

# THE AUTHENTIC JOURNEY: *Advancing in the Way of Love*

Dear friends,

All spiritual seekers share one common aim, which is self-transformation. Many spiritual paths advocate dependence on a Guru, but transformation is impossible while we still depend on anybody else. It is only when we assume personal responsibility and say, “I must act,” that transformation becomes possible. Depending even on God is “passing the buck.”

If I hold my Guru, or anyone else, responsible for my evolution or transformation, that transformation will not happen. The reason is simple: God and Guru have already done whatever was needed. It is now my job, as a seeker, to perceive what has been given in the form of seeds within my heart, and to identify and allow those seeds to germinate and flourish. Depending upon destiny is even more futile – although it is true that we have, in a way, created our destinies through karma.

Having a keen aspiration to transform ourselves, we find that spirituality (especially in the Indian tradition) speaks of Karma, Jnana, or Bhakti Yoga –

the Yoga of action, knowledge, and devotion. The Heartfulness way truly is a beautiful fusion of all three. Yet even while travelling on such a path, we observe many pitfalls along the way because we attach too much importance to the Karma and Jnana approaches. When exaggerated, they stand in contradiction to the subtlety of this path.

You may have heard of brahmins falling from spiritual heights to become *brahm-rakshashas*, and yogis falling from great heights to become *yog-bhrasht*. Their journey of Yoga is incomplete for innumerable reasons. Jnanis and karmis can fall, but have you ever heard of the fall of a bhakta, a devotee? The term *bhakti-brasht* cannot come into being, as a bhakta is in the care of the Lord. The Lord will protect anyone who has attained *saranagati*, that is, who has truly surrendered with irresistible admiration. The problems only begin when we become the *karta* (doer). No bhakta has ever experienced a spiritual fall; it can simply never happen. If it ever appears to happen, it only indicates a lack of true bhakti or *saranagati*.



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When I was first introduced to Sahaj Marg, my preceptor, sister Draupadi, asked me a fundamental question: *“Aap kyun meditation karana chahate ho?”* meaning, “Why do you want to meditate?”

“I am searching for God,” I responded.

Today, as I reflect on some of my personal beliefs, I have come to understand things differently, and realize how wrong I was at that time. While most of us do say that we are searching for God, this now sounds hilarious to my ears. Smaller things may not be visible to the eyes, but how can we miss a being that is all-encompassing? At the same time, we do not see it when it is everywhere, just as

How did we become separated from Him in the first place, so that we now find it necessary to search for Him? In order to re-establish that lost connection, we must identify and remove the factors that caused the separation. This is the beginning of the authentic journey.



a fish has no idea of the ocean in which it spends its entire life. Alternatively, we imagine God as a dimensional infinity and become confused, as we have never seen and cannot conceive the furthest ends of existence. Divinity adopts even further invisibility at its infinitesimal levels.

Even if I begin to seek Him, how to perceive Infinity with my limited perception, unless there is some level of seeking from His side? Infinity is beyond grasp – how to fathom that it is smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest? Yet, another difficulty arises because the gross can never appreciate the subtle.

So, the idea of *saranagati* with reverence and awe is the only way:

वो दिल कहां से लाऊं, जो तुझे पहचाने!

How to prepare a heart that can recognize thee?

Beyond all this, we have a fundamental riddle to solve: How did we become separated from Him in the first place, so that we now find it necessary to search for Him? In order to re-establish that lost connection, we must identify and remove the factors that caused the separation. This is the beginning of the authentic journey.

Imagine that you are at the beach enjoying the dancing waves. But you are unable to see the water in the depths of the ocean, because you can only see the surface waves. The waves, too, keep asking, “Where is the ocean?” They are also



restless in their search. The moment they slow down and **cease**, the surface waves become one with the ocean and there is clarity.

The waves forget that their origin is the ocean – that they originate from there and merge back there. For the waves and the ocean to become one, the key is to slow down, cease, and become still. The ultimate ceasing is death. So, if we can at least mimic and imbibe the attributes of death, becoming मरजीवा, (*marjeeva* or living dead), acceptance automatically will take birth in our hearts. Now, the auspicious moment of being one with the original Ocean shall begin, a state akin to the original state of *Samadhi*. Physical death does not solve the problem. In fact, the problem remains veiled with our subtle bodies, and the cycle of birth and death continues ad infinitum.

The art of ceasing, of letting oneself become subdued in love for the Beloved, is bhakti. It is precisely when we transcend ourselves that the solution is found.

जब मैं था तब हरि नहीं, अब हरि है मैं नाही ।  
सब अँधियारा मिट गया, दीपक देखा माही । ।

When 'I' was there, the Lord was not; now the Lord 'is' and 'I' am not.  
All the darkness [illusions] diminished when I saw the light [illumination] within.

The 'I-ness' illusion is the darkness preventing our vision of the Lord. When He is present in the heart, there is only light, and the darkness of our own presence remains absent.

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The final frontier of awareness is total divinization. The heights and depths of awareness are to be found in the Ocean of consciousness itself. When we understand this much, we realize the meaning of beloved Babuji's penetrating question: "What supports this consciousness?" It is only when we deny love and the Sublime that we lose the vision of the heights and depths of our own being, leaving us with a narrow band of awareness.

No one is poorer (*tuchch*, more wretched and desolate, insignificant) than the person who has lost their inner compass, or whose inner compass is focused on a direction that is diametrically opposite to Divinity. Bhakti, intense love for the Beloved, irons out the rising and falling waves of emotions, of being and becoming, into one uniform homogeneity of Divinity. Per contra, it is the moving away from the awareness of the Beloved that brings pain and misery.

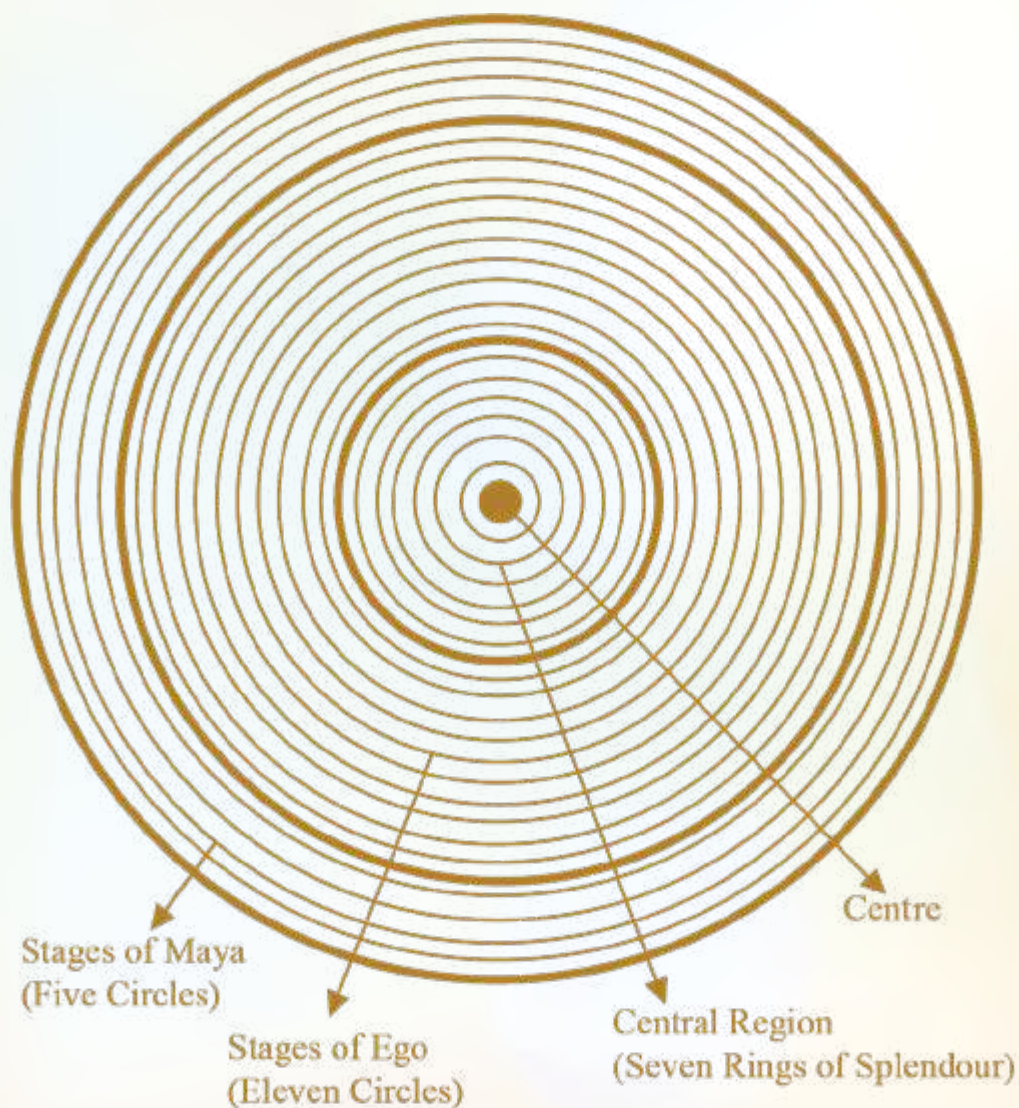
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The Jewish tradition is quite specific in its definition of 'sin' as straying from that which is worship-able. Babuji says that ingratitude is sin. It is precisely when we become ungrateful that various offshoots of deviation from the real relationship begin. Ingratitude is the beginning of straying away; hence, it is sin. Love is now non-existent and so the relationship ends. Where will you go by ending the relationship? Imagine if a wave were asked, "Dear and mighty wave, where will you go away from this Ocean?"

From this perspective, any deviation in which we identify our awareness with worldly possessions, the body, the mind, intellect and ego, is akin to straying

from the Centre, the Source of life, the *atman*. We see the beauty with which Babuji simplifies this identification of being with maya and ego, representing it with a *Sankhya*-style diagrammatic representation of 23 circles. In this diagram, the circles of maya are merely 5, while those of the ego are 11. It only means that it is the ego, *ahankar*, that is driving us toward the circumference, away from the Centre. *Ahankar* is a far more potent roadblock than *maya*. This is a kind of illusion.



## The March to Freedom



Sage Patanjali calls it *bhrantidarshan*, meaning misapprehension. I am not against the acquisition of worldly objects, but identifying ourselves with external prosperity and possessions is a reflection of inner *daridrata* (wretched poverty). Such wealth only creates *bhranti*, meaning illusion or insecurity. Life carries on under the fallacy caused by this identification. Even the best amongst us cannot manage to realize this reality.

A life led under the shadow of illusion, ignorance, darkness, and unawareness is like living in hell, whereas a life led with clarity, innocence, and cheerfulness is a heavenly life. This is the beauty of bhakti and what it triggers in its trail. The day we become truly fed up with leading a lifestyle in darkness, we declare out of sheer frustration, “Henceforth, I will adopt a lifestyle that facilitates interiority.”

That is the beginning of the ceasing of the waves on the Ocean’s surface. The conflicts which arise out of daily efforts to fulfil all kinds of demands can become a kind of *tapasya* or penance. If it becomes *tapasya*, then we are sure to move from fulfilling our duties to fulfilling those duties with love for the sake of the Beloved. And the same trajectory can mature into spotless bhakti.

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Bhakti also means leading a life with the light of awareness, fully cognizant of undergoing all the opposites in life, with acceptance. Meditation is not just mental activity but something that transcends mind and body. Many complain that their meditation is often derailed by various forms of distraction, but meditation done with bhakti makes one perceive the ‘invisible’ with greater accuracy, since the mind remains free from any cognitive and impulsive biases. Distractions are the end result of various forms of mental deviation.

These mental deviations are the result of our own conditioning, which we call *samskaras*.

Taming the mind, while slowly releasing the *samskaras*, is a slow process in most cases. We take a lot of time adjusting ourselves to the inner environment as *samskaras* slowly give way to inner spaciousness. It is then that we realize we have limitations not only in withstanding pain but also in withstanding joy.



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Arriving at a joyful or sorrowful state in relation to our practice, and to the giver of that practice, is inherently interspersed with complexities. As long as our wishes are granted, we develop greater faith. The moment any wish is on the waiting list for a considerable period, we start distrusting either the organization, the practice, or the Guru. I see this day-in and day-out. As an example, one practitioner wrote, “Daaji, my condition has been so good. My daughter is now married with your blessings and I am totally free. I have no more worries and I have decided to serve you all my life.” A few weeks later, the same person complained, even accusing me of being partial! And when I inquired about the reasons for this unravelling, he bluntly said, “You did not help my wife during her sickness. Now she is no more. I prayed to you with all my heart and see what happened. Now I have lost faith and am unable to meditate. I wish Babuji was around. He would have surely cured my wife.”



Witnessing such encounters on a daily basis, we can truly appreciate the wisdom in the Narada Bhakti Sutra, 54:

गुण-रहितं कामना-रहितं प्रतिक्षण-वर्धमानं,  
अविच्छिन्नं सूक्ष्मतरं अनुभव-रूपम् ।  
(नारदभक्तिसूत्राणि ५४)

Bhakti is devoid of materialistic qualities and sensory fulfilment.  
It is ever increasing, very subtle and experienceable.

True bhakti does not waver as a result of lack of reward or extra reward. It increases under all situations. It does not prevent you from enjoying the association of your spouse and children. When adversity haunts such a bhakta, they accept it all with grace and gratefulness. Bhakti can never be conditional. It transcends both mind and heart, both logic and feelings. Bhakti is the single most influential factor in the enrichment of life – to arrive at pure consciousness.

Love is the prerogative of a bhakta. Love means to give. Compassion is about giving. Passion, on the contrary, is about grabbing and taking advantage of others. A compassionate heart knows how to wait, while a passionate person cannot manage this waiting. So, we can safely conclude that there is one eternal phenomena, whether it be during the *Kali Yuga* or the *Sat Yuga* – an individual overpowered by passion can never trust themselves. An individual with incremental love still remains unsure of trust, sometimes trusting themselves and sometimes trusting the other (which also means not trusting oneself sometimes and not trusting the other sometimes). A person possessed by bhakti, having full faith in the Lord, rests his trust in the Lord. Such a transference is ennobling and elevating. The trust of a bhakta never recedes, it is ever-incremental.

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Once, Babuji conveyed a simple message while at Ahmedabad in 1981. He was on his way to South Africa with Shri Khusalbai Patel and only stayed with us for two nights. This simple message still rings in my ears:

राहें तलब में ऐसे बेखबर हो गए,  
मंज़िल पे आके मंज़िल को ढूँढते हैं।

They were so bewildered in their search that  
even when they reached the destination, they were still looking for it!

I was overjoyed with ecstasy hearing those words. It assured us of having reached the destination! For a devotee, the path can in fact become the destination, and this is surely an outcome of his grace and mercy. Otherwise, from our part, we have done nothing at all.



*All our practices are to prepare hearts that are reverential, dedicated and surrendered. It is this preparedness of the empty heart that attracts the Ultimate. The finality, the culmination, is only because of divine compassion and mercy, not because we are ready and prepared.*

What about the Guru and God? If God demands anything, then He too is a beggar. We cannot bring him down to our level. Will a Guru who has transcended the opposites and the state of the living dead, and also merged in the Ultimate, ever permit any of his disciples to worship him? He seeks neither the fulfilment of self-importance, nor fame, nor publicity. Perhaps keeping in mind such qualities of a worthy Guru can save us from being trapped. As devotees, we must learn to resonate with the one whom we find worthy of our attention, of our adoration and love.

Whatsoever we attain through our own efforts, will always pale in comparison to the gifts given by God. With our penances and our dedicated practice over so many years, we still cannot demand that the Ultimate must descend into

our hearts in totality. All our practices are to prepare hearts that are reverential, dedicated and surrendered. It is this preparedness of the empty heart that attracts the Ultimate. The finality, the culmination, is only because of divine compassion and mercy, not because we are ready and prepared. It is here we appreciate the wisdom in the famous sloka from the Bhagavad Gita, chapter II, verse 47:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty,  
but you are not entitled to the fruits of action.

Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities,  
and never be attached to not doing your duty.

With heartfelt prayers,

*Kamlesh*

4 July 2021

Kanha Shanti Vanam



On the occasion of the 94<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of

*Pujya Shri Chariji Maharaj*

24 JULY 2021

heartfulness  
advancing in love

