



Diary, 6 AM, April 4, 1967: Myriads of small-bird twitterings and raspy crow-caws resound from the ashram trees overhead as Mohan and Ram Saroop rope piles of luggage onto roof racks. ‘Take your seat, please!’ Master points me to one of the waiting cars, while bidding farewell to the gathering crowd, closing in like bees to honeycomb. Soon, engines will cough to life and carry us northward to the Punjab.

I came for God, but as unexpected bonus, I’ve gained entry to India’s sacred heart—her people, history, and shrines. Exiting Delhi’s teeming labyrinth, we embark on the narrow cobbled road which passes through hundreds of farming villages and towns. In several places the way is lined with those who have been patiently waiting in the sun for hours, just for a glimpse from the Satguru. I ask, ‘Mohan Ji, without telephones or other means of communication, how do these people know when or where Maharaj Ji is coming?’ ‘Some advanced souls talk with Master in meditation,’ he replies. ‘They know Master’s plans and tell others.’ I wonder if our dependence on gadgets has rendered us less receptive to such subtle realities.

Patiently, expectantly, villagers salute their Preceptor with hands prayerfully joined or open, wafting over their faces and heads palpable glances sent their way. *Darshan* is an active but silent process where the eyes become cisterns of a higher, devotional existence. ‘The tongue of Love is dumb and mute,’ Master says from the front seat. Then, in the sustaining *bread and water of life* aspect of the Guru—reminiscent of Christ—he adds, ‘They eat and drink me!’ Here and there, as we slowly pass, I hear plaintive sighs through the car’s open windows. Many run again to the front of the procession, darshan after darshan. There are some for whom the Light is dimmed neither by the darkest night nor by physical distance.

*In the presence of Beauty, who can fault the eye?
Who is to blame—the lovers or the Beloved?*

Chandigarh—City of the Moon: By mid-afternoon, we arrive in Punjab’s modern capital lying at the feet of the blue Himalayas, which seem to hover in the air to the north. Chandigarh, *City of the Moon*, was designed by Le Corbusier, whose unique imprint is evident everywhere in massive curving, almost surreal concrete structures,

housing projects, parks, gardens, and wide, tree-lined boulevards. The great French architect captured India's past and translated it into a contemporary city of beauty.

Evening satsang is held on a field in the town center. A multi-colored canopy hoisted on twenty-foot poles, billows overhead in the gusting wind. Ten thousand have gathered to see and hear the Saint from Delhi. I jot down but a few moments from his two-hour discourse:

This body is a wonderful house in which we live, but we have lost the Indweller. There was a simple man who had his horse stolen. When the theft was discovered in the morning, he exclaimed, 'Thank God I have been saved!' People asked in amazement, 'Why are you so thankful? Haven't you just lost your horse?' 'Oh, had I been riding that horse, I would have been stolen also!' The people laughed at his foolishness. But, truly speaking, he was very wise. Do we not lose the rider while saving the horse of the body? We are the rider, the Soul, a conscious entity, a drop from the Ocean of All-Consciousness.

After some time, tears begin flowing down my interpreter's cheeks and all translation ceases. The familiar words, *pyar*, *prem*, *mohabat*, *ishq*, and *bhakti* sweeten the discourse. These names in Hindi and Urdu denote stages of divine Love. The audience sways and ripples like a wheat field in a breeze, and a wondrous shimmering network of Light—like an inverted golden basket—covers all, permeates all. Without interpretation, nothing now remains to distract from the luminous presence. As the chanter sings from the *Adi Granth*, each verse's hidden meaning unfolds. Both are intuitively synchronized—one singing a line, the Master commenting—and never a moment's hesitation. The charged atmosphere rises to giddy heights, one plateau after another. Worldly comparisons fall short, though I am reminded of a virtuoso sitar and tabla performance.

Later, the interpreter rediscovers his tongue and the pen begins to move:

An oyster is valued only when a pearl is found within its shell. Similarly, our life is highly prized only after we have realized the priceless pearl of Realization.

Where there is reality and genuineness, you will also find imitators who are like the flowers of the seemul tree which bloom but carry no fragrance. Like the bagla [a small white heron, indigenous to India], they dress in white, seemingly meditating, but as soon as they spot a frog or a fish, it is in their beak! Such poseurs prey on the unwary, and inspire lack of faith... Did not Christ in His time chase the money-

lenders from the Temple, saying 'Go ye out, Pharisees! Ye have made my Father's House a place of business!'

April 5, 8:00 AM: Hundreds are put into an hour's silent meditation. While walking through the sitters, Master's garment happens to brush my sleeve; without opening eyes, one knows it is he. Intense spiritual currents surge within for the next twenty minutes. Finally, he taps the microphone and asks, 'Leave off meditation please!' But one fortunate woman has gone so deep, nothing avails in bringing her soul back. Only after Master directs Sheila Massi to massage her neck in a certain way, does her attention partially descend to the eye-focus. Absorbed in super-consciousness, the return to the gross and dross of physicality leaves her weeping inconsolably.

Speaking of tears, it is a sight to see—tall, strong, proud tillers of the soil, disciplined soldiers, police officers, merchants, new brides, old wise women, and complete strangers—becoming undone in the presence of the Friend. Surely the garden of the divine is watered by tears, for whichever way I turn I see stoics and skeptics, professors, doctors, lawyers, illiterate peasants, the wealthy and poorest of the poor, powerful and powerless, Easterner and Westerner, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Jew—all leveled by the common denominator of *love*. Kindness, charity and a helping hand are some of its visible manifestations. Tears are the distillation of our body, mind, and soul. Within a *single tear shed in longing* for God, there are a thousand verses, songs and sacred books.

Kalkaji, April 6: We leave Chandigarh in the morning's half-light for the mountain-ashram at Kalkaji. After reaching our destination, we embark from the vehicles, climb to the top of a high hill, then descend a narrow footpath into a verdant ravine. In grassy meadows below stands a solitary, simple white-washed brick structure with billowing awnings spread out for shade where more than a thousand wait. Master-ji's thrilling voice echoes across an encircling amphitheater of mountains. Three or four long-separated disciples break ranks and fling themselves before their Preceptor. Nimbly side-stepping the would-be feet-touchers, he mounts the white-sheeted dais. His words bear the weight of attainment, like the earth their mountains. The verdant hills, the smoke-blue peaks and azure sky form a perfect backdrop. The world elsewhere is oblivious of this simple king—though no potentate of worldly domain is he, this emperor of hearts.

*Sing O heavens and be joyful O earth
And break forth into singing O mountains! —Isaiah 49.13*

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Baba Sawan Singh, as

a disciple, stood at the side of his Master, Baba Jaimal Singh in the Murree Hills. Sawan expressed appreciation of the beautiful scenery to Baba Ji, who replied, 'My child, you do not understand. *You and I were here before these hills were even formed.*'

Pinjore Gardens: We depart Kalka around 11AM and by mid-afternoon arrive at the fabled Gardens of Pinjore. I sit cross-legged on cool marble in the shade of a sandstone cupola supported by slender columns, eyes riveted on the Friend nearby as he partakes of a small meal.¹ Eyelids close of themselves, as wave after wave of bliss wafts from his direction, simultaneously within. Somewhere along the way, mischievous Tai Ji places an ice cube against my forehead, testing my concentration. This drives attention deeper. After a few minutes, I become dimly aware of giggling at the periphery. Eyes open gradually and refocus on the Master, seriously staring back at me from ten feet away. *Minutes pass.* With a sweeping arm, he gestures to the stairways, descending terraces, fountains, and buildings flanked by troop-like ranks of lush mango and lichee orchards laid out in perfect symmetry spreading for miles into the valley below. Under his breath he mutters, 'There are *five levels.*' Heart silently asks, *How many levels are there in your words?*

Majori Village: We reboard and traverse a dusty, pot-holed dirt-path for several miles through farmland. After a sharp turn up a wide path hedged by thorn-topped mud walls, we reach Majori. The artist in me is enamored with the congruity of the bright landscape and the ochre tones of adobe architecture; the sky bright blue above. Baba Lehna, the village chieftain, rushes forward to bow respectfully but instead is embraced affectionately by the Master. We are led through narrow twisting corridors past fat, sleepy buffaloes and arrive at Lehna's humble dwelling. Seeing me unmindful in the high-noon blaze (as Kipling said, 'Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun'), Master calls me to his side in the shade. Hilarious Punjabi tales are swapped, and the air is filled with intoxicating laughter. After a while these rustics beseech Father to bless their humble homes, and thus begins a walking tour where babies, sweets, fruits, and scriptures are blessed. They offer everything they have, which he accepts for a moment and returns. Their grateful and brilliant smiles aren't easily erased from the slate of my mind. What I experience in his presence makes me want to dance and shout from rooftops, '*He who sent us into this world has come to take us back!* But legs stumble and the tongue is dumb.

*A saint is an ocean of love and when tides rise in it, even the people sitting on the seashore get drenched. If you want to cultivate love, you must associate with a Master-soul, for then you will both see and experience great overflowing tides of love in his eyes.*²

We return to Chandigarh for three days, where I am boarded with the Hastir family. Vishwanath Hastir is a well-placed civil servant, plus homeopathic doctor who never charges for his diagnoses and medicines.³ My hosts anticipate every need with such cheerful generosity that I am ashamed for my past selfishness. I resolve to emulate their example. ‘We believe,’ he said, ‘that the *guest is God.*’

On our last evening, Vishwanath finds in me an eager listener: ‘As a university student in 1936, I often visited the house of Sant Kirpal Singh in Lahore during the time he was writing his magnum opus, *Gurmat Siddhant* (*‘Philosophy,’ or ‘Wisdom’ of the Masters*). In fact, we lived on the same street, Ram Galli Lane. Ram Galli means the Lane of God, and because we had such a great Saint living next to us, it seemed that God was indeed near! Master detailed his son Darshan, who was also my close friend, to research relevant verses from the scriptural treasures of Persian and Arabic mystics for inclusion in *Gurmat Siddhant*. I was also given some service collecting quotations. When completed, *Gurmat Siddhant’s* approximately two thousand pages were read before Baba Sawan Singh in the presence of many others.’

I interrupt, ‘Were you there?’

‘Yes, I had the good fortune to be there also, at least for part of the reading. When the recitation was completed, Baba Sawan Singh reverently placed *Gurmat Siddhant* on his head and proclaimed, “This is the greatest book on spirituality written in centuries; listening to it has the same uplifting effect as attending satsang. Although published in my name, Kirpal Singh is its author.”’ Following a Guru-disciple tradition, Sant Kirpal Singh signed his work in the name of his Master. Vishwanath continues, ‘To give some idea of the size of Hazur’s satsangs at Beas towards the close of his mission, and of the enormous quantities of food cooked and served freely to all who came, the quantity of salt alone was more than seven hundred pounds.’ I calculate that if the salt content were 2%, then the total food, including chapatis, which are salt-free, would have been in excess of 60,000 lb. per satsang.

April 7: Of the many initiated this morning, more than twice as many women than men witness the luminous form of the Master within. Five women and four men experience total sensory withdrawal from the physical body. I specifically ask the Master why some collapsed on the ground during sitting. ‘If one sits erect, falling over is avoided,’ he answers, and adds, ‘Because of their devotional nature, women often progress faster than men.’ When I ask about the special position for listening to the Sound-current and the speed of transcension, he confirms my experience: ‘When sitting in the bhajan posture, the soul withdraws from the body faster than in any other position.’

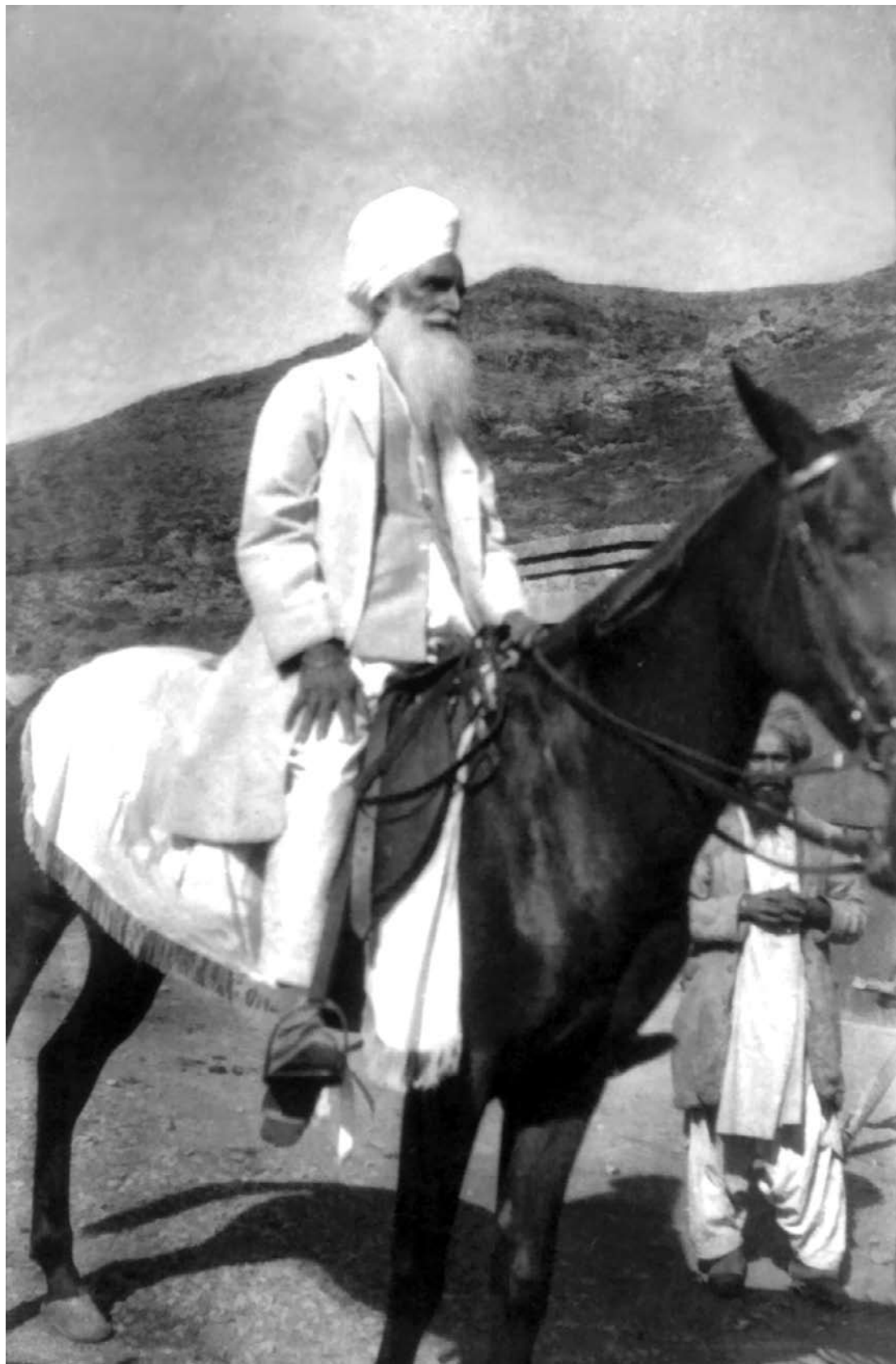


Sant Kirpal Singh giving satsang in the presence of Hazur - early 1940's

Gobind in the Guru: At high noon we bid adieu to the Hastir family and are on the road again. Twice our caravan stops along the winding, hilly highway as hundreds of villagers seeking blessings surround Master's car. In the middle of a deserted stretch of jungled ravines and hills, Maharaj Ji suddenly tells Mohan to pull the car over. A second later, a jeep speeds past from the opposite direction. Its driver suddenly slams on the brakes, sliding into a 180-degree turn. Out leaps a Sikh Major in full army uniform. Master, in the back seat, opens his door and the Major runs over and flings himself on his feet, blurting, 'My Lord, when driving past, I saw Guru Gobind Singh Ji appear in your form. Who are you, Guruji?' He had never seen or heard of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji before! The prescient Master replies, 'I am only a humble servant of the Guru.'

We have just passed Baba Sawan Singh's Dera at Beas. The golden domes of the Satsang Ghar shimmer in the distance, and gradually disappear as we move along. This remarkable building was designed, and its construction supervised by Sawan Singh himself, who by profession was a gifted engineer. Through half-closed eyes, I glimpse Hazur's ghostly image riding a white horse, keeping time with our car. I turn around to look at Master. He is silent, his eyes brimming with a million remembrances.

Kiratpur is our next halt. Ancient and rugged dun-colored hills ring the town on three sides, a river to the west. Kiratpur gained great sanctity throughout the Punjab as the sixth Guru, Hargobind, and his son Har Rai, the seventh, lived here. A local family generously vacated their home for our use. I'm given a bed on the rooftop, but when a



*Hazur was a superb horseman.
When his subtle form appeared beside our car, he was riding a white horse.*

light rain begins to fall, I am moved under the verandah just three feet from the Master whom I can see and hear through the unglazed window. Until past midnight, eager young Sikhs come seeking answers and the removal of doubt.

April 8: Around 3 AM, I rise for meditation; Master has been resting for the past two hours in the darkness, close enough for me to hear his rhythmic breath. My meditation is re-channeled as I become aware of a faint rustle of sheets. The Master sits up, near yet unseen. Unexpectedly, and barely audible, I hear him whisper-singing some verses. Honing in on his voice, I recognize lines of the *Jap Ji*—the sacred verses composed by Guru Nanak five hundred years earlier:

*Ek Onkar, Sat Naam...
There is One Reality,
The Unmanifest-Manifested;
Ever existent, True Naam—Conscious Spirit,
The Creator; pervading All;
Without fear; without enmity;
Timeless; Unborn, Self-existent,
Complete within Itself.
Through the favor of His true servant, the Guru,
God may be realized.
Truth was when there was nothing,
Truth was before all ages began,
Truth exists now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.*

The *Jap Ji*'s thirty-eight stanzas, one flowing into the next, portray a beautiful lyric tapestry of the macrocosm, leading to the finale:

*Air is the Master, Water the father, and Earth the mother,
Day and Night are the two nurses in whose lap the whole world is at play.
Our actions: good and evil, will be brought before His court,
And by our own deeds, shall we move higher or be cast into the depths.
Those who have communed with the Word, their toils shall end
And their faces shall flame with glory,
Not only shall they have salvation, O Nanak,
But many more shall find freedom with them.⁴*

Master finishes, and the silence begins to resonate. In the ringing thunder, my soul skirts the awesome chasm between death and life. The Adepts—and Master Kirpal is unquestionably one of the greatest—wing far beyond, administering to countless denizens on the inner planes, as many disciples have, and do witness. I marvel that while emancipated

from the husks and shells of rituals, he still observes and respects the traditions into which he was born. The Sikh scriptures tell us, *'The true Master is also the true Disciple.'* And, while the initiates may stop and start thousands of times, the Masters *begin simran only once.*

While taking tea and fruit with him at 7 AM, Gurudev solicitously inquires after my welfare, to which I reply that I am very comfortable and very happy! By eight, Pathi-ji's thrilling voice, amplified, echoes off the crenelated hills. Kiratpur's entire populace sits before the Master who proclaims the purpose of existence. He moves amongst them, an ageless Messiah in an ageless setting. The camel and ox, palm trees, adobe and stone buildings, bearded patriarchs, wise mothers, and bright-eyed children adorn the scene; this is a page torn from the Bible. Here, a few pearls have been plucked from his talk:

If even a dog will clean the ground with his tail before sitting, how can we expect God, who is all purity, to sit in an unclean place? If God's image is not reflected in us, it is because the mirror of our heart is not yet clear.

Naam is the true paras, or Philosopher's Stone, reputed to have alchemic property of changing base metal into gold. Once, a man saved the life of an alchemist and as reward, was gifted with the fabulous paras for one month only. Our man went to the market to buy iron so he could change it into gold. 'The price of iron is too dear. I will wait for its price to drop.' He waited until the next day, but the price, instead of dropping, had risen sharply. And thus, everyday thereafter, the price continued rising. He kept procrastinating until the month had passed. The magician returned to claim his stone. Had the foolish man bought the iron, even at a high price, he could have turned it into gold. Similarly is the case with the disciples. What you have received is of infinitely greater value. While the Philosopher's Stone may turn iron into gold, a Saint can turn you into a Saint! But if you continue putting off your spiritual practices, procrastinating, frittering away valuable time in outer pursuits, you will find this precious life gone. Then it will be too late. Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today. Make hay while the sun shines!

Paramhansa Ramakrishna was a simple bhakta (devotee) and didn't pose like other sadhus; he had experience of transcendent Reality. When asked by Naren (Swami Vivekananda), 'Master, have you seen God?' Ramakrishna replied, 'Yes, my son. Not only have I seen God, but I see Him even more clearly than I see you!' At another time Ramakrishna held open his hand before Naren, saying, 'If this is a plate of honey, and you are a bee, how will you eat it?' Naren replied, 'I will come to the edge to eat it, so that my wings may not become

immersed in the honey and I drown.’ Ramakrishna said, ‘This is the sea of Immortality! You will not die! Plunge headlong into it!’

If the Master cannot give you experience by opening your third eye then he too cannot see. Go to an able person. If a teacher is only matriculate, he cannot give you a Master’s Degree, but do not degrade lesser teachers, respect them. My advice is to go to someone of the highest degree, who not only sees and knows the Reality in all its phases, but who can also make you see That.

Remember: wife without husband, elephant without tusks, bird without feathers, body without eyes and calf without milk is just like a soul without a Master. The barren land, which receives no rain, is no different than a human being bereft of Naam. A well without water, a house without light and an orchard without fruit are like a soul cut off from God’s divine Light and Melody...

April 10 Kanpur is a sleepy little village at the end of a long dusty road where lies the rustic beauty and soul of Bharat. From the top of a three-tiered brick house, I look across golden-green fields spreading into the distance, hemmed by blue-purple mountains that float above the valley. Peasants bend and labor in patches of alfalfa, wheat, onions, barley, tall sugar cane and bright yellow mustard. Directly below me, hustle and bustle rises from the langar; devoted hands prepare spicy lentil dal, curried cauliflower and potatoes, pakoras (vegetable fritters), rice pilau, and chapatis. More than a thousand sit beneath awnings on a newly harvested field. Responsive chanting echoes across the ancient land.

I’m startled from my reverie by exploding firecrackers, signaling arrival. Like one long separated, I run to greet and follow the Master to the second-floor. Pictures of Saints adorn the walls. Pointing to one of himself, he asks me, with a laugh, ‘Who is that fellow? *Do you know who he is?*’ I know nothing, but manage to click the shutter.



While tonight’s satsang concludes with a bhajan from Kabir, plaintively rendered by Pathi-ji, Master’s lion-like eyes half close, then turn up in their sockets for several minutes. He is like Aslan—the mythic lion of Narnia—in whose roar the universe manifests and unmanifests.

Guru in a Hurry: Later, when alone with him in his room, I express a troubled observation: ‘Why is it that in so many places we have visited, the followers of _____ have tried to disturb your satsangs and spread negative propaganda? I have seen them tearing down your tour posters.’⁵

‘During the time of my Master,’ he answers, ‘there was much opposition from the Akalis (an ultra-orthodox sect). They would say, “Don’t look into the eyes of Sawan Singh. He’s the Negative Power!” But whoever was against Hazur, after seeing him became his staunchest follower. Once, when Hazur visited my home village of Sayyed Kasran, Akalis came and threw stones in the satsang. Hazur said, “Thank you for your kind reception!” And on these words, they were changed. Just see the angle of vision he was coming from!

‘It is also happening like that, except now, opposition is from _____. They also say, “Don’t look into Kirpal Singh’s eyes! He’ll mesmerize you. He’s the Negative Power!”’ Master smiled, ‘But whoever comes here gets first-hand experience of what they cannot get elsewhere. Hundreds come to me where they have *something* with God’s Grace. The cat will be out of the bag, I tell you! I received one letter from their forerunner in the West—a chiropractor—who wrote me, “If any man has inner experience of Light and Sound at initiation, his life-span will be cut short by two years.” Can you imagine? Now their followers are afraid of asking for any experience. Would you like your life to be cut short by two years? Has your life been cut short?’

I reply, laughing, ‘No.’

‘In the letter, he asked, “Does this experience affect the nervous system?” I said, “No, one becomes fresher, enlivened. Light and Sound are the Bread of Life.” That letter is with me in the ashram. Further, they quote from scripture which says: “It is Satan-ish for the disciple to be in a hurry,” that “hurry is the work of Kal—the negative power.” Yes, the disciple should not be in a hurry. But can the disciple complain *if the Guru is in a hurry?!*” His laughter is filled with Light.

It was often the practice of Masters of antiquity to bestow initiation upon only a select few and even then not until the probationers had passed through extremely difficult trials testing their sincerity and faith. But in the present age, with its particular needs, time limitations and human frailties, Masters have opened up the flood-gates, making true spirituality more accessible than at any other time in history.

I’ve started tying a turban, letting my beard grow (however sparse), in emulation of the Master. He looked at me oddly earlier today, but

made no comment. Master's not into converting anyone from one faith to another, but he doesn't interfere either. I want to walk in his footsteps. What's he to do with such an impulsive youngster?

Every Saint has a Past and Every Sinner a Future: Ludhiana is one of Punjab's major cities. The ashram here—one of sixty throughout India—is managed by Gobind Ram. As I get to know this colorful disciple, I discover one totally motivated by loving zeal.

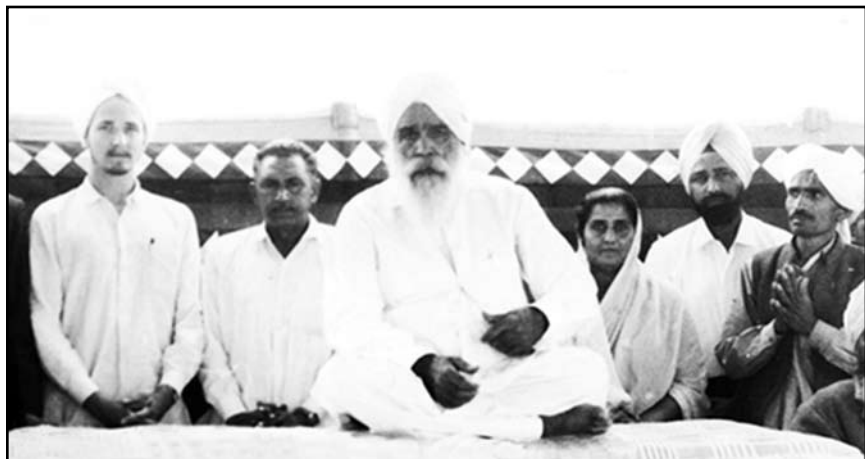
'Gobind Ram, tell me your story,' I ask my grizzled friend, to which he replies, 'Sahib, you don't want to know!'

'Yes I do! Please tell me so I can learn.' After some coaxing, he heaves a sigh, 'Aachaa [all right]. Before I came to Maharaj Ji, or shall I say before he picked me from the gutter, I was very, very bad. I was a gambler and a smuggler. I was addicted to drinking, opium, and *ganja* [marijuana]. My temper was uncontrollable, and everyone feared me, including the police. In broad daylight, I used to yank the gold necklaces and nose jewels from wealthy women. Although I had hoarded up a fortune, I was miserable and restless; my conscience never allowed me a moment's peace, thinking of all the suffering I had caused, but I was helpless to change. As I grew older, I began to pray for deliverance, knowing I would have to pay dearly.

'A few years ago Maharaj Ji came to Ludhiana. What a Godly beauty! What a power! If I could find any mercy in this world, I knew it would come through him! I pleaded, 'Maharaj! Give this worthless sinner your Naam!' He said, 'Yes, you can be initiated providing you mend your ways. You must return all your ill-gotten gains, or you will never become free. Devote your life to serving the needy and to the spiritual practices, which will be revealed to you.'

Gobind Ram continues, 'Not knowing from whom I had stolen, I stuffed all my ill-gotten money and valuables into a big sack and went to the center of a busy intersection where I dumped it onto the ground. I called out as loudly as I could in all directions, "Come! Take according to your karma!" The rush of all those people was a sight to see!'

I have met another ex-dacoit, whom I refer to



as Daku (not his real name). In 1959, the Master gave a discourse in Daku's home village, the subject of which happened to be the redemptive grace of the Sant Satgurus. Historical examples were given—Mary Magdalene, saved by Jesus; Sajjan Thug saved by Guru Nanak; Valmiki, a robber who became a Saint, and the author of the original Ramayana—to show that change is not only desirable, but possible, even for those who have trespassed all moral boundaries.

‘There is hope for everyone, providing they are *sincerely* repentant and desire to change,’ but, Master added, ‘Not even God can change one who doesn't want to be changed. Only that sin is forgiven which is done no more!’ However, Master declined to initiate Daku at this time.

After a few weeks the repentant Daku arrived at Sawan Ashram accompanied by all the members of his gang. They were all initiated and completely changed their lives by adopting the Master's ethical and spiritual teachings. In time, their village—a place once known for evil became known for good. Master often referred to Daku, ‘Now he is putting in six hours of meditation a day. Even robbers can become Saints! Every saint has a past, and every sinner a future.’

A few weeks ago at the ashram, Daku came down with a case of acute appendicitis. He was in obvious pain, and the doctors advised he be operated on immediately, but Master demurred, ‘wait and see.’ Another day passed, and Daku's suffering increased commensurately. Again the Master's advice was sought; again, ‘Wait until tomorrow.’ The heavy debt had to be paid and the Master didn't want it to be deferred to another lifetime. That morning, a village herbalist arrived, and went straight to Daku as though inwardly directed. After a brief consultation, the herbalist pierced the middle of Daku's left ear and tied a loop of thread through the hole. He then brewed a strong tea of *neem* (margosa) leaves, prized for antiseptic healing qualities, then immersed a towel in the tea and applied poultices to the ear. As predicted, a huge amount of pus discharged over the next few days and the swollen appendix returned to normal. Daku was completely healed.

My mind speculates on the karmic dimensions of this case, of suffering and grace, and the unorthodox ways of the Saints. The Master can use any medium he chooses to bring someone to health, *if* it is in accordance with the divine plan.

Book learning vs. Reality: Speaking of the vast difference between academic knowledge, and direct, immediate mystical experience, Maharaj Ji relates the story of Kabir and Sarbajit:

Perhaps you have heard the story of Kabir and the pundit? After reading many books and winning many debates, the pundit announced, 'I am now to be addressed as Sarbajit, the Invincible!' He went to his mother and declared, 'O mother, call me Sarbajit now. I have gained so much knowledge that nobody can defeat me in religious debate!' His mother, who was very wise, said, 'Go to Saint Kabir and if you can win him over, only then will I call you Sarbajit.' So, the vain pundit loaded up a bullock cart full of books and went to the house of Kabir Sahib. When Kabir asked about the purpose of his visit, the pundit replied, 'Either you give me in writing that I am Sarbajit the Invincible, or enter into debate with me.'

Kabir Sahib humbly acquiesced and gave him in writing, 'Sarbajit is the winner and Kabir, the loser.' But when he took this paper home to show his mother, it read, 'Sarbajit is the loser, and Kabir, the winner.' Sarbajit became very angry and returned to Kabir with his demands. Again Kabir wrote, 'Sarbajit is the winner and Kabir, the loser.' Sarbajit ran home to show it to his mother, but again the paper read, 'Kabir is the winner and Sarbajit the loser.' A third time he returned to Kabir, but this time Kabir flatly told him, 'O Pundit, you speak of what you have read and studied, whereas I speak of what I have experienced; the two can never agree. If you have some inner experience of Reality, only then come and talk with me.'

April 13 - Faqir Chand of Hoshiarpur: Master lets me tag along in his car to a holyman conference in Hoshiarpur, about an hour's drive from Ludhiana. Sadhus in saffron robes, and other representatives of Hindu and Sikh faiths, gaze out upon an audience of several hundred from a large dais. Master Kirpal, as the guest of honor, is warmly received. Among the holy men is Faqir Chand, head of this ashram and the successor of Maharishi Shivbrat Lal. Rai Saligram, who was one of the chief disciples of Soami Ji of Agra, initiated Shivbrat Lal. Faqir Chand was linked to the same path of Light and Sound, but through a different lineage than that of Baba Ji and Master Sawan.

While smoking a hookah on stage, Faqir Chand launches into a colorful discourse. In his description of the inner spiritual regions, I take notice when he mistakenly reverses the experiences of the third and fourth planes.

After leaving Hoshiarpur, Master, from the front seat, carefully cuts and peels an apple and passes the pieces around. From the back I ask, 'Maharaj Ji, what is the fate of those disciples of a lesser Master who has advanced spiritually to, say, the second or third stage, but not the ultimate Goal [Sach Khand]?' I have Faqir Chand in mind.

‘Their progress will stop,’ he answers. ‘They will not be able to go farther than their guru.’

‘Will the people who follow them derive lasting benefit?’

‘No.’ *End of discussion.*

Ludhiana—Questions & Answers: We return to the Ludhiana ashram late in the afternoon. Hundreds have been waiting, meditating and singing bhajans. After a brief rest, Master invites questions. A woman describes her difficulties in stilling the mind in meditation, a common complaint.

M: ‘Do you keep the self-introspection diary?’

Woman: ‘No, I am illiterate.’

M: ‘Do you give fifty rupees instead of five?’

Woman: ‘No.’

M: ‘If you can count up to fifty and know the difference between five and fifty, why can’t you count your mistakes?’ Master chuckles. ‘Keeping the diary means keeping track of the impediments and imperfections in our lives; then weed them out! If you don’t check your lower tendencies, how can you go up in meditation?’

An old grandmother slowly rises to her feet. ‘I don’t see anything in meditation now, but I used to see a lot before.’

M: ‘You are not meditating accurately now. There is something lacking in your concentration. There is a cure for not seeing, but there is no cure for not meditating. Meditate regularly, with single-pointed attention in the manner already revealed to you, and the inner way will be opened again.’

An elderly man stands with folded hands. ‘Master, I am a disciple of Baba Sawan Singh Ji. For many years I haven’t been able to sit in bhajan due to severe pains in my hips, but now that you have come, I can sit and, with your blessings, the inner vision has opened again.’

Master humbly replies, ‘It is all due to Hazur’s grace that people are benefiting. I am only a puppet in his hands.’

A white-bearded Sardar comes forward to confess: ‘Maharaj Ji, forgive me, I have started drinking. Please forgive me, I will never drink again.’

M: ‘O’ Baba, it is pardoned, but don’t drink again, and see towards your white beard. Your white hairs are a sign that the angel of death is approaching. What are you doing in your old age?’

Recitation without Naam: A renowned Ragi⁶ once came to Baba Sawan Singh, listened to his discourse which focused on the futility

of external religious practice—such as formulaic prayers, fasting, rituals, blind faith and scriptural reading—comparing that with the supreme blessing of being linked to the Unstruck Melody of Naam, via the agency of a living Satguru. The Ragi was profoundly affected. After the satsang was over, he approached the great Master and asked, ‘Hazur, I have been reading and reciting the scriptures most of my life. I thought this was Naam. Pray tell me, what is the benefit of this as compared to the Naam which you speak of?’

Hazur asked him to fill up a nearby piece of paper with zeros, and when the Ragi finished doing so, Hazur asked him, ‘Bhai Ji [respected brother], what is the value of the zeros?’ The Ragi replied, ‘Nothing, Hazur, they are just zeros.’

Hazur then asked him to put ‘one’ before the zeros and asked, ‘Now what is the value of what you have written?’

The Ragi replied, ‘Hazur, it is inestimable. No one can count that high.’

Hazur concluded, ‘Bhai Ji, singing the scriptures without Naam is just like all the zeros on the paper. It has little value, but when you get Naam from a perfect Saint, it is like putting One before them all. Then your life becomes infinitely precious.’

Reformation of an alcoholic: An alcoholic was initiated in Ludhiana on the ‘67 tour. While half-heartedly agreeing not to imbibe again, within a few days his old craving overpowered both will and reason. Two years of steady drinking and deterioration ensued. As much as he wanted to reform himself, he was helplessly caught in the grip of addiction. One day he overcame his shame, and traveled to Delhi to seek the Master’s help before whom he pleaded: ‘Maharaj Ji, please don’t make me promise not to drink for I know I haven’t the strength to keep it. I do not want to be false to you. Please help me reform, for my life is in ruin, and my family is badly affected. I cannot change myself.’ And he fell on his Satguru’s feet, crying. Pleased with his confession and honesty, Master told the fellow, ‘All right, you may drink, but promise me just one thing.’ Master looked at him with a mixture of sternness and compassion. ‘Promise that you will never drink in My presence!’

After giving his solemn word, the man returned home and kept the bottle at bay. However, after a couple of weeks the old craving began tormenting him again. He remembered his promise, but since Kirpal Singh was five hundred miles away, he reached for a bottle he had earlier hidden under his bed. With trembling hands, he poured a glass, but as he raised it to his lips, he had the shock of his life, for

the Master was standing across the room looking at him. He rubbed his eyes, but the Master's form remained. He really wanted that drink! To avoid the Master's gaze, he closed his eyes and quickly raised the glass. Before the liquor was in his mouth, he received a tremendous slap. From that moment on, he never touched liquor again.

*A drunkard, a lover and a moth begin their circling of the Flame;
Friend, I found a great bargain, the sacrifice of mine and wine.
Trading, I found the inebriate eyes of the Beloved
Dancing me in the tavern of the Timeless*

Raho, Bersian & Nawansher: From Ludhiana, we motor on to Raho, birthplace of the grandfather of avatar Ram Chandra. In the 17th century, Raho had become a flourishing Mughal center, renamed as Sirhind. Guru Gobind Singh's two young sons were cruelly bricked up alive inside a wall by order of Sirhind's ruler. Within two decades, Sirhind was razed to the ground by the forces of Banda Bahadur, and its original name restored.

The ashram here is situated in a large building more than four hundred years old, one of few that escaped destruction. Overgrown mounds of ancient bricks and rubble remain scattered throughout the largely abandoned town, mute reminders of the past. Nearby flows the lazy Satluj River, where my ancestor Lt. Gen. Cripps and the British army came within a hair of losing a decisive battle against the forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. We spend the night here on the ashram's roof beneath the stars. In the early morn while meditating, a small bird alights on my head, a special honor. After breakfast, we move on to Bersian village, where satsang is held in the fields of a cultivator.

At its conclusion, an old man stands and addresses the Master: 'Maharaj, my name is Amar Chand. Several weeks ago, my only son, Chanan Ram became deathly ill, but he did not have the benefit and protection of initiation.' His voice quivers with emotion as he continues, 'While sitting by his side, I closed my eyes and Hazur suddenly appeared in your company. Your radiant form came closer and you gave the clear order to convey the secret of the Five Charged Names to my son, as his soul was about to depart. I therefore directed him to close his eyes and repeat the five names mentally. After a few minutes, he opened his eyes and mouth and repeated, "I am seeing the light-filled images of Hazur and Maharaj Kirpal. They are telling me, 'Prepare to leave this world. It is not your permanent place. You have to leave now.' Father, I bid you farewell." I was satisfied. He then closed his eyes, and his soul took flight into the Beyond.' Grateful tears roll down Amar Chand's weathered cheeks as he concludes, 'As I am an initiate of Hazur, now my son is yours. The almighty power is One and we are bound in it forever.'

In the fierce heat of the afternoon (120 F.) I'm invited upstairs to take rest in the Master's room. Mysterious and alleviating cool breezes waft through it. Initially I am fearful that my thought patterns, so apparent to him, might defile the super-sublime atmosphere. While lying upon the bare floor with my head towards the nearby reclining Master, anxiety subsides as grace-currents allow attention to quickly withdraw.

Later, one muses, *How can a frail bulb withstand the Power-house? How may a broken cup contain the Ocean?* It is said of him, 'He drank the seven seas and yet his lips remained dry.'

In the golden ripeness of late afternoon we drive a few more miles down the tree-lined road to the town of Nawansher.

On the following day, Master speaks of gratitude and remembrance:

There are so many mountains and trees on the face of the Earth, but she does not grumble. Once she was asked if there was any burden which was too great to bear. The Earth replied, 'Yes, the only burden I cannot bear is an ungrateful heart.'

My Master, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh used to say, 'For those who remember the Lord in their dreams, I am prepared to make shoes from my own skin for their feet.'



Picnic, Sirsa, Punjab,

(L. to R: Tai Ji, Master Kirpal, Krishan Lal, & Dr. Lal Singh.)

Seeing me watching from a distance, Master beckoned me over. As food was put on my plate, a delicious-looking cauliflower dish was not offered. 'You'd like?', Master noticed me eyeing it. I nodded and took a big bite. Soon my mouth was on fire and I began to perspire and cough. Everyone, especially Master, burst out laughing. It was super-spiced pickle!

1. In an early undated hand-written memo to himself, Kirpal Singh outlined his personal dietary, sunbathing and yoga exercise regimen. He allowed himself only six to eight ounces of food per day. This original memo is on display at Sawan Ashram.

2. Kirpal Singh, *Portrait of Perfection*, (Delhi & Bowling Green, VA: S.K. Pub., 1981), p. 285.

3. Homeopathy is widely accepted and practiced in India, England and Europe.

4. Kirpal Singh, *Jap Ji—the Message of Guru Nanak*, (Delhi & Bowling Green, VA: SK Publications, Sixth edition, 1981)

5. I was taken aback by organized opposition to the Master and his mission of love and peace, but this was nothing new, from a broad historical perspective.

6. Ragis are professional singers of Sikh scriptures and are held in very high regard. Some of the more gifted enjoy almost super-star status within their community. The Saints of the mystic Word, however, have unequivocally stated that the most sublime outer music may help take one to the *threshold* of the astral world, and bestow a little taste of bliss, but music per se, is powerless to effect further ingress into the spiritual regions—which are far beyond the senses and relativity. The inner Music of God brought about the entire Creation, and is the means of the soul's return to its' Source. Listening to the sweet, melodious strains of the inner Music, the mind's ramifications are stilled; the more mind is stilled, or overpowered by a force much greater than itself, the more it enjoys bliss, peace and freedom from the thrall of the lower self.