

SANT BANI ASHRAM

UPDATES – SPRING, 2020



Hazur Maharaj Kirpal used to say, “Leave one hundred urgent works to attend satsang, and give up one thousand urgent works to meditate.” He used to say that as it is necessary for us to give food to our soul—because our soul has been hungry from ages and ages and it needs the food of meditation and Shabd.

Ajaib Singh, from The Two Ways

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND VIRTUAL SATSANGS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in innumerable ways. In early March Sant Bani Ashram shifted to virtual satsangs. It canceled the April 4 meditation retreat and any planned personal retreats. Soon thereafter, the Big House and Meditation Hall were closed until further notice. It was decided with heavy hearts that it was best to cancel the in-person July retreat (although see the notice below about a one-day virtual retreat). Next, we postponed all retreats and now have canceled all in-person retreats and personal visits until further notice.

An unexpected outcome of the corona virus situation was the implementation of live satsangs via Zoom. If you haven't participated to date and are interested, satsang can be joined via telephone, via the Zoom app or through the website <https://zoom.us>. We are holding satsang Monday through Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m. (ET). Sunday Satsang is available live at 11:00 a.m. (ET). Children's satsang is held on Saturday mornings 10 a.m. (ET). These sessions provide dear ones with the opportunity to remember the Masters, sing bhajans, and listen to the teachings together as we socially distance during the pandemic. One can join from anywhere in the world. For those who are unable to join the live sessions, recordings of the sessions are available through santbaniashram.org. If you want information about how to join these live satsangs please contact us. For troubleshooting problems with Zoom, contact santbaniashram.tech@gmail.com.

We look forward to the time when we can gather for meditation in the Satsang Hall once again.



MEDITATION BEFORE VIRTUAL SATSANG

We began holding virtual meditations before each Zoom satsang starting on June 1st. To meditate for an hour before satsang, join the Evening Satsang a minute or two before 6:25 p.m. Monday through Saturday and/or the Sunday Satsang at 9:55 a.m. The host for that meditation will let everyone into the meeting at that time and will read or play a short 2-5 minute selection before everyone begins meditating. At the end of the reading, the session will be closed, so that anyone who arrives late will be in the waiting room until the satsang starts. At 7:25 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10:55 a.m. on Sunday, the meditation will end, and satsang will begin at the usual time of 7:30 p.m. and 11:00 a.m. respectively.



JULY 6TH VIRTUAL RETREAT

We are also happy to announce that we will hold a virtual retreat on Monday, July 6th in remembrance of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji. The schedule has four meditation and satsang sessions.

Monday, July 6, 2020

All times are Eastern Time.

During meditation times, the Zoom meeting will be closed.

3:00 - 6:00 a.m.	Meditation on one's own
1st Session	
6:00 - 6:30 a.m.	Satsang
6:30 - 7:30 a.m.	Meditation – Bell to end meditation, followed by singing of a bhajan
2nd Session	
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.	Satsang
10:00 - 12:00 noon	Meditation – Bell to end meditation
3rd Session	
3:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Bhajan singing, open to all. Session ends with meditation talk.
3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Meditation – Bell to end meditation
4th Session	
6:25 - 6:30 p.m.	Short reading
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Meditation – Bell to end meditation
7:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Video Satsang

To participate, join the Zoom meeting a minute or two before each session starts. The meditation sessions and satsangs will take place as described above.

We hope you can participate and that even though we remain physically apart, you will find this form of group meditation helpful.



MASTER KIRPAL FACES EPIDEMICS AS A YOUNG MAN

Chapter Eight of the book *Love, Light and Life, Events in the Life of a Great Master Soul*, by Devinder Narendra and Eileen Wigg, provides a timely description of how Master Kirpal Singh faced a number of public health crises, including the influenza pandemic of 1919. Part of the chapter is reproduced here.

In 1919, after the First World War had ended, a wave of severe influenza swept through the Punjab, reaching epidemic proportions. Up to then, science had not found a cure for nor an effective inoculation against this disease and people started dying by the hundreds. The malady was highly contagious and fear spread even faster than the disease, clutching at the hearts of the populace. Even kith and kin were reluctant to be near the unfortunate victims, and stricken men, women and children were left abandoned in their homes, by the roadside, or in the fields. Many of the fortunate ones fled the area, anxious to run as far from the dread sickness as possible.

It struck Kirpal's heart to see what was happening. He felt helpless to know how to cope with the terrible tragedy—where to start? Thousands were sick, dying and dead, and apparently no one would go near them but himself. He knew the numbers were too many to handle alone, so he got all his friends together and pleaded for their help—promising to do the very dirty work himself. To his relief, a few of them volunteered. There was cleaning, washing, cooking, giving medicine, feeding, administering comfort and burying or cremating the dead. Kirpal was here, there and everywhere possible. Eventually, gradually, more people joined in to help with the work, until finally they beat the last case of influenza in Lahore. There was no time for relief or rest however, for adversity was to deal the ravaged town another shattering blow. Plague!

Once again, the government was unprepared for such an event, especially following in the wake of the influenza epidemic. Once again people were dying—in larger numbers than before—and the fear of influenza was overshadowed by the unmitigated terror the plague incurred. What would be an even greater exodus began from the stricken city.

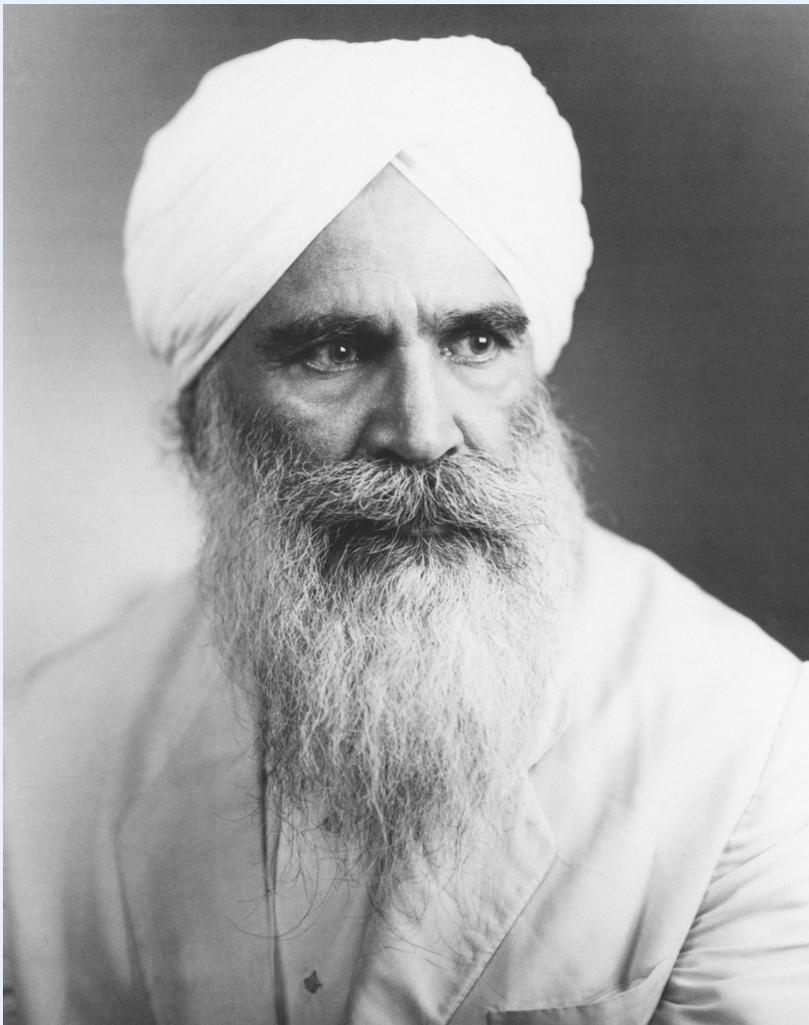
Small towns and villages alike, throughout the area, had the appearance of battlefields where, in the aftermath of battle, the ground lay littered with a graveyard of rotting bodies—the unfortunate who had died with no one to tend them and no one to cremate them. It was the influenza epidemic over again, only worse. Thousands left their sick and dying relatives and ran for their lives. The stench of rotting bodies and sickness filled the air and the nostrils night and day, accentuating a scene of unspeakable misery.

Lion-hearted Kirpal once more entered the arena—this time alone, for no one would help him. Tying a cloth over his nose and mouth, he worked incessantly—not stopping to sleep. Slowly, those who had not fled the city began to notice him working alone and unafraid at his cheerless task, and sheepishly drew nearer with feelings of shame filtering into their hearts. Working under Kirpal's instructions they metamorphosed into brave human beings, picking

up the bodies, piling them into carts and transporting them outside the city for cremation. Watching Kirpal's ceaseless love and compassion for the sick ones, they too began to serve them and minister to their needs.

These same volunteers, in the years to follow, repeated the story of how, by some miraculous form of endurance, they worked hour after hour without fatigue. If, after many hours of arduous labor they began to feel a little weary, they just looked at Kirpal for a few minutes and, magically, felt renewed and recharged with vitality. The task was huge and no time could be spared to stop and ponder the enormity of it all. Only at the end of the hideous nightmare, when the whole unwonted experience was over, did the volunteers wonder in amazement how such an impossible venture had been achieved in so little time, with not a single man feeling sick or falling out for rest.

In the words of one stalwart worker: "We gave no thought to time, we did not rest, we just obeyed the young man and did our best. We felt no strain at all but a great joy rose in our hearts and we had such love and compassion for the sufferers—as if we were suffering with them. It was truly a wonderful experience that we would not have missed."



Kirpal's name was on everyone's lips—the sick and the healthy—as respect and admiration for him spread in the hearts of the people of Lahore. In usual circumstance he would have been hailed as a hero and awarded public recognition but, true to his nature, he withdrew as the government began to restore order. The incident gradually faded into a memory. If the subject arose in his presence, those who would have discussed it were met with a cool and aloof expression, tinged with a little sadness. They abided by his obvious wish to let the whole thing be forgotten but in thought they felt, *Surely he is a strange man to understand.*



NEW BOOK BY SANT JI

*O Farid, there are dozens who say they are friends; I search, but I cannot find even one.
I yearn for my Beloved like a smoldering fire.*

Sant Bani Ashram is very happy to announce a new book entitled, *The Pain of Separation*. It gathers together Sant Ji's commentaries on the hymns of Sheik Farid from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Once the book is published, information will be sent out regarding how to obtain copies; it will be available as hardcopy, e-pub and PDF versions. Background on the publication of this book is provided by Russell Perkins as part of his Introduction, copied below.

During his lifetime Sant Ajaib Singh supervised the translation of Kabir's epic poem, published as *The Ocean of Love: The Anurag Sagar of Kabir*. Three additional books consisting of his commentary on important sections of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the central religious scripture of Sikhism, were also published. These were: *The Jewel of Happiness: The Sukhmani of Guru Arjan*; *The Two Ways: The Gauri Vars of Guru Ram Das*; and *In the Palace of Love: The Asa di Vars of Guru Nanak*.

During his last visit to America, he came to Sant Bani Ashram in Sanbornton, NH. On July 27, 1996, he met with the Ashram's Board of Directors and concluded his remarks to them with the following:

I am very happy to see the book put together by Daryl Rubin [*The Ambrosial Hour*]. It is very good. I am sure that the sangat will benefit from it. And there are other books also in the pipeline, like the *satsang* where I have commented upon Kabir Sahib's hymns and Bhai Gurdas and Farid Sahib, and all that. And when those books will be published, I am sure that the dear ones in the sangat will benefit from that. I know it is very hard work, it is not an easy work, to put a book together. It takes a lot to compile a book. But Guru Nanak Sahib said that we can do good for others only if we sacrifice on our part.

In addition to the three books he mentioned in his remarks, with regard to Sant Ji's reference to "and all that," at various times he also referred specifically to the publication of books of commentary on hymns by women Saints, notably Sahajo Bai,¹ and on the hymns of the Sarang ki Var of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.² The first of these five books was published in 2010 as *The Rescue: The Vars of Bhai Gurdas*. This book, commenting on the verses of Farid, is the second in this series.

¹ In the *satsang* of 10/10/1992 on a hymn of Sahajo Bai, Sant Ji said, "Just like I commented earlier on the Gauri Vars and the other *bani*s (verses) from *Guru Granth Sahib*, which were later formed into a book and people were benefiting a lot by reading those books, in the same way the *satsang* which I will be commenting on Sahajo Bai's *bani* will be available in the form of a book later."

² In the *satsang* of 12/24/1988 Sant Ji said, "A hymn of Rag Sarang is presented to you. Rag Sarang is a section or a part of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Earlier also I had commented on, I had given about six or seven talks from this same Var so that these talks may also be made available to the dear ones in the form of the book, like the talks of Rag Gauri Var. The book *The Two Ways* is based on talks on the Rag Gauri."

There is a reason why great spiritual Masters take the trouble to write books. Their purpose, their reason for being, is to take children of God, all of us, every human being, back to our Real Home as quickly and easily as possible. The more we understand about the Masters and the reality of the universe we live in, about the difference between Illusion and Reality and about the ultimate basic fact that "God resides in every heart," the more real the Masters' teachings are for us. The easier it becomes for the Master to do what he was born to do and the easier it is for us to allow him to do it. We all want to know, to understand; while it is true that knowledge and understanding come only after going within and seeing for ourselves what the Master is talking about, still we can understand a very great deal by studying and digesting the words he has provided for us. The wisdom, compassion, and grace that Sant Ji showed in the writing of these last books can benefit us all, if we take advantage of it.

Russell Perkins



The following is a short excerpt from Chapter Six:

The bani of Farid Sahib is presented to you. Farid Sahib was a Sufi Saint, born in the Muslim religion, and his bani is included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan Dev Ji Maharaj has included the banis of only those Masters who had attained the highest position, had reached the eternal home and whose path was that of the Five Shabds. Farid had so much yearning in his within since his childhood. When he did so many rites and rituals and still did not get to meet the Lord, he had the pain of separation; one can understand the pain of separation only if one experiences it. He who does not know what the pain of separation is, how can he understand it? Here we weep for our children and wealth. The wife weeps for her husband and the husband weeps for his wife, but there are also such people who stay up all night in the separation of God Almighty and weep for him.

Kabir Sahib says, "The whole world is happy, they eat and sleep. Servant Kabir is unhappy as he weeps and stays awake." He says, "I have the pain of separation from God and that is why I stay up and weep for him."

In the same way Farid Sahib says, "O Farid, on the day I was born, if my mother had cut my throat instead of my umbilical cord, I would not have fallen into so many troubles and suffered so much."

Just imagine if we all had the same thoughts like Farid Sahib; how would we still be sitting here? We would have met God Almighty right away.

Master Kirpal used to say, "The coming of a dear soul to the Master is like bringing dry gunpowder near the fire."

We, the others, are wet gunpowder and when we get the warmth of the satsangs, we dry up in respect to the desires of the world and we wake up in respect to God Almighty. So, listen to this bani carefully. He explains things to us lovingly.



SANT BANI ASHRAM WEBSITE

Many changes and upgrades have been made to the Sant Bani Ashram website, <https://santbaniashram.org>. Please take a look.

- Audio recordings of Sunday satsangs are posted from both Sant Bani and the Sebastopol, California satsangs.
- An extensive audio recording library of Sant Ji's talks in MP3 format is now available. More are being added with the goal of having all of his recorded talks available with a searchable database. Sweet remembrances of the Master by various satsangis are also available.
- MP3 files of bhajans, including some sung by Sant Ji
- Over 600 video recordings of Sant Ji on Vimeo, as well as videos of Master Kirpal and Sawan. Eventually we would like to have a searchable database for these as well.
- Many beautiful photographs of the Masters
- A bookstore where hardcopy books are available as well as free PDFs
- Single page self-introspection diary form, as free PDF
- Schedule of satsangs and retreats
- Announcements
- Contact information and links

BOUND VOLUMES OF SANT BANI MAGAZINE AVAILABLE

Copies of bound volumes of Sant Bani Magazine from several years are available. They can be mailed to you, with no charge other than shipping costs.

A list of the volumes/years on hand is posted on the Sant Bani Website at <https://santbaniashram.org/sant-bani-magazine/>
Copies can be requested by emailing: sbapublications@gmail.com.

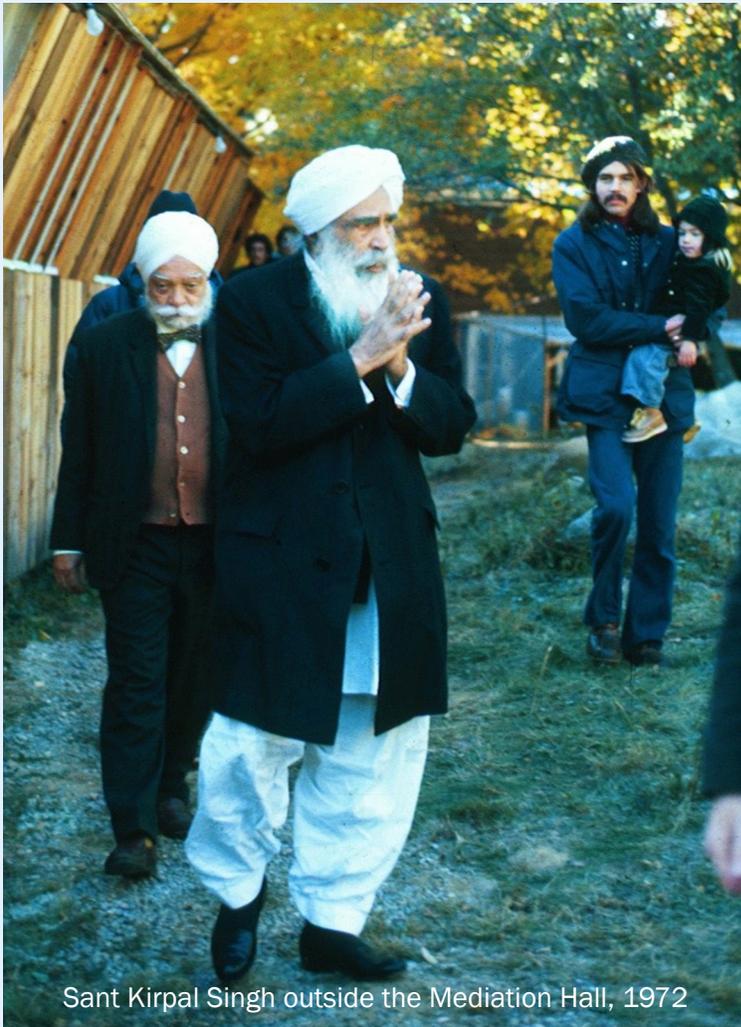


MAINTENANCE AT THE ASHRAM

Two hundred and thirty-year-old New England farmhouses need maintenance. The past couple of years the ashram maintenance committee has put a lot of work into the Big House, our main guest house. The shingles on the roof were replaced. A new natural gas heating system was installed. As well as working better, it is a small contribution to reducing carbon emissions. Several windows were replaced, preserving the traditional colonial style. There was also a major emphasis on improving the safety

of the building. The electrical wiring on the second and third floors was brought up to code by professional electricians. Room, hallway and stairway lighting was improved. New handrails and emergency lighting for stairways installed. Fire alarms were upgraded.

The Big House was only one of many projects though. The Meditation Hall has also undergone major upgrades. A new carpet replaced the original, part of which was now 50 years old. The inside walls of the older part of the Hall were removed and the insulation replaced. Multiple repairs were made to the side stairwell. All this has been done with the goal of ensuring a comfortable, attractive and safe environment for our guests, so they can come and enjoy the opportunity to meditate and remember God without distractions.



Sant Kirpal Singh outside the Mediation Hall, 1972



ASHRAM EMAIL LIST

If you are not yet on the Ashram email distribution list and would like to join, or if you need to update your contact information, please let us know at santbaniashram@gmail.com. Please note that if you have received this Update directly from Sant Bani Ashram you are already on our email distribution list. We would also appreciate having your mailing address and phone number for our records. Should you wish to unsubscribe from our list, please let us know.



DO YOU HOLD SATSANG?

From time to time dear ones move and are interested in learning whether there is a satsang nearby. If you hold satsang, please let us know at santbaniashram@gmail.com. This can help us direct dear ones to make contact with you and hopefully find a satsang that will meet their needs.



He out of his mercy has bestowed upon you such a noble gift that all the treasures of this world stand in no comparison with it. But it will not improve your condition if you will not use it. A hungry man is never satisfied simply by counting the names of various dishes that lie before him. Though the teachings you have got are invaluable, yet they cannot be of any good unless you act up to them and daily engage in the exercises for as long a time as you can spare from your worldly engagements.

Sawan Singh, from a letter, dated August 1, 1912

*Sant Bani Ashram
30 Ashram Road
Sanbornton NH 03269
(603) 934-5640*

<http://santbaniashram.org>

*General contact: santbaniashram@gmail.com
Publications: sbapublications@gmail.com
Zoom satsang: santbaniashram.tech@gmail.com*