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# Sahaj Marg Study Group

## *The Need for a Master*

Set 2, Handout 4 (Principles of Sahaj Marg, Set 1, Page 88-95).

I think my brothers and sisters who preceded me have told you almost everything there is to say about the Sahaj Marg system; so I am in somewhat of a predicament as to what to say because the subject is limited, being a very simple subject. All that we can stress when talking about Sahaj Marg is the absolute simplicity of the system, the absolute simplicity of the practice and, what is most surprising, the absolute simplicity of the very goal that we are striving for in life—our perfection.

All through human history we have had people all over the world trying to practice some system of yoga, some system of meditation, some system of evolution by which they could rise to the highest potentials of human growth, of human development. And the mystic, religious and yogic literature of the world is full of such experiments, some successful, and many naturally unsuccessful too. All this literature emphasizes that there are normally three factors in the process of yoga. The first factor is of course the aspirant, the student who is beginning to develop himself to reach his goal. He is the very first factor. The second is the goal that he sets before himself as something which he wants to achieve in his lifetime. The third is the thing which connects these two, the beginner and the goal, and that is the way by which the aspirant goes to his goal. But I believe that through the ages the fourth and most important factor has been forgotten, and that is the need for a Master who can take us on the way.

Knowing that a way does exist is not enough, because on the way many things can happen. As Jackie Sabourin just told you, we can stumble, as there are pitfalls. So our need is not just for a way, but for somebody that can take us on that way. For this, yogic literature specifies a guru, what we call a Master, as a factor which I consider to be of paramount importance.

Now, if I were to grade these four factors in order of importance, I would give the goal, the way and the Master about equal importance, and the seeker himself the least importance because he is the one who is trying to raise himself to the Ultimate. So in the beginning he is perhaps the least important but, because he is personally involved in his own evolution, to himself he becomes the most important. The other things lose significance. So the aspirant thinks he is himself the most important factor in this pursuit of yoga. But here comes the problem, that when I think of myself as the most important thing, and my evolution as the most important thing, it is but human nature to tend to downgrade the value and the importance of the way and the one who is leading us on the way and, all too unfortunately, the importance of the goal itself.

Now it is a sad fact, a sad commentary, that the word yoga is used too loosely nowadays to imply all sorts of achievements, physical and mental, but very rarely indeed the spiritual attainment to which the word yoga should properly be applied. According to the Sanskrit literature from which the word yoga originates, yoga means union with the Ultimate. It does not mean union with anything else, or anything less than That. So even the goal itself has been downgraded because the self has been upgraded too much in the process of seeking one's evolution. This, in ordinary parlance, we call egoism. We are so filled with ego, our own importance, that we tend to give lesser importance to the goal, lesser importance to the way, and lesser importance to the guide who is to take us on that way, than we give to ourselves. Now, if we should ascribe the proper or relative degrees of importance to these factors, then the first thing that comes in us, or descends into us, is a feeling of humility because, after all, it is I who am so low that I have to raise myself up to evolve by some means to a specified goal. When that humility comes into us then we automatically know that we, by ourselves, are perhaps not strong enough to follow a way successfully. Until this feeling comes, people tend to reject the need for a Master. People often ask, "Why do I need a Master? We have a way, we have a goal. Why do we need a Master?" I will explain this at the end of this talk, or rather the explanation will come by itself.

First, we have to establish what is our goal. And if the goal falls something short of what we should truly aspire for, then it very often happens that our search ends unsatisfactorily. It does not satisfy us, and we cannot reach the real goal because we have reduced the goal in our own eyes. People who shoot with rifles know that when you shoot at a distant target you have to raise the sights. Similarly, for an examination, if you want to come first, you try to be first in the country or something like that. You see, you have to set your sights higher than the goal which you have to achieve. If we start out by lowering the goal itself then our achievement will fall short not only of the actual goal but even of the lowered goal that we have set for ourselves. So the first and most important thing is to determine our goal.

The second thing is to find the appropriate way. I won't say the correct way because, technically speaking, there is no wrong way. It is only a mismatching the way to the goal that brings in this concept of wrongness or rightness. Therefore the word 'appropriate' is more suitable, and we have to find the appropriate way for us to reach our destination, our goal of evolution. Now there are too many ways available, there have always been too many ways available. But here comes, I think, the wisdom and the grace of Nature that it endowed us with an intellect which we are expected to use in assessing not merely our needs, but in seeking a correct way of raising ourselves up to our own goal. So the intellect is there to help us. We have to study available systems. We have to seek a guide. And when the intellect has evaluated or assessed perhaps two or three systems of practice, then we have to come to a final judgement regarding one of them, before we commence the practice of that system and see what it

can offer us. Even though to achieve the goal may take a long time, to know whether a car will move does not take much time. You just have to sit in it and start it and see whether it will go at all. If it does not go we reject it straightaway. So the movement of the abhyasi in the vehicle which he chooses for his evolution can be evaluated from the very outset. It does not need much effort, it does not need much time. But we in the modern world, being too intellectual, always try to get proof first instead of just getting into the thing and trying to prove it for ourselves.

Now that we have the goal and the way, I come to the third thing, the Master. To me, the need for the Master is definitely a paramount one because without a Master I don't think we can achieve anything. Why? Because even when the roads are most carefully mapped, there can be disasters which have happened since the maps were printed. There can be changes. I remember an amusing incident when we were in the United States four years back. A young lady, who is here with us today, was driving us from one place to another. She had a road map spread out on her knee. We had almost come to our destination. We were just about ten miles short, when we found that what was marked on the map as one of those express highways did not exist. It just was not there. We had traveled 160 miles to find that the last stage, the last ten miles of the road, did not exist any longer. The lady who was driving us then called a policeman to ask about the right way. The policeman said, "Well, you are referring to an old map. You should have got a new one." So as ways change, maps change; and as ways of evolution change, as people change, the ways have to change themselves.

So what was held to be something which was practicable, which was demonstrably practicable two thousand years ago, need not necessarily be practicable today. I am not saying it is not, but it need not be. So we have to prove for ourselves the efficacy of existing systems which were there in the past. They generally enjoy the privilege and the prestige of being of hoary tradition. We tend to value yogic systems as we value antiques! In yoga there is no antiquity; it is not of antique value; it is not something we can exhibit in our cupboards and say, "I paid so much for this." That can be true of material possessions. Old age means something in material possessions. Unfortunately, in people it does not seem to have much value. In today's society old people are not looked up to. So we value age in some things, but in other things we don't value it at all. This idea of value we should attach to yogic systems, too. Just because a thing is three thousand years old, or five thousand years old, it does not mean that it is therefore a practical system, something which will work today.

Here comes the need for a Master to guide us, because tradition says, people have testified to this, that Masters come mainly to modify ways to suit present conditions of civilization, present conditions of life and, most important of all, to make or remake systems to suit the conditions of living that exist today. For instance, if you take certain yogic practices which demand practice over hours,

days, months, and years, sometimes, obviously, it is not practicable for today's human being to follow these systems where every minute of the twenty-four hours of the day has to be bestowed upon the practice. That does not mean the goal becomes something denied to us because Nature never denies goals. Nature keeps the goal in view; Nature modifies us to reach that goal, and simultaneously Nature offers to us better methods, easier methods, simpler methods of reaching the goal. To make this available to us, Nature sends the Master to us. So in this context, the Master is of the greatest importance because he redesigns past systems, past methods of approach, to suit our own conditions of life today. This is the first and most important need for a Master.

The second thing is, he is one who has already gone over the path several times. Not only did he do it when he first set out to evolve himself under the guidance of his own guru, subsequently he has got the job of taking people up to that destination. Now a person who goes again and again on the same path becomes an adept. In spirituality, in mysticism, we call such people adepts. So a Master is an adept because he has traveled the same road many times. And what would take us much effort, much time, and perhaps much anguish in finding out for ourselves, he does for us very simply. That is the second thing.

The third factor is what in Sahaj Marg we speak very specifically about—the process of cleaning which refers to the impressions of the past which are buried in us as samskaras, as they are called in Sanskrit. In a sense it is these samskaras which become the burden tying us down to this existence, being worked upon by gravity, let us say. Now when he cleans us, Master refers to what he calls a vacuumization of the inside of our own system, so that something new can be put into it. When you remove something from the system a space is created inside into which he pours his transmission. That is the fourth aspect of the Master's work.

Restricting myself for the time being to this cleaning—I have always wondered why so many sincere, extraordinarily sincere, people who practiced yogic systems in the past with almost fanatic zeal, subduing every human instinct they had, yet fell short of achieving the goal. Thinking over the past so many years about this, it was only two days ago, while I was myself sitting in meditation, that the answer came to me. Every one of those aspirants had in some way cleaned himself and created a vacuum. But what is it that is going to fill this vacuum? Please note, when a vacuum is created, unless it is attached to a source from which the vacuum chamber can itself be filled up with the appropriate thing, it is only going to attract everything that is outside itself!

Now we have vacuum cleaners in our houses and even though they are vacuumized they only pick up the dirt and the dust from the carpets on which we expose them. In a chemical plant, if you want something to flow from one chamber to another, you vacuumize it and connect it to that precise chamber from which you want something to be fed into it. If not, it will only take in the

surrounding air and the dust. It is like the rather euphemistic instrument that you have in cars for fresh air. You open it and all that you get inside is the polluted atmosphere of the outside. There is nothing fresh about it except the inscription 'fresh'. This is what happens to a very serious and very practical abhyasi who, without guidance, without connection to the goal, by great effort over very long years of time, vacuumizes himself, and finds that everything he is throwing out is coming back into himself. I think this is a matter of simple logic.

In those cases where people have had Masters, and have been deeply connected to them by love, by devotion, by emotional attachment of a spiritual nature, all that they could draw from their Master was what the Master himself had within him. If the Master had physical progress, they got physical progress. If he had knowledge, they got knowledge. If he had wisdom, they got wisdom. If he was psychic, they became psychic. Therefore, it becomes an absolutely important thing that when we connect ourselves to a Master, the Master must be of that order who can take us to the Ultimate stage of our evolution. Because, what he does not have in himself he cannot give to us, however powerful the vacuum inside us may be. If I am attached to the wrong source, the greater the vacuum, the more dust, the more unwanted things I am sucking into myself. So it has been a tragedy of past yogic practice that by mis-connection the most serious aspirants, the most sincere aspirants, have ruined their spiritual life by wrong connections with wrong people, with wrong systems.

Now here is what my Master says in one of his books, "If you cannot find the right guru, it is better to be without a guru. There can be no substitute for the right guru." We cannot substitute a lesser goal for the highest goal. Therefore, if anyone is aspiring for the highest goal, it is better that he waits, even if it is necessary to wait a hundred lifetimes, until he finds a proper Master who can take him to his goal. If an aspirant indulges in makeshift or make-do arrangements with lesser things, they cannot raise him but will probably lower him in his evolution. I think this is the most important aspect of the Sahaj Marg teaching, that to have no guru at all is better than having an unevolved or inappropriate guru. When we connect ourselves to the wrong source, the very process of vacuumizing ourselves can lead to our degradation—I don't mean in moral values, I mean in the sense of evolutionary degradation—rather than to the uplift that we are so earnestly trying for.

It thus becomes obvious that by connection with a Master who has in himself the highest ability, the highest achievement, the highest goal that he has achieved for himself by such a connection, the Master can, by the mere and very simple process of emptying my inside, pour himself into me without any effort on my part. This is possible because he cleans my system, he creates a vacuum in me, and by creating this vacuum in me, his Self flows naturally into me. He offers Himself. We call this *pranahuti*, or offering of the life principle into life.

So when we realize that the Master is the cleaner, the Master is the vacuumizer, the Master is the one who comes into me and thus makes me like Himself in

every way, we find that He is the goal, we find that He is the way, and we also find that He is the Master who is going to take me through the way to the goal. So in the proper perspective, and with the proper approach to spirituality, these three things—the way, the goal and the guide—all merge into one entity. And only where such a triumvirate merging into one exists, does the possibility of myself too merging into that, and becoming one with that, exist.

I therefore wish to emphasize that it is of the greatest importance that we seek the proper Master, one who has this ultimate connection, who has the ability to clean our insides, to vacuumize our insides. And if this is done, there is no question of time, there is no question of effort, there is no question of space. Achievement becomes instantaneous, evolution becomes instantaneous. We just jump, as it were, from our present mundane existence into the highest realms of spiritual existence.