



MOTH & THE FLAME
BIRTHDAY OF LIGHT
8

Knowledge is the child of scriptures;
It is love that is their mother!

—Persian poem

Diary, February, 5 & 6, 1967: Human streams pour through the gates from across India to celebrate their beloved teacher's birthday. The ashram's three acres seem to swell in order to accommodate the masses that fill every nook and corner. Many poor folk (some extremely so) travel hundreds of miles on foot, bicycle, bullock cart, bus and train, enduring hardships unimaginable to Westerners, with cheerful resignation. Representatives are also present from Pakistan, Iran, Ghana, South Africa, Germany, Tibet, Burma, Indonesia, France, Italy, America and Canada. As I observe from the sidelines, the Master's pleasure is that of a father meeting long-separated children.

The managing committee wants to decorate the ashram for the festive occasion, but Master's express wish is to keep it unobtrusive, careful to discourage the start of external rituals in any form. However, the devotees' harmless persistence prevails, and his simple bungalow is gaily garlanded like a Christmas tree with fragrant strings of marigolds, jasmine blossoms, and a multitude of tiny colored electric lights.

The *langar* [free kitchen] is crowded with Indian women and men working around the clock, cooking huge cauldrons of steaming vegetable subje, spicy dahl and more than 60,000 chapati wholewheat flat-breads which fill an entire room from floor to ceiling! Throughout the crisp winter night, groups of villagers sit beneath the stars around fires for warmth, blending voices and hearts in beautiful *bhajans* [sacred hymns of past saints] that continue on and on and on. As I walk through the ashram I'm greeted lovingly and invited to sit and sing with them. Their smiles are brilliantly offset by their dark skin. My heart is exceedingly glad, and overflows with love toward these simple, good people—my spiritual brothers and sisters.

On the evening of his 73rd birthday, the Master addresses a throng that packs the ashram from one end to the other:

Since I have met my Master, I have given up discriminating between man and man; there is only soul. It is not a question of intellect or learning which enables us to meet the Lord; it is a

question of LOVE.

Without earnest prayer from the heart of hearts, no one has realized the Great Reality. Without love, no one has met the Beloved. The Almighty is controlled by the true devotee, I tell you! If you want to go on Haj [pilgrimage] to Mecca, go by way of the sea, not the dry desert. The desert sand is the way of intellect, and the sea—the flow of your tears—is the best way to meet and merge with the Lord in the true Kaaba of the heart.¹

*Life is a game like chess; you must be careful how you play. One wrong move and you may forfeit the game. People play stocks, money and horses, but here you have to stake your love if you want to attain self-knowledge and God-realization. Kabir says, ‘Now I want to play the game of chess with God: **If I lose, I become Yours; if I win, You become mine.**’*

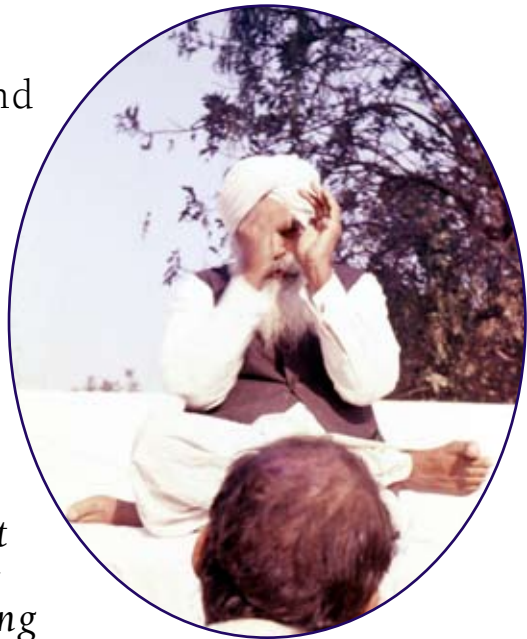
February 6, 4 A.M. Meditation of effortless effort: While the sangat chants lyric verses from Kabir Sahib, the white-clad Master emerges from a doorway. A ripple sweeps across the sea of 18,000 souls and their responsive singing trails off in mid-verse. After sitting half-lotus upon the dais, Maharaj Ji’s² heart-quenching eyes move across the audience, alighting upon this person and that. Suddenly his eyes are upon me. Startled like a deer in headlights, I’m in a frozen panic. Read like an open book, there is no escape from his gaze. All extraneous thoughts subside; fear transforms to affection. There’s a loving power, electrical, a taste of bliss as a silent bridge forms between us, the crowd now forgotten. Long after his eyes move on, *they remain*. Twenty minutes pass. None speaks, none moves. To lift even a finger, to scratch, to blink, to break this delectable, luminous state, would be a sacrilege to an unwritten, unspoken code. With the sangat thus primed, Master commences meditation instructions:

Meditation is the process of withdrawing the attention from the world outside, and focusing it at the seat of the soul in the body, behind and between the eyebrows. This point is known as the inner eye, third eye, the single eye, Shiv netra, tisra til, or the divya chakshu. In order to withdraw our attention and focus it on this point, mind must be controlled and stilled.

Sit in one pose, a little apart from the person next to you so that if they move you are not disturbed. And move not your head, limbs or eyes. Sit straight but relaxed with no tension in the body below. Sit still, please. To be still does not mean moving!

Arms sweeping inward, Master's hands contract to form a circle in front of his eyes; he then taps the point between and a little above the eyebrows.

Close your eyes as in sleep, and look sweetly, lovingly, intently into the middle of the darkness lying in front of you. You will see a dark veil. That which sees the dark veil within, without the help of your physical eyes, is the inner eye. Do not put any strain on your physical eyes, nor turn them upwards, for that will result in headache or heat in the head. Pay no attention to the breathing process...let it go on naturally.



There are two currents working in the body; one of motor-currents or prana or the vital-airs, and the other of surat, or attention, which gives us the sense of feeling. The Saints do not touch the prana currents which govern breathing, circulation of blood and growing of hair and nails. The pranic system of breath-control is the way of yogis and not that of Sant Mat [the Path of the Sant Satgurus]. The Saints' way is to concentrate surat or attention at the single or third eye while mentally repeating the mantra of five charged names which act as an 'open sesame' to the higher planes.

As you look within, you will see a sky, or blue sky. If you look minutely into it, you will find it studded with stars, or pinpoints of Light. If so, locate the Big Star out of them, and fix your whole attention on that. Then you may see the inner Sun or Moon. If so, focus all your attention into the middle of it; it will break into pieces, and you will cross it. Beyond you will see the radiant form of the Master or his Master...

He continues with the esoteric instructions, until everyone is absorbed.

...Become the eye itself. With eyes closed, go on looking constantly without a break directly in front of you. Those who are initiated, repeat the five charged words, one by one, very slowly, mentally, internally, at intervals, so that your inner eye is not disturbed. Those who are not initiated, just sit in sweet remembrance of God...repeating with the tongue of

thought any name of God or Saint which you hold dear. Any effort on your part stands in the way; let yours be an effortless effort, and you will find that your soul will be withdrawn from the body as easily as a hair drawn from [soft] butter. It is by the grace of the Guru that we see.

Stillness washes across the assembly. Effortlessly, my attention withdraws inward and upward into brightness.

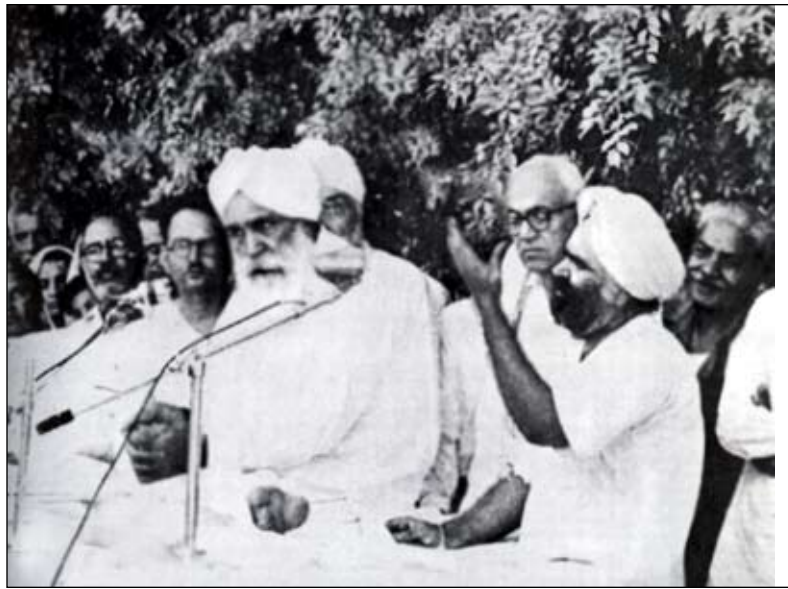
*I am only a bubble in a cosmic sea,
moved by wave upon wave of bliss.*

Whenever mind wanders from the focus, dialoguing, the silent mantra brings the wayward dog to heel. An hour passes, punctuated by the Master tapping the microphone. ‘Leave off meditation. Those who saw the Guru Saroop [radiant form of the Master] in meditation, please raise your hands.’ Several hundred arms shoot up around me. He again asks, ‘Those who saw both the form of the living Master and his Master within...’ Over a hundred raise hands in affirmation. A disciple of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh, by the name of Baba Bela Singh, raises both hands, exclaiming ‘*Sacha Padshah, Sacha Padshah!*’ [True King, True King!]. Bela Singh is a retired railroad official—tall, straight-backed, snow-white beard, in his seventies and highly regarded for his impeccable character. Another of Hazur’s disciples stands, a blind man in his forties, his clothes poor and worn, a seeming victim of circumstance. Trembling and unrestrained, a high-pitched wail emits from his throat, forming the words, ‘*Saaawaan Kiirpaaal! Saaawaan Kiiirpaaal!*’ Shivers go up and down my spine. I look to the Master’s face to see his reaction, knowing his aversion to external show, but all I see is compassion.

In the preliminary stages of development, a few experience uncontrollable ecstasy upon seeing the radiant Master within, and are unable to differentiate between God, the Light of God, the God-Man, or even their own self. This state has been referred to in Sufi literature as *mast*, and the person who experiences it *mastana*, or God-intoxicated. Like Saint Paul, one identifies with his or her Master: ‘It is I, yet not now I, but Christ who liveth in me.’

Speaking over the microphone a third time, when he asks if we saw inner Light of any description, thousands of hands rise, about 80% of those present (including several who later admitted they had come only to scoff). As one old Sikh emphatically exclaims from the crowd in colloquial Punjabi, ‘*Wha Wha!*’ (Wonder! Wonder!), his long gray beard wagging.

Throughout the day, government leaders, saffron-clad yogis, Sikh leaders, including Namdhari Guru Jagjit Singh, Sufis Bhikh Sahib and Nizam-u-din Nizami, Tibetan Lama Bakula, and numerous others sit on the platform with the Master, drawn by his universal spirit. It is highly unusual for different religious leaders—especially Hindu and Muslim—to



Darshan Singh, the Master's son recites verses composed for the occasion.

sit together in such a harmonious assembly. Several of India's renowned mystic poets, including the Master's son Darshan, recite their sonorous compositions in Urdu and Punjabi language.

Sacred hymns from Sikh scriptures are sung with great majesty and beauty by the famed Chelaram singers to the accompaniment of vina, harmonium, cymbals, and heart-throb-like tabla drums. Only twice a year does Master allow musical instruments to be played at the ashram, his focus being on the inner Unstruck Melody. Divinely inspired outer music can ignite the spirit, depending on the receptivity of the listener, and how closely it may resemble inner Cosmic harmonies. But, even the best remains only a reflection of Reality.

During the long celebrations, a sturdy Jat farmer rises from the audience asking permission to speak. When Master assents from the dais, he makes his way to the microphone and relates:

'Brothers and sisters! Like many, I was confused after our Great Master Sawan left this world in 1948. There were many theories and conflicting reports as to succession, so I kept to myself, trusting that He would sort it out in time. One night, two years ago, my village near Amritsar was invaded by hostile Pakistanis shooting guns and looting homes. Several tried to grab me, but I ran for my life. They followed, hot on my heels, bullets whizzing past my ears. While running across a field, I stumbled and fell headfirst into an irrigation ditch. Afraid that my end had come, I began praying fervently to my Master.

‘You can imagine my amazement when Hazur bodily appeared in the company of this Great One we see sitting here before us today. These Masters took hold of my arms and carried me beyond danger’s reach. Then they disappeared—but not before Hazur disclosed the identity of Sant Kirpal Singh and where I could find him. O, my brothers and sisters, it is a great blessing to be enjoying again the same grace and love we had in Hazur’s presence.’ He folds his hands and bows, tears of gratitude rolling down weathered cheeks.

Bowing back to the disciple, Master smiles and adds, ‘It is all Hazur’s grace and benignity. Miracles are the result of the operation of hidden laws of nature, with which we are not as yet conversant. A devoted disciple sees many a miracle operating in his or her life. The hidden hand of the Master looks to our welfare in difficulty and danger, wherever we may be.’

Following satsang, the multitudes are organized into long lines and efficiently fed. It is my joy to join the many serving this bounty, ladling lentil dahl from serving pails and passing out thousands of chapatis. The plates are made of big leaves pinned together with tiny twigs. After all eat their fill, the leaf-plates are gathered and fed to grateful cows outside the ashram walls. Perfect recycling!

In the evening, Master speaks again for two hours. Here are a few gems gleaned from his mine of wisdom, difficult though it is to ruffle the enchantment by the act of recording words to paper:

A hungry man is an angry man, and to speak of God to an angry man is a mockery. We must serve those naked and hungry Gods moving on Earth.

Hindu scriptures describe the beautiful hansa (swan) of paradise, which feeds only upon pearls, whose beak separates milk from water. This hansa is an allegorical reference to the realized soul. When you rise up into super-conscious awareness in the Fourth plane, you are none other than He; soul then cries out “Sohang,” or as Mansur, in a state of unity declared, “Anna’l Haq” [I am the Truth], or as Christ proclaimed, “I and my Father are One.” You have been designed by the Creator to feed on the pearls of Naam; you have been endowed with Vivek [discrimination] to separate the milk of truth from the water of Maya [illusion]. You were meant to differentiate right from wrong, truth from untruth. Realize that your true abode is far beyond the trinkets and trash of this impermanent world. Unfortunately, you

have become like a scavenger crow consuming the excreta of the world and yet you do not care to leave it for the Truth.

Once a shepherd found a lion cub and brought it up with his flock of sheep. In due course the cub identified with the sheep and would bleat and chew grass just like the rest. After many months passed, another lion came along and saw what had happened. He took the young lion who thought he was a sheep to a pool of water and forced him see his true reflection therein. Then the lion roared and bade the other to also roar, so that he might know he was the king of all other creatures. When he roared, the flock of sheep panicked and ran away. The Master is the lion that comes to show us what and who we really are—that we too are lions (conscious entities) in the company of sheep. The pool in which we find our true reflection is in the amritsar or mansarovar located on the third plane. The roar which awakens us is the divine Sound of God which created all worlds, and which takes us back to our True Home. It is the Master who makes the Sound audible within us; it is he who shows us that we are of God's same essence.

It is easy to find God, but difficult to become a human being in the true sense of the word—a wholly integrated human. Self-realization precedes God-realization. First, Know thyself! Become a true human first; then it is not so difficult to realize God.

A realized soul is like a sound, fully cured brick; when placed in a building's foundation, it gives strength to the entire structure.

1. Kaaba, also known as the “Black Stone of Abraham,” is enshrined at Mecca—the focal point for practising Muslims—and which the faithful prayerfully circumambulate. To the mystic, Kaaba is in the heart—not outside.

2. Maharaj Ji: Pronounced “Maha-ra-jee,” means ‘spiritual king’—a term of great endearment and respect.