

Know Thyself

[The Following is an English rendering of the satsang prawachan (discourse) given by Maharshi Santsewi Paramhans ji Mahaaraaj during the All India Convention of Santmat Satsang held in Rishikesh, a picturesque Himalayan town of Uttar Pradesh, India on the 3rd May 1997.- Pravesh K. Singh]

Respected Gentlemen, Honourable Motherly Ladies, and Full-of-Devotion Sisters!

Rishikesh is the land of ascetic fervour, of penance by sages. Several sages have practised meditation here, and have realized the Truth here. This land is filled with their holy aura, their splendour reaches far and wide. We must consider ourselves fortunate that we have gathered at such an auspicious place for Satsang.

You have been told that the 86th annual general convention of the All India Santmat Satsang will be held here. This 86th Convention tells us that we have already conducted the 84th and the 85th Conventions before this. So we have three numbers before us – 84, 85 and 86. What do these signify? So long as we dwell in darkness, we would be wandering through 84 lakhs (8.4 Millions) of species and reincarnations. How do we write 84? We write 4 in front of 8. 8 and 4 add up to 12 i.e., so long as we live our lives in darkness, we will be loitering along 12 ways or roads. What are these 12 ways?

Bharatji (younger brother of Lord Sri Ram) had said,

“Mohi lagi yahu kuthaatu tehi thaataa.

Ghaalesi sab jagu baarah baataa.”

[For (favouring) me she (Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat ji) has laid this plot or conspiracy and, thus, has torn my world in to 12 roads (laying “12 baats” is a phrase in Hindi meaning “destroying everything, or putting everything in a total disarray”). – reference here is to Kaikeyi’s plan of sending Shri Ram, Lakshman and Sita ji to 14 years of exile and of ensuring the throne for Bharat to the great dislike of Bharat who loved & worshipped his elder brother Ram like God.]

“Moho dainyam bhayam hraaso haanirglaanah kshudhaa trishaa.

Mrityuh kshobho vrithaakirtirvaataadyete hi dwaadasha”

[Illusion, poverty/abjection, fear, decline, loss, languor /remorse, hunger, thirst, death, distress/agitation/anguish, futility and ignominy; these are the 12 roads.]

This All India Convention tells us that we have crossed over from 84 and 85 into 86.

85 is pronounced as ***‘pachchaasee’*** in Hindi which starts with letter ‘p’, and ***‘prakaash’*** (a Hindi word meaning light) also starts with ‘p’. Thus the 85th convention inspires us to enter into light. How do we write 85? By putting 5 in front of 8. 8 & 5 together make 13. What does 13 signal to us? I am reminded of a sweet reminiscence related to number 13.

[Note: 13 is pronounced as ***‘terah’*** in Hindi which is very similar to another Hindi words ***‘teraa’*** meaning ‘yours’ in English.]

Guru Nanak Devji Maharaj used to work in a grocery shop. He was an accomplished man, a sant. Still he worked, to set an ideal. Once it so happened that he was selling food grains to a customer weighing 2 kilogram at a time. To remember the amount delivered he would go on incrementally counting every time he weighed 1 Kg such as ‘ek’ (one), ‘do’ (two), ‘teen’ (three), ‘chaar’ (four),..... and so on. As soon as he weighed 13th time, he pronounced ‘terah’ (thirteen) which sounded similar to ‘teraa’ (yours, meaning ‘God’s or belonging to God’), he got connected to the ‘yours’ (i.e. the Supreme Lord) and delivered several extra Kg of food grains to the customer, while his counting had got stuck at 13 ‘teraa’ (yours), ‘teraa’ (yours),

When the shop owner came to know of the incident, he became very angry and started thinking of removing Nanakji from the job. However, when he audited the inventory of grain everything was found to be exactly in order. Nothing less, nothing more. So this ‘terah’ (thirteen) hints towards ‘teraa’ (yours i.e. God’s). Thus, 84 means darkness, whereas 85 means light. How will we go into light? Goswami Tulsidasji has said,

“Terasi teen awasthaa tajahu bhajahu bhagwant.

Man kram vachan agochar, vyaapak vyaapya anant.”

[Meditate upon God (who is beyond the reach of mind, worldly actions and faculty of speech, and is infinitely pervading) by rising beyond the three states.]

The 13th day tells us to forsake the three states (*awakened, dreaming & deep sleep – these are the three states referred to here*). Whoever will take him/ herself beyond the three states, would move into the fourth state. And those who will enter into the fourth state are bound to enter into light, and bound to get light; the prayer of “Lead me into light from darkness!” is fulfilled or answered for him. The 85th Annual Convention, thus, encourages us to journey towards light.

And what about the 86th? This hints us to practice *shabda-saadhana* or *naadaanusandhaan* (the Yoga of Celestial Sound). Light comes after darkness and sound comes after light; so this 86th Annual Convention motivates us to practice *shabda-saadhana* (*audience hails Gurudev*). If we are able to attend properly and sincerely the 86th Annual Convention, we should be aiming at the 87th i.e. *“Nihshabdam Paramam Padam”* (the Ultimate Soundless State beyond the realm of sound). Goswami Tulsidasji says,

“Terasi teen awasthaa tajahu bhajahu bhagwant.”

Meditation upon God would be possible only by quitting the three states and entering into the fourth state. Now what happens when one enters into the realm of light? *“Divya Jnaan”* (Divine knowledge) is obtained; one’s life becomes divine. An illuminated heart leads to an illuminated future, illuminated thoughts, illuminated actions, and illuminated behaviour! Several supernatural abilities are attained. Upon entering into the realm of light, one comes to have awareness of, knowledge of the whole creation. Creation has been formed by sound. Whoever practices meditation on the divine sound comes to have a direct realization of the Supreme Sovereign God. God cannot be realized without practicing *shabda-saadhana* (Yog of Celestial Sound). This 86th (8 and 6 make 14 which is pronounced as *“chaudah”* in Hindi) Annual Convention tells:

***“Chaudasi chaudah bhuvan, achar char roop Gopaal.
Bhed gaye binu raghupati, ati na harahi jag jaal.”***

This ‘14’ hints at the fact that the God filling or pervading all the fourteen worlds is realised by *naadaanusandhaan* or *shabd-saadhanaa*; thus is realized God pervading all animate and inanimate worlds. For such people who practice the yoga of sound the following saying is fulfilled –

“Seeya Ram main sab jag jaanee. Karaun pranaam jori jug paani.”

[I bow down with folded hands to the God considering the whole world to be permeated by Him.]

So this 86th Annual Convention hints at how essential the naadaanusandhaan is and that we must practice it. Natural curiosity arises – how to go into light from darkness, into sound from light, and from sound into soundless states? Who will teach the way? This knowledge can be imparted by persons who are *‘swasth’* (‘swasth’ is of Sanskrit origin meaning ‘healthy’ and is formed of two words, *‘swa’* and *‘stha’*; *‘swa’* meaning self and *‘stha’* meaning situated or living in). You know and see that I am not swasth or healthy. So what can I tell you! Well, let me elaborate a little on *‘swasth’* and *‘aswasth’*. I am not calling myself to be *swasth* because I have not established myself into my ‘Self’. [*This is a statement made in all humility, which is one of the essential attributes of a true sant, from a man who had attained perfection during his lifetime. During private conversations (when he was asked why he frequently made such statements) he would explain the reason for such statements – sants must be plain & humble and hide their supernatural attributes from public view. – Translator*] Those who have established themselves in their true ‘self’ are called *‘swasth’*. I am *‘parasth’* (*‘par’* meaning other or elsewhere). What do I mean by *‘par’*? Our organs, which I call as ours are in fact ‘par’ (not ours).

Once Sri Ramkrishna Paramhans, the famous Sant from West Bengal, India was seated on his *‘Aasan’* (Seat). Swami Vivekanand came and sat near his Lotus feet with a heart full of devotion. Sri Ramkrishna was in a very cheerful state of mind. He said, “Narendra (earlier name of Swami Vivekanand), sing a *bhajan* (devotional song or hymn)”.

Narendra was a very good singer and player of musical instruments. Swami Vivekanand rendered a bhajan in Bengali, a few lines of which are as follows:

“Man chalo nij nicketone.

Sansaar videsh videsheer veshe, ken bhramo akaarone.

Vishay panchak aar bhootgan, sab tor par keh nay aapan.

Par preme kene hoye chho magan, bhoole chho aapan jone.”

[O Mind! Return to your own home. The place you live currently is not yours, it is a foreign land, and this dress you have put on is an alien dress. Why do you keep yourself under illusion? The five subjects (of five sense organs) and five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky – five elements which constitute the Universe) are all (apparently) yours, but none of these are, in reality, your own. Why do you get lost in the love of that which is not yours, and forget Him who is truly your own].

Sant Kabir has said,

***“Kahaa madaave media, lambi bheet usaar,
Ghar to saadhe teen haath, ghaanaa to paune chaar.”***

[Why do you busy yourself in constructing tall houses? Your house (meaning ‘our body’) is only as tall or long as three-and-a-half cubits (a measure of the length of our forearm), or a maximum of three and three quarters (3¾) cubits.]

And even the three and a half cubits long house (our body) which we deem to be our own is, in fact, not ours. Then which is our own home? You see, we can call that house to be our own from which nobody can evict or expel us. If you live in a rented house, you always run the risk to be told, some day or the other, to move out and look for any other apartment. This 3½ cubits tall house of ours is a rented house from which we would have to move out some day. Swami Vivekanand ji gives a call to return to our own home. That home is not situated in ‘this country’. ‘This country’ here does not mean India. Leave alone India; that home, which Swami ji is referring to is not located anywhere on the Earth. This is why Sant Kabir Saahab has said,

“Waa ghar kee sudhi koi na bataave, jaa ghar se jiv aayaa re.”

[Nobody tells the address of the home from where man has come (into this world).]

Saints, therefore, give a clarion call – Come back to that home from which you have come! You are a traveller. How long are you going to be here? Sant Kabir says,

“Rahanaa nahi desh veeraanaa hai.”

[This (world) is an alien land, not a place meant (for us) to live in (permanently)]

This is not our country. Different countries have different characteristic dresses. That is why the Hindi proverb: ***“jaisaa desh waisaa wesh”*** (As the land, so the cloak). India, Nepal, America... all nations have their own typical dress codes. We, having left our own country, have come to this land, an alien land. The cloak that we have put on here is the gross bodily cloak; it is not our true dress. Swami ji sings, ***“sansaar videsh videsheer veshhe”*** (this world is a foreign land, this dress an alien dress.). So, our current appearances are alien appearances, uniforms of a foreigner. Then, ***“ken bhramo akaarane”*** (why do you loiter aimlessly?). And,

“Vishay panchak aar bhootgan, sab tor par keh nay aapan.

Par preme kene hoye chhe magan, bhoole chho aapan jane.”

(Meaning already given above)

Swami ji says, the five subjects – those of form, taste, smell, touch and sound – and your body made of five elements, all of these belong to the other world. None of these belong to you. So, ***“Par preme kene hoye chhe magan”***? Why do you delude yourself in the love of someone who is not yours? Why do you enamour yourself with false temporary pleasures? Lord Buddha had said, ***“O Bhikshu (monk living on alms)! Meditate. Be alert. Let not your attention stray towards (worldly) pleasures, lest you have to swallow the red hot iron balls in the hell in exchange for these pleasures and cry and exclaim in grief, ‘All this is sorrow!’”***. We are lost in attraction or charm of alien things. This body, which we call as our own and involve ourselves so much in doing all sorts of things for, is also not ours.

This year (1997) several respected and renowned persons came to Maharshi Mehi Ashram, Kupaaghat, Bhagalpur, Bihar (India), where I usually reside, to invite me to the Annual Convention of Santmat Satsang of the District of Katihar (Bihar, India). I was not so well then. I told them, “Such eminent persons as you have come to me! If you say so, I am ready to come along with you to Katihar, but listen to a quote of Lord Buddha-

***“Mattaasukh parichhaagaa passe cha vipulam sukham,
Chaje mattaasukh dheero sampassam vipulam sukham.”***

[If sacrificing lesser pleasures leads to greater happiness, then the wise should look to the greater bliss.]

You are inviting me to the Santmat Satsang on a district level which is going to be shortly followed by the Annual Convention of All India Santmat Satsang to be held at Rishikesh (a sacred city in the Himalayas, Uttaranchal, India). Now you yourselves decide which one I should attend – the one at Katihar or the one at Rishikesh? (audience chants, “Hail our Satguru!”)”

When the army of monkeys searching for Sita ji (wife of Shri Ram who had been kidnapped by the Demon King, Raavan) reached the sea-beach, then the Senapati (Commander of the Army) came to confirm the intelligence that Sita ji was somewhere in Sri Lanka. It was not possible to reach there without crossing the sea which was more than a hundred miles wide. Now the big question was: who will cross the sea? Different monkeys started giving accounts of their might and tried to cross the sea. Some were able to go only 20, 30, 40 miles and so on. Angad (son of late monkey-king Bali) said,

“angad kahaa jaaon main paaraa. Man sanshay kachhu firati baaraa.”

[I can cross the sea, but I doubt if I would be able to come back too.]

“So”, I said to the gentlemen, “you consider my health – condition. I can cross the Ganga River and go over from Bahgalpur to Katihar, but I doubt if, after returning from Katihar, I will be in a position (physically) to go to Rishikesh. Now you all will decide whether you would want me to go to Rishikesh for the All India Convention, or to the District Convention of Katihar?” All of them were educated, responsible, learned and wise people; they replied, “We would prefer you to go to Rishikesh.” (Audience hails Guru)

The pleasure of the sense-organs is short-lived and petty. There is so little enjoyment in this, while the pleasure of the soul is great, the highest bliss. If some petty pleasures have to be sacrificed for attaining greater bliss, we should shun the former. That is why Swami Vivekanand ji asks, forgetting true delight, that is the bliss of the soul, why are you engrossed in sensory enjoyments? You are not *indriyas* (organs). Recognise yourself – who are you! Sant Sundarrrdas ji says,

“Too to kachhu bhoomi naanhi, ap tej vaayu naanhi,

Vyom panch vish naahi, so to bhram koop hai.

Too to kachhu indriya ru antahkaran naahi,

Teen gun too to naahi, na to chhanhi dhoop hai.

Too to ahankaar naanhi, puni mahatatva naanhi,

Prakriti purush naanhi, too tau swa anoop hai.

Sundar vichaar aise, shishya soon kahat guru,

Naanhi naanhi kahat rahai, soi tero roop hai.”

[You are none of the five gross elements (soil, water, fire or heat, air and space), nor are

you the five subjects (of sense-organs), for all these are mere illusions. You are not the external or internal organs, nor are you the three attributes/ qualities (of nature namely, satogun, tamogun and rajogun), as these are ephemeral like sun and shade. Further, you are not the self-ego or the nature; you are unique, without a simile. Sundar says that Guru while expounding such beautiful thoughts to the disciple, tells that our true Self can be likened to nothing in this universe; nothing like it, nothing like it!]

Identify your 'Self'. The day we establish ourselves in that 'Self', we will become '*swastha*' (abiding or living in one's true Self – truly healthy). So long as we are not seated in that 'Self', we are '*a-swastha*' (unhealthy or not abiding in one's true 'Self'). Our Gurudev or for that matter, all other sants, exhort us to establish ourselves in our own 'Self' and that is our '*swadharm*' (own or true duty or religion). At present, we are in '*paradharm*' (others' religion). In this regard, Lord Shri Krishna has remarked in Shreemad Bhagvad Geeta,
“Swadharme nidhanam shreyah paradharmo bhayaavahah”

This means that slavery to others' religion (*Here others' religion does not mean Christianity or Islam for the Hindu, or Hinduism or Islam for the Christian etc. Here reference is to the religions of body and soul*) is frightening; it is the best to abide by one's own religion rather than by others', even if it means to sacrifice ourselves. Abiding in *swadharm* leads us towards progress, while *pardharm* directs us towards decline or doom. *Swadharm* imparts to us immortality, while *pardharm* drags us into jaws of death. Thus, we need to know '*swadharm*'. That is why, Lord Shri Krishna says, “Sacrifice yourself for your *swadharm*”. Guru Nanak Dev ji preaches, ***“Saache sachiyaar vitahu kurvaanu”*** (Sacrifice your life for the Truth!).

The Supreme sovereign God is that Truth. Let us forsake everything for Him. Another sant from West Bengal (India) who lived in Bihar, Yogi Panchanan Bhattacharya says the same thing. He throws a question in our face that though we may have grown old, have we ever met our 'Self'?

***“Aami aami kori, boojhite naa paari,
Ke aami aamaate, aachhe kee roton.
Kon shokti boli, bedaaye choli boli,
Kaar abhaav hole hoy, deh ochetan.
Deh maajhe aachhe, praaneri sonchaar,
Taahaa tae boli, aamee baa aamaar.
Praan gele chole, hobe shobaakaar,
Ke baa kaar kothaa, robe dhan jon.”***

[All the time I keep on parrot-like talking and thinking of 'I' and 'mine' without knowing or realizing fully who 'I' am and what lies inside me! Which force enables me to walk and talk, and, in whose absence, this body of mine becomes devoid of all sense or awareness. In fact, the life-force, or the current of consciousness keeps on flowing through my body and enables me to talk and think of 'I' or 'mine'. Once this life-force leaves this body, it turns into a corpse! Then where am 'I', and where are all my wealth and kiths and kin?]

Therefore, know thyself. Unless you know your ‘self’, you do not know anything even though you might think you know many things or everything! On the contrary, if you know your ‘Self’, and do not know anything else, you, in fact, know everything. All the saints have asked us to know our ‘self’. First of all, let us know ourselves, later on we will be able to know everything related to us. When we are aware of our body, we are also aware of the persons and things related to our body. When we are unaware of our body, we also lose awareness of all things related to it, and, thus, can not reap any benefits related to the body. Similarly, what will happen when we come to know our ‘self’, our soul? In that case, since soul (*aatmaa*) is related to the Supreme Sovereign Soul (*paramaatmaa*), we would be able to avail ourselves of the Divine profits or gains that accrue from God. Therefore, unless and until we know ‘*swa*’, our soul, we can not know the Supra-Soul or God that is connected to it; as a result we will deprive ourselves of all the related benefits. It is for this reason that all the saints advise: ‘Know Thyself’. Apart from ‘self’ all are ‘others’ and not ours.

Shri Bhartrihari ji in “Vairagyashatak” opines that we must make efforts to know the ‘Self’ while we are in good health (i.e. during youth itself):

*“Yaavat swasthamidam kalevargrih yaavachch doore jaraa,
Yaavachhendriya shaktirpratihataa yaavatkshayo naayushah.
Aatmashreyasi taavadeva vidushaa kaaryah prayatno mahaan,
Proddyeepte bhavane cha koopakhanan pratyuddyamah keedrishah”*

[So long as this body is young and healthy, so long as old age is far away, so long as the organs possess the vigour, and so long as enough life is left, the wise should strive hard to lift their individual souls to the state of the Absolute Knowledge! Delay not or else, (all efforts) will be as futile as trying to dig a well to fetch water (for extinguishing fire) after the fire has broken out!]

That is, so long as this body is healthy, free of diseases, far from old age, so long as your organs are strong enough, so long as there is full life-force in your body, dedicate yourself to the grand and noble endeavour of lifting up your individual soul. If you do not make efforts now, do you know what will happen? You will grow old. Your organs will become powerless. Your body will lose the vigour. Your eyes will become weak. The ears’ capacity to hear will be impaired. How, then, will you go to meet saints? How will you listen to their discourses? You would not be able to sit straight for long; then how you will meditate? You will catch cough & cold and fever; will grow weak and pass days lying in bed surrounded by doctors, sons & relatives. Will you be able to do anything worthy then except repenting, “Oh? I did not do anything meaningful so long as opportune time was there! Time is past now!” Kabir Sahab says,

*“Aachhe din paachhe gaye, hari se kiyaa na het,
Ab pachhataaye hot kyaa, jab chidiyaa chug gayi khet.”*

[(You) did not make any timely efforts to connect to God and let good days pass by. Now of what avail is all the repentance, when everything is lost and nothing can be done (to save the situation)?]

So, Bhartrihari ji Maharaj says, your condition, then, will be the same as his who has gone out to dig a well to fetch water for putting out the fire after it has broken out. He will dig the well, pump out water and then try to quench the fire. Will he be able to salvage anything from the fire? You, too, will find yourself in a similar situation, helpless state. At the very end of your life, you won't be able to do anything other than crying over spilt milk! And, in the same state of anguish & remorse, you will have to say good bye to this world. Lord Buddha had said,

***“Acharitvaa brahmachariyam aladdhaa yobbane dhanam,
Jinn kronchaa va jhaayanti kheenmachchhe va pallale.
Acharitvaa brahmachariyam aladdhaa yobbane dhanam,
Senti chaapatikhittaa va puraanaani anuththunam.”***

[Those who have not observed continence during their youth and have not saved money for livelihood (for rainy days), keep on remorsefully thinking during their ripe age in vain and are not able to do anything in the same way as the arrow once shot from the bow can never be called back.]

Citing an example, he said, suppose a crane which lives near a pond, has grown old. What will it do? It will die of hunger, what else? We also will meet the fate of that old crane, if we do not earn 'enough wealth' during our prime age. 'Enough wealth' here does not mean worldly wealth. Earn the wealth of devotion. Our Gurudev has said,

“Dridh bhajan dhan hee khaas ho, fir traas kyaa rahe.”

[No afflictions will worry you, if you have earned and amassed the treasure of intense devotion.]

In words of Sant Kabir,

***“Kabir so dhan sanchiye jo aage ko hoy,
Sheesh chadhaaye gaatharee jaat na dekhaa koy.”***

[Preserve the wealth which will stand you in good stead in the long run. Nobody has been seen to carry away the payload of (worldly) wealth from this world.]

Even if we might have stashed a whole world of (worldly) riches, nothing will accompany us when we depart from this world. If something shall accompany us, it is the wealth of devotion only.

I am pleased to see one of my American disciples from the United States of America here with me. When he had come to see me the last time, I had asked him, “You have taken ***deekshaa*** (initiation) from me. How much time do you give to meditation?” He replied, “I have too much of work load with very less of free time available. Hence, I can't devote much time to meditation.” To this I told him, “Will you take all the money you are earning along with you from this world? So, do that which can accompany you. Devote time in earning that wealth which you will be able to carry with you from this world.” On going back to America, he shed a lot of extra work. Now he does less of worldly work and guards his time for meditation. How fortunate or privileged is he! He fulfils his worldly obligations and, at the same time, practices meditation also. I thank him a lot. My blessings to him! He has elevated ***sanskar***. You see, if you rub a dry matchstick against a matchbox, it catches fire immediately. On the other hand, if the matchstick is wet,

however hard you try to rub it, it won't burn, break though it may. Similarly, those whose *sanskar* are good imbibe exhortations in the very first instance. The same applies to my dear disciple from America.

I had heard a story of a very rich man from the same country i.e. America, who had his treasure trove in the basement. Once when he was on an inspection visit to his treasury underground, the power supply tripped and he was suffocated to death. He quit his body near his treasure, so, what do you think, he must have carried away some portion of the treasure along with him? No? Why? If we are away from our material treasure at the time of death, it is understandable if we could not take anything along; but will we not be able to carry the treasure even if we die very near it? Yes, we won't. What an irony! In spite of this, we keep on doing so much, putting in our utmost for stashing this worldly wealth. Sant Palatoo Sahab ha said,

*“Maayaa thaganeer badee thagee yah jaat hai,
Bache na yaa se kou, lagee din raat hai.
Kaudi naahi sang, karorin jodi ke,
Are haan re ‘Palatoo’, gaye hain raajaa rank langoti chhodi ke.”*

[Maya is a big thug (con). It spares none. It is after all of us, day and night. We do so much to earn millions, but are not able to take even a penny along. Palatoo says, be it a king or a beggar, everyone had to go empty-handed from here, even leaving their inner wear here only.]

So, let us earn and collect that wealth which will accompany us even after we leave this world. Which wealth is that? That is the wealth of devotion, of meditation. Our Gurudev has been so kind and compassionate to teach us the art of or way to that end which can be practiced by monks (sanyasins) and householders alike; there is no discrimination of any kind here. So, live in mutual harmony and practice meditation. *I thank you all very much!*