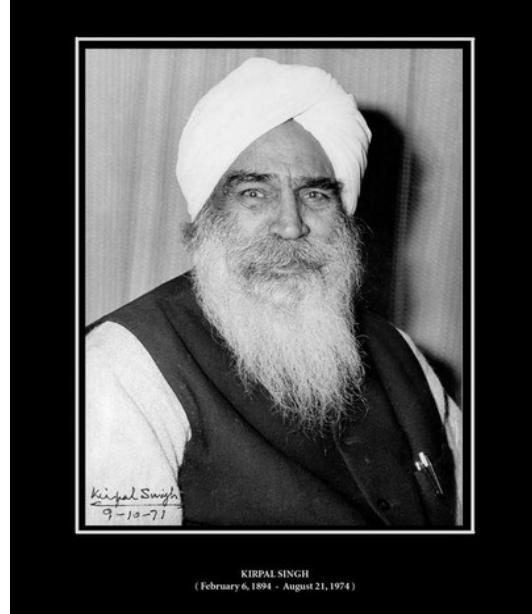


The Science of Soul

English version and substance of a talk given by Master Kirpal Singh in Hindi at Sawan Ashram, Delhi, India. Originally published in the September 1968 issue of Sat Sandesh.

The Master-souls have, time and again, graced this earth for the humanity's spiritual enlightenment. They have left behind, for our guidance, the precious records of what they experienced within. Ever since the first flicker of life on earth, man has been mightily engaged in search of happiness. He has made a tremendous progress in all walks of life. Take, for example, physical research. Many wonderful sciences have come to light: *Unani* system of medicine, *Ayurvedic* system of cure, Allopathy, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, and the like. All of them aim at the smooth working of the physical body. Surgery has progressed to an extent unknown before — the finest organ of the human body can now be replaced or transplanted from one to another. Similarly, man has taken long strides in the field of intellect. Man has not only conquered the forces of nature, but has pressed them into his service. You can hear and see a person from thousands of miles afar with the aid of a wireless set and a television. Man is now trying to probe into the mysteries of space and establish interplanetary relations. All these are the miracles of the scientific mind.

With due deference to the scientific progress, man has ignored the most vital part of his life — the active life-principle in him, the soul, the very essence of life, or spark from the All-Consciousness, an unseen and invisible power at the back of all creation. The Masters of the mystic science have been deeply engaged with the development of this mysterious power called life, and the results of their experiments are recorded in the form of various scriptures of the world. This sacred literature, in spite of the apparent diversities, reveals a marvelous uniformity at the core — a basic unity testifying oneness of the source — the immutable radiance of the divinity. It is



due to the lack of practical persons, well-versed in *pravidya* or the science of the Beyond, that we are offered shadowy rites and rituals, symbolic of the great Truth bubbling with life. So many faiths and isms fail to offer us a perfect solution of the problem of life. The maximum that priest-craft can offer is a certain belief in the goodness to come in the distant future. Thus, most of the people devoted to the so-called spiritual enlightenment remain in their water-tight compartments make-belief of religious affiliations, following a code of set principles, with the hope that all this will ultimately lead to liberation.

All the established religious orders have their origin in some Master in the past, who in his own good time, guided the people to a higher purpose of life — the spiritual perfection. Every flow is followed by an ebb in the affairs of man. To err is human and people generally relax into ignorance with the passage of time. The Merciful Providence, however, in the fullness of time, provides the world with the means of regeneration. Another prophet, a new messiah, comes on the scene to fan into flames the dying embers and tries to knit all his children into silken bonds of world fellowship.

The Masters, as the true worshippers of life, adore only what is the highest life-principle, at the back of all creation — visible and invisible. The Masters do not demand of us to leave our religions which, after all, are the various schools of thought and serve as a training ground for striving after the higher and true aspect of religion, but establish re-union of the soul with the Oversoul.

Verily, where the world philosophies end, there the religion, in its vital aspect, starts. We may not get startled at this statement. The various religious orders are like the badges which students wear, as distinctive hallmarks, indicative of the various institutions or the university to which they belong. Take, for instance, the case of India with a plenitude of perennial river-systems. Here it is considered necessary that one must engage in meditation after a complete bath. Again, take Arabia, a desert-land with an acute dearth of water. There the people worship with just a *wazu* — a simple washing of hands, feet, and face — and in places where no water is available, the people are content with *taummum* — cleaning the hands with desert sand. If you were to think deeply, the basic reason for all these forms of purification is that one should do meditation with an alert mind with no signs of laziness or sloth.

Similarly, take the case of congregational prayers in religious places. In temples, mosques, and gurdwaras, it is considered virtuous for devotees to enter the precincts with their heads covered and feet

bare, while Christians generally go to their churches with heads bare and shoes on. This is all due to the climatic differences in the East and the West, the object in each case being to observe proper decorum and maintain reverence and sanctity of the house of God. The Masters, therefore, find no fault with the religious orders as such with their traditional social background. But they offer us a higher way up — a way into the Beyond — which is purely a practical subject, wholly uncovered by the so-called religious and social make-up designed solely with the purpose of preliminary training as may help in self-realization and God-realization.

There are two types of knowledge — one is exoteric (*apravidya*), and the other is esoteric (*pravidya*). While the former consists in the study of scriptures, going on pilgrimages, observing fasts and vigils, and performing austerities and the like, all of which, of course, are done on the plane of senses, the latter is a practical way-up into spiritual regions. The Masters, on the other hand, always lay stress on rising above body-consciousness, undertaking the spiritual journey into the regions beyond the senses. One may continue to observe and perform religious practices throughout one's lifetime. These would enable one to get into religiosity, but not into religion in its true aspect that comes by awakening the inner impulse for divine grace bubbling over with life.

A close study of man reveals that he is just a bundle of habits and leads a life of routine make-belief. He has no time to ponder seriously over the problem of problems of his existence and of the soul-entity in him. All his life, he runs after shadowy things of no consequence and seeks to find happiness in material things. Just as a musk-deer, not knowing that the perfume is emanating from within him, he runs wild in the ever shadowy mirage until he is completely exhausted. Whatever pleasures man derives are purely sense pleasures and not happiness that comes from serenity within. Even the so-called pleasures are the result of our own concentrated rays of attention falling upon the sense-objects which *per se* are just like a lean bone with no meat on it.

We are living in a world of constantly changing panorama. Whatever we see, we get attached to it and lend it a momentary charm. We feel the pinch of detachment and disappointment the moment either the scene changes or we are forced to quit the pleasures that we must, sooner or later. The Masters, therefore, lay stress on something of unique and permanent interest in the midst of change. They do not ask of us to leave the world and degenerate into a helpless recluse; but offer us a simple yet practical way to attain the real and eternal happiness right here and now. Mind as we know,

like parasitic creatures, has no roots of its own. It derives its sustenance from the soul, and yet keeps its tentacles firmly fixed on our attention, the outward expression of the soul currents within. It is only in the serene moments of complete relaxation that one experiences the harmony of the higher order and unrivaled character when the mind turns back upon itself instead of straying out.

So, I was discussing the spiritual aspect of human life — the most important and mostly ignored. We assemble here from time to time for discussing the science of soul. Usually some composition of a Master-saint is taken as the basis for understanding the higher truths of life, which they have left behind for our guidance. Today we take up a hymn from Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru.

The rich waters of life, to partake which you have come into the world, is Amrit; and this may be taken from the living Master.

Guru Nanak has extended a loving invitation to all. The Master tells us that we have a purpose in life. Have we ever cared to think why we have been granted this physical existence? Human birth is really a great blessing. Man is the roof and crown of all the creation. Man is a rational being, and this is what differentiates man from the rest of the creation. He has been gifted practically with the faculty of discrimination to distinguish between right and wrong. It is for him to make the best use of his intellect and develop in him consciousness of the soul, which is lying dormant at present.

Guru Nanak, therefore, reminds us that to attain *Amrit*, the divine nectar or the Water of Life, we should go to a living Master, who has access to the spiritual fountainhead and is competent to lead us to it. The living Master enjoys a supreme status. He is the very life and light of humanity. "Son knows the Father and those whom the Son reveals," says Christ. The Master-souls are the children of Light and come to diffuse the holy Light among those who come to them.

The Vedas pose a pertinent question: What is that thing, having attained which, one is fully satisfied and desires nothing else? And then go on to explain that the crown of life is the realization of God, attaining which one enjoys perpetual bliss and harmony. Soul is a conscious entity. It is a drop of the ocean of all-consciousness. It is gifted with all the attributes of the Lord. Kabir tells us that it is of the same essence as that of God. Muslim divines regard it as *Amar-i-Rabbi*, or the essence of God. It is due to the misdirected attitude of mind that it is overtaken by wild passions. So, when the soul is analyzed from the body, and liberated from the meshes of the mind

and matter, it can, once again, wing its way to the elixir of life within. It is the holy Name — the holy Shabd or the audible life stream that the Master reveals to those who come to him. It is the central theme of his teachings.

You may better understand it through a parable. Criminals are sent to the prison to serve their allotted sentence. A dignitary goes there and finds that the prisoners do not have adequate living quarters. He sanctions a large amount for the construction of good ventilated rooms for them. Another one goes there and discovers that the food for the prisoners is no good. He allots more funds for this purpose, and the inmates are served with good food. Both of them have done a good deed, each in their own way. Another man — the master of the prison — goes there with the prison keys in his hand. Out of compassion he opens the prison gate and allows the prisoners to escape if they like. You will agree that the last man has done a magnificent service by providing the prisoners an opportunity to be free again.

The world is a large prison-house where each one of us is serving his term, the allotted span of life. We are mightily engaged in the various pursuits of life with no knowledge of the free life beyond the prison walls. The Master has the key into the realms beyond; and when he comes, he throws open the door of the prison-house, and invites us to take our chance of breathing the free air outside. Those who take the chance are blessed indeed. In the succeeding verses, we will know of various factors that qualify a person to gain liberation for the soul.

Leave off artificiality, all outer forms and thy wit, for in duality and uncertainty you cannot get any spiritual benefit.

The Master tries to pull us out of our deep slumber. In compassion, he shows us the way to freedom. He asks us to simplify our life. It is a blessing to be born in a temple, but a sin to die in it. Just as discussed earlier, it is necessary to remain in the religion to which one belongs; but while remaining there, one must learn to rise above all religious and social barriers, expand the self so that it embraces the entire humanity, nay all the creation, and realize the principle of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Once a person rises above body and bodily limitations, blinkers fall from his eyes, and he sees his self in all and all in his self. All the narrowing prejudices of nationality, race, and tribe sink far below, for now he belongs to the one great family of man.

We take up certain religious beliefs with the purpose of spiritual enlightenment; but after some time, we find to our regret that we are bypassing the very purpose of life and are caught up in a vicious circle of forms and formalities. One must be cautious to see which way the wind blows and how he is faring. Again, I want to emphasize that the basic concept of all religions — spiritual enlightenment — should never be lost sight of. We must keep the bull's-eye constantly before us if we are out to be a good marksman. A lover of the Lord must, therefore, love God with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his might. Too much of formalisms and formalities will necessarily bring in doubt, suspicion, and duality. There is a world of difference between an intellectual and a spiritualist. The two are poles apart. A philosopher deals with theories, while a mystic deals with the Reality alone. Hence the need for disenfranchising the self from all limiting adjuncts that keep the soul smothered under the dead weight of rites and rituals.

O mind! be thou still and not run into the wilderness.

It is in the stillness of the mind that one can see the face of divinity. A close study of the subject will show that the mind is generally in the grip of the senses and the latter are helplessly rushing out into the fields of sense-pleasures. In the Hindu mythology, soul is described as riding a chariot of the body with intellect as its driver, the mind as reigns, and the senses as powerful steeds which are whirling it restlessly into sensual enjoyments.

So the first step for a spiritual aspirant is to control his senses and save himself from falling unwittingly as prey to the temptations. It is said that we receive 83 percent of our impressions through the eyes, 14 percent through the ears, and rest of the three percent through other organs. Just see how needlessly we are rushing headlong into the wild drama of life.

The Master not only guides us on how to free ourselves from this captivity, but actually offers a better substitute to the mind in the form of inner Light and Sound-current or the Music of the Spheres. We have just seen that as a counterweight to both the faculties of mind, that of sight and audition, the Providence has provided us with a treasure of divinity within, which can be unearthed to our advantage with the aid of a competent Master. So, mind can be controlled only with the grace of the Master, who attunes it with something substantial within — the Light and Voice of God. We should always try to sit at ease at the eye focus, the resting place of the soul during waking hours, and try to get the mystic experience which the Master vouchsafes to all who come to him.

*The search without causes a lot of pain and sorrow.
The well of life-giving nectar is within, and one need dip therein.*

With all our gratifications at the sensual level, we get nowhere. "Desire is the root cause of all misery," exclaimed Buddha. It is the intense craving for the enjoyment of the senses which leads to untold misery and agony. It is a perverted viewpoint that we try to satisfy our thirst for enjoyment by our indulgence. Even in the field of spiritual discipline, many souls continue looking for the Lord outside in the scriptures, places of pilgrimage, ascetic living, or in other good acts; all of which mean searching the self-outside, ignoring the fact that the fountain of bliss and immortality, known as *Amritsar* (the pool of nectar), is within, and can be properly tapped with the grace of a Master-saint. The bliss-giving holy Naam, or the Word, is within the body; and we waste our precious time and energy in its pursuit in the wrong direction. The divine source of immortality is within us all, and those who introvert and recede within do sip the elixir of life; and by drinking that, all their cravings come to an end.

The holy initiation into this mystic science by the living Master gives a foretaste of the wine from the divine cup-bearer, who doles out and administers it under the divine commandment. No worldly enjoyments can equal the ineffable grandeur which lies far beyond the ken of human comprehension and apprehension.

After we have known that the very fountainhead of perpetual bliss and harmony is within us, and fortunately having been blessed with holy initiation by the gracious Master, the next question is how to derive the maximum benefit. The succeeding verses provide an answer to this question.

*Leaving all vices, become an abode of all virtues.
Whenever you fall into the vices, it behooves you sincerely to repent.*

Herein lies the secret of spiritual discipline. To err is one thing, but to go on repeating past mistakes is unpardonable. Most people have no idea whatsoever of their doings. In the whirlwind of passions, we seldom care to look within and pause to consider about our lapses or shortcomings. Many of us do not know the maladies with which we are affected. This is why daily self-introspection is recommended; for unless we know of our faults, we cannot take the next step of weeding them out. Ethical life precedes spirituality. It is only during the silent moments of deep thought and meditation that

one comes to find these hidden thieves constantly keeping us in perpetual bondage. Every action has a reaction; it is a universal law — it works everywhere. The spiritual aspirant is necessarily required to keep a stern watch over his thoughts, words, and deeds. The evil has its roots deep down in the unfathomable past, and grows strong with the present actions.

You should know it for certain that the past cannot be undone, but one can take a stand somewhere. It is only possible when we have something more fascinating and more abiding than the sense objects that keep us in fascination. Mind loves to enjoy, and all enjoyments derived at the sensual level are but a reflection of the attention of the self within. The gross vices that, at present, hold a charm should be weeded out by self-analysis and self-introspection. These should be replaced with their opposites, the ennobling virtues, by leading a well-regulated life. Regular meditations and continued self-examination help a lot in this direction. The changeover cannot, of course, be accomplished overnight; but patient and persistent efforts do go a long way in achieving the desired results. We may fall and fail here and there; but with each failure, we get more strength to fight and overcome the evil.

A sincere repentance and prayer for divine help and guidance make us invincible in the long run. Thus, by continued vigilance and check, we can get good dividends. The mind is a treacherous gamester. With every loss it craves for more gain. Unless we stop eating any more poison, we cannot possibly wash off the poison in our bones and blood.

Man does not differentiate between good and evil, with the result that he again and again goes deep into the quagmire of delusion.

This is our true state of affairs. We can hardly foresee the results of our doings, and foolishly cling to the pleasurable sensations, caring little for the consequences. Having been fully engrossed in the lures and temptations of the physical life, we are unwillingly going down in the scales of moral values. Our flight is like that of an ignorant man, held fast in the quicksands of time, who at every step forward goes deeper into the treacherous sands. A mighty hand of some friend may come to our rescue and pull us out of this condition of helplessness. Our mighty little soul is woefully entangled in the physical limitations; and only the gracious Master, in the form of the Holy Naam, may come to our rescue. Otherwise, there is no hope for our safety. Like muck-worms, we are rushing in the mud in spite of us. O Lord, have pity and take us out.

*Within thee is the dross of false attachments.
How can the washing of the body help?*

The water can wash off dirt from the body, but not from the mind polluted with vices. There are many vices lying hidden in the mind including those of falsehood and greed. These are the dormant latencies of the mind and require a strenuous effort for eradication. Falsehood does not simply mean telling lies, but it means and includes the great gulf between what is in one's head and heart and what he says and does. Many persons come up and take the spiritual course as a fancy, but inwardly with some ulterior worldly motive. They fail to attain their goal. We should be true to ourselves, and delve deep into our hearts to find out as to what is the underlying factor for which we are taking up the Holy Path.

The Master is competent to grant us anything we cherish of this or of the other world. But he advises us always to keep our target high; that is spiritual perfection. Greed is equally a strong fetter. It should be overcome by renunciation. Greed breeds hatred and feeds fat the latent ego. It blinds the inner eye and thickens the dark veil. A spiritual aspirant should always feel grateful for the manifold blessings, which are granted to him by the grace of the Master. If we awake to the sacred Truth and comprehend the grandeur of the Holy Naam granted by the Master, we will be dumbfounded with its divine ecstasy.

*Let the peerless Naam be ever with the Gurmukh.
This will make manifest all the inner secrets.*

This Holy Naam is immaculately pure and its constant practice confers the greatest blessings. One must, however, try to be a *Gurmukh*, the mouthpiece of the Guru, in his daily life; it means that we should follow the behests of the Master implicitly. The term *Gurmukh* has a special significance in the sacred terminology of the saints. It literally means the mouthpiece of the Master or a prototype of the Master. We should always yearn for spiritual perfection, which the Master has set before us by precept and action. One, with all his attainments, should never consider oneself as perfect, because there are innumerable spiritual realms, one over the other, as so many mansions in the palace of the Father. Always look up for the charming radiant form of the Master within, and follow him lovingly. The holy meditation on Naam will open up many a new region, and divine grace will fill in with abundance.

Give up covetousness, censure of others, love of mortal things; and take to the search of Truth through the Word of the Master.

The Master repeats his admonition in yet stronger terms. We should give up the habit of useless talk for and against others. Censure means criticism, but Masters have gone a step further. They include in it both praise and dispraise. Whatever we talk about has a bearing on our character. If we talk about the evils of a person, naturally these will gradually begin to reflect on ourselves. Similarly, if we give undue importance to somebody, it will lead to misrepresentation; for we cannot possibly know the intrinsic worth of a person. It is, therefore, enjoined that we should always be calm, cool, and collected within. Nothing is perfect save the gracious Master on whose chosen human-pole that divine power works. If there is anyone who commands our reverence and adoration, he is the Master. And it is our own mind, with all its blemishes, that deserves scrutiny and censure. If we throw a brick-bat into a pool of dirty water, we are sure to soil our own clothes. So we must always be cautious in this respect, and always dwell on our own-selves by keeping our faculties well under control by self-examination and spiritual discipline. The holy words of the Master, when cultivated carefully, will bring much reward.

*Redeem us, O Lord, in any way it pleaseth Thee.
Thy servant Nanak adores the holy Shabd.*

Humility is the highest watermark in spirituality. Guru Nanak concludes the hymn by invoking the Lord to take any course that pleaseseth Him, and prays for redemption from the whirlwind of lusts and passions. I always adore and appreciate the greatness of the Holy Shabd — the God-into-expression Power — that has blessed me with this rare union. So the Naam, or the audible life stream, is the central theme of the teachings of the Masters, through whose grace one finds everlasting peace and harmony. In fact, the living Master is Word personified, as it is through him that the divine Word is made manifest to us and helps us in attaining perfection in due course.