well for them. They are firm in their spiritual discipline. They always are engrossed in the study of scriptures and are wholly nonviolent and peaceful. A *mantra* received from gurus embodying such qualities can remove the arrow of suffering of the students—not otherwise.

The incompetent guru is like an unskilled farmer who will have a failed crop because of his inexperience in the skill of sowing seeds. Some places he might put too many seeds, resulting in the suffocation and stunting of the plants. Other times he might sow at the wrong time or fail to irrigate in a timely manner. In general, the unskilled farmer would lack the knowledge of protecting the crop from disease and pests, resulting in a failed crop.

Today's inept gurus do not pay attention to the tradition of true Saints and are simply intent on increasing the number of their followers. They are not judicious regarding disciples—in other words, are not selective in imparting their teachings. This all goes against the ancient Vedic tradition of teaching. The one who has not treaded the path – how can he impart its knowledge to others? One who is engrossed in the five senses and is a servant of the sensual cannot help the students to go beyond temptations. How can the “guru” who is attracted to sexual desires and is ignorant, who is bound by the darkness of ignorance, who does not devote himself to *sadhana*, who himself cannot sit for an hour with erect body and back and meditate, whose senses are not disciplined, who does not understand the essence of the true guru, who does not do *satsang*, who is full of deceit, who is away from truthful conduct, who does not do *mantra* repetition, who does not visualize the form of the guru, who cannot concentrate his mind in meditation, who has

no glimpse of inner experiences such as the Divine Inner Sound, who is unable to see his own nature, who does not see his true self reflected in others, who has not experienced the transcendent form of the Divine, how can that “guru” help others? Hence, all of these self-appointed incompetent teachers, who appoint their close followers as gurus, and those who are students of such gurus, meet with great misfortune. These bogus gurus in their greed of honor, prestige, wealth, and fame do not judge the worthiness of their followers. They disregard the power of teaching and the responsibility of initiation. These gurus praise their rich devotees; they are inaccessible to their underprivileged devotees. They even despicably exploit the poor.

These pretentious gurus have no ability to see or judge the worthiness of the students because they themselves are blinded by ignorance and cannot lead others. It is important that the teacher pay attention to the meditation technique and to the progress of the students. The fake gurus have no understanding of this and are concerned with enriching their own material wellbeing.

During meditation a practitioner experiences various obstacles, many imaginary experiences, as well as many mental sensations and thoughts, all of which give rise to doubts. The practitioner is unable to determine the validity of these experiences, and therefore, seeks the help of the spiritual guide. The false inexperienced guru won't be able to remove these doubts of the student but in fact may create even more confusion in the student. The false teachers themselves do not know the inner path nor understand the students' dilemma. They cannot tell if the student is making progress or going backward. The untrue guru has no way of knowing. In this way the student becomes unsure and confused on the path of meditation.

This is fully the responsibility of the “guru” to assist when the student begins to stray from the path of meditation.

To show the students the correct path, to help them increase their inner strength, to give them good advice, to keep them on the right path, to assist them when in need, to protect them from obstacles, to bring them to the right path even using sternness or harsh treatment, these are the responsibilities of a true teacher. It is the teachers’ responsibility to see the students’ success in the journey from the beginning to the end. Therefore, a student needs to seek the teachers’ advice throughout his life.

Just as in the absence of an adept farmer, even a good field is bare, in the same way even the most worthy student is unable to make progress without a true guru. This can be illustrated by following examples:

- ❖ Just as without a driver, a car with sound parts cannot be driven even a short distance.
- ❖ Just as without a qualified teacher, a student cannot achieve an appropriate education.
- ❖ Just as without a skilled physician, a patient is unable to achieve good health.
- ❖ Just as without a good captain, a ship cannot safely reach the destination.
- ❖ Just as without a good architect, a beautiful structure cannot be built.
- ❖ Just as without a talented and committed woman, a householder’s life does not run smoothly.
- ❖ Just as without a dedicated son, a father’s pride cannot be satisfied.

- ❖ Just as without a worthy student, a teacher's fame does not spread far and wide.
- ❖ Just as without proper protection and vigilance, a woman may not be able to protect herself from becoming a victim of an assault.

In the same way, without a qualified teacher, the student cannot go beyond the Ocean of Samsara (cycle of death and rebirth).

The inner path to the Divine is very subtle. It is arduous and is very difficult to tread. Without diligent practice, the destination seems very distant. Furthermore, the seeker experiences many temptations and obstacles. The student faces many inner struggles and temptations (that are likened to thieves and robbers who seek to rob the student of his accomplishments). These impediments cannot be removed without the assistance of the *Satguru*, a true teacher.

- ❖ Just as without a horseman, the horse does not go in the right direction.
- ❖ Just as without a carriage driver, the carriage does not go in the right direction.
- ❖ Just as without a mahout, an elephant does not walk straight on the path.
- ❖ Just as without a monkey trainer, the monkey cannot be kept in control.
- ❖ Just as without the snake-charmer, a snake cannot be tamed.

In the same manner, without the help of a *Sadguru* (accomplished teacher), the ever-changing fickle mind is impossible to control.

- ❖ Just as without the parents, a child's life is full of challenges.
- ❖ Just as without proper cleanliness, a beautiful home loses its beauty.
- ❖ Just as without an owner, the house is ruined.
- ❖ Just as without a leader, an organization shatters.
- ❖ Just as without a shelter, an orphan becomes destitute.
- ❖ Just as without a support, a sapling is damaged by the wind.
- ❖ Just as without a proper address, a traveler cannot reach his destination
- ❖ Just as without an organizer, the arrangements become haphazard.

In the same way, without the assistance and guidance of a *Sadguru*, a human being's life becomes without auspiciousness.

Today individuals want to transform their destiny through external objects and symbols. They think that by wearing color stoned jewelry according to astronomical signs or amulets they can bring auspiciousness in their lives. Or through wealth, children, business, status, or power, many wish to bring joy in their lives. However according to the Saints:

“Until you receive the auspicious *mantra* from a propitious *Sadguru*, you cannot change your life and remove all forms of inauspicious providence.”

Until you receive spiritual teaching from a *Sadguru*, you will not be able to escape the grip of inauspicious luck and will not attain contentment and peace. Therefore, you should carefully choose a *Sadguru* and commit yourself to his service. Through learning a path or method for God-realization, following moral conduct and

performing *sadhana*, you should make this human birth fruitful and auspicious.

Maharshi Mehi says: “Leave all hubris and desire and obtain the *mantra* from a *Sadguru* and make progress within—this is the instruction of an accomplished guru”.



WITHOUT ESSENTIAL INFORMATION NO MEDITATION (NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE PRIOR TO MEDITATION PRACTICE)

Among the seven requirements for successful farming, the third one is the proper knowledge of farming techniques. Similarly, among the seven phases of meditation practice, the third is: accurate understanding of principles relating to the path of meditation. Just as a farmer who does not have adequate knowledge of all the tools and techniques relating to farming will be at a disadvantage in the success of his agriculture, so also, a practitioner who does not have proper understanding of the principles and practices concerning meditation will have difficulty realizing all the desired benefits. Therefore, a practitioner should seek to understand the essentials and fundamentals before treading the path of meditation.

For example, following questions need to be considered before embarking on the inward journey to the Supreme: How does one define moral and proper conduct? What are the elements of pure character? What is *apara bhakti* (a beginning stage of devotion

in which the devotee uses external symbols and forms to connect with God), and what is *para bhakti* (the highest form of devotion in which a devotee sees the Divine present everywhere)? What is *yoga*? What is *jnana* (knowledge) and what are different forms of knowledge? What is *mukti* (liberation) and what are its various kinds? What are the material and subtle elements that make up the physical body? What are the mental vices? What are the sense objects? What are their names? What is meant by *jada prakriti* (unconscious, inert matter) and *chetan prakriti* (cosmic conscious matter)? How many are the sense organs and what are their names? Who are the governing deities of these senses? What are the *koshas* (sheaths that cover the soul) of the body? What are the different states of meditation? What are the prescribed duties for humans?

It is also important to understand the various limbs of *yoga*. What are the different types of *japa* (recitation of *mantra*)? What results are to be expected from the practice of *japa*? What is *pinda* (shell of the material body)? From where do the various sounds originate in the body (*pinda*)? What are the different varieties of material and subtle *shariras* (bodies)? What is *maya* and what are its various forms? What are the *mayaic* (material) coverings that conceal the soul and what are their names? How many *chakras* (centers) are there in the body and where are they located? What are the different gates of the body and what is gate of liberation? Where does the mind reside in the body? Who are the guardians at the door of *moksha* (liberation) and what are their names?

What are the different types of *samadhi* (states of highest concentration)? What are the names of the different *pranas* (life force, breaths)? What are the characteristics of *dharma* (cosmic law, order)? How many *mandalas* (realms) are in the body and where

are their centers? What is the seed of *bhakti* (devotion)? Where is the origin of yoga? Who is called the fallen yogi? How does one sit in meditation and where does one focus during *japa*? At which point do the fluctuations of mind cease? What is meant by *shama* (control of the mind) and *dama* (control of the sense organs)? When does a practitioner get the power to “see” and “hear” afar, that is to say, gain clairvoyance and clairaudience? What is the meaning of *ajna chakra* (sixth chakra, third eye)? What is the difference between *triputi* (three related words from the same root verb) and *trikuti* (third eye, where the three channels of spiritual energy meet)? Where is the *yoga* heart situated in the body? What are the qualities of the three energy channels (*ida*, *pingala*, and *sushumna*)?

What is the greatest sin? In what level of meditation are the *vikaras* (afflictions, impurities) of the mind destroyed? How many states are there of the *jiva* (living soul)? Who is the master of each state? How many sensory organs work with the soul in various states of meditation? What is the difference between *jivanmukta* (liberated while living in the body) and *videhmukta* (who has become *Brahman*)? Where does sin reside in the body? To what realm of the inner journey does the fear of death haunt a living soul? Where does the soul get release from the snares of *karma*? How many types of *samadhi* are there? What is the affliction of this world? What is the difference between *prakriti* (natural state of balance) and *vikriti* (current state of imbalance)? At what stage does the fear of death leave us?

What is *bindu* (the infinitesimal small point—the center of the third eye) and how does one attain *bindu darshan*? Why is meditation on the form of the *guru* glorified? How far do the realms of *tamas guna* (quality of darkness, inertia), *rajas guna* (quality

of passion, activity), and *sattva guna* (quality of light, lucidity) extend within the inner realms of the body? What is meant by a microcosm (drop of water, body) in macrocosm (ocean, the universe) and vice versa? Where does the soul find release from the three types of sufferings (physical, natural, and Divine)? In what state of meditation does consciousness separate from the mind? How is the inner body purified? What is the nature of liberation? What is meant by “ultimate state of peace”? What is the supreme bliss? Who is a true *Sant* or *Sadhu*? Who is a true guru? What does it mean by the strong and solid gate that separates the soul and the Divine; and how can it be opened? Where is the end of all doubts? How many planes are within the sphere of the Divine Light? What is the cause of all mental unsteadiness? Where does the inner path begin and end? Why do sleep, laziness, and thoughts disturb the mind during meditation? What are the different kinds of sins? What are the differences between *devi sampada* (divine qualities) and *asuri sampada* (demonic qualities)? What is the source of all suffering? What is the greatest of all diseases? What are the different forms of violence and those who commit violence? What is the difference between pure seeing and tainted seeing? What taints the mind? What is meant by “dying while living”? What are the principles of *Santmat*? What is the fate of the meditator who becomes tempted by the power of fame, money, and prestige through public lectures? What is the source of worry? What is the difference between the fire of anxiety and the fire of the funeral pyre? Where is the beginning of *sadhana* for *raja yogis* and *hatha yogis*? Is the path to find God within or without? Where does the inner path of meditation begin and where does it end? Who is the traveler on the inner path? What are the supports for the traveler on the path of meditation? What

are the obstacles on the inner path? What is faith and conviction? What is the foundation of detachment and forbearance? What is *urdhvareta* (in which a male yogi practices sublimation of semen in celibacy)? What is the root of happiness? What is the cause of bondage and freedom? At what point does a practitioner see the Divine inner star, sun, and moon? Who is the most revered person in the world of Truth? Who is the most genuine and revered person in the spiritual world? In what stage of meditation does the practitioner see the divine light of stars, moon, and the sun? What is the difference between *jnana* (knowledge received through instruction) and *vijnana* (intuitive knowledge, received through intuition)? In what manner does a *Sat Guru* behave, what is the character of a true guru like? What are the characteristics of a practitioner who has inner experiences and what is his/her behavior like? Etc.

The answers to these questions must be understood by both the student and the guru; otherwise there is a possibility of straying from the true path. The seekers of the spiritual path should discuss these issues among themselves. In ancient times the *mahatmas* gave this information to those who sought their advice. As a result, the student was able to easily progress on the path of meditation. Today, great crowds gather to learn meditation, but how many have all the essential knowledge to undertake the path? Without considering these questions and merely following the crowd, is like “the blind following the blind.” Those who do not adhere to the prescribed codes of conduct (*dharma*) and right action are confused, but ironically most who consider themselves experts in this subject are no less in disarray.

A human being is like the engine of a train and the *karmas* are

like the cars of a train that follow it everywhere. The engine pulls its cars. Similarly, whatever good or evil deeds a human being performs, result in the form of pleasures and pains following him or her like the cars of a train engine. Regardless of the mixed nature of *karmas* being good, bad and neutral, they are tied to the human being and follow us wherever we go. The pure deeds can be likened to the first-class car of a train; the deeds performed by the attraction of senses can be compared to sleeper cars; and the evil deeds are like third-class compartments. Each compartment of a train gives a varied degree of comfort to the passengers. Conventionally, there are only a few first class cars in a train. We mean the following, by this example: The deep joy experienced through meditation on the Divine is due to one's own good deeds. The life of well-being and joy can be likened to traveling in the first-class car of the train. However, human beings in this world rarely experience such joy. The results of actions performed through sensory stimuli yield the comfort of three-tier train compartments. Wicked actions lead to difficult and painful experiences similar to that of traveling in the third-class compartment.

Today, most human beings spend their time in performing religious rituals, but they are not familiar with a true course of action such as meditation through which soul reaches the Divine. Even though most humans characterize themselves as religious and feign spiritual actions, underneath they are unrighteous people. They don't understand the essence of true *dharma* and their minds remain restless and deluded. The performance of *yajna* (ritual sacrifice), *dana* (charity), and other meritorious acts yield momentary material joys in this world. These pleasures do not truly satisfy the doer of these actions. Furthermore, most do not achieve an adequate amount

of sensory pleasures due the lack of commitment to meritorious deeds.

However, most people neither spend time in contemplation and meditation, nor do they perform religious charitable actions. The sum total of the actions of the vast majority of people is unrighteous—accumulation that creates unfavorable *karmas*. The irony is that many of these same people consider themselves righteous and spiritual. Most do not understand that mental and physical afflictions such as restlessness, poverty, physical and mental pain, the ills of sensory attachments, craving for sensual objects, ignorance of true knowledge, ego, and desire, are all the results of unrighteous thinking and subsequent impure actions. A true and genuinely righteous person can transform sorrow into joy and turn adversity into bliss. Today people perform charities, rituals, and pilgrimages to alleviate their sorrow, agitation, disease, and worries, etc. But even these do not relieve their sorrow and unhappiness. Then these same afflicted souls seek the refuge of so-called holy men and women and beg that their afflictions be removed. But they feel discouraged at finding no permanent solutions for their sorrows. Taking the advice of these “holy” men and women, they go on pilgrimages, perform rituals etc. but do not get relief from their afflictions and sorrows. They then become despondent and condemn themselves and even talk about the insignificance and uselessness of prescribed rituals and religious deeds. What an irony! When the conditions are favorable, these actions seem good, but when the situation becomes adverse, the same people revile the religious actions of pilgrimages, rituals, etc. This is the behavior of today’s “spiritual being!”

The highest pursuit in life that can take away worries, afflictions, disillusion and unhappiness is not understood by most. It is

important to know the following: what path to practice, whom to follow, what to avoid, whom to listen to, whom to associate with, whose advice to adhere to, etc. Most do not follow the right spiritual path and the advice that would ameliorate mental and physical sufferings as well as worries and confusion. Even those who have knowledge of such a path do not heed this knowledge. Some people believe that pilgrimages and certain rituals and prayers can relieve suffering but find that they do not work, and then they blame God for their failed attempts. Talking with some older *satsangis* (who have been following the path of *Santmat*), it is amusing as well as disheartening to see their frustration because they do not have a proper understanding of the path. They simply never understood the correct way of practice. When I inquire about their method of practice of *mantra japa* (repetition of the *mantra*) and *manas dhyana* (visualization of the form), i.e., what mantra they use and how do they focus in meditation, in response some say: they do mental repetition of the sacred syllables and inner visualization of the Divine form. Others mispronounce the mantra (*Hay Guru, Hay Bhagavan*, or *Shri Guru*, etc.) When I ask some learned followers, they told me that they use a variety of mantras of different deities, including *Rama, Krishna, Ganesha*, and *Devi*, etc. One follower stated that he chants different mantras in an hour “so that each of these deities is pleased with me.” Some practitioners use a rosary with mantra while engaging in business transactions. Others don’t even abstain from smoking and eating prohibited foods (such as animal flesh) while doing their rosary. Some do *japa* out loud and others do the mantra with the breath or silently. Some recite *mantra* with closed eyes and other with opened. Some look at the tip of the nose while doing *japa* and others focus in the middle of the

eyebrows. Some recite the *guru mantra* but focus on the form of Lord Rama. Others recite the *Rama mantra* but focus on the form of Lord Krishna. Thus, there is no synchronicity between the practice of *japa* and *dhyana*.

Now let us look at the variety of practices of *dhyana* (focused meditation) utilized by practitioners with whom I had encounters. Some put stress on their eyeballs during the focus and use *khechari mudra* (yoga practice of putting the tongue against the palate). Some others practice *Mula*, *Uddiyana*, and *Jalandhar bandha* (yogic techniques of harnessing the energy) during the practice of meditation. Others use the *Lilihan mudra* to meditate on the form of *Shiva*; some use *matsya mudra* to meditate on *Bhairvai*; some sit in *siddhasana* (cross-legged) and meditate on *Shiva* and *Shakti*; and others sit in *padmasana* (lotus posture) and focus with both eyes on the Sun and yet others do *trataka* (fixing the gaze) on the moon to improve their eyesight.

Some meditate on a small red point imprinted on a canvas and some stare at a lighted candle to see the Divine light. Some even use computer generated images of various colors and stars in order to experience the Divine light. Some play music in order to focus on the Divine sound. Some make sounds of a dog, and others, the sounds of a lion. Some laugh and others weep; some make humming sounds and others create the ringing sounds of insects. These kinds of practices and experiences are illusory, taught by misguided gurus who themselves do not know the inner path of light and sound, and are not the true path. Consequently, the seekers face obstacles on the path of Truth. Nevertheless, a true seeker who is persistent will achieve success by finding a true teacher.

Some practitioners share their inner experiences with me. For

example, some say they see various kinds of stars in meditation. Others say they see the moon and river Ganga adorned on the head of Shiva's locks. Some approach me and say that in meditation they see the goddess Durga or Kali; others claim to see the rising sun or the midday sun. Someone told me that he sees the celestial lakes with lotuses and swans on their banks. Some practitioners say they hear different kinds of sounds during meditation. In this way, many people explain their imagined spiritual experiences! Moreover, their conduct does not accord with their experiences when they behave in a wicked manner. I am amazed by their behavior that is inconsistent with their so-called religious experiences, which, by nature, must yield positive, calm, and virtuous conduct in the practitioner.

It is not possible to have immoral conduct and also have true spiritual experiences on the inward path—both simply cannot coexist. Can one with a corrupt mind focus in meditation? Can the mind of a practitioner who is immoral find true concentration? Can those who speak ill of others regularly focus their mind in tranquility? The two are mutually exclusive. Those who are jealous will have the same problem. How can those who have no control of their senses find a glimpse of the inner spiritual experiences? Can an angry person encounter tranquil experiences? Can the greedy person get rid of the mind's agitation? Can an arrogant person grasp the purity of Divine light? Being a person of anger also disqualifies one from such experiences. Deep attachment will leave a practitioner incapable of focusing or concentrating during meditation. Can a person deafened by his or her ego hear the inner celestial sounds? How will one who is always looking to be honored be able to honor others? The one who is looking for honor and titles and respect cannot accomplish *samadhi*. Can one who performs wrongful acts

be able to concentrate on the pure image of the Divine? Can one who desires sensory pleasures yearn for God's love? Can someone who holds animosity for others be able to tread the pure path leading to inner Divine experience? If we are caught in the above traps it will not be possible to have genuine divine experiences. Success comes from perseverance, and to those who are able to avoid the above-mentioned obstacles. Therefore, know the particulars of the inner path from an accomplished guru and then begin the path of meditation, otherwise your efforts will be wasted.



CHAPTER 6

RESOLUTE PRACTICE

The fourth among the seven requirements of successful farming is “hard work.” It is on the basis that a farmer can achieve success even on barren land and reap the benefits of making land fertile. However, in the absence of hard work even fertile land will not yield the desired crops. A lazy farmer suffers poverty due to the resultant lack of prosperity. In a similar manner, of the seven elements of meditation practice, the fourth requirement is hard work. Without this a practitioner cannot continue for even a single step on the path of meditation. On the path of meditation ardent practice holds the key to success.

The power of dedicated practice has been described in the following ways: Through ardent practice and determination a practitioner can even shake the Himalayan mountains or empty the ocean with a small straw. He can consume the fires of the apocalypse; face the fierce storms of the world; happily bear the enemy’s attacks; endure the difficulties arising from inward obstacles of the inner path of meditation. The practitioner can face

the demons of lust and defy death and time itself; break the snares and trample the forces of material temptations. The practitioner can confront a heroic combatant mind and can shake the throne of the god Indra; stop the flow of any river; destroy the power of celestial weapons; break the snares of the rain god; face fierce weather; and lift the heaviest mountain. The practitioner can make the Pacific Ocean distressed; or dry up all lakes; or confront the divine elephant of the gods; or make a mountain float on water; or defeat the five sensory demons. The practitioner can destroy the vicious nature of the fourteen sensory organs and break the chains of good and bad *karmas* as well as burn the pile of individual sins. The practitioner can easily realize the most subtle form of God, Supreme Being (Divine Reality). The Supreme Being, which is even beyond the reach of the gods such as Brahma. The Supreme Being is transcendent and is beyond the scope of human sight, hearing, taste, and all human senses and is even beyond the grasp of the mind and intellect. Such a Divine Reality can, in fact, only be attained by a seeker through diligent and steadfast practice.

The abode of the Supreme is a place even the gods cannot reach. Within the Divine abode even time and death do not exist. The Divine abode cannot be approached by any of the senses and cannot be touched by any disorders. That abode is devoid of all attributes and qualifications. The Divine abode exists where no god or goddess is able to reach. The elements (ether, air, fire, etc.) or even subtle breath (*Prana*) cannot reach this place. It is beyond the reach of the five physical and subtle sheathes of reality. The Supreme Being can only be attained by the practitioner through the strength of steadfast practice.

Even the deities (Brahma, etc.) find it difficult to attain the bliss

of Supreme Being. This Divine Reality is beyond the reach of any powerful forces of the world. The Divine Reality is a mystery and its transcendent nature eludes the reach of all gods and goddesses. The bliss of the attainment of the Divine Reality that *rishis*, *yogis* and *mahatmas* have been searching for, the Divine bliss that great kings who renounced everything for—yet still have not attained—that Divine bliss can be acquired by the strength of steadfast practice.

The question arises: How are we to attain that Divine bliss? What is its nature? It is important to know the answer to these questions. Generally, people understand the meaning of resolute practice as the following: reading scriptures for hours, practicing *pujas* for hours, sitting with closed eyes and mediating for hours, or remaining engrossed in the repetition on the rosary for hours. These practices people understand to be examples of being steadfast. They simply think that the amount of time spent in these practices is sufficient to gain spiritual progress even though their minds are not focused on these activities and they are totally distracted. The accurate understanding of the practices in the context of realization of the Divine is, however, quite different.

The meaning of steadfast practice is as follows: until the goal of a task has been realized and manifested it is important to not impede the speed and steadfastness of the practice. Even though countless obstructions and challenges emerge we should remain diligent in the intensity of action to achieve the goal. We should even further increase our determination. During the task of *sadhana* one should see the goal alone and should think of nothing else. The action of *sadhana* should be embraced with a firm commitment. Quick expectation of results for the goal should be eschewed. During the process and action of meditation, the mind should be fully absorbed

in the task, i.e., the mind fully engaged in the action of *sadhana*. During any *sadhana* undertaking, one should keep the mind disciplined and on the task of meditation. When one is distracted she or he should bring the mind resolutely and continuously back to the task of concentration.

Steadfastness means firm, immovable, and strong. Practice means diligent repetition of an action and constant effort. Here we use the word steadfastness with practice because often when practitioners direct their minds to meditation, the mind wanders toward worldly things. The practitioners should repeatedly refocus their mind on meditation whenever the mind strays into worldly thoughts. This state of diligent struggle is known as steadfast practice. Sage Patanjali calls this practice *Pratyahara*. Lord Krishna elaborates this subject to the Sage Narada: “The mind which is unsteady and fickle and wanders around, should be stopped by the practitioner and repeatedly brought back to focus on God.” He further states: “The mind wanders around struck by the infliction of desires, but a learned person should bring the mind back to the goal of concentration.”

Many Sants like Sant Kabir, Sant Paltu, Shri Tulsi Das, Maharshi Mehi, and the devotee Mira Bai elucidate on this struggle with the mind. In their teachings they all instruct the practitioner to fight the inner combat of the mind diligently and bring their mind constantly back to the object of meditation. In this way, a constant struggle between sensory attractions and the inner contemplation continues in the mind of the practitioner. Whoever succeeds in this struggle becomes victorious and is known as a steadfast practitioner. And those who get defeated wander from life to life and suffer. It is worthy of consideration that different sants use different terms for

focusing the mind: some instruct to focus in the heart and others in *shunya* (emptiness), yet others on the object of meditation. This can be confusing for a practitioner who does not precisely know the meaning of these words. Practitioners try to capture the mind but it remains ever-elusive. Therefore, it is important to understand the meaning of the Sants' teachings. The mind does not become still by outward observances such as visiting temples, fasting and rituals, and by going on pilgrimages. Meditation practice is not concerned with outward *pujas*, etc. The practice pertains to repeatedly bringing the mind to a focal point as directed by the preceptor.

Our mind is connected to the senses and worldly objects. However, the soul is attached to the Divine. The sensory attractions are tainted and that is why the mind is material and unstable. The soul is pure and stable. God is pure and the soul connected with it is also pure and divine in nature. In impurity lies instability (distractions), and in purity lies stillness (tranquility). Therefore Sants guide us to attach our mind to the soul. Due to the association with the pure soul the mind can also gradually attain purity and stillness.

For the purpose of keeping the mind steady many virtuous deeds are performed. True joy is hidden in the serenity of the mind. As the mind becomes still, so also joy and peace begin to arise. Only in the complete stillness of the mind, true delight and peace can be found. Today, in spite of the availability of worldly luxuries and entertainment, people are still seeking to attain true joy and eternal peace. This is due to the agitation of the mind. The Sants say that ignorant people of the world seek happiness in fleeting sensory pleasures and material things. Where there is no true peace there is no hope of attaining joy either. And where there is no true joy how

can one hope to attain happiness? This is like looking for warmth in the snowy mountains or looking for coolness in a blazing fire.

The soul is pure and therefore by nature still. Due to its stillness, the soul is eternal. Therefore, Lord Krishna advises that the mind should be connected to the soul. Self-realization is the objective and the goal of all human life. But where can we obtain this goal? The answer is within one's heart. This is not the physical heart, but rather the heart of the inner Self. This is called, by the Sants, the *yoga heart* (innermost Self). It is in this space that the mind is linked to the soul. The Sants have described this place with many names such as: the "sky portal," the "tenth gate," "the point," "window," the "lotus flower," "*sushumna*," "*ajna chakra*," "third eye," "center of the eyebrows," "tip of the nose," "*bindu*," etc. By repeatedly concentrating on this place one can attain all the merit acquired through performing *pujas* and ritual worship. However, this place is so subtle that we cannot see it with our eyes or touch it with our hands. It is smaller than any measurable object. But it does exist and can be seen through resolute practice. For this, it is important to have the focus of mind and sight on this subtle point. It is also required to have a disciplined life dedicated to the observance of moral conduct. It also requires letting go of all material desires. The focus and attention of the mind must be withdrawn from the attractions of the sensory pleasures. There must be complete cessation of craving for the pleasures arising from the ten senses and all sensory distractions. For the purpose of focusing on this infinitesimally minute place, the grace of the guru and persistence and hard work is required.

The guru's grace makes this difficult goal attainable. The most impossible attainments become possible to the student of this

discipline. The ocean can be fitted on the hoof of a cow; the highest Himalayan peak becomes easily accessible; rivers can be made to stop in their course, and fierce fires can be made cool like a sweet breeze. The sants have given specific instructions for supporting the practitioner in this discipline. These aids help prepare the students before they go into the most subtle forms of focusing techniques. Through these practices the difficult task of concentration slowly becomes easier, and the practitioner has no difficulty reaching the state of deep focus in meditation.

This empirical existence of the world is made up of name and form. In this name and form all creatures and material objects exist. This existence of name and form is like a net in which the human mind is trapped like a fish in a net. However, the fish-net is visible from outside, but the trap of name and form that envelops the mind is invisible to the human eye. The practitioner only experiences the reality of this entrapment during meditation.

Normally, the human mind is entrapped in the reality of name and form. However, the extension of this reality reaches to the very core of the mind. The mind is the master of all the senses and subtlest of all the elements, including space and fire. Therefore, the mind, in its subtle form, contains all the material and subtle substances of name and form. With the power of its volition, the mind can manifest material forms and words.

When a practitioner in meditation attempts to focus the mind on a single object, then different forms and names begin to emerge and begin to be seen on the screen of the mind like a movie (film). Consequently, the practitioners' power of practice becomes weak. During continued practice the practitioner encounters other obstacles such as sleep (which are due to the result of previous good and

bad *karmas*). In this way, diverted by thoughts of different forms, distracted by deliberation on various inner chatters (thoughts), and struck by the enemy of sleep, the practitioner loses focus on the goal. Then she or he thinks, “even though I became a devotee, I must not be a true devotee due to these obstructions.” His or her resolve gets weakened further. Such a practitioner may even discourage others on the path due to their own failures. However, the practitioner whose willpower is strong and has a firm belief in the gurus’ words, and is a diligent practitioner, does not become disheartened. Such a seeker continues to practice with ever-increasing enthusiasm and progresses toward the goal. Now we elaborate on the four components of the practice of the inward journey requiring resolute commitment.

1. *Japa: Recitation of Mantra* (Sacred name given by the Guru)

The Sants have prescribed the support of a sacred name and a sacred form in order to break away from the snares of name and form. Just as we need iron to cut iron, and use poison as an antidote to alleviate the effects of poison, similarly, the practices of coming close to God by using a sacred name and form taught by the guru can liberate the student from the bonds of the net of all names and forms. The *mantra* given by the guru is imbued with the holy radiance of the guru. The Divine form for meditation prescribed by the guru is permeated by the guru’s conscious energy. Then the syllables become the powerful mantra, and the physical form becomes a conscious wish-fulfilling Divine form for the practitioner. It is important to know the precise technique of reciting a *mantra*,

the purpose of reciting a *mantra*, and the various types of mantra recitation.

Saints have described many methods of *mantra* recitation, but the results for all these forms of mantra recitation vary. Practitioners obtain results of *mantra* recitation according to their minds' stillness and concentration. The method of recitation that produces deep concentration is better and yields superior results. There are four ways of *mantra japa* recitation. First is the *mantra* that is spoken out loud (*vachika*). Second is reciting the *mantra* by moving the lips or murmuring quietly (*upanshu*). Third is following the *mantra* using the breath (*svansa*). Fourth is repeating the *mantra* mentally (in one's mind).

I. *Vachika Japa*: In this method the *mantra* is recited aloud. This is audible to the practitioner and others around him. There are three additional divisions of the practice: very loud, loud, and natural. First, very loud is used in a trying situation or during an unexpected condition or suffering. The repetition is urgent and loud. Second, the *mantra* is repeated loudly during a difficult time, for example, in pain, or in unexpected and startling situations of joy and sorrow. Third, the *mantra* is repeated softly, naturally, which is done in a peaceful and steady state of mind.

II. *Upanshu Japa*: It means spoken but not heard. In this form only the lips move and no sound is made. During this repetition neither the one repeating nor others around are able to hear the repetition.

III. *Svansa Japa*: This is a breath *mantra*. With each breath the *mantra* is recited within, and this is known as the breath mantra repetition.

IV. *Manas Japa*: This involves repetition of the *mantra* internally and mentally. In this method neither the tongue nor the lips move. The breath or rosary or any other means of counting is not used. The mantra recited is only through the mind. This *japa* or repetition is the essence of other mantra techniques. It is a form of meditation.

Sants state *upanshu* (murmuring) qualitatively has ten times more focusing power than *vachika* (loud) *japa*. *Svasa* (breath recitation) *japa* yields a hundred times more concentration than *upanshu*. *Manas* (mental) *japa* on the other hand creates one thousand times more concentration than *svasa japa*. Mental *japa* is on the same platform as meditation (concentrated focus). Therefore, efficiency of mantra *japa* is determined by the intensity of concentration.

The meaning and significance of mantra is this: The mantra when recited with faith, surrender, and concentration brings solace to the mind of the practitioner. This occurs when the words are recited repeatedly. *Japa* means calling out and inviting the deity in order to obtain the *darshan* (seeing face to face in meditation) of that deity. There are different kinds of calling out. Generally, we do not call a common person and respected person or deity in the same way, each is addressed in a distinct way. This is because there is a special kind of emotion attached when we address each of these. There is always a purpose and reason for calling out to these persons. No one calls these different personages without any purpose.

“The common people” includes daughters, sons, and other relatives.

“Honorable people” includes mother, father and older brothers or sisters.

“Deities” hold the status of worship and reverence.

In order to fulfill ordinary worldly tasks we call upon the common people. And to accomplish more important and significant tasks we call out honorable dignitaries. Further, we call upon our deities to fulfill our extraordinary desires, and also for their *darshan* and assistance in acquiring devotion to them. We call upon ordinary individuals in a common and casual manner. We call upon honorable persons with great respect. Finally, we call upon the deity with total humility.

The “common” individuals answer to those who call them for help, and they physically or materially assist them in their tasks. The dignitaries or notable people delegate the task through assistants and have the requested task accomplished—only in some rare circumstances they perform the task themselves. The deities manifest themselves through the medium of the sound of the *mantra*, which the devotee recites with full devotion. By presenting themselves to the devotee and giving them *darshan* the deities satisfy the devotee who is inviting them. Common and honorable people live in this material world, but the deity is present everywhere and lives in the heart of the devotee.

In the beginning it is difficult to see the all-pervasive form of the deity, therefore a practitioner is told to stare at a focal place within, as directed by the teacher, and then practice the *mantra* repetition. During the time of meditation the practitioner should keep full conviction that the deity is always in front of him and always present. Because of uncountable unfavorable *karmas* the deity is not visible initially to the devotee. Therefore, it is important to practice the *mantra* repetition with devotion and call out to the deity with yearning to meet her/him. Call upon the deity like the

elephant (in a narrative in Hindu mythology) did when he was in the jaws of the alligator. He called out to Lord Vishnu for his grace and Lord came to his rescue. The practitioner should call out the deity in the same way that Draupadi, when being molested by the evil Kauravas, called out to Lord Krishna for help. There are many such examples in the Hindu myths narrating the power of calling out and the deity helping the devotee. Similarly, practitioners should consider themselves in the clutches of death and suffering, and call out to the deity with devotion and urgency for help and freedom. Many *rishis* (sages) like Sanat Kumar have expressed these sentiments during *japa* in the following way:

“Oh abode of compassion! I am drowning in the ocean of this world and I am powerless. The crocodiles of *karmas* and attachments have gotten a hold of me; please rescue me from this worldly ocean.”

During the time of *japa* practitioners should feel so much love and joy that their hair stands on end. Their eyes should become filled with tears. Through these tears the negative *karmas* of the practitioner are washed away. Pleased by the call of the devotees, the deity becomes filled with compassion and manifests himself in front of the devotee and embraces the practitioners. Today’s devotees consider *japa* as child’s play and not a serious endeavor. On the one hand they negotiate with their customers, and on the other, they use their rosary while the mind is wandering elsewhere. The practitioner’s mind is neither in the rosary nor in the *mantra* –it wanders around in different directions. Using the beads of wood, stone, etc. do not yield any results. However, when even for a minute the mind is concentrated on the Divine then immediately the joy of meditation is experienced.

Many Sants have described methods of performing *japa*.

Sant Kabir says: “Connect your awareness with the *mantra* and then perform recitation while keeping the mouth closed. Close the nine gates of the body and then open the tenth gate to the spiritual realms.”

Sant Tulsi Das says: “When a practitioner recites the *mantra* with full concentration then he attains all eight Divine *siddhis* (powers).”

Sant Tulsi Sahib says: “Oh soul, recite the name of your deity with full love and yearning for his or her presence, just as in the rainy season the mythic Chatak bird calls out, staring at the clouds, yearning for the drops of the water of swati nakshatra.”

In the same way as stated above, a devotee during meditation should stare at darkness and should recite the *mantra* for the *darshan* of the deity. Sant Dulan Das says:

“There are only few practitioners who recite the name of the Divine in such a way that neither their lips nor tongue move. Those few focus their attention on the darkness of the inner sky. Day and night, they perform their recitation in this manner. This type of *mantra* recitation becomes their rosary.”

Sant Dulan Das also says that the true guru guides his or her devotees to practice *japa* in the above manner. And that those who become adept in this practice cross the ocean of this world and enjoy divine bliss.

Sant Mehi Sahab says: “The beginning of the end of life has begun and death is not far away. Recite the name of the Divine, keeping your attention at the center of the realm of darkness and light. Withdraw from your senses; concentrate at the center of the *sushumna* (in the center of the eyebrows). Then, recite the Divine name, keeping the mouth closed. In this way you close the nine

gates of senses and open the tenth gate or the Divine gate.”

When complete withdrawal from the five senses—from the speaking of the mouth, from the hearing of the ears, the smell of the nose, the taste of the tongue, and the touch of the skin—is accomplished, only then the true recitation of *mantra* begins. Otherwise, it is not the *mantra japa*. It is only *mantra japa* practice.

In order for the mind to become fully concentrated with *mantra japa*, the practitioner should abandon the following unscrupulous traits, such as indolence, yawning, sleeping, sneezing, spitting, fear, unnecessary fidgeting, anger, sprawling, gossiping, and lying. When the practitioner becomes accomplished in the *japa*, the aforementioned shortcomings vanish by themselves. Then in all conditions (daily routine) the *mantra* naturally and persistently continues.

The meaning of *japa* is calling out to the deity. Some people ask: Why should we keep our attention in the middle of the eyebrows while we are reciting the *mantra*? First, just as a child cries out and asks something by going in front of his or her mother, the mother then embraces the child and lovingly gives what the child asks. In the same manner, when a practitioner recites the *mantra* with full devotion and feeling and imagines the deity right in front of him, then the deity reveals his or her form and fulfills the desires of the practitioner. Second, the place in front that we are referencing is the third eye, which is filled with purity, and the *Sushumna Nadi* (the central channel) resides there, and it is associated with purity. The *Ida Nadi* (left channel) associated with ignorance, resides to the left, and *Pingala Nadi* (right channel), associated with passion, resides in the right side. When we keep the consciousness on that third eye spot then the distracting passions and negative tendencies

do not bother us. If however, we do not focus on the third eye, the mind will be restless and sluggish and will not be able to achieve the desired result of the *mantra* recitation and will not be able to receive the *darshan* of the deity. Thirdly, when practitioners close their eyes, they see darkness, and that darkness is the result of collective impure *karmas* of previous lives that obstruct the *darshan* of the deity. When practitioners launch the “arrow” of the *mantra* on the “bow” of consciousness and make darkness the “target,” then through this intense focus (strike) the clouds of darkness disappear. Consequently, the devotee beholds the form of the deity on the luminous screen of the mind.

Question: Why is it not possible to pierce the darkness through one single strike of the *mantra*-arrow?

Answer: If the target is strong and large, it has the capacity to tolerate the strike of a single arrow. Therefore, in order to pierce a target one has to strike hard and repeatedly. In essence, the inner realm of darkness is vaster than the Himalayan Mountains and stronger than god Indra’s thunderbolt. In order to pierce such a target, constant repetition and practice of the *mantra* is required. This is the reason for bringing the concentration to the front, at the point of the third eye.

Indeed, it is important that the practitioner recite the *mantra* constantly. However, to receive full benefit one should follow the above-described technique. In this manner, through diligent practice of the *mantra*, all distracting sounds (thoughts) become absorbed in that *mantra*. Subsequently, whenever the practitioners hear something, it will be the sound of the *mantra* only, and wherever they see a form, they will only see their deities’ form. When closing their eyes they will see the shinning letters of the *mantra* within.

Slowly that *mantra* will pervade in every pore of the practitioner's body. Then the meditator will not be distracted by any other sounds of the world.

The aura of purity surrounds such a meditator. When you approach such practitioners, automatically pure thoughts will arise in your mind. Whatever such practitioners declare, that will happen. Their words always become true. This condition is known as the fulfillment of the practice of *japa*. Sage Patanjali says: "Through *japa* one attains supernatural powers (*siddhis*)". When *japa* is accomplished, then upon calling out even once, the deity manifests, and the practitioner acquires the eight kinds of supernatural powers.

Dear practitioners, this is not the final stage of inner meditation but *japa* is a support for traveling the inner path of *Bhakti* (devotion, intense love for the Supreme Being). Through *japa* the entire realm of darkness does not get destroyed. Through *japa* only that expanse of darkness is destroyed which is equal to the form of the deity. The vision of the deity's luminance is the beginning of the end of inner darkness. The total destruction of darkness is accomplished by complete concentration on the *Ajna Chakra*.

However, some devotees quote Sant Goswami Tulsi Das's following words and question the above-described technique: "You can recite the name of the Divine either with love, anger, or laziness; you will always find benefit in all directions of life with any of these methods of practice." Others point to the discrepancy between techniques: on the one hand, we are asked to concentrate the mind staring within (in the third eye) during *japa*, and, on the other, we are asked to use devotion and feelings.

Our Guru Maharshi Mehi has answered such questions and assures us. He says: "Ten directions are in this world. According

to Sant Tulsi Das, we will find happiness in this world through any kind of *japa*, but when we leave our body and this material world, only the above-described (concentrated) practice of *japa* will yield well-being.”

Through the repeated recitation of the *mantra* (*manas japa*) of one’s deity, the practitioner becomes free of the obstructions of other material sounds. And through the meditation on the form of one’s deity (*manas dhyana*), the practitioner becomes free from the distractions of other material forms. However, focusing on the form of the deity is more difficult than the recitation of the *mantra* of the deity. The reason being, that the *japa* repetition can be done even if the mind wanders. However, the concentration on the form cannot be done when one is distracted. It is because we find more attraction toward material forms than toward material sounds. Therefore, the Saints have described the intensity of attraction for the sense of sight as greater than the intensity of attraction for the sense of hearing. By focusing on one’s sacred form of the Divine, this intensity of distraction of the form or sight gradually wanes.

2. *Manas Dhyana* (Mental Focus on the Form of the Deity)

The mind wanders into the material sounds and forms because the mind is either full of *rajas* (passion) or *tamas* (sluggishness and dullness). By focusing on a sacred, pure *mantra* of a deity and the holy form of a deity, both impurities of passion and sluggishness are destroyed. Consequently, the mind becomes filled with *sattva* (purity and lucidity) and begins to focus in meditation with great ease. It is through inner purity that the practitioner becomes proficient in meditation.

According to the above account one may ask if meditation on the *mantra* and form are naturally sacred. Why then do we add the adjectives of “holy” and “pure” in describing them? In answer, I say there are three kinds of deities of worship:

First, deities filled with impurity (*tamas*);
Second, deities filled with passion (*rajas*);
And third deities filled with purity (*sattva*).

The first category includes beings such as ghosts, demons, birds, desirous of material objects, spirits and those deities who are angry, greedy, jealous, drunkards, violent, liars, egotists and back-biters. These deities are *tamasic* in nature, and are of the lowest type.

In the second category are those deities living in the seven lower realms, and practitioners who accumulate supernormal powers by ascending from the *Muladhara Chakra* (located on the basal end of the spine) to the realms of the Thousand-Petals-Lotus (above the third-eye). These are all still in the realm of duality and have not risen above passion and desire (*rajas*).

Third are those Saints and gurus who have attained the direct knowledge of God, and also the deities and Divine incarnations like Shri Hanuman with tranquil composure, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva with a meditative posture, Lord Vishnu, and the propitious forms of Lord Rama and Krishna. All of these are luminous and pure (*sattva*) forms.

By meditating on the name and form of a deity whose nature is *tamas*, demonic tendencies arise in the practitioner’s mind. Meditating on the deity whose form is *rajas*, a practitioner’s mind becomes filled with cravings for actions. Meditating on a deity,

whose nature is *sattva*, the divine qualities manifest in the heart of the practitioner. The devotee also maintains the desire to perform actions with detachment. The reason for such outcomes is that through meditation upon a certain deity, the practitioner begins to imbibe all the qualities of that respective deity.

Generally, when an accomplished guru initiates a student into the practice of *mantra* and divine form, that name and form are considered sacred. Therefore, by worshipping that name and form the practitioner becomes pure and desire-less. However, in my opinion, of all the names and forms, the name and form of the *Satguru* is the most pure and Divine, and therefore, you should meditate on the name and form of the guru. In fact, all three *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* are binding and keep us in the cycle of birth and death. Even gods under the sway of the three *gunas* are affected accordingly. However, a true *Satguru* is always connected to the Divine and is never under the sway of the *gunas* or sensory desires. Except for the *Satguru* (and Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) all other deities are under the sway of the *gunas*. The other consideration is that the forms of the deities are created by the collective imaginations of common people. The practitioner cannot be certain about the deity's original form since it has been created from the collective imagination of people. Therefore, the results of their meditation are also often imaginary. However, through recitation of the *mantra* given by the accomplished guru, the practitioner will see the real form of the Divine. The form of the true guru, who is a conscious living human being, can be directly experienced, and it is not imaginary.

The *Ramacharitmanas* declares: "Behold the form of the deity associated with the sacred name! Without the encounter of the Divine name, it is not possible to have the knowledge of

the Divine form.” The form of the Divine guru is perceptible, conscious, and real. A practitioner can meditate on the true guru’s form with certainty about its authenticity. All other deities bless the practitioner indirectly but the true gurus, both through their manifest and un-manifest form, shower grace on the practitioner. All other deities only live in the heart of the devotee but the *Satguru* resides in the heart of the devotee and also is manifest in bodily form. The *Satgurus* encompass all deities and all *mantras* within themselves. The *Skanda Purana* supports this claim. Lord Shiva explains to Goddess Parvati: “Oh goddess, this two letter “guru” *mantra* is the royal of all *mantras*. It is the essence of all *Vedas*, *Puranas* and scriptures. Have no doubt about this.”

When a practitioner performs *japa* of the guru and meditates on his/her form, he transcends the cycle of death and rebirth. Sant Tulsi Das says: “Only the fortunate are able to see the Divine form of the guru within. These have found the boat (of the guru *mantra*) that takes them across the ocean (*Samsara*) of the cycle of birth and death.”

I do not want to impose my ideas on the devotees, but I consider it is necessary to guide them in the right direction, toward success in their spiritual endeavors. Practitioners should carefully study the scriptures and the teachings of Sants. This would help them choose a guru who is able to fulfill all their desires. Practitioners would not have to experience remorse after meditation practice (when does not yield desired results), nor fear that it is not rewarding.

In the *Shrimad Bhagvata*, Shri Shukadeva Ji teaches his disciple Parikshat about the merits of deity worship in the following ways. He provides a long list of deity worship (meditation on different gods and goddesses in Hindu tradition) for the purpose of acquiring

chosen goals, which correspond to the deities' wish-granting powers:

The one who is desirous of the radiance of Brahma should worship the god Brahaspati. The one who desires extraordinary strength or power should worship Lord Indra. The one who desires children should worship Prajapati. The one who desires prosperity should worship Maya Devi. The one who desires radiance should worship the god of fire. The one who desires wealth should worship the Vasus. The one who wants to become heroic should worship Rudra. The one who desires abundance of food should worship Aditi (the mother of gods). The one who desires heaven should worship sons of Aditi. The one who desires sovereignty should worship Vishvadeva. The one who desires dominion of subjects should worship deities. The one who desires long life should worship Ashvini Kumars. The one who desires health and well-being should worship the mother earth. The one who desires fame should worship the Goddess of Wisdom. The one who desires beauty should worship celestial *gandharvas*. The one who desires a beautiful wife should worship the celestial maiden Urvashi. The one who desires to become the lord of the universe should worship Brahma. The one who desires prominence should worship Yajna Purusha. The one who desires treasures should worship Lord Varuna. The one desires knowledge and wisdom should worship Lord Shankara. The one who desires conjugal love should worship Goddess Parvati. The one who desires virtues (*dharma*) should worship Lord Vishnu. The one who desires to protect the lineage should worship the ancestors. The one who desires to escape obstructions should worship Yakshas. The one who desires to be strong should worship Maruts. The one of desires to attain dominion should worship the gods of Maruts. The one who desires to get skill in exorcising should worship the

goddess Nirrti (the goddess of death and destruction). For material enjoyments, one should worship the Moon deity. For the purpose of going beyond worldly desires one should meditate on the Supreme Being Narayana. The one who is wise—filled with aspirations, or without desires, or the seeker of *moksha*—should worship the Supreme Being through intense *Bhakti yoga*. The wellbeing of the worshipers lies in seeking the company of the devotees of the Supreme Being and acquiring an unshakable trust in the Divine.

Having considered the above analysis, the practitioner must decide what form of deity is to be worshiped for the purpose of fulfillment of all desires, because one does not feel satisfied by achieving only one of the desires described above. Which deity has the ability to bestow all desires? According to Paramhans Shukdev Ji Maharaj, only the One Supreme Lord is able to fulfill all our desires, and those who are devotees of God (who are always immersed in the love of God) are even greater than the Supreme Being.

Lord Kapil describes the characteristics of an accomplished devotee: “Those who abandon attachment to this world and the other world, and who abandon the desire for wealth, cattle, and house, etc... and who devote themselves to Me, who meditate on Me and who surrender to Me, I help them go across the ocean of life and death.”

Such individuals who have achieved the unity of *atman* (soul) and *Paramatman* (Supreme Soul, God) are known as Sants. According to the *Bhagavad Purana* there is no one greater than a Sant in the eyes of the Divine. Lord Krishna says to his disciple Uddhava Ji: “All devotees like you are very dear to me. They are dearer to me than Lord Brahma, Lord Shankara, my brother Bal Ram, Goddess Lakshmi and even my own soul. Therefore, I walk

behind these Sants hoping that the dust arising from their holy feet would touch my body and purify me.”

In the scriptures and in the Sant literature are found many descriptions of the unity between Sants and the Supreme Being. The difference is that the Supreme Being is hidden (cannot be seen) but the Sant is present in the material body and is visible. The Supreme Being is unmanifest and the Sant is manifest. The Supreme Being has unqualified form and the Sant has attributes. The Supreme Being cannot be perceived through the senses but the Sant can be seen. The Supreme Being is Nameless and the Sant has a name. In essence, however, both are the same and there is no difference. In other words, the unmanifest and incomprehensible Supreme Reality becomes manifest in the form of the *Satguru*. Lord Kuber’s sons Nalkubera and Manigreeva told Lord Krishna:

“Oh God, Sants are your manifest forms and my eyes should always behold their divine *darshan*.” Many Sants such as Sant Kabir, Guru Nanak, Sant Garib Das, Sant Tulsi Das and Sant Tulsi Sahab, Swami Brahmananda, and Sant Mehi Sahab all speak about the oneness of the Sant and the Supreme Being. These Sants also laud the glory of Sants and sing about the likeness of Sants and God. These teachings guide us to consider that there is no better divinity to worship other than the form of the *Satguru*. One should diligently worship the form of the deity according to the instruction of the guru. Owing to differences in faith people seek out gurus according to their own faith and mindset. Therefore, gurus accordingly have different reasons to instruct devotees to meditate on various forms of deities. For that reason it is not correct to force upon them our own views and preferences.

Our Gurudev elucidates: It is said that many devotees worship

various deities as their chosen divinities. Even though the names and forms of these deities are different, their inner essence or *atman* is the same. Until a believer realizes the inner form of the guru, his or her devotion is not rewarding. By realizing the inner Self of the chosen deity, one will attain the realization of the Supreme Being. There is no doubt about it. Each deity contains material, causal, subtle, supra causal, and the *Kaivalya* (the Supreme State), the level of pure consciousness. A practitioner who is not cognizant of the essential Self of the deity and does not seek to realize it, and only stays in the material name and form of the deity, will not be able to attain liberation and the full benefit: absolute, eternal peace and joy.

When such understanding regarding the form of deities is had by the devotees then they will certainly gain the same benefits as those who worship the *Satguru*. A devotee who really understands the nature of the inner Self of his deity will not succumb to worshipping many deities in order to please them for personal gain. In other words, the essential form of each deity is the same, then, why go from god to god for gaining material things? The practitioner will understand that the colors of the pillow may vary but the cotton is always of one substance. In the same way, the deities have different characteristics but their essential Self is the same. Therefore, a practitioner with one-pointed faith, and through intense meditation, will be able to attain that essential inner Self. But if a devotee is too occupied trying to please many deities little by little, he will not be able to get freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Material name and form are not everlasting. Subsequently, by meditating on them it is not possible to attain the eternal State. Some devotees, whose ultimate goal is the eternal essential inner Self, begin with an early stage of practice. At this stage they are still

focused on the material name and form, and they have not yet moved on to the higher stages of meditation. Should they leave the body at that stage, they will again get a human body and will proceed on the path of meditation. In this way, obtaining increasingly higher human forms in consecutive lives they will eventually attain liberation.

Now the questions arise: What is the correct method to meditate on the material form of the deity, to meditate on the light or subtle form of the deity, and, finally, to meditate on the subtlest form, the Divine Sound form (also known as *Nada Brahma*)? The answer: Just as the mythical Chakor bird constantly stares at the moon; just as a tortoise, even though she stays in water, constantly thinks of her eggs on the dry land; just as a woman carrying a water pot keeps attention in the pot on her head even while talking to others; just as the legendary snake keeps attention on its *mani* (jewel) while hunting; just as a circus performer focuses full attention in the act being performed; just as a devoted wife keeps her attention on her husband who is traveling; just as a woman while husking the grains pays attention to the grain thrasher; just as a baby bird or a baby cow keeps its attention on the mother; just as an archer keeps attention on the goal; just as a thief always thinks about others' money, in the same way a practitioner should always concentrate on the deity and keep constant single-minded attention on the deity.

The mythical Chakor bird first sees the moon then falls in love with it; the turtle after seeing her eggs keeps her focus on them; the women carrying the water pot on her head continues to keep her focus on it. The circus performer is familiar with the act and pays attention to it. The devoted wife has seen her husband and then thinks about him when he is gone. A grain-thrasher first feels the thrasher and then pays attention to operating it. A baby bird

and baby calf has seen his mother and waits for her even when she is gone to forage. Even the thief has first seen the money of others and then attempts to steal it. However, the practitioner has not seen the deity within and yet tries to behold the form on the basis of his belief that the deity is present. The practitioner becomes anxious when he does not see the deity within and greatly desires to have a glimpse of the deity. The practitioner does not pay attention to his comforts. He cries out in devotion to see the deity, pleading with the deity to show his face within. Sometimes a devotee acts in ecstasy like a mad person, and other times, he laughs, dances, weeps, and beseeches. So in reality this love for the deity cannot be compared to the above examples because the above analogies have actually seen their object of love. But Sants use these comparisons to convey the message of intense devotion and focus. I would like to convey their intent in using these examples.

The Chakor bird is far away from the moon. The moon does not reciprocate the love for the bird, but the Chakor is in love with the moon and stares at the moon. Sants compare the intense and unrequited love of the Chakor bird with the love of a devoted practitioner. Sant Paltu Sahab describes the plight of the practitioner as follows:

The method of inner seeing is understood through allegories. Just as a Chakor bird, according to myths, stares at the moon without blinking, in the same way a practitioner with full and single-minded concentration must focus within. Just as the bird does not remove her eyes from the moon and turns her head to stare at the moon as it moves across the sky – even when the moon sets she continues to look for the absent moon. Just as when the bumble bee gets trapped overnight in the lotus when the sun sets and the lotus flower closes

its petals – in its love for the lotus, and does not leave the lotus and dies as a result. Just as an insect is attracted to the flame and surrenders its life to it, so a practitioner should focus on a single point in meditation. Just as a thief loves to take the money of others, in the same way, a practitioner through intense focus should try to attain that secret treasure within. In essence, just as the bird loves the moon, the bumble bee loves the lotus flower, as the insect loves the flame and the thief loves others' money, in the same way through *drishti yoga* (yoga of focused gaze with intense concentration) the meditation practitioner should seek to attain the divine light within through intense love of the deity.

We are human beings and the Supreme Being is always with us. However, we are unable to love the Supreme Being as the Chakor bird loves the moon. We try to focus our gaze at the Divine form of the deity in our inner heart, but our mind gets distracted and we begin to see other scenes created by our thoughts. We get preoccupied with trivial distractions. Our mind gets diverted by the slightest sounds outside and by minor diversions. Ironically, the bird cannot live without the moon. Nevertheless, we, without any care for the vision of the Divine Being, consider ourselves happy without the experience of the Supreme! Sant Tulsi Das compares a devotee's intense devotion to God with the love of Chakor to the moon. He asks the devotees to follow the example Chakor bird in their love and dedication for God.

The moon does not love the bird but the bird loves the moon. However, the Supreme Being has loved us since our beginning and never forgets us, though we have entirely forgotten the Divine. The bird is ready to sacrifice its life for the moon but we cannot even sacrifice insignificant pleasures for the Divine. The bird becomes

impatient when the moon disappears behind a cloud and cries in separation. Yet, we are not concerned that the Divine has been hiding under the material layers of our body and mind and we never become restive or yearn for Him. Instead, we fill our stomach and go to sleep. Through this example it becomes clear that we are conceited devotees and worse than this bird. Sant Sundar says: “Focus on the inner sky of the heart just as the Chakor bird keeps intense attention on the moon.”

According to Sant Tulsi Das Ji Maharaj: “Just as the Chakor is delighted to see the moon, similarly, the devotees become joyful on seeing God.” The Sants give many other examples to illustrate this point. A tortoise lives in the water, but lays eggs on the dry ground. With the power of her concentration she hatches her eggs. Unfortunately, despite the fact that we are humans, we cannot keep our focus on God. A devotee who, while engaged in quotidian activities with his body and senses, is not able to keep attention on the Divine will meander in this world like a hunter after losing his game, wandering aimlessly from forest to forest.

A village woman with her friends goes to a well to fetch water. After filling her pots, she puts one pot on her head and the other pot she holds under one of her arms. With her other hand she carries her rope and bucket. She also conducts a conversation with her friends, but balances the pot on her head with full concentration. She knows that a slight loss of focus might shift the balance, therefore, keeps full attention on the pot. Sants say that a village woman is able to keep her attention on water pots but a devotee is not able to focus on the Divine form of the deity. We are so engrossed in the entanglement of the senses that we forget the Divine. In other words, we are not able to focus our mind even for a few moments.

A *maniyar* snake (cobra pearl snake) carries a *mani* (a shining jewel) in its mouth. The snake hides in a hole during the day, but at night comes out and looks for food in the light of that gem. If the snake hears a sound, it puts the gem back in its mouth and hides in the hole. It always stays alert about the whereabouts of the gem because this gem is the source of its livelihood. The snake cannot live without its gem and dies when it is lost. Sants say that practitioners should remain alert in meditation on their chosen divinities because, for devotees, the deity is one of the most important things. If you could not make the deity the center of your focus, then it is difficult to say when the sun of your life might set and your life become filled with darkness. Therefore, the deity should be the center of your life, should be the focus of your devotion. All activities should be done by keeping the form of the deity in mind. In short, you consider the deity your all in all. *Sadhaks*, you should be so attached to the deity that you pine for *darshan* and experience agony when you are not able to focus on the deity,

A circus gymnast performs exceptional movements requiring intense focus. He plays tricks with sticks and ropes. The gymnast does not lose his focus but stays attentive on the rope. He understands that even a moment of distraction can cause him to fall, and that would be end of the performance. Similarly, a devotee should keep an intense focus on the deity. He should skillfully perform daily activities, but should remain detached while interacting with people. He should keep attention on the deity because if he loses the focus he will remain stuck in the cycle of death and rebirth and his meditation would not be fruitful.

According to Hindu tradition, a devoted wife is constantly dedicated to her husband. Although she may face many challenges

in her life, she does not even think about another man, even in her dreams. She devotes herself to the family of her husband and does everything that pleases her husband. When the husband travels abroad she eagerly waits for his return. Engrossed in the love of her husband, she is not able to enjoy the pleasures of food or ornaments. She constantly prays for her husband's wellbeing and wishes for his safe return. According to Hindu myths, some devoted women did not even hesitate to mount the pyre with their husbands when they were departed to other worlds. The purpose of this example is not to endorse the practice of widow self-immolation, but, rather, to illustrate the one-pointed commitment of love and intense dedication. There exist rare examples of men and women devoted in love.

This point can further be illustrated by a folktale. One devoted wife's husband travelled abroad. After many years, she heard the news of his return. Excited by the news, she ran to welcome her husband home. On the way, a *pandit* (priest) had spread out his prayer mat for offering his ritual offerings in the river. The woman was engrossed in the joy of welcoming her husband back that she stepped on the prayer mat and proceeded. When she returned, the priest had finished his rituals. After seeing her, the *pandit* shouted: "Oh, mad woman! You don't pay attention to your surroundings and mindlessly walk along. In your carelessness, you soiled my prayer mat due to your carelessness." The devoted wife replied: "I was so engrossed in the love of my husband that I did not even see you or your mat, but if you were also absorbed in meditation on the Divine, then how did you see me?"

In essence: we study the *Puranas* and other scriptures, but do not know how to truly commit ourselves to the devotion of God.

We should be ashamed of an example like that of a stork. The stork sits in the pond in complete stillness while his heart is busy—intent on calculating a move for catching a fish. The stork seems to be sitting still in meditation but its mind contemplates catching a fish.

All of the above examples have one thing in common, that is, maintaining focus despite the busyness of day-to-day life. Seekers should practice intense and focused concentration during their meditation (*sadhana*). Furthermore, like a devoted wife, a meditator should infuse himself/herself with intense love for God. We should have a one-pointed focus on one deity and not try to please different gods. Even when we face challenges, we should not seek the help of other deities in times of desperation. Also, a practitioner should not insult other deities, because this interrupts one's practice of focused devotion. Devotee should visualize the form of their chosen deity in other deities and honor them. It is not advised to worship other deities simply because of the desire for material gains; this may cause disruption in the progress of the devotee.

Practitioners should be determined to see their *ishta deva* (chosen deity), just as a devoted wife's mind is always eager to see her god-like-husband. We should yearn day and night for a glimpse of the deity and eagerly wait for it. A devotee should observe the following disciplines in order to please the deity: "Abandon the cravings for the pleasures of food; abandon the desire for beautifying ornaments and clothes; forsake the joys of comfortable beds; abandon all the material objects that distract the mind." The devotee should also reject names and forms that distract the mind in meditation, and give up all the lifestyles that make the mind agitated.

Like a devoted wife who completely absorbed in the love of her husband becomes oblivious to her other relatives, similarly,

we should only focus all our thoughts on the holy and auspicious countenance of the deity. We should become so absorbed in the Divine form of the deity that we lose any sense of separate consciousness between the devotee and deity, just as a lump of salt becomes one with ocean-water. In a state of such forgetfulness, we attain the mental state “in which the deity is seen in all visible forms.”

If devotees find even the slightest delight in a form other than their *ishta devata* (chosen deity) and take joy in sensory pleasures, then their resolve is not firm. One who forsakes Divine bliss for transitory pleasures is imprudent, and will not be able to obtain the eternal joy. If, for some reason, the devoted wife’s husband does not return on time, then it must be due to her adverse fate. However, if a devotee is not able to see the Divine form of deity in meditation, then there must be deficiency in the devotee’s meditation. Moreover, there must be some deficiency in his or her devotion, resolve, trust, and conduct. It is not due to the lack of compassion of the deity.

The village woman uses one hand to thrash the grain and with other hand she puts the grain in the thrasher. Simultaneously, she keeps an eye on people’s activities in the courtyard. Since she keeps her concentration on her task, she does not smash her hand in the thrasher. The devotees who are desirous of progress in meditation should keep their attention on the deity while doing all the activities of the world. If *sadhaks* do not do this, they will continue to endure the sufferings caused by the cycle of death and rebirth.

Just as a calf and a baby chick, when separated from their mothers, eagerly call on their mothers and cry out in desperation, similarly, devotees should focus on their deities, call out their names, and yearn to behold the sight of their deities. Even as an archer, while

doing target practice, keeps his complete attention on the target, similarly, a practitioner must keep his attention contemplating upon the focal point, and beholding the target as instructed by the guru.

Just as a thief always loves other people's wealth and is eager to steal it, a devotee should love the wealth of *Bhakti* (devotion) of the Divine, making consistent efforts to attain it. By focusing on the material name and form of the deity, the capacity and ability to focus on the subtle name and form becomes developed. Our Gurudev (Maharshi Mehi) used to say that the young child initially must write big letters before he can develop the skill for reading and writing smaller letters. In the same way, without meditating on the physical name and form it is difficult to meditate on the subtle name and form.

Some practitioners approach me with their experiences: "During meditation I see many incredible lights and also hear various celestial sounds." Then, I ask if they are able to focus on the form of their deity? Generally they say no. Then, I say, "Without accomplishing the focus on the material name and form of the deity, one cannot hear and see the subtle forms of light and sound." The practitioner then asks: "What is this that I see and hear?" I tell them that that this sound and light is illusory, not real. Our Gurudev has given a clear instruction:

"Practice the recitation (*japa*) of the name of the guru and focus on the form of the guru (*manas dhyana*). These preliminary practices purify the mind and intensify the focus. The subtle form of meditation begins at the center of the eyebrows (*Ajna Chakra*), also known as the third eye. Maharshi Raman calls the third eye "the *Agni Chakra*." This is the place where the channels of *Ida* and *Pingala* converge. Here the subtle light-point begins to emerge.

From this point the inner subtle meditation begins. Therefore, in order to focus on this point, it is important to concentrate initially on the physical body of the deity. We concentrate on the material form with both streams of the eyes and focus so intensely that the material form of the deity becomes infinitesimally minute. And at this juncture, the gaze becomes so concentrated upon the material form that we cease to see the form. The reader may be surprised at this, but with practice it is certain to happen in time.

While describing the method of meditation, Shri Shukdeva tells Parikshit, “With the assistance of discerning power of intellect, withdraw the mind and senses from the sensory objects. Then withdraw the mind, which is restless due to cravings, with diligence, and yoke it to the auspicious form of the Divine. Further, through a still mind, the practitioner should focus on one part of the deity’s body. In this way, by focusing on a single part of the body at a time, the practitioner should keep the mind away from worldly desires, and eventually it becomes completely immersed in the Divine form of the deity. At this time, pay attention so that no other thoughts enter in the mind. Once the mind is completely focused, then with purified intellect, disciplining the mind, merge the mind with the intellect, and merge the individual Self into the inner soul. Then uniting your inner Self with the Supreme Being, a still-minded person merges into the Supreme tranquil State.”

Lord Krishna also emphasizes: “A wise man should withdraw his senses from the sensory objects through the mind. The mind should be yoked to Me (the divine form of God) with the help of the charioteer, the intellect. The mind that is scattered in different directions should be withdrawn and focused in one place. While meditating, do not think of other parts of My body, only My smiling

face. Having focused your concentration on the face, then remove the gaze from there and place it in the Inner Sky. Finally, leaving that behind, unite to My pure form without thinking anything else.” In this quote the focusing on the Inner Sky is referred to the subtle form of (*shunya dhyana*) meditation. The *shunya* does not mean “emptiness”, but means devoid of material components, just as a *shaligram* (the stone representation of Lord Vishnu) does not have any physical form, but it is considered a form of the Divine, and is one of the prominent deities in Hinduism. (Even though it is in stone form, it is believed to be imbued with power.)

The Inner Sky (inner heart) is devoid of all five sensory elements. All sensory name and form disappear here. Generally, the material name and form distract the mind and make it agitated. The significance of *Shunya* or subtle meditation is that since there exist no sensory objects, the mind becomes settled and focused. At that point there are no physical desires to pull you downwards. Saints laud the importance of this stage. Sant Kabir says: “The *Shunya* meditation tames the mind of the practitioner.” Sant Mirabai says: “When the consciousness rises to the Inner Sky, it becomes restrained.” We can explain with a simple example: Just as a snake crawls in a zig-zag manner, but becomes straight when it enters in the hole, similarly, when the mind is engrossed in the nine gates of the body, it is fickle, but when it enters in the tenth gate, it becomes straight (without any crooked thoughts), and becomes peaceful. Sant Tulsi Sahab says: “With the association with the guru (in the passage way of the inner self), and with the help of the guru *mantra*, the great poisonous mind is brought under control.” The “passage way” refers to *Brahmarandhra*, “the guru’s abode.” It is the gateway to *Brahman*, it is also known as the tenth

gate, and is also referred to as the *shunya marga*, the subtle path.

Until the mind is focused on a single form among many forms, how can it be focused on one part of the body? If it cannot be focused on one part of the body, how can it focus on the Formless? Therefore, it is important to initially practice concentrating the mind, and focused gaze by means of the material form of the deity. In the *Bhagavatam* Lord Krishna says: “First focus on My holy lotus-feet, then knees, torso, heart, etc... Thus one at a time, bring attention to different parts of the body (each part of the body is named). Finally, bring the gaze between My eyebrows and meditate on the Inner Sky. At that point remove the attention from even that spot and merge into the Formless Sky of Consciousness.”

So, what is the meaning of consecutively focusing on the lower body of the deity and then moving the attention upward to the middle of the eyebrows? It implies that the mind is moving from material to subtle, from gross to subtle. Once the gaze is focused on the middle of the eyebrows of the deity, then the focus of the practitioner will also naturally be on his own mid-eyebrow-point (the *Ajna Chakra*, Seat of the Soul).²

Some practitioners ask: “Why does the mind not completely focus on the material form of the deity?” The answer is: just as in a lake many lotuses bloom and the bumble bee hovers from flower to flower looking for the nectar of a flower, the mind thinks about the various limbs of the glorious form of the deity, but remains restless. Only a persistent practitioner through intense concentration focusing consecutively on different parts of the body of the deity

2 I have provided the above technique on the basis of various scriptures and teachings of Saints. However, devotees should follow the instructions of their teachers in doing meditation. This will not be contrary to the correct path.

brings focused gaze to the center of the eyebrows. However, many practitioners become fixed in the splendid form of the deity, and do not move upward. Paramhans Dhayanand Ji says: “Don’t become fixated by the physical form of the deity; keep moving upward.”

3. *Drishti Yoga* (The Yoga of Inner “Seeing”—Light Meditation)

There is more attraction with the subtle form of the deity than in his material (physical) form. The consciousness is much easier to become absorbed in the subtle form rather than the material form. The worshippers of the qualified or physical form of the Divine do not consider the significance of subtle meditation. They argue that it is not possible to meditate and concentrate on the Formless since without an object it is impossible to concentrate our mind and gaze at it. However, through a close consideration of the subtle form, one can begin to understand the possibilities and purpose of the subtle meditation.

There are two kinds of scenes within the inner world. One is darkness and the other is light. Initially, when practitioners close their eyes, the darkness is seen within. Then, after some time of diligent meditation practice, the light emerges. First, during visualization, the mind’s eye sees the shapeless darkness. In the same way the light is without form and shape. But through the mind’s eye, the practitioner is able to concentrate their gaze upon the inner light.

Sight is seen only through eyes. Focusing the inner gaze in the darkness and light is called the meditation of seeing, or *drishti yoga*. The recitation of a *mantra* and the meditation on the sound is called sightless meditation. Focusing the mind in the darkness is

called the meditation of visualization in darkness. Concentrating the gaze on the light is known as practice of visualization in light. One's gaze must become concentrated in such a way that the whole darkness becomes a single point. In other words, the power of gazing gathers the whole darkness and transforms into one point. This dark point is known as the dark *bindu* or mark. By focusing on this point unceasingly, the white point emerges, and is known as the "white *bindu*" or "point" (*bindu* or small dot), "white lotus," and "*pranav bindu*." From this white, effulgent *bindu* the meditation of light begins.

These various kinds of meditation, both gross and subtle, have been described by the Sants in the following ways. Withdrawing from all other physical names and sounds and only focusing on the name given by the guru is called: "material but Formless meditation." Withdrawing from all material forms and focusing on the image of the deity as taught by the guru is called material-visualization meditation. The meditation on the point or *bindu* is the subtle form of meditation. The meditation on the countless divine sounds is considered the subtlest form of meditation since it does not require visualization or focus on any form. This is called the most subtle and Formless meditation.

When we close our eyes and do not see any objects, this does not mean that there exists nothing that can be seen. In other words, the shapeless darkness is also an object. Unfortunately, we cannot even see pure darkness because we are constantly thinking about the images of the world, and instead of seeing darkness we see the imaginary sights projected on the screen of inner mind. Without practicing the meditation of focusing in the darkness, it is not possible to see the subtle light that lies deep within. The experience

of Divine light in the meditation brings joy, and the progress then becomes rapid. Consequently, one's faith and conviction becomes stronger. Goswami Tulsi Das says: "This form of meditation of the Divine is easy and gives joy; who will not enjoy it."

However, until the sheath of darkness is in front of us, it seems that this is a very difficult path to realize the Divine. The fountain of joy has not yet opened, and progress in meditation is slow. Furthermore, if the conviction of practitioners is weak; their faith is also not mature. Gradually, the practitioner may become doubtful of the meditation technique because progress is not in sight. Some even leave meditation and become fake *sadhus*. Some abandon the path and expound meditation to others to save face. Some open *ashrams* and indulge in satisfying the sensory desires. This apparently impermeable vast realm of darkness is capable of destroying the enthusiasm of many great seekers, making them disheartened and turn toward the world. However, keep in mind that a coward leaves the battleground but a fighter continues to struggle to the end. The courageous practitioner battles the realm of darkness and diligently engages in the yoga of *drishti* or focused gaze. This is the juncture. It is essential to be firm in moral rectitude. At this time it is important to dedicate day and night to the practice. It is necessary to discipline your daily lifestyle and study the scriptures. It is essential to focus the mind and gaze, follow the practice according to the instruction of the guru. Therefore, it is necessary to surrender oneself to the guru, and serve the guru with the mind, body, and life-breath, in other words, diligently following the teachings of the guru. For this, it is important to surrender to the holy feet of the guru.

When we gaze at a scene in the middle, our mind becomes focused and we only see the center of the scene, which is the source

of the scene. This focal point can be likened to a seed. At the very center of the seed lies the invisible energy, which is the source of the visible tree. Even though the source of the tree lies in the seed, many are not able to understand the mystery. The implication of this analogy is that the cause of darkness lies in the light, the cause of the light lies in the sound, the cause of the sound lies in the material subtle sounds, the cause of the subtle sounds lies in the Infinite Divine Reality. In other words, the primal seed, the cause of this whole world—both seen and unseen—is the Divine Being. Until we realize the direct experience of the Divine, we are engrossed in the delusion of the material world. As soon as we have complete knowledge of the Divine, the other forms of material and subtle reality disappear.

As discussed earlier, the center of our energy is the Divine Being. However, as our consciousness is bound in the physical body, its visionary center is considered to be the *Ajna Chakra* (tenth gate). As soon as the consciousness becomes focused on the *bindu* (point) in the center of the realm of darkness, it realizes that its source is beyond this center. Thus, consecutively transcending the centers of lower realms and ascending upward within, the consciousness goes beyond the world of material name and form and merges into the root center of the Supreme Being, the original source of all creation.

As we discussed earlier, the imaginative center of our consciousness energy is the *Ajna Chakra* or third eye. The attenuated form of the conscious energy is categorized under four names: mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), thought processes (*chitta*), and ego or “I” principle (*ahamkara*). These four create this world, which is transitory and conditional. In essence: As we progress toward our center, then these created images of the world slowly begin to

dissolve in the mind, because this is all created by the mind. Then the mind and intellect become dissolved in me. I created my world and I am created by the Supreme Being. Logically, the creation becomes dissolved in the cause. In the same way, through diligent meditation my world will merge in the mind, the mind will merge in me, and then I will merge in the Divine.

Thus holding onto this deepest conviction you should meditate (*sadhana*). You should consider that all the darkness you see is illusory and it is inevitable that illusion will be destroyed. In this way, first you should disassociate yourself from the names and forms of the world created by the mind. Then with full intense concentration you should gaze at the darkness within. Gradually begin to concentrate scattered thoughts and gaze into the darkness. Slowly, by concentrating your sight, focusing your gaze (concentrated seeing within), establish yourself in the center of the darkness. In other words, focus on the middle of the darkness.

Remember, do not hasten to get success in this endeavor. With great patience and earnestness withdrawing your mind constantly, try to prevent your gaze from wandering up or down or left to right. When the gaze moves away from its focal-point, then concentration disappears. When the gaze is unstable, the mind becomes restless. When the mind becomes restive then again, the thoughts of name and form of this world begin to arise in the mind. During this practice, it is very important to concentrate both the gaze and the mind so no disturbance arises between the sight and the focal-point. However, as one begins to have success reaching the state of concentration, some physical, material, and supernatural obstructions emerge. Therefore, the practitioner must be alert and deal with these in earnest. Otherwise there will be much difficulty in attaining the

goal and piercing through the center.

1. Divine Obstructions: The supernatural obstructions include forward-facing loud sounds, high winds, shaking of the ground, arising of great fear in the mind—fear that my breath will stop and not return again (as the breath slows down). It may seem that someone is shaking your body, but when opening the eyes no one is present.

In order to protect yourself from these obstructions please take refuge in a *Satguru*.

2. Bodily obstructions: Dizziness, heaviness in the head, bodily tension, pain in the eye, achiness in the head and in the body. Breathing may become slower or faster and body heat may increase resulting in sweatiness.

In order to protect yourself from these obstructions you should practice the five disciplines, *niyamas* (truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-hording and sexual control) with great diligence.

3. Material or physical Obstructions: These include a snake's appearance on your body, a lizard falling on your head, a conflict in the household, unexpected criticism and humiliation, receiving an surprising phone call or unexpected guest, disturbance by animal noises.

The only way to stop these obstructions is a commitment and discipline to sit in meditation even if you might have to face death. Some reasons and cures for additional physical afflictions: During focusing on the point in meditation, the consciousness begins to withdraw from the senses. All the subtle channels of yoga begin to be drawn toward the third eye or *Sushumna*. When we try to focus our mind at one point, it can strain the brain. And if one does not

practice the concentration technique correctly then even the eyes become stressed. One cannot get rid of all these obstructions by means of physical strength. For this we require the strength of the mind, which is obtained through the complete control of all senses, including the practice of celibacy. When a practitioner experiences these physical discomforts he should not worry about it. Only take a short break from the practice of concentration. Then slowly begin the practice again. In this way, the practitioner during meditation *sadhana* engages in concentration and takes short breaks, giving the mind rest from intense focus. Through practicing in this manner, these afflictions begin to abate.

Moreover, the practitioner should earn money with his hard labor by honest means and eat fresh and light foods in small quantities. He should pay attention to protecting the subtle energies by controlling the senses. One should not waste energy on sensory indulgence. Our Gurudev Maharshi Mehi used to say: “Those who guard their celibacy (comprehensive sense-control) find immense strength in the practice of meditation.” Through self-control not only does the mind become firm but it also becomes pure. A person chaste in conduct even without external cleanliness always remains pure. Those whose minds indulge in sensual pleasures, their minds are tainted in spite of external cleanliness. When the strength of the mind and strength of purity increases, practitioners achieve rapid success in their *sadhana* practice. In other words, practitioners are able to concentrate on the inner focal-points; their consciousness begins to rise upward; their mind and vision begin to focus on the point for some time. This focus for brief periods is called *dharana*. Sage Patanjali calls this “the sixth stage of yoga.” When that focus is sustained for longer periods then it is known as *dhyana*—it is

the seventh stage of Patanjali's system of yoga.

In the beginning stages of meditation the gaze does not stay on the object of concentration for a long period of time. After staying focused for some time it loses focus. At that time, the practitioner experiences light that is similar to the sparks of light emerging from the rubbing of two stones. When the practitioner begins to focus for longer periods then he experiences the light similar to that of lightning flashes amidst the dark rain clouds. After such experiences, many practitioners become frightened and open their eyes. But when they see nothing with eyes opened, they then close their eyes and continue. Some practitioners who keep sitting in meditation with closed eyes and unafraid of the inner experience of thunder and lightning, their success becomes more rapid and they continue to see lights of various kinds. This state is known as "the realm of lightning." Such momentary experiences are due to the lack of full focus on the focal-point. Therefore, at this time, the practitioner should not be distracted by all these effulgent lightning flashes and should continue to gaze on the point in the middle of the eyebrows.

When both eye streams are perfectly focused then the first experience of inner light is known by Sants as *pranava bindu*. This infinitesimally small point is filled with radiance and light. In the initial stages, it is difficult to focus on this fine light-point and it appears to vanish. But this mark does not disappear because it is always firm in one place. Our focus does not fix in one place and therefore it seems to disappear. The place where the *bindu* appears, fix your focus and try to concentrate your vision at that point. Through this practice, the focus becomes powerful and stays on the object for longer and longer periods. Eventually, that *bindu* will

not disappear but move with our vision. At this time the practitioner thinks the bindu is moving and not stable, but the fact is that the power of concentration is not yet mature. Nevertheless, the gaze has become so concentrated that it does not separate from the *bindu*-point. By focusing the vision on that point the wavering of the gaze will slowly end. Then the vision will be concentrated on this light *bindu*. At this juncture, the gaze through the power of increased concentration will transform into a very fine needle-like point. And through the light *bindu* (the tenth gate) the practitioner enters into the realm of light. In that state the practitioner begins to experience awe-inspiring lights of varying forms, for example, a lit lamp at a distant place. This is known as the *mandala* or “Zenith of Light”.

Sometimes the practitioner may experience light similar to that of a streaming ray of the sun reflecting colorful floating particles; or he may experience the radiance of a precious jewel. Or he may experience the light similar to that of the nine kinds of glowing gems; or experience light from a fierce fire, which is called “the firelight *mandala*.”

We may see the North Star rising in the morning, or the light from a cluster of stars, which is called “the star *mandala*.” We may see the light of the five elements, or the light of moonlight – the light of a new moon or light of a full moon, also known as the moon *mandala*. This realm of light is known as “the Light *mandala*” or “the Moon *mandala*,” “Nectar *mandala*,” “the thousand-petal lotus,” or “the White Lotus *mandala*.”

Upon entering the light realm, the intense effort to focus as prescribed in *dhristi sadhana* has yielded its reward, and the effort of *dhristi* focus is now no longer necessary for continuing on the path to the Divine. The practitioner here experiences the joys of the

light realm. There are many regions within the light realm, with each higher realm being exponentially larger than the previous. Also the bliss and joy of each successive realm increases greatly. In this realm of light the practitioner sees and converses with his guru and receives further instruction for advancing. The student sees many wonders within each realm, including seeing gods and goddesses and incredibly beautiful scenes of light or landscapes. These realms are still in the world of the senses and mind. However, here the senses experience intense beauty and delight. Suffering as experienced on earth is unknown. Pleasures and joy abound and are so alluring that the student would get trapped here were it not for his guru, who beckons and guides the student to higher and higher regions. Many yogis who arrive in these realms believe they have reached the final destination of bliss and joy. And because these realms are so alluring, they become trapped here. However, these yogis are mistaken and this is not the case. The truly most awesome and blissful regions are further above. These yogis simply are not aware that higher realms exist beyond the lower ones. The souls who reside here are delighted that we have escaped the earth and have advanced to these higher realms, which are extremely welcoming. Each higher realm is exponentially more charming and alluring and the powers (*siddhis*) prove too irresistible for almost all who journey here. The practitioner is bound to have falls and stumbles from the target that are caused by making use of these *siddhis*. It is imperative that the practitioners recognize their falls and diversions, and return to the path as prescribed by their *Satguru*. These setbacks happen and it is important to reestablish oneself with the help of the guru.

Within this “thousand-petal lotus chakra” (*sahasrar chakra*)

are located the highest and middle abodes of gods and goddesses. In other words, seven heavens are situated within it. All the gods and goddesses of blissful heavenly realms reside in this chakra. Here the practitioner beholds the presence of gods and goddesses and converses with them. Having reached this state, the practitioner is able to roam the Divine realms both with this body and without it. Practitioner who ascends to this realm becomes the master of all material sciences. They can develop any material inventions imaginable without any source material. They can destroy someone or burn someone just through the power of their words. They can even make the dead come to life. Those who have reached this state, their blessings and curse always yield results. The practitioners who have reached this realm can even create a new heaven where none existed before. They can touch all existing planets while on this earth. The practitioners can consume fire with no harm to themselves and they can carry the entire ocean in their palms.

An accomplished practitioner can make the Himalayas mountains as small as a mustard seed, can stop the wind and convert day to night and vice versa, can turn poison into nectar and vice versa. He or she alone becomes the store-house of all the powers of the gods and goddesses, and gains all the supernatural powers as described in the holy texts. That knowledge that is hard to be obtained by scholars is easily obtained by the accomplished practitioner. The wealth that worldly people strive hard to procure is easily acquired by him or her. A progeny who can be most difficult for some householders to obtain can easily be conceived by him. The power that is difficult to attain through various rituals and prayers is attained by the practitioner.

Here is the culmination of the *sadhana* of Hatha Yogis. This is

the climax of the performers of the Kundalini Yoga and the apex of worshippers of gods and goddesses. This is the location of the Divine Lake Manasarovar in which myriad brilliant wish-fulfilling lotuses bloom. This is a place where all unfavorable *karmas*, even arising out of the sins such as the killing of fetuses, are destroyed. It is the place where the Divine swan sings and the practitioner learns to differentiate between truth and untruth (knowledge and ignorance). It is the place where the practitioner sees the moon with the infinitely cooling light. By witnessing this, the inner passions that burn the soul become mollified. Gaining a vision of the light, the practitioner sees the entire world as if contained in the palm of the hand. This is the place where the practitioner becomes free of the bondage of the physical body and enters into the subtle body. This is the realm of all *siddhis* (supernatural accomplishments), which present themselves to the service of the practitioner with folded hands. This is the place where seeing the progress of the practitioner the heart of the god Indra becomes jealous and troubled. Going forward from this realm the practitioner becomes the master of all the powers of gods and goddesses. Going beyond this juncture, the practitioner attains complete focus of mind.

But remember, even with a little lack of caution the practitioner can become tempted into the snare of supernormal powers (*siddhis*). He or she faces the danger of losing whatever has been accomplished. This is owing to the fact that at this juncture, the inner agitations have not been completely destroyed nor has a complete control of passions been achieved. Therefore, the practitioner is susceptible to temptations which can cause a fall from the path. This place is extremely slippery; most practitioners are tempted and deviate from the path. Only a select few are able to go onward from this juncture.

The practitioner who advances on the path achieves eternal bliss. We described earlier the experience of moonlight, which should not be considered the complete experience of the light state. The realm of pure light, the center of infallible divine light is far from the realm described thus far.

There are two parts of the realm of the Divine Light: the light of night and the light of day. From the third eye (*Ajna Chakra*) to the moonlight realm is known as the “night realm of light.” From the dawn light to the full sun is known as the “daylight realm.” There are three levels of the day light realm: the light of dawn, the red light of rising sun, and the bright light of the noonday sun. Some say since the sun is also outside why do Sants describe this inner sun? It is important to differentiate between the inner light experience and the common outer experience of sunlight. The outer sun in this material world rises in the morning and sets in the evening. The sun of the inner divine realms, however, once it rises never sets; it unceasingly shines. The practitioners who have experienced the vision of this inner Divine sun will also never experience death. (In other words, they will not be subjected to the cycle of death and rebirth). Sant Kabir says: “The practitioner becomes immortal and never dies.”

Furthermore, the outer sun is warm and gives heat, whereas the inner sun is cool and pleasant. Sant Kabir says: “In the inner Divine sun resides the coolness of the moon.” In other words, the rays of the inner Divine sun are imbued with the coolness similar to the moon. The outer sunlight awakens living beings and brings chatter and activity, but the inner sun is the precursor of Divine Sound. Outer sunlight awakens beings to yearnings and the inner sun removes afflictions. The outer sun renews the strength in the

body and senses, while the inner sun removes the activity of the senses, which become subdued. People who see only the outer sun perform all kinds of actions, while those experiencing the inner sun are drawn to listen to the Soundless Sound (*Nihshabda*). With the outer sun ignorance increases (as humans indulge in mundane activities), but the inner sun removes ignorance and gives rise to Divine knowledge.

Sages call this place “*Surya*”, “*Sun Mandala*”, “the Realm of the Sun”, also “*Trikuti*”, “*Mayabrahma*”, “*Ayodhya*”, “*Chintamani*,” and the “Center of *Brahma Jyoti*.” From this center Brahma creates the universe, Vishnu sustains the universe, and Shiva destroys the universe. From here the subtle strands of the three *gunas* of *Prakriti* (primordial material substratum) arise and flow downward for the creation of material world. The light from this center illuminates the whole universe. All the bright lights of the night originate from this center. Within this center or realm the practitioner attains the greater knowledge of Brahma, which pervades the whole of the creation. Within this realm the practitioner understands the creative forces of *Saguna Brahma* and the manifestation of the Divine. This is the place where all forms of luminosities originate. From this realm all the creatures of the worlds are sustained. This is the place where the practitioner’s subtle body dies and the causal body takes birth. This is the place where the practitioner hears the loud tumultuous inner Divine Sound. This is the end of the realm of material form and it is the beginning of the Formless realm (beyond light—material and subtle forms). This place marks the beginning of the Formless world of Divine Sound. From this place the Unstruck Divine Sound begins. This is the end of the realm dominated by *rajas* or actions and desires. This is the beginning of the realm of

purity or *sattva* and lucidity. Only up to this realm can the mind go. Beyond here the mind cannot go. At this juncture the control of the senses, the strength of the mind, the sway of the desires, the grip of illusion or *maya*, desire to perform unlawful actions, the force of accumulated *karmas* from many lives, the strength of foes and forces of passions, and the power of jealous gods—all the forces that keep the practitioner in bondage—are destroyed. From here the consciousness or soul cannot fall back to lower realms. Having reached here, the practitioner never loses enthusiasm. At this juncture, the anxiety of death disappears. With the piercing, glorious light of this realm, Lord Shiva destroyed the god of lust, the sages annihilated the rogue Vane, and the Goddess Durga burnt the demons with *Dhruma*. The practitioner sees the entire creation from this juncture. In this realm a practitioner can understand the language of any being. Having reached this juncture, the practitioner becomes accomplished in all material sciences and knowledge. At this place all knowledge is subservient to the practitioner.

What I have described above is simply a representation of experiences within; words fall short their descriptions. Any explanation does not in any way fully describe these realms. There are so many forms of Divine light that only the one who has the experience of these realms would know them in their full scope. Our language does not have the tools to describe the Divine light realm. Nevertheless, I have attempted to describe some of these experiences to provide inspiration and edification to practitioners on the path, who can fully appreciate with overwhelming marvel the nature of these realms. Furthermore, not all practitioners experience the identical spectacles. There can be variations of experience depending on the individual's *samskaras* (past lives deeds). This is the reason

that you may find a variation in different Sants' descriptions of the realms. A practitioner must not be confused to hear such variations of descriptions of these realms.

The realm of darkness is dominated by *tamas guna* (ignorance, inertia). The realm of light is dominated by *rajas guna* (passion, activity) and the realm of Divine Sound is dominated by *sattva guna* (purity, lucidity). All the chakras below the third eye—from the *Muladhara* to the *Ajna Chakra*—are dominated by *tamas*. From the third eye to *Trikuti* is the realm dominated by *rajas guna*. And from *Trikuti* to the realm where primordial matter rests in an equilibrium state (beginning of the causal realm), is governed by *sattva*. Above this is the Divine Conscious Sound Realm that is beyond the sway of three *gunas*, qualities. This is also known as *Para Prakrti* (pure or higher Nature). The Conscious Unstruck Sound permeates the whole creation. The Unstruck Sounds of the material realm are pervading within the material creation. This is the reason some fortunate practitioners can hear the Divine Sound in meditation even in the realm of darkness. But generally, the sound experience begins after one has accomplished focus on the subtle point in the third eye.

The Formless pervades the form. The realm of light is the manifestation of the form of the macro-cosmos (*brahmanda*). And the Sound is the Formless macrocosm. The practitioner who becomes accomplished in the light realms begins to experience Divine Sound along with various Divine light experiences. However, after the center of *Trikuti* (the center of *Brahma Jyoti*) the light form becomes absorbed in the Sound (that is formless) since the form arises out of Formless. According to the natural law anything that is created must return to its source and be dissolved therein.

When the practitioner experiences various aspects of the light realm, the consciousness is not drawn toward the Divine Sound owing to its attraction to the light. Moreover, because this light realm is dominated by *rajas*, the mind continues to be affected by activity and passion. In the *Trikuti*, the bright light of the sun destroys the residue of impurities of the mind. Here, purity (*sattva*) pervades the consciousness and *rajas* completely vanishes. At that time, the scenes of the light realm that form the worlds of name and form, begin to fade, and merge into the Formless. The Divine Sound of the Formless realm becomes increasingly strong, to the degree that even though there is some light remaining, the consciousness does not become distracted. Thus, although there is form in the Formless, the mind is not drawn to the forms (experience of the spectacular scenes of the light realm).

The meditation on the Sound is Formless and transcends the realm of name and form. Through this meditation the practitioner reaches the Supreme Being. Through this path the meditator goes beyond all obstacles and achieves the ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The practitioner becomes free from taking birth in this world. The practitioner whose consciousness grasps the Central Sound even once escapes the afflictions of time and death. This practice of meditation is the direct path as was stated by the Prophet Mohammad. By treading this path the practitioner reaches the untainted destination of *Khuda* (a word for God in Urdu) or the realm of the Supreme. This path of meditation is described by Jesus as the eye of the needle, and by going through it one attains the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the path leading to Nirvana as described in Jainism and Buddhism. This is the Unstruck Sound (*Anahat Shabd*) revealed by Guru Nanak, which is heard by closing

the ears, eyes, and mouth. This meditation is the essence of all the different religions, all sacred texts and the core message of all Sants and sages. This meditation takes the practitioner to the ultimate goal. Without this meditation the existence of any religion, sect, or path is incomplete.

This meditation is purifying and transforms the sinner into a sage. By practicing this meditation the great thief and rogue Ratanakar became the great seer Valmiki. This meditation is the highest form of transcendent meditation. By means of this practice one can have the experience of the transcendent Omnipresent Divine Being. This meditation is like a magnet that separates the consciousness from the bondage of the material world. In other words, it frees the practitioner from the attachments and involvements of the phenomenal world. This is the practice through which the practitioner can defy death and crush all fears of death. Through the power of this meditation all gods and goddesses stand in front of the practitioner in service waiting for the practitioner's command. This is the meditation through which a practitioner becomes a storehouse of all powers and *siddhis*. His display of countless miracles does not in any way diminish his power. This is the meditation through which the practitioner becomes a *siddha*, and when fully accomplished, becomes a Sant. The Sant becomes merged in the Divine—unified with the One. Just as when hearing the sound of the *bhringi* insect, other insects also become *bhringis*, by listening to the Divine Sound, ordinary humans become similar to God.³ This is the form of meditation through which the practitioner

3 There is an unusual insect in the Himalayan Mountains, called *bhringi*, which resembles a bee. The *bhringi* preys on insects and hides them in its nest. After hearing its sound of “bhrin, bhrin...,” the other insects also turn into

becomes detached from all sensory distractions and passions. This is that meditation through which the practitioner rises above the bondage of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. At one time the practitioner was engrossed in the form and now he becomes established in the Formless. The individual soul becomes *Brahma* or the Universal Soul. The small particle of the Divine (*anu*, *atman*) becomes the Supreme Divinity (*Vibhu*, *Parmatman*). The one who lived in duality now lives in unity. The one who lived in the world of differentiated reality becomes the undifferentiated. The limited knower becomes all-knowing. The enjoyer of the senses finds joy only in the unity of Universal Consciousness. The one who lived in many becomes one and gains the power to become many out of one. Life of affliction transforms into well-being. The practitioner moves from delusion to Ultimate Reality. Self-forgetfulness transforms into the remembrance of the Divine. Once dependent on external light, he now becomes the source of inner light. Sorrow is transformed into joy. One who was dependent now becomes free—he who was bound is unbound. The one who lived in creation now becomes creator. The enjoyer becomes the doer, and the doer rises above all activities. *Dhyana* becomes *Samadhi* (concentration, union), and *Samadhi* is transformed into the *Nirupadhi Samadhi* (as state without any desires, afflictions and attributes).

Accomplishments in this state can also be described through other examples: The fatherless becomes with father and the father becomes the Lord. The water in the pot transforms into an ocean and the ocean enters into a seashell. Demon Ravana becomes Lord Rama and demon Kansa becomes Lord Krishna. The prison in Brindavan becomes the abode of Lord Krishna. Brindavan and bhringis. Sants use this example illustrates the powerful impact of the sound.

Shyama (*Radha*) becomes Lord Shyam (another name of Krishna), and the servant becomes the master. The one who was indulging in passions becomes like the great Sant Tulsi Das, and the once deluded becomes a source of wisdom. The poor become the master of riches and the miser becomes the fount of compassion. The worldly becomes dispassionate and the attached becomes detached. Craving transforms into contentment; desire turns into desirelessness. Worry transforms into wisdom of remembrance of the Divine, and the wearied finds solace. The coward becomes a great combatant and the witless becomes wise. The one who lived in a body rises above the physical realm. The traveler becomes the destination. The direction itself becomes the center. In this way, through the practice of the Yoga of Sound, the soul inflicted by pain and the heat of desires submerges into the Ocean of Divine Nectar. This is the only straightforward and effortless path to attain the Divine. This is *Sahaj Yoga* (simple, easy, straightforward path). This leads to the attainment of our natural pure state.

This is the highest form of *Bhakti* (devotion) that leads the way to ultimate freedom. This form of devotion is the store-house of all joys and the root of all happiness. This practice of Sound meditation carries the soul to the abode of Vishnu or the Divine. This is the essence of Yogi Shankara's *Vedanta* as expounded by his prominent disciple Padmapada in the *Vedanta Dindima*. This is the Celestial Sound of Lord Krishna's Flute. This is the Sound of the Divine bow of Lord Vishnu. This is the roar of Lord Narsingha that has the power to tremor the wicked hearts of those like the demon Hiranyakshyap. This is the great *mantra* of Lord Shiva. This is the Divine thunder of the goddess Durga. This is the yoga seed of Guru Gorkahnath. This is the true devotion that is performed through

the subtle breath, *prana*. This is the Divine *Veena* (instrument) of Saraswati. This is the Sound power that is permeating the whole universe. This is the *Raram* Sound that pervades every atom of the universe. This is the *Soham* Sound that eliminates the divide between the soul and the Supreme Soul. The glory of the path of meditation on this Sound is beyond the scope of human description. Undoubtedly, this form of meditation is the highest among other practices, but it is equally difficult to practice.

Sant *Satguru* Maharshi Mehi writes: “The Yoga of Sound (Inner Sound Meditation) is not mere child’s play. A person who does not follow the prescribed yogic principles of *Yama* and *Niyama* (observance of ethical disciplines, including abstaining from lying, stealing, harming others, and adultery) cannot successfully practice the Yoga of Sound. Numerous gross sounds vibrate in this material body, and it would not be accurate to describe listening to the material sounds as the Yoga of Sound. Moreover, considering these precepts as unnecessary to attain spiritual freedom only displays ignorance with regard to the practice of meditation. The belief that an individual is able to practice this path without the prescribed yogic disciplines is contrary to the teachings of Saints and is unfit. The meaning of the lack of prescribed disciplines is this: a life devoid of observance of ethical disciplines including, truth, non-violence, non-stealing, sense-control, contentment, purity, self-study, etc. In other words, the one who speaks untruth, who is violent in mind, speech, or actions, who steals, who engages in sexual misconduct, who is unclean, who hoards money, who is obsessed with making money, who is unwilling to endure hardships while performing *sadhana*, who does not follow the teachings of the sacred texts, and who does not yoke their mind with God, is lacking and would not

be able to progress in the inner path of meditation.” The one who is totally attached to the pleasures arising out of the nine gates (sensory pleasures) of the body is unable to practice the inner spiritual path. In short, a seeker who has any desire in his/her heart other than realizing the Divine cannot successfully practice the Yoga of Sound.

Sant Kabir Sahab says: “A rare practitioner who abides by the knowledge given by the guru listens to the subtle Sound of Inner Space. First that Sound emanates from the *bindu* or *Ajna Chakra* (third eye). A practitioner who can withdraw his mind from the nine gates of the body and concentrate in the tenth gate, he or she alone is able to hear that subtle Sound.”

Sant Tulsi Sahab says: “Enter into the Inner empty Space (*Shunya*) of *Sushumna* and listen to the Sound that is beckoning you toward the Divine. This Sound has been vibrating since the beginning of creation. If you want to meet your True Friend (Supreme Being) then constantly and carefully listen to that Sound. This body is the sacred holy place (*Ka’ba*, the holiest place in Islam) created by the Divine, and within it is found the arch (the higher realms of macrocosm beginning from the tenth gate). It is the inner sanctum within, in which is found the Divine Sound reverberating. O practitioner, listen with full concentration; the Sound that originated from the Divine is constantly reverberating and calling you.”

Someone must have asked, generally, if the Sound is not heard with the physical ears then with what kind of ear is this subtle Sound heard? When the mind becomes concentrated, then the physical sense of hearing becomes quiet and one does not hear. This occurs because the attention withdraws from the senses and one is unable to hear physical sound.

In response Sant Tulsi Sahab says: “A practitioner who is able to focus in the *Sushumna* or the tenth gate for some time will experience the opening of the inner subtle hearing faculty. That inner sense of hearing is also known as the consciousness Current.” My Guru Maharshi Mehi says: “A practitioner hears the sweet Sound of the flute through the stream of inner consciousness.” When the outer ear ceases to hear and the mind is fully concentrated within, then the inner hearing opens up and the practitioner can hear the Divine Sound within (through the inner ear). From this, do not infer that a deaf person could easily hear that inner Sound, because complete concentration is the key, not a lack of physical hearing.

Sants have articulated about the closing of three gates of the body to experience the inner Sound. The three gates are eyes, ears, and mouth. Close these and, only then, can one hear the inner Sounds. According to Sant Kabir: “Close your eyes, ears, and mouth, and listen to the *anahad* (inner Unstruck Divine Sound).” Sant Nanak Sahab says: “Close the three gates and listen to the reverberation of the Divine Sound.” Sant Maharshi Mehi and also Sufi Sants have used similar vocabulary to describe the process of closing three openings for hearing the inner Sound.

I have heard accounts of some practitioners who follow unusual sound meditation practices and claim to hear sounds. However, these gross material sounds are imaginary or generated by metabolic functions and blood circulation. An ear disease can also create a humming sound that can be mistaken for the inner Divine Sound. Some false gurus boast about their imaginary inner experiences of Divine Light and Sound in order to impress their followers.

Other Hatha Yogis perform postures (*asanas*) such as *mula bandh* (contracting the muscles of lower organs), *uddiyana bandha*

(contracting the abdominal muscles and diaphragm that involves breathing exercises), and *jalandhara bandha* (throat lock to the flow of energy in the nerves and blood flow in the neck). Some practitioners use *ketchari mudra* (touching the root of the palate with the tongue) and attempt sound meditation in that *mudra*. Still others try to listen from the right or from the left ear. Some listen from below “the tenth gate” and others above “the tenth gate.” Some press their eardrums with their fingers and hear vibrations and think them to be the Divine Sound. Some stare at the tip of the nose; some listen to music in the dark, and some in the light. Some place their head down, others straighten their chest. In today’s world, in the name of the Divine Sound there is a prevalence of a great variety of illusory and imaginary practices claiming to be techniques of Sound meditation. These are not only against the teachings of Sants but are also incapable of providing any real inner experience of Divine Sound.

Sant Tulsi Sahab declares: “Without the true knowledge of the Yoga of Sound, all efforts are hopeless. Only a *Satguru* who is accomplished can impart this knowledge about the different forms of Sound.” Therefore, Maharshi Mehi says, “Practicing Sound Yoga (Inner Sound Meditation) is not child’s play.” Sant Kabir says: “Without practice of this Sound meditation man is subjected to birth and death.” Therefore having learned from an accomplished teacher, the practitioner would gain the ability to hear the Celestial, not illusory, sounds.

The closing of the eyes, ears, and mouth is used to help tune out the distractions caused by the outer senses. This is essential for the purpose of focusing one’s gaze in the *Sushumna*. Therefore, in the initial stages it is advised that the practitioner close these three

senses of sight, hearing, and speaking. Consequently, the mind begins to be focused in the third eye. For those whose consciousness stream has become mature in the power of concentration, it is not necessary to close these three sensory organs. This is due to the fact that the practitioner's mind is focused on the target of the "third eye" becomes detached from the senses and is no longer held by experiences arising from the sensory objects.

The secret of practicing Sound Yoga is to attach the consciousness to the center of the "third eye." It is necessary for the following reasons: First, by not following this instruction, the practitioner will be distracted by the lower physical sounds imbued by *rajas guna* (passion) and *tamas guna* (dark inertia). The consciousness Current would not be able to grasp the *nada* (Essential Central Sound) and ascend to the higher realms. It gives the practitioner only a satisfaction of listening to a sound—but not the true benefit of the experience of the *Sar Shabd* (the Essential Sound).

Second, the color of the sound of the lower, physical, or the realm of darkness is black, and tainted material sounds are black, but the color of the Divine Sound of the macrocosm or light realms is white (pure). With the practice on the lower gross sounds, the practitioner cannot escape the cycles of birth and death. The "tenth gate" (third eye) is the holy gate where the pure light of the Divine is always radiating. For that reason, when consciousness becomes concentrated there, it becomes extremely pure. Here the practitioner becomes capable of grasping the pure subtle Sounds of the Divine.

Third, after the consciousness is established in the "tenth gate" or the *Sushumna*, the mind becomes completely withdrawn from the material name and form. In this focused State, it begins to experience the subtle *Nam* (Holy Sound) and Form (Light).

Fourth, the Central *Nad* (Sound) is grasped only from the center of each sphere. The first center (junction) of the subtle and gross realms is the third eye or the tenth gate, and, therefore, it is advised to attach the consciousness stream to the third eye in order to grasp the Central Sound of the first realm.

Fifth, my guru Maharshi Mehi has explained that the first Divine drum Sound is resounding at the meeting-point or junction-point of the subtle and the gross realms, which is the “third eye.” For all these reasons, he and other Sants recommend to focus on the third eye and pierce the gate through the intense gaze on the point.

In the writings of Sants and in the sacred scriptures it has been said to listen to the Sound of the southern direction or from the right direction. Therefore, one should listen to the Divine Sound using the right ear. However, we determined earlier that the inner Sound could not be heard with the outer physical ears. Moreover, since the inner Sound is not a material sound, it would not come from any direction. Then, what is meant by listening to the subtle Sound from the right direction with the right ear? Indeed, there must be some meaning hidden in the teachings of Sants. I think it is necessary to shed light on this for those who are practitioners of the Yoga of Sound. According to the *Prana Sangali*: “By the eastern direction it is meant the dark realm; by western direction it is meant the light realm; by southern direction is meant the realm of the Divine Sound; and, the northern direction it is meant the realm of the Soundless region.” In the beginning of *sadhana* first we experience the darkness, and in the end, the Soundless realm or Moksha, a State of freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The interlinking happens between the left and right or top and the bottom. The *Ajna Chakra* is the meeting place of the gross

and subtle realms. At the left side of the *Ajna Chakra* are the dark tendencies—*tamas*, and on the right resides the passionate propensities—the *rajas* tendencies. Below the *Ajna Chakra* exists the realm of darkness dominated by *tamas* and above, the light realm, which is dominated by *rajas*. Thus, by listening from the right direction, it is meant that the Sound from the light realm is descending to the center of the *Ajna Chakra*. And by listening from the right ear is meant the hearing from the consciousness Current. Some Sants have described all the realms of chakras below the *Ajna Chakra* as the left direction and characterize the *Ajna Chakra* as the right direction. This means that this is the only chakra that assists the practitioner in hearing the Divine Central Sound. By focusing on the lower chakras it is impossible to grasp the Divine Central Sound. Therefore, the *Ajna Chakra* is described as the right and correct direction. It becomes clear that the Sound emanating from this chakra should be considered coming from the right direction. Also, the pure consciousness ascending upward to the center through which this Sound is heard is considered the right ear.

For a practitioner who is established in center of the “third eye”, it is not necessary to close the ears to practice Sound Yoga. But for the practitioner not established in the third eye and still in the realm of darkness, it is necessary to close the ears when practicing Sound meditation. This helps one to escape outer sound distractions. It is instructed for the practitioner, if he hears a loud sound from either the left direction or left ear, he then should slowly remove the finger from the right ear. If such sounds do not resound, keep both ears closed with the fingers.

Meditation practice is a difficult and arduous task for both men and women. It requires intense effort. I use masculine gender for

both men and women because seekers of both genders share the quality of an absolute dedication to the goal. In Indian traditions, for men their right side (right hand, etc.) is considered auspicious. The sound direction is considered south or right and is therefore considered auspicious. My guru Maharshi Mehi says: “The Light is the left hand of God and the Sound is the right hand.” With light meditation the soul does not become fully purified however. Through *Shabd* (Sound) Yoga the soul becomes fully purified and glorious like Brahman. In ordinary dealings, some people call their allies their “right hand” and adversaries their “left hand”. In the realm of light the enemies are temptations and *siddhis* (material powers), which seek to pull the practitioner down. But, in the Sound realm no such enemies exist because the practitioner rises above the snares of temptations. Therefore, the Divine Sound is said to be a practice that takes the soul beyond delusion, and is auspicious. The soul incurs the ultimate good and well-being through this practice.

The question arises: What is the secret of correct technique for *Shabd* (Sound) meditation? Sant Radhaswami says: “Focus your consciousness stream on the Inner Space. You will find the Divine Sound which will lead you beyond the snares of this illusory world.” You should focus your consciousness or inner Current in the middle of the eyebrows—the meeting point of the *Ida* and *Pingla* channels—, which is known as the tenth gate, *Sushumna*, *Ajna Chakra* or third eye. The practitioner will attain one-pointedness through this practice. In other words, the subtlest and most luminous sign of the light realm (*bindu*) will appear. With that luminous sign the inner Sound will also manifest.

Sant Paltu Sahab says; “Out from that burning light comes the Divine Sound, and only the one immersed in the *Samadhi*

(meditation) of Divine knowledge can hear, none other.” This is the Sound that is heard when concentrating on that first mark of light. Due to carelessness, it is possible to also hear the other sounds of the lower realms that have the potential to distract the consciousness Current. It is conceivable then, that the upward ascent of consciousness becomes distracted, thus creating a hindrance in progress. This is because only the Central Sound has the power to attract the consciousness to the center and carry the soul to the center of a higher realm. Other illusory material sounds do not have that magnetism to attract the consciousness to the higher realms.

A practitioner of Sound Yoga is not required to grasp the sound. But, by focusing on the “third eye” he must attempt to recognize the Central Sound, as instructed by the guru. As soon as the practitioner recognizes the Sound emanating from the center of the light realm, this Sound, like a magnet, will attract the consciousness and will draw it to the center of a higher realm. Once a practitioner grasps the Central Sound, he will continue to ascend upward until the soul reaches the ultimate goal of realization of the Divine. Maharshi Mehi says: “It might be possible to separate the magnet from the iron but the consciousness Current which is attracted to the Divine Sound cannot be separated in spite of any outward distractions and dangers.”

Sant Daria Sahab elaborates: “My mind is always drawn to the Divine Sound (*Shabd*) and it has forsaken all worldly distractions. Day and night it is focused on the target and listens to the resounding of the Divine Sounds (*Shabd*) within. This makes Yama, the god of death, uncomfortable.”

In the first stages of Sound meditation, the practitioner experiences various forms of Divine light and listens to the Divine

Sounds of the lower realm, and moves forward in their inner journey with the help of the Central Sound. But as the Central Sound (*Shabd*) of the first realm moves closer toward the second center, the subtle forms of light and the Sounds of the lower realm lose their intensity, and their attraction begins to weaken. The intensity of the Central Sound of the realm and its sweetness continues to grow. As a result, the experience of the lower realm's light and sound does not distract the consciousness Current and begins to subside.

Having reached the center of the second realm, the first Central Sound becomes merged in that center. The Sound emerging from the second realm carries the consciousness Current to the center of the third realm. Nevertheless, the practitioner does not even notice the transition from the Sound of the first center as it merges into the Sound of second realm. Just as when we strike a bell and the sound reverberates and then we strike it again. While the sound of the first strike is still resounding it is difficult to distinguish the sound of first strike from the second strike. Just as many waves in a river are so entwined and we are not able to differentiate their individual identity—where one begins and the other ends—in the same way, it is not possible to distinguish where the first Central Sound ends and the second realm Central Sound begins.

Now, in the second realm, the consciousness attracted by the Divine Sound of the center, ascends to the third realm. The sweetness, intensity, and intricacy of the Sound increases considerably. Even though the scenes of the light realm still exist, the consciousness becomes oblivious to them. The Sounds of the lower realm become faint and are unable to distract the practitioner. Because of the intensity and increasing allure toward the Central Sound, the practitioner does not get distracted by peripheral sights

and Sounds.

My *Gurudev*, Maharshi Mehi, writes about the force of the Central Sound: “The Sound is so loud we cannot describe its intensity. The great beat of the Celestial drums can be heard, and so also the Divine thunder.”

Along with the Central Sound, the practitioner experiences an innumerable variety of Celestial Sounds. Therefore, this realm is called the *Anahad Dhvcnayatmak Shabd Mandal* (the realm of the Unstuck Divine Sounds). In this realm the material forms (*rupa*) are entirely left behind. Therefore, this realm is known as the Formless (*Nirguna*) *Brahmanda* (universe). Since all the Central Sounds are connected to the Supreme Being, therefore, they are known as *Brhama Nada* (Divine Sounds.) The Central Sound arising from each of the centers of the realms pervades their respective lower realms. That Sound reverberates and is heard by the practitioner as Ru, Ru... in the every particle of each realm. Therefore, the Sound is known as *Raram Brahma* or *Rarankar*. Here the mind becomes emptied of all notions of form and becomes Formless. It is known as the realm of Emptiness (*Shunya*). Here the mind’s restiveness completely ceases. And this State is the beginning of the *Asamprajanata Samadhi* (the highest State of concentration in which the mind becomes completely steady). Here, the ego and the idea of a separate identity disappear, and mental awareness (*vritti*) becomes united with the Divine Reality or *Brahman*. Thus, the Central Sound of the second realm takes the consciousness to the center of the third realm, and sequentially proceeds to the center of the fourth realm, the meeting-place of Supra-causal and *Kevalaya* realm.

Guru Nanak praises the *Nam* (the Divine Sound) as the source,

the seed, the giver of life, and all-pervading.

One form of Sound sows the seed, and the second Sound gives birth to the seed. It implies that the Sound rising up from the first center, one at a time, ascends through the four centers and finally merges into the fifth center. In this way, except for the first and fifth centers, all other centers have the Central Sounds that arise and merge with the next center.

When a practitioner hears the sound of a beetle, that juncture is known as *Brahma Gufa*, the circling hollow cave. In this realm *rajas* and *tamas* qualities have no hold on the practitioner. This realm is dominated by *sattva* (purity). The realm of darkness dominated by *tamas* is known as *Shiva Loka*. Here the soul's knowledge completely vanishes and it lives in ignorance. The light realm is dominated by *rajas* and here the inner knowledge of the soul is manifested. This is known as *Brahma Loka*. The Sound realm is dominated by *sattva* and is known as *Vishnu Loka* and here the knowledge of the soul is nurtured. Here the mind merges into the creative source, the primordial matter (*prakriti*). The mind ceases to exist and with this ends the mind's nature of constructing thoughts and reflections that give rise to desires. This place is called the *mahashunya*—the great emptiness. Here the consciousness becomes separated from matter. Here the consciousness freed from the matter, gains the knowledge of the Divine. Here the individual soul leaves its individuality and realizes the Unity with the Supreme Soul and proclaims this Unity. This declaration is known as the *Sohangam Nad*. 'So' (That) means Divine Soul and 'Aham' means, I the individual soul. In other words, I, soul (*atman*) am the same as the Supreme Soul (*Paramatman*).

In this stage, all three qualities or *gunas* are in perfect equilibrium. This is the balanced state of the creator, sustainer,

and destroyer of the universe. Therefore, it is known as the state of equilibrium of material nature. From here the material world emerges through an imbalance of the *gunas*. This is the source of the material creation. Above this is the realm of Pure Consciousness (*chetana*). All the Sounds of the other realms merge in the Sound of the fifth realm.

In the *Nad Bindu Upanishad* is written: “An infinite number of Sounds and millions of *pranav bindus* merge into the Sound of creation. Here is the end of the multi-phonic Sounds. Here, only one Essential Divine Sound remains.” Sant Kabir says: “This One Celestial Sound reverberates day and night. It is beyond all description. And my heart becomes joyful listening to this Sound.”

Here the otherness of the soul and the Supreme Soul ends. Here nothing else exists apart from the pure essence of the soul. The Sound of its center takes the consciousness to the realm that is beyond consciousness (*chetana*). This place is known as the meeting place of Supra Causal (*mahakarana*) and *Kevalya* or the fifth center. Therefore, this fifth realm is called *Kevalya Mandala*, the realm of “Oneness” or “Unity”. The Sound that is grasped here has been called by various names such as *Ram Nam*, *Visnu Nam*, *Nirguna Nam*, *Om*, *Udgitha*, *Sphota*, *Pranava*, and is the Essential Divine Sound of the Beginning. This Sound is very sweet and superior. Maharshi Mehi called it “the extremely sweet and melodious Sound of creation.” This Sound is sweeter, alluring, more subtle and pervasive than any other Divine Sounds of the lower realms. This Sound wave bursts forth from the Supreme Reality for the creation of this universe. This Sound is the seed of the universe. Since this Sound pervades every atom of the universe it is called “*Ram Nam*”. This Sound has the power to attract the

living beings of the entire universe and that is why it is called “the Sound of Krishna.” It is called “the Flute of the Divine” because it attracts all souls. This Sound illuminates the soul and is blissful, therefore, is called “*Sacchidananda*” (source of truth, knowledge, and bliss). This Sound is the Sound of the Divine and is therefore called “*Pranava*” (Cosmic Sound OM). This Sound is imbued with the energy to sustain and destroy the creation, and, therefore, is known as *Om*. This Sound preceded the creation of the universe and is therefore called “the Sound of the Beginning.” This Sound helps the soul to realize its original form, and, is therefore known as the Sound of Universal Consciousness. This Sound emerges from the Divine and is known as the primal burst of creation or Origin. This Sound descended from above as the Divine Music, and, is therefore known as the “Song from Above.” This Sound brings auspiciousness to all, and, is therefore known as the “Shiva Nam.”

This Sound controls both material (*apara*) and non-material (*para*) natures (*prakriti*), and, therefore is known as fierce *Shakti* or pure Divine energy. A practitioner’s consciousness stream, or a soul that attaches to this *Shabd* (Sound), is able to merge into the Ocean of the Incomprehensible Bliss of the Supreme Being (reaches the realm beyond Sound, *Shabdateet*). After uniting with the Supreme Being, the soul attains *Moksha* or Liberation. This marks the cessation of the wandering of the soul in the cycle of rebirth and death.



CHAPTER 7

BHAKTI: DEVOTION AND LOVE FOR THE DIVINE

Among the seven essential steps for successful farming, the fifth is complete dedication to the task. Similarly, for the inner journey to attain the Divine, the fifth step is whole-hearted devotion (*Bhakti*) and commitment to the practice. Just as a farmer who works wholeheartedly receives the benefit in the form of a successful crop, in the same way, a practitioner who devotes himself to the spiritual path is more likely to achieve success according to the amount of devotion and effort. If a farmer does not make a full commitment to his work, then his effort does not yield adequate results. Similarly, a seeker who does not approach this path with devotion would not achieve adequate success despite investing time in the practice of meditation. Sant Kabir says: “Without devotion one cannot reach the abode of the (Divine), which is difficult to attain.”

In today’s world, most practitioners devote themselves to achieving worldly pleasures, yet desire to attain realization of the Supreme Being. How would it be possible to attain the highest goal, God given the absurdity of being dedicated only to material goals?

Just as a passenger sits in a train heading toward Delhi, but desires to go to Bombay, his wish does not change the destination of the train traveling in the direction of Delhi. Like someone who wants the taste of an elixir but ends up drinking poison; just as someone who desires to go upward but takes a downward course—success is difficult to attain by such individuals whose goals and efforts are not in harmony. Similarly, practitioners who wish to attain the Divine but are dedicated only to the service of wealth and worldly pleasures will not succeed in their efforts. They can be compared to those individuals who try but cannot walk on both shores of a river at the same time. Two swords cannot fit in one sheath; one cannot eat and drink at the same time! One cannot indulge in musings of this world and simultaneously meditate on the Divine Being. Sant Kabir says: “The mind is only one, and it is up to you to decide where you attach it. Either be attached to the Divine or to sensory pleasures.” One cannot think two thoughts at the same time; one can only focus on one idea at a time or upon one thought after the other.

Among the seven steps, devotion is indeed the essential component. Without being accomplished in dedication, it is not possible to achieve success in either material endeavors or in spiritual enterprise. Even though the Divine and the soul are essentially not separate, the individual soul cannot meet the Divine until it has intense devotion and desires to unite with the Divine. In fact, lack of devotion creates this separation. Is there really separation between the sun and its rays, or ice and its coldness? Is there a difference between the water and its waves? Is there a distance between fire and heat? The answer is negative. In the same way, there is no separation between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. Only the lack of devotion and intense desire keeps the two apart.

Once a young man asked Swami Vivekananda: “Is it possible for you to give me the *darshan* of God?” Swami Vivekananda responded: “Certainly.” The young man asked him to give him the *darshan*, the vision of the Divine. Vivekananda said that this was not a good place to see the Divine, but that the River Ganga would be the best location to reveal the *darshan* of the Supreme Being. The young man happily agreed to go to the Ganga. Vivekananda entered the river with the young man. The young man requested of him again to show the vision of God. Swami asked the young man to enter further into the deep waters of the river. The young man submerged in the river up to his neck. Vivekananda then dipped the man’s head in the water, leaving him longing for breath. After a few moments, Swami Ji raised the man’s head out of the water and then he quickly walked back to the shore. The young man, overwhelmed and filled with anger, followed Swami Ji and chided: “Considering you are a *mahatma* (holy, great soul), I approached you to show me God, but now I realize that you are very harsh. Instead of showing God you tried to take me to the door of death.” Vivekananda asked: “When you were submerged in the water and breathless, how did you feel?” The young man stated: “I felt I was dying.” Vivekananda asked: “Were you thinking about anything in the world? Did you desire to eat at that time? Were you thinking about your friends or enemies? Were you thinking about your bank balance? Did you desire a higher social status? Did you in fact desire anything at that time?” The young man replied: “At that moment, I was only thinking of how to get out of that dire situation and save my life.” Swami replied: “When you will forget about all the desires of the world and only yearn to find God, at that moment you will be able to behold the vision of God, not otherwise.”

Once a devotee asked Swami Rama Tirtha: “How many days will it take to see the Divine?” Swamiji replied: “As much of the love and dedication you have for your wife, family, business, status, and wealth, the same amount of love, or even half that amount of devotion, would be sufficient to see the Divine.” If we do not have devotion for God even equal to that of the love of our spouse, then it displays our ignorance in attempting to see the Divine. Our devotion is such that we may abandon our routine of meditation, but not feasting. We easily break from our meditation practice because of various worldly activities, or we do not even plan our daily schedules to include the practice of meditation. We can easily abandon God but not the world. Neither can we abandon our craving for prestige and honor! Think for a moment, despite the transitory nature of our wife, family, and material objects how much we care for them. The Supreme Being in essence is comprised of peace, joy, happiness, light, and well-being, and even then we do not have that much love and devotion for the Divine. Many Sants elaborate: “Crazy after the trivial and transitory joys of the material world, we dedicate ourselves for their attainment. Have we ever yearned for seeing the Supreme Being? Keeping such a mindset, desiring to see the Divine only shows our foolishness.”

Alas, we are gripped by the fleeting pleasures that give only momentary satisfaction and do not concern ourselves with this eternal joy of seeing the Divine. We choose bondage instead of freedom. We choose anxiety instead of eternal peace. We choose worldly status instead of heavenly honor. We choose the embrace of the physical body instead of the embrace of the Divine. Why is there such a desire for the pleasures of this world instead of a longing for the Divine?

A certain householder offered his reverence to a *mahatma*, and then the same *mahatma* offered his obeisance to the householder. Surprised, the householder asked: “You are a Saint. Why did you offer homage to me?” The *mahatma* asked the householder to first tell him why he paid homage to him? The householder replied: “You are a monk, a Saint who has renounced sensory pleasures; therefore I showed reverence to you.” The *mahatma* then said: “I only gave up my meager home and pleasures of this earth while you gave up the greatest source of bliss and the paragon of all treasures, the Supreme Being! Sadly, it is you who have given up the most, not me, and, so I pay my great respect to you.” Having heard the explanation of the monk, the householder became embarrassed and left reflecting upon his state.

Those who cannot give up short-lived pleasures of the world for attaining Divine joy, how can they have sufficient dedication for the attainment of the Divine? It simply is impossible. We will have whole-hearted devotion to the Divine when we will only consider this to be the highest of all achievements. Grandsire Bhishma, who was the paragon of wisdom, addressed Lord Krishna as “the Most Glorious One in the whole world.” Queen Rukmani called Lord Krishna “the Most Attractive One in all the Three Worlds.” Our guru, Maharshi Mehi, described the Divine as the “Star of the Third Eye.” In other words, the devotees use various epithets that display their sentiments of love and devotion for the Divine. This is the reason that those Sants who have experienced the vision of the Supreme Being are not attracted to the material pleasures of the world. However, common people have an attachment to material objects since they have not experienced a glimpse of the glory of the Divine. Because of their variety, the worldly objects and material

things have lesser or greater degrees of beauty and attraction. But, the Divine Reality is truly one, and remains constant, unchanging. God is the essential Divine ground of all luminescence, beauty, and bliss. Once you see the Divine, your mind will be completely satisfied and there will be no room for yearning for different worldly pleasures, since dissatisfaction lies in duality.

Some devotees complain: “We love God but God does not love us in return.” To them, I respond: How is it possible that a God who loves all beings, from angels to animals, humans to *asuras* (demons), not love a devotee? How can this be true? The real reason behind your feeling is that we display outward devotion, but do not hold true love for the Divine.

I have heard Sufis describe five forms of devotion or love:

1. Not a genuine kind of love. The mind is always contemplating matters of mundane attainments, but with the body (outwardly) some virtuous deeds are done. Even though it is of the lowest kind, with sporadic acts of service, the mind would eventually turn to God.
2. The body is involved in spiritual acts, and there is an effort on the devotee’s part to attach the mind to God.
3. Both the mind and the body are engaged in meditation. However, due to material attachments, the devotee’s mind becomes distracted and is engaged in immoral actions. Upon realization of this deviation, the devotee immediately recognizes the error and seeks to correct it.

4. The devotee loves the Supreme Being with his mind, heart, and soul and longs for the Divine like a fish out of water yearns for water. He does not care about food, sleep, the company of others, and does not wish for anything other than God. Sometimes in yearning for the Divine, he swoons. (There are many stories of Saints who become unconscious, struck by Divine love.) True devotees become unconcerned with bodily needs and do not worry about loss or gain. They are unaffected by the news of death or birth of their loved ones. They are not jealous of others' progress, nor do they worry about criticism or honor and dishonor. Because of their state of ecstasy and carelessness to worldly conventions, others think of such devotees as crazy. But in this state, they enjoy the bliss of God, who is the Ocean of Love. The devotees have a single focus and that is to see God. All other longings vanish from their hearts.
5. In this type of love, the devotee becomes like the Beloved, God. The soul is an inseparable part of the Divine, and through devotion it becomes Divine just as ice, made up of water, after melting, becomes water. This kind of devotion leads to the union of the soul and the Supreme Soul, God.

With effort one can extract butter from milk, the red color from henna, juice from the sugar cane, oil from the mustard seed, and make fire from wood. Similarly, through intense devotion, the devotee makes the all-pervasive Divine manifest in his heart. Due to some perplexing or atypical reasons, it might not be possible for one to extract the butter hidden in the milk, redness from henna, juice from the sugar cane, oil from the mustard seed and fire in the

wood, but it is impossible that intense love, devotion, and single-focused dedication will not manifest the Divine in the heart of the devotee. God has to appear, otherwise all the teachings of the Sants and scriptures would be proven wrong!

In an ancient narrative, Lord Shiva tells the gods that the Supreme Lord does not live in heaven, but that He is all-pervasive and resides in every atom of the universe. God only becomes manifest through intense devotion, not through any other methods. All other techniques are meant to awaken this latent devotion and not to manifest the Supreme Being. Devotion has that power that makes the unmanifest manifest. The One (God) who rules the universe becomes your assistant, as has been described in many tales. Drawn to the *Bhakti* of the devotee, the Divine submits to that devotee. There are many examples in the scriptures that illustrate the Divine's love for the devotee. For example, Lord Krishna became the charioteer of Arjuna, ate the simple food of the devoted woman Draupadi, and became a guest of the humble minister Vidura. Love is that power that makes God break His own laws in order to serve the devotee.

Love is that meditation or method that makes the impossible possible. That which is harsh becomes gentle; the enemy becomes friend; the weak become strong; the concealed becomes revealed. Even though it is said that it takes many lifetimes to realize the Divine, if a devotee performs *sadhana* with true, unwavering devotion, then the Divine will manifest at that moment.



CHAPTER 8

THE MERITS OF PAST LIVES

The sixth aspect of good farming is equity or cash asset, and the seventh is favorable weather and rains. Similarly, the sixth essential element for success on the path of meditation is acquired good *karmas* and merits, and the seventh is the will of God.

Some farmers have sufficient land, fertile soil, perseverance, access to healthy seeds, the necessary dedication and knowledge of farming, but if there is not sufficient cash or assets, the farmer would not be able to achieve the desired results. In every form of commerce, cash assets are indispensable to success. One needs resources for business, for a job, for building a house, for subsisting in life, for tending to the deceased, for performing charitable acts, for taking a pilgrimage or visiting temples, for joining a religious community etc. Without sufficient means, we cannot invite Sants to our home, nor would we get an opportunity to have audience with them. Without basic resources, close association with Sants is often not possible, or is difficult to attain.

In today's world money speaks and is influential in all aspects of

life. We come across such examples daily in our lives. The purpose of this discussion is not to exalt the value of wealth, but rather to convey the following: just as material resources are essential for success in worldly endeavors, so too spiritual resources are necessary for advancement on the inner journey to the Divine.

According to the sacred literature, humans are drawn to good or evil actions due to the accumulated actions of their past lives. If it were not for our earned past *karmas* and *samskaras*, then we would all have similar tendencies, interests, and abilities. All traits, characteristics, interests, abilities, and tendencies are driven by our past *karmas*. This is the reason that we see such a variety in people's choices about their course of actions, ranging from extremely compassionate acts to evil deeds, from inclination toward sensory pleasures to absolute detachment, from a tendency toward hoarding wealth to renunciation, and so on. Those who have performed meritorious acts in their past lives are drawn to perform right actions (during this life). Those who have accumulated unfavorable *karmas* are drawn to the opposite behavior. Sant Tulsi Das Ji writes: "Stricken with our past life's dreadful actions, we do not take delight in listening to the name of God, just as a person suffering with fever is unable to enjoy food."

The question arises: sometimes good people are seen performing evil actions, and bad people good actions. What is the reason for such inconsistency in behavior?

Answer: Until a human being transcends the realm of karmic consequences through meditation practice, she or he performs both good and bad acts. The reason for this is that due to the effects of many lifetimes of actions we hold both tendencies within us. Those who have an accumulated storehouse of good *karmas* restrain

themselves from doing evil actions, even though at times such inclinations arise in the mind. Such a person also pays heed to the advice of Sants (wise men and women) and chooses the right path. However, those who have an accumulated store of evil actions ignore the advice of sages. For example, prince Duruyodhana in the *Mahabharata* chooses to deceive and wage war against his cousins despite Lord Krishna's counsel to abstain from such heinous acts. Duruyodhana blamed fate for his orientation toward evil deeds. But fate, in fact, is another name for our own past actions that guide our conduct in our present life. Along the same thought, King Yudhishtira responded to a question: "Within me resides a being that prohibits me from doing evil actions." It was King Yudhishtira's accumulation of meritorious deeds that impelled him to perform righteous actions.

We must pay attention: Why are our eyes always drawn to see the shortcomings of others? Why are we eager to hear about the weaknesses of others? Why are we inclined to see other's faults, hear gossip, and yearn for the pleasures of taste and touch? Why do we not hesitate to think and do ill to others? Why are we entrapped in the snares of material desires? In general, why do we take delight in sensory pleasures and actions that steer us away from the Divine and toward ignorance, darkness and ego?

O seekers! When you find difficulty in progressing on the path of the inner journey, you doubt the guru and his accomplishments. Perhaps our guru is keeping it a secret and not sharing with us, or perhaps he is more favorable toward other disciples! Or we wonder if he is not being generous enough to bestow his grace upon us. However, what we do not see is that it is our own impure actions in past lives that inhibit our advancement toward the Divine. We are

in the grip of sensory desires because of our earlier *karmas*. Our past impure actions have taken the form of the sheath of darkness (that is seen when we close our eyes in meditation) and ignorance, and have obstructed the Divine light and knowledge of the truth.

The sages have described four forms of accumulated unfavorable *karmas* and their manifestations.

1. Darkness;
2. Agitation of mind;
3. Various kinds of obstructions; and
4. Many types of diseases that bring suffering.

When these four are removed, then our inner Self lights up with luminous light. Just as accumulated unfavorable *karmas* always cause pain and suffering, in the same way meritorious acts increase the joy of human beings. Evil (unskillful) *karmas* are like an enemy which constantly inflict pain, while good *karmas* are like good friends or company that gives joy.

Today some people ask me: “Where do we go after death?” I reply to them that if you leave your body in the aforementioned four physical and mental conditions you will go to lower realms, incurring sorrow and unhappiness. Sants say the lower, hell realms, lack light, purity, joy, and friendship. In other words, an evil soul is imbued with darkness, impurity, suffering, and animosity.

Different people are interested in various kinds of religious practices such as pilgrimages, *satsang* (association of Saints, wisdom of the wise, and the reading of scriptures), meditation, chanting, etc. This difference in interest is because of good *samskaras* (imprints/ impressions) left on the mind due to one’s actions in previous lives.

Lord Krishna says: “The practice of austerity and good deeds for many lifetimes purifies the mind, and then the mind is naturally drawn to the practice of concentration in meditation.”

Devotees such as Dhruva, Prahlad, Shabri, and Mira Bai attained their spiritual heights due to the accumulation of good *karmas* over multiple lifetimes. The Sants, including Buddha, Sant Kabir and many others, say that it takes many lifetimes to reach Nirvana or Moksha (liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth). According to Sants, one life’s worth of good *karmas* is insufficient for advancement on the path of meditation. One life’s worth of *karmas* are not enough to find a *Satguru*, nor are they adequate to motivate us to devote ourselves to the practice of *japa* and seek the company of Saints. All the means that motivate us toward God-realization are the result of our accumulated past good *karmas*. We should stop sowing the seeds of evil actions and sow the seeds of good actions.

Today’s *karmas* become the fate of tomorrow. According to our last life actions, our mental tendencies are formed in this life. Because of our pure actions we will have the desire to seek the association of Sants and to meditate.

Some argue that nothing goes with the soul after death, but this is not correct. The teachings of Sants and scriptures indicate otherwise. If our past life *karmas* were not a determinant of our present condition, then, all people would be exactly the same—with identical tendencies and aptitudes. The soul carries with it the results of good and bad actions and this can be attested by the fact of the existence of a diverse population with varied capacities in the world. Some are born beautiful and others lack beauty; some are born in wealthy families and others deprived of basic needs;

some are born with a serene nature and others are spiteful; some seek and gain wealth, and others remain poor; some easily rise to scholarly heights and others barely gain minimum success; some become great artists without much effort and others struggle with no success in sight.

People are inclined toward different goals according to their past *karmas*. Therefore, everyone has a unique nature, bodily structure, conduct, countenance, circumstances, and status. All this is because of our actions in previous lifetimes. Furthermore, it is also observed that sometimes our past actions unexpectedly change the course of our present life. This is seen in the change in the direction of our life, or in a sudden change in attitude, or changes in health or status. In these conditions, people's lives take surprisingly different courses that are unexplainable in the context of the present life's situations. We cannot know what past *karmas* have created for our future or how they may affect our future life-situation. Even the great souls go through the ups and downs caused by the effects of good and bad *karmas*.

Numerous narratives of Hindu mythology, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, present us with characters of virtuous men and women, such as mother Sita, King Dashrath, King Harishchandra, and Dharma King Yudhishtira, who had to endure harsh and unfavorable situations due to the *karma* of past lives.

Without enough resources, and in spite of having all other agricultural means, a farmer is unable to have a successful crop. Similarly, though having met all other basic requirements to tread the path of meditation, a practitioner without favorable past *karmas* will not have the desired success on the spiritual path. If we continue to create good *karmas*, then the course of our life will shift and will

lead to spiritual progress. Individuals, even if they do not believe in reincarnation or the *karmas* of past lives—if they carefully tread their path in this life and devote themselves to performing good actions—their deeds will become a source of future progress, and help them move forward on the inward journey of the soul.



CHAPTER 9

THE WILL OF THE DIVINE

Sometimes it is observed that despite fertile land, healthy seed, knowledge of farming, hard work and adequate equity, environmental conditions turn adverse. Occasionally, such unfavorable occurrences happen in spite of all of the farmer's best efforts, and the crop is destroyed. For example, natural calamities such as hail, unexpected fire, floods, excess rain, or insect infestations can destroy crops. At times, thieves can steal stored grain. In such circumstances the farmer's perceptive power becomes perplexed. Therefore, in every situation a person needs the Favor or Grace of the Divine. Without this no human being can attain success. But a farmer who does not give up, and patiently continues to focus on the first six components of farming, will certainly eventually achieve Divine Favor. There may be a delay but success is certain.

No matter how much humans may desire, without the Divine Will (*Mauj*), the goal is not achieved. Despite one's worthiness, association with an accomplished guru, knowledge of the path, resolute (meditation) practice, devotion, favorable accumulated

karmas, a devotee cannot succeed without the Will of God.

In the *Ramayana*, Sugriva tells Rama: “All my actions would be worthless without Your Grace.” Therefore, we should collect the flowers of our aspirations and offer them at the Holy Feet of the Supreme Being. We should make ourselves free of desire. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: “Offer all to Me and do not keep anything for yourself.”

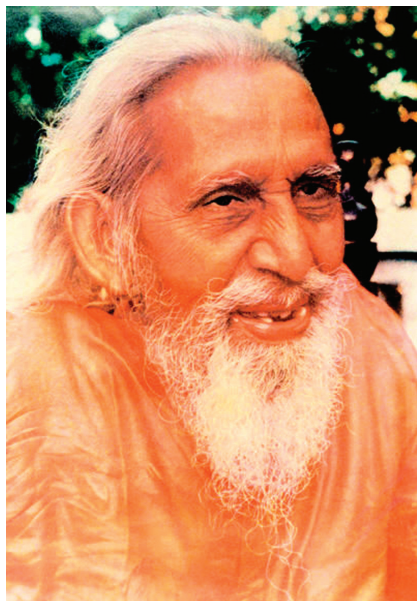
The devotee who offers all to God and does not keep anything for himself wins the favor of the Divine. The Saints act wholly in this way. So, devotees! Remember, if you want to please the Divine then rid yourself of desires, empty your heart, and then the Grace will be bestowed and remain with you. If you are filled with worldly cravings then there will be no room for God’s Grace. Therefore, abandon all desires, offer all to God, surrender yourself (your sense of ego, individuality)—this is highest form of offering. This is highest type of prayer. Make your life consistent with the Will of God. Even if it seems that God does not give anything in return, continue to follow Him. You will never be deceived; you will never be disappointed.

God is all-giving. God, who provides for thieves in jail, to birds and animals, to insects and the tiniest creatures, will definitely fulfill the needs of His devotees. Sant Mira Bai completely surrendered herself to God as though she were a puppet in the hands of God. She submitted to the Will of God and became free from all desires, all thoughts, and all yearnings. Call out for God’s help, surrender yourself and live according to the Will of the Divine: “I am Yours, Oh, God! I have surrendered myself to You. Now my victory and defeat both are in Your hands.”

We should cry out in deep dedication and surrender. Pray that

we should never forget God and always commit ourselves to the path of union with the Divine.

To surrender ourselves and live according to the Will of God is not an easy task. Such a mindset is realized in the final stages of meditation practice. This is the climax of meditation. We will have to accomplish the other six stages of *sadhana* first in order to completely surrender ourselves to the Divine Will. The result: one day, the seventh component of the inner journey of the soul will be realized. To sum up: if a practitioner does not practice these seven stages of the inward journey, then he will not be able to see even the initial signs of the Divine. Therefore, practitioners should follow the seven elements of *sadhana* as elaborated above according to their individual capacity.



Maharshi Mehi Paramhans Ji Maharaj



Swami Vyasanand Ji Maharaj with the Howard Family
Bangalore Ashram, 2012