

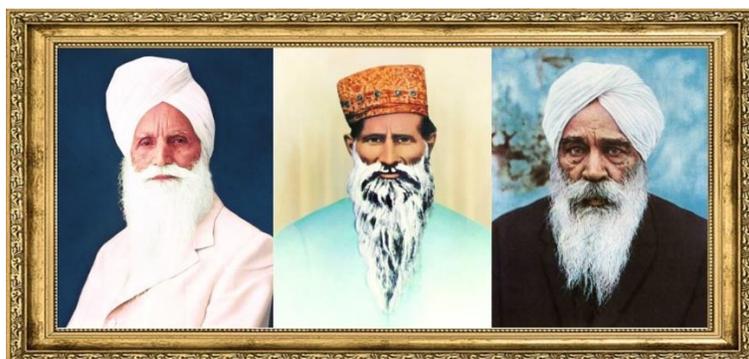
The Radha Soami Lineage of Masters

by: Giovanni Vines

“O God! Thy Saints have at all times been in the world. O God! Throughout the ages the line of gurus has been in existence. The succession of Satgurus continues throughout, and they have ever preached the lesson of the Word.”

The Adi Granth

Dharana Nada Masters have always been present in the world because they have an essential role to perform. Humanity is in a continual state of spiritual evolution, and there are at all times new souls who are ready to embark upon the spiritual path and others ready to complete their development toward God realization. There is food for the hungry and water for the thirsty, as per the law of supply and demand. Humanity is ever in need of spiritual succor.



Historically, there are cases where a spiritual master has appeared at a time and place to fulfill this need but then left no competent successor to carry on the spiritual work. There are other cases where the teacher did leave a successor, and in some cases, established a rich spiritual tradition which endured for generations. The Sikhs gurus, the Sufi masters, and the Buddhas are all examples of lengthy

traditions. But eventually these lines dry up, for one reason or another, and a spiritual master appears in another culture, somewhere else.

The Sikh line of living masters ended with the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh. He is famously known as the ‘warrior guru’, due to his role in organizing an army of peasants which ultimately drove the Moguls out of northwestern India, once and for all. Since his death in 1708, the Sikhs have considered their holy scripture, The Adi Granth, to be their guru, even though the Adi Granth itself states that the world is never without a living master.

Tensions between the Moguls and the people of northwestern India reached a boiling point during Gobind Singh’s life. His father, Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, had been murdered by the Moguls and the Mogul authorities feared that Gobind Singh might be out for revenge. As a result, Gobind Singh himself became a target.

He stayed on the move for much of his life, traveling throughout the subcontinent establishing friends and allies, while initiating sincere souls into the practice of the Word wherever he could find them. While traveling in southwestern India, he met the Peshwa of Poona in Maharashtra, India, southeast of Mumbai. A Peshwa served as a governor or viceroy over a particular region for the emperor, but in fact had complete authority and functioned like a king. Gobind stayed with the Peshwa for a period of time and initiated the entire royal family, and much of the royal court, into the practice of the Word.

“The Rani (Queen) of Ratan Rao Peshwa, accompanied by Bhai Nand, came to the feet of Guru Gobind Singh for spiritual instruction.”¹

¹ Shri Des Raj, ‘Hindu Sikh Ithras’

Because of the decentralized nature of his spiritual mission, Gobind Singh established the 'Khalsas', or 'pure ones'. These were disciples who had achieved a certain level of spiritual attainment and who Gobind entrusted with carrying on the task of initiation on his behalf during his absence. One member of the Peshwa's royal family, Ratnagar Rao, was not only a Khalsa, but became a spiritual adept in his own right. During Gobind Singh's life, he initiated souls on Gobind Singh's behalf, but after his death, he carried on with his own mission and a rich spiritual tradition was established in Poona which would endure for many generations.

In 1720, twelve years after Gobind's death, Bajji Rao I succeeded to the throne. Two generations later his grandson, Amrit Rao, as first born, was due to succeed as Peshwa. However, just prior to his coronation the young man disappeared. His family attempted desperately to locate him, but to no avail. As a result, his younger brother took the throne and came to be known as Bajji Rao II.

It is impossible to know precisely why the young man renounced his privileged destiny and disappeared, but historians who have researched the incident have concluded that Amrit Rao, who had been initiated into the spiritual science at a young age, made rapid inner progress in his youth, spending long hours in solitude out in the jungles. When it came time for him to assume his inherited role as peshwa, he decided that life at court was not for him, electing instead for the life of a contemplative and ascetic.

These conclusions are based on the research of a prominent local historian, Shri Vitthal R. Thakar, which was completed and published in 1980. Shri Thakar has also concluded that Tulsi Sahib, the great saint of Hathras, author of the 'Ghat Ramayana' and 'Ratan Sagar', is none other than the same Amrit Rao of Poona.²

² J.R. Puri and V.K. Sethi, 'Tulsi Sahib, Saint of Hathras', 1978

Amrit Rao changed his name to Sham Rao immediately upon leaving Poona. He clearly did not want to be found or identified. He wandered throughout India for many years, eventually settling in Hathras, 30 miles north of Agra, in 1808. By that time, he had become known as Tulsi Sahib. He was also popularly known as ‘Dakhani Baba’ which means ‘sage from the South’.

Some have speculated that Ratnagar Rao was Tulsi Sahib’s master. This is unlikely due to the fact that Ratnagar Rao would have been beyond 100 years of age in Tulsi’s youth. Amrit Rao was probably initiated by one of Ratnagar Rao’s surviving disciples, perhaps a family member.

Tulsi Sahib (1763-1843) is said to have adopted the name ‘Tulsi’ because he believed that part of his mission was to clarify the epic work, ‘Ramayana’, written by the great poet saint, Tulsidas (1532-1623). The ‘Ghat Ramayana’ is aimed at clarifying the earlier work, especially pointing out the subtle spiritual truths underlying its allegorical literary format. Like so many other ancient religious texts, the Ramayana had been widely misunderstood for centuries because people had come to interpret it literally, thereby missing its spiritual undertones.

While many choose to discount a possible connection between Tulsi Sahib and the Sikh lineage, if one compares his writing to that of the Sikhs, both appear to be part of the same spiritual tradition.

*“Listen, O friend, to the thunderous roar of the Word,
Which reverberates throughout the firmament.
The invisible world is contained within the human eye,
Behold Brahmand within, through your astral eye;
When that eye is opened, everything stands revealed.
The soul in Sunn (third plane) will hear resounding peals of Sound.
She will uncover and know the essence of the Word.”*

*“Lightning flashed in my eye, O friend,
While basking in the light of the moon.
I got a glimpse of the Invisible within,
And thirst and longing for the Lord were aroused.
My ears received the boon of Unstruck Music,
And knowledge came in an explosion of light, O friend.
Dark clouds began to scatter
And the sight of the Divine Mansion
Was revealed to me.
Beyond the sun, the moon, and the tunnel,
Tulsi beheld the abode of the Lord Almighty.”*

Shabdavali Pt. II

*“The Universe is contained within the human frame,
Tulsi has himself seen what to others is beyond reach.
Not only the macrocosm within the microcosm did I behold,
But, piercing the veil,
I also perceived the One pervading all.
Within my own body,
I have discovered the universe;
One who has tasted the Divine Nectar within,
Will alone know the effulgence of the Supreme Lord.”*

Ghat Ramayan Pt. I

*“Word, Word, sayeth everyone,
But that Word is found beyond Sunn;*

That alone is called the True Word.
True Word is transcendent, it is unstruck melody.
The unstruck Word is not the Word
Which can be written or read;
O Tulsi, the unlettered Word is indeed transcendent,
Known only through hints given by Saints.”

Shabdavali Pt. I

As Tulsi's reputation grew, he was often visited in his small hut on the outskirts of Hathras by Brahmins and Pundits looking to engage in debate with the master. He was always hospitable and patient, giving them the opportunity to speak their minds. But before they left, he would offer a simple explanation of the teachings of the saints, or 'Sant Mat' as he called it. Sometimes his visitors, upon hearing of the spiritual science, would request initiation before returning home. On one occasion, a monk named Priyelal Gosain, after realizing that what Tulsi was describing was what he had sought his entire life, discarded his saffron gown, his beads, and sacred threads and asked for knowledge of the Word. Tulsi replaced the beads and robe around the monk's shoulders and explained that our outer modes of attire have no relevancy, either way.

Tulsi frequently visited the towns and villages in the area, including Agra. Among his Agra disciples was a Sikh family, including the young Sikh couple, Seth Dilwali Singh and Mahamaya. On his trips to Agra, Tulsi Sahib used to stay in their home. On one of his visits, Tulsi informed the couple that they had been chosen to bring a great saint into the world. One year later, on August 25, 1818, the couple gave birth to a son, Shiv Dayal Singh, who would later become known as Swami Ji Maharaj.

Swami Ji is an example of one of the rarest types of saints who is born realized. On the last day of his life, he told his closest disciples that he had been practicing the inner Sound Current since the age

of six. He further stated that his Sant Mat path was a continuation of the path of Sat Nam begun by Guru Nanak and his successors, and that his own master, Tulsi Sahib, had been a subsequent exponent of the same tradition.

Spiritual enthusiasts and scholars enjoy friendly, and at times, not-so-friendly debates over successorship of their guru, their guru's guru, or somebody else's guru. The question of whether or not Swami Ji had a spiritual master is a popular case in point. Some argue that Tulsi Sahib was his spiritual master, while others argue that he had no master, that he didn't need any master.

Advocates to both sides often have personal interests at stake. Saligram, for example, seemed to initially accept that Tulsi was Swami Ji's mentor. But it appears that later on, he backtracked from that position, apparently because it didn't fit neatly into the intricate Radha Soami theology which he was instrumental in formulating following Swami Ji's death. Tulsi Sahib's followers have always insisted that Tulsi was his guru.

Regarding this particular question, some simple logic may be all that is required. Swami Ji's parents had been initiated by Tulsi, who they had a personal relationship with. They understood that their son had a unique, spiritually-related destiny which lay ahead of him. Prompted by this knowledge, Shiv Dayal Singh probably received all the meditation instructions he needed from his parents. It's really fairly simple. "Plug you ears and listen, and then fix your gaze here." A highly evolved soul like Swami Ji really wouldn't need much more.

Swami Ji learned as a child that he would one day inherit Tulsi Sahib's spiritual work. There are also stories of Swami Ji, who as a young man, would trek the 25 miles up to Hathras to enjoy Tulsi's darshan. Tulsi's legs had begun to fail him as he aged, partly the result of sitting in Samadhi for long periods with too little exercise. Swami Ji used to throw the old man onto his back and haul him around

for nearby visits and errands. Swami Ji later adopted the term ‘Sant Mat’, a term which Tulsi Sahib had coined.

After Tulsi left his mortal frame in 1843, Swami Ji spent the better part of the next 17 years in a small room at the back of the family home in continual samadhi. Then, in 1861, largely at the behest of his beloved disciple, Rai Saligram, he began his public mission.

Swami Ji’s communication style was simple and straightforward, and at times, even terse. He produced two written works; the Sar Bachan in prose, and the Sar Bachan in verse. The prose work is essentially a collection of his sayings written down by disciples during and after his public discourses.

“Three things alone will lead to salvation in this age of Kali Yuga, (iron age);

- 1. Implicit obedience to the teacher;*
- 2. The company of a Saint;*
- 3. Simran (light meditation) and Bhajan (sound meditation)*

Everything else leads to worry and confusion. Time spent in anything else besides these three things is time wasted.”

Sar Bachan 41

“They are greatly mistaken who try to verify the teachings of the Saints by reference to the Vedas. Even the author of the Vedas did not realize the exalted status of the Saints. How then can the Vedas know of them? Saints are not chained to anything. They promulgate whatever path they consider proper and suitable for their time. Those who accept will stand to gain. Those who do not, will remain unfortunate.”

Sar Bachan 149

“Only he who has suffered in the world and is afraid of it will come into the Satsang (gathering) of the Saints. It is not possible for others to stay before Them. When the soul is thus convinced of the authenticity of the Saints, he will not fall into the snares of the priests and false masters.”

Sar Bachan 151

“It is difficult for a person to come to the Satsang of a Sat Guru. Even if somehow he does come, he finds it difficult to stay. For when the Saints refute the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Quran, and describe their own teachings as being valid and true, it will not be possible for him to bear hearing it. Only a true seeker, or one afflicted with the pangs of Divine longing will be able to stay.”

Sar Bachan 146

“One should first get on the right road; then he can reach the goal. The right road cannot be found until one contacts a Sat Guru. But instead of seeking a Sat Guru, people busy themselves in pilgrimages, fasts, idol worship, Namaz (Muslim prayer), and book learning. Such acts lead only to egotism and confer no spiritual benefit.”

Sar Bachan 141

“The Lord loves humility first of all. It behooves you, therefore, to do that which will induce humility. The society of the Saints is the best place to develop it. Keeping the company of priests and pundits who care for nothing else but wealth and good food will not develop humility, nor will the Lord be pleased. Until one comes across a merciful Saint, he should not accept anyone as his guru.”

Sar Bachan 111

“Leaving everything else aside, one must implicitly obey the Sat Guru of his own time, and faithfully follow his instructions. This will lead him to success. This is the long and the short of everything.”

Sar Bachan 116

Swami Ji could be a harsh critic of organized, institutionalized religion and religious claims. In one of his writings, “Hidayatnama”, he describes the soul’s journey through the lower spiritual region.

“When your eye turns inwards in the brain and you see the firmament within, and your spirit leaves the body and rises upwards, you will see the Akash in which is located Sahas-dal-kanwal, the thousand petals, which performs the various functions pertaining to the three worlds. Its effulgence will exhilarate your spirit. You will, at that stage, witness Niranjana, the lord of the three worlds. Several religions which attained this stage, and took the deity thereof to be the lord of all, were duped. Seeing the light and refulgence of this region, they felt satiated. Their upward progress was stopped. They did not find the guide to higher regions. Hence, they could not proceed further.”

Swami Ji continues to remark on the journey through the intermediate spiritual regions.

“At the apex of this Akash (in Sahas-dal-kanwal), there is a passage which is very small like the eye of a needle. Your focused attention should penetrate this eye. Further on, there is Bank nal, the crooked path, which goes straight and then downwards and again upwards. Beyond this passage comes the second stage.

Trikuti (having three prominences) is situated here. It is one lakh yojan in length and one lakh yojan in width (an expression describing vast dimensions).

There are numerous varieties of glories and spectacles at that plane which are difficult to describe. Thousands of suns and moons look pale in comparison to the light there. All the time, melodious sounds of Ong Ong and Hoo Hoo, and sounds resembling thunder clouds reverberate there. On obtaining this region, the soul becomes very happy, and purified and subtle. It is from here onwards that the soul becomes cognizant of the higher spiritual regions.”

Swami Ji then speaks of the lower regions of pure spirit.

“The refulgence of this region (Daswan Dwar) is twelve times that of Trikuti. Pure pools of ambrosia, called "Mansarovar," abound here. There are innumerable flowers and gardens. Spirits, like beauties, dance at various places. Everywhere, fountains of nectar are overflowing and the streams of nectar are gushing out.

How may one describe the splendor and decoration of this region? There are platforms of diamonds, beds of emeralds and plants of jewels, all studded with rubies and precious stones.

Bejeweled fish, swimming in pools there, display their beauty and ornamentation, with their glitter and sheen, attract attention.

Beyond this, there are innumerable palaces of crystals and mirrors, in which spirit entities reside at their respective places, as allocated by the Lord. The denizens there are spiritual and free from physical taints. Full particulars of these regions are known only to Sants. It is not feasible to describe them in greater detail.”

Swami Ji continues, attempting to do justice, in mortal words, to the purely spiritual realms.

“The soul, thereafter, ascends to Hootal Hoot, which, in Hindi, has been described as Bhanwar-gupha. There is a rotating swing here which is all the time in subtle motion, and the spirits ever swing on it. All round, there are innumerable spiritual islands from which the sounds of "Sohang Sohng" and "Anahoo Anahoo" rise continually. Spirit entities playfully and rapturously enjoy these sounds. Whiffs of scents of various kinds and sweet fragrance of sandalwood are enjoyed by the spirit there, and the melodies of flutes are heard, while the soul proceeds onwards.”

Finally, Swami Ji speaks of Sach Khand, the true home of the soul.

“On crossing into this place (Sach Khand), the spirit entity reached the outpost of Sat Lok, where melodious sounds of "Sat Sat" and "Haq Haq" were heard as though being sung by a vina. On hearing this, the soul penetrated further on, rapturously. There rose to view, silver and golden streams full of nectar, and vast gardens, each tree thereof is one crore yojans in height (50 million miles), and crores (vast numbers) of suns and moons hang from them as flowers and fruits. Innumerable spirits and Hansas sing, chatter, and play on those trees like birds. The wondrous beauty of this region is ineffable.

While enjoying it, the spirit entered Sat Lok and came into the presence of Sat Purush. Now as regards the glory of the person of Sat Purush, each hair of His is so brilliant that crores of suns and moons look pale in comparison. How may one describe His eyes, nose, ears, face, hands, and feet? They are all nothing but refulgence. Even to describe them as oceans of light does not convey the remotest idea adequately.

After witnessing the glory of this region, the spirit proceeded on to Alakh Lok and got darshan of Alakh Purush. Thereafter, the soul continued and attained Agam Lok. The spirit entity sojourned there a long time, and as it proceeded further, it experienced the

darshan of Radhasoami; that is, Anami Purush, and merged in Him. Radhasoami Dham is boundless, infinite, endless and immeasurable. It is the Nij Sthan, the special resting place of Sants. That region is the Ultima Thule (limit) of all Sants, and all speech and description ends here.”

Swami Ji, Hidayatnama

Swami Ji implores us to faithfully follow the instructions of the Master of our own time. One of his own instructions was to keep the company of a living Sat Guru. Swami Ji lived in Agra and most of his disciples were either from that area of India, or traveled to Agra to have the benefit of his personal attention. During that period, in the mid nineteenth century, there was no way to conduct a spiritual mission on a global scale due to the limitations of transportation and communication. Today, in the twenty-first century, the world community has become smaller and more intimate and spiritual and educational missions can, and are scaled globally. However, with people spread all over the planet, it is not feasible for most disciples of a teacher to have the kind of physical access that Swami Ji’s disciples had to him. This fact illustrates a good example of how the circumstances of each generation, such as technology and the ongoing evolution of culture, help determine how a teacher will go about reaching out and conducting his mission.

Swami Ji’s leading disciple was Rai Saligram (1829-1898). He is also referred to by some under the honorific, ‘Huzur Maharaj’. A few years after Swami Ji’s death, Saligram inaugurated his own spiritual mission, and is almost universally recognized as being Swami Ji’s principal successor. He is named in Swami Ji’s will as such. It is also generally recognized that Swami Ji had multiple successors.

Many of Swami Ji’s associates had already suspected that Saligram would continue Swami Ji’s work. Swami Ji had stated that sometimes he was Saligram’s teacher, but that other times, Saligram was his teacher.

Rai Saligram is credited for cataloging and codifying Swami Ji's teachings. He founded the Radha Soami movement, as a tangible, organized entity. He was Swami Ji's Paul, his evangelist. Not on the scale of Paul, but equal in spirit. Saligram authored and published over a dozen books on the spiritual path. You can feel Saligram's evangelical spirit in the opening preface of one of his most important written works, "Radha Soami Mat Prakash".

"This tract is intended for the benefit of those who, seeing the instability and transitory state of the things in this world, as well as its short-lived pleasures and permanences, have a craving for everlasting and unalloyed happiness and undisturbed peace, in a mansion which is not subject to change, decay or dissolution.

It will also help sincere enquirers of truth who, observing that the love or affection for objects in this world is accompanied by great pain and affliction, resulting from their transience, or their separation or disappearance, are anxious to know the Supreme and Eternal Cause, or Creator and Master of the whole creation, with a view to fix their attention and set their heart entirely on His Holy Feet, and approach Him in His Highest Mansion."

Saligram had a distinguished career in the Indian Postal Service, rising to the high position of Postmaster General for the North Western provinces. He was the first Indian to hold the post, having been previously held by English administrators. He is remembered for significant achievements in modernization and innovation.

Rai Saligram learned about Swami Ji from a co-worker, who happened to be Swami Ji's brother. He met Swami Ji and became his disciple. As a young man, Saligram had studied religion, philosophy, and yoga, so in an academic sense, he was an ideal disciple for Swami Ji. Saligram understood the spiritual science theoretically, in terms of religion. After two years of discipleship, Saligram proposed

that he retire from his position in the postal service. Swami Ji declined, saying that his career would not interfere with his spiritual progress. Saligram and Swami Ji developed a close relationship, with Saligram taking responsibility for many aspects of his master's welfare.

As a teacher, Saligram was a hard worker, often conducting satsang five times a day. After his death in 1898, the question of successorship, and various issues pertaining to the direction which this fledgling organization should take moving forward, were left a bit murky. This murkiness, over time, resulted in the Radha Soami Agra group being splintered into three principal factions; Soami Bagh, Dayal Bagh, and Peepal Mandi. A fourth faction would ultimately be spawned in the Punjab by another of Swami Ji's beloved disciples, Jaimal Singh.

Saligram's writings contain some of his own insights on various aspects of spirituality, including how love plays a role in binding souls together. He writes about the effects of experiencing one's own inner bliss. He also writes about certain stages of inner development, such as the development of the connection with the radiant form of the master in meditation.

“The Supreme Being is a boundless ocean of spirit, or love, and the human being a drop or current of spirit or love from this ocean; and love being the very essence and means of existence of the whole creation, it follows that no effort in any direction, temporal or spiritual, unless actuated by love or affectionate regard, can be crowned with success, and the work or labor rendered easy, sweet and harmonious.

Every wave of love rising in a lover's heart brings tidings of goodness and joy from the beloved, and every thought springing up in such a heart is a harbinger of good works and good services for the sake of the beloved.

Knowledge, without love for the Supreme Being, is futile and tends towards untruth or darkness or materialism. Pure, spiritual love turns everything to good use and leads to

enlightenment and truth. Even worldly love, such as filial and conjugal, is accompanied with goodness, happiness and comfort for all concerned. How much more goodness would then ensue for mankind, in general, if this same love were to become spiritual, and be directed towards the Supreme Being, the Merciful Parent of the whole creation.

The noble passion of love is most powerful and strong. Where pure love dwells, there sheds the light of Grace, as it forms a link with the spirit or love current from its source, the Supreme Being. Love, or the power of attraction, is the basis of the entire creation and the cause of its sustenance and preservation.

The sound heard internally is a current which has originally emanated from the Supreme Being and is the means not only of concentrating the attention, but also of raising the spirit to the source from which it emanates.

Due to excessive bliss in Bhajan (sound meditation) or Dhyana (light meditation), an Abhyasi (practitioner) may experience great ecstasy and detachment. He may become somewhat averse to the pleasures and activities of the world. In this condition of ecstasy, the Abhyasi should never think that he is perfect and that his task is completed.

Such an Abhyasi must not give up his family, avocation or anything else in a fit. He should not consider this state of ecstasy to be stable and lasting. If he takes any action in haste he would repent. He should try his utmost to control his feelings and conceal them from people of the world.”

One of Swami Ji's most ardent disciples was a young Sikh boy named Jaimal Singh (1838-1903). Jaimal was born in the Punjabi village of Ghuman, into a family of pious Sikh farmers who had prayed for a saintly son. His village had been home to the famous Namdev a few centuries earlier, and had become a place of pilgrimage for sadhus and holy men.

Jaimal's early years can be closely compared to Nanak's. He had a keen interest in religion and at the age of five, was put in the charge of a Vedantist scholar who lived nearby. By the age of nine he had memorized large sections of the Adi Granth and had a sound training in Hindu literature as well. And like Nanak, he sought the company of the many Sadhus and holy men who were to be found locally, in the hopes of finding the true path to enlightenment.

Jaimal had discovered that in the Adi Granth, there were repeated references to the five-sounded Word, or 'Panch Shabd', and that self-realization and God realization could only be achieved through communion with the Word. He realized that unlocking the mystery of these passages was the key to finding God, but no one in his village could give him a satisfactory explanation or demonstration.

Like Nanak, Jaimal showed little interest in mundane affairs, preferring to associate with the many holy men who frequented his village. His father sent him off to live with his sister, hoping that the new surroundings would help him break the habit of 'wasting all of his time' with sadhus. He was given some goats to look after but soon after his relocation, he met a yogi who instructed him in pranayama. When his father learned that the boy was spending all of his time practicing yoga, at the expense of his little herd of goats, he ordered him back home. A few months later his father died, leaving Jaimal Singh free to begin his spiritual quest in earnest.

At the tender age of thirteen he left home, determined to find a guru who could unlock the mystery of the Word. For a year he traversed northwestern India on foot, back and forth, in search of a true master. He met many teachers along the way who instructed him in their methods, but none could unlock the mystery of the Word. Eventually he returned home, exhausted and dejected.

He spent the next eight months applying himself to family duties and obligations but a passage out of the Vedas continually haunted him; "*Awake, arise, and stop not until the goal is reached!*" One

day the urge to solve the mystery of the elusive Word overcame him and, at the age of fifteen, he set out again, hoping this time to complete his quest.

Not long into his journey, he found himself on the banks of the sacred Ganges in Hardwar, a community known for its many holy men. After meeting and talking to some of the locals, he learned of an old ascetic, over 100 years of age, who lived off in the jungle, who was thought to have great spiritual powers. Jaimal managed to locate the old sadhu, finding him in his posture, suspended in a swing, hanging from a tree branch. Jaimal took a seat off to the side in hopes of eventually getting the sadhu's attention. Nightfall came and Jaimal stayed on.

The next day, the sadhu finally acknowledged him and asked what he wanted. The boy replied that he was in search of enlightenment, and had heard of the sadhu's great powers. He sought instruction in his disciplines. The sadhu closed his eyes and went silent. Later he came out of his trance and explained that his disciplines were very difficult to practice and that they had not led to spiritual freedom. Then the sadhu climbed back into his swing, closed his eyes, and meditated there for the remainder of the day and the following night. Jaimal stayed on.

The next morning the sadhu arose, bathed and then joined Jaimal. He told the boy that in his meditation he had seen the master he was seeking, and that he lived in Agra where he gave public discourses on the Adi Granth in his home. Jaimal immediately began the long trek down to Agra, and after a week of searching, located Swami Ji.

Jaimal sat in on Swami Ji's discourse and afterward, questioned him privately. Jaimal was satisfied with what he heard, but was a bit surprised that Swami Ji didn't dress in the traditional Sikh attire. In fact, he blended in so much with the other men that he almost seemed too ordinary to be a great saint.

“Only a perfect one, who is always laughing at the word ‘two’, can make you know of love. His greatness is built on this foundation: the ability to appear, speak, and act as the most common of men.”

Hafiz

Swami Ji took Jaimal to a private room, where he gave him meditation instructions and left the boy alone. Jaimal immediately went into Samadhi, where he remained for the next 48 hours. Eventually, one of Swami Ji’s disciples asked about the young Sikh boy. They returned to the room where they had left him and found Jaimal, still out of his body in deep samadhi. They shook him a bit to help him regain his physical consciousness. Jaimal Singh could not speak but Swami Ji did, saying, “Well dear boy, do you still wonder whether or not your master is a true Sikh or not?” Swami Ji went on to explain that the path of the Saints is not concerned with outer forms and appearances, and that each must live by the best traditions of the community in which the Lord has chosen to place us.

Swami Ji was a teacher of teachers. On the last day of his life, he named no less than four of his disciples to continue on with the spiritual work. Rai Saligram founded the Radha Soami school in Agra. But it was Jaimal’s destiny, a few years after Swami Ji’s earthly departure, to re-establish Guru Nanak’s spiritual mission in the Punjab, by way of Swami Ji’s Sant Mat panth. In Northwestern India, the presence of a living shabd yoga master had been absent since the time of Gobind Singh.

Jaimal Singh was not attracted to life as a householder. Instead, he joined a Sikh Regiment in the Indian/English army, where he served as a private in the infantry, eventually rising to the rank of sergeant. As a career military man, Jaimal developed self-discipline habits which would serve him well in his sadhanas. He would ultimately find success in his spiritual pursuits.

Jaimal Singh left a collection of his letters sent to his leading disciple, Sawan, which have been published under the title, “Spiritual Letters”. While much of the letters deal with personal matters, others

provide valuable insight into their master/disciple relationship and the spiritual guidance offered by Jaimal. As a re-clarification of terminology, Jaimal uses 'surat' to describe the attention, 'shabd' to describe the sound characteristic of the Word, and 'Dhun' to refer to the stronger and more harmonic aspect of the sound current. He also uses 'sarup' to refer to the radiant form of the master seen in meditation.

"Now, about the four means of controlling the mind:

- 1. Following the instructions of the Sat Guru*
- 2. Shabd Dhun (strong sound)*
- 3. Getting attached and devoted to the Dhun*
- 4. Finding enjoyment and bliss in it.*

When you begin to gain control of the mind, then the form of the Sat Guru appears in the eye focus. Just as you see your face reflected clearly in the mirror, in the same way the sarup (radiant form) of the Sat Guru will be seen inside, within the eye focus. The mind, which works conjointly with the surat, and the vritis, will become pure by daily practice.

When all worldly desires have been driven out of the mind, the mind won't wander off. It will be fixed in the form of the Master. As the merciful face of the Sat Guru falls upon the mind, all its material desires will disappear. The mind will then obey the surat. Then the Dhun will merge the surat with Itself, and thus give some amount of bliss. The Shabd Dhun will then pull the mind up and control it in the same way animals, like goats or cattle, are kept tied by means of a rope. Thusly does the Shabd Dhun pull the mind.

After rising up gradually, and taking the mind along with it, the surat leaves the mind in Trikuti (second spiritual plane). When the surat comes back from Trikuti to the lower levels, then it brings the mind along with it. After that, the surat is no longer subject to

the mind, which does not give rise to any trouble. That is the way to control the mind through practice of the Word.

When you sit for sound practice, whatever sounds you hear in the beginning, like that of the working of a mill or that of a railway engine, or the sound of a roaring fire, put your mind and surat into it wholeheartedly. Then, fix your attention in the sound of the big bell, and into the sound of the conch. By and by, the surat will feel the bliss and will one day reach the highest. Do not be impatient, for when the soul's love for the Sound has become strong, a connection with the Sound will be firmly established. By and by the mind will become subservient to the Sound."

Spiritual Letters 28

Saints often leave the question of successorship open so that surviving disciples are unclear as to who is best-suited to carry on the spiritual mission. One day, while Jaimal Singh was visiting Sawan Singh, his closest disciple, he stated that the two of them had come for the good of mankind. Sawan didn't know what to think of his master's statement and replied that Jaimal had come for the good of mankind but that he was just an ordinary man. Jaimal repeated the statement and Sawan repeated his reply. Then Jaimal's eyes lit up and he repeated the statement a third time, firmly. Sawan sat silent and dumbfounded. Sometime later, Jaimal asked Sawan to join him on the Dais during the monthly gathering and announced openly that Sawan would inherit his job.

The two masters' styles could not have been more different. Jaimal was the humblest of beings, happy living a simple existence in his small hut by the river. Sawan, the prominent government engineering officer, immediately went to work with engineering and building plans for the future. Eventually, he would turn Baba Jaimal Singh's property by the river into a thriving community, capable of serving the needs of 100,000 people.

Sawan's teachings are preserved in the form of a collection of his public talks which were transcribed and published under the title, "Discourses on Sant Mat". There is also a collection of his letters to disciples published under the title, "Spiritual Gems". In one of his letters, Baba Sawan Singh explains that even though the way the teachings are presented may change to suit the times, the underlying spiritual principles do not change.

"Man, himself, is the perfect book, for all books have come out of him. Inside of him is the Creator, with all His creation. The study of books gives us second-hand information, while the study of ourselves gives first-hand information. So why not read ourselves and see what is there?"

From books we are able to grasp the central idea upon which they are based. If you examine religious texts in that spirit you will find that the central idea of religion, and of Sant Mat of course, is the practice of the Sound Current. Many different words and names have been used to express the theory. Christ, Buddha, and the Vedic Rishis practiced and preached the same. The fundamental core of all of their teachings is the Sound Current.

The way the teachings are presented depends upon the language of the people, their customs, and their intellectual development. And as these customs, manners, and so forth change with time, their books go out of date; hence, the necessity of giving out the same age-old principles of the Sound Current, afresh. The message must be kept modern, and so adapted to the times and people to whom it is presented.

This Current is present in man; all human beings. It is natural in man, not artificial. It can be neither altered nor modified; nor added to, nor subtracted from. All else in this world changes continually, but not this Current. It is an emanation from, or wave of, the

*Great Source of all – the Supreme Creator, by whatever name you wish to speak of Him.
Each individual is a spark or a drop of that same Infinite Source.*

The Creator is at the top of this Current and the individual soul is at the other end, with the Current itself acting as the connecting link between the two. By this Current, the life – even the very existence of the individual is sustained. But the individual is unaware of it due to the thick veils of mind and matter which cover it at this end. But it sustains creation, and in man is found in the eye focus from where it permeates us within and outwardly, through the various sense organs. To catch it, the scattered and scattering attention must be controlled and held in the focus where connection is established with the astral, mental, and spiritual planes; finally merging in the Source at the other end.

The first essential thing, therefore, is to enter this laboratory within ourselves, by bringing our scattered attention inside of the eye focus. While this is a slow process, we should not be deterred. It is the most worthy of pursuits. It is our job to control the thoughts arising within us, and we must do it! And we must do it now, in this very lifetime, while in this human form.”

Spiritual Gems 157

After Swami Ji's departure in 1878, the proliferation of Radha Soami groups swelled, and along with multiple groups came multiple shabd yoga masters. Many of these masters are worthy of note. However, one of them, Baba Faqir Chand (1886 to 1981), stands out as being a refreshing voice for rational thinking and open discussion.

Faqir Chand is best-remembered as the 'honest guru'. He was refreshingly straightforward regarding certain aspects of the role of the guru, and the guru's abilities. His assertions include:

- Gurus should not take credit for their disciples' inner experiences and mystical revelations
- Gurus should not take credit for otherwise inexplicable events in the lives of their devotees, events that could be characterized as 'the workings of God', or 'miracles'
- Gurus should admit that they don't know everything
- Gurus should admit that they suffer from the same human weaknesses as everyone else

Faqir Chand was born into a Brahmin family in the Punjab. His father was employed in a low-level position with the Indian Railway Police. The family lived an impoverished existence, and partly as a diversion from family stresses, as a young boy, Faqir Chand devoted himself to mastering various Hindu scriptures.

At the age of eighteen, he secured a humble position with the Indian Railway as a signaler for construction projects. In this job, he interacted with co-workers, most of whom were tough, earthy men who ate meat, smoked tobacco, drank alcohol, and used coarse language. As a result of these influences, Faqir Chand became a meat eater, and developed some of their unseemly personal characteristics. But his family quickly intervened and guided him onto a more proper course. He adopted the vegetarian diet and other principals of Hindu Dharma appropriate for a young Brahmin. But he felt shame and regret over his moral weakness.

One night, while in prayer, lamenting over his lapses and transgressions, his inner vision suddenly opened and he witnessed the radiant form of a sadhu with a glowing white beard. The sadhu asked Faqir Chand what made him weep, and what did he want? He answered that scriptures claimed that God appears on the earth as a human being, and that he wanted to meet God in human form. The radiant sadhu replied, "For you, your God in the human form is already on this earth. You will come into His contact and all your sins will be pardoned." After saying these words, the radiant sadhu vanished.

He continued to yearn for a chance to meet the lord. One day, his longing became so great that he wept continually for 24 hours. Early that morning, he had a vision of a living Radha Soami master, Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal. In the vision, the master drew water from a nearby well and offered it to Faqir Chand. Then, the radiant master disclosed to Faqir Chand his address in Lahore.

Faqir Chand began writing letters to this address, provided in the vision. Since he didn't know Shiv Brat Lal's name as yet, he simply addressed his letters to God. After a year of letter writing, he received a reply from Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal, who invited him to Lahore. The letter said, in part, "I value your sentiments and your passion for the Lord. I, myself, have discovered Reality, Truth, and Peace at the feet of Rai Saligram Ji of Radha Soami Mat. Provided you feel no reluctance in following this path, come and see me at Lahore."

Baba Faqir Chand traveled to Lahore, met master Shiv Brat Lal, and received initiation instructions. He was also given one of Swami Ji's books, 'Sar Bachan'. Faqir Chand initially objected to Swami Ji's writings, since he was critical of all established religious teachings, including Vedanta. Shiv Brat Lal suggested that he put the book aside, and then revisit it after he had gained more personal experience and inner awakening. Faqir Chand applied himself to his spiritual practices and quickly made contact with the inner radiant master, or guru dev. He continued making inner progress with regular meditation (simran and bhajan), hoping to one day achieve the realization that had prompted Swami Ji to condemn institutionalized religion.

Faqir Chand had his first encounter with guru politics when he met another Radha Soami devotee who had been initiated by a different Radha Soami master, Babu Kainta Prasad Sinha, who was at that time the spiritual head of the Radha Soami Satsang at Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh. This other Radha Soami devotee belittled Faqir Chand, saying that since he had not been initiated by a true guru, he was himself,

therefore, not a true Radha Soami follower. This incident became foundational for Faqir Chand's later views regarding sectarianism and the subjective nature of inner, mystical revelation.

During World War I, Faqir Chand was stationed in a post which allowed him the opportunity for long, uninterrupted meditation sessions. During these years, he made rapid inner progress. In 1918, he was allowed leave, so he headed for Lahore to be with his guru. He posed the question to Shiv Brat Lal, "How and why does the goal of Radha Soami Mat differ from that of other religions?"

His master's reply came as a surprise. "Faqir, you are yourself the Supreme Master of your time. Begin delivering spiritual discourses to true seekers and initiate them into the path of Sant Mat. In due course of time, your own disciples will prove to be your 'True Guru', and it is through your interaction with them that your desired secret of Sant Mat will be revealed to you."

In genuine, Faqir-like humility, he responded, "Your Holiness, I am myself ignorant of the Truth. How can I lead others on this sublime path?" His master replied, "Faqir, you may be suffering from ninety-nine shortcomings. But you possess one sure virtue, that of Truth. Truth resides within you in abundance and it will be everything you'll ever need to realize all of your life's goals. You will not only redeem yourself but will help many others to attain redemption."

His teacher then advised him further, saying; "Your name is Faqir. Be true to your name. Do not look at the faults of others. Instead have pity upon the helpless, ignorant and the weak. With your sincere love and affection, help them out of this sphere of illusion, guiding them to their real Home. Remove the walls which divide mankind and tell the whole world how it can live a happy and peaceful life. Liberate the deserving amongst them from the cycle of birth and death. Guide them to the supreme state of Nirvana."

Thus, it was that at the young age of 32, Faqir Chand began his work as a spiritual master. He served eminently in this role for the next 63 years. Initially, he only gave out instructions to sincere

seekers on a personal basis, whom he met with privately. But after many years had passed, in 1939, following the death of his own guru, he began conducting formal initiations. For some reason, he ceased conducting formal initiations some years later, focusing most of his attention on public discourses.

He initially wrote two books, and mailed copies of both to Baba Sawan Singh in Beas for review. Sawan Singh had been a close friend of Faqir's guru, Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal. Sawan Singh wrote back, saying, "You are a true Faqir. You are doing highly desirable service to the Radha Soami Mat (teachings)."

But Faqir Chand remained in somewhat of a quandary. He was concerned that his observations and realizations pertaining to inner experiences and visions, combined with his perceptions of guru limitations and improper appropriations of inner experiences, were too radical to be presented publicly. He was afraid that his understanding of these matters could potentially undermine the various Radha Soami groups and their teachers and members.

Faqir Chand had developed a deep respect for Baba Sawan Singh. In 1942, he visited Sawan and expressed to him that he felt that he should be open and honest about his avant-garde ideas. He also expressed his reservations. Faqir had become so distressed over the issue that he thought the best course of action might be to be relieved from his commitment to teach the Radha Soami Mat altogether.

Sawan surprised him with his response. He stated that he could not disclose the truth about these issues in their totality, for two reasons;

1. Satsangis, in general, are not prepared to fully understand these matters, and
2. He was bound by certain institutional requirements to uphold the status quo.

He further stated to Faqir Chand; "Please continue to fulfill your assigned duties fearlessly. You shall have my full support under all circumstances."

Sawan's reply to Faqir Chand has significance that strikes to the underbelly of the entire apparatus of religious institutions, especially Hindu culture. Indians love to adore their teachers. This is a good thing. Bhakti is an essential component to Hindu Dharma. Bhakti helps to ensure that the bond of love developed between teacher and student will endure, and that this bond will help the stronger carry the weaker into higher spiritual realms, both here on the earth plane now, and also beyond death. (It's usually the teacher who is more spiritually advanced, but not always.) Now, if you're a spiritual pilgrim, and you're going to devote your heart and soul to your teacher, you certainly want your teacher to be special. You want him to have special abilities; perhaps even the ability to perform miracles. It would be wonderful to love somebody unconditionally who is bigger than life, an answerer of prayers; even better if he was God, Himself. Indians have been projecting these characteristics onto their teachers for a very long time.

Over the centuries, Indians have been building up, and building up their spiritual heroes, both living and dead, to near mythical dimensions. This has created a skewed mind-set of normalcy regarding spiritual masters, with most students looking upon them as if they are, in some ways, truly super-human. What Sawan was communicating to Faqir Chand was essentially this: it is true that disciples of spiritual teachers misunderstand the true nature and phenomenon of the abilities and limitations of the living master. But nothing can be done about this. No one, including Sawan Singh, could do anything to transform these attitudes and perceptions, perceptions which have taken shape over thousands of years of Hindu culture.

It's not inherently harmful for disciples to believe these things, as long as the teacher does not use these perceptions to take advantage of them in some selfish way. The truth is that spiritual masters, in a physical and emotional sense, are just like us. Their physical lives often defy the ideal of 'perfect' that we want them to measure up to. They experience emotions the way we do and suffer from the same human weaknesses. But separate from their physical lives and selves, they have achieved remarkable

inner spiritual revelations and attainments. As a result of these realizations, they have gained valuable, esoteric knowledge and are now in a position to lead and guide others.

Baba Faqir Chand's refreshing honesty and humility, stemming from his personal realizations, can be summed up with the following statements and observations, taken from his life example and his writings:

1. The highest truths pertaining to the absolute reality are unknowable, even for spiritual masters. They simply don't know the answers to most of the great questions pertaining to our existence.
2. When presented with questions about lofty metaphysical or mystical issues, Faqir never hesitated to reply with, "I don't know". In doing so, he joined great thinkers like Lao Tzu, Socrates, and Galileo in concluding that, 'not knowing was intellectually liberating and was indeed, a sign of the greatest wisdom of all'.
3. He was quick to offer that his observations and statements may simply be wrong.
4. He admitted to being plagued with the same human weaknesses as everyone else. He was in truth, a very ordinary man.
5. He stated that he had no power to perform miracles.
6. He stated that he had no power over, nor ability to affect any of the mystical phenomena and inner visions experienced by his disciples.
7. Mystical experience does not originate from anywhere other than from within ourselves. Mystical phenomena, and indeed all inner vision and sound experience, takes place within our individual consciousness, like all other human experience.
8. Gurus who take credit for mystical phenomena and miracles are wrong to begin with, and by making such claims of responsibility, serve to stand in the way of their disciples' inner progress.

The warm, professional relationship enjoyed between Baba Sawan Singh and Baba Faqir Chand serves to illustrate the futility of engaging in guru politics. They were both co-workers in the divine plan, each serving thousands of souls, hungry for spiritual succor. The fact that each was working under the umbrella of a different organized effort to further the cause of human spiritual evolution, trumped these petty distinctions.

Baba Sawan Singh had a good number of disciples from Europe, America, and other places outside of India. But it was his favored disciple and successor, Kirpal Singh, who ultimately took Dharana Nada Yoga to the far reaches of the globe.