
Sahaj Marg Study Group

The Spiritual Essence

Set 4, Handout 6 (*Principles of Sahaj Marg, Set 1. Pages 302-309*)

I came to the feet of my Master, Samarth Guru Mahatma Ramchandraj Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, in the early part of March 1964, not knowing what was spirituality and having, through an exposure to religion, tradition and culture, veered away from those traditions, more emotionally than intellectually. Because whatever association I had till then, with formal modes of worship, rituals, our traditional forms, had in some way, created a feeling of, initially disappointment, subsequently frustration and finally, I should say, (I may confess to you) a feeling of disgust!

Fortunately or unfortunately the major part of my life has been spent in North India, and at one stage I had to live in Benaras, where I graduated from, and the goings-on there among the religious community—among the temples, the cheating, the hypocrisy, the way suffering humanity is dealt with in the citadel of God—were shocking experiences. And when I discussed these things with my so called *acharya* of the South—I belong to the Vaishnava community and we had our own traditional acharyas—when I discussed with them, all they could say was, “You have to tolerate. God’s ways are mysterious. By evil comes good; from darkness comes light.”—all these sorts of funny things. None of them could really give me an answer. And having been blessed with sincerity or cursed with sincerity, I used to do all the rituals that I had to do, because I lost my mother at the age of five, and the annual *shraddha*, I used to do with utmost sincerity, with meticulous observance to the *niyama* and all these things such as the early morning bath, not drinking even water. And when I found how the *purohits*—who were to come and administer the puja and the rites—behaved, I was horrified.

On one occasion, I had the misfortune to be away from Madras and I had to perform the shraddha ceremony. The purohit who was supposed to come at nine o’clock, didn’t turn up. I sent a boy and the boy in his innocence came back and blurted out, “He has performed shraddha in another house, and he is eating the *pitru-bhojan* [the food-offering to the departed soul] you see, and when he is finished with that, he will come here.” Now, the Shastra says that when you do *pitru-tarpana* or *pitru-shraddha*, that purohit should not eat for the preceding three days. It is a *prayaschitta* [act of repentance]. But he was eating there, after performing a shraddha and coming to me to help me perform my mother’s shraddha! This was the ultimate ‘straw on the camel’s back’. And on that day, if I may use that phrase, I broke with traditional religion as it is understood. I just said, “This is over.” This was a few years before I came to the feet of my Master.

Then, without guidance, I used to do some forms of the *hatha yoga*, do some *asanas*, do some *pranayama* and ultimately, I should say, my destiny led me to my Master Shri Ramchandraj Maharaj and, if you permit me to say, his training was a series of shocks. I can assure you from personal experience, nothing works like a shock. You know even in common life when a man is on the point of losing his job and the boss calls him and says, “Well, either you quit or ...”, it is a

shock. We become aware. When there is a market crash, there is a shock. So these shocks are very essential to shake us out of our complacency, of our passive acceptance of everything that has been said, done in the past, of an intellectual blindness to the teachings of the past. None of us is willing to read for himself and understand for himself. It is easier to listen to some pandit or purohit who is conducting a *pravachan*. We have no patience, we have no interest to confirm what he reads and what he says by a second reading for ourselves. What he says goes because we have no interest in it. All that we want to do is to listen and walk out, and by the time we are out of the gate, that is forgotten!

So shocks are essential to shake us out of these inner complacencies which, if I may say so, have brought the Indian society to the degraded levels in which we are seeing it today, of which we are all part, you and I and all of us here. My Master administered these shocks progressively because he had no qualms about shocking us. The first shock was when he said, "Religion is utter nonsense!"

I asked Him, "What do you mean? Religion is supposed to be the thing from which we draw our succour and by which we have come from the past, and into which we are going in the future, if tradition is to be believed."

He said, "It is the kindergarten school where, at best, you are taught something of ethics, something of morality, and some idea of what is called Divinity or God is given to you. Beyond that, religion can do nothing." And he chose his own personal example and said that, as his mother was a very pious lady, he started doing the traditional puja. He said, "I found no benefit in it."

I said, "How long did you do it?"

He said, "It is immaterial. I don't have to do a thing all my life to find out whether it is useful or useless! Suppose a blade doesn't shave properly, you don't shave with it all your life before you discard it. When a pot of rice is boiling, if you take out one grain of rice and press it in your hand, you know whether the whole pot is cooked or not. You don't take it one by one and say, 'this is cooked', 'this is cooked', 'this is cooked'; you will have no rice left to eat!"

It was an argument I had to accept! So that was the first shock—Religion at best is a kindergarten school where some idea of ethics, some idea of morality and some idea, a very very vague idea or the concept of something called Divinity or God, exists.

I said, "What next?"

He said, "Well, I started hatha yoga. I did some asanas and pranayamas and I did for a few days, few months maybe, and I found out that was also not beneficial!"

I said, "Surely, Babuji! One would expect a little more time to be given to hatha yoga."

He said, "No, if a thing has benefit, it must have benefit from the beginning. I cannot get into a wrong bus, and expect it to go to my destination after three hours! It is wrong from the moment I stepped into it. Nothing can become right when it is wrong, whether more time is given or less time is given."

That again was a very logical argument, you see. I cannot get on to a wrong bus and say, by virtue of moving in it over an extended period of time it can ever

possibly take me to the right destination! His logic was unbeatable!! So he gave up hatha yoga.

Then he started pranayama. He found psychic disturbances, problems arising in his sleep. So he said, "*Use bhi humne chhod diya.*" [I left that also.]

Then I said, "Babuji! What did you do after that?"

He said, "Nothing! I waited patiently, I prayed to God to send me a Master. And after a few years, I went to Fatehgarh and found my Master!" This is what he said to me. I said, "In between you did nothing?" He said, "It is better to do nothing than to do what is wrong."

It was confusing to me because we have been taught that to do something is better than to do nothing. Here was a man who was preaching me, "To do nothing is better than to do something which is wrong." Well, palpably it was wisdom of the highest order. Like our boys (children) when they study, if they have nothing else to read, they read comics or they read the trash literature that we get today and we are happy. "*Arre bhai! Kuch nahin to kuch to padh raha hai woh!*" [Brother! At least he is reading something!] You see, this habit has ruined our conception of what is good and what is bad, that to do something is better than to do nothing, whereas my Master taught me, "When you do not know what is right, or what you should do, **do nothing**." And that was the highest wisdom he taught me, in the third shock.

Then I said, "What happened when you came to your Master?"

He said, "When I looked at Him, I found **That** which I sought and my eyes never turned elsewhere, I saw and I fell."

Now we are familiar with the other quotation, "I came, I saw, I conquered." That was the idea of conquest, of victory, of power. Here was the summation of surrender! "I saw, I fell, I never rose again!" People often ask, "What is surrender?" you see, I think those three short words—"See, fall and do not rise"—these epitomise the value of surrender.

So like this, I was administered shock after shock. Then I said, "What is this spirituality of which you are teaching about?"

He said, "*Dekho isme kai baten hoti hain. Log samaj nahi pate.*" [See! There are many things in this (spirituality). People are unable to understand.]

I said, "*Aap to samjha sakte hain?*" [You can teach me?]

He said, "People confuse religion for spirituality. They are called spiritual discourses, when they are nothing more than religious discourses! You cannot change the content of a bottle of water by calling it wine. It will not become wine. But these people are cheating the public by calling them spiritual discourses. The poor people don't know the difference between religion and spirituality."

I said, "*Aap to hamen samjhayiye?*" [Please let me understand.]

He said, "Religion deals with dogma, tradition, ritualistic worship—only three things."

I said, "What about *moksha tatva*? What about after-life? I am supposed to be lifted up to realisation."

He said, "*Bekaar hai!*" [Useless!] No religion can do it!"

I said, "Babuji! Surely you are not denying the efficacy of the Sanatana Dharma of which so much has been written!"

He said, "If you have eyes, you can see for yourself. There have never been more temples in India than there are today. And there has never been more degradation! There has never been more moral decrepitude! There has never been more corruption! There has never been more dishonesty, viciousness, lust!"

I said, "Surely—you don't attribute it to temples?"

He said, "I don't attribute it to temples. But the existence of the temples is the direct index of the fall in society of moral standards and values."

I said, "Surely Babuji! I am not able to understand this idea that when there are more temples it shows more moral degradation"

He said, "*Bhaiya, socho, kisi nagar me jahan ek haspatal tha, wahan bees haspatal ho gaye* [Brother! Suppose that in a city which had only one hospital, there are twenty hospitals now], what will you think?"

I said, "*Vahaan beemari jyada hai.*" [Sickness has increased there.] "*Ab dekho jahan mandir jyada hote vahaan kya hota hai?*" [See, now, what happens when there are more temples?]

I said, "Guilty conscience *jyada hai.*" [There is more of guilty conscience.]

"*To tumhare muhse tumhi ne iska jawab de diya!*" [So you have yourself answered your question.]

And again it was an unbeatable argument -- the more the temples, the more the moral degradation; the more the fall in values, the more the corruption.

He said, "You know, religion deals with you in an external way, whatever good may have existed in it in the past. Undeniably there were values in it when the founders started it; there is no denying that. But through generations they have become corrupted, today it is a money making machine."

I said, "All right, what about spirituality?"

He said, "In spirituality we deal with the essence. That which is here inside you."

I said, "Is it the soul?"

He said, "*Haan* [yes] *'Soul' keh sakte ho. Lekin woh soul bhi nahin hai.*" [Yes, you can call it the soul but it is not the soul either!]

I said, "*Soul bhi nahin hai?* [It is not the soul either?] But I thought we deal only with the *atma*. The *sharir* [body] and the *atma* [soul], are the two *tatvas* [substances] we have been taught about."

He said, "*Vaise tatvon to bahut hote hain, lekin hum essence ke bare mein apko batana chahte hain.*" [That way there are many tatvas, but I want to tell you about essence.]

I said, "What is this essence?"

He said, "That which sustains **you** through eternity.

I said, "Is it not the soul?"

He said, "No."

This was the next shock. Because we have been taught to understand that the soul goes, you know, by transmigration from body to body, lives from the beginning to the end, it is incorruptible, it is not created.

He said, "As the body lives by the soul, the soul also lives by something and that is this Divine transmission which we call—*pranahuti*, which the guru pours into the heart of the disciple, which is the food for the *atma* itself. Therefore, the *atma* is a living breathing thing, it can be destroyed."

I said, "Any proof of this?"

He said, "Today's existence! Most people are soul-less!!"

I said, "Surely there is something, some remnant left."

He said, "Yes, it is like a balloon without any air in it. It has to be inflated again."

So the whole Sahaj Marg *siddhanth* [philosophy], rests on the fundamental assumption that while the body exists by the soul, the soul **has** to exist by something else, which has to be infused into it by a guru who has command over the powers of Nature and is therefore called a saint. The guru by virtue of his connection with the Ultimate, what you call *Brahmalaya* in Sanskrit, is able to transmit that energy into the heart, recoup the soul and make it flower again. And this you have found in yogic terminology as the *adho mukhi* [downward facing] lotus, which becomes *oordhwa mukhi* [upward facing] and then opens and flowers and then falls the nectar into this. So the references in yoga are not false.

I said, "Then what has happened to these references, Babuji? You yourself are saying these are correct and it did exist in the past."

He said, "Seventy-two generations before Raja Dasharath, the system of transmission existed. It was lost."

"How was it lost?"

He said, "You know the Indians are a peculiar race. Everything that was valuable, everything that was sacred, they made it secret and the person would not transmit it even to his *chelas* and when he died, it died with him."

And this is true not only of spiritual values, spiritual methods, spiritual disciplines, but also of arts and crafts and so many other traditions you know, like making even pickles, medicines! There have been medicines for snakebites, simple things, but for which they make a mystical nonsense out of it and say that "You have got to have *upadesh* [instruction]. Then only it will work." Medicine works not by upadesh, it works because it is a medicine!

So by mystifying, by cultifying, all with the idea of *nakar*, our traditions have been corrupted, the originality has been lost, the reality has been diffused into nothingness, and we are left today with false values, ephemeral values, lies, cheats. And we go to them for spiritual succour, when we are troubled and all that they are able to do is to give us some *vibhooti* [sacred ash] or some *prasad* and say, "*Beta, tum theek ho jaaoge.*" [Son, you will be all right.] I said, "Babuji! What about this vibhooti? People go to gurus for vibhooti!"

He said, "You know, you go to gurus for reality and they give you ashes!" So we are left with the ashes of reality! And my Master, by progressive shocks administered one after another like this, was able to infuse reality into us. It is not something which you can explain over a half an hour talk. It took me twenty years. It is a thing which you learn through eternity. It is something which is an eternal pursuit. We can **start** at one moment of time, but it never ends. So spirituality is that which deals with the essence not with the body, not with the soul, not with the *panchatatvas* [five substances] or the *gunas* [their properties] or anything of that sort. I wish to stress this because many people say, "Sir! He is spiritual. But his behaviour has not changed." Now a behaviour is treated by psychology as a subject called 'behavioural psychology'.

A man may have a very good character, but his behaviour may not be congenial as far as you are aware. See, I have a good barber who, whenever he is shaving, goes on talking and I don't like it. It is his behaviour. But he is the best barber in town. You go to a cloth shop, and the best salesman is an irritant. He says, "What money have you brought? What are you going to buy?" But he is the best salesman. Otherwise he wouldn't be employed there. We want not the thing itself but we want the wrapping. You know modern packaging technology survives on this foolishness of the human being, that the thing which is inside is not so much valued, as the outer packaging in which it is wrapped. Therefore you see the trash sold in so-called book shops with lascivious pictures printed on top, which both the sixty-five-year-old and sixteen-year-old want, on the basis of the picture. When they read it through, they are disappointed because there is nothing inside which the picture displays outside.

Religion does the same thing—*swarna rathas* [gold chariots], gold covering for the *vigraha* [idol]. Is that idol going to perform less of a service to you had it been just mere stone? Why should it be covered with gold? Why should lakhs and millions of rupees be spent on gold rathas, and *acharyas* made much of. You see the publicity they give them in the press. Is a gold god more than a silver god, or is a stone god less than an ivory god? Does that mean that god has to be measured in terms of tola content of gold? We have corrupted God Himself. Our temples are a living testimony to the corruption that even God suffers at our hands. We besmirch His name, we falsify His generosity, we deny His love, when we go and put prasad and ten rupees in the *hundi*, and say, "God, take this ten rupees and raise my salary by one thousand rupees!" "God! Take this ten rupees and make me managing director of the company; now I am only an executive director." "God! Take this ten rupees, I am a civil court judge, make me a supreme court judge." For ten rupees, *hum sauda karne ko taiyaar hain Ishwar ke saath*. [For ten rupees we are ready to clinch a deal with God.] And this religion we are quoting from every platform *Satyameva jayate*, the most shameful thing in the Indian tradition, that you have to put this slogan on your national emblem! It is a testimony to the lying character of the Indian, not from today but from the time of Vedas.

From the Vedic rishis' time we have been told *satyam vadah, satyam vadah, satyam vadah* [tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth]. Now in no society have you to be told to tell the truth, if you are already telling the truth! When we read in railway coaches, 'Do not spit', what is the conclusion we come to? That people spit. "Keep latrines clean. Flush after use." The Westerner sees this and is amused. He says, "Don't your people flush the toilet after use, Chari, that you have to put up a notice?" The unfortunate conclusion is that they don't! *Satyam vadah* means what? We have been liars since eternity. *Is desh jisme Ganga behati hai!* [This country where the holy Ganga river is flowing.]—You see this, the great flaunting tradition that we fool ourselves with and are trying to fool the rest of the world with, that we are a nation of saints, we are a nation of incorruptibles—"See! *Satyam vadah*." This is what the ancient tradition says, and the Westerner and the Easterner both laugh and say, "Fool! Have you to **say** 'speak the truth', if you have been speaking the truth?"

So gentlemen, ladies, brothers and sisters, this is the state of affairs. Things will not change by whitewashing them. You have a mud wall which is being eaten away by rains, by weather, by white-ants. Whitewashing it, will not make it sound. It has to be broken down and a cement and brick wall put up in its place. It is left to the present generation of human beings, to correct the mistakes of the past and leave a better heritage for the future. This is the destiny. It is an important duty of the present generation. We are signally failing in this because out of our selfishness we are only concerned with ourselves. No parent is today worried about where his child goes; no parent today is worried about what his children's marks are. So long as they go to school, the mother is happy that the children are away and she can cook in peace for her loving husband who is in the club, dancing with somebody else. The father is happy that the mother is busy cooking so dutifully even if he is cheating her and fooling her; the child is happy that neither is attending to it, so it can do what it likes. Triple selfishness! And we are talking, we are bewailing, we are condoling with each other on the fate of society, what is going to happen in the future, when **we** make that future ourselves.

So there is no government, there is no society, there is no God. Even God cannot save a humanity which seeks to condemn itself by its selfishness, by its lustful pursuits, its avarice, all centred on the self. "I must have this, this and this." "What about your children?" "Arre, for what am I earning?" Very pious, you know! "It is only for my children!" And thirty years later the child says, "My father was a damn fool. If he had not left me this wealth, I would not have gone to dogs like this. I would have earned an honest living with my two hands. He has corrupted my existence." He has no love for you because when he is old enough to understand what you have been doing, he sees what all practices we have indulged in, in building up the so-called wealth for him, which he dislikes, which he hates, which frustrates him, which denies him his humanity, his manliness, everything. It emasculates him. We have had this lesson from the West in the so-called, you know, the hippie movement, when they deny their parents, when they condemn their parents for destroying the heritage of the past—which should have been handed over to them as a sacred inheritance to be passed on from one generation to the other. The only heritage which we are passing on, I am sorry to say is the 'HUF account' carefully garnered, nurtured and passed on!

So you will excuse me if I am a little harsh, but my guru shocked me. It is my duty to shock you into some awareness that "things are not all that good in the state of Denmark." (It is a Shakespearean quotation—All is not well in the state of Denmark.) Here we have been fooling each other on the political front, on the religious front, on the moral front. We are all happy, because we all know we are all liars and cheats, by mutual recognition and mutual back patting, "*Shu karvanu Saheb*." [What to do, Sir?] This has become the standard phrase in Gujarati, its translation the standard phrase in all languages! There is a lot to be done. 'Shu karvanu' means, do this, this and this. The way is available. Change yourself. By changing yourself you change your family environment, your children grow up better, they become moral when they see their parents are truth-loving. Unfortunately you know, we start teaching our children to tell lies from the age of three. Bell rings, somebody comes, "*Bol do papa nahin hai ghar mein*." [Tell the

caller that Dad is not at home.] And then later on when he tells lies to you, you beat him. Poor fellow, **you** have taught him to tell lies! He says, "Papa, how is it different when you told me you are not at home and now you are beating me for saying-'I am not at home'." "*Jhoot nahin bolna sach bolna*." [Don't tell lies, tell truth.] The child is bewildered, you see. You are at double standards yourself, which, in your adult stature, adult wisdom you are able to handle. Like we handle two accounts, three accounts, we are able to handle two sets of moral values, multiple sets of moral values, but the child has only one set, his parents' behaviour. There begins children's indiscipline which goes on in the school, which goes on in the college, which creates communism, which creates goondaism of the streets, a rampant destruction let loose by a cry of the heart against parents, against society. They cannot destroy their parents, thank heavens, our children cannot destroy us! They don't have the courage. They love us too much! But we have the love which destroys our children!

So spirituality teaches us what is the real meaning of love. Love protects; love does not violate; love nurtures. If you put a chimney around a lamp and immediately the lamp is blown out, what would you think of the chimney? It is after all to protect it from the winds and to keep that tiny flame alight. So we have to learn what is love, what is morality, what is ethics. *Yahaan "Shu karvanu che" se kaam nahin chalega!* [Nothing can be accomplished here with 'Shu karvanu'.] There is a lot to be done. The beginning is now, here.

So those of you who have the courage to say, "Yes, brother, I wish to do this sincerely because when I change, I change a part of the universe; and when I change a part of universe, the totality **has** to change;" there is no question about this. Every individual change is reflected throughout the universe. It is said that not a leaf falls in the universe that He does not know about. And this, you know, we create. There are self-helping arguments, "What can we do Sir, society is like this," conveniently forgetting that the whole of the society is sick, we want to be healthy. Everybody is begging, we want to live and eat *sandesh* and *garam masala* [sweet and savouries]. Everybody is foolish and paying taxes, we want to be in the citadel of tax evasion. There we have no choice you know-'I', 'It is for my benefit!' But when you say you change, the society will change, then we would prefer to wait! We would prefer to evade payment of our railway fare when everybody pays, forgetting that in everybody, I am also part of it. Isn't it? I mean if you question yourselves, your hearts, nobody can deny the truth of what is being said here, whether we are willing to accept it, face ourselves with it and do something about it.

Well, my prayer to my Master is that he give us the courage, because it needs courage. It is very easy to forget or, I would say, it is even more easy to remember that anything we do might destroy these false edifices, citadels that we have built of a false security, of a false wealth, of a false social eminence, nurtured by nothing more than ill-gotten money, where a man is great because he has ten lakhs, another man is greater because he has fifteen, and he is the greatest because he has seven crores! What is his education? "*Kai vandho nathi saheb, tran karod to chej tyan?*" [No difficulty, Sir! He has three crores rupees there!]

So, this is our society! You see, we have forgotten values. Today we have no respect for teachers, we have no respect for aged people. Why? Because they are a drain on us. Every old father has to be supported by his sons. In our selfishness you know we grudge the thirty or forty rupees that the poor fellow eats—it is a mere pittance of the tax that we have to pay -- pittance! It doesn't even pay for the paper on which we write our false accounts! But we are, you know, denying the old man because he is not contributing. Today is the day of productivity! Contribution!! So old people are relegated to a dungeon, in a beautifully built house with a puja room conveniently allotted to them, to continue to perpetuate the paucity on themselves and pray for wealth to us.

So brothers and sisters, I have to humbly and very forcefully request to you to re-examine yourselves. It is all right, every man has a right to destroy himself, but he has no right to destroy his inside, much less his family, which is all we are doing. And it is said that God, in His Ultimate wisdom, is giving us sufficient leash, sufficient time, with immense patience, with immense mercy. He says, "*Theek hai* [all right], let me see how far can he go in this play of corruption and ill-gotten gains and stupidity and vices!" But we have to remember that a time will come when we have to answer for it. This is what He says. Let us not worry about what He says, but let us worry about what this [pointing to his heart] says, which is more immediate. My heart says, "Do this and don't do this," let us obey it. You call it God, the conscience, let us obey it so that the tiniest voice can become the most powerful. One day 'I' will be its servant, instead of it being my servant.

Thank you!