



MOTH & THE FLAME
KARMA, HELL, SIDDHIS & HEALING

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Everything in the universe is the fruit
of a Just Law, the Law of Causality, the Law
of Cause and Effect, the law of Karma.
—Dhammapada of Gautama Buddha

Karma is a word much bandied about these days, but the average understanding of the immutable principle it represents is casual at best. The law of karma, or action and reaction, plays a major role in the evolution and devolution of life. Karmas have been classified by the Saints of the Sant Mat tradition into three distinct categories:

Sanchit: The storehouse of karmas going far back into innumerable incarnations from the unknown past;

Pralabdh: Fate, or destiny, or that portion of the *sanchit* [storehouse karmas] that constitute our living present from which there is no escape however we may wish and try;

Kriyaman: The karmas we perform as free agents in our present life, and by which we make or mar our future.¹

When one is initiated into the inner *science of spirituality* by a fully competent Adept, the radiant form of the Guru takes up residence in the student's third eye—the seat of the soul, located between and behind the two eyebrows. As one develops proficiency and receptivity in the spiritual practice, this form begins to appear in palpable glimpses within—without any visualization or imagination whatsoever (in fact, visualization and imagination in Sant Mat is discouraged, as *God is One Who comes of Himself*). There are many instances of this radiant form appearing to the seeker long before knowing of the physical Master. Sant Kirpal Singh refers to this, and other dimensions of spiritual grace as the *God Power*, *Christ Power* or *Master Power* that begins the process of guiding the initiate in the present and the future, while winding up old karmic debts.

The *pralabhd* or fate karmas that created this present life and which govern major events such as birth, intellect, health, sickness, wealth, poverty, status, marriage, children, fame, ignominy, etc., are left in place, and when fulfilled, the individual has no choice but to leave this world at the time of death, to wander as a disincarnate spirit in the astral plane, then to be judged by *Dharam Rai* (the

lord of death), who allots rewards and punishments according to past deeds and unfulfilled desires. The soul is eventually forced to re-enter the physical plane through a womb-door (animal, human or otherwise). The trauma of birth wipes out the memory of past lives, and in most cases, the *jiva* (embodied soul) lives out its days in a state of spiritual ignorance.

The souls of those fortunate to have found the protection of a qualified, *unbound* Master and initiation, also quit the body at the appointed time, but have already begun to become familiar with soul's journey through individual spiritual practice. Perhaps most importantly, once freed from the trammels of the earthly body and sensual desires, the souls of initiates have protection from Dharam Rai and are not subject to transmigration into lower forms (below the human form), but are taken to higher spiritual regions as merited by conduct, devotion and practice. From the inner planes, such souls evolve and joyously progress back to their Original Home, never to return to the realm of fleeting joys and sorrows, severe justice, decay, death and relativity. Where unfulfilled worldly desires are still uppermost, or to settle some old residue of give and take, the initiate takes rebirth in a suitable family and circumstances congenial to spiritual development. Liberation is assured within four lifetimes, but the Master exhorts, '*Four lifetimes? Why not do it in this life!*' And, '*in this human form, we can progress one hundreds of times faster than after physical death, so make hay while the sun shines!*'

The Masters have said that if one wishes proof of this process of joyful and conscious transition, go and sit at the bedside of any devoted disciple at the time of death. Then it can be said, as it was in the time of Jesus and his initiates:

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Guru Arjan sings in the *Adi Granth*:

Anand payee meri ma, Sataguru mai payaa...

O my mother, I'm in ecstasy,

For at last I have met the True Guru.

While *pralabdh* or fate, and the limitations and mortality of the flesh apply to all who are born, in the case of initiates of a God-realized Adept the severity and duration of difficult karmas are considerably toned down, like a minor injury or illness in exchange for something far more serious. In this context, the Masters have described the mitigation in Punjabi: '*Sooli ka kanda hogia*' [*a pinprick for the gallows*].

The formation of *kriyaman* or day-to-day karmas is reduced by the cultivation of ethical virtues, self-introspection, *simran*, *sat-sang*, meditation, spiritual devotion and thoughtful choices. Our actions—whether we are consciously aware of them or not—lead to inescapable consequences—except in rare cases of intercession. According to the Adepts, the ratio of *pre-destination* and *free choice* is approximately seventy-five/twenty-five percent. Giving regular time to accurate meditation practice gradually leads to great bliss and divine experience, while erasing many a debt. For this, the Masters from time immemorial have advised the ten percent tithe: i.e., the egoless tithing of a portion of one's honest earnings in the service of humanity and the Creator—as this removes any poison from our earnings and expands the heart; more importantly, the ten percent tithe extends to meditation. Ten percent of twenty-four hours is approximately two and a half hours—the early morning hours being most conducive. Not an easy habit to begin and maintain, but one yielding tremendous transformation. Meditation on Light and cosmic Sound, when coupled with the performance of selfless service to others, purifies the soul and yields the fruit of greatness.

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji often came down with a mysterious fever following the giving of initiation with Christ-like, or Buddha-like solicitude. Masters assume the karmic burdens of many lifetimes of their initiates, burning them in the abstract fire of Naam.

Sometimes they transfer karmas to themselves and suffer vicariously without a murmur of complaint. As mysteriously and suddenly as the symptoms of illness may manifest in the body of a Saint, they also disappear when the debt is paid. If the *sanchit* karmas were not assumed, there would be no way for the *jiva* or individual soul to become totally free. The immutable law of justice, of endless sowing and reaping, of endless birth, death, and rebirth—known also as the *Wheel of Life*—is circumvented through an Intercessor who represents the merciful and tenderhearted aspect of the Divine.

In a letter to his first Western disciples, Dr. and Mrs. Brock, Baba Sawan Singh Ji has stated:

No initiation is possible without payment of karmic debt. People may be thinking that Saints lead a life of ease. They have crowds of followers, and so forth and so on. But the Saint's duty is most difficult. He carries a heavier responsibility than a captain of a ship in a storm. This sea has a bottom and shores, but compare it with the sea of existence through which Saints guide the soul and make it one with the One. The more your soul is elevated, the better your service. There

is no doubt that pretenders, in the garb of Saints, have done enormous harm, but such is the case in other walks of life as well...²

Sometimes, like Baha'u'llah, Christ, Guru Arjan, Tegh Bahadur, Mansur, Milarepa, Shams Tabriz and others, the Saints may be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice at the hands of orthodox fanatics and political schemers quite ignorant of their genuine spiritual stature. A consciousness unfettered by pain, fear, anger, or retribution is capable of calmly blessing even the executioner, as did Jesus when he prayed for his crucifiers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Guru Arjan, when being tortured and boiled alive, responded, **'Sweet is Thy Will.'**

The following story from the life of Baba Jaimal Singh illustrates the compassionate nature of the Saints:

Moti Ram and Baba Ji:

Once when Baba Ji was at Ambala [approximately 1885], a seeker by the name of Hukam Singh applied for initiation. This seeker was a friend of a devoted disciple, Moti Ram, a tailor who worked for the British regiment stationed there. Baba Ji refused to grant his request. Hukam Singh approached his friend who, in turn, approached Baba Ji, but to no avail. "He is not yet fit for the Path," the Sage observed, but Moti Ram was not to be put off. He pleaded again and again for the case of his friend.

'I have told you before: his karmas don't permit it. So what can I do in the matter?'

'Holy One, all the more reason you should take pity on him; for if you don't, then who will?'

'Moti Ram, do not press me further. I would rather initiate four hundred others than this friend of yours.'

A Saint cannot refuse a devoted disciple for long and would even pass through fire for his sake. When Moti Ram repeatedly pressed, he [Baba Ji] gave way, adding: "But as soon as I have initiated your friend, I shall not spend another moment here, but proceed straight home." True to his word, Baba Ji, as soon as instructions were over, packed his scanty belongings and entrained for Beas. Whoever expressed a desire to follow him there was told to come two weeks later.

On reaching his hut, Baba Ji lay down in bed, and when local visitors came to see him, they were in consternation for they found him in the grips of a deadly fever. Doctors and medicines were sent for, but Baba Ji would take nothing. About a fortnight later, the fever subsid-

ed; and when Moti Ram received the news, he hastened to see him and begged forgiveness: ‘Sir, if only I had known what it was to mean for you, I would not, for the kingdom of three worlds have pressed you to initiate my friend.’

Baba Ji was in a communicative mood and revealed: ‘So heavy were the karmas of Hukam Singh that, but for the intercession, he would, for the next seven lives, have passed through the most trying sufferings and ordeals.’

Moti Ram humbly thanked him for his unfathomable grace; but Baba Ji, true to his innate humility, simply replied: ‘Such was the Will of the Lord.’²³

Astral Hell: Not long after arriving at the ashram, a boil formed inside my left ear. The pain was excruciating, but I struggled to accept it as a gift, an opportunity to repay some old and ugly karmic debt. What seemed to intensify the suffering was a constant, very loud inner sound coming from the left side of my head. Without any choice in the matter I was unable to escape its screaming intensity, mindful that the Master often told us never to listen to inner sounds from the left side, as they have their source in the Negative or *Kal* power, and as such are debasing to the soul. Only the inner sounds emanating from the right side and from above are from the Positive pole, or *Dayal* (*the Merciful*), the current that draws the soul back to its Source, its center and Unity. Try as I might, the left sound prevailed and I was unable to notify the physical Master of my situation.

During the second night of steadily progressing agony, I had an incredible excursion into an astral hell. In the past, I had often wondered if “hell” was merely a fairy-tale, a fabrication created to scare people into behaving in a socially acceptable way, or a metaphor for the sufferings of this physical world. Certainly the founders of the world’s major religions referred to a hell or hells as well as a paradise or paradises. The Masters in the Sant Mat tradition teach that astral heavens and hells do indeed exist as temporary abodes of the disembodied spirit, wherein good and evil karmas are judged and reaped. Once the accounts are cleared, the souls are then returned into a fresh incarnation on the physical plane, to sow and reap again. The chains of iron wrought by bad deeds, and the chains of gold formed of good, bind the soul and perpetuate existence in the wheel of transmigration—termed in the Sant literature as *Chaurasi Lakh* or the Wheel of Eighty-four [8.4 million species]. The object of the seeker is the cessation of suffering; to get off the Wheel, and to be of service. One who is bound cannot remove the shackles of others.

In my own strange experience, the Master allowed me to enter the astral inferno and view it from a safe vantage point. There, one could see great numbers of souls in basically human shape, suffering in



Stygian Lake by Gustave Doré

intense fire and anguish; some immersed in burning lakes while others were contained in places of unspeakable filth and degradation. Some were moaning; many cried for help. The Master protected me in an impenetrable bubble, impervious to the heat, suffering, and stench of that place. I saw for myself that hell exists, and that certain souls are sent there to pay off heavy crimes and misdeeds. Fortunately, hell is not a permanent place or condition, for once the karmic load is paid off or atoned, such troubled ones are released to pursue a higher and nobler path in their spiritual and ethical evolution—and a fresh round of incarnations.

When I returned from that surrealistic inferno, I had to face my own physical hell in the form of an ever-intensifying earache. When the pain reached unbearable proportions, I dragged my ball-and-chain body in the direction of the Master's residence. As it was after midnight, I didn't want to disturb him and decided to turn back. I had been taking a homeopathic remedy given by Dr. Moolraj, but without any apparent effect. Not long after staggering back to my room and torture chamber, it felt as if a cannon exploded in my head. The boil had burst, and the blood and pus that drained out from my ear over the next few hours soaked two towels.

By 7 AM the pain again reached a crescendo. In desperation I again dragged the body back to Master's house and asked to see him. Edna, standing by the door commented, 'You look like death warmed over!' Master was sitting cross-legged on his bed, nodded me in and asked, 'Why didn't you come to me sooner?' 'I didn't want to disturb you,' I replied. 'There's no question of disturbing.

Hmmm....’

Master turned to his big black medicine case (about the size of two briefcases), and looked through the hundred or so small glass vials in it, which contained homeopathic remedies (he was an expert homeopath). After a while, he found a big white aspirin-like tablet, shook it onto his palm, looked at it intently for a few moments and then asked, “Would you like?” Still in great pain and clasping a bloody towel to my left ear, I nodded slowly and opened my mouth, while he placed the pill on my tongue. In that instant all pain disappeared and the bleeding stopped. I thanked him from my heart, but the Master would take no credit, humbly deferring to the medicine.

‘To whom do you turn when in pain?’ I asked.

He pointed to his third-eye location between the eyebrows and replied, ‘I turn to my Higher Self.’

‘Is the Higher Self one’s own Satguru?’

‘**Higher Self is God!**’ He responded emphatically. ‘You see, sometimes pain arises even with Masters,’ and added, ‘It was the homeopathic medicine you took earlier that drew the boil to a head. In future, come to me sooner.’

I bowed to the one from whom my relief came. How many ugly karmas had just been washed away?

*O mind, always give thanks for adversity,
for troubles are gifts of absolution in disguise.*

Siddhis (supernatural powers): The Masters have all powers, but these are normally held in reserve. Whenever Saints do employ spiritual powers, it is under exceptional circumstances and then only to save, help or awaken the seeker or disciple. Ability to perform miracles is not the sign of a true Master and is considered a lower power which impedes inner progress.

It is necessary here to give a word of caution regarding riddhis and siddhis, or the supernatural powers that one very often comes to acquire in the practice of yogic discipline. They are to be scrupulously avoided, as they are positive obstacles in the way of true spiritual progress and the attainment of self-realization and God-realization.... These temptations assail one in the second stage of the journey, but prove of no avail to one who adheres to the Path, and is firm and steadfast in his sadhana [spiritual practice].⁴

I had earlier overheard the Master stating quite bluntly, ‘Miracle-seekers are not truth-seekers,’ while adding the Biblical quote: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all else shall be added unto thee.’ On learning that one of his older initiates had taken to mastering lower

powers with the help of mantras, the Master wrote to congratulate him for having regressed from college to primary school! Upon receiving this ironic reprimand, the initiate was filled with remorse and gave up dabbling with such practices.

Spiritual Healing: Related to *siddhis* is the subject of spiritual healing, widely embraced by numerous New Age enthusiasts, occult societies, and several mainstream religious groups. The Masters of Sant Mat view spiritual healing from a very different angle of vision:

Sufferings demanding spiritual healing fall mainly in the domain of physical troubles, that may include mental agonies such as a nervous breakdown, etc. These being the reactions of the past, karmas demand adjustment and as such are to be borne by the victim. The healer conducting this service takes the karma on his head, to be borne by him at a later stage. The bit of spiritual attainment he has achieved in silencing his mind is dissipated. Moreover, this process of healing is administered on weaker minds, which usually fall prey to their own sentiments or tendencies. What can ordinarily be cured by undergoing a bit of suffering and medicine, is exchanged for spiritual dissipation, and the debt remains standing, awaiting adjustment at a later stage....

The Masters advocate right living and right thinking. A simple and truthful life will lead to happiness and joy. If, however, some suffering due to the evolution of past karma comes, its severity and duration is greatly toned down by the intervention of the gracious Master Power, like a penny for a pound, or a needle prick for the gallows....

The healing administered by Jesus and other Masters was of a higher quality. When you merge in cosmic awareness and lose your identity you become so spiritual that even thinking of a person or a touch of the hem of the garment will induce healing.... You have not to exert on your part to heal others; it is faith that cures.⁵

Be ye not deceived, God is not mocked;
for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.—Bible

How will you become a clear mirror
if you resent being polished? —Rumi

1. Kirpal Singh, *Wheel of Life: The Law of Action and Reaction* (Delhi, India, SKRM Publ.), p. 11.

2. Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems: Extracts from Letters to Seekers and Disciples* (Beas, Punjab, India: Radha Soami Satsang, 1965) p. 43.

3. Kirpal Singh, *A Great Saint: Baba Jaimal Singh*, (Delhi, India: S.K.Publications, 1993), p. 72-73.

4. Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life—A Study of Yoga*, (Bowling Green, VA: S.K. Publications 1961).

5. Kirpal Singh, *Spiritual Healing Circular*.