

# The Philosophy of Liberation

By Maharishi Mehi

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1. Stillness or steadiness is the essence of *Shanti*.<sup>1</sup>
2. He who has attained *Shanti* is a saint.<sup>2</sup>
3. Sant Mat encompasses the thoughts and way of saints.
4. The desire for attaining *Shanti* is natural in human beings.

In the *Upanishads*<sup>3</sup> the formula for the attainment of *Shanti* is expounded by the seers and saints of these ancient works. Similar views have been expressed by the saints of all times, including such saints as Guru Nanak Sahab and Kabir Sahab who expounded their views in the *Punjabi* and *Hindi* languages respectively.<sup>4</sup> Such expressions are for the inspiration and edification of all people.

However, the *Upanishads* uniquely and fully describe the means for attaining *Shanti* and describe the means for attaining the Highest Wisdom. That is why the *Upanishads* are considered the foundation of Sant Mat. Further, a comprehensive exposition of the Divine Word-Sound is given in the *Upanishads* which leads to the Highest Wisdom. The *Upanishads* explain the yogic techniques and systematic views of transcending thought and attaining the Absolute through the use of sound (Yoga of *Surat-shabda*).<sup>5</sup> Sant Mat follows the yogic path as prescribed in the *Upanishads* and specifically employs *Surat-shabda-Yoga* in its practices. The result of such practice is the attainment of the Highest Goal, the knowledge of the Supreme.

This is not to undermine the teachings of other saints, but rather to say that in the *Upanishads* are found the basis of the teachings of these saints. Often the teachings of various saints would, on the surface, seem contradictory to each other or even contradictory to the principles of the *Upanishads*. In fact, there is an unbreakable unity in the spiritual views of all saints. In different times and in different places saints appear, and their followers name their tradition in respect to the particular saint. The appearance of differences can be attributed to time, place and language, giving varied labels to views

which are in reality the same. Likewise, due to excessively zealous followers these seeming differences are often accentuated. When all sectarianism and the forms of the particular time or place of the writings of a saint are removed, the basic principles of Sant Mat are in unity. The Ultimate, Unbounded, Infinite state (as described in section 11) is the unique possession of a saint. Further, the means to attain this state (as described in section 59 and 61) are found in the writings of the saints. Even though there are differences in the name and form of the Deity of worship, the underlying unity of the Unbounded dissolves these seeming differences (according to the idea expounded in section 86).

*Surat-Shabda-Yoga* as a means to attain the Unbounded state is an integral and indispensable aspect of the Sant Mat tradition. Any tradition devoid of this essential aspect is not true Sant Mat. Various saints describe the Yoga of *Surat -Shabda*, and from these descriptions we become aware of the significance of *Surat-Shabda-Yoga*. The following are some words of the great saints, concerning the importance of *Surat-Shabda-Yoga*:

Guru Nanak Sahab states:

"The invisible and supra-sensory name of God (Divine Word-Sound) is extremely sweet and lovely."

Tuls- Das states:

"I offer homage to the Divine Name of the Universal Being, *Ram*, which is the cause of the sun, the moon and the fire. That Divine Universal Name is the form of the creator, maintainer and destroyer."

.....One will not succeed in Yoga if purity of character is disregarded. Lying, stealing, smoking, taking of drugs (including alcohol), violence, and adultery are all obstructions to the successful practice meet the Supreme Sovereign).

53. Listening to and study of the discourses on this sacred knowledge is an important step in the Sant Mat tradition. Listening to *satsaïga* (spiritual discourses) is prescribed as an essential activity.

54. The personal and private instruction in the art of this spiritual practice should be received from a *Sadguru* (an accomplished spiritual master). Once the technique has been learned, one should practice it regularly and daily according to the instructions given by the master.

70. Through constant practice of the Meditation of Sound, the practitioner also experiences the Divine Light. Just as upon attending a concert, one cannot help but notice the beautiful setting, of Upper Nature, the plurality of sounds ceases to exist, and only then can the Essential Divine sound be experienced. Other sounds of the various Realms are not experienced at this level of the State of Oneness because diversity does not exist in the state of Oneness.

75. The State beyond Sound is acknowledged in the writings of saints as the goal of their teachings. In addition, their writings accept repetition of a Divine name, concentration on a form of the Divine, fixing the mind on a point and concentrating on the inner sounds of the different spheres as a means to reach the Soundless State. These four techniques are therefore essential in Sant Mat.

76. Without achieving perfection in the Yoga of Sound, the realization of the Supreme Sovereign God or the Knowledge of the Self cannot be achieved.

77. Without resolute devotion to the *guru* (a spiritual master), even by means of the Yoga of Sound, the realization of the Supreme Sovereign God is not possible. Without the help of the master, it is not possible to attain the full devotion for the Divine and the highest good.

82. The recognition of a true spiritual master is the most difficult of tasks. However, the one who has purity of character (rectitude), who practices diligently the Yoga of Sound, and who can explain clearly Sant Mat (the path of saints) can be accepted and trusted and given devotion as a spiritual master. A person without rectitude or purity of character, regardless of the other qualities just mentioned, should not be regarded as a true master.

If one has accepted a spiritual teacher and later finds him or her lacking in rectitude, that teacher should be abandoned. In spite of the teacher's exquisite knowledge, association with that teacher is not desirable if he or she is lacking in moral character. As the aspirant is particularly affected by the teacher's moral character, it is imperative to avoid

teachers without moral virtues. Purity of character is the essential quality of a teacher and if purity is lacking that teacher is no better than an animal. A teacher lacking purity of character or other essential virtues is a false spiritual teacher. The fruits of accepting a true master are immense. Unfortunately, true teachers are few and difficult to find. A spiritual master who is wise, pure and a practitioner of the Yoga of Divine Sound gradually imparts his or her virtues to the student. The good will of the spiritual teacher cannot but help affecting the aspirant in a positive manner because one is affected by the power of a higher vibration. Section 77 describes the qualities of the teacher and how the aspirant benefits from his or her relationship with the teacher.

The master who practices the Yoga of Sound but is negligent in his moral character and in his spiritual knowledge is harmful to the seeker of spiritual knowledge. If one has accepted such a master, disregarding the importance of rectitude and knowledge, the aspirant would be deprived of the benefits of the association with a true preceptor, mentioned in the previous paragraph. In addition, in following an immoral teacher the aspirant would have the difficult task of not going astray, much less advancing on the spiritual path. However, without the aid of a true teacher this spiritual task can be undertaken by a few steadfast learned disciples. For most it is almost impossible to undertake this task. of gaining grace as described in the writings of the saints.

83. The aspiration to serve with love and behave humbly before the teacher arises naturally in the hearts of students. Therefore, devotion to the spiritual teacher is also natural. To say anything against devotion to the teacher is pointless. And also, the wise will not give devotion to an unworthy teacher and will influence other aspirants to do the same.

84. The four essential elements an aspirant of the spiritual path needs are the following: one, association of saints and hearing of things spiritual; two, moral rectitude; three, dedication to the teacher; and four practice of meditation. These essentials have previously been discussed; association is referenced in section 53; moral rectitude is addressed in section 60; meditation is referenced in sections 54 through 59. In Sant Mat an intense eagerness to acquire these essentials must be present. However, devotion to the teacher is paramount to the other three essentials and is the key to achieving the other three.

85. The desire of an individual to be free from sufferings and to attain the happiness of absolute peace is naturally present in the hearts of all. The purpose of Sant Mat is to provide a system which fulfills the desires of attaining absolute peace.

.....The saints and true teachers are known to be impartial; their blessings fall like the rain. However, the rain, while falling on all, tends to collect in deep pools just as the grace of the saints while showering on all flows rapidly and collects in the deep pools of the aspirants who are devoted. It is not surprising that the aspirants through their devotion draw the grace of the master towards them. Aspirants who give great attention to the ways of the teacher are worthy of the gift of knowledge. Obviously, not the careless one, but the one who honors the gift and cares for the receiving bowl receives the gift of the grace of the teacher. Making oneself worthy is the secret of devotion to the master, and will greatly facilitate meditation explained in detail in section 59.

105. The means to attain the direct knowledge of the Supreme Sovereign God (Summary of the *Philosophy of Liberation*).

Before learning the technique to attain the direct knowledge of the Supreme Sovereign, intellectual understanding of the essential nature of the Supreme Sovereign God and one's own self is necessary. Through hearing and studying the discourses of spiritual teachers and contemplation, such knowledge can be acquired. Along with knowledge of the order of creation, the reason for not having the direct knowledge of both should be sought. Through intellectual understanding of the essential nature of the Supreme Sovereign, it is determined what needs to be attained. One should be able to discern whether it is the body which realizes the Supreme or the Self, Knower within the body. Also, for this realization should the practices be of an external nature (outwardly devotional practices) or internal nature (Yoga of Vision and Yoga of Sound)? Having come to an understanding, these wanderings will be left behind. After gaining the intellectual knowledge of one's Self, one will understand whether one is suited for attaining this Knowledge. Once, intellectual knowledge of the order of creation and the reasons for not having direct knowledge of God and one's own Self are understood then the means will be brought to light. With this revelation one will be able to go be

ultimately merging in Soundlessness or the Supreme Sovereign God. The internal practice of meditation ends here: the Supreme God is realized and the work is completed.

98. The practitioner should support himself in gainful employment, living on one's own earnings. The aspirant is best content with a few things.

99. The aspirant should keep himself free of impulses such as lust, anger, greed, delusion, egotism, jealousy and fear. In his interest for spiritual progress, the practitioner should create pure mental habits: compassion, mercy, contentment, forgiveness and humbleness.

100. The following should be avoided because they cause unsteadiness of the mind: intake of intoxicants, including alcohol and various non-prescription drugs, and eating of meat and fish.

101. Through association of saints, the hearing of spiritual talks and study, wisdom can be acquired. Wisdom is essential in determining what is the right way to live your life. Without wisdom one can make poor decisions, which result in undesirable consequences.

.....In conclusion, as has been stated the microcosm and macrocosm are interconnected as they are completely permeated by the realms described above. Likewise, to go beyond all the realms is to go beyond all concealments. Further, in whatever realm the individual dwells, he dwells in that realm both in the microcosmic sense as well as the macrocosmic sense. In addition, if one ceases inhabiting one of the Realms, then he leaves behind both the microcosmic as well as the beyond the concealments of Causal Nature imposed on the creation and the Self and then will meet with the Supreme and experience direct knowledge of the Supreme Sovereign God.