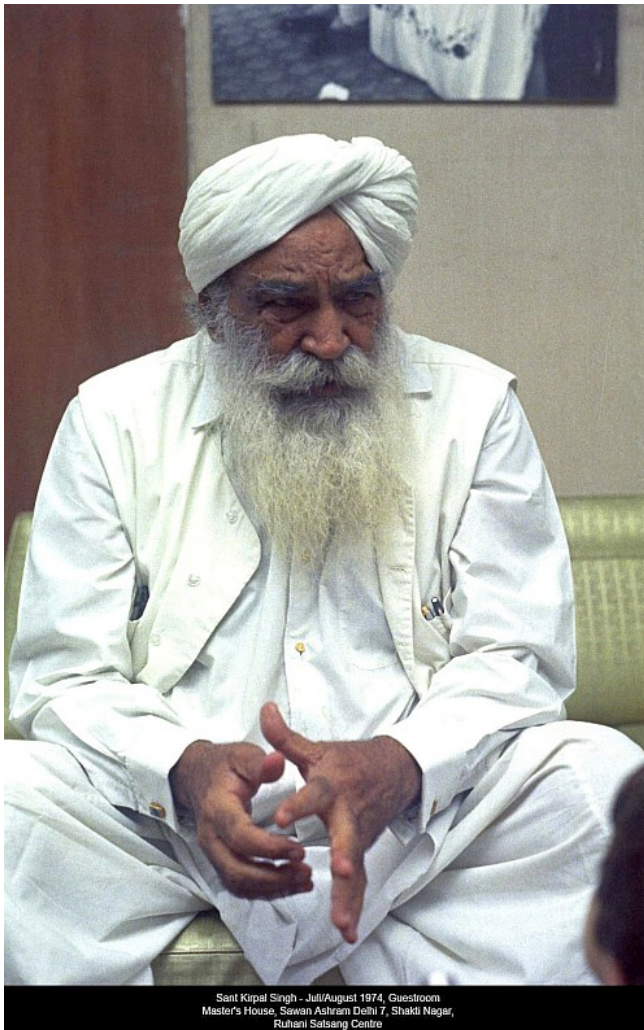


Chastity and Forgiveness

This talk by Master Kirpal Singh was originally published in the January 1968 issue of *Sat Sandesh*.

The supreme ideal of human life is the realization of God. Religions were made to perpetuate the teachings of great souls who had attained enlightenment. They have left an account of their personal experiences for the guidance of posterity. They have all said that God is omnipresent. Whatever we see around us is undoubtedly His manifestation, but the question is how to see Him?



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*The Lord's Word is all
pervading;
There is no place
where His Word does
not exist.*
— Jap Ji

*We have seen the
glimpse of God.*
— Gurbani

One can experience God only by rising to His level of super-consciousness. Although the atmosphere is full of microbes, nothing is visible to the naked eye. Does that mean that there is nothing in the air? We can see thousands of tiny

objects through a microscope. Now, there are two possibilities. Either whatever is present in the air is made to magnify so as to correspond to the visual level of our eyes, or our vision should become so subtle as to see these tiny germs clearly. So, it is impossible for us to see the highly subtle and indescribable Lord with our physical eyes. When we are able to develop super-consciousness and subtlety of His level, we can have some experience of Him. The question is one of developing the Third Eye. Who can open the inner eye? Only the Master's grace can do it.

*Through the Grace of a Godman,
You will see the temple of the Lord within. – Gurbani*

The human body is the temple of God. In order to attain super-consciousness one has to withdraw from all the physical attachments. So long as we remain identified with external objects, we cannot assume a subtle form. Tulsi Sahib says: "The Lord dwells within us, but we remain ignorant. Cursed is such a life." Even after getting human life, if He is not manifested within, it is a great curse because we can accomplish this task only in human life. "O Tulsi! The whole world is suffering from cataract."

Doctors do not give vision to cataract patients. They only remove the thin membrane covering the pupil of the eye. Similarly, the Lord is within us. He is our controlling power. The entire universe is His manifestation. He can be realized within, but not before our subtle eye is able to pierce through the darkness within.

Tulsi Sahib and Shams-e-Tabrez both have said the same thing: "See the Lord with your own eyes and hear His Eternal Music with your own ears".

If we see through the darkness inside, we can experience the divine Light. Tulsi Sahib says that you will not be able to penetrate through the darkness without the help of a perfect

Master. In this lies the greatness of a Master Soul, who can dispel our darkness and give us the inner experience of divine Light. This is possible when our attention is withdrawn from outside and we rise above body-consciousness. This is not easy. Despite years of meditation, past sages and seers could not always get this experience (of divine Light). They used to practice *Kumbhak* (Hatha Yogic exercise), and after passing through the six ganglionic centers, got a little inner experience in the center of the two eyebrows. This practice takes hundreds of years.

*Only the all-powerful Master can pull the soul up;
He alone can free us from the prison of oblivion.*

— Swamiji

Who can rise above body-consciousness? One who is unattached and is not engrossed in sensual pleasures can do it. Only such a person can easily tap inside. Ethical and chaste life is, therefore, very essential. Even if the Master, by his own grace, lifts someone whose life is not pure above body consciousness, the latter will not be able to withstand it. It is crystal clear that there are two main obstacles in the way: passionate desires and anger. To lead a chaste life is not enough. We have to overcome all desires. In anger the soul flows out. Self-indulgence and anger lead to various other vices. Unless these two enemies are disciplined first, others — greed, attachment, and egotism — cannot be controlled. One who succeeds in conquering all these five enemies is free from suffering. The senses derive their power from the mind and the mind from the soul. If our attention is concentrated at the seat of the soul, the senses become powerless.

Saints show us the way back to God through *Surat Shabd Yoga*. Where is the seat of the soul in the body? At the time of death, the soul withdraws behind the two eyebrows after leaving the lower regions. Anyone who is able to withdraw his sensory currents at this point in his lifetime can open his inner eye. But, this can be done only through the grace of a perfect

living Master. First, the Master helps us in withdrawing our attention from external worldly objects with which it is identified. In this body – the temple of God – dwell both we and our Controlling Power. The Master has great power to pull the soul above the plane of senses to the seat of the soul. He opens the inner eye. Thus, the spiritual aspirant has a firsthand experience and does not require any other evidence.

*Until I see the Truth with my own eyes,
I cannot be fully convinced of what the Master says.*

–Gurbani

Unless the senses are controlled, the mind is stilled, and the intellect too is equipoised, the soul cannot realize itself. *Gyan Yoga* will not be of much help. We only draw inferences to acquire knowledge. But, the true knowledge has to be experienced. Only an adept who has had a firsthand experience can give you a taste of it. Similarly, only one in whom the divine Light is manifest can show you Light. Intellectuals and religious preachers cannot do this work. True inner experience can be given only by the grace of a truly competent Master. By infusing his own life-impulse, he puts us on the spiritual path and then unites us with the Power of God. One who has subdued the senses qualifies for the divine grace.

Cravings and anger can be controlled by cultivating chastity and forgiveness. If you go into details, you will find that these are our main hurdles. If you were to listen to someone silently, you will find that he talks of his passionate desires, petty jealousies, factions, enmities, recriminations, etc. He will overrate some and underrate others. These vices must be dispensed with. Prophet Mohammed has said: "If you can control the two sense-organs; namely, one between the two lips and the other between the two thighs, I shall stand surety for you in the Lord's Court." We simply read or hear these words but never go deeper into their meaning. If these two virtues were cultivated, it would be a great blessing. In the absence of these virtues, meditation is hampered. This is the main object of my laying

stress on keeping a diary. The first column in the diary is for *ahimsa* (non-violence) and forgiveness. Even if someone harms you, forgive him. Do not injure anybody's feelings. One who practices *ahimsa* would not tell a lie, cheat others, or have ill-gotten gains. Now, let us see what saints have said on the subject.

Chastity and forgiveness are the two basic and noble virtues of all. If we acquire these virtues, we will be successful in our meditation. Christ says: "Suffer the little children to come unto me . . . for of such theirs is the Kingdom of God." Children are endowed with these two qualities. They are totally indifferent to sex. They never mind even if they are naked. If they go astray, we (parents) are to blame. If they fight with each other, they soon reconcile their differences. Let us become like little children and we will be successful in our meditation. A competent Master, by virtue of the God Power working in him, turns away your attention from outer pursuits, pulls it above the plane of senses, and opens the inner eye. He gives to the spiritual aspirant some capital of inner experience which is his grace, but it is our responsibility to preserve it.

Ibrahim Adham, King of Bukhara, once went to Sant Kabir. He served his Master (Kabir) day and night. Mother Loi, one of Kabir's disciples, one day praised Ibrahim for his selfless service to the Master and felt that Ibrahim had become a deserving devotee for the spiritual gift. Kabir remarked that Ibrahim had not yet attained maturity. To prove this, Kabir asked her to throw rubbish on Ibrahim's head from the top of the house and then listen to what he had to say. She did so. At this, Ibrahim said that he would have dealt with the mischief-monger properly had he been in Bukhara. When Kabir came to know of Ibrahim's reaction, he said that the latter had not got over his pride of kingship and egotism and, as such, he was not mature enough for initiation. After some time, Kabir told Loi that Ibrahim had become ripe for the gift of spirituality. As she had not noticed any appreciable change in Ibrahim, she wanted to know the criterion for this verdict. This time, Kabir asked her to

throw night-soil on Ibrahim. She did so. To her surprise, Ibrahim said: "O God! I am even worse than this." Remember, one whose heart is full of compassion for others, who wishes well after having been hurt, and prays even for his enemies is known as a *Mahatma* (great soul).

Christ was asked as to what should be the code of conduct in life. On inquiring about the injunction of Moses in this regard, he was told: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." At this Christ remarked: "It was because your hearts were hardened that he gave you this injunction." When asked to express his own opinion, Christ said: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." When further asked how enemies should be dealt with, he replied: "Love thy enemies." Jealousy, malice, calumny, backbiting, falsehood, and fraud can be overcome by love. Unless these vices are given up, there is no way out. Even good preachers and reformers are found wanting in chastity and forgiveness. They indulge in recrimination, falsehood, fraud, hypocrisy, etc. What is wanted is cultivation of forgiveness. If we develop child-like qualities, we can reach our goal. Now let us listen to what Sant Kabir has to say about purity of life: "When chastity and forgiveness sprout in one's heart, the invisible Lord becomes visible. Without chastity one cannot reach Him. Empty words are of no avail."

Kabir says in very clear words that chastity and forgiveness are the two prerequisites for God-realization. Without purity of life, all sermons or learning are of no use. Chastity means purity of thoughts, words, and deeds. Chastity is life and self-indulgence is death. Forgiveness is difficult to practice. Outwardly we pose to be humble, but inwardly we do not hesitate to harm others.

I remember an incident in my life. Long ago, my wife was relieved of her purse at a railway station. The police caught the thief and the purse was recovered from him. I was asked to lodge a report at the police station. I told the police it was unnecessary as the purse had been found. But on their insistence, I had to go to the police station, perhaps for the

first time. I told the officer on duty that I was not interested in reporting the matter, but he would not agree and the report was ultimately lodged. Later, I had to go to the court as a witness. The police officer talked to me on this issue. He felt that justice must be done; but I contended that there were two aspects of the law, one justice and the other compassion or mercy. I emphasized that even after justice had been done bitterness would remain; whereas, through mercy he could be forgiven. Compassion leads to mercy which, in turn, leads to non-violence in thoughts, words, and deeds. Anyway, when I appeared in the court, I requested the magistrate that if he could let the accused off on some ground, I would have no objection. The magistrate, after satisfying himself that there was no record of previous conviction against the accused, ordered his discharge with a warning. As a result, the accused and his relatives always remained grateful to me.

What a tremendous effect forgiveness has! Justice could never produce this effect. Forgiveness is the greatest of all virtues. So is purity of thought. But alas, all our time is spent in tensions and petty squabbles. We find it difficult to pardon others. Remember, only a brave man can forgive others, not a weak person. Indirectly, we remain busy in condemning our opponents. Such persons can never realize God.

All learning and religious pursuits are of little significance unless the qualities of chastity and forgiveness are thoroughly understood and cultivated in life. Because of these two virtues in children, saints always have a great love for them. God does not dwell in the skies, but is within us. Unless proper background is developed, spiritual advancement is not possible. Kabir now explains in greater detail what chastity is: "One who is chaste is greatest of all and is a storehouse of all virtues."

Chastity is the main source of all virtues. It is rare to come across a really chaste person. Nearness to such a pure soul produces a soothing effect and even his reflection causes awakening. It is not an exaggeration. By virtue of ethical life,

the body of a celibate is charged with the divine grace, tranquility, and fragrance. Chastity is thus a great blessing. "Chastity brings all the treasures of the three worlds (physical, astral, and causal)."

You may ask as to what should married persons do. In olden days (in India), people used to observe continence for the first 25 years. Thereafter, having assimilated religious scriptures, they would settle down as householders for another 25 years. Having got one or two children, they would leave their homes to enter *Vanaprastha Ashram* for another period of 25 years, during which they would devote themselves to achieve the ultimate Goal of life – realization of self and God. After reaching the Goal (in Vanaprastha Ashram), they would become *Sanyasis* — those who renounce the world completely and wander from place to place to preach religion.

The real significance of marriage is to have a life partner who could stand by you under all circumstances – in pleasure and pain, in riches and poverty. Both should cooperate in striving to realize God. To go on producing children is not our aim. "If a woman has to give birth, she should bear a saint or a philanthropist or a great warrior. Otherwise, it is better if she remains barren and does not waste the divine Light."

Our forefathers generally used to lead more disciplined lives, but now there is little restraint. I have to say this because of the deplorable condition in which we are. The world population is increasing at an alarming rate of 90 a minute. We can well imagine the population problem after 20 or 30 years. So, it is all the more necessary for us to cultivate continence. Christ has said: "Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church." Swami Ram Tirath has also emphasized "Unless husbands and wives love each other as brothers and sisters, there is no hope for India." Those who are awakened say so. The solution thus lies in leading a life of self-restraint. Even if a person is able to find a perfect saint who can give the disciple a firsthand spiritual experience, progress on the spiritual path is

impossible unless we practice chastity and forgiveness. We should, therefore, forget the past and start leading a clean life from now on.

"There is no dearth of scholars, religious and disciplined people; but we seldom come across a really chaste person." Kabir says that there are countless learned men, those who meditate and achieve concentration and those who are benevolent and disciplined; but a celibate is rarely to be found. I have come into contact with the heads of almost all religions, but only a few lead a life of celibacy. A celibate can reach his real Goal without making much effort. One who practices both forgiveness and chastity has nothing to worry about, and will realize God.

Let me give my grandfather's example. He was a clean-hearted man. He would not nurse any grievance against anyone. He became a widower at the age of 25. He never married again, although he lived for more than 100 years. A day before his death, he told some people that he would be leaving the world the next day; and if they wanted to convey any message to their dear ones in Heaven, they might let him know. Just before his end, some of his relations asked him to utter the name of God; but he said that "God is permeating throughout my body and I am going straight to Him." I am talking of chaste ones. Such people have an innate feeling about the presence of God.

*Those who have complete faith in God,
They enjoy the quintessence of true knowledge.*

— Gurbani

You may go on meditating all through your life, but unless you practice chastity and forgiveness, it will not bear any fruit. Anger causes excitement. Most of the ills are psychosomatic, being the result of emotional disturbances caused by hatred, animosity, and worry. Saints always lay stress on the basic essentials of life, but alas, we do not pay heed to them.

"Chastity is the ocean of happiness; none can fathom its depth. Without the Word none can be called a Sadhu (disciplined soul); without capital there cannot be a money-lender." Kabir says that chastity is the ocean of happiness. It is so deep that none can measure its depth. But only the Word-personified saints can realize it. The Word would become manifest where there is a life of continence.

One who loses semen, loses everything. – Nanak

A person who practices celibacy and forgiveness can realize God and can truly be called a sadhu. These two virtues are of prime importance; and wherever these exist, other virtues come in of their own accord. Such a person by constant contact with the inner sound-current (*Shabd*) becomes a storehouse of all virtues.

One who has found a Master, but has not become his mouthpiece (*Gurumukh*), has not yet freed himself from lusts of the flesh. After having found a Master, one must develop receptivity towards him. Who is a Gurumukh? One who has no wish of his own and lives in the will of the Master. Such a person is automatically relieved of all sorts of passions. As the Master is an embodiment of chastity, chastity radiates from him and penetrates into the disciple the moment he thinks of him. He is full of compassion and forgives all. Only a Gurumukh can escape from all kinds of indulgences since he abides in the Word of the Master.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. – Christ

Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj used to say: "We hesitate to commit an impious act in the presence of a child, how dare we ever do so if we realize that God within us is all-seeing."

The Master is an embodiment of the Word, and gives us a contact with it. By listening to the Eternal Music and seeing the divine Light, one gets inner peace.

Mind gets docile by communion with Naam. – Gurbani

Upanishads state that by attaining the Word, we attain all.

"So long as man has animal passions, he cannot be a Gurumukh. When the Satguru resides within, the disciple is free from lusts." As you think, so you become. If your mind constantly dwells on a chaste person, you will unconsciously attract and imbibe chastity. Kabir says that one who becomes a Satguru incarnate would automatically rid himself of all desires. In the first place comes His sweet remembrance. The next is His manifestation within. One should, therefore, exercise great caution in adopting a Master. If he is really an adept in the science of soul, you can achieve salvation. Otherwise, if you concentrate on the form of a so-called guru, you may, at the most, become like him.

You might have heard of Dadu Sahib. One day he was going bareheaded. Someone, knocking him on the head, inquired: "Where is Dadu's house?" He replied: "Go this way and you will find him inside the house." To his consternation, he found the same man (Dadu) sitting in the house. The visitor felt ashamed when he realized that he had insulted the saint. Dadu Sahib said it did not matter since even an earthen pot of insignificant value is purchased after the buyer has made sure of its serviceability by knocking it all over.

A Master should be chosen after thoughtful consideration, just as water should be taken after filtration.

A perfect Master is a rarity. The world is full of so-called gurus, while there are only a few really competent Masters. Such Masters alone are described in the Vedas and other scriptures as sages, saints, and great souls for they are Word-personified.

Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

– Christ

He who can give you a firsthand experience of the divine Light and celestial Sound is a true Master.

Through association with a saint, the power of God becomes manifest within.

A saint bestows the essence of esoteric science.

— Gurbani

Anyone can lecture, sermonize, or give a religious talk; but a practical inner experience can be given only by an awakened soul.

Only an alert and wide-awake person can practice chastity.

The thieves of sensual desires cannot rob such a person.

It is only an alert and conscious person who can cultivate chastity and can attain higher consciousness. By practicing chastity one gradually rises into cosmic consciousness. When consciousness dawns within, one is not troubled by the sensual thieves — we are being robbed by five deadly passions. In the absence of chastity and forgiveness, a thick wall of darkness comes over the soul and we are not our own. Christ has described this state as "death of the soul." What is death of the soul? It is the bedimming of the Light-consciousness in us. Attachment to material comforts lowers our consciousness. Consciousness increases with increasing awareness. Where does this awareness come from? It comes by cultivating compassion and chastity. See how important these virtues are, but we do not pay attention to them. We have already been blessed with his grace and also with the capital of holy Naam. Is it not our duty then to safeguard our capital? We should keep his commandments instead of doing mere lip-service to him.

"One who is courteous to one's guests is a great soul; one who offers them a seat is a saint. One who lacks these courtesies is either a heretic or a pagan." Now, all this is about our external conduct. One who is endowed with the two virtues of chastity

and compassion would welcome even an enemy courteously. A *mahatma* (great soul) has this great virtue. He welcomes anyone who calls on him even in the dead of night. Such a person remains cheerful even in the face of death. To observe celibacy in youth is a great thing. People usually postpone it for the old age.

"Those who do not meditate while young would not be able to do so in old age." As in old age physical disabilities appear one by one, we cannot engage in meditation. One should, therefore, make a start while young. Saints have said that one who practices celibacy while young is a prophet. This is not a child's play. We simply read these things and forget about them.

We do not forgive others. In the absence of forgiveness; anger, jealousy, hatred, backbiting, etc. emerge. Our hearts and minds are contaminated with all such thoughts. We talk of these things and do not hesitate to slander those with whom we are angry. My Master used to say: "All sensual appetites have some taste in them, but what taste comes from slandering others? If there is any; is it sweet, sour, saltish, or insipid?" Still every family, society, and country is afflicted with this malady. A devotee, who is an embodiment of forgiveness, has nothing to fear. He will always greet others with love. If someone thinks in of you, let him do that. In what way does it affect you? Instead, the former harms himself by being angry and jealous. If you retaliate, you will be afflicted likewise. One who considers that the Lord is omnipresent and is dedicated to Him is not carried away by what others may speak of him. These are the shortcomings in our way to self-realization and God-realization.

"Forgiveness extinguishes the fire of anger." Great souls go to the extent of welcoming those who find fault with them. Once a man went to Lord Buddha and started abusing him. When he was about to leave, Lord Buddha remarked: "Brother, listen to me, if the receiver refuses to accept the gift offered to him it

would remain with the giver. I refuse to accept the gift you have brought for me."

If one abuses and the other retaliates, there would be a shower of abuses.

But, in case of non-retaliation, the matter would end.

— Kabir

"Where there is compassion, there is religion. Where there is greed, there is sin. Where there is anger, there is negation. Where there is forgiveness, there is the Lord Himself."

Compassion leads to forgiveness, and greed leads to sin. Greed and attachment mean desire for name or fame. For the fulfillment of one's desires, one becomes jealous of others. One neither becomes good nor bad by other's opinion. Those who indulge in slandering others are unpaid apprentices of the C.I.D. of God. God and the Master are both within you. One who is true to the Master has nothing to fear, for his heart is pure, and purity of heart gives added strength. One cannot realize God unless the mind is equipoised. Anger, jealousy, malice and ill-will, even in thought, fan the flames of invisible fire all around. Kabir says that at a place like this you will find nothing but Negative Power; but where there is forgiveness, there is God Himself. Forgiveness washes clear all inner defilement and leads to peace of mind. Otherwise, anger would provoke anger, and accusations counter-accusations, vitiating the entire atmosphere.

"All quarrels and strife emanate from abuse." Kabir says that bad language is the root cause of all quarrels. You know how the great Mahabharata war started? Just by sarcastic words. One single sarcastic remark of Draupadi led to the destruction of Indian culture and civilization.

No power on earth can harm one who is protected by the Guru.

— Gurbani

If someone harbors in him thoughts of jealousy and hatred, they react doubly on him. This is the natural law. One noble thought gives rise to thousands of noble sentiments, and one evil thought to thousands of miseries. If you sow a single seed in the soil, the plant that sprouts would bear hundreds of similar seeds. Likewise, if you plant a mango seed, you would get hundreds of mangoes from it. One thought may produce a soothing effect, while the other may excite you. Every action, even a thought, has its reaction.

"The words of a vicious person are like so many arrows, but saints alone can tolerate them. If lightning falls into the sea, what damage would it do?" Kabir says that malicious words are like poisoned darts. But a forgiver is like an ocean that is not affected even by lightning. So, forgiveness is a great blessing. Kabir says that a man becomes tough by bearing external hardships. He who has prepared his ground can listen to the Music of the Spheres all the time.

"The earth can tolerate digging and the forest cutting. Only a saint can bear harsh and malicious words and none else." You may dig the land or cut a forest to any extent without any reaction. Similarly, only a saint is endowed with forgiveness and chastity. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. You can reap only what you sow.

Actions, good or bad, bear their own fruits. We must understand these principles and implement them in life. First, a perfect Master, capable of imparting the experience of inner Light, is hard to find. Even if you find one, you cannot reach the Goal without purity of life and forgiveness. If you follow and act on what I have just said, you will be liberated from the bondage of matter and mind. These virtues will bring to you higher consciousness, and you will develop faith in the existence of God.

After all, what is the purpose of worship? It is to develop firm faith in the existence of God. By self-introspection, you can see

what your condition is. Learned people, moralists, and theologians generally preach to others. What is their own plight? It is well said: "Wanted reformers, not of others but of themselves." We preach to others what we do not practice ourselves. The result is that all exhortations produce little effect on others.

Be true to Him who is dwelling within you. If you practice the two virtues — chastity and forgiveness — you will find that, without much effort, you will attain higher consciousness, complete awakening, and perfect peace of mind. Thus, you will begin to radiate peace, harmony, and tranquility to those around you.