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Spiritual Stability

**The key to a secure and
responsible society.**

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Universal Target is a spiritual journal promoting unity in diversity and peaceful co-existence. It is founded on the belief that all human beings share a common source and spiritual heritage, irrespective of the differences of culture and world traditions. The journal draws upon the shared and accumulated wisdom of our common heritage, to encourage harmony through self-realisation. Universal Target endorses the maxim of His Holiness Nirankari Baba, 'Know One, Believe in One, Become One'.

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SOCIETY AND SPIRITUALITY

Editorial: Harbans Singh

The summer riots in England not only shocked and horrified the nation, but also unbarred the state of its soul. 'Where did we go wrong?', was the question that loomed large on every thinking person's mind. It prompted a search for the cause and solution to fix the damaged society.

Whilst contributing factors for this sudden eruption of violence may be many, the chief underlying cause seems to have been the vacuum left by a lack of morality, and sense of responsibility towards other fellow citizens, resulting in a distorted sense of right and wrong. This missing ingredient seems to permeate the whole of society, from the bottom through to the very top. It demands reformation – the encouraging of stable families and a more responsible populace, which in turn entails greater accountability and show of moral leadership at all levels, from the old to the young.

The morality of our Spiritual Teachers, be they Moses, Christ, Buddha or other venerable personages, forms the foundation of our civilisations. These teachings, ethics and values, are designed to make us better human beings by instilling principles of right conduct, will-power and self restraint especially when it comes to controlling our baser instincts of lust, greed, jealousy, prejudice and hatred. These revered spiritual beings sought to spiritualise their followers, and in so doing elevate them to a higher plane, thus effecting transformation in their lives. Morality and sense of right and wrong was simply a by-product of this process.

It has been rightly said that the purpose of religion is to spiritualise society, moralise and elevate humanity, thus the saying "Religion Unites, Never Divides". Religion loses its role and declines when it fails to deliver. When religious leaders start to use religion as an instrument to divide and preach hatred against other human beings, religion becomes soul-less and empty.

The West's race for material advancement, and increasing consumerisation of society at the expense

of spiritual progress (which is being equally emulated by the rest of the world) has led to increasing abandonment of religious beliefs, and has further accentuated the situation creating a vast spiritual vacuum in the daily lives of ordinary people. For any society, this is a highly dangerous position to be in, as spirituality is the real basis of morality.

Just as a bird flies with the aid of both wings, mankind also requires a material wing and the spiritual wing to reach the heights of humanity. As he requires food, water and other material things to meet his physical needs, he also needs to satisfy his spiritual hunger in order to lead a prosperous, balanced and peaceful life.

A spiritually enlightened person would say there is nothing wrong with having wealth, power or nurturing ambitions to excel in one's chosen field, so long as one's humaneness, humility and humanity is not traded off for harmful vanity and haughtiness. In fact both bonafide materialism and spirituality should co-exist as equal partners in our daily lives, although the greater our spiritual strength, the more enabled we become to endure material inadequacies, overcome unhappy circumstances and move through undesirable obstacles that may cross life's path.

Likewise, there should be no conflict between religion as a uniting and spiritualising force and science or materialism, because the overriding object of both should be to serve mankind and to do what is most beneficial for humanity as a whole.

The solution therefore, not just to Britain's and the West's problems, but also to the global social malaise, lies in tackling the spiritual famine that our world is faced with. For without spirituality, without rising above barriers of class, colour, creed, race or nationality we will continue to fall short of embracing each other as fellow human beings. Whoever and wherever they are, humans are members of one global family, and it is only in this realisation we can achieve a stable society, both domestically and globally. ■

Timeless Message



By using the example of Diwali (the festival of lights), on 26 October 2011 in Delhi, His Holiness Nirankari Baba explained the very essence of life:

"It is only by burning the effigy of our ego at the advent of Dushehra¹ can we expect to lead to Diwali.

This happens when saints stand firm as a rock, coloured by divine love. They keep the company of the strong, faithful devotees, not the weak, faltering attendees, who take them away from the congregation. They acquire a blissful state of mind – a mind that is a repository of good thoughts and feelings, which keep their divinity alive. They are firmly attuned to Nirankar (Almighty God) and dare not be parted from Him like a fish out of water wriggling in pain."

His Holiness Nirankari Baba said that the precious moments he

spent in the UK with the saints gave him a lot of joy.

Intoxicating Experience

On the occasion of the celebration of India's independence at the Birmingham Town Hall on 15 August 2011, the invitees included the Consul General of India, who had also attended the spiritual liberation day at the West Midlands Centre in Wednesbury the day before. Many guests expressed their spiritual joy by saying that the spiritual liberation day was truly intoxicating and a life-time experience.

This was significant in light of the violence that had erupted in London, with rioting spreading to the whole of the country. On the one hand there were people who ironically derived pleasure from wanton violence and destruction. On the other hand there were selfless saints who worked hard to strengthen human relations by propagating the Mission's message. The Consul General of India praised the Mission's legacy.

This spirit of service continued in North America. On St. Martin's Island, a principality independent of the USA and jointly governed by the Dutch and French, the congregation was attended with joy. So much so that the prime

minister, together with his son, were in situ during the whole of the congregation. The prime minister's son even declared:

"The Mission's message is sorely needed."

Identity of a Saint

At the Maharashtra Samagam in January 2011, His Holiness reiterated that saints' devotion speaks volumes. He said if the sound of Dhan Nirankar² did not reach the sky, the joy would be that much less. The discipline (maryada) and devotion that demand many hours of service are saints' assets. In fact saints have an identity, not an outward one, but a subtle one. They put God first at every step, walk upright, spread spiritual wealth, imbibe positive feelings and accept everyone as their own. Like Saint Meerabai, they wear the shroud of devotion and never allow the waning colours of the material world (samsaar) to touch them. For such colours cause pain, resulting in inhumanity, impatience and intolerance.

With the complete colour – the divine hue, saints harbour feelings of humanity and goodness, urge everybody to awaken from their profound slumber, and inspire all to walk the path of salvation. They

¹ Dushehra denotes the victory of good over evil which is celebrated annually by Hindus, by burning the effigy of the evil King Ravana.

² Dhan Nirankar means God is great.

stay away from intoxicants and unnecessary rites.

True Religion

The message that was spread by Saint Tukka Ram in Maharashtra, and other saints elsewhere, is that humanity (one human race) is true religion, which should be taken into every part of the world. His Holiness Nirankari Baba likened this oneness to a watch, which has many parts - some small, some large. But all of them have a role to play. If they do not work together, the watch cannot function. Similarly, everyone in the world has a role to play. As such, every single person should be respected, not tainted or hurt.

When people begin to taste the sweetness of Nirankar, they begin to sing from the same hymn sheet. In such a state we find the truth, true devotion and true prayer. ■



My Awareness Began Without My Realizing It.

Namita Krull, The Hague, Holland

The future belongs to God and it is only He who reveals it, under extraordinary circumstances. How does one guess the future? "It is based on the omens of the present; the secret is here in the present. If you pay attention to the present, you can improve upon it...." (The Alchemist, p108, by Paulo Coelho)

Until a couple of years ago, I didn't take the trouble to read books with spiritual messages. When I did start reading spiritual journals, it occurred to me that to be able to gain anything from them I had to slow down. The simple reason being, that haste, actually kills spiritual intake.

All my life, I have been trying to find a benchmark for my achievements. I have been wondering when the time would come to reach the very top of my capabilities. Be they in my education, career or altruistic endeavours. Basically, I've been toeing the line of every Tom, Dick and Harry.

I went back to University to study when my children came of age. I managed to convince my manager that going back to college would be of mutual benefit. So, to cut a long story short, I spent four years at one of the finest universities in Holland, balancing my career, education and motherhood.

To enable me to bring all my ambitions into fruition, I felt it was also necessary to be physically fit. So I started jogging 3 times a day. I even took part in the Rotterdam Marathon during my studies.

In so doing, I was becoming mentally and physically stronger by the day. This experience was

exhilarating to say the least. On top of all this I was even able to join the congregations (satsangs); I was growing in spiritual awareness. Without my realizing, I was actually trying to gain a balance in my life - a balance of not only physical and mental, but also spiritual stability.

Spiritual Stability

Today, I have more time to hand. I am conscious of living in the present and making the most of it. For 'the secret is here in the present. If you pay attention to the present, you can improve upon it'. I still exercise and jog a couple of times a week and try to keep myself physically and mentally fit. I very often attend spiritual meetings at home and abroad. Besides this, I divide my time in such a way that I get to read spiritual books like the Bhagavad Gita, Gurudev Hardev and others. I also always take the time to read the monthly edition of the Sant Nirankari Magazine. The reading is done at a slower pace to absorb the teachings. After all 'Life does not get salvaged merely by reading the words of spiritual Masters. We must adopt them, act upon them.'

I have realized that spiritual stability does not occur through beautiful words alone. They are only valuable when we give them importance and act upon them. In fact, there are absolutely no limitations to our achievements. I hope and pray that with His Holiness Nirankari Baba's blessings the spiritual balance in my life improves day after day to reach the point of equipoised stability. ■

I recently came across a meaningful example which I would like to share with you:

"When I was 5 years old, my mother told me that the key to life was happiness. Some years later, there was an assignment in school where we were asked what we wanted to be when we were older. I responded to that question with 'happy'. They told me that I didn't understand the assignment. I told them that they didn't understand life."

John Lennon

A simple thought and yet it reminds us of a universal truth that we often forget about in our busy day to day life. That maybe, of all our pursuits in life, the most important one is to find that inner peace and happiness. Perhaps, if we were content and at peace with ourselves then we would be able to take any situation within our stride and remain composed and unaffected.

What a wonderful achievement that would be. To remain unaffected by our surroundings, negative or for that matter positive, thus achieving a state of equilibrium or equipoise.

Spirituality can offer us that stability. Not because the world around us changes, but because our perception changes. Perhaps even widened or broadened. Wayne Dyer, a motivational and spiritual author echoes these sentiments:

"If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

It is however, not only our changing perception but also our appreciation of time and a realisation of a constant presence that allows us to become spiritually stable. I recall hearing a story about the appreciation of time. There once was a king who

was searching for some stability in his turbulent life. He spoke to his trusted wise man and asked him to inform him of something that would get him through the challenging times and something that would prevent him from becoming over elated in the good times. The wise man thought for a while and then said to the king:

"In both scenarios, just remind yourself that this time will pass."

We therefore begin to appreciate that our moods and feelings are temporary. In fact, with the laws of nature and even physical laws, everything from our homes, our possessions, our languages and even our bodies are set to eventually evolve or perish.

In a world of constant change, there is not much that is stable or constant. Yet many spiritual scholars and philosophers concur that this entity we commonly refer to as 'God', has and will always exist.

In the Holy Sri Japji Sahib (verse 1) it is written:

"True since the beginning of the universe, True since the start of the ages, True in the present, O Nanak, He shall be forever True."

In the Holy Bible (psalm 90:1-4) it is said:

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations."

In the Holy Sampuran Avtar Bani (verse 16) we are reminded:

"He was, He is and He shall always be, and splendid is His creation."

Not only is God considered to be eternal, omnipotent and omnipresent but it has also been suggested that for all our

problems: mental, physical and spiritual, a constant and stable faith in God is the solution. Again after describing the duties of a devotee, the Sampuran Avtar Bani (verse 223) states:

"The disciple who does all this will attain all the three forms of happiness."

It is with this belief and possessing an 'attitude of gratitude' that I attempt to live my life and it certainly has made my journey a more stable one.

I noticed this through a recent encounter where I lost my grandfather due to a serious illness. I knew that he did not have long to live and in my final conversation with him, I thanked him for everything that he taught me and I was able to tell him that I loved him deeply. The latter was something I didn't tell him very often. For the opportunity to tell him that in our final conversation, I will always be grateful.

If it wasn't for spirituality and mental stability that I had gained from it, maybe I would still be mourning my grandfather's loss. Instead, I choose to appreciate and celebrate our moments together and his life as a whole.

Spirituality also enabled me to understand that the human body is a gift from God and that we are mere trustees of such a gift which is a temporary abode for us all.

In conclusion, being spirituality stable enables us to learn a valuable lesson in life which I will attempt to summarise in a few words:

"God never promised we wouldn't have storms. He did promise to be our shelter."

Whenever I have turned to Him, He has always fulfilled this promise and been my shelter. ■

My professor once asked,
where's your God?

I said, He's in every place
you ever trod

He said, I've been around the world,
mapped the equator

But my eyes have never been able to
trap this Creator

I said, you search for God,
make a map of the globe

Dear professor,
He's on the back of your robe

He said, science is in defiance,
you've read the old oracle

I said, if science is so sure,
why do they search the God-particle?

He said, I don't believe you,
I need more persuasion

If God can be defined,
define Him with an equation

I said, it's very simple
and already done

We are many,
but God is One

You search for God
and map the masses

Dear professor,
He's in your glasses

He said, I don't understand,
I need this disguise exposed

I said the light is there,
but your eyes are closed

He said, if God exists,
why is there war, why is there pain?

I said, you can't have a rainbow
if there isn't any rain

He said, I like the theory,
but I need to see

I said, I know a place
where they set you free

You search for God,
map the stars design

Dear professor,
did you search your mind?

You search for God,
map the museum's art

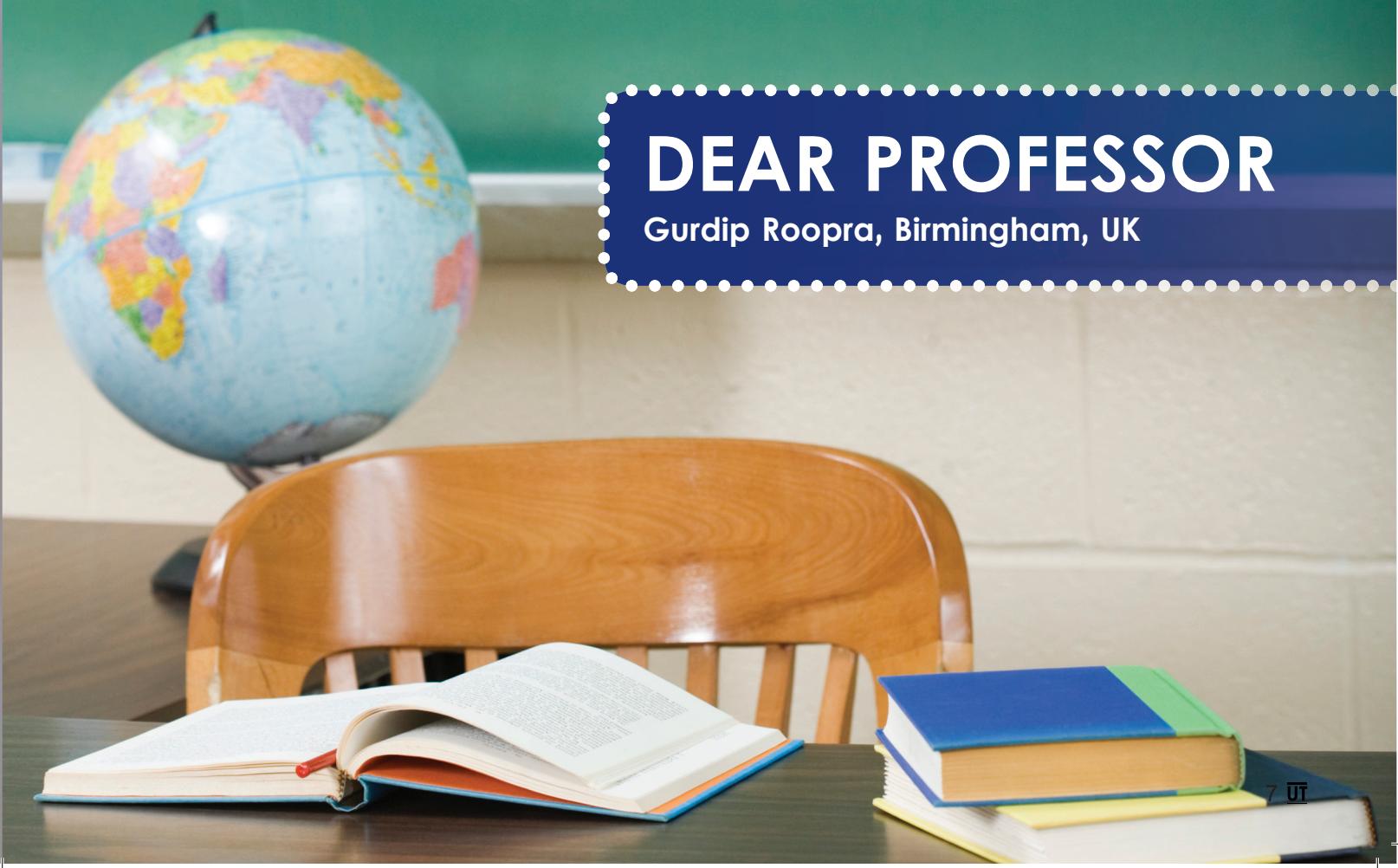
Dear professor,
did you search your heart?

You search for God,
you search His face

Dear professor,
He is in every place.

DEAR PROFESSOR

Gurdip Roopra, Birmingham, UK



JOY OF STABLE LIFE

Prashant Lande, Chicago, USA



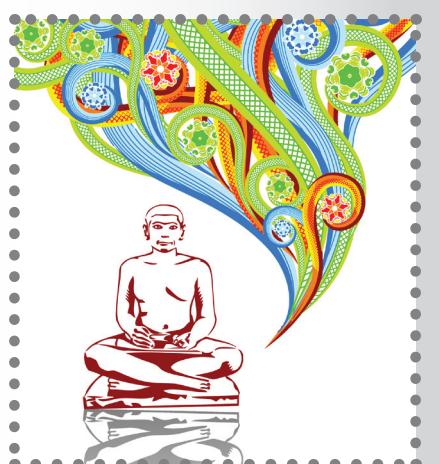
In this ever changing, ever growing dynamic universe, we still look for stability of body, mind, emotions and spirit. Why? Because it is something we all need to connect with the Source to be able to experience the joy of a stable life.

As humans we rest on four pillars of life: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Without a single exception, every single pillar needs to be healthy and totally stable. For only this total stability helps us to maintain our empire of existence, and helps us to connect with the ultimate Truth – Universal Soul also known as the Formless. If any one or more of these pillars become unstable at some point in time, it is really difficult to reconnect and attain the state of bliss. The weak pillar puts immense pressure on the other pillars. When the pillars get damaged beyond repair, what do we do?

This is when the true Enlightened Master comes to the rescue. It is he who showers his benevolence to realign our equilibrium to grant us happiness and liberation by uniting our soul with the Super soul.

How can we keep these pillars strong and healthy? As responsible individuals, we must strive to keep our body healthy. After all, health is real wealth. It is for us to engage in physical activity and maintain regular health checks.

We must keep our mind healthy by doing creative and intellectual work to sustain a positive environment. This we can do



by listening to music, reading inspirational material and by keeping positive company and thoughts. It boosts the intellect, increases wisdom and equips us for taking the right decisions at the right time.

By observing emotions and reflecting on them, we can keep ourselves continuously positive and healthy. Negative emotions do indeed take place, but they should never control or promote actions which we may later regret. As we make mistakes, we should develop an attitude of forgiveness both towards ourselves and others. We need to be tolerant, nice and civil, imbibing the spirit of forgiveness and understanding. If not, just keep your silence, giving others the chance to justify their respective behaviour. There should never be a resort to bad words or physical abuse. For, to serve and help others is the aim of human life and the secret of achieving peace and happiness.

We have to keep our spirit healthy by staying connected to the Ultimate Truth - Nirankar. This can be done by keeping the company of saints and the Enlightened Master, whose teachings dispel darkness and lead us to Light, the harbinger of lasting stability and bliss.

Thus the joy of a stable life, spiritually free and fulfilling life, is attained through such a Master's grace. Once we feel we are stable in all these pillars, we are in fact ready to connect and shine with life in the best manner possible, experiencing it in the fullest, blissful way! ■

SPIRITUALITY IS ETERNAL

Sudhir Kundi, London, UK



Guru Arjun Dev ji was a Master
A liberator of souls
When he came to spread this light
They sat him on burning coals
He smiled as he was burning
said God's way is sweet
Today the whole world knows him
millions would bow at his feet

For us the Lord laid down his life
Christ was placed upon the Cross
Whilst going he forgave those who
did not know
The world is still at loss...
Today we read the Bible and
of the lives of those who served
That was their journey this is ours
Yet we go on sinning unnerved

Lord Buddha,
He was kept in darkness
But when he stepped into the light
He saw the sick, the old, the dead
Formed the middle path
that was right

He revealed Nirvana
and today all people know
He was a Spiritual Master
to whom all would readily go

These Masters show us
how to live
Their lives are not some old fable
They forgive, accept
see all as theirs
They are the spiritually stable
Those who are awoken by them
Are then connected to this Source
They see God in all
experience Him
They become one with this force

His Holiness Nirankari Baba
Is the one who guides us today
What have you to lose by asking?
If it doesn't make sense just say
We strive for financial stability
Let's strive for a wealth unmeasured
Let's enrich our lives with Knowledge
Experience God, the most treasured.

NO NEED

Komal Preet , Los Angeles, USA

Why look in a book?
The wisdom is there

With the Lord
there's no need to look anywhere

No need to go on any fast

To make your relationship
with God last

No need to remember
scripture word for word

If you act upon the Lord's
message, you heard

No need to argue
about which religion is right

Because, in the Lord
we are all an equal sight

No need to boast of all your wins
They are nothing
compared to your sins

No need to believe
you are of a superior race

Because it is always the Lord
in the higher place

No need to look
to the heavens above

Remember Him,
you will always have His love

How many times you help others
should not be measured

Instead, do it willingly
you will find the greatest pleasure

Do find the need
to do what is right

To believe in God
and be with Him for life

So why look in a book?
The wisdom is there

With the Lord
there's no need to look anywhere.



SPIRITUAL STABILITY

Dr. Bobby Sura, Solihull, UK

Never before have human beings enjoyed comforts, to the degree they are available today in the developed world. In an age of science and technology, tasks that would have taken days, or perhaps even weeks to accomplish just a few decades ago, can now be undertaken within moments. The fact that we may speak, write and see one another across continents, and that too through hand-held devices, was once a mere figment of imagination. Countless other conveniences have become common components of households across the world.

We have faster modes of transport, more reliable means to protect ourselves from harm, and a seeming ability to extend life itself. Knowledge has become freely available and abundantly so, at our very fingertips. If not perturbed by the carbon footprint of our actions, we may eat Spanish oranges in the Scottish Highlands, within a few hours of them being picked from the tree. Air conditioning units keep us at the desired temperature, regardless of the cold or heat outside. Hunger can't keep pace with the speed at which food can be warmed and served.

Costs Incurred

In short, nothing seems to be lacking - no need seems too great, or too far from being fulfilled. However, where so much has been gained, essential aspects of our heritage have also been forgotten. In the advent of such progress and evolution, it becomes relatively easy to overlook the costs that have been incurred along the journey. Having acquired the means to make life so much easier, we have lost certain capacities, which were readily available to our ancestors.

Whereas primitive man would have been guided by the stars in his movements, and measured the time of day by the changing patterns of light and shade, modern human beings so readily lose track of where they are, or ought to be. Mental arithmetic is a skill in decline, and human memory is not as robust as it once was. We listen less to the messages of our bodies – work more than we should, sleep less than needed and lead sedentary lives, which impacts upon health and well-being.

The Pleasure Principle

This is a time where as human beings, we have nurtured the capability to create what we want, and hand back whatever we don't like. Is it any wonder then, we have lost touch with values such as acceptance, tolerance and forbearance? In trying to make life entirely pleasurable, we seem to have lost the capacity for more open experience.

Our vision is too often clouded by what could or should be, as we reach for what we want, rather than using what we have. It is no wonder we struggle,

when undesirable events or experiences occur. And this is the crux of the matter – inspite of all our development, and regardless of the tools that have been forged to carve out happiness, human beings cannot lay claim to omnipotence! We may have been lured by worldly advancements into a false sense of invincibility and control, but we simply cannot create, predict or manipulate every eventuality. No matter how powerful or ingenious we become, there will always be something outside our jurisdiction or influence.

We build towards the skies, and have deeds etched in paper to confirm ownership of our property. But the hurricanes and earthquakes do not recognise this authority – when they hammer at our door, we have but a brief opportunity to relinquish our attachments, and escape with our life intact, or otherwise be buried beneath the rubble.

Leaving aside the vulnerability we have to the vast elements of the universe, we find ourselves blown in all directions, on account of our own fickle emotionality.

The mind functions as a whirl of thoughts, sensations and



feelings turning first one way, and then another. The depressions, stresses and anxieties that plague mankind in the modern age, are more prevalent than ever before in history. Is it not therefore the greatest irony, that life has become so much easier for many, yet our inner struggles have become so much harder. When faced with managing situations which do not follow our script, discomfort quickly turns to crisis. Stability stands in tatters.



Personal Will

There is a recipe for greater balance and equipoise. Inspite of the comings and goings of life, we can be still and at rest. The answers lie within. Consider how freeing it would be, if we could accept that 'my' will need not prevail. We have based our happiness on things working out as we wish, or on people behaving according to our expectations.

We know so well, just how difficult it can be to change our own personal habits and feelings - let us understand that we do not have unfettered rights to convert others, or forge them in our own likeness. It isn't possible, even if we wish for it to be so. We cannot determine how others around us think, feel or behave, and to harbour such a myth leads only to disappointment and frustration.

The same holds true for circumstances. In order to rise

above discomfort, we will need to adjust our sails, when we cannot change the direction of the wind. Spiritual stability is possible, when we tap into our potential to be at home in all experiences, to be at ease with things as they are.

The Travelling Mind

As human beings we have an unparalleled propensity compared to other creatures, to move mentally through time. We so readily miss what once was, and live in reminiscent regret. We may feel unhappiness at what is happening in the present, wishing to exchange our experience for something we would choose to have, rather than what we have begrudgingly received. Further, we wonder what tomorrow holds – perhaps anxiously, perhaps optimistically. Whether we project fear or hope into tomorrow, whether we try to bargain with the now, or sit in reflection upon the yesterday – all postures take us away from what is. There is no stability, unless we become more present.

Becoming Present

In order to become more present, we will first need to become more aware. Pure awareness comes when we understand life for what it is - a process of ceaseless change. Like a motion picture, made of thousands upon thousands of individual frames that blend together to create the illusion of continuity, the world is really a flickering arising and vanishing of phenomena we experience to be stable, although it is not.

Whatever is happening, will pass. Our greatest joy, and deepest sorrow is fleeting – nothing is permanent. If we could observe life from this slightly detached vantage point, we would see that everything being observed is changing, yet there is a quiet observer within, who has never changed and will always be. The



'seen' is moving, transforming and in flux – the 'seer' is still, at ease and at rest. The degree to which we attach to changing material nature, we are in a perpetual state of restless motion. When we begin connecting with our unchanging spiritual nature, we begin to experience quietude and ease.

Eternal Essence

Our spiritual essence, is eternal and non-transitory. It is immaterial, having no location, no movement, no properties - entirely non-conceptual. It was, before anything was. It will be after all that we see and feel is no more. In short, it is the source of all things. Whatever words or names we use to identify or label this everlasting foundation, let us realise that a sound basis for the values and attitudes that lead to spiritual stability, may be discovered in our relationship with it. Spiritual moments cause our awareness to enlarge, become spacious and inclusive. A profound timelessness is felt when this happens, as we feel part of something much greater than what we ordinarily perceive ourselves to be. In a world constantly in flux, ever changing and unpredictable, spirituality brings poise and space for quiet reflection. In this, lies the basis for a more fulfilling experience of life. ■

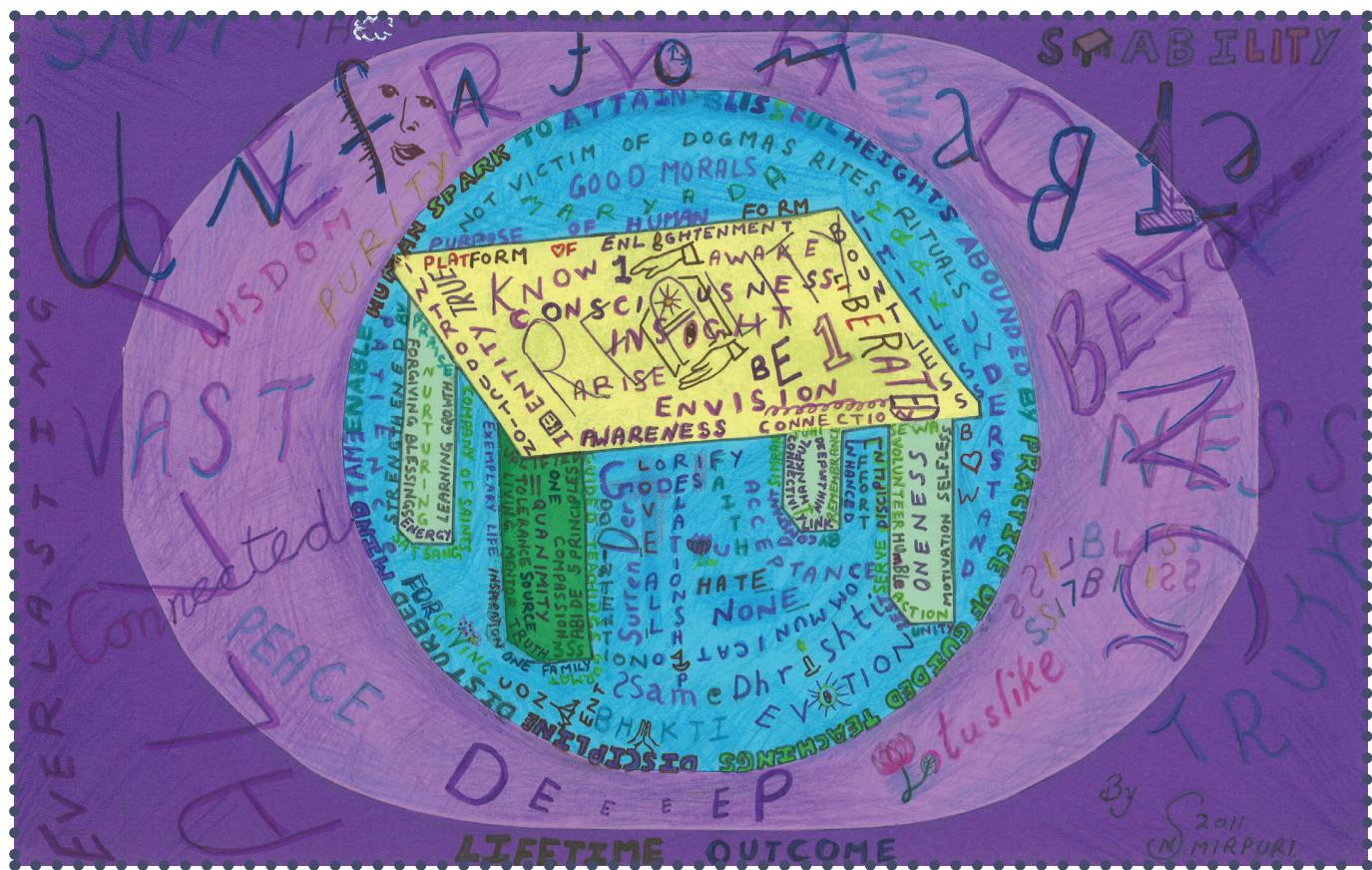


Illustration by Sonu Mirpuri, Dallas, USA

Key to Equipoise

Davinder Dhanoa, Toronto, Canada

When asked as to how spiritual strength could be judged, His Holiness Nirankari Baba answered that "it is measured by how often you get disturbed during the day." This means that a spiritual person is one who dwells in bliss. Bliss is not a temporary 'high', which lasts for a while and then goes away, but in the words of His Holiness, something that is beyond the senses and a state of being one with the Formless Nirankar.

In this state, the ups and downs of life do not affect the individual; they are in the world, but not of it. How is this accomplished? What is the secret? His Holiness Nirankari Baba teaches us that whatever takes place, happens because of the will of God. This will is perfect and good for all of us.

The key or the secret of living
is that the downs in life are

only temporary; they do not last forever. The good always prevails again with the grace of God. This also applies to the ups of life. All this is God's will too. We must remain level headed. We must never get out of control or become egotistic.

“Bliss is...something that is beyond the senses and a state of being one with the Formless Nirankar.”

To remain stable in life, we have to attach ourselves to God, not to 'maya', the material possessions in the shape of family, friends, relations and properties. For they are also temporary; they do not last forever. What we have to focus on is the Brahm Gyan (Divine Knowledge), which shows us where we come from and where we will go.

Being attached to God, the Supreme Energy, gives us strength and helps us to realise who we really are – part of the all-powerful spirit. Living in such a knowledge, there is no choice but to surrender to the universe. In forging our link with God, we begin to live in bliss.

So stability in life is only possible through spirituality, and spirituality is only possible through the knowledge of the spirit. This knowledge can be acquired through seeking a saint, seer or mentor who can tell you what the spirit and the source of the spirit is, namely the Super Soul (Nirankar).

“Spirituality is only possible through the knowledge of the spirit.”

Peace, No Matter What

Arti Nehru, Los Angeles, USA

You know those people, who always seem happy? Nothing seems to get them down...they're always smiling, patient, worry-free? Well, I've always wanted to be one of them. But I'm not.

Some days I'm super happy, some days I feel down. Outward circumstances seem to dictate my mood. I get praised at work, I'm happy. I'm looking for work and I'm frustrated until I land that perfect job. Not the best way to live, I know. I've always wanted to know the secret to being more internally, emotionally, and spiritually stable.

This is what I have learned helps me:

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is the most powerful thing in the universe. It releases God's power in your life. It presents an opportunity for you to surrender your worries to a higher power, which in turn allows you to enter a place of rest or peace.

The minute I feel like giving up or am overwhelmed by day-to-day life, I know I need to spend time with God. Because when a person feels down, it is easy to give up. It is easy to complain. It is easy to feel sorry for yourself. And it is easy to give in to temptations. But spending time in prayer can be your weapon against all those negative feelings and can help turn your frown upside down.

The Bible says, "Cast your cares on the Lord." (Psalms 55:22) Easier said than done, right? But really, if we start thinking and speaking these types of

scriptures out loud, it becomes easier to practice. When worry seems to consume me - attending holy congregations, reading scriptures and surrounding myself with positive devotees always seems to do the trick. These things remind me I don't have to waste my time trying to do what only God can do. They remind me uncertainty is inevitable but worrying is optional. They remind me I can choose to trust God in every situation and that when I do that, I will automatically enter a state of peace...a state of rest.

Positive Attitude

I once heard this story about a man who was tortured during the Holocaust and he said his attitude was something no one could take away from him. Wow! In such an extreme situation, that man held on to a spiritual state of rest.

When you realize God is in charge, you realize you do not have to try to figure everything out. You can replace over-rationalization with faith. You can rest easy like that person who is always smiling.

Refuge in God

Our lives are strengthened when we go to God in every situation. What wears us down is trying to do it all on our own. We all encounter challenges but we

should not be fearful of them. In fact, when we connect with God there is a way to find 'peace' in the midst of everything going on. Through prayer, our situation may not change, but we can be changed. Our outlook can change. We can stop fighting what God is allowing to happen and reach a state of acceptance and rest.

Rest in a Storm

When a storm is brewing, a chicken will run around in circles and try to hide. But an eagle, also a bird, does not run from a storm. An eagle waits for the storm to come and then uses the wind to lift itself above it. The eagle uses the storm to go higher. When we spend time with God, we too can rise above any challenge. We can experience rest in the midst of a storm. That rest comes through faith, trusting that God is working in our life.

You cannot be at peace when you are feeling worry or when you are anxious or mad. You cannot be at peace when you are busy coveting what someone else has - instead you should be thankful for what you have been blessed with. Those feelings waste time and do not accomplish anything. I have learned I do not have to be a victim of my circumstances. I can be at peace with where I am. Peace comes from knowing God, trusting in Him, spending time with Him, and by imbibing Godly values. This type of spiritual stability brings forth stability in other areas of our life – emotional, mental and physical. Hard to always practice, but hey ~ I'm a work in progress. ■

Science and Spirituality

The Spiritual Scientist

Jagjit Khambe, Iver, UK

Coming from what you might call a typically religious Indian family, I can still remember the day I told my parents I was going to study physics, "Scientist? You want to be a scientist?!" Far from being disappointed, they were just puzzled at my announcement, as studying physics was not a familiar route to a mainstream career in those days. Nevertheless I was encouraged to fulfil my ambition, and have always remained thankful for the blind vote of confidence.

The reaction of my wider family and friends was no less amusing. Though most people were generally pleased I was pursuing something novel, others weren't so sure about my aspirations. Most interesting however was the response that my days of spiritual inclination were now numbered, with genuine concern that my scientific curiosities would ultimately draw me away from spirituality altogether.

For me however, the potential journey that lay ahead was an exciting prospect, and rather than seeding doubt, I saw this as the perfect opportunity to test the hypothesis that science does not necessarily conflict with spirituality, as is very often the case presented. I believed that science by its very nature prompts us to consider the existence of an omniscient energy – a power that set the pendulum of life in motion, and remained at the heart of all things. In actual fact it was something that I had come across earlier that summer that had really inspired me:

"Look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Albert Einstein

I was intrigued by what could have prompted someone of Einstein's calibre to make a statement like this. As one of the greatest physicists of his time, he made it clear that the prevalent science failed to consider an element of fundamental significance. What exactly did he mean in making this claim? How deep was he looking, and what exactly was he seeing? Was he referring to sensory observations or of something completely different altogether? Perhaps there really was a need for both science and spirituality to contribute in tandem towards a unique enlightenment.

I recognised that before I could even begin to understand this question I had to begin to understand the world around me more clearly. Maybe physics then, as the fundamental science, would give me greater insight into the whole matter.



Since completing my Masters degree, I have spent another ten years reflecting on what I learned, and continued to keep in touch with the waves of new thinking through wider reading. The complexity and magnificence of our world never ceases to amaze me, but more so the resourcefulness of people and the great lengths to which they will go in the quest for knowledge. Such commitment has brought us technology and facilities that underpin modern life today, but perhaps these technological leaps have also resulted in some naivety amongst the wider population, with little appreciation for how little we still know in relation to the vastness of our universe. Whilst it may seem as though we have grasped the secrets of nature and the power to manipulate resources to our advantage, the truth is that our discoveries are prompting us to rethink our understanding of the world, and to reconsider the philosophical implications of our observations.



The simple fact is that whilst we can create conceptual models and refine our thinking through the pursuit of scientific research, there may always be an experimental discovery around the corner that requires us to return to the drawing board, no matter how established the theory may be. Indeed, there are many branches of science in which even the most subtle gaps or observational inconsistencies are a cause for concern amongst pioneering researchers, with some age old questions still awaiting answers.



So science is by no means complete and nor can it ever hope to be. This however is not a surprise as science is not simply about closing the book on how the world works; rather it is a framework to support our ongoing exploration and search for knowledge, quite simply:

"The whole of science is nothing more than the refinement of thinking."

Albert Einstein

With regards to physics in particular, people often like to make sweeping statements about how the universe hangs together, but actually we can only state what has been observed, and all other predictions are just that, until of course they can be empirically proved. Therefore, despite our wonderful achievements we are in no position to provide a complete or precise view on why things behave the way they do, although we can of course make predictions. The fact that we seem to have been able to achieve so much by exploiting what little knowledge we have (in the grand scheme of things), should be seen as an indication of the underlying power of the universe:

"It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how nature is. Physics concerns only what we can say about nature."

Niels Bohr

We, as human beings, are an important element of nature. Unfortunately it seems that somewhere along the line this important fact has been

overlooked and we have instead focused our attention purely on the material world that surrounds us, without considering our subtle position in the same frame. The problem is that when you take any quantity, known or unknown, out of an equation, it just doesn't balance, and likewise without consideration for the immaterial or qualitative elements alongside empirical sciences we just cannot appreciate the bigger picture. In recent times the consequences of this separation have become increasingly apparent, with scientists finding it difficult to find an explanation for our most significant observations without introducing unknown energies, entities, or fields of some nature.



Such conflicts have given rise to new waves of research and required mainstream science to revisit underlying propositions and to question whether we have been looking deep enough, with the right lens, and even in the right places for that matter. This, I believe, is where experimental science must collaborate with spirituality. Indeed, new waves of

science are tending to converge on the borderlines of a scientific description for an omniscient, omnipotent, and all pervading energy, which creates, binds, and operates at the heart of all things. We, as human beings, are no exception in this. In the words of His Holiness Nirankari Baba:

"Today, human beings have acquired considerable knowledge about not only their own planet but many others also. It is, however, unfortunate that they are yet to discover their own self."

The theologian Gordon Kaufman has also voiced a similar view:

"God is the ultimate point of reference, in terms of which all else is understood, and apart from which nothing can be rightly grasped or known."

Another complication facing science is that the numerous separate fields of research, which appear to hold true their stand-alone theories, have not yet been brought together under a single unified theory. If they are indeed true then surely they should be related in some way. Nobody as yet has been able to achieve this, not to say that it is not possible, but scepticism remains:

"There is no formula that can deliver all truth, all harmony, all simplicity. No theory of everything can ever provide total insight. For to see through everything would leave us seeing nothing at all."

John Barrow

This statement again brings us closer to the domain of spirituality. Although an apparent contradiction in terms, the great eastern spiritualists have repeatedly proclaimed that the all pervading power is “visibly invisible, but invisibly visible” i.e. transcends sensory perception and must be experienced in another way.

In recent times the discovery of ‘dark matter’ has caused a paradigm shift in the scientific community. The idea that there should be some unfathomable substance which transcends our entire universe with great density, and without which the physical mathematics just cannot be explained is difficult to digest:

“A cosmic mystery of immense proportions, once seemingly on the verge of solution, has deepened and left astronomers and astrophysicists more baffled than ever. The crux ... is that the vast majority of the mass of the universe seems to be missing.”

William J Broad

Even before this discovery we have been aware of the stark reality that much of our universe is not actually what it seems. Take the atom for example – much of it consists of empty space, with a

very small proportion being made up of what we would call matter, or particles. Furthermore, even those subatomic particles are subject to assuming particle or wavelike properties – and nothing it seems is certain, only probable. So, even though we appear to live in a world of solid objects, our interactions are a lot more complicated than we may care to imagine, and science is still trying to decipher it.

Such discoveries have prompted even the most acclaimed scientists to take a step back and reevaluate the context of their life’s work, and it is therefore unsurprising that they have made statements in their later lives that would otherwise seem out of character for a traditional scientist. As a result, people are required to open their minds to other possibilities, and to the prospect of a dark energy that is reminiscent of God, albeit not in the traditional sense as religion would view it. Perhaps this then, is where religion must now also collaborate with science, to strip away the similes and metaphors that have conceptually transformed our picture of God through the ages, and perhaps drawn us away from the true essence of how ‘God’ is manifest and at the heart of all things in creation:

“The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known that we were coming.”

Freeman Dyson

“Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man.”

Albert Einstein

So it seems that not all scientists are ignorant to the view that some power, that the spiritualists may call God, exists. I am a firm believer, in fact more so from my scientific experience. My appeal to everyone out there is to keep an open mind and to take your own journey towards the other side of the pond – you never know what insight and inspiration it may bring:

“Everything is determined... by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect as well as for the star. Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust – we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible piper.”

Albert Einstein ■





Baby Steps to Stability

Shiva Rane, Livingston, Scotland

One of the greatest inventions in the history of mankind has been that of a wheel. It helped bring about the industrial revolution which in turn brought many inventions to fruition.

The surroundings of the early man made him realise that he could not physically carry large objects. In order to be able to move them from one place to another, he learned to place them on round tree logs. This not only lightened his burden, but also facilitated his transport. Likewise, the first step to self-discovery is to fully realise that worry, enmity, hatred, jealousy and doer-ship (ego) are

objects of burden; they need to be dealt with. This evolves to the state of freedom.

Just like the wheels that set us free from carrying our luggage, the wheels of clear consciousness (awareness of the self) also set us free from our emotional baggage, which, although easily off loaded, is a burden we are often unaware of.

Once this awareness actually dawns, the need for the constant company of like-minded souls becomes a must. For the saints live and embrace life fearlessly, in a carefree manner, within an attitude of gratitude. In such

company, one not only learns the art of living a joyous and peaceful life, but also validates the age-old adage, "man is known by the company he keeps."

Just as the wheel is used in all shapes and sizes all over the world in the form of tiny wrist watches, computer disk drives, automobiles and jet engines, the wheels of divine understanding also help one to apply positivity in countless aspects of everyday life. Furthermore, these spiritual wheels help one to gather inner strength to live life to the full, bringing stability - both material and spiritual - into one's life. ■

In Thought of You... Sangeeta Tutt, Walsall, UK

Your words within me ring loud and clear
The time has come to act without fear

Your blessings and guidance I do humbly seek
To be strong and steadfast and in devotion to peak

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue

Where the fiery ego is provoked by some
May the silence of Your love sing humility's sweet hum

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue

Whenever I love but that love is not returned
May I remember love's unconditional and must be earned

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue

Whenever an undesired emotion is seen
May Your compassion within me take over the scene

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue

When Your devotees shine a smile upon me
May I value that love as a blessing from Thee

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue

Whenever Your remembrance is graced upon me
May I thank You Lord for making me see

For may each moment be in thought of You
And may I be coloured in devotion's divine hue.



Everlasting Garden of Eden

Dan Slobodnik, Washington D.C, USA

There was a time when I had no gardens. Having no green thumb and being the grim reaper of plant life, I was in great need of someone to show me the way. Fortunately, my brother has many years of practical experience in the plant world; he's a master. Mike had taken on this sizable project, taking care of the design work and the costing. He was the commander; I was the foot soldier. Mike was fully in his element. His excitement was contagious, making the work interesting. I trusted his judgement and instruction.

After many days of hard labour the shape and form of the gardens began to develop. Mike had envisioned the garden from the recesses of his mind, not really needing the blue print. However, I did not understand his vision until the evolution had taken place before my very eyes. On the final day of the project, the garden was beautiful. Yet this was only the beginning; I was naïve. Mike knew there was more to come, as the garden would grow to maturity taking a different shape and resulting in astonishing beauty.

Over the first few years, Mike visited regularly to watch over the progress. I would tell him how everything looked great, but he would closely inspect every plant. Where I had seen "all is well", Mike had seen insect infestation, lack of nutrients and overgrowth. Then he would lecture me on maintenance to prevent problems. After several years, the master had gotten through to me, as I had pruned the plants to create health and strength and thinned out overgrowth to create balance. Feeding, weeding, killing off invading swarms of insects, I had become somewhat of a master myself. Now my brother's job was finally complete after

designing, planting, maintaining and teaching; he gave it his all. Now it was up to me to keep the garden beautiful with the given knowledge.

This garden project has become a great analogy of my spiritual progress. For most of my life, I did not know of spiritual matters; I was clumsy and made many mistakes. Some of these mistakes hurt others and me, yet I always wanted to be a better person. But trying seemed to create setbacks. Yes, at times I had given up on the spiritual path until I came in contact with a Master – His Holiness Nirankari Baba. The Master, like Mike, helped me envision a plan to follow. Then he stepped me through the process to install within me a beautiful spiritual garden. The Master knew I was not capable of upkeeping this spiritual life. So he stayed with me, teaching patiently until I got it right.

After many years I finally got it, as I can actually see my flaws. Now seeing where I need to prune, weed, feed and protect my spiritual self. Pruning is essential to our spiritual life, because if we do not cut out the unnecessary material - maya, then we allow clutter to eventually close in



and pull us down to our spiritual demise. Overgrowth in our lives comes from attachment to the physical world as our five senses are overly stimulated to the point of driving us to fulfill every desire. Chasing after all desires is a spiritual dead end, because there is no satisfaction from the physical world unless we detach from the physical by realising God. Coming to know and trust God will reveal that God provides for our needs. Eventually we must learn to attach to the Creator instead of the creation.

"Chasing after all desires is a spiritual dead end."

We need to feed our spirit not only with scriptures, but with a connection to God. Meditation on God enables continual feeding of our spirit, and through this constant God Remembrance we prove to God our love and desire for a true relationship. We shouldn't only be calling upon God when we need something; instead we should have a one-on-one relationship with God. Thinking of God every second of your life! By the spiritual pruning, weeding and feeding, we are prepared to fight off invasions of wrong thought and evil of the world. Just as insects

can totally destroy a plant, so can negative thoughts destroy us. If we allow negativity to take root in our spirit, then we will be eaten alive, and we will be destroyed spiritually. With a constant God Remembrance, we strengthen our spirit so no invading force can penetrate our being.

"We need to feed our spirit not only with scriptures, but with a connection to God."

Just like my brother stayed to watch over me, the Master stays continually to watch over us. We don't always get it right, and sometimes it takes years to learn one lesson, but thank God the

Master is so patient, forgiving, loving and waiting for us to get it. See, the Master has a vision and plan for us which we don't initially appreciate. Even when our spiritual life is unfolding before our eyes, we still can't envision the entire plan. Yet the Master knows from the beginning our potential and what we will become if we strive to achieve from his instruction. We all have the potential of growing into a beautiful spiritual being - however we must follow our Master. Keep our lives simple and free from attachments and be positive with every human being allowing our inner love to blossom forth. Your spirit should blossom as a flower bringing beauty and fragrance to

the world as a testimony of the Master's teachings.

My garden is not always perfect, and I must take action because the garden brings me beauty. My spiritual life is not perfect as well, and I have to be on guard 24/7 to keep my spiritual beauty. There is always some negative thought waiting to pull me in the wrong direction. There is always physical clutter attaching to me, that I have to sever away. But not to worry, Master Nirankari Baba is always with me, and I get the benefit of his grace, love, patience and many blessings to help me become the 'Everlasting Garden of Eden.' ■



SPRING HAS COME

David Shrine, Wednesbury, UK

When Your spring erupts
Heralding Your majesty
It paints a blank canvas
With Your vital energy

The flares of colour daub
Everything with Your hues
A new chirping and cooing
Many a celebration ensues

But when You come in person
There is no greater reality
The unseen can then be seen
There is no better spirituality

For with You there is life
Joy hope and tranquillity
Without You there is nothing
But dusk despair and tragedy

Transmuting metal into gold
It is Your hand of worth
The panacea for all ills
You are the immortal mirth

It is You who breathes life
Into every clod of clay
It is You who provides for all
You give and You take away

Were it not for You, my Lord
Creating this universal fayre
Day and night would not exist
A mere void would be there

For with You there is life
Joy hope and tranquillity
Without You there is nothing
But dusk despair and tragedy

But your compassion and love
Like spring continually bloom
Saving redeeming all asunder
With the fragrance of Your womb

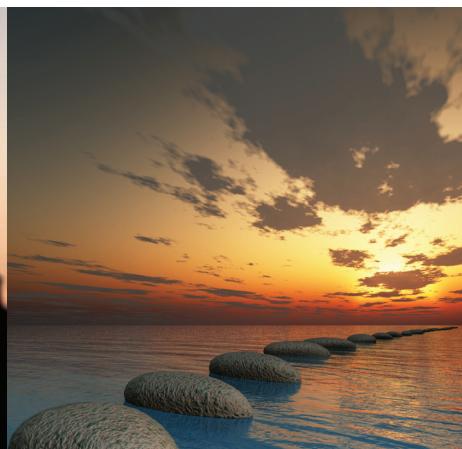
You are the essential spring
That rivers and streams salute
Forests and hills pay obeisance
And life dances to Your lute

You're the seasonal shepherd
Herding the sheep back home
Reabsorbing them into Your fold
Ensuring they do not roam

For with You there is life
Joy hope and tranquillity
Without You there is nothing
But dusk despair and tragedy.

Spiritual Life

Dr. D K Mehta, Wolverhampton, UK



"Beatitude is a possession of all things held to be good, from which nothing is absent that a good desire may want...."

St Gregory of Nyssa

There is not one person in the world who does not want stability or beatitude, which is essential for spiritual life. Everybody wants to be comfortable, stable and secure. So much so that one is prepared to purchase a holistic experience - physical, mental and spiritual - with one's assets, which St. Paul would see as liabilities leading to loss, garbage and rubbish. In other words, everything belongs to God; we have no assets.

If indeed, this is so, that our body mind and wealth belong to God, the questions arise, how can we acquire stability? Do we have anything to barter with? Can we transcend our base nature to become divine?

In our societies of tall buildings and shallow men with noble ideas and ignoble actions, the onslaught of modernity, with its manifold demands, pulls everyone into its abyss. This state of affairs breeds nothing but insecurity. People look around, but unfortunately find nothing to hold on to because they lack beatitude.

Beatitudes

One of the most important aspects of the Sermon on the Mount is the beatitude, which calls upon the aspirant to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The concept is quite simple. Only those who regard themselves as sinners, unworthy of recognition, and accept God and God alone as perfection, gain stability (i.e. kingdom of God). For such a person experiences total surrender of the self, truly becomes meek and hungers for righteousness. This state of mind is only possible if, in the words of Nirankari Baba, we separate ourselves from that which separates us, our ego.

Surrender

The Holy Quran stresses on faith and unfaith. In the Sura Ibrahim it is stated that a goodly word is like a goodly tree and an evil word is like an evil tree that has to be torn out because it is not conducive to stability. Faith granted by the 'leave of its Lord', receives the palpable fruits of religious life – florescence of moral and intellectual achievement. Unfaith

(kufr), on the other hand, is never grounded in reality but illusion, possessing no stability. According to the Sufis, one has to embark upon the tariqa (the way) and acquire what is called the tasawuuf (contemplation), which are the requirements of the strong roots of stability.

Nirvana

The Uposatha Sutta spells it out clearly that stability can only come about by eliminating oneself to become the epitome of equi-poise. The eight-fold path was devised to help detach oneself from the ever-changing world and to attach one self to the eternal City of God. To be impeccable, pious, truthful and meek do not come ordinarily. Without dedication, devotion and a firm passion for righteousness, there can be no nirvana. Without nirvana, there can be no stability in life.

Detachment

The Bhagavad-Gita says that man is only stable when, in the face of duality, he shows the same attitude in pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness and success and failure. In Chapter

6, Lord Krishna reminds us that whilst the unstable mind is the cause of delusion and an enemy of the self, the stabilised mind is the very seat of the Supreme Consciousness and the gateway to self-realisation.

The Three Virtues

Guru Nanak Dev ji prescribes three virtues for stability. They are: 1) keep God in mind at all times (Nam japna); 2) earn an honest living (kirt karna); and 3) sharing your material happiness with others (vand chhakna). He teaches that Truth is Higher than everything, but Higher still is

Truthful living. This is born out of the precept that the Lord and His Name (Nam) are identical; they are one and the same. It is a vehicle for uniting the devotee with the Lord. That Nam is not only the support of all beings, but also the support of the whole universe. It is the divine lover's food, his honour, his eternal companion and his true shelter. For just as the body needs alimentary food, the soul requires spiritual food, without which there can be no stability.

It is, therefore, crystal clear that beatitude or spiritual stability is attained only by becoming like the lotus flower, which blossoms spiritually, despite being rooted

in the material world. Man has to accept that all he believes to be his, in the form or shape of assets - be they material, intellectual or physical - are in fact trust properties, temporarily loaned by the Almighty, for him to make use of. To understand this conundrum, the help of a spiritual Seer becomes paramount. For without Him, it is not possible to overcome the hurdle of one's deluded self and experience union with God.

It has been aptly said: He who become God's own, never dies, but becomes immortal. The Truth is, says Avtar, God is revealed only by the spiritual Seer. ■

STEADFAST IN FAITH

Raman Chauhan, Victoria, BC, Canada



When the storm stands as an obstacle
in the way of hope;
when the terrain seems too rough
and too tough to cope;
when I see nothing
and have nothing to hold on to,
not even a rope;
when everything
that I go up against
seems to become
a slope after slope;
There is no fear, and no burden,
for I bear none;
rather the task at hand
is to only concentrate on
and remember the One.

The One who has
no shape or form;
the One who brings calm
and carries the storm;
He is visible
day and night;
the One who shines
and brings truth to my sight
He is my saviour and
He is my Father
who abolishes any and all worry;

which can be only done
by a True Master.

Steadfast in faith I will remain
even when the waters
on the river are too harsh
and too relentless the rain.
Steadfast in faith I will remain
even when I may not
go across that river in one shot.
Steadfast in faith I will remain
even when there is high water
my faith in You will not falter.

When the storm stands as an
obstacle
in the way of hope;
when the terrain seems too rough
and too tough to cope;
there is no fear
but only eternal bliss,
for at every step
and at every breath
it is only You
who I see;
and at every step
and at every breath
it is only You
who I believe.

INNER DEVELOPMENT

Acharya Dr. M Praveen Kumar, Birmingham, UK



The highest thing that one can achieve in this world is self-realisation, or what is called in Sanskrit 'atma jnana'. It is, in fact, the highest knowledge which helps to connect the micro-self (spirit) with the macro-self (supreme spirit). With it one breaks free of the cycle of agony, pain, misery, sorrow and suffering, and enters the realm of eternal peace, bliss and immortality.

The attainment of such a sublime state of real happiness is a most challenging and arduous task, as it involves the subjugation of ego, and the taming of the unruly mind.

The natural mind is always in a state of flux, always restless, never satisfied and never still. Whereas the whole body's five sheaths – anna (body), manas (mind), prana (vital energy), vijnana (intelligence) and ananda (bliss) - require harmonious co-functioning, which is invariably elusive in the face of the power of passion (rajas) and inertia (tamas) that unleash emotions of likes, dislikes, lust, greed and jealousy.

On the other hand, the natural state of spirit (atma) is divine, constituting the Truth, Consciousness and Bliss (sachchidananda). But the negative forces neutralise its divine essence, causing our fall from grace. Thus we are responsible for our own sadness and misery. To blame the kind and compassionate God for our misfortunes would be extremely naïve and foolhardy.

Fear is the cause of many anxieties. As a result we are always on the go, and never rest even in our dreams. Endlessly we hanker for success and worldly things in every pursuit of life.

The chief reason of all the negativity in our life, in fact of the human plight, is the fickle mind and its ever so subtle, ever so powerful by-product – the ego, the biggest block on the path of spirituality. The removal of such a profound obstacle has confounded, and still confounds, the finest minds despite their wealth of wisdom and immense knowledge.

But there have always been a tiny number of personages who managed to achieve this near-impossible feat. And fortunately they have left their legacy of their enriching experiences to enable us to reach the heights of spirituality and enjoy real peace and happiness in this world. A study of scriptures, with the guidance of such people, will further clarify and help us to understand the greatest mystery of all time.

They tell us that it is possible to obtain the ecstatic state of union with the supreme universal spirit through the grace of a perfect master. One's past deeds lead to such a holy being who, out of his benevolence, bestows the true knowledge or the realisation of the self on the genuine seeker. So long as the wall of ego that stands between man and his maker remains undemolished, bliss and eternal peace will be a far cry.

It is with the weapon of humility that one breaches the wall of ego and meets the spiritual master to receive his blessings. Equipped with the knowledge of the self, and perceiving the Creator all around and everywhere, one walks the spiritual path, gathering goodness, loving all and serving all his fellow-beings.

To develop and sustain this achieved state, one needs to be in the company of self-realised personages. For this is true spirituality, and a way to real happiness. ■

Equanimity and God-Knowledge: The Axes of a Brave New World

Babita Kotwani and Nisha Kalwani, Singapore

Any revolution requires a stable axis - and the stronger and faster the revolution, the more substantial the axis need be. Otherwise, the movement goes off-kilter, at breakneck speed. Such seems to be the condition of our world today. Globalisation and information technology have thrown together diverse people and contrasting ideologies. At the same time, schools of thought such as postmodernism and relativism have undermined our axis by questioning the existence of truth, the legitimacy of authority - be it political or religious - and the applicability of laws, rules and norms, no matter how sensible they seem. This bewildering chaos has led many scrambling for security to the other extreme: The fear over the loss of identity brought about by diversity has caused greater isolation, instead of interaction, in the age of globalisation. The insecurity caused by postmodernism has created fundamentalists, those adamantly clutching on to the letter and not the spirit of religion.

An ideology that will stabilise our world has to have two characteristics - it must be free of the trappings of dogma and ritual that obscure the Truth and it must be universal so that it binds together our diversity. The metaphor of a prism best explains this. When white light shines on a prism, it is dispersed into its seven separate colours. This first prism acts like our intellect. When we meet someone who is different from us, our intellect roars to action and begins to differentiate people. While our mental schemas have their practical uses, when applied to Man, this dispersion by our intellect causes hatred. However, this physical change is

reversible by placing a second prism before the dispersed white light. The second prism converges the seven separate colours back to the one white light. The teachings of the Mission have been doing the work of the second prism in my life.

His Holiness Nirankari Baba offers refreshing and practical advice that allows me to not just navigate our world, but thrive in it:

"God wants spiritual fruits, not religious nuts."

His Holiness shared this with his devotees last year in the 63rd Annual Spiritual Congregation in New Delhi, India. In our humble opinion, religiosity brings about community brotherhood but spirituality brings about universal brotherhood. A religious devotee will claim that God is One. However, a spiritual person will see God as One. We are indeed grateful to my Lord Master for this divine vision to see the creator's image in his creation.

Living in a multi-racial and multi-religious country like Singapore, the concept of samdrishti or equanimity promoted by the Sant Nirankari Mission is crucial in order to live harmoniously with our fellow citizens. It moves us away from the notion of tolerating differences to appreciating diversity. It brings about stability in thought and deed, one that does not change when we encounter someone who is different from us according to man-made categories like class, creed, socio-economic standards etc. Instead, we interact with the human race out of spiritual stability granted to us through the divine vision by our Master:

"I see them as a soul just like me. The common thread of God runs through each one I meet and we are One."

The gift of God-Knowledge has also bestowed us with great security and freedom. In the Nirankari Mission, God-knowledge is explained very simply and clearly. The fact that something so profound can be explained without reliance on ritual or dogma makes its universal applicability clear. In times of dilemma or confusion, We draw upon this knowledge to figure out the solution, instead of withdrawing from challenges or striking out in fear.

God is stable: an entity that never changes despite place and time. Therefore, he who is in tune with such an entity will always be steadfast and spiritually stable. His actions are those of love-not sometimes, but always. His deeds are truthful not for a few months but throughout his days on Earth. He remembers God not just in times of difficulties, but his life is a testimony of God's faithfulness. Equanimity, love and faithfulness - these are the very qualities needed in our chaotic world today and only the roots of true God-knowledge can produce these spiritual fruits. ■



A Simple Path...

Sehansheel Nandwani, San Diego, USA

Last week, before I took an exam, I was so nervous that I reached a point where I started crying. A few days ago, when I was driving home from work, a driver swerved into my lane and almost hit my car. I was angry, nervous, and scared all at the same time. When at work, a business deal didn't go through; I kept asking myself, "Where did we go wrong?" I'll tell you where I went wrong, I was unstable! I had let the 'normal' situations in life affect my state of mind causing me to behave in a way which was mentally unhealthy. Yesterday, I left work later than I planned. As I left, I ended up hitting more traffic. Frustrated throughout the whole drive I kept telling myself again, "Nothing is going my way!" As I was about to reach home, traffic completely came to a halt, as a tremendous and fatal car crash had happened just in front of me. It hit me! That could have been me. God has a plan for me, yet I keep forgetting. Everything that happens, is for the best, but only if we have faith in Him. Everything that happens is a blessing in disguise. What had happened to my faith? What had happened to my neutral state of mind? What had happened to my spiritual stability?

Tea Bag

There are three types of people in this world: an egg, a carrot, and a tea bag. The eggs are soft from within, but once you put them in hot water, they become hard. Then there are the carrots which are hard. But once you put them in hot water, they become soft and mushy. Lastly, there are the teabags. No matter how much hot water you put the tea bag in, it never changes its shape or form. It actually ends up changing the flavor of its surrounding by spreading its fragrance. A spiritually stable person is like a tea bag. No matter how many obstacles, problems, and hardships they go through, they never change. Instead they continuously spread their positive presence on others and leave a very pleasant influence. Why? They believe that everything that happens is for a good reason. They believe that God has a plan for us. "Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right."



How do I achieve it?

In the face of enormous negative external influences such as war, poverty, hunger, recession, and terrorism, it is really important for us to understand the times we live

in. It should be obvious to us that the entire society which we live in, struggles with attaining spiritual stability. People are fighting over the name of the nameless, color of the colorless, and the form of the formless – fighting in the name of God. Our thoughts are

filled with anxiety. They are filled with an inability to cope with circumstances in life. There are a number of solutions but most of them don't work because we can't see the trees for the forest. We may be able to capture a few basic principles but not the reason why. The biggest reason of instability is the fear of the unknown.

Selfless Service

"A candle loses nothing by lighting another." When we give our time and skills in selfless service of another, it is like lighting a candle. We don't lose anything, but gain more light (knowledge). Selfless service (seva) always leaves us richer in spirit, happier, and makes us forget about our stress and anxiety. Volunteering has a meaningful impact on our lives. Every day, millions of people in this world come together to serve the community to give back for what the community has given them. But more importantly, service to mankind is service to God. Seva makes you come on common grounds regardless of race, ethnicity, or color. You come together for one purpose, to serve mankind. You put your ego behind and humbly work together without competition. You work together to



make this world a better place to live by giving to those who might need help in a physical, monetary, and mental form.

Congregation

Have you ever given an interview? Before you go in, you feel butterflies in your stomach. Familiar feeling? How can you cope with this nervousness? Where do you go to learn to deal with anxiety? Where do you go to deal with circumstances that you find weakening you and pressuring you? Simple. This feeling goes away when we become accustomed to situations and we are familiar with our surroundings. A person who has given several interviews in his/her life won't feel anxiety. Similarly, the one place, we can go to become comfortable and familiar with our surroundings, is the House of God. By attending congregation (satsang) we constantly are surrounding ourselves by positive and enlightened souls. We listen to words of wisdom which leave a lasting impression on our heart; words that are the basis of teachings and foundation of our Faith.

Remembrance

Before giving my exam, I called my parents for blessings. However, as I was speaking to them they could hear my voice quivering. They told me Shelly,

before you start your exam, close your eyes and engage in remembrance (simran). Do a prayer to the Lord to give you strength and confidence to pass. After taking a few deep breaths in the name of God, after surrendering my will to God, I felt so calm. I immediately felt as if He grabbed my hand and walked me into the exam room.

Family

One of the greatest sources of strength and stability is a godly home. Spirituality begins at home. Whenever a child has a problem, they go to their parents for comfort and answers. A child is nurtured not only with food and water, but with love and wisdom which parents provide. It's popularly known that a stable home is one in which there is enough food and water, however, if we do not mentally nurture our children with God Knowledge, tomorrow will be very unstable. Parents and elders in the family should provide children with the strength and wisdom to seek God in everyone and to learn that before they take any action, they must remember God. Let's teach our children to serve mankind (seva), engage in prayer (simran), and encourage their regular and timely attendance at congregation (satsang). Let us give our children spiritual stability through faith in God, so that they accept the Lord has a plan for them.



Humility

So Dear God, please bless me with the essence of humility so that I may remain stable. If I wrongly judge my worthiness and assume that I deserve everything, please remind me that in true humility when I have no demands and I seek nothing for myself, I will never be disappointed. If I'm very upset and angry, please bless me with patience and tolerance to deal with situation. ■

SAINTS ARE NOT EXTINCT

Surjit Dhami, Cannock, UK

If the rise and fall of man's history was depicted in a graph, it would not be an ascending straight line, but rather a series of jagged spikes and falls. Humanity's chapter of tragedy is rightly called the dark ages which is associated with a period where Europeans readily embraced despair and superstition. After the fall of the Roman Empire the shadow of the dark ages engulfed Europe, Greece's ancient principles of logic and reason were swiftly forsaken.

Empires are like extravagant buildings built to last forever but soon turn to ruin. Man's ruin is not due to the fall of these empires. The waves of time have spared none. The Mayan, Roman, Byzantine and Moghul empires have all fallen. So why should today's media, technology or energy empires fare any different?

The only empire that can truly carry man's legacy is the empire of humanity. For, it is humanity that represents the lasting legacy of human values. As long as man breathes, so must humanity. Today religion has disowned humanity and is more preoccupied with upholding values of rituals and rites. The vast realm of religion is being confined to a day in a week or to a particular place or building. It is for this reason we see growing numbers ascribing to the view that religion has become an outdated relic, and the word God should be consigned to the history books. In such circumstances, man finds it difficult to comprehend the changeless Maker who is ever present in a changing world.

On the one hand the religious bigots have torched human beings alive, and yet proclaimed

themselves as torchbearers of humanity! Religion, by breaking its ties with humanity, has been hijacked by fanatics. Thus the rallying call for strict secularism is gaining increasing support. A conflict between the religious and secular ideologies is dehumanising society where the masses are eager to adore media driven sports stars and celebrities who regularly disappoint their fans with their offensive behaviour. The casualty in this battle is humanity.

Yet not all is lost for saints are not extinct. We still have true saints amongst us who do not just profess the repetition of holy words, but have actual insight of the holy Spirit, i.e. union with God. Those who embraced this all-pervasive great Spirit have been regarded as true spiritual beings (saints). Sadly, objects of veneration in religion have gained far more importance than the divine inspiration that can be obtained from spiritual beings.

The spiritually inspired sufi-saint, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, claimed that the union with God was only possible in the company of the one who is already attuned to God. The mystic Al-Hallaj was so intoxicated with the presence of God that he declared: "I am the Truth"; "there is nothing wrapped in my turban but God," and pointing to his cloak he would say, "there is nothing in my cloak but God." This was considered blasphemous. He was incarcerated and then gruesomely executed. The meaning of those profound words was not understood. The living spiritual person has always been misunderstood and opposed.

In every culture and epoch so many relationships of friendships

and blood relations are valued. But the 'master-disciple' relationship has been rejected by many. In today's climate, the master-disciple relationship is often mistakenly seen to be outmoded, even heretical and insulting in some quarters. When it comes to the domain of academia or sports, modern man has no problem with the concept of the master-disciple relationship in the transfer of experience from one to another. Therefore there can be no reason why the concept of a living spiritual role-model should be so difficult to accept.

Between the 9th and 11th century the Sufi tradition of master-disciple relationship emerged in central Asia and soon after flourished in North Africa. The teachings of such wise sages widened man's narrow vision. The mystical orders with their respective masters sprung all over Asia like fresh water springs in the desert. People flocked to quench their thirst whilst the established religions failed to recognise this thirst.



In India, the history of Sufi master-disciple relationships is well documented and still celebrated at large. However, in the 18th Century, in Turkey and North Africa it was another story. The religious elites hunted all movements based on the ideology of living master-disciple relationships. So much so that it in the 1780's, it became illegal in parts of Africa to show any adoration to living saints.

It was the sufi Hazrat Shah Hussain who said: "the devil tempts all other men, but idle man tempts the devil". In a fast-paced world, man is busy being spiritually lazy. He is so preoccupied with collecting wealth that he has made little effort in collecting his own thoughts. In ensuring his worldly relationships remain stable, he makes no effort in finding a living spiritual guide to stabilise his troubled mind.

The word master for some may conjure up thoughts associated with the cruelty of black slaves in American plantations. With the introduction of human rights, the measure of humanity is judged against equality and freedom for one and all. The master-disciple relationship on the surface can appear very unequal and suggests the disciple forfeits freedom. In the spiritual realm this is not true. A spiritual master (teacher) does not suppress, ridicule or denigrate the disciple (student). On the contrary, he wants the disciple to reach the highest level of spiritual awareness. This leads the disciple to real freedom.

The following Sufi saying captures the importance of having a living spiritual guide: "Do not pity the orphans who say, *I have no parents*, but pity the man who says, *I have no living spiritual guide!*". All those we admire to be spiritual did in fact have a living spiritual master. No one walked the spiritual path without a guide. Therefore, why should this age be any different? So why should we not turn to spirituality by turning to a spiritual guide? ■

Is it God's Grace or Luck?

Rajvir Lasher, Toronto, Canada

We have all heard about comments on luck or being lucky. In my humble experience, luck really amounts to God's grace - shelter and protection which has helped me in every aspect of my life ever since I was born. I was actually named after a female athlete who had come first in the State Championships. Because the media declared her to be very lucky, my father decided to name me after her. However, it was more than luck; my story began with God's grace and it has been blessed by it ever since.

God's grace is the power that helps us to face challenges. We always have two options; we can blame the world for problems, or keep our faith in God's grace. Keeping faith does not mean we should give up on our efforts. Quite the contrary, we should work hard and allow God to take care of the result. To illustrate, Lord Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, cites an example of King Janaka, a noble king and a wise sage. Such a royal sage never abandoned his royal responsibilities in the pursuit of spiritual perfection. He was always aware of God's grace and presence, but combined this with a ceaseless work ethic.

I believe it is grace which leads to a closer relationship with the Creator. It is through grace that we may be blessed, with knowing

God. Seeing everything in this world through the lens of God-knowing is one of life's biggest blessings. The way we see the world depends on the colour of our glasses. For those who wear the glasses of God-knowing, they see everything as God's grace, no matter what comes to pass. Those who see differently, often observe only negativity. It is so important to remain imbued with the colour of God-knowing, and to step aside from the tint of ignorance.

Within God's shelter, we stand protected. With God's grace we are always blessed. With God's presence felt and known all around, we live in what some people term, the 'Super Soul'. With God's grace we soar to new heights, yet never forget the spirit of humility. As it has been said, success is not measured by how high we reach but how humble we become. It is through God-knowing, that we are able to fulfil the supreme purpose of life. My spiritual teacher, His Holiness Nirankari Baba, often speaks of the measure of successful living. He tells me success and respect should not be based merely on secular achievements – status and degrees, but on the enduring qualities of sweetness that enlarge the heart. This spiritual achievement, is only possible through God's grace and blessings. ■



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