

The Path all must Travel

George Arnsby Jones, Litt.D., Pt5.D.

No BOOK, nor any magazine article (this one included), can liberate the human being from thralldom to mind and matter. If there is a measure of truth behind the words written in a book or article, the individual seeker can ponder upon them and then attempt to apprehend the reality mirrored in the words. But, in the final analysis, the aspirant to truth must find another human being, who has attained the spiritual goal of Godhood, and who can lead the seeking one to the ultimate goal as a trusted guide and spiritual mentor. Metaphysical courses and books cannot enable the seeker to gain practical experience of the higher spiritual planes, even if he had the time to study for the rest of the planetary cycle. Such teachings are concerned mainly with the form side of life; but the eternal aspect of life is spiritual and transcends all causal, mental, and physical forms.

To still the wandering currents of the mind is one of the first requirements in the science of the Surat Shabd Yoga. The average human mind is like a tangled skein of wool, hopelessly muddled and becoming increasingly knotted. The threads of wool are whirled hither and thither in the everchanging currents of the human mental-emotional environment. To overcome this anarchic, wandering nature of the mind the mystic adept, the Sat Guru, gives the aspirant a *simran* of the basic names of God, and this leads to a stilling of the mind and the withdrawal of the soul-currents to the point of inner focus. Once the aspirant has mastered this technique, he discovers that his true self is the soul - and not the complex of mind, outgoing faculties and physical body which comprises the external organism of the human being. He witnesses the unraveling of the tangled skeins of wool of the mind, and draws into himself an ordered line of mental process under the full control of the *atma* or spiritual soul. From his new vantage point he can witness the tangled webs of thought, the incessant chattering of billions of crossed wave-lengths, which comprise the inner life of the multitude of human beings. He becomes aware of the timelessness and spacelessness of inner reality, and he then grasps what the great mystics of the past have meant when they have referred to the "illusory nature of form." Once he has become aware of these higher levels of being, the aspirant loses all sense of fear or failure in regard to his external life. Through the Grace of his Sat Guru his destiny unfolds itself before him and he sees the great vista of the luminous realms of life, extending onwards and upwards. The true identity of the Sat Guru, whom he had previously known as a great and noble teacher in the physical world, becomes apparent to the aspirant, and he bows low before the radiant majesty of He who is truly the incarnation of the Supreme One.

Religious and mystical literature refers to the "Path that all must travel." The liberated human being discovers that the Sat Guru is the Path, and the living Shabd or *Naam* is the Path, and that he himself is the Path - for the Path has always been within him. "The Kingdom of God is within. He finds that the hypnotic images of the external world have been removed from his inner imaginings, and for a period of time each day he forgets the pressing needs of his transient environment, and delves into the realm of reality within. He knows that this is the spiritual treasure that will complete the fullness of life for him. To quote the Galilean Master again: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

There are so many aspiring seekers who have been faced with the "keys of the kingdom," and yet they still have done nothing about it. They become prey to emotional disturbances and frustrations, simply because they will not take the first step to spiritual liberation. They deplore the material world, but they wail and weep in an orgy of self-pity. They are still responding to that inertia, which, in the basic nature of man, reflects life in its primal state. Such an instinct is never far below the emotional and mental perception of man, and it holds him in bondage to the present *status quo*, no matter how he strains for liberation from such bondage. Through the technique of Surat Shabd Yoga, the individual is immersed into the vast ocean of the audible life stream during meditation, and this sound principle pulls the soul of the aspirant free of the inertia-power. During such meditation the individual becomes conscious of himself as a separate, sovereign *atman*, and yet experiences a unity with the entire cosmos at the same time.

In the practice of *simran* the aspirant has to adopt a convenient posture and then focus his inner attention at the point of focus between the eyebrows, the **tisra ti1** or "third eye" center. Simran is a mental process and does not include the vocalizing of words or phrases with the physical tongue. The aspirant thus repeats the charged words mentally whilst keeping his inner attention fixed at "third eye" focus. The charged words, given by the Sat Guru at the time of initiation, are repeated slowly without causing any strain or pressure on the forehead. The aspirant usually devotes a half hour per day to the practice, when he first starts on the inner path, but eventually increases this period to two or three hours or even longer a day. The practice of simran thus leads to stilling the mind and brings it to a point of equipoise.

When simran is correctly performed for a certain period of time, a state of inner calm and illumination is experienced. The soul is consciously freed of its bodily thralldom and is irresistibly drawn upward by the audible life current under the control of the Sat Guru. When the soul thus withdraws from the physical plane, it becomes focused at its own point of consciousness, the aspirant experiences inner illumination and successive levels of consciousness unfold themselves. As the soul transcends these first levels of the inner realms and reaches the subtle plane, the luminous form of the mystic-adept appears and leads the soul onwards from plane to plane. When the soul meets the mystic-adept within, the work of simran is completed, and the spiritual progress of the soul is vested wholly in the hands of the Sat Guru throughout the higher realms.

The use of simran in the conscious transcension of the soul from the physical plane is of a two-fold nature. First, the simran of the charged words eradicates all externally-focused thoughts and enables the consciousness to be focused in remembrance of God, and second the simran enables the soul to withdraw from bodily consciousness and so gain access to higher planes of being. To be really effective, the practice of simran must be constant and unceasing. Constant remembrance of the Supreme One is achieved through the assiduous practice of simran, and this is truly a life-giving force to the spiritual aspirant. Nanak cried out to God: "If I remember Thee, I live. When I forget Thee, that means death to me." Simran, the remembrance of God through the charged words, is the only natural method of inner realization, and it is the easiest to practice, for young and old alike can participate in the technique of Surat Shabd Yoga. Simran brings the aspirant into conscious contact with the sublime symphonic strains of creation; it is truly the Word of salvation, contact with the audible life stream within.

The consciousness of man will travel where the mind directs it. Men are **not** governed by reason as is generally supposed, but by their imagination. Every feeling, desire, or intention creates an image in a part of the mind of which we are usually unconscious. Every detail of this image stands out in vivid colors, in vital significant form, as perfectly executed as a painting by El Greco or Rembrandt. We become aware of this in moments of great stress, great joy or fear. An old woman, descending a rickety stair-case at night, is terrified lest she fall. The fear induces an actual vision of falling; and one day she falls! Mind creates out of man's imaginings in the external world, and it is loath to invert its habitual practice. Through simran the aspirant can invert the mind, focusing its energies at one still point, and thus the consciousness is liberated from the physical plane.

The aspiring human being must wake from the nightmare existence in which he finds himself. He must free himself from the explosive energies of emotion which are strengthened by the power of the mind. Human greed and jealousy creates images of death and destruction which explode in torture, war, murder, and madness. Human fear creates images which paralyze both agent and victim, and eventually destroys them. Love creates images which liberate, transform and redeem. And it is in the image of love that the aspirant must build himself anew. Simran must be performed with love and devotion, for the ultimate nature of the entire spiritual universe is "All Love!"

The music of the supernal Word vibrates in all human beings alike, and the aspirant on the path of the Surat Shabd Yoga needs no special physical or intellectual training, for it is as available to the simple as to the learned. In point of fact, unsophisticated people and children, because of their relatively uncluttered consciousness and faith, often make more rapid progress on this path than their more sophisticated brethren, although ultimate headway demands unfaltering perseverance and effort which may not always be forthcoming from the young. Married life is no bar to the practice of this spiritual science, and there are no rigorous disciplines to be followed. However, competent mystic-adepts are rare, and even when these spiritual teachers are found,

only a relative few of the ensuing aspirants are prepared to undergo even the simple kind of discipline this royal science requires. The spirit may be crying out for liberation, but the flesh is weak, and mind and matter call the wavering ones back to the round of pain and pleasure. Kabir, the poet-saint, will make the final point of this article: "A heaven veritable lies in the Master's feet alone. No outer shows are needed, all must be done within. Why lose time with the outside world? I am now engaged in my Lord within."

THE PATH ALL MUST TRAVELNOTES

1 . *Simran means* "repetition" or "remembrance;" and refers esoterically to the above-mentioned repetition of the names of God.

2. *Naam* means the same as ***Szabd***, Word, ***Nad***, etc. It is the primal sound principle, stemming from the Supreme Lord.

3. Luke 17:21.

4. Matthew 6:33.

5. This is in contradistinction to the science of ***Mantra Yoga***, which is the yoga of vocal rhythmic repetition of verbal formulae and which is mainly concerned with the magical aspect of the power of sounds and music.

6. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, the great mystic adept and Sant Sat Guru of the nineteenth century, was describing the inner realms to his disciples. When he came to speak of the supreme region, he said very simply: "It is **All Love!**"

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