

*Your
Name
is
Nectar*



Satsangs of Baba Somanath Ji

volume 2

translated by
Christopher and Suzanne McMahon

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Your Name is Nectar

Volume 2



Baba Somanath Ji

Translators' Preface

All Saints are One. They come from the Almighty Lord with the same mission—to free the suffering souls from this world of duality and restore them to their True Home. Giving out the Path of the Sound Current, they guide the aspirants back to their native Godhead. God resides with His Saints and when we come into Their company, we are approaching God Himself. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*My mind like a bird flew heavenwards,
But found that paradise was all deserted
as the Lord resides with His Saints.*

It is in Satsang that we can imbibe the Teachings of the Saints. *Sat* denotes Truth—the Unchangeable Permanence; and *sang* indicates union. So “Satsang” means union with Truth. The message of Truth is given out in Satsang. In the Satsang, the Saints eloquently lay before us the mystery of God and the soul, unveiling the profound connection between the two. They illuminate the sacred Path to God-realization, emphasizing the necessity of the Godman or Guru—revealing His nature, profound significance, and indispensable role in guiding the soul on the inner journey until it reaches back to its Source. All the Saints lay great stress on love, faith, compassion, and ethical living, weaving together all the elements essential for the steady evolution and revelation of Divine Life, guiding the spirit towards a radiant blossoming into cosmic

awareness and ultimate union with the Godhead. Recognizing the transformative power of Satsang, Swami Ji Maharaj makes this prayer before the Lord:

*Purify my heart with Thy Satsang; for there it will
separate itself from the body and contact the Mystic
Sound.*

*Then will it drink Amrit from the fount of immortality.
Then will pains and miseries disappear, and the
soul will have no fear.*

*Then will I contact the Sound principle (Word or
Shabd) and gain the love of my Swami,*

*O Lord! make me Thine own: I have come, for I seek
shelter at Thy feet.*

Regardless of the language or mode of expression they employ, whoever has seen the Truth will say the same thing, for the Path leading Homeward was fashioned when the creation came into being and will endure unaltered until the end of time.

For instance, Maharaj Sawan Singh's major mission was in the northwestern regions of India, and, while fluent in Urdu, Persian, Sanskrit, and English, Hazur chose to deliver His Satsangs in the Punjabi language, touching the hearts of the listeners with familiar tales from the rich traditions of an area where Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim cultures coexisted and intermingled, sharing such cultural treasures as *Hir Waris Shah*, the allegorical Sufi romance of Hir and Ranjha who symbolize the soul and God and the quest for union with the Beloved.

On the other hand, Sant Kirpal Singh, who was educated by Christian missionaries, was well-suited to present Sant Mat to the Western World, giving Satsangs in English in the style of lectures, or better said, heart-to-heart talks, drawing freely from the Bible and interspersing His discourses with quotes from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Madame Blavatsky, Henri Bergson, and many other Western luminaries to demonstrate the universal nature of the spiritual teachings.

So, the intoxicating nectar may be served up in different vessels, but its message of the Oneness of the soul and the Almighty Lord never varies. Saints are the diverse messengers sent by God to give out that One Eternal Truth.

In the saga of spiritual enlightenment—where North India had long been adorned with Saints teaching the Path reawakened by Guru Nanak and Kabir Sahib and proclaimed openly by Swami Shiv Dayal Singh of Agra and His successors in modern times—Baba Somanath Ji emerged as the pioneering gardener, cultivating the seeds of Surat Shabd Yoga in southern soil. While many mystics and mahatmas have flourished in South India over the centuries, Baba Somanath was the first to work there following directly in the lineage of Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji, Baba Jaimal Singh, and Hazur Sawan Singh.

The ancient Path of Surat Shabd Yoga has come down unchanged and unchanging from time immemorial. Yet, each Saint makes a unique contribution to this universal message, bringing forth the Truth of the One Light through the prism of their own individuality and experience, tempered by the demands of the era and region they inhabit. Baba Somanath Ji, as the torchbearer of Sant Mat in the South during modern times, unfolded this ageless wisdom with a distinctive cadence, resonating in the hearts of the people immersed in the South Indian culture.

The Life of Baba Somanath Ji

Baba Somanath Ji was born in a small village in the Gulbarga district of Karnataka on September 7, 1885 and was given the name Saibanna. Orphaned in infancy, he was raised by his grandmother, whose loving and devotional nature had a profound effect on his later life. He grew up deeply influenced by the Hindu religious traditions and from an early age he was drawn to the life of spiritual renunciation as portrayed in the lives of great Hindu mystics such as Gorakhnath, Machindranath, Akka Mahadevi, and Basaveshwara. The inspiration from the teachings of these great souls propelled him forward into a lifelong quest for God realization.

When he was old enough to make his own living, he first took up work with a wealthy cloth merchant in Sholapur. The merchant soon discovered Saibanna's intense interest in religious and spiritual matters and granted him access, once the day's work was completed, to his personal library of scriptures and sacred writings. He himself taught the young boy Sanskrit and instructed him in the writings of the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads, all of which stressed the need for a living Guru to guide the aspirant on the Path Godward. This phase of life opened up new spiritual horizons for Saibanna, and it was also at this time that the desire to make a pilgrimage to the sacred centers of Hindu tradition took firm root in his heart.

Later he moved to Bombay where he was employed in the cotton mills. Each day when his work in the mills was finished, he would translate the ancient scriptures for his fellow workers and demonstrated a natural ability to explain the abstract truths embedded in the Vedantic teachings into simple language that the common person could easily understand. It was in Bombay, in the year 1913, that fate led him to the feet of his first spiritual preceptor, Swami Shivadayal, who initiated

him into Nathpanth yoga and on that day Shivadayal changed Saibanna's name to Somanath.

Immersing himself totally in the practices of the yogi—fasting, intense tapas, and pranayama, Somanath quickly perfected the disciplines of Nathpanth and mastered the kundalini power. But even though his strenuous sadhanas granted him supernatural powers that dazzled the ordinary people, still he had found no peace to his soul. He knew deep in his heart that he had not come into this world to accumulate such meaningless trifles.

He realized that spiritual enlightenment still lay far ahead, and he set out in earnest to find a Perfect Guru who could guide him onward to his cherished goal. In his search, Baba Somanath undertook many arduous pilgrimages, first to Surat and Pandharpur, then on to Girnar and Dwarka, Nashik, and Trimbak. Finally, he turned his steps northward to attend the Kumbha Mela at Kurukshetra, but there he found no one to guide him further on the spiritual Path. Forging on, he traveled to Rishikesh and Haridwar, but not finding what he sought there, he trekked high into the icy fastness of the snow-covered Himalayas, seeking out the sacred temple of Lord Shiva at Triloknath. But reaching that temple his hopes were dashed once again, for there he found only the gruesome remains of animal sacrifice—but not a trace of true spirituality.

Desperately disheartened, he descended from the mountains to Chintpurni and then onward to the plains of Punjab. Wandering aimlessly with no particular goal, he reached the village of Daulangarh, not far from Beas. One day Baba Ji was sitting under a tree, offering up the prayers of an anguished heart for union with its Creator, when the local schoolmaster, Mahadaya by name, happened to be walking by. Strangely attracted to the emaciated yogi, he stopped for a while to converse

with him. Mahadaya was an initiate of the great Saint, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh, and, as he learned of Baba Ji's long search, he began to share with him stories about his own Master and the Path of Surat Shabd yoga. Hearing Mahadaya's amazing words and sensing that—against all hope—the culmination of his long and arduous quest was at hand, Baba Somanath did not delay even an instant but hurried to the nearby Dera Baba Jaimal Singh to have the darshan of the Great Soul Mahadaya spoke of.

Approaching the ashram immersed in devotion, a tearful Baba Ji prostrated himself before Hazur, who was sitting outside supervising the agricultural seva in the ashram fields. Very kindly and gently, Hazur inquired from him, "Where have you come from and what has brought you here?" Baba Ji, overcome by emotion at Hazur's tender words began humbly and haltingly to relate his long search for Truth, the practices he had adopted to attain it, and the inner ascent he had gained so far. He told Hazur, "Now that I have reached you, I will never leave your protective shelter. Now kindly liberate my soul from the Wheel of Transmigration." Deeply touched by Baba Ji's appeal, Hazur gave him a place at the ashram, and after several months, imparted to him the charged words of the Simran, connecting Baba Ji to the Sound Current within.

Baba Ji embraced daily meditation and seva, surrendering his ego to the radiant presence of Hazur. Though Baba Ji came from a different background to most of the residents in the ashram, the essence of the spiritual teachings—love, humility, and selfless service—transcended all external differences. The Saints tell us that when the spark touches the dry gunpowder, it explodes instantly. Baba Somanath's long years of austerity and discipline made him an apt pupil, and he quickly scaled the spiritual heights to reach the final goal.

Baba Ji lived and served at the ashram for several years, but one day Hazur Sawan Singh called him and told him that the time to return to the South had arrived. Hazur instructed Baba Ji to earn his own livelihood, to subsist on a pure vegetarian diet, to be devoted to daily meditation for a minimum of 2 ½ hours, while attending to all his worldly duties as well. Along with this he was to commence spreading the Sant Mat teachings to any sincere seekers he encountered. Hazur saw that Baba Ji had now become practically successful in the Inner Way and because of his command of Kannada, Marathi, and Hindi and his familiarity with the culture and spiritual traditions of the South, he was uniquely qualified to give out the message of Sant Mat in that region.

As a parting gift, Hazur Sawan Singh gave Baba Somanath 20 rupees, two pillows, a small wool rug and a silken sheet. With these few possessions and the treasure of the Guru's blessings and instructions, Baba Ji returned to Bombay to take up the work allotted to him by Hazur.

On his return to Bombay, Baba Ji at first sold roasted chick-peas at Worli Sea Face, later taking up work in a grain merchant's shop. The merchant himself was a religiously-minded man and he readily gave Baba Ji permission to hold Satsang in the evenings on the steps of the shop after business hours were past. Being greatly moved by the depth and beauty of Baba Ji's discourses, he soon realized that his common laborer was a person of high spiritual attainment. One day he told Baba Ji that it was not fitting that he be employed in such a menial position. He told Baba Ji he would lend him the money to start his own business, saying he could pay the loan back once he was established.

In this way, Baba Ji opened a cloth shop in Bombay that would provide his livelihood. He began to give regular Satsang

discourses, and the sangat in Bombay and the surrounding areas grew steadily. Initially, most of the seekers came from the large community of mill-workers who had been drawn to the area by the city's burgeoning textile industry, but with the passage of time, a number of professional people like lawyers, doctors, and teachers were attracted to the timeless teachings of the Saints revealed in his discourses. Gradually the message also spread to the several agricultural communities in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Periodically, Baba Somanath Ji would visit those areas—often traveling from village to village by bullock cart to give spiritual water to the thirsting souls.

During this time Baba Ji would periodically take seekers up to the Punjab, to receive initiation into Sant Mat from Hazur Sawan Singh. Hazur also made several visits to the South, once to Bombay, and once to the Kingdom of Sangli with a stop-over in Bombay where he gave Satsang at Baba Somanath's new satsang hall that had been constructed for the convenience of the ever-growing sangat. During the trips to Beas and during Hazur's visits to the South, Baba Ji would translate Hazur's Punjabi satsangs into Marathi for the benefit of the local seekers.

On one of these visits to Beas in 1946, Baba Somanath related a special incident that took place on the occasion of Satsang when Hazur requested Baba Ji to come sit on the dais to do the translation. Of this time, Baba Ji relates: "As soon as I was seated, my whole body began to tremble. Then looking into my eyes with his merciful, grace-filled glance, a current of pure Divine Consciousness flowed into my heart and permeated my entire being from head to toe. Then Hazur motioned to the Pathi to commence chanting the bani. During the entire Satsang that Power itself, the Power that he had transferred into my heart, conducted the Satsang."

In 1947 Baba Ji, along with other dear ones from the South,

went to Beas in the month of February. When Baba Ji went to Hazur for Darshan, Hazur tried to speak, but no words would come forth as he was very weak. Still, the heart speaks to heart through the eyes and Hazur filled Baba Ji's within with his grace in an exchange of glances. This was to be the last meeting on the physical plane between these two Great Souls. On April 2nd of 1948, Hazur cast off his mortal coil.

In the period immediately following this event, Baba Ji, along with all those who were devoted to Hazur, passed through a painful time. Those who had inner access and who had transcended body consciousness to meet the inner Radiant Form of the Master had the daily consolation of His Presence within, but even for those fortunate souls the knowledge that they could no longer meet with Hazur outwardly was hard to bear.

Along with this, Baba Ji also realized that the time was now approaching when He would need to take on the responsibility of initiating seekers of Truth, as instructed by Hazur, into the practices of Simran, Dhyan and Bhajan, which all great Masters have taught to those who wish to practically begin the arduous task of controlling the body and taming the mind so that the spirit within can shake loose the shackles of the physical, astral and causal coverings and enter the realm of Pure Spirit. Eventually, Baba Somanath Ji sold the cloth shop and purchased land in the small village of Kengeri, outside of Bangalore, where Sawan Darbar Ashram was established in 1958. He would still return twice a year to Bombay for bhandara programs, and many of the Satsangs in this collection were given at that time. Baba Somanath Ji departed from the physical plane for the final time on November 28, 1976.¹

1 For greater detail see: Christopher McMahon, *The Life of Baba Somanath Ji: Sant and Sage of South India* (Guddella, India: Som Ajaib Kripa Ashram, 2023)

Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs

While we have profound respect for the physical body of the Master who shares with us the means to reach our True Home, the Saints themselves tell us: “Respect my words more than my body.” Kirpal Singh has said, “Satguru’s words—words ARE Satguru.” The lives of the Masters are a model and inspiration to the disciples, but it is only when we understand their teachings and put them into practice in our own lives that our journey Homeward can commence.

In the Guru Granth Sahib we are told by Bard Harbans:

*Like the holy, the ever-flowing waters of the sacred Ganges,
Flow the sermons of the Guru.
In it bathe the congregations of the disciples.
The scriptures are explained and recited,
As if Brahma himself chanted the Vedas,
Over the Guru’s head waves the royal umbrella.
From His lips the Divine Name as nectar rains.*

It has been our long-standing desire to make the message of Baba Somanath Ji accessible to a broader audience and during the course of a retreat with Baba Ram Singh, in January 2019, we asked if we could take up the work of translating some of Baba Somanath’s Hindi Satsangs into English. As soon as Baba Ram Singh kindly gave approval to the project, some wonderful things unfolded to make it possible for us to move forward with that work in a concentrated way.

While we were at the retreat, an old friend of ours from the early days of Sant Ajaib Singh’s first Bombay programs, Mr. Satpal Dase, came with his son, Roshan, to participate in the Satsang and meditation program. Satpal was one of Sant Ajaib

Singh Ji's first Bombay initiates, and he worked tirelessly in the seva of the programs there.

We were very happy to see him and meet his son, for we had not been together for many years. Earlier that day, we had been walking around in the ashram garden, wondering how we might locate tapes or transcriptions of Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs in Hindi. We knew of several small booklets that had been published, each containing about ten Hindi Satsangs; we already had two of them at home. But then Satpal's son, Roshan, informed us that he had been active in digitizing the audio files of Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs and, if we liked, he could send us files for a number of Hindi Satsangs that were clear and, for the most part, complete. We did not even know that such a resource existed. We were stunned and delighted. When we got home, we found that Roshan had already sent audio copies of all the digitized Satsangs to us, and, with this treasure house of Hindi Satsangs, we commenced the translation work in earnest. Under Baba Ram Singh Ji's guidance, our efforts to give form to this project began moving forward steadily.

By the grace of the Master Power working overhead, we have now completed 120 of these Satsangs and are publishing them in three volumes of 40 Satsangs each. This is the second volume in that series. The title for the series, *Your Name is Nectar*, is taken from the beautiful bhajan often sung by Baba Somanath Ji's sangat:

Terā nām rasamūlā jī, jinhoneñ svāda liyā

Your Name is Nectar for those who have tasted it.

The Satsangs presented in *Your Name is Nectar*, were recorded in the later years of Baba Ji's life, roughly from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. They encapsulate the essence of Sant Mat and were mostly delivered on His visits to Bombay, though several were given at the Sunday Satsangs in Kengeri.

These discourses span a range of topics: the need for a living Master in order to tread the Path of spirituality; the importance of perfecting the Simran, or repetition of the five-holy Names given at the time of initiation; the vital role played by regular and accurate meditations in contacting the Shabd within, and the tenets of righteous living that loosen the karmic bonds tying the soul to this material plane. Each discourse deals with a unique and vital aspect of the spiritual journey. It is told from the perspective of a Param Sant who spent years practicing the austerities of Nathpanth yoga, traveling the length and breadth of India in search of a Perfect Guide who could reveal the further way up, coming into the shelter of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh on the banks of the River Beas in Punjab, completing the inner journey under the guidance of that great Saint and finally carrying Hazur's message back to the souls in South India who were searching for the way Home.

Baba Somanath Ji gave Satsang according to the needs of His audience. The Saints see the condition of the jiva, just like looking at the contents of a glass jar. He would often scan the assembled crowd, thumb through the collections of banis of the Saints that he had on hand, and then choose one for the Satsang that would be appropriate for the moment. If only Hindi speakers were present, He would deliver a Satsang in Hindi for a full hour, but if the Sangat was mixed, he would split the available time, discoursing first in Hindi for half an hour and then in Marathi or Kannada for half an hour. As a result, the length of the available Satsangs varies considerably, but whether the Satsang is long or short, the message of Truth always comes through with equal power. During the Hindi Satsangs in Bombay His Bombay Pathi would recite the banis, but then in the middle of the

Satsang, He would often have Pushpamma, His regular Pathi and devoted sevadar, chant from the Kannada hymns written by the mystic poets of the South like Akka Mahadevi, Bhasweshwara, and Mankutimma. He would then comment on that hymn and afterwards return to the main bani of the Satsang. Baba Somanath's Satsangs are deeply rooted in the message of Surat Shabd yoga and to make that teaching accessible to His southern audience he draws not only on the Granth Sahib of the Sikhs and the writings of Swami Ji, but also draws freely on His experience as a Nathpanth yogi, His familiarity with the traditions of the Vedas and Vedanta, the Hindu epics, and folk tales of the common people.

A Word on Translation

We have tried to provide not just a translation from Hindi to English, but also to build a bridge for seekers across linguistic boundaries to the spiritual realms that Baba Somanath Ji so ardently explored and illuminated. Through these pages, we embark on a pilgrimage, guided by His words, towards unraveling the layers of our own consciousness and discovering the Eternal Melody that reverberates throughout all the creation.

Translating these satsangs has been a spiritual, cultural, and linguistic journey for the translators. Baba Somanath spoke a highly eclectic form of Hindi, deeply influenced by His extensive contact with sadhus throughout India, His long sojourn in Punjab at the feet of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji, and the ancient patterns of culture, deeply rooted in the Ramayana, Mahabharat and other epic literature, as well as the Sanskrit texts of Vedanta. As we delved into the intricacies of Baba Somanath Ji's words, we felt a profound connection with the wisdom he imparts. The challenge of preserving the essence and nuance of His teachings in the translations was met with a sense of reverence for the spiritual

depth embedded in each discourse and a heartfelt prayer to the Master Power to shower grace on our feeble efforts.

Besides the actual words Baba Ji chose, the mode of expression was molded by His long and intense search for God and His unwavering devotion to the inner practices taught by the Saints of Surat Shabd Yoga. Baba Somanath was affectionately described as the Mahayogi. He was big-hearted and broad-minded, but for the benefit of the spiritual aspirants Baba Ji did not hesitate to present the Truth in unequivocal terms. The breaths of this human life are precious, and Baba Ji was quick to correct errors in the disciples that could throw them down from spiritual heights and make their journey home longer than need be.

Translating esoteric teachings involves navigating a subtle landscape of language and culture. In rendering Baba Somanath Ji's words into English, we have endeavored to preserve the linguistic and cultural context inherent in His original Hindi discourses. We have footnoted terms and concepts that may have been very well known to Baba Ji's listeners, but are likely to be quite unfamiliar to the English-speaking reader. We have also used diacritics sparingly to approximate the pronunciation of unfamiliar Hindi terms.

Baba Somanath Ji would often make timeless Truths accessible to His agricultural audience through folk stories, jokes, and puns that would appeal to the simple people to whom he was ministering. Where feasible we have tried to capture some of His light-hearted wordplay, and, while it is impossible to convey the full experience of hearing the Hindi Satsangs, we hope that some flavor of the time, the sangat, and the personality of that great Saint and Sage of South India can be experienced by the readers and that the universal and timeless wisdom encapsulated in these Satsangs echoes through to all sincere seekers after Truth.

Acknowledgments

As this effort draws to a close, we would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has made it possible. First, in this as in all things, we offer our humble thanks to the great Master Power working through all the Saints, who inspired the project and brought it to fruition. And in particular, we are inexpressibly grateful to Baba Ram Singh Ji for His unwavering support and blessings throughout the translation process.

We are grateful to Revati Shinkar for reading portions of the translations to Baba Ji when we had questions about particularly enigmatic sections; and we would also like to thank Prem Shinkar and Ashok Shinkar for their kind encouragement and invaluable expert guidance. We are grateful to Joe Gelbard for his careful proofreading of the entire manuscript, which contributed greatly to the overall readability and clarity of the volumes. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Satpal Dase and his son Roshan for providing the audio files of Baba Somanath Ji's Hindi Satsangs. Without the efforts of Roshan and the other dear ones who worked on the remastering project of the Satsang recordings, this translation project would not have been possible. And finally, we would like to thank Bernard and Dominique Daniel for their loving support as this project proceeded.

— Christopher and Suzanne McMahon

Kabir Sahib says, "Don't delay!" Our thoughts linger very contentedly around a fanciful notion of salvation. We imagine how we will achieve it at some later time: "In the future, we will be liberated in such and such a way. In the next lifetime, we will obtain mukti (liberation)." We find such conjecture and anticipation very comforting and pleasant. But what guarantee do we have of such a future? We don't even know what will happen tomorrow. So, what guarantee could we have for the next life? Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us, "Go into the shelter of the Satguru as quickly as you can."

—Baba Somanath

Awake, O My Mind, Awake!

**The Almighty Lord and the Guru dwell within you.
Awake, O my mind, awake!¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. In search for the Lord, past mahatmas have devised countless practices such as yoga, intellectual inference, renunciation, repetitions, austerities, rites, rituals, and all the other outer forms of worship. But by following these practices, the devotees merely conjure up some image of the deity within themselves, and mistaking that fantasy for the Almighty Lord, they enshrine in their hearts a god of their own creation. They become devotees of this “god,” and then, to fulfill some desire or other, they spend their lifetime offering austerities, devotion, and prayers to their imagined deity.

But the most natural and verifiable Path lies within. When we turn our attention inward, gradually shedding the coverings obscuring the light of the soul or *ātmā*, we develop self-knowledge, which paves the way to God-Knowledge; the soul realizes it is a drop of pure consciousness and merges back into *Paramātmā*, the Ocean of All-Consciousness. This is the goal of *gyān* or True Knowledge. The soul proclaims: “I am not

¹ *Paramātam guru nikaṭ birāje, jāg jāg man mere, Kabir Sahib,*

the sense organs. I am not the mind. I am not the *antahkarana* or higher mind. I am separate from the five elements. I am free from the three conditions—waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. I am the *Sākshī*, the unconcerned witness.”² Becoming separate from all the material elements and qualities, the soul realizes its true nature and merges into the Oversoul.

This Path leads to Lord within. In the Upanishads we find *Aham brahmāsmi*: “I am Brahm. All the world arose from me. I am the support of all that exists.” This is what is meant by *gyān*. The soul soars above the lower knowledge of the *buddhi* (intellect) and into the etheric element; then, rising into the formless, it loses itself in the Higher Knowledge.

Now He explains to us that *Paramātmā*, Guru, and Naam are three manifestations of the same Power. You are simply describing that Power by three different names. In some places, it is called Guru; in some places, it is called *Paramātmā* (the Almighty Lord); and in some places, it is called Sat Naam. So, Kabir Sahib Ji says that both the Guru and the Naam dwell within you—that Power never leaves you and is the nearest of the near. But at present, the mind is fast asleep, trapped in ignorance and duality. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji enjoins: “O mind, awaken to the Power residing within you.”

**Hurry and attach yourself to Satguru’s feet;
Death is standing on your head.**

Kabir Sahib says, “Don’t delay!” Our thoughts linger very contentedly around a fanciful notion of salvation. We imagine how we will achieve it at some later time: “In the future, we will be liberated in such and such a way. In the next lifetime, we will obtain *mukti* (liberation).” We find such conjecture and

2 *Sākshī* or Pure Consciousness “witnesses” the activity of the three worlds, but remains untouched.

anticipation very comforting and pleasant. But what guarantee do we have of such a future? We don't even know what will happen tomorrow. So, what guarantee could we have for the next life? Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us, "Go into the shelter of the Satguru as quickly as you can." And what does the Satguru advise you to do? "Brother, the Naam resides within you. Connect your thoughts with that Naam, and apply yourself to the meditation. In this way, you will achieve emancipation." Kal is dancing on your head. You don't know when Kal will come to claim your soul. Therefore, complete your work with all the speed you can muster.

**Second by second, moment by moment,
everything is passing away.
Don't delay; use every means at your disposal.**

Kal is such a mighty force; there are no words to describe his power. Even the great avatars, who we worship as gods, were all devoured by Kal. Therefore, Guru Nanak has said:

*Rama departed and Ravana departed,
With all their kith and kin.
At the end time, nothing remains;
This world is like a dream.*

Ravana was such a magnificent king; the world has not seen his equal before or since. But even though he was so great, when his death approached, not one person remained to pour water into his mouth.³ He was also enslaved by Kal. The mighty Ravana was slain by Rama and had to accept his departure from this world at the appointed time.

3 Hindus pour a few drops of water into the mouth of the dying person; it is customary to use Ganges water into which a leaf from the Tulsi plant (*Ocimum sanctum*) has been placed.

Compared to those great beings, our span of life counts as nothing. The Kal Power is so mighty that there is no record of how many jivas he destroys every day, or how many jivas he causes to take birth. We might be able to find a register that records the number of human beings who take birth and die in a day, but who has a tally of all the insects and the many other forms of life? They are also subject to Kal. They also take birth and die according to Kal's decree, but we have no record of their coming and going. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, "Complete your own work now; don't delay even for a second."

**Age after age, you have gone on sleeping;
Now wake up—the day has dawned.**

It is not just today that you are sleeping; you have been asleep for age upon age. Up till now, you have not awakened. The time in the human body is like the early hours of the dawn. Getting this human birth, your good fortune rises like the morning sun. If you don't take advantage of this opportunity, you will slumber on in this endless sleep. Therefore, He says, "Wake up now! As soon as you possibly can."

**Cast off the bonds of lust, anger, attachment,
greed, and egotism.
Cultivate forgiveness and mercy in your heart.**

Now, He explains what is meant by awakening. Two powers reside within you—one divine and one demonic. Lust, anger, greed, attachment, and egotism—these are manifestations of the demonic power. In contrast, the qualities of the divine power are chastity, forgiveness, contentment, generosity, and

humility. Whoever wants to meet the Pure Lord within must first chase away the thieves. As long as the thieves are lurking in your heart, they will go on plundering the wealth of your life-breaths. So, you should replace lust with chastity, anger with forgiveness, greed with generosity, attachment with discrimination, and so forth. When these qualities of Truth awaken in your heart, you will establish a connection with the Inner Power. As long as your heart is full of greed, know it for certain that the thieves are still hiding there.

If you want to be successful in meditation, then when you sit, you should bring together your body, your mind, and the Power in whose remembrance you are sitting. When you focus within, these three become unified. At that time, all the thieves—lust, anger, and so forth—will stand shoulder to shoulder to block your way. They are determined not to let you progress. As soon as you start meditating, some worldly thought or other will rise up before you. And if you make an effort to stop those thoughts, then sleep will come to bother you. The mind says, “Take a little nap now, and then you can get up and meditate later.” The mind that is sitting within you will give you this advice.

Until you bring the mind under your control, your soul will go on following its behests. If it tells you to go to sleep, you will sleep. Sitting within you, the mind says, “You fell asleep today, but don’t worry. Tomorrow, you can sit with determination.” Well, tomorrow that same mind will still be with you. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji says, “Do your meditation every day, with regularity and love.” Whether your mind takes to it or not, sit for two hours every day, from four to six in the morning. If you keep sitting, after a little while, the mind will definitely invert and go within. It will come in contact with the Naam, and once it tastes the sweetness of Naam, the taste for the worldly things will fall away.

Brothers, friends, family, relations—they are all slaves of self interest.

Now, if you look at the outer world frankly and honestly, you will see that your worldly relatives—your brothers, your sisters, your friends, your family and your community, in fact, every living being you come in contact with—are all slaves of their own self-interest. If you examine each of these relationships carefully, you will see that none of them are selfless. Your mother and father, brothers and sisters, wife, children, and grandchildren are all bound by selfish motives.

But if you introspect and do the inner practices, the experience of Truth will dawn within you, and an attitude of genuine selflessness will manifest. And, at that time, the nature of all these worldly relationships will become clear to you. But until you contact the Truth within, you will also remain the prisoner of your little self.

No one will help you when Yama catches you in his snare.

When the time of death arrives, the yamduts seize your breaths and drag your soul out of the body. At that moment, everyone will abandon you. Your body, that you have cared for so tenderly, has been your closest companion. But even that body has to be tossed aside. So, how will your outer relations go with you? When all connections are severed at the end time, how can any of these outer things come to your rescue?

Crosscurrents in the ocean of existence will sweep you back into the wheel of eighty-four.

Now, is the soul automatically liberated after death? Kabir

Sahib tells us emphatically, “No!” After death, you will suffer the reactions of all the deeds done while in the human body—for all the storm of falsehood you created, for all the sins you committed, for all the pleasures you indulged in. The yamduts—the angels of death—will beat you and throw you again into the cycle of birth and death. It will not be possible to get the human birth again until you suffer through all the eighty-four lakh forms of life. Therefore, now, when you have this precious human body, you should do the work you came into this world to accomplish.

Kabir says: Listen, O Sadhu.

Now, become liberated from this world.

At the end of every verse, Kabir Sahib says, “I am saying all this for the sadhus, the ones who practice the sadhana or meditation. My teachings are not for those who are attached to the worldly relations and activities. I am giving out these instructions for those who want to do the meditation and meet the Almighty Lord in this lifetime. My words are directed to those devotees who are ready to apply themselves to the sadhana.” So now, you should hold every word in your heart and try to mold your life according to His teachings. Those who do the meditation with regularity, merge back into the True Naam. They earn the name of Sadhu, and their lives are crowned with success.

Keep your eye fixed on the goal;

Cherish the Naam in your heart.

So, how do we perform the sadhana or meditation practice? The great souls that came in the past, have left behind clear instructions—a straight road to follow. But until we walk on

that road ourselves, the power to understand the true import of their teaching will not come in our within. What do they tell us? Always fix your attention without a break on the True Naam that is reverberating within you. When your aim wanders away from the target, the power of illusion takes over. There is a strong connection between illusion and the world, and you will become trapped in the outer world. Therefore, He tells us that wakefulness or vigilance means keeping your attention riveted on the True Naam. Never let it waver.

Your Lord becomes pleased with the one who falls at His door.

When you direct your attention towards Him, the Almighty Lord will become pleased with you. His Grace will flow toward you: “This beggar has fallen at my door. I should shower my grace and blessings.” But only if you fix your aim on Him. This is the subject of love, faith, and determination. Religious scriptures, renunciation, or rites and rituals do not count at all.

All fear of Yama’s tyranny disappears when the Lord casts His gracious glance.

When the Lord directs His glance of grace toward you, even for a moment, cruel Kal—with all his fearsome traps and power—becomes helpless.

Once, a moneylender set out to visit his debtors who were behind in their payments. He went to one farmer’s house to collect what was owed and forcefully seized all the farmer’s money and goods to clear the debt—including interest. The moneylender was thinking that he would first eat at that farmer’s house and then have the farmer carry his trunk and

bedding for him to the next village. But since that moneylender had taken everything he had in the world, that farmer was very angry: “What do I have to do with this moneylender? He can carry his bedding himself, or just leave it sitting where it is, for all I care.”

So, the moneylender was standing by the road, looking this way and that. He was hoping he could hire someone to carry his trunk and bedding—but no one came along. After a little while a sadhu walked by and said, “O Saukar Ji!⁴ Why are you standing here looking so worried?” The moneylender explained to him, “Maharaj Ji, I have to go to the next village. But I have no one to carry my trunk and bedding for me. That’s why I’m standing here like this.” Taking pity on his plight, the sadhu asked him, “How would it be if I carry your luggage for you?” The moneylender thought to himself, “What luck! I will get a worker for no pay. The sadhus don’t have any give and take with anyone. He won’t expect any payment.”

So, the merchant accepted his offer and the sadhu stacked and they set off. As they were walking along, the sadhu said, “Look here, Saukar Ji! Let us talk as we go; either you should tell me something about God, and I will listen, or I will tell you something about God, and you can listen to what I say.” The moneylender replied, “Maharaj, I don’t know anything about God: what He is like, how to meet Him, what kind of devotion pleases Him. I don’t know anything about this at all. Even my father and grandfather did not know about such things. So, whatever you have to say, I’ll just listen to that.”

Then the sadhu explained to him about the greatness of the Almighty Lord and His devotees. He sang the praise of the Naam and explained the practices for going within. And the moneylender walked along behind, muttering, “Yes. Yes.”

4 *Saukār* is a term for a banker or moneylender.

Finally, they reached the next village, and the moneylender said, “Sadhu Maharaj, this is my destination. Someone here owes me money, so, this is where I will be stopping.” The sadhu set the bedding and the trunk down on the ground and started to depart. Then the moneylender said, “Maharaj. At least accept something for your trouble.” But the sadhu did not want any payment, “What should I take from you? I don’t need anything at all.” Hearing his words, the moneylender became very happy: “I got my work accomplished, and it didn’t cost me even a paisa.” But then the sadhu added, “I would like to share one last thing with you in parting. You should bear it in mind.” The moneylender asked, “What do you have to say?”

“Your last day on earth is only eight days away. You are going to die.” Hearing the sadhu’s words, the moneylender was speechless. All his life he had been greedy and concerned only with profit and loss. He preyed on the poor farmers; instead of one month’s interest he would charge them four, and then he would use his cruelly won gains to celebrate a luxurious Holi.⁵ When the moneylender found his voice again, he said, “Maharaj, your words have destroyed me. You have prophesied my death; now, tell me how to avoid it.”

Then the sadhu told him, “There is no way to avoid death. But I can give you some advice. On the eighth day, at such

5 In Maharashtra, Holi is also called *Shimgā*. Holi comes in the month of *Phāgun* (March-April), and celebrates the triumph of light over darkness. Everyone throws colored powder, including a bright red powder called *phāg*. The idea of the moneylender’s “luxurious Holi” stems from earlier times when revenue officers collected land rents in March-April, generating a good business for the moneylenders, because farmers often had to borrow heavily to make the burdensome payments. So, at festival time, the poor farmers had nothing, but the moneylenders’ coffers were full.

and such a time, the angels of death will appear. They will seize you and beat you mercilessly; they will drag you before Dharam Raj, the Lord of Judgment, to relate all the deeds of your life. In your entire lifetime, you have not done even one righteous deed until today. You have cheated and swindled and plundered. You have filled your life with a storm of falsehood. These two hours that you have spent with me are the only good moments of your whole life. After Dharam Raj has reviewed your account fully, he will discover these two good hours. At that time, he will ask you, 'Do you want the fruit of these two good hours first, or do you want the punishment for all the sins you committed throughout your lifetime?' You should reply to him, 'Maharaj, my sins are like a mountain. When I suffer the punishment for all my sins, who knows how long it will take before I will get the chance to reap the reward for these two good hours. It will be better if you give the reward for that righteous deed first. Afterwards, you can throw me into whatever hell you choose.' Then, Dharam Raj will ask you, 'What reward do you want for that one good deed?' You should tell him, 'Please take me to that great soul, in whose company I earned this merit.' After that, leave it to me; we'll see what happens."

Just as the sadhu had foretold, after eight days had passed, the moneylender's life ended. The yamduts came and dragged him before Dharam Raj. When they examined the moneylender's account, they reported with great indignation and severity: "Lord, he is a very great sinner. There was not even a trace of righteousness in his life. But eight days ago, he had the company of a sadhu mahatma for two hours. That time with the sadhu is his only righteous deed. Otherwise, he has nothing to show but wickedness." Hearing this, Dharam Raj flared up in a rage and said, "O sinner! Which do you want first, the

punishment for all your many sins or the reward for these two righteous hours?” With great humility and trepidation, the moneylender replied, “Maharaj, I have so many sins to suffer for that I can’t imagine how long it will take. It seems quite hopeless to me. So, first, please give me the fruit of the two good hours. Afterward, you can toss me into any hell you wish.” Dharam Raj asked the moneylender what reward he wanted, and he replied, “Please take me to the mahatma, in whose company I earned this reward, and leave me with him for two hours.”

That sadhu dwelt in the Pure Realms, lost in samadhi. The yamduts transported the moneylender to that region, but they were not allowed to enter there themselves. So, they remained outside and pushed him in. He went and sat at the sadhu’s feet, but after two hours had passed, the yamduts started shouting to him from outside. “Your time is up. You have to come back now.”

Frightened by their calls that moneylender implored the saint, “Maharaj Ji, they are calling me, and I have to go.” The sadhu smiled and told him, “Don’t even look in their direction. Just sit here quietly.” So, the moneylender ignored the yamduts and kept sitting. And since the yamduts were not allowed in that region, there was nothing they could do. And, in the end, the moneylender remained there with the sadhu and attained liberation. So, the meaning of saying all this is that when the Almighty Lord showers His grace, the tyranny and cruelty of Yama cannot touch you.

**When the Satguru becomes gracious,
He ferries you across.**

When the Satguru is gracious, He reveals the secret of Naam within. If you obey His words and do your meditation regularly

every day, the Conscious Power within you will lift you out of this material body and into the higher realms. With His blessing upon you, no other power in the creation can touch you.

**You are freed from the wheel of birth and death;
And you dwell with the Guru forever.**

You no longer revolve in the wheel of eighty-four lakh forms of life. The torment of Yama comes to an end. The soul is freed from birth and death forever. Uniting with the Immaculate Power within, you become perfectly pure and receive the treasure of salvation.

**You drink from the Cup of Love and remain lost in
His intoxication.**

The rain of Naam Amrit is showering within. You can call it the Cup of Love or you can call it Naam Amrit; the sweetness is the same. And, when you imbibe it, that shower of Nectar infuses every cell of your body. But you can enjoy that taste only when your soul merges into the stream of Naam; then all the tastes of the world fall off of themselves.

**Until you realize the value of the true treasure within,
You will be consumed with false desires.**

Until you recognize Truth within yourself, the false desires do not leave your heart. It is only this falsehood that stands in your way. The Truth already resides within you. Your soul or *ātman* is Pure Consciousness. Anyone who looks within their own heart can prove this for themselves. Your real nature is Truth, without even a trace of falsehood.

When Truth manifests, falsehood runs away. But where falsehood resides, the Truth will remain hidden. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji says, “Introspect your own heart and weed out falsehood. Attach your love to the True Naam, and become the form of Truth.” No matter how many material things you collect, they are all false, and not one of them will go with you when you leave this world.

**Some rare Gurumukh beholds this scintillating
Light and reaches the True Abode within.**

The Self-Existing Light resides within you. Only by taking the support of this Light can the sun and moon shed their illuminating rays on the world. That refulgent Light is shining within you day and night. When your thoughts merge into that Light, you will say:

*O mind, you are the form of Light;
Now recognize your origin.*

Your mind will keep on running here and there as long as it remains lost in gross unconsciousness and connected to the things of this world. But once it merges into the Light within and becomes the form of Light, all the sins are removed automatically and your ties with the world will be broken. Rise to the level of the Naam, which is untouched by the mind. Contact that Naam within you, and become one with it.

**The Indestructible Lord watches over all,
But only a rare Saint recognizes Him.**

Whoever unites with the eternal Power of Naam achieves an exalted status. But this is the fate of some rare *Sant* (Saint).

Otherwise, one person's name may be Sant Ram and somebody else may be called Sant Singh. But these "Sants" have nothing to do with the Naam. Attaining the status of a Sant and simply being called by the name "Sant Something-or-Other" are two vastly different things.

**Kabir says, "The door of illusion is shut fast;
Whoever opens it understands the Truth."**

Now, what does He tell us? Truth and untruth are mixed together in your within, and this mixture is called illusion or inference. So, until you remove untruth, the door of illusion blocks your way. As long as your within is filled with mind and Maya, you can't go any further. The door will be opened when the Truth within you becomes unalloyed. But if you try to carry your fantasies and conjectures with you up into the higher realms, that door will remain shut fast like a wall, and you will gain no access.

The ultimate purpose of every spiritual practice we perform is to remove this egotism from our within. Therefore, Guru Ramdas Ji says: "O Lord, please make me the servant of Your servants." Humility is our only weapon against egotism, but it is very difficult to cultivate true humility. On the other hand, in this world that is ruled over by the ego, vanity comes to us quite naturally. Humility dawns only through the grace of the Lord.

—Baba Somanath

Make Me the Servant of Your Servants

**O Lord, I implore you to make me the servant of
Your servants.¹**

This is the bani of Guru Ram Das Ji, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He says that the most effective means for removing egotism is to cultivate humility and lowliness. The entire world is a manifestation of I-hood. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, along with the 33 million gods and goddesses; the rishis, munis, anchorites, and yogis; all the human beings, as well as the lower life forms—sentient and insentient—are full of egotism. This sense of “I and mine,” this vanity and self-absorption, is evident throughout the entire creation.

All the actions that we perform every day arise from our sense of I-hood. And even the different religious practices we engage in, like repetitions and austerities, have egotism at their root. Vishwamitra endured severe austerities so that he might gain the power to fashion his own alternative universe. Similarly, Ravana lifted up the Kailash Mountain to claim the

¹ *Rāmā ham dāsan dās karijai*, Guru Ram Das

ātma-linga of Shiva and achieve immortality.² But they both performed these mighty deeds under the influence of egotism. This entire created world is a manifestation of the ego. And, so long as our actions continue to be governed by egotism, our soul will remain disconnected from the True Shabd. The ultimate purpose of every spiritual practice we perform is to remove this egotism from our within. Therefore, Guru Ramdas Ji says: “O Lord, please make me the servant of Your servants.” Humility is our only weapon against egotism, but it is very difficult to cultivate true humility. On the other hand, in this world that is ruled over by the ego, vanity comes to us quite naturally. Humility dawns only through the grace of the Lord.

**As long as there is breath, let me imbibe the dust
of the Sadhus within.**

True humility doesn’t come and go according to the occasion. If you need someone’s help to accomplish a task, you go to them with so much humility. You greet them with folded hands and touch their feet. You are even willing to sacrifice your body and mind. But you do all this only because you want something from that person. Such a display of lowliness vanishes once your purpose is served; it has nothing to do with true humility.

So, what does Guru Ramdas tell us? He says true humility does not come and go according to outer circumstances—it is permanent and unchangeable. When we develop real humility, that humility will never leave us as long as the breath of life continues to flow in our body.

² The *ātma-linga* was a divine treasure possessed by Lord Shiva, that granted immortality and invincibility. Ravana coveted this treasure and performed austerities to obtain it, but Lord Shiva was afraid that Ravana would misuse those powers. So, he played a trick on Ravana and, as a result, that *ātma-linga* remained in the possession of Lord Shiva.

But how do we develop such humility? If we wish to become truly humble, we should imbibe the dust of the Sadhu's feet. When we keep the holy lotus feet of the Saint fixed in our hearts, the amrit showers down on us. Within us, the radiant form of the Guru is radiating Inner Light. Guru Ramdas Ji tells us that as long as the breath flows in our body, we should keep our mind absorbed in His radiance, which is the real "dust" of the Sadhu's feet. It is only in this way that true humility can be developed. But the so-called humility that we exhibit from time to time—just to get our worldly works accomplished—is no humility at all.

Shiva, Narad, the thousand-headed serpent, and the sages long for the dust of the Sadhu's feet.

Now what does He say? Shiva, Narad, the serpent Shesh and the greatly exalted gods and goddesses, all of them pray for the dust of the Sadhu's feet. That dust has great efficacy. Attaining this *charaṇ dhūrī* (dust of the feet), one realizes the Lord. Becoming freed from the bondage and suffering of the cycle of birth and death, the soul achieves liberation. This is the Power inherent in *charaṇ dhūrī*. For this reason, all the devotees of the Lord pray for that precious dust.

Every dwelling where the Sadhus place their holy feet becomes sanctified.

If a dwelling or a building or a temple is blessed with the touch of the Sadhus' holy feet, that place becomes sanctified. This is their greatness and their glory.

Once Lord Shiva and Parvati were out walking, when Shiva Ji suddenly bowed down and, taking up the dust from that place, rubbed it with great reverence on his forehead.

Parvati was surprised and said to him, “Maharaj, here there is no temple or monastery, no idol or shrine—nothing at all. At yet, you have lovingly taken up the dust of this place and put it on your forehead. What is the mystery behind this?”

Lord Shiva replied, “Ten thousand years ago, at this very spot, a Mahatma sat meditating on the Lord’s Name. Therefore, this ground has become sanctified and holy.”

So, Guru Ramdas is telling us that wherever the Sadhus place their holy feet, it becomes a sacred place—that home, or building, or bungalow is sanctified.

**Relinquish your pride and renounce all egotism;
Go to the Sadhus and remain in their company.**

Now just consider. We have so many famous places of pilgrimage. But why were they established? What do they signify? They are considered holy only because some true Sadhu meditated there, doing the Simran of the Lord. As a result of their devotion these places of pilgrimage came into existence.

Therefore, He explains that, abandoning all pretense, we should go into the company of the Sadhus with pure and undivided devotion. And once we have taken shelter at their holy feet, we should never leave their protection. Removing every vestige of vanity from your body, speech, and mind, remain in the refuge of the Sadhus; then you will gain all the benefit and can safely tread the Godward Path that leads to the soul’s liberation.

*If you wish to meet the Saint, abandon all ego, attachment,
and illusion,
Then with each step you take towards him, you will gain
the fruit of a million yagyas.*

When you go for the darshan of the Sadhus and Saints with a sincere heart, with each step you take towards their holy presence, you will receive the fruit of a million yagyas (ritual sacrifices). The greatness of the Sadhus is inaccessible, incomprehensible, and infinite. Their glory is beyond description. When we go to the Sadhus, we should leave behind all dissembling and egotism. We should give up our pride of caste and community. We should leave at home all our self-importance and with humility, love and lowliness go into their presence.

**When you give up your fear of the Dharam Rai,
the Lord of Judgment.
You will be rescued from drowning in the sea of poison.**

Without any reservation, we should remain in the company of the Sadhus. In their company, our account sheet with the Lord of Judgment is torn in two. Thus, we will be freed from the cycle of birth and death. He will pull us out from this ocean of poison in which we are drowning and grant us emancipation.

**Wandering here and there in illusion, we have
become worn out and wasted, but going in the
company of the Sadhu, we take on new life.**

Everyone passes their worldly existence, tossed about on the waves of happiness and sorrow. While our hearts remains filled with illusion, we cannot come to know where true happiness lies. Under the influence of illusion, we think we can find happiness in material objects, but there is no inherent happiness in these things. Controlled by illusion, whenever we experience happiness within, we think that some outer thing is the source of that happiness.

But if we look at the reality, we will come to understand that the source of happiness is the Living Consciousness within us, not these lifeless outer objects. For example, our body uses hunger to signal that it needs nourishment to keep functioning. And to assuage our hunger, we have the natural desire to eat food. But there is no innate happiness in any specific outer food or in the way it is prepared or in the spices that will flavor it.

First, we realize we are hungry and seek to satisfy that hunger by eating. We take a few mouthfuls, but then, because of the delicious taste, we go on eating and eating. Sometimes, we even make ourselves sick through overeating and end up having to rush to the hospital. There is no happiness in that.

We satisfy our hunger by eating the food. But because of the sense of taste, a thought forms in the mind that the food will bring us happiness. We labor under the illusion that the happiness is coming from the food itself. Because the food satisfies our hunger and the taste of the food brings us pleasure, we think the happiness is coming from outside ourselves.

This is a false perception—a fantasy of the mind. The source of all happiness is the soul within us. Therefore, He explains that even though true happiness already exists naturally within us, when we project that happiness onto all the material objects in the creation; we mistakenly think that they themselves are happiness-giving.

Many people say that children are the source of happiness. When we get together with our acquaintances, they enquired, “How many children do you have?” We reply proudly, “I have six boys and three girls.” So, that makes a total of nine. Or someone else says they have twelve children. An even

dozen. Now consider—to raise all those children in a good way, how many difficulties we must face. And in that day-to-day struggle, we forget the Lord. We don't even remember who we are or where we are. We no longer possess that much self-awareness. Our entire thought process is consumed in thinking about the welfare of our children. And our whole life is spent figuring out how we will raise those children, how we will get them married and so forth. So how can we say that there is any happiness in having children?

But because of the force of illusion, we remain in ignorance of the Truth. Self-existing, unchangeable happiness already exists in our within, but we project that happiness onto the transitory, destructible objects of the outside world. And in order to pursue this illusory mirage of happiness, we involve ourselves in so many deceitful practices. We squander our precious birth chasing these ephemeral joys. All of this worldly happiness is just a fantasy of our mind, and it will evaporate into nothingness. There is no real happiness to be found outside.

We are so weighed down by the affairs of the world, we are so entangled in the net of our own making, that we even resort to astrologers, requesting them to find some solution in the stars to extricate us from our dilemma. But how can they get us out of this illusion? We are so deeply entangled. They read out a few formulas from their star charts, but how can that free us? Or we go to all the places of pilgrimage and bathe in the holy waters. And we bow down our heads in front of the idols; we visit them by the thousands.

But what can we gain through all this outer effort? The problem lies within us. Until we eradicate the illusion that controls our thinking, our immaculate soul cannot shine forth. Until we purify ourselves within, we won't be able to shed the shackles of attachment to this world.

**So do not delay, even for an instant;
Go and fall at the feet of the Sadhu.**

When you go into the refuge of the Sadhu, don't delay for even an instant. The moment you hear about a True Sadhu, run immediately and fall at His feet. And going into His refuge, lay your request before Him with humility and meekness: "Have mercy upon me and free me from this deceptive web of the world."

**The Music of God's name is a priceless jewel;
The Lord has given it into the keeping of the Sadhus.**

He says: "The True Naam, the Power of God that pervades the whole creation has been given into the keeping of the Sadhus." When we wish to protect the valuable item in our home, we place them inside an iron safe. Thieves cannot open that safe; they cannot take away the wealth stored there. The heart of the Sadhus is like that iron safe. The Lord has first placed the spiritual gems of the Naam within the Sadhus and then sent them into this world. And when a Sadhu becomes merciful and bestows these priceless treasures on you, then, following the instructions you have been given, you should sit regularly for meditation and withdraw your conscious attention into the higher regions, leaving all the turmoil of the world behind.

**Whoever accepts the Guru's Word as Truth,
receives this precious gift.**

Now who is fortunate enough to receive this treasure? When an aspirant accepts the Guru's teaching as Truth and devotes

their life to the Guru unreservedly, they receive this wealth from the Guru. He mercifully bestows on such a devotee the treasure of Sat Naam.

Listen, O brothers, the Saint is raising His arms and proclaiming loudly.

What does He tell us? In the beginning, the Lord Himself devised this method. There is no other means through which we can reunite with the Lord. So, the Saints raise both their arms and, with the beating of drums, proclaim: “I tell you the Truth. If you wish to achieve liberation in this lifetime, go into the refuge of the Sadhu. Take the initiation into the Sat Naam and meditate according to His instructions; then you can gain emancipation. There is no other way.”

If you seek everlasting peace for your soul, you should enter into the Sanctuary of the True Guru.

If you are seeking the Eternal Truth, go into the refuge of the Saint. You cannot find this treasure anywhere else. The happiness you gain from attaining the Truth cannot be increased or decreased. It remains forever one and the same. That is why it is called *Sadā Ānand*—the Eternal Bliss.

All other types of happiness are transitory. They last but for a short while. For instance, when we eat some food, we feel happy and satisfied. But then, after two or three hours, again we are troubled by hunger. But the real happiness lasts forever. That experience of joy is beyond the senses and the inner mind. While superficial happiness is a product of our own imagination, the true happiness is Self-Existent and Unchanging.

**If such good fortune is written in our fate,
we should hold fast to the Guru's Naam within.**

If we have a very high destiny, we will understand and accept the teachings of the Guru. This world is filled with gurus and spiritual systems, and countless aspirants follow them blindly. And if we go travel down these paths, who knows what the consequences may be.

So, if you have great good fortune, the teachings of the True Guru will touch your heart. You will mold your life according to the Guru's instructions. You will treasure the Guru's words in our heart, day and night, and you will follow them implicitly, never wavering even for a moment. Through constant repetition of the Guru's Naam, your soul will achieve liberation. This is the way of *gurmat*—the teachings of the Saints.

**Attachment to Maya lands us in great difficulty;
But by drinking the Nectar of the Lord's Name,
we will easily cross over the ocean of this world.**

When the devotee follows the Guru's teaching, all illusion and attachment to Maya are automatically banished. Day and night, the soul remains content, drinking the nectar of Naam. In such a heart, no place remains for the tricks and delusions of Maya.

The person who is free of all desire is the emperor of emperors. Becoming desireless, an ordinary king is elevated to the throne of the supreme emperor. It is the custom that one sadhu will greet another sadhu, saying, "Welcome, Maharaj." That sadhu is addressed not just as a raja or king, but as a maharaja, a king of kings. What does this title signify? The True Sadhu is one whose soul has united with the Supreme Power—the Self-Existent Lord, untainted by desire.

**Those who are in love with Maya, in the end, will
be consumed by Maya.**

Now He speaks of the manmukhs and Maya. The manmukhs are born in Maya; their whole life—childhood, adolescence, and adulthood—is squandered in the pursuit of Maya. They never remember the Lord. They never give a thought to spirituality. And from this precious human birth, they take no benefit at all. They spend all their days in the confusion and turmoil of outer pursuits—children, family, wealth and possessions, name and fame, status and position, power and rulership. So, Guru Ramdas Ji tells us that, in the end, they are consumed by Maya. Drowning in Maya they perish. Even to their dying breath, they never understand the real nature of this illusory world. All their thoughts and all of their dealings have been rooted in Maya and delusion.

**The path of ignorance and darkness is treacherous;
We are loaded down with the crushing weight of
egotism.**

Do we know where the road we traveling on in this life will lead us? Only when we meet the True Master, receive initiation into the True Naam, and regularly imbibe the words of the Satsang, can we discern the Path leading to Truth. Then we realize that before coming to Him, we had been controlled by ignorance. We were wandering down the path of illusion; constantly engaged in the works of Maya, we were amassing a huge bundle of false deeds and were being drawn ever deeper into the ways of the world. We had no knowledge of how to make this human birth successful and had not even heard of the True Home of the Soul. We were enshrouded by dense darkness and could not discern the right path to follow,

but we weren't even aware of our ignorance. We didn't know the destination or how to reach there. We were wandering like blind people stumbling on through the night.

Nanak says: Meditate on the Naam, the manifestation of the All-Pervading Lord; Merging into His Naam, you will achieve emancipation.

Therefore, He says, "Merge into that Power of Naam, which is All-Pervading."

*Everyone utters Rām, Rām;
But the Lord is not won through outer repetition.*

Everyone goes on chanting *Rām, Rām*, but the meeting with the Lord cannot be achieved merely by repeating His name outwardly with the tongue. When we break the bonds of *harām* (worldly vices), only then will Rām, the Almighty Lord—who is totally untainted by the sins of this world—manifest within us. As long as our repetition of Rām is superficial, motivated by our own egotism, we are still *harām*, and that True Lord within will remain far away from us.

Therefore, Guru Ramdas says that we should repeat the Name of the Lord both without and within—with our body, our mind, our speech. Merging ourselves totally into that All-Pervading Lord, we should go on repeating His Name. Then, not even the smallest space remains for the intrusion of *Maya*.

Meeting the Sat Guru, we discover the Reality of Sat Naam and become united with the Lord.

In this world, everyone repeats the name of God that is

composed of the written words and letters, but such outer repetition has no special power. Therefore, He explains that when we meet the Satguru, we realize the true nature of the Almighty Lord—where He resides and how we can meet Him.

Receiving initiation into Naam, the Name of the Lord, we learn the meditation technique from the Sat Guru and can commence our inner journey. And when we ourselves rise into the inner realms, we can prove for ourselves the validity of the Saint's teachings. Otherwise, everyone just goes on superficially repeating some outer name of God, while the mind roams unchecked here and there in the world.

Kabir Sahib is telling us that if we want to please the Almighty Lord, we should take up the fly-whisk of Gyān. When we wave such a whisk, no flies or other insects can come near; that is, the flies of the world—lust, anger, greed, attachment, egotism, and all the other worldly desires—cannot enter our heart. This is the meaning of taking up the fly-whisk of True Knowledge.

—Baba Somanath

Wave the Fly-Whisk of Knowledge

**What the Lord wills, that He brings into being.
The soul wields the scimitar when He unites it
with the Shabd.¹**

[Before we are born] we are not thinking: “When I incarnate, I will get the human body. I will take birth from such and such a mother. I will belong to such and such a caste.” Who knows any of these things before they are born? Wherever the Creator gives us birth, whatever body He chooses for us, we have to accept our fate.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us: “Whatever the Almighty God ordains will come to pass.” If He is not gracious on us, what can we accomplish through our own feeble efforts? As soon as our life-breaths come are finished off, all our activities in this world cease.

When the Lord becomes our support—when He wishes to grant enlightenment and reunite a soul with Himself—only

¹ *Karegā soī karatā ne hukum kiyā*, Kabir Sahib

then will True Knowledge dawn within. Love and devotion for the Satguru will manifest, and whenever we turn our attention toward Him, our task will be accomplished.

If it comes in the Will of the Creator, the soul merges back into the Inner Sound. And becoming the very form of Shabd, that soul grows powerful both without and within. Only such a brave warrior can emerge victorious over mighty Maya on the battlefield. Otherwise, one thought after another will attack us with such force and suddenness that we lose our footing and fall down. Ultimately, we are overwhelmed: “I’ve had enough of this nonsense. What is the point of it anyway? After all, who knows if the Guru and the Naam are real or not? I’m leaving.” Duped by the mind, we admit defeat. But once the Lord places His hand on our back, once we take the support of that Power within, not even the mighty Brahma can deflect us from victory.

**Wave the fly-whisk of *Gyān* and rotate the fan of Love.
Take up your sword, and banish all your doubts.**

Kabir Sahib is listing the inner qualities we will need to please the Lord. Bhishmacharya had been fighting in the Mahabharat war for many days, but on the seventh day [of the dark half of *Mārgashīrṣha*²] he was attacked, and every inch of his body was pierced through with arrows. At that time, he told Shri Krishna, “I had wished to see the conclusion of this war. But now, here in the middle of the battle, I am dying from my wounds. Please let me stay as I am on battlefield till the final day.” Shri Krishna told him, “It shall be as you wish. You will remain here and

² *Mārgashīrṣha* is the ninth month of the Hindu lunar calendar.

witness the final eight days of the war.” Arrows were sticking out all over his body. Each arrow had pierced right through him from front to back. So, he said, “At this time, I am in much need of rest. Please take me to some sheltered place where I can lie down, but also watch the battle’s progress.”³ When they had moved him, Duryodhan brought a velvet covered mattress and thick cushions to make him more comfortable.

But Bhishma told him, “I am a warrior who has stood many times on the field of battle. Now I am dying, pierced by countless arrows. Soon, I will take leave of this world. And you have brought this luxurious mattress, stuffed with cotton, for me to lie on? I have no use for it; this is not a fitting bed for a hero.” So instead, they laid him down on the ground, supported only by the arrows that had pierced his body, but still he lacked a pillow. Then Arjuna shot three arrows into the ground, forming a cradle to support his head.⁴ Just as Bhishmacharya spurned the rich bedding they offered, in the same way, the True Lord who dwells within us has no need of outer comforts like fans or cold water; such trifles are useless to Him.

Instead, Kabir Sahib is telling us that if we want to please the Almighty Lord, we should take up the fly-whisk of *Gyān*. When we wave such a whisk, no flies or other insects can come near; that is, the flies of the world—lust, anger, greed, attachment, egotism, and all the other worldly desires—cannot enter

3 Shantanu, Bhishma’s father, had granted him a boon called *Ichā Mrityu*, the ability to die at a time of his own choosing. According to the Mahabharata, the war lasted 18 days. Bhishma fell on the tenth day of battle but remained on the battlefield eight more days to watch the conclusion of the fighting. He stayed in the body, even after the battle ended; finally, after entrusting the kingdom to Yudhiṣṭhira, he chose to die on *Uttarāyaṇ*, about 58 days after he was mortally wounded.

4 Arjuna also shot one arrow into the ground and a stream of cold Ganges water shot up to quench Bhishma’s thirst.

our heart. This is the meaning of taking up the fly-whisk of True Knowledge.⁵ And then He tells us to rotate the fan of Love; that fan manifests peace within our heart. If we rotate the outer fan, when we stop turning it, we will feel twice as hot as before. This is not the fan Kabir Sahib is referring to. When love manifests in our within, we are bathed in coolness. But if we are devoid of love, that coolness doesn't come, no matter how much we may fan ourselves outwardly. So, in this way, immerse your heart in that True Love and Knowledge; unite your thoughts with the Shabd. Only the real warrior who fights on this battlefield can be called the brave one. If the Divine Love has not entered your heart, no matter how much show you make outwardly, you won't achieve anything.

**When you fit the arrow in that mighty bow,
With the twang of the bowstring, you banish your
three enemies.**

Day and night, the brave warrior goes on fighting—aiming and loosing arrows at the target again and again. In the same way, you should fix your thoughts lovingly at the still point

5 “The term ‘Gyan’ or ‘Jnana’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘gya,’ which is equivalent to the English word “know.” In common speech, *Gyan* or knowledge is taken to mean thinking at the intellectual level, embracing within its fold all knowledge recorded in and derived from books, ancient or modern, spiritual or secular. No doubt this is a kind of *Gyān* or knowledge; and while it is an elementary kind, it is very extensive, varied and significant as far as it goes...

Apart from the *Apara Vidya*, or *Gyan* at the level of thinking and writing, there is a subtler and higher type of Knowledge which is gained at the supra-mental level. It is independent of the knowledge gained through the ordinary senses as it is intuitive and a direct experience of the soul. Hence it is called *Para Vidya*, or the Knowledge of the Beyond. In all religions it is spoken of as the real *Gyan*, or True Knowledge.” Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) p. 285.

between the two eyes, constantly repeat the Simran with Knowledge and Love, and become absorbed into the Naam. Then the three powers—*rajas* (activity), *tamas* (inertia), and *satva* (truthfulness)—will leave you of themselves.

**Overjoyed, you vault into the inner sky.
Running free on that verdant plane, you let out a
jubilant cry.**

At that time, every cell of the body is infused with bliss, and the soul has no wish to stay in the lower realms. Day and night, it remains absorbed in the inner ethereal sky. This is the “battlefield” where the soul rejoices, but it is no easy matter to make this ascent. From the outside, we may appear alright; but if our heart is unchanged, if we have not manifested True Love within, the Divine Light will not dawn, and we will not be acceptable in the Court of the Lord.

**The twenty-five prakritis and the three gunas are
put to rout.
It makes no difference if you are a merchant, a
king, or a pauper.**

The five subtle elements and the twenty-five prakritis will not come near. They will find no place there. It makes no difference if you are a rich person, or a general, or a king, or a pauper. No one looks at these outer distinctions; high and low have no meaning there.

The Shabd has no fear of anyone, and the Shabd does not frighten anyone. It is Self-Existing. But as long as our heart is

troubled by fear—fear of public shame, fear of disgrace, fear of criticism—how will we know that fearless Power. Where there is fear, there is no Shabd Power.

**Kabir says, the rare Saint is an Expert Jeweler.
On that vast plain, He beats the drum.**

He tells us that only some rare Saint can judge the value of the diamond. He is the Expert Jeweler. He is the one who can read the heart; and when He finds a true warrior who has banished fear, he proclaims it with the beating of drums. As for the rest of us, our hearts are filled with fear. We think: “What will become of me? What does the future hold? How will I manage?” Within, we are riddled with fear. Physical fear, mental fear, fear for wealth, fear for name and fame—all of these fears have taken root within us.

To meet the Lord, you must cleanse your heart and become fearless, because the Almighty Lord is *nirbhay*—the One without fear. But if you peer into your heart, you will discover how much fear is still lurking there. “I am an important person, what if I lose my status? I have so many possessions, what if I lose this or that thing?” So many kinds of worry. “If I lose my job, how will I get by?” This is everyone’s condition, is it not so?

**Give up your I-hood and remember the Lord.
That Lord is not far away from you.**

He says, “Give up your sense of self. Attach your heart to the Lord and repeat His Simran.” When it comes to

meditation, everybody says that we can meet the Lord only by giving up our little selves. But abandoning self-love is no small thing. When we sit for meditation, no awareness of the body should remain. We keep thinking: “Now, I am sitting. Now, I am seeing this or that inner sight. Now, I am repeating the Simran.”

But we should abandon all these thoughts of I-hood. No worries of the outer world should intrude. Remain all alone, and become absorbed into the inner sky. This is the meaning of giving up the little self. Remember the Almighty Lord. That Lord is always standing ready to meet us; He is not far away. But when do we become successful in our meditations? This happens only when our good fortune awakens. Otherwise, our attention will remain fixed in the body and when the mosquitoes bite us, we will leave our meditation aside.

**Seek within yourself for the One who is speaking.
The Shabd is present with every breath.**

Khudā means the Self-Existing Lord who is speaking within everyone. Have firm faith in Him. Become determined and have His darshan. If we go to outer places where He is not speaking, what can we hope to gain from Him? The Muslims go to the mosque where they offer their namaz. In that place, they don't keep any images at all. The walls are white and bare. Why? They don't want any distractions when they pray. But all the whitewash they apply does no good in the end. The outer mosque may be clean, but what about the dirt heaped up within? Until our heart is spotlessly pure, the feeling of self-love (*khud*) does not leave us, and we cannot meet the Lord (*Khudā*).

The Lord is present in every breath we take. He is always with us—closer than hands and feet. But since He remains hidden behind the curtain, we say He is far away. As long as our vision is obscured by that inner curtain, we cannot see Him. We cannot testify to His presence because we don't even realize He is there.

**Why do you wander from place to place?
Search deep within yourself,
Where the scintillating Light streams.**

He asks, “Why do you wander from place to place?” The Divine Light within us gives support to our body and understanding to our inner mind. It is through that Power that our eyes can see and our tongue can taste. But we have abandoned that Inner Power; we are seeking for the Almighty Lord in the stones and the water. We search for Him in all the ten directions, but where can we ever hope to find Him outside?

*The child you are searching for
is tucked under your arm,
But you wander throughout the city
sounding the alarm.*

You cry out, “My child is lost.” But my friend, what are you saying? Your child has not gone anywhere.

**Now accept the words of Kabir;
Understand that He speaks with authority.**

Kabir Sahib says, “I am not acting and posing. I am not

speaking from rumor or hearsay. I am proclaiming the Truth, with the authority of the Almighty Lord. I am not repeating someone else's claims or quoting from the books and holy scriptures. I am telling you of the True and Eternal Path that I have seen with my own eyes."

When a person is afflicted by hunger, he scurries here and there, like a mouse in search of food. In like manner, those who have a genuine hunger and thirst for God within are always longing for union with Him. Thus, you should commune with the Lord and become His very form. Whatever manifests is according to our desire. And that desire arises from within our heart, be it for the Lord or for the world. So, if you establish the Naam of the Lord in your heart, then the remembrance of the world will vanish from your within.

—Baba Somanath

As the Rainbird Longs for the Raindrop

**Remembering Him, all our sins are erased;
And many generations of our family are rescued
as well.¹**

Guru Arjan Dev says that by doing Simran, all your sins are automatically eradicated. Then, not only you but your ancestors are also liberated. This is the Power inherent in Naam. But you must repeat the Simran with faith and love. If you are doing the repetition outwardly, but your mind is wandering here and there; nothing can be gained from such devotion.

**Therefore, meditate without ceasing on the
Name of the Lord,
He who has no beginning nor end.**

Always keep the Name of the Lord in your heart; never forget Him. He is boundless and the Power of Naam has no beginning and no end. When your heart has been touched by Naam, when your thoughts have become one-pointed, when

¹ *Jis simarat sabh kilavikha nāseh pitarī hoi udhāro / Guru Arjan Dev*

you remain absorbed in the Lord's Name without a break, then you will achieve liberation in this very lifetime.

**O son, this is your mother's hope, that you may
never forget the Creator, even for an instant.
May you ever meditate upon Jagdish, the Lord of
the Universe.**

The mother says to her son, "Oh son, never forget the Name of Jagdish, the Lord of the Universe, even for the blink of an eye." Such a mother is blessed; such a mother is worthy of praise. Our mothers have a lot of influence on our lives.

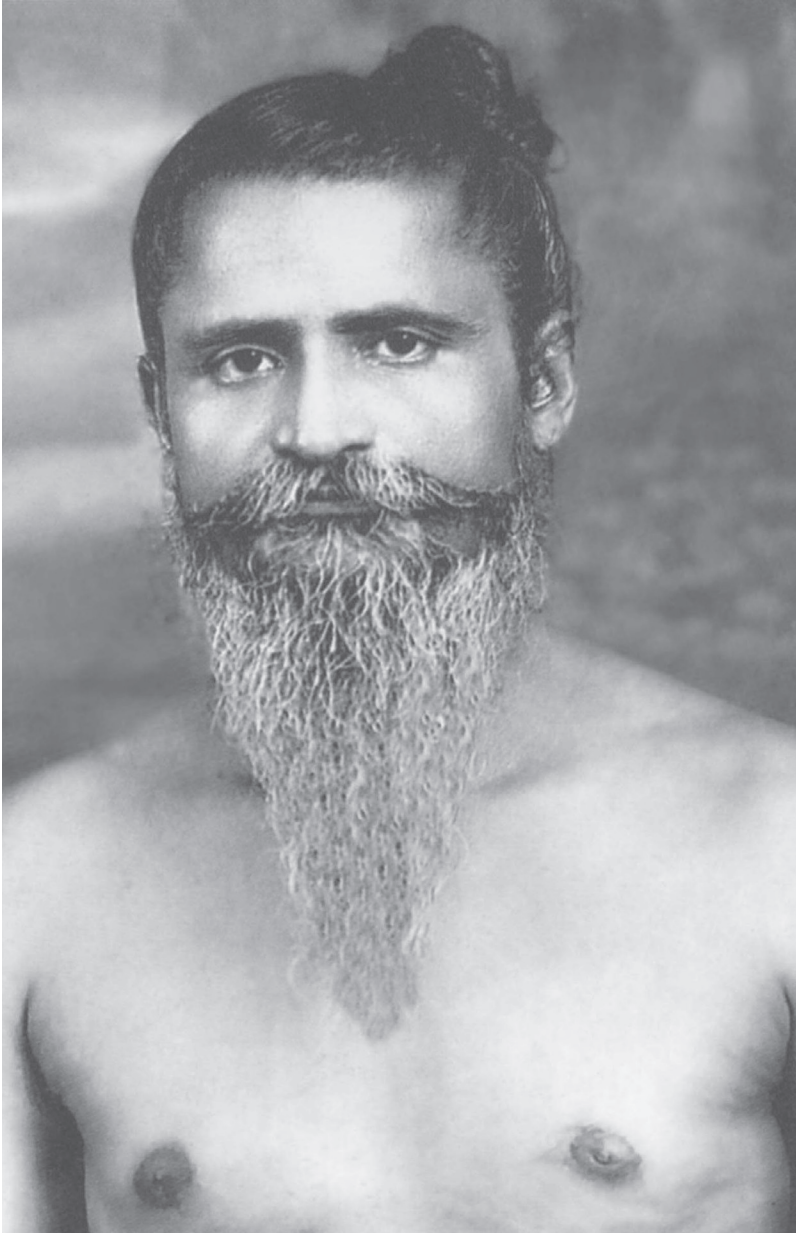
**May the Satguru be gracious upon you,
And may you remain attached to Satsang,
the company of Truth.**

Then what is the result? The grace of the Satguru will descend upon you. Then, the true Satsang will go on endlessly within your heart.

**May the preservation of your honor by the
Transcendent Lord be your clothes,
And may the singing of His praises be your
constant nourishment.**

What food sustains your soul day and night? The singing of the Lord's praise. Just as the hungry man is thinking of food incessantly, in the same manner, you should fix your attention unceasingly in the Lord's remembrance.

When a person is afflicted by hunger, he scurries here and there, like a mouse in search of food. In like manner, those



Baba Somanath Ji

who have a genuine hunger and thirst for God within are always longing for union with Him. Thus, you should commune with the Lord and become His very form. Whatever manifests is according to our desire. And that desire arises from within our heart, be it for the Lord or for the world. So, if you establish the Naam of the Lord in your heart, then the remembrance of the world will vanish from your within.

**Therefore, forever quaff the Ambrosial Nectar and
gain immortality;
May you dwell in infinite delight, absorbed in the
Lord's remembrance.
Filled with ecstasy and wonder, may your
cherished desire be fulfilled;
And may worry never come near.**

Drinking the nectar of the Lord's Naam, may you remain perpetually absorbed in Him and attain immortality.

**Let your mind become like the black bee and the
Lord's feet like the lotus flower.**

So, now He says that you should become like the black bee. That bee has so much love for the lotus blossom, that when its petals start to close on it at sunset, even then the bee does not abandon the flower. It is prepared to face death, but it is not prepared to leave the lotus that it loves.

Similarly, if the bee of your heart remains absorbed in the lotus feet of the Satguru, then how can the remembrance of the world intrude there? What room is left in such a heart for the happiness and sorrow of this material creation? Not even birth and death can enter there.

**The servant Nanak says: Let the mind dwell on Him,
As the rainbird longs for the swati raindrop.**

The devotee's attention must be fixed on the lotus feet of the Master with unswerving devotion. He says, "May my mind remain perpetually absorbed in the Guru's lotus feet, just as the rainbird longs for the swati raindrop².

2 The swati raindrop is a special drop that falls during the *swati nakshatra*, one of the "lunar mansions" of Hindu astrology. It is said that the rainbird refuses to drink any other water and quenches its thirst only when it encounters that swati drop.

All this illusion is arising from the doubting mind. We have not established the Guru and the Naam firmly within ourselves when we do the meditation practice; that is why doubts come in our within. If we were to head straight for our goal, if we were to follow the Naam, we would meet the Guru and, contemplating on the Guru, we could proceed further.

—Baba Somanath

The Fickle Mind Does Not Obey Me

**The fickle mind does not obey me.
How can I bring it under control?**¹

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Radha Swami Ji. He tells us that a concentrated mind leads to liberation, but a wavering mind leads to bondage. At present, all the world is groveling before the mind. We go through life following the mind's dictates and have become its mouthpiece. If you consider this carefully, you will observe that from the lowliest to the most exalted—even the gods, goddesses, yakshas, gandharvas and kinnars²—all are controlled by the mind. On the surface, each appears to have a unique form, but if you delve a little deeper, you will discover that, in essence, they are all a manifestation of one and the same mind.

1 *Man chanchal kahā na māneñ*, Swami Ji Maharaj

2 **Yakshas, gandharvas, and kinnars** are three different classes of demigods. **Yakshas** are ruled over by Kubera, the Vedic god of wealth. They generally appear as nature-spirits — sometimes benevolent, sometimes destructive — dwelling in trees and lonely, wilderness spots. **Gandharvas** are renowned as the celestial musicians, who perform in the heavenly palaces of the gods and goddesses. **Kinnars**, like the yakshas, are attendants on Kubera, but, similar to the gandharvas, they are mostly associated with music and dance.

The ever-restless mind sits within everyone, and whatever it commands us to do, we obey without question. Compelled by the mind, we create the karmas and then must endure the consequences of our actions. We mistake our bondage for happiness, and, in this delusion, we throw away our precious lives and are cast back into the wheel of eighty-four lakh births and deaths.

This has been our condition—not just in the present incarnation—but for millions of lifetimes and through millions of ages. Now, at least, we should take stock of our life. From our childhood up to the present moment, we have been following the dictates of the mind; we have acted according to the instructions of the mind; we have wasted our whole lifetime trying to please the mind.

The mind has taken up residence within us and draws pleasure from sense indulgence. But the soul also has its seat in this human body, and, birth after birth, it has suffered the reactions of the mind's deeds. Therefore, Swami Ji tells us that the foundation stone of the spiritual edifice is to bring the mind under our control. No other means has the slightest effect. In order to still the mind and make it understand, we keep fasts, offer devotion, practice hatha and raja yoga, repeat mantras and endure austerities, but for all our efforts, we accomplish nothing at all.

The mind is such an immense power. Although it will readily listen to all the spiritual teachings and will perform all the devotional practices, still it will never willingly give up its old habits. The mind enjoys reading all the sacred scriptures. It will read the Bhagavad Gita; it will read the Puranas. It will listen to stories from here and there and even quote the scriptures to others. But its essential nature remains unchanged.

Swami Ji says: “The mind is so disturbed that it won't pay any attention to my words. What method can I adopt to control it?” Sometimes, people who have not brought their minds under control go about instructing everyone else on the best

way to control the mind. My friend, first, rein in your own mind—then you can teach others. Until your mind obeys you, how can you preach to someone else? Kabir Sahib tells us:

*First, awaken your own mind;
Then you can make others understand.*

Until you comprehend the reality, how can you impart knowledge to others? Therefore, Swami Ji says: “What is the most important task? It is to bring your own mind under your control.” Then your work is complete. Until the mind becomes obedient, your spirituality remains full of fancy phrases, but devoid of practice.

**The Guru daily instructs me and explains how to
perform the meditation practice.
I sit in Satsang and listen with rapt attention.**

He says that the Guru explains to me every day how to still the mind. The Sadhus lay great emphasis on this principle. All the Vedas and Shastras attest to its importance. And I also long to make the mind still so that True Knowledge may dawn within me. But the mind, sitting within everyone, listens to all these teachings, refuses to change—it goes on committing sins unchecked. So, Swami Ji tells us: “Daily I listen to Satsang and try to make my mind understand the Truth.”

**I hang on His every word and bitterly repent my
past follies;
But then the mind dupes me once again and leads
me astray.**

While I sit listening to the Satsang, every single word touches

my heart, and my mind deeply regrets its past failures. Swami Ji describes the condition of the mind in this way:

*After committing a sin, I always repent sincerely;
But at the first opportunity, once again, I become the thief.*

As soon as we leave the Satsang, the ghost of the mind enters our within. That mind starts to order us about, and, according to its commands, we perform all our actions in this world. We do repent for our bad actions and think: “I should not be doing this. I should be doing Bhajan and Simran. My human birth is going wasted.” At heart of hearts, we understand the reality and repent. But when that mighty power of the mind surges up within us, as soon as we leave the Satsang, we come under its control once again. We do not take the benefit from the Satsang with us but remain exactly the same as we were before. Lost in forgetfulness, we go on wandering about in delusion.

**I have tried so many methods to subdue it.
How can I put an end to this troublesome mind?**

Try as I might on my own, I am always defeated. No matter what I do, this mind still won't obey me. So how can I subdue it? How can I destroy the mind? In spite of all my efforts, I have not succeeded. The mind always throws me down in defeat.

**On my own, I have not reached the high dwelling
place of Surat Shabd.
How can I merge my consciousness into the inner sky?**

Now, He tells us that there is only one way to destroy the mind. When we bring the mind in contact with the Shabd, its restless activity ceases, and it becomes still. But to meet with

the Shabd, you must rise above the physical level and reach the inner sky. And the mind will not, of its own volition, ascend to the plane of the Shabd. In fact, it fears that contact and resists any attempt to rise above. Its tendency is downward, and it has an affinity for the outer practices. The mind is attracted to the outer religions—it rotates the rosary, observes fasts, and relishes philosophical discussions. It is all eagerness for anything associated with the outer world, but stubbornly refuses to go within. And even when we sit for bhajan, the mind prefers to run about in the outer world. It won't sit still for a moment and avoids the inner ascent. So, Swami Ji says: “No matter what I do, the mind will not even try to contact the Shabd. It refuses to rise up to the exalted level where the Shabd is resounding. Now, tell me. How can I lay hold of it and bring it under control?”

**Assailed by doubt, my mind is always wavering.
I cannot let go of the worldly desires.**

The mind is always unsteady and full of doubts. The word we use for this world is “*sansār*,” which combines *sansā* (doubt) and *sār* (essence)—the essence of doubt. This is the meaning of “*sansār*.” And the root of all this doubt is the mind. Sitting within us, it remains uneasy. It is always wavering and changing. It is filled with doubts. It cannot stay still and so the Higher Power within can offer it no aid. The mind's works can never be fully accomplished; whatever virtuous deed or sinful action it may perform, it always remains in the grip of doubt. When it sits for Bhajan, again it is overcome by doubt. It cannot hold its focus. Thoughts crowd in: “I should be sitting in such and such a way. I should be seeing this or that. Now, I am seeing the moon, the sun, the stars. Oh, some ghost has come! Some deity has appeared within. The form of some woman has manifested.” This is all the play of the mind, sent to distract us.

How do we reach our goal? The path is clear before us, and we should march along that straight path, not looking to the left or right. Deities like Rama may appear to us, but these forms are false—just figments of an overwrought imagination. When we rise above and have such visions, it is our own mind spinning one fantasy after another. “This deity has come, that deity has come.” Well, if all these deities come, how will we fit them all in? There is no extra room for even one deity, and we are trying to bring along seventeen.

All this illusion is arising from the doubting mind. We have not established the Guru and the Naam firmly within ourselves when we do the meditation practice; that is why doubts come in our within. If we were to head straight for our goal, if we were to follow the Naam, we would meet the Guru and, contemplating on the Guru, we could proceed further. What about all the other sights we will encounter? When we go into the within, stars will appear here and there, the sun and moon will rise. But our goal is to have the darshan of the Guru. If the other sights appear, let them come, but always proceed straight forward, searching only for the darshan of the Guru, which is our sole aim. But now when we sit for meditation, we find that we are still bound by worldly desires. Until we remove those desires and sever our connection with the world, how can we ascend within? When we are still attracted to the outer world, how can we hope to transcend this plane and rise up to the higher spiritual regions?

**When I take refuge in the Satguru’s shelter,
I can cure the mind’s disease.**

There is only one remedy for this dilemma. On my own, I have read the six Shastras and the eighteen Puranas; I have practiced all the rites and rituals; I have performed the outer

worship; and, I have tried to contemplate on the forms of the deities. But even after pursuing all these avenues, I have achieved nothing.

Only one method will work. Now, I must go into the refuge of the Satguru and remain there with firm determination, whether my meditation is perfected or not, whether I achieve salvation in this lifetime or not. And even if I have to take rebirth, no matter where I am placed, still, I should remain in the refuge of the Guru with unwavering resolution. This is my only hope of achieving my cherished goal.

**The trap of the world causes great agony.
Daily I am burning in the fire.**

If I don't practice that method, I will become the food of Kal. I will be trapped in the snare of Yam Raj (The Lord of Death), and, bound in that trap I will die. There is only one remedy—to go into the shelter of the Guru. Nothing else will work.

**Without grace and mercy nothing can be accomplished;
Now I have taken refuge with Radhaswami.**

So, in the end, Swami Ji has made this matter perfectly clear. Until the grace of the Guru descends, nothing can be accomplished. Superficially, the mind has learned to say: "It is all the Guru's grace." But my friend, do we earn the Guru's grace just by learning to parrot a few words? Many people speak of the Guru's grace, but that does not mean they have understood that grace or become worthy of receiving it. They just mouth the words: "It is all the Guru's grace."

Where do we find that fountainhead from where the Guru's grace is flowing? Outwardly, we are extolling His grace, but we should just look at our inner condition and see where we

stand. When we have never even contacted that flowing stream of grace, what can we hope to gain from such pretense? The True Guru does not reside anywhere outside. The Guru is the form of Shabd; the Guru is the Light within. But we have not even met the True Inner Guru, so who are we imagining will shower the divine grace upon us? My friend, when the Guru manifests within, He unites us with the Shabd. This is the true meaning of the Guru's grace. But if we have not gone within and met with the Shabd Guru, what do we mean by saying that it is all the Guru's grace? If a son is born, it is all the Guru's grace. If there is a wedding, it is all the Guru's grace. If, by some means, fair or foul, you earn Rs100,000, it is all the Guru's grace. My friend, this is not the Guru's grace, this is the grace of Kal and Maya. We acquire more worldly wealth and comfort, and then we think this is the grace of the Guru. How can that be possible?

Therefore, Swami Ji tells us: "I know that until the grace of the Almighty Lord descends, my work cannot be accomplished. Therefore, with whole-hearted devotion, I have come into the shelter of the Guru." And once we surrender to the Guru, we should not go on splitting hairs. "Why is it like this? Why is it like that? This is not how I would do it." On and on. How can this be called going into the Guru's shelter?

The desires of the cobbler's wife have made their home within me.³
How can the Guru come to dwell in my heart?

3 The desire of the cobblers (*chamār*), is to work with skins (*chamare*), and Swami Ji is using this image to indicate that we see the world like a cobbler, looking only at the value of the outer flesh, while ignoring the divine spark within. The expression Swami Ji uses — *chamariyā chāh* — literally means, "the desires of the cobbler's wife." (*chamariyā* = cobbler's wife and *chāh* = desires)

Now, He says: “What is the nature of this world? It is a dwelling place of cobblers.” As long as our soul remains separated from its own pure, conscious and transcendent nature, as long as it maintains its relationship with this body of flesh, we will go on seeing the whole world from the point of view of the flesh, the outer covering of skin. All our dealings will be with the skin.

The people who make sandals out of leather are called *chamār* or cobblers, but, in reality, we are all cobblers. We are sitting in this body made of skin and flesh, and our thoughts are all directed to the outer world. We see everyone—our children, our family, our relatives—from the point of view of the outer covering of skin, just like a cobbler. But what do we know of their true nature? Until we stop looking at the world with the eye of a cobbler, how can we rise into the higher spiritual regions? Swami Ji says, “The desires of the cobbler have made their home within me.” As long as we are only concerned with the covering of skin, how can we hope to achieve liberation? Only when we set aside the lusts of the flesh, can we enter into the sublime presence of the immaculate Guru.

But now, introspect your own heart. Ask yourself: “Is my Guru residing there, or is my heart filled with worldly desires?” Then you will see where you stand.

**I am daily visited by pains and pleasures;
I have to endure the consequences of my karmas.**

Because of our karmas, we daily experience pain and pleasure. We are forced into servitude like a potter’s donkey. We must endure the reactions of our past deeds. Otherwise, how could the transcendent soul be bound? How could it become enslaved? The soul is free; it is Self-Existing Consciousness. Who would

have the power to bind it? We are bound by our own karmas, and it is only to bear those karmas that the soul has become imprisoned in this body of flesh. Bewitched by this play of the mind, we go on reaping the fruits of our past actions.

**Purity has abandoned me;
Affection and devotion do not stand firm.**

If we make the heart immaculate and pure, love and devotion will awaken of themselves. But instead, we have filled our within with the dirt of the world. How can dirt give rise to purity? We are intoxicated in egotism and cling to our possessive sense of I-hood: “These are my children; this is my family; these are my relations; this is my wealth.” We are lost in the vanity of the flesh, and the worldly thoughts crowd out everything else. If any material thing is lost, we break down weeping. And if we accumulate more worldly wealth, we laugh for joy. But what cause do we have for happiness when we have not performed the real devotion and have not attained the True Love within?

**Yearning and love have flown away.
What can I do? All my efforts are in vain.**

He says, “I have no longing within, no affection, no true love for the devotion. What can I do when all my efforts have failed?” Search your own heart and judge your condition. “Only a rare one from millions does the Bhajan and meets the Lord.” The devotees of the skin cannot achieve anything, but He tells us that the true devotees are very rare—one in a million.

**No one but my Guru can save me.
Except for the Naam, I have no other support.**

There is only one remedy. Without the Guru's grace, I cannot be rid of the lusts of the flesh, nor can the devotion of Naam manifest within me. If the Guru showers His grace and awakens Naam bhakti within me, I will break free from these chains that bind me. Otherwise, I will remain trapped—taking birth and dying, taking birth and dying, over and over. My worldly thoughts will keep dragging me back here because “wherever your desires are, there you will be also.”

**Now I have come into the Satsang, and I remain in
His shelter.
Day and night, I attach myself to Shabd.**

Now, Swami Ji says: “After a long search, I finally found the one means to liberate my soul. Becoming true within, I have kept the company of Truth—I have taken refuge in the Guru's Satsang. Now, I no longer fill myself with the useless things of this world, and doing the meditation of Shabd day and night, I have become the form of Shabd.”

**When Radhaswami turns His gracious glance on me,
the lusts of the flesh all run away.**

When Radhaswami showered His grace upon me, I no longer saw with the eye of a cobbler. My divine vision was thrown open, and merging into the Lord, I became the form of the Lord.

So first, you should decide your goal once and for all; make a firm resolve. Just as the sati prepares for death, in the same way, you should become determined in your meditation. Maybe your mind won't take to the meditation in a day, or in two days, or in a year, or in ten years; but someday, it will definitely focus and go within.

—Baba Somanath

The Time for Wavering is Past

O crazy mind, stop wavering back and forth.¹

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. Everyone is ready and eager to do the devotion of the Almighty Lord, but the power of the mind is always pursuing us. You could call that power Kal; in fact, the mind is a part of Kal. We always start out to perform the true deeds, but each time the mind lures us away, leading us into the labyrinth of the world, where we are assailed by desires and doubts. Finally, we let go of the True Simran, and are swept away in the ever-changing current of the mind.

The mind is such a powerful force—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are all dominated by the mind. The yogis, the celibates, and the wandering ascetics are under its control. The three realms of creation are the form of the mind. Casting off the influence of the mind and becoming stable within is called spirituality. Many people set out to travel on the spiritual way and perform the meditation practice, but, because the mind is so powerful, they never manage to tame it. Instead, as they proceed along, their good intentions go by the wayside, and they begin dancing to the mind's tune.

¹ *Chānṛī de man baurā ḍagmag*, Kabir Sahib

If you want to gauge the power of the mind, observe its antics during Simran and Bhajan. When you sit for meditation in the morning hours, the mind will dredge up thoughts that never arise during the normal course of the day. You can't even imagine where such thoughts sprang from. Recollections from a distant past or imaginings of an unknown future loom up before you, and you are swayed back and forth as the mind's kaleidoscopic oscillations go on amplifying and breaking apart.

Three obstacles are thrown in our way by the mind—*mal*, *vikshep*, and *āvaran*.² The power of *mal* is characterized by *tamogun*.³ It does not allow the soul to incline towards spirituality. *Mal* is the dirt of the world. Your heart is filled with thoughts of the worldly pleasures, high status, and wealth. And such thoughts bring greed, lust, and anger within you. If a person dominated by *mal* does happen to take Naam initiation, first of all, they will never sit for meditation. Or if they do happen to sit, then their mind will waver, disturbed by the thoughts that keep arising—fantasies of the sense pleasures, give and take, family relationships, and business dealings—and the meditation is spoiled. Then what does that person say? “I have been sitting for meditation, but I'm not getting any results. I'm going to give it up.” Further, *vikshep* overpowers us when we sit with the resolve to practice Naam Simran, and in just a moment, the power of forgetfulness diverts our attention to other thoughts. This is the effect of *vikshep*—we start with one intention but are soon led away to something else.

Finally, we have to face the obstacle of *āvaran*, the veil that

2 *Mal* is the filth of the world that must be purified, *vikshep* is the wavering of the ever-restless mind that must be stilled and *āvaran* is the veil of ignorance thrown over the soul by Kal and Maya that must be removed.

3 The three qualities governing the creation are *rajogun* (energy), *satogun* (purity) and *tamogun* (inertia).

clouds our vision within. When we sit for Bhajan and Simran, we are afflicted by *āvaran*. At that time we are neither meditating, nor are we sleeping—we drift into a drowsy, half-conscious state. Duped by the mind, we think, “I have been meditating for a long time, and my meditation has been successful.” But in reality, we have not removed that obstacle of *āvaran*. *Āvaran* is a strong force. It is no other than the power of Maya. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji says, “O mind, give up this wavering.” As long as the mind continues its vacillations, it cannot remain fixed and still within.

**The time has come to burn and die;
Take the sindhora⁴ in your hand.**

Once you free yourself from worldly attachments, you will meet with the Almighty Lord. When you come into the Satsang and have the company of Truth, this is called spirituality. At that time, what can you gain by wavering, looking this way and that? When you prepare for death and go to face it, when death overtakes you, what will you gain by being afraid? Death will not spare you. Similarly, when you take up the spiritual Path, in a way you die to thoughts of the world. But then if you waver and slip back into those worldly thoughts and spend your life entangled in them, this is the reaction of some previous bad karma.

So first, you should decide your goal once and for all; make a firm resolve. Just as the sati prepares for death, in the same way, you should become determined in your meditation. Maybe your mind won't take to the meditation in a day, or in

4 A sindhora is a small jar in which a married Indian woman traditionally keeps sindhur, the red powder that is applied to the part in the hair, and, in this case, to the hands, before performing sati.

two days, or in a year, or in ten years; but someday, it will definitely focus and go within.

*If the mind wanders off, let it go,
But don't allow your body to follow.
If you do not draw the bow,
The arrow will not be loosed.*

Next, you will discover that it is the nature of the mind to rush here and there—but you should not let your body follow after it. If your body tries to run away, bring it back. When you sit for meditation, countless thoughts will arise; the mind will dart in and out, but you should not go after it.

Then, all at once, the mind will bring out its third weapon, and sleep will overtake you. At the time of meditation, the mind sits within you and says, “You should lie down and get comfortable; you can do your Simran better like that.” Obeying the mind, you stretch out and do three or four rounds of Simran. But sleep is waiting to ambush you, and the next thing you know, you are snoring away happily. The Sound of the Shabd should be reverberating in your within; but instead, the only sound coming out is the sound of your own snores. You are under the impression that you have meditated, and once again the mind has deceived you. In this way, the mind lays traps for you day after day. Every day, when you sit for evening meditation, you think, “Today, I will do the meditation with firm determination.” But every day, the same mind is also trailing along right behind you.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib says that when you sit for meditation, you should be as unshakable as the hero and the sati, who face death without flinching. Becoming determined, do the meditation with love and devotion.

**Have firm faith and love for the Guru;
Listen to the thundering resonance of the Shabd.**

Our mind is filled with the love of the world. We have to turn that love inward and connect it with the Almighty Lord. The Lord is the form of Love, but how can we love Him when we do not see Him? His is too subtle for our intellect to discern. And so, we must learn to love the Guru who we can see. The Guru is that same Power of Love. The Power that can divert our love away from the world and awaken True Love within us for the Almighty Lord is the Guru.

The word “Guru” does not mean some human being. He is not a swami, or a monk from some religious house, or a sadhu with long, matted locks, or a mendicant in colored clothes. The Guru is the Power of Love that channels our love away from the outer, material world and awakens True Love within our soul. This is the real meaning of “Guru.” Therefore, Kabir Sahib instructs us to redirect our thoughts that are now attached to the outer world and connect them to the Guru within.

The purpose of contemplating on the Guru is to develop true love for the Him. In the worldly way, the lover always thinks of his beloved and keeps her image in his heart. Similarly, we should focus our thoughts on the Guru, to such an extent that His form manifests in our within. The true form of the Guru is Shabd, and so Kabir Sahib says, “Connect yourself with Shabd. Shabd will take you back to the source from which it emanated.”

The Guru tells us of the true and simple Path, but we take to it only if we have a good background. Tulsidas says:

*All things are available in this world,
But you cannot achieve them without meritorious karmas.*

All the material things are available in this world, but you cannot obtain them without working for them. Similarly, you cannot achieve anything in spirituality if you have not made the good karmas—it will not even appeal to you.

**Free from doubt, become absorbed within and
dance for joy.**

Abandon all your greed, attachment, and illusion.

No doubts will remain. When the soul becomes permeated through and through with the inner Divine Light, there is no scope left for any doubt. Doubts manifest only where illusion reigns. When illusion is dispelled, you merge into the Light within; you become one with the Shabd, and then doubt finds no place.

If a man falls into the water, he becomes completely immersed. He is surrounded on all sides by water. There is no room left for anything else. In this way, when you become immersed in the Light, then without and within there is only Light, Light, and still more Light. So, what room remains for any doubt to intrude? But if your heart is devoid of Light, if your heart is empty, then what will happen? If any doubt comes along, it will fill your empty heart. Some doubt or other will come up to fill that empty space. But when your heart is filled to overflowing with the Divine Light, then there is no room for even a shadow of a doubt to squeeze in. Therefore, He says:

*The mouse mind is paralyzed when it drinks
the mercury of Hari Naam.*

When the mouse mind drinks the mercury of Naam, then it stops running here and there. When it tastes the inner sweetness,

when the Light of Naam manifests and the inner spiritual experience unfolds, then the mind becomes fixed and still.

At that time greed and attachment both depart from the heart. Outwardly, many people claim to be free of greed, but all the while greed is lurking in their within. We can understand this from a worldly example. If you decide to lock your door after a thief has already entered your house, what good will it do? The thief is already there stealing all your possessions. Locking the door after the thief has gained entry is like practicing outer, superficial devotion—just following what you have read in books and heard from others. You go on pretending to be a devotee, while in the meantime, greed and attachment have already made their home within you. Until you evict greed and attachment, your heart cannot contact the Almighty Lord, you cannot merge into the Naam, and the Inner Light will not manifest within you. But when the Light manifests, when you become the form of Light, then no room remains for greed and attachment—they will run away of themselves.

But what will happen if you just go on denying outwardly that you are affected by greed, while your heart is filled with longing for the worldly things? If your desires are not fulfilled, you will go on scheming—“When will I get this? How will I acquire that?” And if you follow those desires, you will be led farther away from the Naam and the Guru. Therefore, if greed and attachment have made their home within you, you must throw them out. Only when you get rid of these thieves can you experience the resplendent Light within.

**The hero does not fear death;
The sati does not decorate her body.**

Someone might say, “I am a worldly man. I must work in the world. Otherwise, how will I make a living? I have no choice.”

But this holds true only when you remain enslaved to the worldly works; if you perform your duties with detachment, it is a different story. You have to become like the hero and the sati. The hero straps on his weapons and stands on the field of battle; even in the face of death, he does not turn away. At that time, he bravely declares, “Where is my enemy? I have come here only to gain victory over him.” Similarly, if a woman goes to the cremation ground to become a sati, but shrinks in fear when she sees the fire, how can she be called a true sati?⁵

Some bhaktas do the devotion, removing all worldly thoughts from their minds. Such devotees go into the shelter of the Guru and the Naam. But what of the devotees who waste their lives in worldly attachments? How can they be called true bhaktas? They have put on the outer trappings of a devotee, but real devotion is something else entirely.

If you first understand the Truth, all of your doubts will go away. But what is Truth? Soul is Truth. And that soul is spread throughout this gross, material body. Once you understand the subtle nature of the soul, your consciousness can become detached from the inert, material objects.

But what if you do not first understand this mystery? “Who am I? What is my true nature? What practices should I perform?” If you have not answered these questions, no matter how much you may go on practicing the outer devotion in a superficial way, you will not be able to remove the gross unconsciousness from your within. And your heart will still be full of all the bad qualities. Outwardly, you may look like a devotee, but within your consciousness cannot contact the Almighty Lord.

5 Baba Somanath is not advocating the outer practice of sati (a widow’s ritual suicide on the funeral pyre of her departed husband). The Saints oppose suicide in all its manifestations. Instead, He is employing an example familiar to His listeners that exemplifies facing danger and death with bravery.

**Public shame and family prestige,
They are a noose around your neck.**

Now what does He say? Fretting over your status in the world, worrying about the honor of your caste and community, dwelling on high and low, all these thoughts are like a noose around your neck. The allure of prestige and praise is so strong that only a few brave warriors can push that curtain aside.

Raja Harishchandra abandoned his kingdom for the sake of truth. One night in a dream he offered to donate his whole kingdom to the sage Vishwamitra. It was just a dream; he did not offer anything to Vishwamitra outwardly. But the next morning Vishwamitra himself came to the king to collect that donation and told him, “This kingdom now belongs to me. You should go away.” Harishchandra immediately obeyed him and made preparations to leave Ayodhya for Kashi. He had to face so many difficulties, but in spite of all the hardship he endured, still he always maintained truth in his heart. He never turned away from the truth. In the end, Vishwamitra repented, and, to atone for his misdeed, he had to give Harishchandra the fruit of 7000 years of austerities he had performed.⁶

Truth is such a power. But you can practice Truth, only when you come to understand its nature. As long as your life is filled with sins and vices, Truth remains a closed book. Truth is a tremendous Power, and that Power resides in each of us.

But what do we say? “If I follow this Path, what will my family and relatives think? What will my friends and everyone

⁶ Raja Harishchandra is renowned for his unshakable devotion to truth. Even though his promise to give Vishwamitra his kingdom was made in a dream, still he honored it in the waking world. He had to surrender his kingdom, sell his wife and son into servitude and work in the cremation grounds handling the dead bodies to meet Vishwamitra’s demands; nevertheless, he remained true to his word.

else say? And if I go against them, how will I carry on with my life? My standing in the eyes of the world will be diminished.” We lack resolution, and countless wavering thoughts crowd into our hearts, becoming like a noose strangling the life out of us.

**You take a step forward and then run back,
And so you become a laughingstock before the world.**

If you have put on the garb of a devotee but then run away from the devotion, the world will laugh at you. And after death, you will have to endure the beating of Yama and go again into the wheel of eighty-four.

In the Dwapar Yuga, the Kauravas and the Pandavas waged the great Mahabharata war. In the thick of the fighting, sensing that his end time was approaching, Dronacharya loosed the *Brahmāstra*⁷, a divine weapon of enormous power. Sri Krishna knew the potency of the *Brahmāstra*, and said to Arjuna, “Look out. A *Brahmāstra* is coming towards us. You should get out of the way.” Obeying Krishna’s words, Arjuna stepped back and ran in the opposite direction.

Now, Bhima was fighting in the midst of the battle. Joining him there, Sri Krishna told him, “O Bhima, Dronacharya has loosed a *Brahmāstra*, and it is heading in this direction. You should save yourself.” What did Bhima reply? “Respected Krishna, I think that you should go warn Arjuna instead. I am a warrior standing on the field of battle. Do you think the fear of death can drive me away? Go give this advice to your friend, so he can run for cover.” Similarly, when we step on the path of bhakti, if we then turn and run away at the first difficulty, what kind of devotees are we?

7 The *Brahmāstra* was the mighty supernatural weapon—a fierce fireball with the power to destroy the whole creation and all the beings in it.

*If you call yourself a servant, don't cherish selfish motives;
The one who follows their own desires is no true servant.*

Two swords cannot fit in the same scabbard. If you have accepted the discipleship, do you think you can still spend your life running after the worldly desires? Someone may say, "I can do both things at once." But this is not possible. If you take up the devotion, then hold fast to the Path and move forward without wavering.

**If you don't burn in the fire, you can't be called a sati;
If you don't fight on the battlefield, you are no hero.**

Until a woman burns herself on the funeral pyre with her departed husband, no one will call her a sati. And if a warrior is afraid of death and runs from the battlefield, no one will call him a hero.

*The army's poor commander is like a frightened sheep.
Bleating, he shambles off the battlefield,
But he's always ready to eat.*

The world is full of such "heroes." And we find many devotees of this type on the path of bhakti. If any difficulty befalls them, they run away. What can be accomplished through such devotion? Nothing at all.

**Whoever is burning in the fire of *viraha*,
They reach the final goal.**

The fire of separation flares up within you spontaneously. No one can teach you the ways of *viraha*.

Who taught the hero to die on the battlefield?

No one taught the hero how to die before he marched onto the field of battle.

Who taught the sati to burn on the funeral pyre with her husband?

This is not something that can be taught. The fire of *viraha* flames up spontaneously in your heart. No one can teach you about it. You cannot learn it from a book. You can't achieve it through virtuous deeds. *Viraha* is a unique power. When that fire of separation manifests within, day and night, you have no thought for food and drink. You find no difference between sleeping and waking. When *viraha* manifested in the princess Mira Bai, she lost all awareness of high and low. Forgetting all about her royal status, she set out for Vrindawan, playing the *khartal*⁸ as she went along the way. She had no concern for what other people thought about her; this is the nature of *viraha*. *Viraha* is a fire that burns the mind, and when that power manifests within you, all your connection with the world is severed. Once you become absorbed in the love within, you will weep constantly in His remembrance. He becomes everything to you. This is called *viraha*, or the pain of separation, but only a few rare ones achieve it.

This world is a place of filth and dirt; Whoever takes hold of the Naam is purified.

This whole world was created from impurity. The dealings of the world are dirty. And at the end time, we have to die in this filth. At the time of death, just see how the dying person's

8 A pair of wooden castanets fitted with bells

thoughts are occupied with the gross, material things of this world. But if instead, we remove all the worldly thoughts from our within, then our soul merges with the Naam, and we become purified straight away. This is not an outer matter.

**Kabir says, never give up the devotion.
Stumbling along, keep climbing upward.**

Now, what do we say? “I can’t do this. I’ve been following the practices of bhakti since I was little. But what good has it done me? So, I say, give it up.” Therefore, Kabir Sahib is trying to wake us up and inspire us with the courage to continue on the Path: “My friend, don’t give up now. When you walk along the road, you have to watch out for rocks, and thorns, and snakes, and scorpions, and even motorcars. If you don’t exercise caution, you won’t reach home safely. Don’t give up when you’re just halfway there. Then you are neither of the road, nor of your home. You’re left sitting in the middle of the road with nowhere to go. If we stop doing our bhakti before we reach our goal, we have nothing. We have given up the world and yet we have not attained spirituality. So, what is to be done? Whatever Path you take up, stick with it till the end. Do your practices and keep moving forward.

In this house of the body, duality has taken up residence. The meaning of duality is illusion and doubt. Wherever you find duality, doubt will be present there. Where you find the sense of "two," there you will find doubt. Doubt is founded on duality. This is the case wherever we find the concept of "two," is it not so? For this reason, our consciousness keeps running outside every moment—because it is caught up in doubt. And the source of doubt is duality.

—Baba Somanath

Your Consciousness is Torn in Two

The mind doesn't give up the ways of the baniya.¹

The mind dwelling within us acts like a shopkeeper, a baniya.² Nowadays, many people still refer to the banyas' shops as the “*Kāla Bāzār*” or Black Market. It is just a name that has stuck from past times because, previously, those merchants were less than honest in their dealings. Those banyas would try to earn the maximum profit from their dealings, and their business practices were not always above board. When they were buying goods from someone, they would put a heavier set of weights on the scale,³ so they would receive more goods than they were paying for; then, when they were selling, they used a lighter set of weights,⁴ so the customer who was buying

1 *Man banyāñ bāni na chorai*, Kabir Sahib

2 Baniya is a merchant caste made up of shopkeepers, traders, bankers, financiers, and, in modern times, owners of commercial enterprises.

3 For instance, a weight might be marked “one pound” when it was really “one and a half pounds.”

4 For instance, a weight marked “one pound” might really be “three-quarters of a pound.”

would receive less merchandise than they were being charged for. Those baniyas also had other ways of tipping the scales in their favor. If they were buying goods from someone, they would give their full attention to the pan with the weights and, with some deft sleight-of-hand, they would press down on the balance beam in that direction, so the seller would need to add more goods to the other pan to balance the scale. And if they were selling goods, they would press down more on the pan with the merchandise, so more weights would be needed to balance the pans, with the result that they could charge the customer extra.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji says, our mind is like a baniya. It is fond of profit, luxury, and prestige. Wherever prestige is being sold, the mind cheats and tips the scale to get more of it. Wherever money is available, again the mind tries to tip the scale to accumulate more wealth.

In this way, taking on the form of a baniya, the mind remains constantly caught up in trying to tip the scales. And for millions of ages and millions of births, it has been coming into this world again and again to ply the same dishonest trade. In order to awaken this “baniya,” Kabir Sahib enjoins, “Oh mind, you go on assuming the form of the baniya. At least now, give up your deceitful ways.”

**O baniya, birth after birth you have tipped the scale.
Up till now, you have never given true weight.**

He says, “Birth after birth, you engage in the same false dealings. Up till now, it has never even entered your head to deal honestly.” Even though we listen to the Satsang every day, nevertheless, as soon as we wake up in the morning, we start tampering with the scales. We get swept up in

the drama of life. And what about the words we heard in Satsang? Who knows where they have gone. When we get up in the morning we go chasing after falsehood—we start trying to tip the scales.

**Cheating has taken control of you.
You are lost in error, lurching this way and that.**

If someone goes on tipping the scales, if they go on cheating in their dealings, then falsehood takes control of that person. They always remain trapped in illusion. Their heart is molded in the image of the deceit they are practicing. They become the form of falsehood. Not a trace of Truth is left.

**In the house, duality and wickedness prosper.
Moment by moment, your consciousness is
torn in two.**

Now, what does He say? In this house of the body, duality has taken up residence. The meaning of duality is illusion and doubt. Wherever you find duality, doubt will be present there. Where you find the sense of “two,” there you will find doubt. Doubt is founded on duality. This is the case wherever we find the concept of “two,” is it not so? For this reason, our consciousness keeps running outside every moment—because it is caught up in doubt. And the source of doubt is duality. First, we are burdened with the sense of “I and mine”; then the duality of “mine and yours” creeps in. Doubt is inherent in this sense of duality, and all our relationships in this world are based on this doubt. We are trapped. Day and night, we keep running here and there; but still, we cannot complete our task—we are never whole.

All the family is *harām*.

Poison is mixed with the nectar.

What is the meaning of *harām*?⁵ Many people think of the common definition when they hear the word *harām*.⁵ And this is what they mean when they use the word themselves. But what does *harām* really mean? When *homen* (egotism) mixes with our pure soul, we become separated from *Rām* (the Almighty Lord). If we look from this level all the jivas, all the embodied souls, are *harām*. Unless the jiva removes *homen*—the sense of I-hood—from their within, their soul cannot reunite with *Rām* and regain its native purity.⁶

As long as the consciousness within us does not merge into the form of *Rām*, our impurity will not leave us. *Harām* or impurity is the cause of our birth in the physical plane; so, how can we hope to be free of it?

Only when the Perfect Satguru showers His grace can the soul unite with Naam, which is the form of Oneness; then the impurity of egotism leaves us. There is no other way to remove it.

On our own, we have no understanding of how to remove it. We will not even be able to comprehend the nature of *harāmi* or impurity. This is because our ego or individual nature is mixed with the Divine Nature of *Rām*. The gross and the conscious within us are bound together by a knot. If we think we can remove this impurity using the intellect, we will never be purified. Therefore, Kabir Sahib is advising us to do the meditation and connect our consciousness with the Naam.

5 Forbidden by Islamic law

6 Similarly, Maharaj Kirpal Singh used to say: “God plus mind is man and man minus mind is God.”

Guru Amar Das says:

*Ego is opposed to the Name of the Lord;
The two cannot dwell in the same place.*

There is enmity between the ego and the Naam. They cannot remain together. Therefore, you should always keep your thoughts connected with the Naam. When the Naam manifests, the impurity will leave you. That Naam is All-Pervading.

**You are in the water; you are in the earth.
You are speaking within every being.**

Now, He tells us about the nature of *Rām*. He says, “You are in the water. You are in the earth. You are in the sky. You are present even below the seven nether worlds.” [end of tape]

**Kabir says: If the disciple is caught up in fear and
doubt, the knot of the heart will never open.**

Further, when the philosopher's stone touches the iron and transforms it into gold, that gold becomes completely distinct from the grossness of iron. So, who can call it iron? It is pure gold. In the same way, when we take the human birth, if we are touched by the "philosopher's stone" of the Guru's grace, He transforms us into pure gold and separates us from this gross, physical world.

—Baba Somanath

Touched by the Philosopher’s Stone

**Without the Gurudev, the jiva’s fantasies cannot
be dispelled;
Without the Gurudev, the jiva receives no benefit.¹**

He asks: “Without the Guru’s help, how can you still the waves arising in the heart?” You may read the four *vidyas*,² you may read the Shastras and Puranas, but all this reading is just another wave. If you become the *vaktā* (teller) or if you become the *shrotā* (listener) of the Ramayana,³ that is also a type of wave.

Many people think of the Guru as someone who offers outer guidance, just like a school master. But this is not the work of the Guru. The Guru teaches us to still the waverings

1 *Gurudev bina jiv ki kalpanā nā miṭe*, Kabir Sahib

2 Ancient Hindu philosophy recognized four *vidyas* or categories of knowledge: *Trayī*: study of the Vedas and related writings; *Ānvikṣikī*: logic and metaphysics; *Danḍanīti*: politics and public administration; and *Varta* or *Varum*: agriculture, commerce, medicine, and other practical arts.

3 In the traditional recitation of the Ramāyana, both the teller and the listener are important. “Both teller and listener shall be treasurers of wisdom for the tales of Rāma are mysterious.”—Traditional saying.

of the mind and unites us with the Immaculate Lord or Naam within. In the word “Guru,” the syllable “*gu*” means darkness, and “*ru*” means light; so, the Guru shines light into the darkness. Unless our *antahkarana* (inner mind) becomes illumined, our sinfulness and ignorance will not leave us. A building may be very spacious, but if no lamps are burning within to drive out the darkness, what purpose does it serve? How can you see the things that are inside the building?

Similarly, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and the 33 million gods and goddesses reside within us. The macrocosm of Brahmand is housed within the microcosm of the *pind* (body). The human body contains the vast expanse of Brahmand, with all its countless realms of existence. When you peruse a map of the world, you see all the places on the earth represented; similarly, within the human body, you will discover the whole universe and all the powers that dwell in it.

We people do grasp this truth intellectually. Outwardly, we claim that all the powers reside in this body—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; Atma (the soul) and Paramatma (the Oversoul); Ishwar, Parameshwar, Sat Lok, Alakh, Agam and Anami. Everything is within. But have we ever witnessed this Truth that we talk about? Have we ever peeped within? Never, not even once.

We say that we know all about Anami. But what are we talking about? We have our evening meal and sink into the oblivion of deep sleep. This is our idea of Anami; after all, “Anami” means “nameless” and in that unconscious state there is no name or form. Everyone experiences this unconscious state, but what has that to do with Anami?

The True Anami, the Nameless One, is a Self-Existing Power. And our soul is a part of this Power. But when the soul came into the physical plane, when it became connected

with the gross, material body, it joined the caste of this world. Now if the soul wishes to sever that worldly relationship, can it rise again into Higher Consciousness through fantasies and wishful thinking? Such a thing can never be. It makes no difference whether you are a god or a goddess, whether you are a king or an emperor. Only one Power can liberate the soul—the Guru's Grace. The Power that connects the soul with the Almighty Lord is called Guru. The Guru is not just a human being. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us: "If your false understanding is not removed, how can you receive any benefit?"

**Without the Gurudev, the darkness is not lifted.
Think this over in your mind and understand it.**

Without the Guru, the darkness enshrouding your heart cannot be dispelled. Once you hear about the Truth, you must put that Truth into practice; only then will the Inner Light dawn within your heart. Only then will you gain a real understanding of the words you have heard. Otherwise, you just go on reading every day: the Guru is like this; the Guru is like that. But you really don't understand anything about the nature of the Guru. What does the Guru's grace mean to you? When you set out to burgle someone's home, you pray for the Guru to shower His blessings on you. What can the Guru do with such a disciple? What kind of blessings can He shower?

**The Gurudev puts you on the subtle Path;
The obstacles of countless births are removed.**

The Path leading to the higher planes is the subtlest of the subtle. There is nothing to compare it to in this world. For millions of births and millions of yugas, we have been stuck

here. Without the Guru, we cannot remove the roadblocks from our Path and meet with the Almighty Lord. Many people say, “We have no further need for the Guru; we already have the Naam initiation.” Such people haven’t gained anything at all. What good has it done them to take the Naam?

**Kabir says: When you find the Perfect Gurudev,
you will discover that jiva and Shiva are the same.**

When the veil of “I and mine” is thrown over the soul, it becomes a jiva; and, wrapped in the veil of “I and mine,” the jiva becomes the doer. The jiva can no longer contact the God Power. A veil has been placed in between, and Kabir Sahib is telling us that when the veil is removed, the jiva (embodied soul) once again becomes Shiva (the Universal God Power).⁴ Shorn of I-hood, the pure soul merges back into the Almighty Lord. That Primal Lord is Self-Existing, but the jiva is bound by individual thoughts and desires and has a very restricted outlook. The embodied soul becomes no more than the puppet of the ego.

**Attend the Satsang; take firm hold of the
Gurudev’s lotus feet.
When you have His darshan, all illusion runs away.**

Now Kabir Sahib tells us to attend the Satsang. But we already go to Satsang regularly—we are never absent even for one day. Since He is not referring to our physical attendance in the Satsang, what do Kabir Sahib’s words mean?

4 Kabir Sahib is using “Shiva” in the sense of the Universal God Power. He is not referring to the individual god Shiva, included in the Hindu Triumvirate of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

When you go to the Satsang, do you treasure the words of the Satsang in your heart? No doubt, you go to Satsang with the intention of listening to the discourse. But, if you are honest, you will have to admit that when you get up to go and brush the dust off your clothes, you brush away all the words of Satsang as well. You don't bring anything home with you.

So, what is Kabir Sahib advising you to do? When you are listening to the Satsang, keep your contemplation fixed on the Guru. Attach your attention to His lotus feet and hang on His every word. Then His message will penetrate into your consciousness with profound intensity, and you will be filled with the Guru Power. Otherwise, your attention will keep wandering all over the place: "Today, we heard a very nice hymn of Kabir Sahib. Yesterday, they sang something else. Today this happened, that happened..." Leading you along in this way, your mind gradually lures you away from the words of the Satsang. Never mind what happened yesterday. What about your own condition right now? You remain unchanged; you haven't improved at all.

So, when you attend Satsang, keep your attention fixed at His lotus feet. The darshan of the Satguru will remove all your illusion. This is what is meant by real Satsang—keeping the company of Truth. Otherwise, anyone can deliver a spiritual discourse and call it Satsang. They think it's no special thing: "Just read ten or twenty books and repeat what you've read—that's all there is to it."

**Chastity, truthfulness, and contentment manifest
with His Grace.**

The blows of Kal cannot harm you.

First, He talks about the virtues: chastity leads to contentment

and then to mercy. These are the qualities that connect you with the Lord.

*Without mercy, the siddha is
no better than a butcher.*

If a person has no mercy in their heart, even if they are a great siddha, an evolved soul, still they are no better than the most cruel-hearted butcher. Tulsi Das tells us:

*Mercy is the foundation of religion,
And egotism is the root of sin.
O Tulsi, never abandon mercy,
As long as you have breaths in your body.*

Where there is no mercy, our selfish motives cannot be removed. And if we harbor selfish motives, our spiritual quest cannot flourish. But what can Kal do before such a being as the Guru? The Guru dwells far beyond the realm of Kal; He has no element of Kal within Him.

**All the jivas are caught in the trap of Kal.
Without the Knowledge of Gurudev, it is all
darkness within.**

How has Kal imprisoned all the world? Through lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego, the three gunas, the five subtle elements, the twenty-five prakritis, and the restless waves arising in our impure hearts. These are the powers that Kal uses to lay his traps. Until the Light of the Guru's Knowledge dawns within us, we cannot be released from the snares of Kal. We cannot become liberated. The goal of *mukti* or liberation, is to become free from the snare of Kal.

**Kabir says, you will not come again into the realm of birth.
Touched by the philosopher's stone, you are freed from this world.**

He says that when all the desires are removed from your within, you will not have to take birth again. When your attachments to this world have all been eradicated, what can bring you back here?

As long as the husk remains as a covering on the rice grain, you can sow that grain, and it will grow into a rice plant. But if you remove the husk, how can the rice grain sprout and grow? Such a thing is not possible. Similarly, if the veil covering the soul is completely removed, there is no need for the soul to take birth again.

Further, when the philosopher's stone touches the iron and transforms it into gold, that gold becomes completely distinct from the grossness of iron. So, who can call it iron? It is pure gold. In the same way, when we take the human birth, if we are touched by the "philosopher's stone" of the Guru's grace, He transforms us into pure gold and separates us from this gross, physical world.

Otherwise, when the soul comes into the human body, it is just like being sentenced to life imprisonment. If someone commits crimes, if they commit sins, they will be beaten and thrown into prison. The sentence may be ten or twenty months, or a year, or two or four or twenty years, according to the crime. And when hardened criminals have completed their sentence, they tell the jail warden, "Don't remove my hearthstone. I'm leaving for now, but I will be back again soon." In the same way, when your time to leave this world approaches, you think, "These are my children, this is my

family, this is my home. I have so much money. I am a wealthy person. I am this, I am that.” All of these possessions are like your hearthstone. You think this “hearthstone” should remain in place, just as it is, so that all your possessions will be here waiting for you when you return. But meanwhile, the angels of death beat the soul and drag it away. And who knows if that “prisoner” will come back to the same place? Who knows where the departed soul has gone or where it will take birth next?

**The jiva doesn't know the secret of the Gurudev;
They want to flaunt their own intellectual prowess.**

The jivas want to show off their knowledge, and the story is the same no matter where they go. It has been said:

*The wisdom of the mind cannot comprehend Him,
But the Guru's wisdom reveals the Almighty Lord.*

Even in front of the Guru, you want to showcase your own wares. Do you think the Guru should be teaching you or do you plan to instruct the Guru? When you go in the company of the Guru, no matter how great your power of understanding may be, still you should become like an ignorant child before Him. Then your within will be flooded with the Light of the Guru's Knowledge.

Unfortunately, when we go to the Guru, we seek to surpass Him. If He tells us one thing, we chime in with ten things. We put forward so many examples, so that other people may see what knowledgeable, clever, and accomplished disciples we really are. When this is our attitude, how can the Guru make us understand?

*You keep explaining, but they won't understand.
 The mind still runs the show.
 They are floating down the stream, so let them go.
 In fact, give them an extra shove or two,
 To send them on their way.*

Even when He explains to us, we refuse to understand. So, what can He do? He just gives us a couple of extra pushes to move us along.

There was once a Brahmin who would visit all of his patrons or *jajmān*⁵ once a year. It was his custom to stay at each place for five or ten days, and at the end of his stay, the family would give him a donation, which he would take back to his home. He continued with his visits throughout the year, and, in this way, he earned his livelihood. Nowadays, a few Brahmins have adopted English ways, and they have entered other professions. But in previous times, a Brahmin would have only his *panch pātra*⁶ and a spoon for performing the sacred rituals. This was the only trade he knew.

So, in the course of his travels, he once went to the house of some disciples who served him a particularly delicious meal. The Brahmin enjoyed that food so much that the desire for its taste did not leave his heart, and, as a result, his hands and feet became swollen. When he went back to his home, his wife asked him, “Maharaj, have you fallen ill? What is the matter? It is an inauspicious sign when your hands and feet swell up. I’m very worried about you. What is wrong?” The Brahmin

5 A *jajmān* is a patron or a donor, for instance, the donor who requests and pays for the performance of religious rituals by the Brahmin priests is called *jajmān*.

6 The vessel is called *panch pātra*, “five leaves,” because it is used to hold five kinds of leaves during the puja ceremonies: tulsi, arugu, vembu, vilvam and vanni.

replied, “No, no. Nothing is wrong.” But his wife was adamant: “That can’t be true. Tell me what has happened?” The Brahmin told her, “Don’t worry about it. I am not sick.” And she asked, “Well then, what is this all about?”

So finally, he gave in and explained: “I visited the home of one disciple, and his family served me a meal. That food was so delicious, that even now I can’t forget the taste of it. It is because of this desire that my hands and feet have puffed up.” Then his wife told him, “Have I not been born in the form of a woman? Tell me what kind of dish they prepared for you and bring me the ingredients. I’ll prepare the food right away and serve it to you.” But she was just boasting; she didn’t really know how to prepare that food.

So, the Brahmin brought all the ingredients: lentils, flour, rice, sugar, ghee and milk. Since his wife had no idea what to do with all those things, she went to an old woman living in the neighborhood and asked her for advice. “Mother, I have to make this dish for my husband. Can you tell me how to prepare it?” The old woman knew this skill and started to explain the steps in her own simple way. But the Brahmin’s wife kept interrupting her. The old woman told her, “First, you knead the flour.” And the Brahmin’s wife quickly cut in, “Oh, I already know how to do that.” The old woman went on, “Then you mix in the ghee.” But the Brahmin’s wife interrupted her again saying, “Mix in the ghee? I already know how to do that too.” In this way, the Brahmin’s wife kept interrupting the old woman, and, after a while, the old woman got aggravated by all these interruptions. She thought to herself, “She thinks she knows everything and won’t even listen to me. So, why should I try to tell her about the proper method for preparing this dish? I’m just going to make up some nonsense. Maybe that will teach her a lesson.” Finally, out loud she said mysteriously,

“No, no, daughter. This dish is prepared in a very special way!” And the Brahmin’s wife replied, “Oh! Well then, you had better tell me how it is done.”

The old woman told her, “First you get a big pot and put it on the stove. You start with some water and throw in the flour, the oil, the chili peppers, the spices. Add in the ghee and the lentils. And finally, toss in the betel leaf and betel nut—everything all together. Then build up a blazing-hot fire with a lot of wood.” The Brahmin’s wife said, “Excellent! I understand now. I didn’t know this method before.”

Chuckling to herself, the old woman told her, “Oh yes, this is how it is done. Now you go try it.” The poor Brahmin’s wife went back to her home. She poured some water in the pot, tossed in all the ingredients, and built up a roaring fire. Everything burned, and the thick mixture turned as black as a drum of coal tar. Then she took the pot off the fire.

In the meantime, the Brahmin had bathed and was sitting reciting his *sandyāvandanam* (evening prayers). So, she called out to him: “What do you think you are doing, sitting there babbling? Come in here.” Then he asked, “What’s the matter?” She replied, “Is this the delicacy you ate? I don’t see how anyone could keep it down. Come take a look.” So, they both sat there stirring that sticky, black mess back and forth with a spoon. How could anyone eat such a concoction?

This is just a story, but when we go to the Guru, we are just like that Brahmin’s wife. “Oh, I know this Shastra. I know that Purana. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib says this. Kabir Sahib says that.” But why do we need to show off how many scriptures we have read? We go to the Guru to learn from Him; He is supposed to explain to us. But instead, if we go to Him and do all the talking. We want to explain to

the Guru. So, what can he do for us? He tells us, “Okay, you can go. That’s all for now.”

The Gurudev pulls the jivas out of the ocean of this mortal world and transports them to the Ocean of Happiness.

The Guru is gracious. In this ocean of the world, the jiva is enduring countless sufferings. Showering His grace, the Guru rescues us from these sufferings and ferries us to the *sukh samudra*, the Ocean of Happiness. Kabir Sahib tells us further:

*The sinner has no love for the devotion
and no taste for the worship of the Lord.
The fly forsakes the sandalwood tree
and heads straight for the stinking garbage heap.*

The Guru is wants to shower grace on the disciple, but the but the disciple says, “I like my present condition. It suits me very well.” If this is the attitude of the disciple, what can the Guru do for such a disciple?

**Close the outer eyes and look within;
The Gurudev will open the inner door.**

First, close your outer eyes. The mind is now connected to the world, and you must invert it. Focus your mind at the still point between the eyes—then the mind that was running wild outside will rise into the Divine Realms within.

**Kabir says that you may search the whole world over,
But you will never find anyone equal to the Gurudev.**

In the end, Kabir Sahib tells us of the greatness of the Gurudev. The Congress Party has spent 29 or 30 million rupees trying to get people to give up drinking liquor. But what to speak of anyone giving it up, now they are drinking twice as much as before. Every house has equipment installed for distilling liquor. But the Satguru has turned the soul away from the liquor of this world and has remade it in the form of the Almighty Lord. What benefactor can you find equal to Him? He has no give and take to settle; He is our Selfless Servant.

Thus, the one who applies the true tilak beholds the Self-Existing Light within and becomes its very image. Such a devotee—the fortunate bride of the Lord—is truly blessed. The Lord is ever-present for the one who has applied the diamond tilak and beheld the Inner Light. For that fortunate soul, the cycle of birth and death has come to an end.

—Baba Somanath

Apply the Diamond Tilak

The mind becomes rarefied when the Lord blesses you with His hand of grace.¹

The mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation. Becoming enmeshed in the outer, inert objects, the mind itself has become inert—the mind has become the source of its own bondage. But when the mind becomes etherealized, when it leaves the gross world behind, then, meeting with the Lord, it becomes the very form of the Lord.

Therefore, Ramdas Swami says:

O mind, become fine like sandalwood powder.

He tells the mind to become like the powder produced from rubbing sandalwood. A sweet fragrance issues forth from that powder. Similarly, when you separate your mind from the outer objects and scrub the mind with the Simran of Naam, it is freed from all material grossness and inertia. Then, your mind becomes the subtlest of the subtle. Then you merge into the immaculate, exalted Power within you and become one with it.

¹ *Man mihīn kari lījīye jab piu lāgai hāth*, Paltu Sahib



Baba Somanath Ji

**When the Lord blesses you with His hand of grace,
you understand yourself as the lowest of all.
You abandon all bigotry and never utter harsh
words.**

What is the proof that you have met the Lord? What are the attributes of the person who has become free from the gross world? The devotee who has contacted the Conscious Power within attains a high status and becomes one with that great Power. Still, such a devotee is filled with humility and thinks, “I am the lowest of all. Everyone in this world is greater than I am.” Renouncing high and low, criticism and praise, profit and loss, honor and disgrace, the true devotee becomes wholly absorbed in the love of the Lord. These devotees have united with the Almighty Lord and have shed all grossness from their minds.

But what about the person who flies into a rage if someone else corrects or criticizes them? Previously, that same person had been reverently folding their hands in greeting, touching everyone’s feet with respect, and showing all the outer signs of humility. But then, if anyone says even a little word against them, they flare up in anger. This cannot be called humility.

**Reduce desire for praise and honor to dust—then
victory is yours.
If someone hurls insults at you, forgive them;
Never offer abuse in return.**

You should burn your egotism to ashes and smear those ashes on your body. If someone speaks insultingly to you and those words do not pierce your heart, understand that your heart has become pure. If you go on blowing air to extinguish the sun,

that air will blow back into your face, but it will not affect the sun at all. In the same way, the harsh words of others cannot touch you if you make your heart pure.

Praise the greatness of others and understand yourself as the lowly one.

When you meet others, be the first to fold your hands and bow your head in greeting.

Always go on praising others; understand yourself as the one of no account. When you meet anyone, fold your hands respectfully to greet them even before they can greet you. Humility is a great power, and it should guide all our deeds. But we should avoid a false display of lowliness. We exhibit false humility just to fulfill our own selfish motives. Outwardly, we may fold our hands in respect, touch the feet of others, and act humble in every way—but within, we are harboring egotism and self-interest. This cannot be called humility. When we enjoy the darshan of the Lord, we become free from the petty ego; gentleness and lowliness fill our within—this is true humility.

O Paltu, the diamond glitters on the forehead of the fortunate bride.

The mind becomes rarefied when the Lord blesses you with His hand of grace.

He says the diamond tilak is sparkling on the forehead of the fortunate, happily married wife. Some people apply tilaks of fragrant sandalwood paste, and some apply tilaks of ashes. Women wear many different types of tilaks; brides often wear tilaks of sparkling jewels. But these are all outer tilaks, whether of sandalwood paste, ashes, or jewels. The word tilak

itself—“*ti*” + “*lak*” —points toward its real significance. “*Ti*” is taken from *jyoTI*, “light,” and “*lak*” from *LAKhna*, “to behold.”² Thus, the one who applies the true tilak beholds the Self-Existing Light within and becomes its very image. Such a devotee—the fortunate bride of the Lord—is truly blessed. The Lord is ever-present for the one who has applied the diamond tilak and beheld the Inner Light. For that fortunate soul, the cycle of birth and death has come to an end.

2 As seen in many of Baba Somanath Ji’s Satsangs, He often employs “folk etymology,” that is, reinterpreting the form or origin of a specialized, foreign, or unfamiliar word using familiar terms to elucidate a deeper meaning or illustrate a point. In this case, Baba Somanath is shedding light on the true meaning of “tilak” in terms familiar to His audience, not tracing its strict etymological roots.

This is the country of mind and Maya. Coming here, you no longer remember who you are. Your consciousness (sudh) and your power of thinking (budh) are both completely forgotten. Instead, Maya's trap is so strong that attachment and the sense of "I and mine" dominate you completely. Those two keep Kal's wheel of birth and death turning, and to escape from this wheel is extremely difficult.

—Baba Somanath

O Hansa, Remember Your Homeland!

O Hansa! Remember your Homeland.¹

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He calls the pure, unalloyed soul a *hansa* or swan. So, you should tap into the Truth, the immaculate purity, that is your intrinsic nature. Ask yourself: “Who am I?” You may reply, “My name is Atma Ram.” But the name Atma Ram cannot reveal the real nature of the soul (*ātmā*) or its relationship with the Lord (*Rām*). Or you may say, “I am Bhagwan Das.”² This name is just an outer label that your mother and father chose when you were born. It applies only to the physical body. But in its pristine form, the soul is an immaculate swan.

We should think about these questions deeply: What is your true nature? Where have you come from? What is this trap that has ensnared you? Which Path will lead you out of this false world? And finally, when will you start your homeward journey? All of these questions are worth our attention.

Now, what does Paltu Sahib say on the subject? “Your span

1 *Hansā sudhi kar apno desā*, Kabir Sahib

2 The servant of God

of life goes on diminishing moment by moment.” Yesterday has already passed by. And if you waste today stuck in worldly affairs, you can’t get that precious time back again. When evening falls, if you wish to reclaim the early morning hours, it is impossible. Therefore, don’t delay. With every breath, purify yourself. Think of the true nature of your soul and attain the knowledge of the Inner Truth.

Think about your origin: “What country have I come from?” Keep this question in your heart every moment till you discover the answer. Then you will find the way to sever the worldly bonds. Right now, you are entangled in this world, and you just go on talking about finding freedom. But your fetters cannot be cut by words.

When the fire of hunger is burning within, a person may be embarrassed to admit it: “I’m not hungry. I ate before I came. I’m already so full.” But all the while, the fire goes on raging. In the same way, when you are intoxicated in the worldly desires, you are unwilling to admit your condition, and you say, “Now, I have renounced the world for good. I am not at all concerned with these outer things.” Meanwhile, your within is seething with those very desires. This is not what is meant by purity of soul. You cannot be called a *hansa*.

**Since you came here, all consciousness and
awareness have left you;
You are trapped in this foreign land.**

This is the country of mind and Maya. Coming here, you no longer remember who you are. Your consciousness (*sudh*) and your power of thinking (*budh*) are both completely forgotten. Instead, Maya’s trap is so strong that attachment and the sense of “I and mine” dominate you completely. Those two keep

Kal's wheel of birth and death turning, and to escape from this wheel is extremely difficult.

**Now, remember your true Beloved;
This is the teaching of the Satguru.**

Having explained all this, He explains further that nothing is to be gained by remembering bygone days. "My father was a very wealthy man. His treasure chest was stuffed with gold. And now today, just look at my condition." This kind of thinking is absolutely pointless. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us that the past is gone—let it go. You should wake up right away and listen to the teachings of the Guru. What does the Guru tell us? He says, "The Lord is within you. The Path to meet Him is also within. Meditate according to these instructions."

The Guru reveals all this to you. Follow His teachings with full attention and come to your senses. Otherwise, you won't get this beautiful time again. Just as the past has already slipped through your fingers, so the present and the future will also be stolen from you. And then one day, you will find yourself at the cremation ground, the final resting place of the body. What can you do at that time? Nothing at all. Therefore, awaken this instant.

**O Hansa! You have never given a thought to the
country you came from.**

To awaken us, He enquires: "O Hansa! O Soul! Which country have you come from?" You need to understand this. It is just like when you move to Bombay and forget about your native place. If someone asks you where you have come from, you are embarrassed, and you will reply, "I am from Bombay." You

think Bombay is such a huge city, and your own village is just a small, insignificant place—you are reluctant even to name it. You think, “If I say where I have come from, people will look down on me.” So, you simply say, “I am from Bombay.” In the same way, Sat Lok-Sach Khand is your native place. You have come from Sat Naam, the True Name. But you don’t even remember anything about your origin. Instead, you have made this world your home.

You say, “I am from this country.” You never think of your True Home. If someone asks who you are, you reply, “I am a big businessman; I am a banker; I am a minister; I am the Prime Minister. I am the greatest of all. I am very privileged; I am very wealthy.” This is your condition in the world. But what country have you come from? Where is your true Homeland? You have completely forgotten.

**As soon as you came here, you were snared in
net of attachment;
Kal, the Lord of Death, waits eagerly to seize you
by the hair.**

Having explained all this, he tells us frankly, “You have been trapped in the snare of attachment. You are a prisoner.” This world is the compound of Kal. You have been trapped in this compound, and you have no idea what lies outside it because Maya’s trap of attachment is so strong. You have no conception of your true nature. Children, family, wealth, possessions, house, high and low status—these were all created by Maya. These things can never remain the same; they are always changing.

Fifty years ago, hardly anyone came to Worli; it was open countryside. But now look at the conditions here; there are

so many people that there is hardly room to sit down.³ In this way, the whole world is always in an upheaval. And since we have come into this world, our thoughts have also become confused and disturbed. We are caught in the trap of attachment. We have made all the children and the family members as our very own. But we did not bring all these things with us when we came into this world. And not one of them will accompany us when we depart.

When a person dies, four people from outside will carry away the dead body.⁴ They are unconcerned; they are just transporting a dead body. But the family members are weeping and wailing. A few mourners accompany the corpse to the cremation ground. And then that's an end to it. All connection with that departed soul is severed in a moment. We observe this occurrence all the time, but we make no attempt to detach ourselves from these false relationships. Instead, we become entangled in them even more. And what do these bonds of attachment amount to in the end? When the Kal Power seizes you by the hair and wrenches your soul from the body, all your relatives stand by helpless; they can do nothing to stop the Lord of Death from claiming your soul.

**Focus your consciousness on the Invisible Realm;
There even Shiva goes on repeating the Lord's Name.**

There is only one way to escape from these bonds. Detach your thoughts and attention from all the worldly things, and

3 Baba Somanath Ji's Bombay cloth shop and Satsang Hall were located in the bustling area of Worli Naka. In His early years, He had meditated in Worli, when it was a still a pristine and undeveloped jungle.

4 Sometimes family and friends carry the body; sometimes other arrangements are made. In modern times, the body is often transported in a vehicle.

attach them to the Naam of the Lord. And what will be the result? When the taste of the Naam comes in your within, when the purity and power of that Naam infuses your soul with its sweetness,⁵ then all the turmoil and trouble of this world will depart of themselves. The inner world is so beautiful and enchanting that the tastes of this world will seem loathsome to you.

We can understand this through a worldly example. For a special occasion, we will go to a particular shop to purchase especially delicious sweets. Even though we pay a few extra rupees, still we don't mind because the sweets from all the other shops seem insipid and ordinary by comparison. Similarly, when we go within and discover the incomparable sweetness of the inner elixir, then the tastes of the worldly attachments appear disgusting to us. When once the soul imbibes the inner sweetness, then the outer tastes fall away automatically. The soul repents its former existence, thinking in amazement: "How could I have spent so many days trapped in such filth?"

Kabir Sahib tells us that even the gods and goddesses long for the human body and perform devotion to the Almighty Lord.⁶ So now that we have gained that priceless opportuni-

5 In the Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Baba Farid tells us about this sweetness:

*Sugar cane, candy, jaggery, molasses, honey, and buffalo's milk;
Farid says, O Lord, the worship of your Name is far sweeter than all of these!*

6 The Saints tell us that even the gods and goddesses long for liberation; for this reason, they pray for the gift of the human body and the grace of the Satguru. "Even the gods worship this human form and long to inherit it. Why?—Because it is the most precious time and opportunity when we can return to our True Home. Even the angels bow before it. And, we have got it!" Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, March 1972, "Who is High? Who is Low?" p. 4.

ty. Becoming detached from the world, we should repeat His True Naam in that Invisible Realm.

**The doubts of age upon age will fly away;
The suffering and strife of Kal will leave you.**

When you become true and follow the Guru's teachings, then the mind's desires and doubts from ages upon ages will leave you. Then no fantasies and doubts will arise in your heart. You will be freed from Kal and the sufferings of this world. You will become one with the Self-Existing Bliss within, but only if you dedicate yourself now to the meditation.

You go on putting off this important work. You say you will do it later today; you will do it tomorrow; you will do it after you grow old; or you will do it in your next birth. But how can you hope to do it in your next birth? Who knows if you will even get the human body again. You may come back as a monkey.

**Where did you come from?
What are you doing here?
How did you forget your True Home and become
trapped in this alien country?**

In the womb of the mother, you vowed to do the devotion of the Lord. But when you came out, you were ensnared in this foreign land, and your vow was forgotten. The womb is a very difficult place; only the jiva who is trapped there knows the suffering of that dark, narrow space. And when that suffering becomes unbearable, that soul cries out to the Lord, "O Maharaj! Free me from this captivity."

Hearing the jiva's prayer, the Lord becomes gracious and brings it out into this world. The child is born through the action of the *Vishnu Prasūtivāyu*.⁷ In the womb, the unborn child is in a sitting position and its head is turned upward. But when this *vāyu* flows, the child's head quickly rotates downward. At that time, the thunder roars, and the jiva feels as if a hundred lightning bolts are striking. And in an instant, the vow to do the Lord's devotion is completely forgotten. Then, the force of the *vāyu* pushes the child into the birth canal and out into the physical world, where the attachment of Maya surrounds it.

In a little while, it will be laughing and weeping. When it drinks milk, it is delighted, but when it becomes hungry it starts to cry. And gradually, the jiva becomes inextricably bound to this world. The memory of its vow and all the knowledge it had in the womb are wiped away. So, He says, "Coming into this alien world of Kal and Maya, you have forgotten your own True Home."

Kabir says, "O Hansa! Go to that place where birth and rebirth are finished forever."

Kabir Sahib Ji admonishes the soul to abandon this destructible world and return to the True Home. He tells the soul, "Return to your own place, and become the eternal form of Oneness. That Realm is unchangeable. No thought arises there, and you will not come again into the cycle of birth and death.

7 Prasūtivāyu refers to: "Air generated in the womb during the pangs of travail and held to be assistant to the expulsion of the birth; puerperal convulsion." J.T. Molesworth, *A Dictionary, Marathi and English* (Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, 1857) p. 452.

**O Man! Why are you sleeping in this intoxication?
The call to depart has come, but still, you don't awake.**

Now, He explains to us: "In the intoxication of attachment, you have fallen into a deep sleep." Many people work all day long, and then in the evening, they drink a glass of liquor. When you ask them why, they will tell you: "I can't sleep otherwise. The liquor takes away the weariness of the day and helps me relax; a glass or two does me a lot of good."

In this world, all the jivas are consuming the liquor of attachment and have fallen into a drunken stupor. We can awaken from that state of oblivion only when our consciousness becomes absorbed into the Higher Consciousness. Then the Light dawns within and without. This is what we call awakening. On the other hand, if we pass our life in ignorance, with our thoughts entangled in Maya, this is called sleeping.

**With the first beat of the drum, your hair turns white;
With the second, your ears go deaf.**

He is giving us a stark description of our condition as death approaches. Kal beats the drum to announce our departure, and with the first beat of that drum our hair turns white. Even though we hear that first drumbeat, we still hope we can outrun the Lord of Death. We rush to the bazaar and buy some hair dye. We want to make our hair dark again and put off the summons of death.

But how many days can we evade that decree? Many people also dye their mustaches. But that color only coats the surface. Underneath the mustache is still white. We think we can avoid our end time; but we cannot stop the beating of the drum. When the next beat sounds, we start to lose our

hearing. We can't hear the words that are spoken to us. This is the second drumbeat.

**With the third beat, your vision becomes clouded;
And the fourth beat announces your death.**

With the third drumbeat, our eyes become weak. We cannot see the things that are right in front of us. And the fourth drumbeat sounds the final call—the time of departure has arrived. The drum is calling: “Brother, come along now. You have no more work here. It is time to vacate the house of the body and lock it up.” What will become of that “house”? It is taken to the *shmashāna*⁸ or cremation ground. In Marathi, we call it *sonāpūr*, the city of sleep. Now the body goes to its resting place.

**You did not obey your mother and father;
You didn't respect the holy men.**

Your mother and father gave you so many teachings. Some parents are engaged in the Lord's devotion, and they teach this devotion to their children. But some parents have bad habits; they themselves drink, and they give their children liquor to drink also. In this way, the mother and father are the first teachers, and they have the duty of introducing their children to a virtuous way of life. Later the children learn from their teachers, and if they receive good teaching, based on spiritual principles, then they remain pure, and the desire to do the devotion grows strong within them. But, if they ignore that good teaching and start to drink liquor, well, a person who drinks will definitely turn to meat eating in due course of time.

8 “Resting place for the corpse”: *shma* is a form of *shav*=corpse; *shāna* is a form of *shānt*=rest, bed

In one area, many Brahmins started eating fish. But, even then, they were not satisfied: “Fish eating isn’t good enough for us. We prefer eating four-legged animals.” So, now, they have started eating goats as well. But it is all one; meat is meat, whether you are eating fish or goats. From meat-eating your intellect becomes dull, and you cannot achieve Higher Consciousness.

**You did not learn how to board the boat of dharma;
So now, the Lord of Death will explain to you.**

In this world, if you lead a noble life and are constantly concerned with Truth, if you follow the ways of dharma, this becomes your boat; that is to say, your true and righteous way of living becomes the support of your life. But if you do not take up the way of Truth, then at the time of death, Lord Kal will come and lay hold of your soul. He drags you away, and no one knows where he has taken you.

Many people will tell you, “Our father has gone to Vaikunth (Vishnu’s heaven).” Other people say, “My departed relatives have gone to Kailash (Shiva’s heaven).” Well, the Brahmins will make a profit out of that, because after someone dies, then once a year, the family members call the Brahmins to perform a *shrāddha*⁹ for that departed soul. The family feeds the Brahmins very tasty dishes, thinking that food will reach their relatives in the heavens. Well, your father used to have his coffee and tea three or four times a day, and, on top of that, he would eat two or three hearty meals. And now, one time out of the whole year, you are serving food to the Brahmins on his behalf, hoping it will reach him. Do you think he is

9 A *shrāddha* is a ceremonial offering honoring a departed ancestor, intended to help the departed soul move from lower to higher states of spiritual evolution. The Brahmins conduct the prescribed rituals and receive food and donations for their services. The word *shrāddha* translates roughly as “faith” or “devotion.”

going to be satisfied with such meager fare? This is all hypocrisy and falsehood; these rites and rituals have nothing to do with dharma.

Dharma is true living that purifies your heart. You must remove falsehood from your heart, from your body, from your speech and from your mind. This is the real dharma. In this way, you will come in contact with the Truth that already exists naturally within you. Then all the refuse and garbage that have been heaped up will be cleared away, and you will also be purified through and through.

**The proclamation has gone out in the cities and towns.
Those under the dominion of Kal feel distress.
But the self-realized soul has prepared for this time
when the pranas withdraw back into their source.
In the City of Love, there is a cloth dyer's shop,
where the Dyer is the True Lord Himself.**

Now, Kabir Sahib tells us that as you go on practicing the meditation, your soul rises to the level of the Universal Consciousness and becomes All-Pervading. Then the soul becomes drenched in the color of True Love and Longing for the Lord. When once the Guru, who is the True Dyer, dyes the cloth of the soul with the dyestuff of Shabd, that color is fast; it never washes out.

**Kabir says, "Now this body has become useless.
Clay mixes back into the clay."**

If you do not use this precious time to attain self-knowledge, if you do not use your human birth to search for the Lord, but instead you waste it in the affairs of the world, then what

is your condition? Yamraj, the Lord of Death, comes at your end time to reclaim what is his; because all the elements—earth, water, air, ether, and so forth—are the property of Kal. And at the moment of death, he takes everything back.

We talk about Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and the other days of the week; all these days are also the property of Kal. Morning, afternoon, and evening belong to him as well. We can observe how our frame of mind changes according to the time of day. In the morning, our *buddhi* or understanding is working one way, in the afternoon in another way, and when evening comes and we go to sleep, then our *buddhi* quits functioning altogether in that unconscious state. The elements and all the divisions of time are the property of Kal; they make up the body and influence the working of our understanding.

So, all this belongs to Kal, and at the time of death, he reclaims his property. If the soul has not achieved Higher Consciousness, it is thrown back into the cycle of eighty-four. This is the real state of affairs.

No matter what you say of Him, you cannot describe His greatness. Whatever form you see with your eyes of flesh, that is not the True Lord—His real form is Unseen and Unchanging. Therefore, the Vedas, the Shastras, and the other holy scriptures can only cry out: “Neti! Neti!” He is not this! He is not that! The holy scriptures try to describe the Almighty Lord with words, but they have no knowledge of the One who dwells beyond the reach of words.

—Baba Somanath

He is Not This! He is not That!

**What kind of arti lasts just for a moment?
The true arti of the Saints is ceaseless—they sing
the Lord’s praise day and night.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. Everyone performs the *arti*² of the Lord according to their own understanding. Some people rely on dharmic traditions handed down from the ancient past. Some take the support of holy scriptures that contain the teachings left behind by departed saints, mahatmas, rishis, and munis. And then, without understanding their true import, they cling to these practices and revelations, no matter what, and make them into a religion. Other people perform puja to the various gods and goddesses—Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Sharada³, Saraswati, Ganesh and so forth. They

1 *Pāv aur palak kī ārtī kaun sī, rain din ārtī sant gāvai*, Kabir Sahib

2 *Arti* is a ceremony that is often part of Hindu *pujā*. The light of a flame, typically produced by burning camphor, is waved in front of the venerated deities as an offering of love; songs of praise to the deity may also be sung as the ritual is performed.

3 Sharada is usually equated with the goddess Saraswati or described as an incarnation of Saraswati.

say, “These gods were worshiped by our ancestors, and we also offer devotion to them.” But if we look at the matter squarely, we will see that all these practices are just the product of our own imagination.

Now, the time of *Ganesh Chaturthī*⁴ is approaching. At that time, so many devotees of Ganesh appear. All of Bombay gathers by the seashore, where idols of poor Ganesh are immersed in the water. People buy those idols in the bazaars, “infuse them with life”, and then immerse them in the sea where they will dissolve. This whole ritual is called *Ganapati Pujā* or the worship of Ganesh.⁵ We may worship Ganesh or any other god that we choose, but no matter how much devotion we may offer, no matter how many rites and rituals we may perform, still this cannot be called true dharma.

Dharma is the devotion that goes on ceaselessly and naturally within us, day and night—not breaking even for a second. Therefore, Kabir Sahib asks, “What kind of arti is it that breaks even for a moment or a fraction of a moment?” Day and night, the Saints remain absorbed in the Truth. They remain immersed in the Inner Light, while the boundless Shabd Dhun reverberates within. This is the true arti that never ceases.

**The sound of thunder points the way;
The hidden cymbals tinkle, and the bell sound
echoes from an Unseen Source.**

4 *Ganesh Chaturthī* occurs on the 14th day of the bright half of *Bhādrapad* (*Bhādoṅ*). It is the Hindu festival celebrating Ganesh coming to earth from Mount Kailash with his mother Parvati. Devotees bring plaster of Paris idols of Ganesh that are “infused with life” through a ritual called *prāṇa-pratishthā*. Then the idols are immersed in water (*Ganesh Visarjan*) and left to dissolve there.

5 *Ganapati* is another name for Lord Ganesh.

He says that you will find a hidden Path within yourself. When your attention becomes fixed and still, then easily and naturally your soul follows the signs upward along this Path. What are the signs along this Inner Way? The countless inner melodies playing—the bell, the conch, the vina, and more.

**There you find a temple without a foundation,
where a serene deity dwells.
Before that throne, in the inner sky, you will
discover the further way up.**

Within you lies a temple. That temple has no foundation or support. A divine being resides there, seated on a throne. How do you reach that temple where you have the darshan of the deity and find the further way up? When your soul crosses the inner sky, you come to the foot of that throne. And there you discover the Path that ascends higher.

**Kabir says, “Where the arti goes on day and night
without a break,
There you learn how to perform the five pujas.”**

The arti in this realm goes on day and night. Once a year, we perform the *jāgran* during *Mahā Shivarātrī*.⁶ That night you perform the puja five times. This is just a set custom that you follow. But when we go within, we will cross the inner sky and ascend upward through the five regions leading to Sat

⁶ *Mahā Shivarātrī* is the night when Lord Shiva dances to drive away the darkness. During the *jāgran* vigil, the devotees fast, sing and perform the “five pujas,” offering fragrance, flowers, incense, *arti*, and parshad to Ganesh, along with set prayers.

Lok-Sach Khand. Each of those five regions has its own characteristic Light and Sound. When you cross those five regions and ascend further—this is the real meaning of performing the five pujas or artis. In this way, you become free from the cycle of birth and death.

**O Lord! Only You know Your own seva.
You reveal Your secret, but who can understand?**

The Perfect Mahatmas are the Beloveds of God, in whom the Lord is manifested. And those Mahatmas reveal the infinite secret: “O Lord! Only You know the nature of Your seva.” Only if the Lord Himself performs the seva will it be accomplished. No one else can understand Your secret. You have no end; You have no limit. You are inaccessible and unknowable. Who else is capable of doing the seva besides You?

**Each one infers the truth according to their own
innate understanding;
Indulging in a debate of words, they set wave after
wave in motion.**

When five or ten people get together, you will find that some people have read the Vedas, some have studied the Shastras, and some are familiar with the Puranas and other holy scriptures. Some can quote the Bible. Using their individual intellects, they have each formed their own ideas about the books they have read. So naturally, in such a forum, they will discuss and debate. They want to prove their ideas are superior to the others. Someone will win the debate, and someone will lose. This is all a display of mental gymnastics. But the Almighty Lord is not accessible through the intellect. He cannot be

found in books. In books, we read His praises, but the Lord Himself does not reside in those books. This is all just an empty, intellectual exercise.

The word *prem* (प्रेम) or love is written in Hindi with only two-and-a-half letters. Whoever has read those two-and-a-half letters, has understood everything written in the Vedas and much more. But even if you have studied every word of the Vedas and the other holy scriptures, still, if you have not learned that one word, *prem*, then you have gained nothing at all. No matter how many holy books you may have read, if you have not read the two-and-a-half letters of love, then your reading was to no avail. This whole world is a congregation of Love. The same Power of Love is working within all—whether animate or inanimate.

Once, four men were traveling together from one village to another—a grocer, a wrestler, a Hindu pandit, and a Muslim maulvi. As they were walking along the way, they saw a little partridge (*titar*) by the side of the road. It was sitting in the bushes, singing in its own language. *Cheep, chir-ee, chi-ree-up! Cheep, chir-ee, chi-ree-up!* So, they stopped to listen.

The Hindu pandit said to the maulvi, “Tell me, respected Mian.⁷ Do you know what this bird is saying?” The Muslim maulvi replied, “Yes, I know what it is saying. But do you know?” So, the Hindu pandit answered, “Yes, I know. The bird is praising God saying: *Rām! Terī Māyā. Rām! Terī Māyā.* O Ram! All this creation is yours.”

Then the maulvi told him, “No, Pandit Ji, you are mistaken. The bird is saying: *Subhān! Terī Ḳudarat. Subhān! Terī Ḳudarat.* O Lord! All nature belongs to you.”⁸

7 *Miāñ* is a Muslim term of address showing respect.

8 *Subhān* means praise or pure. The phrase generally used is *subhānallah*, meaning Glory to God! or God is Pure!

Then the wrestler chimed in: “You are both way off. You don’t understand at all. That bird is saying: *Khā Khurāk. Kasrat Kar. Khā Khurāk. Kasrat Kar*. Eat hearty and keep exercising!”

Finally, the grocer had his say: “All three of you are wrong. That bird isn’t saying any of these things. It is calling out just like I do when I sell my spices: “*Lo-o-ong, Mi-i-irch, Adarak; Lo-o-ong, Mi-i-irch, Adarak*. Cloves, peppers, and ginger. Cloves, peppers, and ginger.” In reality, the bird was not saying any of these things—but each of those men interpreted its song according to his own imagination.

Similarly, we people try to describe the Almighty Lord. Someone says He has a trunk like an elephant. Someone else says He has four arms. Someone says He has five faces. We think that Brahma has four faces and Ravana has ten. But what does the True Lord really look like? We don’t have the slightest idea.

[Pushpamma sings a verse of Mankutimma, and Baba Somanath Ji comments]

**What is God? Is He a dark cave?
Or is He everything inaccessible collected
together in one place?
If the Protector is only one, how can the world
be as it is?
How can birth and death both exist?⁹**

There was mahatma who did not choose to reveal his real identity. He called himself Mankutimma.¹⁰ He tells us, “You people go on saying God, God, God. Who is this God you are talking about? Is this God you speak

9 Based on the translation of Dr. L. Umadevi, *Wisdom of Kagga*, p. 3

10 Mankutimma was the pen name of Dr. D. V. Gundappa (1887-1975), a renowned Kannada philosopher and poet.

of a cave of dense darkness? Or do all the gods we worship collect together and make a mountain of gods?” The mountain of gods and the dark cave are both just inventions of our imagination.¹¹ So who is this God?

Then He tells us: “Many people imagine that God is one—the Almighty Lord, who is our Protector. But if He is the Protector, then why does one die and another take birth?” He kills the person dying and gives life to the child being born. Does your one Almighty Lord have two different natures? You go on saying God is one, but that same God is destroying one and creating another. What kind of God is that?

If your God is One, the Protector of the whole world, then why is this world in such a pitiable state? Why do we die and take birth? Does one power bestow life and mete out death? Does the same power give happiness to some and sorrow to others? The one God you have concocted is ruling over a world of duality. That can’t be true.

But if you imagine God as many—you people believe in a pantheon of different gods—then which God are you talking about? This is all the product of your own mind; first, you create some conception of God, and then you worship the God of your own making. This is a very deep subject, and it is worth understanding.

11 Hindu temples typically have a mountain-like central tower called a *vimana* or *shikara*, ornamented with images of many hundreds of gods. That mountain of gods symbolizes their heavenly abode, inaccessible to mortals. Directly below this structure is the dimly lit sanctuary proper, the dark cave or *garbha-griha* (womb chamber) where the images of the main temple deities are enshrined. Worshipers believe that the gods descend from the lofty “mountaintop” to the “darkened cave” to become accessible to human beings in the physical form.

[Baba Somanath Ji returns to the bani of Kabir Sahib]

You construct gods with your imagination. You depend on the power of your *buddhi* or intellect. You indulge in mental gymnastics and spin fantasies out of thin air. Then you maintain firmly that whatever God you have fashioned through your mental exertions is the only true God.

**Whatever you say of Him—He is not that;
 Whatever you see with your eyes—He is not that.
 The Vedas cannot describe Him; you have to rise above.**

No matter what you say of Him, you cannot describe His greatness. Whatever form you see with your eyes of flesh, that is not the True Lord—His real form is Unseen and Unchanging. Therefore, the Vedas, the Shastras, and the other holy scriptures can only cry out: “*Neti! Neti!*” He is not this! He is not that! The holy scriptures try to describe the Almighty Lord with words, but they have no knowledge of the One who dwells beyond the reach of words.

**Kabir says: For a dumb person, I explain with gestures.
 Whoever becomes like one dumb will understand
 my meaning through the my signs.**

Kabir Sahib Ji tells us: “I am explaining the inner mysteries to a dumb person, and so I have to use gestures and hints.” A mother teaches things to her dumb child only through gestures. Generally, we see that if a person is dumb, they are deaf as well. Therefore, it is necessary to use sign language with our fingers, to make them understand.

Therefore, He says, “The teachings I am giving out, what I am explaining about the experience of the Almighty Lord,

I am conveying with gestures and hints. If I use the words arising from the mind and senses, or the *buddhi* of the inner *antahkarana* (inner mind) they will convey nothing. I know this person is deaf and dumb, and, for their sake, I am using ‘sign language.’ So, whoever becomes like one deaf and dumb, they will understand my meaning. But whoever goes on seeking answers with their *buddhi* or intellect, they will not learn my secret.”

Guru is the Power that removes the thoughts of the world from our hearts, reveals to us the inner spiritual secrets, and connects us with the Lord. Shabd is the Guru, and the soul is the disciple. The Sound Current within is the real Guru. Until we have established contact with that Power, until we meet the Perfect Master, we will not gain access to the secret of Shabd.

—Baba Somanath

The Secret of Shabd

**The world ruminates over the three gunas,
entangled in the words of the Vedas.
But without the Naam, we suffer the beating of Yama,
taking birth and dying, time and time again.¹**

This is the bani of Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. First of all, we people should carefully consider what is meant by the word *mukti* or liberation.

Many people think, “When I get married and have children, when I become wealthy and can pay off all my debts, then I will be carefree, liberated from all the worldly worries.” Freedom from the cares of the world—which are in fact only creations of our own mind—has been associated with liberation.

But what is the real meaning of “liberation”? What is its real significance? Liberation is freedom from bondage to this world. When we become detached from all the worldly entanglements, when we merge into the Unchanging Power of the Almighty Lord, then we become free from the cycle of transmigration and attain liberation.

¹ *Beda bāñī jag varatadā, trai guṇa kare bīchār*, Guru Amar Das Ji

True liberation cannot be achieved through study of the Vedas and the Shastras or through the practice of repetitions and austerities. Liberation is achieved only through contact with the True Naam, which already exists within us.

Most people interpret the meaning of Naam through their own limited intellects. They say that Sat Naam, the True Name, merely indicates the *aksharātmak* Naam, the outer descriptive names with which we address the Almighty Lord.

Some call Him Allah. Some call Him Khuda. Some call Him Rama. Some call Him Vitthal. Some repeat *onkār*; some say *soham*.² These are all outer words that have been used to describe the Naam.

But the reality of Naam lies beyond words that can be written, read or spoken. Naam is something separate from the letters “A” (*akār*), “U” (*ukār*) or “M” (*makār*) that make up the syllable AUM (*onkār*).

The Unstruck Music that resounds within us, the *Akāsh Bānī* or Voice from the Heavens, is the real Naam. Until we meet the Guru who knows its inner secret, we cannot understand the true meaning of Naam.

But being ignorant of this basic truth, we have established thousands of outer religions. Understanding the *aksharātmak Naam*, the outer name that can be written or spoken, as the only reality, the whole world has become ensnared in countless religions, sects, and creeds.

We have become devotees of Hari, or Shiva, or Rama, or Lakshman, or any of the other gods and goddesses. And with

² *Onkār* is the sound of the second region, which may be repeated in yogic practice as “*aum*.” Also in yogic practice, the sound emanating from the throat chakra in the body is *soham*. This physical sound is distinct from the *Sohang* or *Soham* of Sant Mat, “I am Thou,” the Divine Sound reverberating in the fourth Spiritual Plane.

the repetition of all these outer names of God, a great uproar arises. One is chanting *onkār*, another is repeating *soham*. Someone repeats this name; someone repeats that name.

But Naam is only one. When the Almighty Lord is only one, why are we seeking Him through thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of different outer names. There are seven million traditional mantras. And everyone advises us that, through repetition of these seven million mantras, we can achieve liberation. My friend, you cannot gain liberation through repeating outer mantras, no matter how many you may repeat. Liberation comes only through the Naam. The True Naam is something entirely different from the outer mantras.

Rama does not know the greatness of Naam.

Even Lord Rama himself did not know the secret of Naam. And still, everyone goes on chanting *Rama, Rama*. They do not understand the difference between Rama (*Rām*) and Naam (*Nām*). In one place it is said:

*Rama liberated the Rishi's wife,
But Naam liberates millions of evildoers.*

Lord Rama was able to liberate Ahalya, the wife of Gautama Maharishi, but the Naam can liberate millions of sinners. Therefore, we cannot equate Rama with the True Naam. Until the Naam manifests within us, we cannot throw off the shackles of Maya and attachment. We cannot be freed from the cycle of birth and death.

**Meeting with the True Guru, we find liberation
and pass through the Door of Salvation.**

Now the question arises as to where we can obtain the Naam.

It is to be had only from the Perfect Master. Nowadays, the gurus outnumber the disciples. Everywhere you look you discover a guru, but a disciple is hard to find. Someone recites a few scriptures or reads out some accounts from the Puranas. And then if anyone questions them, they declare, “Oh, I am a guru, a great guru!”

But recounting great deeds from the past, quoting the Vedas and Shastras, or relating parables and other religious tales does not make you a Guru. Guru is a Power, not a human being. He is not some monastic leader or swami or priest of the gurdwara. As I said, Guru is a Power. In fact, the Guru is the manifestation of the Supreme Power.

Guru is the Power that removes the thoughts of the world from our hearts, reveals to us the inner spiritual secrets, and connects us with the Lord. Shabd is the Guru, and the soul is the disciple. The Sound Current within is the real Guru. Until we have established contact with that Power, until we meet the Perfect Master, we will not gain access to the secret of Shabd.

Even if we receive the secret of the Shabd from a guru who has not mastered the Inner Way, nothing can be accomplished from such theoretical knowledge. Sometimes a person may be initiated into Naam, and then, without having become perfect in the meditation themselves, they take up the role of a guru and start initiating seekers. But when such gurus have not themselves achieved spiritual perfection, what can they impart to others?

The Guru Power remains with the disciple from the moment of initiation until the soul reaches the True Home. So, Guru Amar Das Ji tells us the benefit of meeting with the Satguru: “O Nanak, whoever meets the True Guru, their ledger is torn up.” When you meet the Perfect Master, what remains of your karmic account?

**O man, immerse yourself in service to the Satguru.
By great good fortune, you have found the Perfect
Master; now meditate on the Name of the Lord.**

What is the way of true discipleship? Not even for a moment should you let doubt arise within you. So far, we have talked about the nature of Naam and the qualities of the Guru. But how should we conduct ourselves as disciples? He says that we should instruct our mind: “O mind, if you wish to follow the Spiritual Path, then devote yourself wholeheartedly to the seva.”

But we can do the real seva only when the three veils—attachment to body, mind, and wealth—are removed from our within. Only when we get rid of these three impediments will we be able to perform the true seva. This is the way of discipleship. Until we accept the seva in this way, we cannot become the real customers of Naam—we cannot purchase that precious treasure—because the true price we pay for the Naam is our body, mind, and wealth. Going into the Guru’s shelter, we have to surrender them all.

To become a true disciple is a matter of great good fortune. And likewise, it is a great blessing for the Guru when He finds such a disciple. A very high destiny flowing down from the Realm of Truth brings the True Guru and the True Disciple together. Otherwise, it is just like the old proverb about a so-called guru who encounters a curiosity seeker: “The guru initiates the seeker in the evening, but the next morning the two go their separate ways.” In such a case, no lasting relationship is forged between the two; their contact is superficial and temporary. Nothing can be achieved from such a meeting. Such gurus have not earned the inner wealth, so what can they distribute? And such disciples are not fit to receive any spiritual benefit.

**Through His Own Will and Pleasure, the Almighty
Lord created the Universe.
Through all the ages He has sustained it.**

The meaning of this couplet is very clear. Issuing forth from the Will of God, this created universe came into being. And it is only when His grace descends, that the individual soul can merge back into the Lord. No other method can bring about this union. When His grace illumines the heart of the disciple, then all the darkness of the world and worldly attachments is dispelled. Otherwise, the poor jiva can do nothing of their own accord.

**In the fullness of time, He purifies the mind
and fills it with His Immaculate Love.**

Guru Amar Das Ji explains to us that, through His *Bhānā* or Will, the Lord purifies the heart and manifests His Love within. Then the soul merges into the Lord and becomes His own form.

**When it comes in the Will of the Lord, we meet
the Satguru, and all our births are crowned
with success.**

Through the grace of God, one meets the Guru, and through the Guru's grace, one meets the Lord. Someone may ask, "Who is greater, the Guru or God?" But for this question, there is no answer. We meet the Guru through the grace of God, and it is through the Guru's grace that we meet the Lord. So how can we say one is greater than the other? In one place, Kabir Sahib tells us:

*If my Guru and Almighty God both stand before me,
To whom will I make my obeisance?
I sacrifice myself to my Guru,
Who showed me the Path to God.*

What is the secret behind His words? When we were suffering in the eighty-four lakh species of life, at that time God was residing within us. And in this birth—before we met the gracious Guru—at that time also, God was with us.

But throughout all those long eons, through all the countless incarnations, God never manifested Himself to us. He never told us, “I am dwelling within you. I will protect and care for you. I will lead you to liberation.” God never spoke to us at all.

It was only when we came to the feet of the Guru that we understood the reality. He revealed to us that the Lord is with us. He is pervading all the creation. But until we met the Guru, what good did it do us? What difference did it make to us that the Lord was residing within?

Fire may be hidden in a piece of wood, but that latent fire cannot cook our food. It is only when the fire manifests—when we kindle that wood and burn it on the hearth—that the fire becomes useful. Similarly, the Lord is hidden within us, closer than hands and feet, but until He manifests Himself, we gain no benefit from His presence.

So, no doubt, we have all heard that God dwells within us. But when our soul incarnated in this physical plane, it became inextricably bound up with the *panch bhut*, the five gross elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—that make up the body.

And even though God has been our constant companion, we can achieve liberation only when the Guru takes us into

His shelter, stands surety for us throughout all the planes of creation, frees our soul from the bonds of the five elements, and connects it with the True Naam. For instance, you may have a one rupee note in your pocket. If both sides of that note are clean and clear, then you can spend it in the market. But if one side is damaged or defective, then no one will accept that rupee. Similarly, God and the Guru are two sides of the Supreme Power—they both work together.

Hail! Hail! The Bani is Truth, but only the Gurumukh comprehends it.

He proclaims, “O Lord, the words of the Satguru are true, but who can comprehend their real import? Only the Gurumukh!” The manmukh, the follower of the mind, cannot understand the Guru’s words, and interprets them according to the dictates of the mind. The poor manmukh cannot accept the teachings of the Saints and so remains ignorant of their deeper meaning. But the status of the Gurumukh is beyond our comprehension. Only the Gurumukh can fathom the Truth of the Guru’s words. Guru Nanak tells us:

*The Gurmukh liberates millions,
Giving just one particle of Naam.*

Hail! Hail! Praise be to the Lord without equal.

So, Guru Amar Das Ji says, “O Satguru. You are Infinite. You are worthy of praise.” The greeting *Vāhe Guru* means “Hail to the Guru!”

If we remember the Guru’s greatness day and night, if we go on repeating the Simran of Naam, then our liberation is

assured. But if the Guru is saying one thing, and the disciple is doing something else, how can the work be accomplished?

**When He bestows His forgiveness, then through
His grace, He unites the disciple with Himself.**

The meaning of the bani is very clear, but if we read it, clinging to our own misconceptions, then we won't be able to take any benefit from it.

So now what is He telling us? When the Lord showers His immense grace, He manifests in this world as the Guru and grants us the boon of initiation. Then all the karmic accounts are wound up, and the soul achieves liberation.

**When the Satguru reveals the True Supreme Lord,
the Ambrosial Nectar rains down;
And remaining absorbed in the Truth, the mind
becomes content.**

My Satguru has united me with the True Lord, and now the rain of Amrit is showering down within. My soul has become one with the Immortal Truth, and I too have achieved immortality.

**The Lord's Naam is the eternal spring of life;
Drinking from it the soul can never wither or
fade away.**

Those whose attention is absorbed in the Naam of the Lord, their happiness knows no end. They remain forever blossoming and joyous—they can never wither or waste away. They are unaffected by sorrow. They are untouched

by others' disdain. No worldly thought can intrude on their within. They dwell in perpetual peace.

Such is the power inherent in Naam. But we do not achieve this state simply by taking initiation. We must apply what we have been given; we must work hard and devote ourselves sincerely to the meditation. Only when we manifest the Naam within, can we experience this spiritual bliss.

Many hundreds of thousands of people take initiation. But out of that vast number, only a rare one does the meditation and realizes the Lord. Naam is a great Power. Merely taking initiation is not enough; what can we gain without doing the work?

**Without the True Guru, no one achieves liberation;
Anyone can try it and see for themselves.**

Now, Guru Amar Das Ji says that until we meet the perfect Satguru, we cannot obtain liberation. It is up to us to consider this matter carefully. Has anyone ever won emancipation without the Guru?

**By the Grace of God, we come to the True Guru.
Then easily and naturally we meet with the Lord.**

Through the grace of God, we meet the Guru. Then the merciful Guru manifests the Naam within us and makes us meet the Lord.

**The manmukhs are deluded by doubt.
Without noble destiny, they cannot obtain the
Lord's wealth.**

Being ignorant of the inner secret, the manmukhs cannot even grasp the basic reality. They interpret the spiritual teachings according to their own limited mind and intellect, and as a result, all their efforts are just like piling stones on top of a mountain.

When the mighty mountain of stone is already towering above us, what can be gained by throwing two or three more stones onto it? Since so many religions and interpretations already exist, what do we accomplish by adding more to that enormous heap?

Since the manmukhs are ignorant of the inner secret, they can't grasp even the basic principles of Gurmat, the Path of the Masters. And as a consequence, whatever they undertake bears no fruit. It is all useless effort.

So here, Guru Amar Das Ji is telling us that, without great good fortune, the spiritual wealth remains out of reach. Despite all the jiva's efforts, they come up empty-handed.

**The three gunas shape the material world.
People read and study the sacred writings endlessly,
trying to fathom their nature.**

What is contained in the religious scriptures, like the Vedas, Shastras, and Puranas? They all discuss the three gunas. The Gita states clearly:

The Vedas explain the nature of the three gunas.

The scriptures tell us clearly that the whole world is *trigunātmik*, that is, composed of the three gunas. Even the soul comes under their influence. So, if we perform the karmas of this world under the sway of the *rajas* (energy), *sattva*

(righteousness), and *tamas* (inertia), how can we hope that those actions will raise us above the influence of the three gunas and lead to our liberation?

**But the study of books does not lead to liberation,
and the door to salvation is not found.**

The three gunas have given rise to the material world, and they maintain it in its course. So long as a person's understanding is colored by the three gunas, they can never achieve liberation. They cannot escape from the cycle of birth and death.

**Without the aid of the Satguru, you cannot break
the fetters that bind you;
You cannot develop love for the Naam.**

Aside from the Satguru, no can one break our bondage to Maya, nor are we capable of escaping from it ourselves. When we meet with the Guru, He cuts us free from Maya's web. Only then can we contact the inner strains of Naam, through which our liberation is assured.

**The pandits and the silent sages have grown weary
from reading and studying the Vedas.**

The pandits' efforts in their pursuit of knowledge are not half-hearted; they devote their whole lives to studying the scriptures. They always remain engaged in repeating the mantras, in uttering magical incantations, or in reciting the holy verses. But what do they gain from all this hard work? Nothing at all. It only inflates the ego. You start to think, "I have mastered

all the four Vedas. I am a great scholar.” At every debate, you quote some apt passage from the shlokas and explain it so eloquently that no one else dares open their mouth. But when your end time comes, your own lips will be sealed. No doubt, in this lifetime your eloquence silenced all your opponents. But when death approaches, Kal seals your tongue, and then no Veda or Shastra can save you.

**The Lord’s Naam never enters their consciousness.
They do not dwell in the True Home.**

Why do you go on accumulating knowledge to impress others? However much you may read and study, you only become more and more extroverted. Outer knowledge cannot take your attention within. And until you become introverted and manifest that inner Power of Naam, you cannot hope to become detached from the world.

**The Messenger of Death hovers over their heads;
Deceit lurks within and destroys them.**

He says we are two-faced. Our within is filled with darkness and deceit, but we show something else to the world. Inwardly our thoughts follow one track, but our outer actions take us in a different direction. Just for show, we may meet others with great politeness, but inwardly we are harboring some ulterior motive. We greet them by saying *Sat Naam, Vahi Guru, Rama Rama, Rama Krishna Hari*, or some other name of the Lord. But if we examine our real inner condition honestly, we will find that we are still being deluded by the mind.

We must become the same both within and without and remove the veil of mind that separates the two. This is what is meant by meeting the Lord. Then we are genuine through and through. But where deceit lurks, destruction follows.

**Everyone yearns for the Naam;
But, until it is written in our destiny,
we cannot meet the Lord.**

Everybody has the innate longing to contact the Divine Naam. Everyone cherishes this desire deep within themselves, but without good fortune, it remains unattainable. Why? Because the Naam is a Self-Existing Power. Naam lies beyond the realm of the mind, and, while we remain under the mind's sway, that True Power will not manifest within us.

We cannot experience it through asserting our intellect or by dominating over others. We cannot realize it through deception or force. Begging for it will be of no avail, nor can we acquire it by theft.

Naam is the essence of Truth, and to contact it, all the deceptions of our mind must be eradicated. Only when our heart is made pure, can we achieve self-realization and God-Realization.

**When the Lord bestows His glance of grace,
we meet the True Guru, and the Lord's Naam
fills our mind.**

When the Lord showers His grace, we meet the Guru. Then the Guru unites us with the Naam, and we gain freedom from this world.

**O Nanak, through the Naam, our honor is restored,
and we remain immersed in the Lord.**

Through contact with the Naam, our honor is restored. And through Naam, we achieve emancipation from the wheel of birth and death. Naam is the core reality, the primal element. Make Naam the support of your life. Then, while living, your liberation is assured.

Only the devotees of Truth can win the wealth of bhakti and obtain real happiness. Repeating the Naam of the Lord without ceasing is called devotion. When we rise above the attributive names that we ourselves have ascribed to the Almighty, then we become one with the True Name. This is the aim of devotion; this is real bhakti.

—Baba Somanath

What is True Bhakti?

**In this age, you earn the wealth of the Lord only
through devotion;
But everyone wanders about in this world deluded
by falsehood and doubt.¹**

This is the bani of Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says that the entire creation and all its inhabitants—both sentient and insentient—are engaged in their own type of devotion. All created beings worship the Lord in their own way.

Human beings, in particular, engage in so many different types of devotion. Some are devoted to Rama, some to Vitthal; others seek paradise and the heaven worlds. Some strive to acquire supernatural and miraculous powers, while others devote themselves to good deeds. Some even become patriots—devotees of their country. Everyone practices their own type of bhakti in one way or another. Kabir Sahib has said:

*Everyone does the devotion but do not cast off illusion.
Entangled in the net of deception,
They undergo terrible suffering and strife.*

¹ *Is jug meh bhagatī hari dhan khatīā hor sabh jagat bharami bhulāīā, Guru Amar Das*

The goal of bhakti is to eradicate *bharam* or illusion from our within. The meaning of illusion is that we act according to *anumān pramān*, our individual perception of reality based on inference rather than direct experience.² Put another way, *bharam* or illusion causes us to mistake Truth for falsehood and falsehood for Truth.

In the beginning, in the present, and in the times to come, the very nature of the soul is Truth. Truth is permanent and unchanging. But when you turn your back on Truth, when you remain absorbed in the destructible things of the created world, this is called illusion. So long as you perform your bhakti under the influence of illusion, it is no more than a flight of fancy. No doubt, you will receive the reward for your good deeds according to our devotion. But this is not the Path to liberation. Only the devotees of Truth can win the wealth of bhakti and obtain real happiness. Repeating the Naam of the Lord without ceasing is called devotion. When we rise above the attributive names that we ourselves have ascribed to the Almighty, then we become one with the True Name. This is the aim of devotion; this is real bhakti.

2 *Pramān* means proof—the means to acquire and verify knowledge. Only *pratyakṣh pramān* or direct experience is completely reliable. As Master Kirpal Singh said: “Seeing is believing.” Baba Somanath Ji often contrasts *pratyakṣh pramān* with two other more problematic means of acquiring knowledge: *anumān pramān*—knowledge by inference (which can mislead us because our inferences may be based on false premises) and *śabd pramān*—the testimony of experts speaking, for instance, through the holy scriptures (which is also open to question because the expert’s knowledge may be unreliable). In this instance, Baba Ji is explaining that our whole conception of the Almighty Lord is just a product of our own imagination because we have never seen Him. In fact, even our direct perception of the physical world is colored by all our past experiences and state of mind—thus even our so-called “empirical” knowledge contains a significant element of inference. For a detailed discussion of the sources of knowledge see: Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga*, (Bowling Green, VA: Sawan Kirpal Publications, 1980) p. 126-129.

**When by Guru's grace, Naam comes to dwell in
your mind.
Night and day, you meditate on the Lord's Name.**

Now, how can we gain access to this Naam? With great sincerity, we must go into the refuge of the Guru, and then, taking instruction from Him, we must scrupulously follow the teachings He imparts. We must apply ourselves earnestly to the service of the Guru and, through His grace, engage in meditation with regularity. Until the Guru becomes merciful, the inner door will not open.

*The wisdom of the mind cannot comprehend Him,
But the Guru's wisdom reveals the Almighty Lord.*

The thoughts generated by the mind are all subject to destruction, whereas through the wisdom of the Guru, we can unite with the Eternal Lord. This is all the Satguru's grace. You may call it the Guru's grace or the Guru's prashad; it is one and the same thing.

**When you remain aloof from the poison of the
sense pleasures;
Then the Shabd burns away all ego.**

Because the True Light has manifested within, you will look on the sense pleasures with disdain. Even though you are surrounded by the worldly allurements, you will remain aloof from them all. There are many who pretend to be renunciates, but the real renunciate is one who remains detached, even though surrounded by all the pleasures of the world. For such a devotee, the temptations of this world have lost all their attraction. This is the real meaning of bhakti.

Falsehood lurks within until the Power of Truth manifests. Only Truth can drive it out. When the sun rises, it chases away the night. What could dispel the darkness except the dawn? If you are surrounded by the darkness of night, you cannot chase away the shadows by expounding on the brilliance of the sun. Night's blackness will not be banished until the sun's bright rays spread over the horizon. In the same way, when the Light of Truth dawns within you, it vanquishes all illusion and ignorance. Then Divine Brightness floods your heart; uniting with this Inner Light is called Naam bhakti, the real devotion to the Lord's Name. Then your soul merges into the Shabd, and your egotism is destroyed. Shabd becomes your all in all.

The true devotee swims across this ocean of existence and liberates all their family as well. Blessed is the mother who gave birth to such a great soul.

Not only do those devotees achieve liberation, but all who come in their company are also saved. Thus, their incarnation in this world is crowned with success. But the jivas who take birth in this world and remain entangled in evil pursuits gain nothing, and, at their end time, they depart empty-handed. They are cast back into the wheel of 84. What difference does it make whether such people took birth or not? What did they accomplish with this precious human birth? Nothing at all.

Why did the Almighty Lord graciously grant us this beautiful human body? Only for God-realization. But instead of doing the devotion, we have wasted our whole lifetime, ensnared in the net of Maya. And in the end, we go back into the wheel of transmigration. Kabir Sahib tell us:

Even the gods long for the human body.

Even the gods and goddesses are praying for the beautiful human birth. Just imagine! Brahma and even the Almighty Sat Purush Himself—dwell in the human body. The All-Pervading Naam and the regions of Alakh and Agam are housed in the human frame.

Even the Guru incarnates as a human being. So, if we do not get the human birth ourselves, if we come in the lower bodies of birds and animals, can we hope to find the Guru? How can the snakes and scorpions meet Him? Those poor creatures must remain in hiding all day long. If they dared to come out in the daylight, they would be killed.

All Powers reside in this beautiful human body—those mighty Powers through which the whole universe came into being. But what do we do with our precious human incarnation? We squander it for shells. The things of this world are transitory—they do not remain forever. And if we go on indulging in the worldly pleasures, it is just like throwing gasoline on a fire. Our desires will never be reduced in this way. In the end, we are not enjoying the pleasures, but the pleasures are enjoying us. They are consuming us.

Now regarding the worldly enjoyments, many people say that by God's grace they have an abundance of worldly wealth and possessions. "My children are all standing on their own legs. And I am a senator; I am a Minister; I am a Commander." We say all this, thinking ourselves to be the most fortunate ones. No doubt, with regards to the worldly achievements, we are highly favored. But concerning God and devotion, we are nothing. We have fallen to the lowest depths. Why? Because all the worldly possessions we have acquired and all the high positions we have achieved are transitory—in time, they will vanish into thin air. They do not remain forever. The Negative Power has ensnared us in these external affairs for the express purpose of impeding our devotion. But truly speaking, our

devotion can never be diminished, nor can it be destroyed. In fact, by regular attentiveness to meditation, our spiritual wealth only goes on increasing. Thieves cannot plunder it, nor can water drown it, nor fire burn it. Once we gain victory over Kal, we will speed on to our True Home; this can be called the real bhakti. We ourselves achieve liberation, and we ferry others across as well. Guru Nanak tells us:

*The Gurumukh liberates millions of jivas,
Giving just one speck of Naam.*

Such great souls inspire others to practice the true devotion of the Lord—leading them on to emancipation.

Bliss and peace dwell in the mind forever, and the soul merges into Truth.

The devotee's heart is filled with perpetual bliss. Why? Because the Lord's Name is the giver of all joy, and the soul has merged into that peace-giving Naam. Even while going about the worldly affairs, the devotee remains immersed in the Naam and becomes the form of happiness, untouched by the enjoyments or the sufferings of this world.

Once the kingdom of Raja Janak, a great maharishi, was overrun and plundered by another king. After the invading forces withdrew, Raja Janak set out to survey his kingdom, traveling here and there, visiting the demolished cities and celebrating as he went. He summoned musicians to play songs and hung decorations in the ruins. With these celebrations, he was commemorating a victory.

About this time, Narad, the messenger of the gods, arrived and enquired of the king, "Maharaj Ji, what are you doing? This all looks upside-down to me."

Raja Janak asked him, “Why do you say this?” He replied, “Your enemies have destroyed all these cities, and you are celebrating? What is the meaning of this? It is the victor who should be happy. But your kingdom has been plundered of all its wealth and still you are rejoicing.”

Then, Raja Janak said to him, “O Narad Ji, there is something in what you say. But in spirituality, whoever has been conquered is the victor. And whoever thinks he has won, has, in fact, lost all. Before this destruction, each of these cities was under the dominion of Maya. And in Maya’s realm, we are never satisfied. If we get 100,000 rupees, we think we must have 200,000. We store up heaps of gold and claim all these things for our own. But this outer wealth is not truly ours—it all belongs to Maya. Allured by these worthless baubles; my subjects were all bound in the fetters of outer wealth and possessions. But when all this wealth was plundered, my subjects were set free from Maya and became happy. This is why I am celebrating.”

Hearing his words, Narad Ji fell silent. The happiness you gain from spirituality is eternal—victory or defeat in this mortal world has no power over it.

**Even Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are misled by the
three qualities,
Caught up in the net of illusion, their egotism
and attachment increase.**

Not only the human beings are deceived. Brahma is deluded by *rajogun* (restlessness), Vishnu is deluded by *satogun* (peace and tranquility), and Shiva is deluded by *tamogun* (inertia).

And in this creation of the three gunas, we are also misled. If even such mighty powers as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are

controlled by illusion, then how can we human beings hope to awaken on our own? When the grace of the Guru descends upon us and the conscious Power of Naam manifests within us, only then can we cast off these shackles.

Day and night, we act within the sphere of the three gunas. First, a thought arises in our mind: “I should perform such and such a deed.” This is the influence of Brahma (*rajogun*). We think, “If I act in this manner, will the result be beneficial or harmful. Is this action right or wrong?” In this way, the intellect evaluates whatever work we intend to undertake. And then, after we perform the deed, Shiva (*tamogun*) erases the desire itself, along with the memory of the process whereby we weighed the pros and cons of the contemplated action.

The entire creation is *trigunātmak*—defined and confined by the action of the three gunas. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva embody these three qualities. And what is the ultimate source of these three gunas? Egotism. From egotism, Maya sprung into existence. And from Maya, the three gunas arose.

**The pandits go on reading the scriptures and the
silent sages are led astray.
Duality captivates their attention.**

Not understanding this secret, the pandits go on reading the scriptures, and, ensnared in egotism, they go farther and farther away from the Truth. The Gita clearly states:

The Vedas explain the nature of the three gunas.

The subject of the Vedas is the three gunas. They tell us that all the world is trapped in their grip, and until we can rise above these three qualities, we cannot escape from the created universe and achieve liberation.

**The Yogis, the anchorites, and the sanyasis remain entangled in illusion;
Without the Guru, they do not find the Reality.**

In their search for the Lord, the yogis adopt the practice of hatha yoga. They focus on pranayama, or breath control, to unite the *prān vāyu* (cold air breathed in) and the *apān vāyu* (warm air breathed out). And when these two become one, the pranās ascend and become steady at the seat of the soul, where *kumbhak* (retention of breath) is performed. And when they blend with the mind, the light of *chidākāsh*—the inner sky behind the third eye—manifests.

Upon reaching this stage, the yogi develops supernatural powers and the ability to work miracles. But when these supernatural powers are displayed, the attention is drawn back outside, and the yogi remains extroverted. Therefore, Guru Amar Dev Ji tells us that the yogis are also led astray. They pursue the practices of hatha yoga, but these are not the sadhanas that lead to final liberation.

And what of those who study the sacred scriptures, practice repetitions, or perform austerities? They are also engaged in outer practices and perform them only to fulfill one desire or another. And they will get the reward for their devotion according to the desires they are cherishing. But in terms of spirituality, they remain stuck where they are.

**The miserable, self-willed manmukhs are forever duped by doubt;
They squander their lives in useless pursuits.**

Even though many spiritual aspirants devote themselves with zeal to the difficult and demanding practices, still they remain

trapped in illusion because they have not had the good fortune to meet the perfect Satguru.

But what of the worldly manmukhs who have no interest in spirituality at all? Day and night they remain ensnared in illusion. Many people say, "I don't have time for the spiritual quest." Friend, why can't you find the time? This is only because your mind is bound to Maya. Otherwise, you have so much time at your disposal.

You have no difficulty making time to pursue all your worldly ends. But none of those achievements will help you when the angels of death are sitting on your chest. At that critical moment, do you think you can refuse the messengers of Kal? "I don't have time right now. Come back later." No, they will wrench you out of the body and drag you along with them.

So, if you don't have time now for spirituality, do you think you will find time tomorrow. My friend, is tomorrow under your control? Is even the next moment in your hands? Time is under the control of Kal. The life of the manmukh is of no account, filled with misery day and night. And at the time of death also, they suffer and depart lamenting. What excuse can they offer before the Lord of Death?

**O Nanak, those imbued with the Love of Naam
achieve the state of Natural Equipose;
Through His Grace the Lord pardons them,
and then He unites them with Himself.**

Now, in the end, He tells us that those who become one with the Naam, their liberation is assured. But it is only through the grace of the Lord that this feat can be accomplished.

Otherwise, just think how many people take the Naam initiation. Now, in our own path of Radha Swami, there are more than twenty lakh (two million) initiates. But it would be very difficult to find even five from that number who really practice the Naam.

It is easy to talk about seva, but accepting that servitude is difficult. Only a few rare ones have fathomed the secret of seva; only those devotees who have cultivated the spirit of service and humility through fruitful meditations can fully appreciate this opportunity. As long as even a speck of ego remains, you cannot perfect that seva.

—Baba Somanath

Serve the Servants of the Guru

Knowledge is not achieved through yogic practices—serve the servants of the Guru.¹

What spiritual practice leads to Knowledge? Paltu Sahib tells us that some people adopt yoga and other artificial techniques; some pursue spiritual knowledge through studying scriptures; some perform rites and rituals, formulaic worship, repetitions, austerities, and other sadhanas. What is the aim of all these endeavors? Elimination of the ego. Therefore, He says, “The best way to become free of the ego is to serve the servants of the Guru. Service to the Guru’s devotees is the highest, the noblest of all practices.” This method requires no strenuous methods—no pranayama, extreme abstinence, fasting, or running away to lonely places.

**When the Saint becomes gracious, you get the seva of the Guru’s devotees.
Then, you easily attain the state of Sehaj—the Lord frees you from the grip of Maya.**

He says that you receive this opportunity only through the

¹ *Jog jugat nā gyān kachhu guru dāsan ko dās*, Paltu Sahib

grace of the Saints. The state of Sehaj, or Natural Equipoise, manifests within you through seva. Such service is the most efficacious of all sadhanas. Through this practice, illusion evaporates—you become free of Maya. It is easy to talk about seva, but accepting that servitude is difficult. Only a few rare ones have fathomed the secret of seva; only those devotees who have cultivated the spirit of service and humility through fruitful meditations can fully appreciate this opportunity. As long as even a speck of ego remains, you cannot perfect that seva.

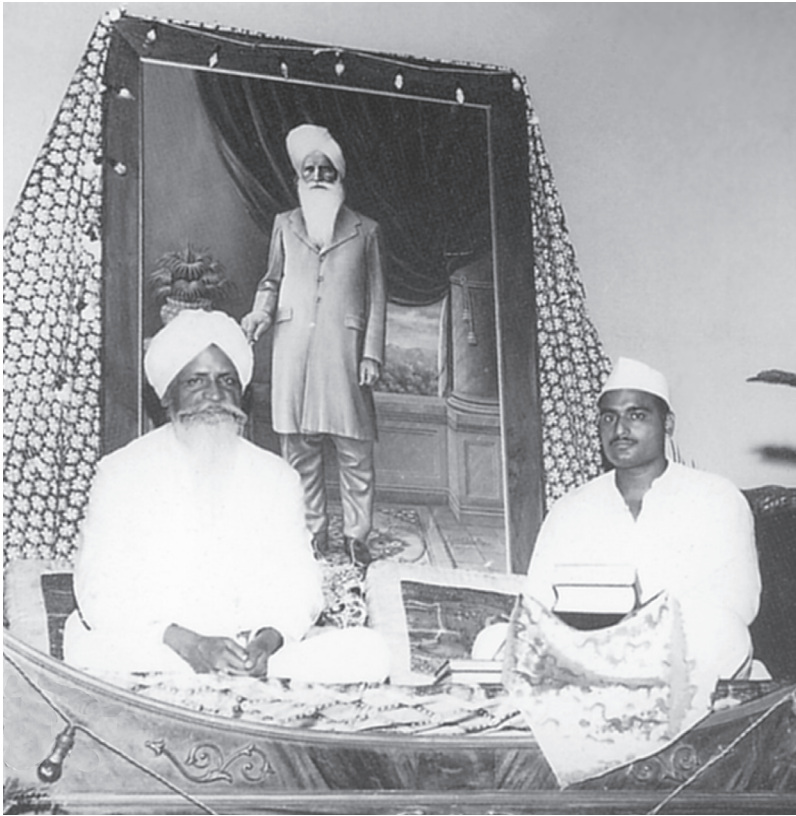
**When you cast even a brief glance of grace,
devotion dawns in the soil of the heart.**

When the Satguru looks with mercy on His servant, in a moment, the fetters of Maya fall away. When the sun rises, the darkness of night flees; in the same way, with the advent of the Satguru and the Almighty Lord, egotism and Maya depart.

**The mind is filled with peace, and worldly illusion
runs away.**

When true devotion awakens, you get peace in your mind, and all your love for the world departs. This is the sign that your practices have borne fruit. Until you perform the seva and manifest the spirit of service within yourself, true spirituality is still far away. Many people think that they have achieved emancipation just by taking Naam initiation. They say, “I have received initiation into Naam. Now, I am liberated from the cycle of birth and death. From now on, I don’t have to make any efforts; Satguru will do everything.” Friend, the Satguru gave

you Naam initiation so that you could perform the practices. He didn't tell you, "Okay, now you don't have to do anything at all. I will see to your liberation." You took Naam initiation so that you would be able to do the meditation. Many lazy people say, "I don't feel like waking up in the morning. If the Guru showers grace on me, then I won't feel sleepy, and I will get up and sit for meditation." Guru was gracious when He gave you initiation. Now, it is your duty to do the meditation. Do your work and become worthy of the Guru's grace. Then, your heart will become pure.



Baba Somanath Ji with Shri Vyanktesh Shanbhag

If you do not purify yourself and become a fit vessel, where can the Guru bestow His grace? Even a dog will not sit amidst the garbage, so how can you expect the Guru to shower His immaculate blessings in a dirty heart? Your heart is already impure and full of egotism, and if you lack any worldly thing, you rush to obtain that thing as well. So, where is there any room left for the grace of the Guru? For this reason, you need to clean your heart and make it pure through Bhajan and Simran—you alone can do that meditation.

**Devotion takes you to the Fearless Realm;
Follow that ancient Path.**

There, the Sound of the Naam plays without a break.

Then, the true devotion awakens of itself. Merge into that Naam and never leave it. Becoming the form of that Naam, keep your heart engaged in contemplation of the Sound Current. Never forget it even for a moment. If you lose that remembrance, however briefly, falsehood will enter your heart. Only when your attention remains continuously absorbed in the Naam can your devotion can be called true.

**O Paltu, you cannot hope to reach the Almighty
Lord by acquiring bookish knowledge,
contemplating the lower chakras, or performing
austerities.**

**Knowledge isn't achieved through yogic practices;
Serve the servants of the Guru.**

Paltu Sahib explains that we do not gain anything through contemplation of the chakras, study of scriptures, repetition

of mantras, or performance of austerities. The highest practice of all is to serve the devotees of the Guru. It has been said:

*O Lord, please grant me the boon of serving You,
All the hours of the day and night.*

When you become a true servant, you will easily unite with the Lord and become His form. But your first difficulty is to become the real sevadar.

Now you are inextricably trapped in the clutches of children, family, relatives, this and that. The more you struggle to be free, the more entangled you become; if you manage to get one foot free, your next step hurls you into hell. When you are so hopelessly entangled, how can you find the way out on your own? But if, by the grace of the Satguru, you detach yourself from all these worldly bonds, then the high road to liberation opens before you.

—Baba Somanath

The High Road to Liberation

**If you are bereft of love, you cannot meet the Lord,
no matter what garb you may adopt.
Love for the Beloved cannot be concealed,
no matter how hard you try to keep it hidden.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. Yesterday, we started with *ka* and *kha*². The sequence goes on through the alphabet: *ka, kha, ga, gha, ṅa, ca, cha, ja, jha, ṅ*, and so forth. Now today, He is explaining about *ishq* or love. He says that until we manifest love in our hearts for the Almighty Lord, we cannot become successful in spirituality, because spirituality is not a subject of intellect, it is a matter of love. But the love that appears one moment and vanishes the next is no love. When you remain drenched in His intoxication day and night—without a break—this is True Love.

1 *Ishq binā nahin mili hai sāhib, keto bhesb banāvai*, Kabir Sahib

2 Baba Somanath Ji is commenting on a verse of Kabir called a *kakahara*—an acrostic, based on the Devanagari alphabet. The first line of each verse begins with a different consonant, working through the alphabet in sequence. In this Satsang Baba Ji comments of verses starting with *ṅa, ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, and ḍha*. Since Hindi words beginning with [ṅa] are just about non-existent, Kabir has substituted a vowel, starting the first line of the verse with [i]: *isq binā nahin mili hai sāhib, keto bhesb banāvai* / If you are bereft of love, you cannot meet the Lord, no matter what garb you may adopt.

Māshuq means the Beloved, the one to whom your love is attached. The Beloved of the soul is the Power working within—the Almighty Lord. Until your love is directed to the Beloved alone, until that love is undivided and unbroken, the lover and the Beloved cannot meet. This is a feat of love, and the soul's love must be directed to the fountainhead of all Love. The Almighty Lord is the form of Love, and the heart of the lover must merge into that love. When day and night the lover remains absorbed in the contemplation and adoration of the Almighty Lord, then we can say that True Love has blossomed. The Beloved is the treasure house of Love.

Then what does He tell us? Having no understanding of True Love, many people become *bheshdhāri* sadhus, those who adopt a distinctive type of dress. Many different sects of sadhus wear the colored clothes, maybe one hundred and ninety-nine, maybe one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine. But out of all these many sects of sadhus, you will be hard-pressed to find even one true lover. Most are enamored of wearing special clothes, or arranging their hair, or smearing ashes on their bodies. Others have abandoned their homes over some falling out with the family. But how can these people be called real sadhus? They may have put on the garb of a sadhu, but where there is no love, the Lord who dwells within will never grant His darshan.

Further, Kabir Sahib tells us that when the Almighty Lord manifests in the heart, no matter how hard the lover may try to hide that love, it cannot be concealed. However much you may want to keep it a secret, it is impossible, because that Love is All-Pervading—its fragrance will spread throughout the whole atmosphere.

**Give up running here and there, this way and that;
The Guru never wavers; take firm hold of His Feet.**

Now, He tells us that we should not consider the practice of love as an outer thing. We should not flit aimlessly from one guru to another: “There’s nothing here, let me try over there. This is too difficult, let me look for something easier.” Our mind leads us from place to place, but we should give up this kind of thinking. Many people take initiation from one guru and then immediately go looking for someone else.

There was one sadhu who took initiation from five or six gurus. First, he became a Brahmachari or celibate. Then later, he joined the Udasis.³ After that, becoming a devotee of Shiva and Dattareya, he joined the Dashanamis who adopt one of the ten names like Giri, Puri, and so forth.⁴ And then he took initiation from the Suthras.⁵ The Suthras are active in Punjab, but they also come to the South from time to time. They wear iron bangles on their arms and carry sticks in their hands. When they go begging, they beat the bangles with the sticks and make a great racket. They will refuse to go away until you give them a paisa. These people are called Suthras. But after a while, this wandering sadhu also abandoned the Suthras and joined the Nath Panth yogis. Looking at his condition, the Naths thought, “He has tried out every sect, and now he has come here. We should put *kunḍal*⁶ earrings in his ears to show he belongs to us.” So, they pierced his ears, inserted the

3 An ascetic Sikh sect based on the teaching of Sri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak.

4 The Dashanamis are Shaivite ascetics associated with Vedanta and Shankaracharya. When a Dashanami aspirant is initiated, they take the name of the order they join. The order names indicate unity with all nature: *Giri* (mountain), *Puri* (tract), *Bhāratī* (land), *Vana* (forest), *Āranya* (forest), *Sagara* (sea), *Ashrama* (spiritual exertion), *Sarasvatī* (wisdom of nature), *Tirtha* (place of pilgrimage), and *Parvata* (mountain).

5 The Suthras or Suthra Shahis are a mendicant order who trace their origin to Suthra Shah (1625?-1682?), a disciple of Guru Hargobind.

6 The Naths were *kunḍal*, large round hoop earrings made of wood, bone, or precious metals.

earrings, and initiated him into Nath Panth yoga. They thought that now he would not be able to run home or to some other sect, since the earrings clearly marked him as a Nath.

Later, at the Kumbha Mela celebration, all the sadhus from all over India assembled together. And there, one of the Suthras recognized that sadhu and went to report to the mahant, the head of the order. “Maharaj, this man was with us before. We initiated him as a Suthra. But now look what has happened. He has taken Nath Panth initiation and is wearing earrings in his ears.” Hearing this the mahant replied, “Just go call our brother, and bring him here to me.” So, three or four Suthras went and seized that man and brought him to the Suthra encampment. Then, looking him over, the mahant said, “Now, how shall we remove those earrings of the Nathas? I think we will have to cut both his ears off.” So, they removed his earrings by cutting off his ears, and changed his name to *Buche Shah*,⁷ the earless Shah.

The meaning of this story is that once you have found a True Guru, there is no more need to wander here and there. Then, it becomes a question of manifesting love within. If we just adopt one path and then, after a few days, change to another path, what is the point? Time passes by, but nothing is gained.

**Happiness will dawn, and sorrow will be destroyed.
You will break free from the cycle of birth and death**

Make up your mind, once and for all. With firm determination, attach your attention to the Guru’s feet. When you banish the darkness from your heart, love will awaken within you, and your spiritual journey will be complete. In this way, you can succeed; no other method will work.

⁷ Suthra Shahis always add *Shāh* (king) to their names.

**Wherever the Primal Naam manifests, understand
it as the True Guru.**

The Primal Naam that manifests within is Self-Existing and Unchanging—it was not created by anyone. Now, when Ram incarnated, everyone began singing his praises; all the emphasis was on glorifying Sita and Rama. But when Krishna came into the world, then everyone started worshiping Radha and Krishna. But the Primal Naam lies beyond *Akār*, *Ukār*, and *Makār*.⁸ It is uncreated and permeates every being. Understand that Naam as the True Guru. As for the gurus who whisper some mantra in your ear, well, the world is full of them.

**If you contemplate on the outer naam, that
devotion will not carry you across.**

There is another type of naam—the artificial, outer naam that can be written, read, and spoken. Whoever devotes themselves to this outer naam will never achieve liberation.

**You make a great display of holiness, but Maya
binds your heart.**

**You perform the *artī*, and you blow the conch;
But you don't become detached from the affairs
of the household.⁹**

On the outer level you perform the three daily prayers or *trīkāl*

8 The sacred syllable of A-U-M (OM) is composed of *Akār*, *Ukār*, and *Makār*

9 [t] *Ṭīm ṭām bāhar bahutere, dil dāsi se bandhā* / You make a great display of holiness, but Maya binds your heart.

sandhyā.¹⁰ You apply the *trīpundra tilak*¹¹ of sandalwood paste. You don't allow anyone to touch your body, and you maintain all the rules of ritual purity. But my friend, all this purity is superficial—connected only with your body. Within you, your soul remains the servant of Maya; you have become Maya's very form. Now, you should put aside all this outer hypocrisy. Until you give up falsehood, Truth cannot manifest in your heart. The mind is only one; you can engage it in hypocrisy, or you can engage it in Truth.

So, Kabir Sahib tells us the mind is bound by women and wealth. Many people sit in the temples and perform the *artī*. They blow the conch, beat the drum, and play on the other instruments also. Outwardly, they put on quite a show. But within, they remain bound to their homes and their relatives; they haven't severed their worldly ties. You cannot succeed in spirituality through outer display; it is a question of inner detachment.

One morning a brahmin pandit was going to Ganges River in Kashi to have his ritual bath, and along the way, he encountered a sweeper who was cleaning the path. When the pandit came up behind him suddenly, the sweeper did not see him and accidentally touched the pandit with his broom. At this, the pandit flew into a rage: "Here I am on my way to the Ganges for my purificatory ablutions, and I have been polluted by the touch of this low caste person." The pandit started

10 Three prayers performed at "transition" times during the day: dawn, meal-time (midday), and dusk.

11 To their forehead, the Shaivites apply the *trīpundra tilak*—three horizontal lines drawn with *vibhuti* (ash) from the sacred fires, completed by a *bindu* (dot) in the center made of sandalwood paste or vermilion. These three lines broadly signify a "triad," but each sect ascribes their own specific meaning to the symbolism of those three lines: three syllables of AUM, three worlds, three gunas, three aspects of Shiva, and so forth.

abusing the poor sweeper and calling him names: “This low caste *chandāl*¹² has touched me!” Hearing the pandit’s words, the sweeper replied, “Maharaj, do you know the real meaning of *chandāl*? It is written in your own Vedas and Shastras. *Chandāl* does not mean a person of low caste. *Chandāl* is the anger that arises within. You have read the Vedas and Shastras yourself and so you know about that fire of anger. The person in whom that fire of anger is burning is the real *chandāl*. It is not a matter of high and low caste.” Hearing the sweeper’s words, that pandit was silenced and went on his way.

As he was walking along, the toe piece on his sandal broke, and he went to hut of Ravi Das the cobbler, on the outskirts of town, to have it mended. Reaching there the pandit said, “Hey, *chamār*.¹³ The toe piece on my sandal has broken. I am in a hurry, and I want you to mend it right away.” Ravi Das replied, “Pandit Ji, I have another job in hand, and until I finish it, I cannot repair your sandal.”

Again, the pandit flared up: “You are just a lowly *chamār*, and you are offering me such insolence? Don’t you realize I am a pandit?” Ravi Das told him, “No doubt you are a pandit, but it makes no difference. I have my own way of working, and I do not alter it.” Hearing this reply, the pandit started calling the cobbler all sorts of names, but finally, he calmed down. In the meantime, Ravi Das finished the other task and repaired the pandit’s sandal for him.

When the pandit was about to leave, Ravi Das gave him one paisa (a small coin) and said, “Pandit Ji, please be so good as to take this coin with you. After you have completed your own ritual bath in the Ganges, please implore the river goddess: “O Mother Ganges, if you appear to me, I will put this

12 The *chandāl* caste deals with the disposal of corpses at the cremation ground.

13 *Chamārs* are cobblers and leather workers.

coin in your hand. It is an offering from Ravi Das.” The pandit took the paisa with disdain. He was very angry, and as he went along, he kept on criticizing Ravi Das in his mind: “I am a high-caste pandit. Three times a day, I perform sacred ablutions and prayers. I maintain all the prescriptions of ritual purity. And here is this low-caste cobbler—this *chamār*—who stitches old, worn-out shoes. Does he think the goddess of the Ganges will appear just to receive this little paisa? We’ll see about that.”

So, he had his bath in the Ganges, and after he had said his prayers, he addressed the goddess of the river: “O Mother Ganges, this coin is an offering from Ravi Das. Please come and receive it.” And, instantly, the goddess appeared. Taking the coin in her hand, she said, “What can I possibly give in exchange for such an offering?” Then, she placed a jewel-studded bangle in the pandit’s hand, and he was overjoyed. He thought, “I have come here to bathe and offer prayers for so many days; and today, at last, I am receiving the reward for all my good deeds.” He was very pleased. But as he made his way home, he avoided the hut of Ravi Das, thinking: “Why should I go by the hut of a cobbler? I’ll go straight home. If I go back to his place, he will say, ‘Mother Ganges appeared to accept my coin, and she meant this bangle for me, so you should leave it here.’ I don’t want that to happen. I’ll go the long way round and avoid his hut altogether.”

When he reached home, he told the whole story to his wife. She was very happy and said, “We have been greatly blessed. But if we keep a bangle like this, what good will it do? It will not fill our stomachs. On the other hand, if we sell it, we will get a great deal of wealth and can live comfortably.” So, the pandit asked, “Who can we sell it to? Who could afford to buy such a treasure?” Then, the pandit’s wife told him, “The

local merchants and jewelers will not have the price of it. You should take that bangle to the king. Only he can give you its true value.”

So, the pandit went to the king and offered to sell him the bangle. And the king took the bangle to show to his queen. He told her, “This is no ordinary bangle; it is priceless. It surely comes from *Dev Lok*, the realm of the gods. Just look at it.” The queen examined the bangle and told the king, “You can’t wear just one bangle. You need a pair—one for each wrist. Whoever has brought this single bangle to you must have stolen it. Call the man and threaten to execute him. Tell him that if he brings the second bangle, you will pardon him. Otherwise, you’ll cut off his head.”

The king went back to the court and took his seat again on the throne. Very solemnly he said, “Pandit Ji, where did you get this bangle? You must have stolen it. Otherwise, you would have the matching bangle also. There should be two; you can’t wear just one. Now, you must bring me the matching bangle by this evening. Otherwise, I will cut off your head.”

Hearing this proclamation, the brahmin’s blood ran cold: “I can feel the executioner’s sword at my throat. I am as good as dead.” He staggered back home and told his wife all that had happened: “I have to present the king with a matching bangle by this evening. Otherwise, it will cost me my life; I will die this very day. What should I do now?” Immediately, his wife told him, “Go back to Ravi Das as fast as you can. Fall at His feet and beg for His mercy.”

So that pandit raced to the hut of Ravi Das and threw himself at the cobbler’s feet. He cried, “Maharaj, save me!” Ravi Das asked him, “What is the matter?” The pandit replied, “The matter? I will tell you what the matter is. You trusted me to take your offering to Mother Ganges, and the bracelet she

gave you as a reward for your devotion, I kept for myself. I treated you very unjustly, and now I am reaping the punishment for my sin. If I don't give the king a matching bracelet by this evening, he has already declared he will cut off my head."

Hearing his words, Ravi Das laughed and said, "This is no great matter. Just go back to Mother Ganges and tell her, "Ravi Das wants the matching bangle." When the pandit did as Ravi Das instructed, the river goddess appeared and gave him another bangle, identical to the first. Taking that bangle, the pandit went straight back to the king's court: "Maharaj, following your order, I have brought the matching bangle."

Then the king asked, "How could you come up with it so quickly? This is a treasure from the kingdom of the gods. Such a bangle could not be found in this mortal world. Where did you get it?" Then very meekly, the pandit replied, "Maharaj, what can I say? Outside the town lives one Mahatma named Ravi Das. He gave me a paisa to offer to the goddess of the river Ganges, and in return, she gave me that jewel-encrusted bangle. Since no one else in the kingdom could give me the price of it, I brought it to you. And you know what reward you offered me.

After I left your court, I ran to Ravi Das and threw myself on His mercy, begging him to save my life. He sent me to ask Mother Ganges for the matching bangle, and after she gave it to me, I brought it straight to you so that my life might be spared." After the king heard the pandit's story, he got up from his throne, went straight to the hut of Ravi Das, and bowed down before Him. He implored, "Maharaj, ferry me across the ocean of existence." Ravi Das granted the king Naam initiation and made his life successful.

Naam is not some insignificant thing. You cannot obtain it by running from one sect, to a second, and then a third. Naam can never be found in the outer practices.

**Tilak and sindhur, spindle and spinning wheel.
The wife has her requests, and the little children
go on asking for sweets.
All the while, the mind remains intoxicated in the
outer things.**

The pandit applies a tilak to his forehead with colored powder, puts on the sacred thread, and draws mudras all over his body with sacred ash in the prescribed manner. In earlier times, many pandits wore the *choti*, the tuft of hair on the back of the head. That *choti* was supposed to be the size and shape of a cow's hoof—this was the pattern they used. Wearing the *choti* was the custom of the brahmins. Nowadays, they cut their hair off short; the *choti* is clean out of fashion. Most brahmins no longer wear it at all. Either they cut their hair short, or they wear their long hair loose like hippies.

These brahmins carry their mats and books around with them from place to place and caste astrological charts. They foretell bright futures for some people and warn others of approaching doom. Of course, back at home, they have five or six hungry children, and when they return, they will bring sweets, dried fruits, and savory snacks from the market—to everyone's delight. This is the state of the pandits today.

**If the devotees pay well for the puja, they are
showered with blessings.
Otherwise, the pandit prays: O Jagdish, Lord of
the World! Rain down curses on this place.**

Now, if you give honor and respect to the pandit, if you invite him to your home, then he will recite some mantras and spells to remove impurities, and he will perform some Vedic puja or other. And if you give him money and good things to eat, he will become content and offer benedictions: "May

the Lord bless you and shower you with wealth and prosperity.” But if you give him nothing, then he will curse you: “May the Lord bring about your destruction and reduce you to ashes.” This is the way of the pandits.

**The thief wears so many disguises but ends up
with a noose around his neck.
What is the good of pretending, if you do not
worship the Indestructible Lord?¹⁴**

Those who put on countless disguises cannot be called real sadhus. This is all just a fraud to swindle the people. The Indestructible Lord is not pleased with wickedness, and such deceivers can never meet God.

**Endure all the blows at your Guru’s door;
Then you can return to your True Home.**

He says, “Always remain at your Guru’s door. Even if the Guru rebukes you hundreds of times, never abandon him.” Dattatreya is said to have had twenty-four gurus. Who were these gurus? A guru is not someone who just whispers a mantra in your ear. Each of Dattatreya’s gurus showed him an important quality. Whoever taught him something, he accepted that person as his guru. He even accepted a dog as his guru.¹⁵ The dog is such a faithful creature. If any danger befalls or if any enemy threatens to attack its owner, the dog is

14 [ṭh] *Ṭhag bahure bhes̄h banāveṅ, gale laḡāvaiṅ phānsī* / The thief wears so many disguises but ends up with a noose around his neck

15 Dattatreya is often depicted surrounded by four dogs and a cow, symbolizing the four Vedas and Mother Earth, who nourishes all beings.

ready to offer its life to save him. If the owner beats the dog, it will run away for the moment. But as soon as its owner calls lovingly, it comes running back with its tail wagging and sits at its owner's feet. The dog is very docile and loving to its owner. Sometimes, the owner may not even feed the dog, but no matter what the owner does, still the dog does not leave his door.

In the same way, no matter how much suffering you have to endure, no matter how difficult your seva may be, never leave the door of the Guru. There you will gain true benefit—through His grace, your attention will become stilled at the seat of the soul, and you will reach your True Home.

**The beating of birth and death comes to an end;
You won't go again into the hands of Yama.**

When, through the grace of the Satguru, the Light of Sat Naam dawns in your heart, then the sense of duality disappears, and no desires remain. All the strife of coming and going is finished—you will not take birth again. There is so much power in the grace of the Satguru. But you must become worthy of receiving that grace.

Even in doing the Guru's seva, deception and hypocrisy can creep in. When the Guru is present physically, many people race about, running here and there and making a great show of doing the seva. But when the Guru goes away, then those very same people get out their mattresses and go sleep under the shade of the trees. This cannot be called seva; it is all deception. We think we can fool the Guru. Know it for certain, that Truth cannot arise from such pretense. When you are ready to give up your life rather than be separated from the Truth, this is what we call Guru seva.

**Removing all stubbornness, become a dead body
before the Guru—remain under His protection.**

Becoming like one dead, remain in the Guru's shelter. Don't let even a trace of duality enter your heart.

**The coward cannot do the devotion; only the brave
warrior stands firm.**

Kabir Sahib says that the brave warrior is unshakable; only such a devotee can win the prize of bhakti. The coward runs away just seeing the battle; such people cannot do the devotion.

*The army's poor commander is like a frightened sheep.
He shambles bleating off the battlefield,
but he's always ready to eat.*

Such cowards are not fit for bhakti.

**Without commitment, your work won't be successful;
Take firm hold of the Immovable Naam.**¹⁶

We are wishy-washy in our devotion: "Maybe I'll meditate today or maybe I won't; it will be okay either way. If I don't meditate today; I can do it tomorrow. And, after all, if I accomplish a little bit in this life, then in my next life, I can do a lot more." Someone once asked a sadhu, "Maharaj, what righteous deeds should I perform, so that I will get the human birth in my next life?" The sadhu replied, "Without the lion, there is no roar," that is, without the human body there is no liberation.

16 [d] *Ḍagmaḡ teṅ to kāj sare nahin, āḍig nām gahiye* / Without commitment, the work can't be successful; Take firm hold of the Immovable Naam.

If you are seeking liberation, why are you thinking of taking another birth? Roar now, while you have the human body. Do the devotion now while you have the opportunity. Why rely on the future? Who knows whether you will get the human birth in your next incarnation or not. You have no idea about the future nor does anyone else. Why not take advantage of your good fortune in this life and do the devotion?

Therefore, Kabir Sahib is telling us, “Don’t listen to the wavering mind. Give up its company. Naam is the Eternal Power that never changes. Adopting the qualities of truth and resolution, merge into the Immovable Naam.

All fear of the terrible Kal will be erased, and you will achieve the Deathless Realm.

Kal is frightful; he terrorizes the three worlds. Give up your fear of this Lord of Death. Within you is True Naam, which is Eternal and Unchangeable. Merge into that Naam and become its very form.

Instead, you should fear the Guru Sadhu; nothing good can come from putting on an act.

He says we should have both fear and love in our hearts for the Guru Sadhu. Wherever there is love, fear¹⁷ is present also. And where there is fear, there is love. Both are needed for devotion. If there is love, but no fear, then devotion cannot be successful. If there is fear, but no love within, then this is no better than hypocrisy. If we are only making a show of respect, it will serve no purpose.

17 Here “fear” indicates reverence and respect.

In this ocean of existence, deception leads to the pain of birth and death.

If you do not give up acting and posing, you will drown in the ocean of existence. You will revolve again and again in the wheel of birth and death.

**Your life is only one-and-a-half days long;
Now, remove wickedness from your within.**

Your life in this world is for a few days only. Therefore, while you have this golden opportunity, remove wickedness from your heart; cast out everything that separates you from the Truth.

**You will find shelter in Sat Lok;
Merge into the Shabd of the Satguru.**

Then, wickedness is removed, and your heart becomes pure. Supported by the True Naam, you enter the Realm of Truth, and your coming and going in the cycle of birth and death is finished forever.

**The One you are searching for is not far away.
When you look within yourself, you will find Him.¹⁸**

When you go out in search of the Almighty Lord, you imagine He is something separate from you. Where is the Lord? Someone says He is dwelling in Rameshwar. Someone else says He is in Badrinarayan. Others believe He is in Kedranath,

18 [d̥h] *Ḍhūr̥hat jise phiro so ḍhing hai, terā tañ ul̥ṭi nirekho* / The One you are searching for is not far away. When you look within yourself, you will find Him.

Amarnath, or Pashpatinath. But searching for Him in outer places is all deception. The Power you are seeking already dwells within you, supporting your body and the entire universe. That Power of Truth enlivens your very soul. And still, you remain caught in the chimeric webs of illusion, wasting your precious life in make-believe.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, “Turn your thoughts away from this world.” Ask yourself: “Who am I?” Focus your attention firmly within and become one with the Power of the soul already present there.

Beating the drum, I enjoin you all: Realize the Shabd of the Satguru.

Kabir Sahib says, “I am not holding anything back. I am proclaiming the Truth with the beat of drums. I came in all the four yugas to sing the praise of Satguru’s Shabd. I have come only to awaken understanding of the Shabd in the hearts of the jivas. In the golden age, I was called by the name Satsukrit. In the silver age, I was Muninder. In the copper age, I came as, Karunamay. And in this iron age, I am Kabir. Throughout the four ages, I have come into this world, only to spread the glory of Sat Naam. I have not kept the secret hidden but have declared it openly.

Who are you and where have you come from? Where is your True Home?

If someone asks us—“Where do you come from?”—we will reply that we are from such and such outer place. One person says, “I am from Maharashtra.” A second person tells you, “I

am from Karnataka.” A third person will say, “I am from Uttar Pradesh.” And a fourth person answers, “I am from Kashmir.” But my friend, these outer places are not your True Home. You are only describing where your physical body is residing. In reality, you are a part of the Sat Purush and a denizen of Sat Lok, the Realm of Truth.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib asks: “Who were you before you came into the physical world? Where is your real dwelling place? Where is your Homeland?” Up until now, you have not answered these questions, but the time has come to understand. When you are born into this world, your mother and father tell you your given name, your surname, and all the names and titles that come with your community and rank. But these names are just describing the body; your parents cannot tell you anything about your real nature. So, Kabir Sahib asks: “Who are you really? Where is your True Home?”

Why are you wandering lost in illusion?

Where will you dwell when you leave this body?

Why are you wandering in this vast land of illusion? Where will you go at the time of death? Think about this carefully while there is still time and make some preparations. Then your soul can return to its True Home and cease to roam.

Now you are inextricably trapped in the clutches of children, family, relatives, this and that. The more you struggle to be free, the more entangled you become; if you manage to get one foot free, your next step hurls you into hell. When you are so hopelessly entangled, how can you find the way out on your own? But if, by the grace of the Satguru, you detach yourself from all these worldly bonds, then the high road to liberation opens before you.

**Who is the Protector of the soul?
Recognize Him and take His shelter.**

Now, Kabir Sahib says, “Recognize the Protector of the jivas and go into His refuge.”

**If you fail to realize the Protector,
you will come to harm.**

The Inner Power that supports this body is your Protector; you can call it the Power of Truth or you can call it the Power of the Shabd. But if you do not realize that Power while you are still in the body, then at your end time, you will be the loser. You are making your way to destruction.

It is not difficult to give up wife and family. If there are domestic squabbles or difficulties in providing for the household, you can simply step away. There is no difficulty in this. And further, many people can easily give away all their wealth. But name and fame, and the jealousy that follows in their wake, are potent forces, and to overcome them is no small matter. We say that we can easily subdue them, but, in reality, this is a very daunting task.

—Baba Somanath

The Most Important Task

**The whole world remains engrossed in outer rituals and the six practices.¹
But these practices cannot cleanse the inner dirt of ego;
Without the Guru we lose the game of life.²**

This is the bani of Shri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He explains that everyone, in order to meet with the Almighty Lord, engages in countless rites and rituals, religious devotions, observances, repetitions, and austerities, according to their own inclinations.

But no one realizes that God is not outside—He is not separate from us. God dwells within us, and we are His own form. So, how can we expect to realize Him by pursuing rites, rituals, devotions, and fasts, which are all external practices? The

1 *Kiriyāchār*, or outer rituals, indicates prescribed religious practices, such as worship of the deity, daily prayers, recitations from scriptures, ritual bathing, etc., which vary from religion to religion. The *shatkarma*, or six yogic purifications: *netī* (nasal cleanse with oiled thread and water), *dhautī* (stomach cleanse by swallowing and removing a long strip of cloth), *naulī* (cleansing abdominal region by rotation of abdominal muscles), *basti* (colonic irrigation), *kapalābhāti* (“skull polishing,” rapid breathing like a bellows to cleanse sinuses and energize chakras), *trātaka* (gazing at a fixed point).

2 *Kiriāchār kareh khaṭ karamā it rāte sansārī* / Guru Arjan Dev

more we perform these outer devotions, the more we become stuck fast in our idea of an external God.

When we engage in fasting, we say, “I am fasting for the sake of the Lord.” Such thinking reveals that we consider God to be something apart from us. Similarly, when we go on pilgrimages, we bathe in the holy waters. But such practices only remove our physical impurity. The inner impurity—the filth of the mind—cannot be washed away by these outer ablutions. Sometimes, we may perform the rite of *sandhya tarpan*, in which we offer water to the gods or the spirits of our departed ancestors. But this is also an external practice and has no effect on the dirt within.

What is the nature of this inner impurity? It is none other than our own egotism, our sense of “I and mine.” This power of egotism is so deeply entrenched throughout the creation that it pervades all beings from Lord Brahma down to the tiniest ant. It is not an exaggeration to say that we have come to mistake the power of the ego for the Almighty Lord. We have made the ego into a second god. The power of the ego dwells within us and works invisibly. We cannot comprehend it, nor can we perceive it. The ego has no form, but that ego is making everybody dance. Each person asserts, “I am somebody. These things are mine.” My friend, you speak of “I and mine,” but can you tell me where they reside? Can you describe their form? Can you tell me their color? Up till now, no one has fathomed the real nature of the ego. Until we come into the shelter of the Satguru, until He awakens the sleeping soul, there is no hope of removing the ego from our within. Kabir Sahib says:

*It is easy to surrender gold and women,
But name and fame, and the jealousy they engender,
Cannot be set aside so lightly.*

It is not difficult to give up wife and family. If there are domestic squabbles or difficulties in providing for the household, you can simply step away. There is no difficulty in this. And further, many people can easily give away all their wealth. But name and fame, and the jealousy that follows in their wake, are potent forces, and to overcome them is no small matter. We say that we can easily subdue them, but, in reality, this is a very daunting task.

**O my Lord, protect me and grant me Your grace.
Out of millions, only a rare one becomes Your
True Servant;
All others are mere traders.**

Next, He explains that when God showers His infinite grace, out of millions only a few rare ones receive it. When He becomes gracious upon us, all our egotism vanishes; then the soul unites with God and becomes His very form.

Otherwise, there are millions of devotees; we are all practicing some type of bhakti. No one would ever say that they are devoid of devotion. Each one asserts, “I am a true devotee.”

And if someone were to say, “You wretched fellow, you’re a poor excuse for a devotee,” then we would blaze up in anger. “Who are you calling wretched? Are you trying to insinuate that I am lacking in devotion?”³

And further, everyone becomes entangled in their business dealings. One person is running a grain shop; someone else is selling gold. And then there are those who make a business of enforcing the rules and regulations. Or some people may uphold the conventions of the society. People may even call

³ Here Baba Somanath is using the word “*kambhakt*,” meaning a wretched, ill-fated fellow; but it is also a play on words because the syllables can have a double meaning: *kam* = “inferior, lacking in” and *bhakt* = “devotee.”

them gyanis. They lecture and preach, expounding on Vedanta, and are never at a loss for words. Going here and there, they dispense their outer knowledge and collect their fees. This is how they earn their livelihood.

So, in all the other shops, there is some tangible merchandise for sale. But these gyanis do not need material goods to ply their trade. They don't need to keep warehouses full of grain. They don't need to labor in the fields. They have no worries of this kind. Their business consists of peddling mere words.

**I have combed through the Shastras, the Vedas,
and the Smritis, and they all affirm one thing.
Without the Guru, no one obtains liberation;
Reflect carefully on this truth and keep it ever in
your mind.**

Now He says, "I am not the first one to reveal this truth. If you carefully study the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, and other religious scriptures, you will find that they all tell us the same thing—we must go into the refuge of the Guru. Until the Guru becomes gracious on us, we cannot obtain liberation."

Now the question may arise: "How can the grace of the Guru grant liberation?" In fact, there is no difference between the two; they are inseparable. The Guru's grace is the essence of liberation. Therefore, all the religious scriptures have emphasized that the Guru's grace is of supreme importance.

**Even if we take cleansing baths at the sixty-eight
places of pilgrimage;
Even if we travel to every corner of the earth;
Even if we reflect and ruminates day and night,
still, without the True Guru, it is all darkness.**

Here in India, we have sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, where people go in search of God. From among these, four places—the *chārdhām*—are considered particularly efficacious. And further, there are the twelve *jyotirlinga* , shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva.

In search of the Lord, devotees bathe in the holy waters. They don't visit just the four major sites; they travel to all sixty-eight places of pilgrimage. And at each pilgrimage site, they take a ritual bath in the holy waters, but that outer water can only remove the dirt of the body.

But where can we find the water that can purify the soul? To remove the inner filth, we must go into the refuge of the Guru and meditate on the Naam.

The Shastras, the Puranas, and the other holy scriptures praise these sixty-eight places of pilgrimage. Accordingly, we accept the teaching of the scriptures and adopt the outer practices they prescribe. But we receive no real benefit from them.

Still, after visiting these places, people return to their homes with a lot of fanfare. They start praising one or another pilgrimage spot, “Oh, this place was amazing. That place was marvelous.” My friend, tell me, what benefit did you gain at from such places? None at all.

Further, we find that the brahmins lay great stress on the importance of going to these pilgrimage spots. And their promptings raise even more unfounded hopes in our hearts. And then, the astrologers also lend their support to these claims and advise us: “What a miracle occurred. Such an astonishing event was reported. If you also go on pilgrimage, you too can earn great merit.” We have become no more than the playthings in the hands of the brahmins, and following their advice, we waste our entire life.

Once, a princess was born in the palace of the king. In our

Hindu religion, right from our birth, the brahmins start to bind us in inextricable bonds. So, our home, our fields, and our animals are all under the control of the brahmins. The installation of the idols, the ceremony of the sacred thread, the ritual shaving of the head—all these ceremonies are controlled by the brahmins.

And when someone's end time arrives, the brahmins are needed to perform all the final rites. And the matter doesn't end with death. Even after a soul leaves this world, the brahmins will still require that, from time to time, we perform the *shrāddh*, a ceremony to honor our departed ancestors. In all these various ways, the brahmins keep us under their control.

So, when the princess was born, the king summoned the most renowned astrologer to cast her horoscope and reveal how the stars would shape her fate. That pandit came to the palace, and when he calculated the chart for the new princess, he realized at once that she had been born under such an auspicious configuration of constellations that wherever she might reside, the head of that household would become king. There would be so much happiness in that home that all worldly worries would be driven away.

Then, the pandit thought to himself, "This is an extraordinary circumstance. I should devise some plan so that I can profit from it. Just imagine. If this girl came to dwell in my home, I myself could become king."

So, to deceive the king, that pandit adopted an air of great sadness, sitting with downcast eyes. Seeing this, the king enquired, "O Pandit Ji, why are you looking so distressed?" He replied, "Maharaj Ji, what can I say? It would be improper to express what is in my heart before such an exalted person as yourself, because after all, you are a noble king, and I am just a lowly brahmin."

The king said, "No, no. Tell me what is wrong." Then the

astrologer replied, "Nothing is wrong, Your Majesty. I am just feeling a little down today."

Hearing these evasive words, the king ordered him to speak: "No, Pandit Ji. Tell me clearly what is bothering you." So finally the pandit said, "The signs are extremely unfavorable. I see that the king and queen will both die instantly if they should even look upon this girl's face. And the whole kingdom will also be lost. Her astrological chart is so ill-omened."

Hearing the pandit pronouncement, the king immediately ordered that a trunk be constructed. Then he commanded that the child should be placed in that trunk and set adrift in the running river.

Meanwhile, the brahmin packed up all his books and hurried downstream a few miles, where he took up his seat by the river, awaiting the arrival of the trunk. After some time, he spotted the trunk floating towards him on the river. When the princess had been placed in the trunk, she was carefully swaddled in pillows. And the trunk itself contained air-holes to let in fresh air. The brahmin was sitting eagerly on the riverside. And when the trunk came near, he slowly hauled it towards the shore and lifted it out of the water.

Now, unbeknownst to the pandit, as the trunk had been floating downstream, a bear trainer and his bear had been passing by. They had finished their performance in one place and were on their way to the next village. By chance, the bear trainer spied that trunk floating in the water. So, what did he do? He pulled the trunk to the water's edge and opened it. When he looked inside, to his surprise, he found the young princess and some jewels that the king had included for her upkeep.

He was amazed. He thought, "She is certainly a royal princess. She must be the daughter of our great Raja." So, he lifted the baby girl and the treasure out of the trunk. Meanwhile,

the curious bear had been watching all this and now, climbed into the empty trunk to investigate. Unfortunately, his lumbering weight rocked the trunk, the lid snapped shut, and the trunk, with the bear inside, was swept swiftly downstream by the rushing water.

But the brahmin had no idea that any of this had just taken place. So, when he pulled that trunk out of the water, he thought to himself, “Why is this trunk so heavy? Perhaps they put rocks in the bottom of the trunk so that it would not capsize.”

Glancing around, he thought, “Someone might see me if I open this trunk here. I should take it some place more private” So, by one means and another, he managed to drag that trunk back to his house. When he had it safely home, he loosened the ropes binding it closed. But as he was opening the lid, the bear, angered by his uncomfortable misadventure, leapt out and grabbed the brahmin by the neck. And no one was nearby to rescue that brahmin. The bear trainer had been left far upstream and was now on his way to the king’s palace to return the princess.

So as the bear attacked that brahmin, the unfortunate fellow cried out: “In the end, the princess has returned to the palace of the king, but now this bear has the poor brahmin by the throat and is going to eat him alive.”

So, the brahmins themselves are bound in illusion, and accepting their advice, we slavishly follow the formulas laid down in the Puranas and other holy books. As a result, we waste our whole lives in useless practices—going on pilgrimages, performing rites and rituals, and engaging in other external devotions. But when it comes to doing the true devotion, we cannot manage to sit in meditation for even one hour. And if we have not accomplished that most important task, then our human birth has been squandered.

Until we meet the Perfect Satguru, we cannot discover the pathway that leads within. The inner door does not open, the inner light does not dawn, and we cannot achieve emancipation.

**Wandering throughout the entire world, I have
finally arrived at the Lord's Door.
Eliminating my evil-mindedness, He has
enlightened my understanding;
O servant Nanak, the Gurmukhs are ferried across.**

Running here and there, we have wandered throughout the whole world. Becoming exhausted, we have at last come into the Guru's shelter. And the Guru explains to us that God is actually residing within us. He says, "Meditate on the Lord and unite with Him. In this way, free yourself from suffering and distress."

In the same way, when you practice bhakti, you should never think of retreat. Whatever happens, you should forge ahead with your fight, because, at your end time, only bhakti will stand by you and come to your aid. Your children, your family, and your relatives will all gather around you, but what help can they give you in that final hour? When you depart, they will mourn you; they will cry and beat their breasts. They will carry your body to the cremation ground, and then return straightaway to their own homes. The real devotee of the Lord conquers death in this world and achieves immortality in the world beyond.

—Baba Somanath

Pitch Your Tent in the Immortal Realm

Play a true game on the field of life.¹

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He says that this whole world has been spun out of falsehood and fantasy. Where were we before we came into this incarnation? Before we were born, did we have any idea who our parents would be in this lifetime? And now, when we leave this human body, do we have any knowledge of where we will take our next birth? For us, the past and future always remain a closed book; we have no knowledge of what has gone before and no guarantee of what is yet to come. Over and over again, we die and take rebirth—caught in an endless cycle.

Now, when we fall asleep at night, nothing of this world remains with us. At that time, we don't know where our mother and father are residing. We don't even know where we are ourselves. We have no memory of where our children, family, and relatives might be. We have no idea what has become of

¹ *Sachmukh khel le maidānā*, Kabir Sahib

all our wealth and worldly possessions. But when the mind reenters the waking world, again we lay claim to all those relatives and possessions as our own.

This world is a vast playing field, and the object of the game is to cross over the field to the other side and win the prize—the Power of Truth. Guru Nanak has described that Power beautifully:

*He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.*

That Power of Truth already resides within you. It is the very support of your body. With the support of that Power the *chit* (memory), *manas* (will or resolve), *buddhi* (intellect), and *ahankāra* (ego) function.² The same Power upholds the entire creation. While we are living in the world, we have the opportunity to discover this True and Eternal Power. If we do not seize that opportunity, then we will go on revolving in the cycle of birth and death and be dragged back into this world again and again.

**Fix your attention firmly on the Shabd Guru;
The Sound will pull your soul upward.**

You can call it Guru, or Shabd, or Naad, or Naam, but that Power is One and only One. From the beginning, Truth and untruth are intertwined within our heart; the inert and the

² The four aspects of the *antahkarana* or higher mind

conscious are bound together by an inextricable knot. Until the Perfect Satguru makes us aware of the Truth already present within us, our soul will remain enveloped by a veil of falsehood. The soul has become the form of falsehood and cannot cast it off. Therefore, through the Satsang, the Satguru instills within us the discrimination to discern Truth from untruth and makes the hidden Truth manifest. Then the soul can perceive clearly: “This Truth permeates my within.” But the fact remains that—even though Truth is residing within you—still, until you are put on the True Path, you will not be able to contact it.

In order to meet that Inner Power, devotees have performed countless sadhanas: repetitions, austerities, fasting, burning the sacred fire,³ offering yagyas,⁴ and all the many forms of yoga. But each of these practices keeps you entangled in the business of the intellect. So now, the soul must rise above all these outer practices and unite with the Self-Existing Power within.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us, “Attach your love to the Shabd Guru with such dedication and devotion that your thoughts never stray from Him.” Become so absorbed in the Shabd that you become the form of Shabd itself. Until Shabd alone remains, both within and without, you will not be able to banish illusion and self-love from your heart. You will remain enslaved to this outer world.

How do you achieve this total absorption in the Shabd? Kabir Sahib Ji says that when you fix your attention between

3 *Hom* is a fire ritual usually performed by the priest to bless a household at the request of the homeowner.

4 *Yagya* is a large communal event involving offerings to the sacred fire and special mantras. The patron who donates to pay for the yagya is thought to receive considerable spiritual merit.

the two eyes, your soul begins to withdraw from the body below. At that time, do not allow any outer thoughts to drag you away from that still point. When the soul becomes perfectly equipoised, merging into the Shabd, it becomes the form of Shabd. And riding on the Sound Current, the soul is transported back to its origin—the fountainhead from which the Shabd arises.

**Aim your gun and bring the mind under control;
Strike down the enemy of attachment.**

When your attention unites with the Naam, then the mind comes under control automatically. Describing this process, Kabir Sahib says:

*The mouse mind is paralyzed,
When it drinks the mercury of Hari Naam.*

When the mouse mind drinks the mercury of the Lord's Name, it no longer runs here and there. When you fix the mind within, when you make it steady, then you can unite your soul with the Higher Consciousness. When the soul merges into the Naam, it is no longer dragged here and there in the outer world.

Once the mind comes under control and experiences the inner bliss, it is freed from all outer attachments. Mind is a lover of pleasure; it is fond of delicious dishes. As long as it is stuck fast in outer enjoyments, as long as it is a slave to the outer tastes, it cannot go within. But once it tastes the inner bliss, it stops running about, and then all the outer tastes are forgotten.

**Take up the shield of hunger and the sword of
knowledge;
Strapping on your weapons adopt the ways of the
Maratha.⁵**

He tells us to hold fast to the True Knowledge. Merging into that Knowledge, become the form of Knowledge. It has been said: “To fill our stomachs, we are ready to cheat the whole world.”

We are all the slaves and disciples of our stomachs. The stomach sits within us like a king issuing orders, and we—the loyal subjects—carry them out. So, Kabir Sahib says, “Become like a warrior, and stand ready to endure hunger.” Don’t be subject to the dictates of your stomach. Don’t be bound by hunger and thirst. Give up all your desires and absorb your love into the Oneness within.

Just like the warrior takes up weapons and marches out to defeat the enemy, likewise, taking up the weapon of True Knowledge and wielding it with the might of Inner Experience, the spiritual aspirant should become determined to defeat the mind.

**Whoever fights the enemy face-to-face can be
called a valiant warrior.**

The aspirant who goes within and attacks the mind head on is a fearless warrior—a mighty captain on the field of battle. But the majority of humanity comes from a different mold:

⁵ During Kabir’s time, the Marathas were a caste inhabiting the current area of Maharashtra. They were known for their valor and later formed the Maratha Empire under the rulership of Shiva Ji (1630-1680).

*Everyone performs bhakti,
But no one discards illusion.
Caught in the trap of illusion,
We undergo untold suffering.*

We all perform the devotion, but our hearts are filled with illusion, and we do not strive to remove it. That illusion is the root of all our suffering.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib says that the brave warriors never waver from their purpose. With unshakable determination, they march on to the field of battle, and they devote themselves fearlessly to meditation on the Lord. Uniting with the bliss within, they become the image of bliss. Forging ahead, they put the enemy mind to rout; they drive all the useless thoughts and worldly fantasies from the field of battle. Such devotees are truly courageous.

The devotee who manifests the Lord within can be called a brave warrior. We people love to hear stories about doing bhakti; we find such talk very intoxicating. But when the time comes to actually do the devotion ourselves, it is only the very rare ones who emerge victorious; the rest of us go down in defeat.

*The army's poor commander is like a frightened sheep.
He shambles bleating off the battlefield,
But he's always ready to eat.*

Everyone wants to practice devotion, but when the time comes to fight the battle and face the mind, we slip away somewhere else very quietly or lie down and pretend to be dead. When we start practicing the devotion, for a few days we make a great

show of it. But then we give it up: “This bhakti is getting old. I’m tired of it; let’s do something else now.”

How long should you hold fast to the devotion? Until your dying breath. If at our end time, we do not remember the bhakti, then when we leave this body, we will again have to endure the pain of birth and death.

The lesson behind saying all this is that just like military soldiers go through rigorous combat training, in the same way, the practitioners of bhakti must also learn to fight the mind and its minions. Soldiers become competent through daily training; then, when they stand in battle, they are not troubled by fear. They declare heroically: “I have come here only to defeat my enemy.” Thinking like this, they march onto the battlefield and join the fight.

In the same way, when you practice bhakti, you should never think of retreat. Whatever happens, you should forge ahead with your fight, because, at your end time, only bhakti will stand by you and come to your aid. Your children, your family, and your relatives will all gather around you, but what help can they give you in that final hour? When you depart, they will mourn you; they will cry and beat their breasts. They will carry your body to the cremation ground, and then return straightaway to their own homes. The real devotee of the Lord conquers death in this world and achieves immortality in the world beyond.

**Take up the priming powder of contemplation,
match cord of knowledge, and gunpowder of love.**

Contemplation is the priming powder, and love is the gunpowder. First, the priming powder is poured into the flash pan.

So, when the burning match cord of knowledge ignites the priming powder of contemplation, the flash from the priming powder flares up through a hole in the gun barrel, explodes the gunpowder of love, and hurls the bullet towards its target. And when the musket is fired at the opposing army, the enemy falls down dead.⁶

You need both knowledge and love. If both have manifested within you, then true spiritual experience will dawn. But if you are lacking in love and have only the knowledge of the intellect—the knowledge gained from books—then your heart will be filled with darkness. Outwardly, what knowledge can you impart to others, when your own within is devoid of light?

**Load the cannon and fire it, again and again;
Conquer the country beyond.**

Over and over, load the cannon, aim it at the target, and fire! Attack the enemy (mind) again and again. Gain the victory and take possession of the country beyond (the Spiritual Realms).

**Kabir says, “Listen, O brother Sadhu, become
ecstatic in His love.”**

While still living in this world, become immersed in the intoxication of love. When the moment of death arrives, you will cast the body aside, just like a worn-out garment, and your soul will depart for the True Home.

⁶ Baba Somanath Ji is describing the action of the matchlock musket, in use by the Mughal armies of Kabir Sahib's era.

**Pitch your tent in the Immortal Realm where the
Satguru has raised His banner.**

Whether you call it *Amar* (Immortal), *Alakh* (Imperceptible) or *Agam* (Inaccessible), reach that Realm, and merge into the Primal Lord. This is the True Home of the Satguru, where His banner flies. Plant your own flag there.

Offering this outer example, Kabir Sahib has explained to us that if we are going to cross over a river or an ocean, first we must find a ferryman. And what will he do for us? He will take us across in His boat. In the same way, when we want to cross the ocean of this world, the Guru—the Expert Ferryman—takes us in His ship of Naam and transports us safely to the other shore.

—Baba Somanath

The Expert Ferryman

**O fool, unite with the Guru.
Why waste time thinking over and over again?¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. First of all, He advises us to unite with the Guru, and, from this exhortation, it is clear we are still separated; we have not yet secured communion with Him. To become one with the Guru, we must seek shelter at His holy feet. It is the only way. There is no question of securing liberation from gods, goddesses, or other divine beings—they cannot grant it.

We have wandered far away from the Lord and have become separated from Him—it is not less than madness. Who can we call as mad? When you forget the Truth, you become like one mad. But when you remember, then that madness leaves you. You recognize the One who dwells beyond the three aspects of time—past, present, and future—and you merge into that Reality. But while you yourself remain trapped in time, you cannot realize that your soul is the same essence as that of the Timeless Lord, and union still eludes you.

Therefore, first of all, Kabir Sahib is telling us, “O fool, unite with the Guru.” He says that we mad ones must meet

¹ *Guru se kar mel gairvārā, kā sochata bārambārā*, Kabir Sahib

the Guru and become one with Him. Why? Because we have wandered far away from the thing which is eternal and unchanging. And now, through our own strength and reasoning power, we cannot contact Him. Therefore, Kabir Sahib declares unequivocally: “If you wish to meet God, fall at the feet of the Guru and beg for His protection.” This is the only way. You cannot take the support of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva² or all the other gods and goddesses. There are no two ways about it—to meet Him you must go into the shelter of the Guru. And further, He says that all the rumination arising from the mind and intellect is fruitless. It serves no purpose at all.

**When you want to cross to the other shore,
you must look for a competent ferryman.**

This is an outer example. When you need to cross over a body of water—whether it is a river, a lake, or an ocean—then you need a boatman. You cannot make the crossing on your own because you have no boat and no boatman. Likewise, when you wish to cross the ocean of life, how can you hope to reach the other shore without the help of an expert Ferryman? Further, you can determine the size of an outer body of water; you can measure its depth, width, and length. But how can you measure the ocean of this world? It is boundless—it has no beginning and no end.

What is the deeper meaning of world or *sansār*? First, some doubt (*sansā*) is created in our hearts, and the essence (*sār*) of that doubt arises from false perception. Taking the world to be real, we mistakenly think that happiness can be achieved through the enjoyment of outer things. That “essence of

2 *Utpatti* or the creation is governed by Brahma, *sthiti* or maintenance of life is governed by Vishnu, and *sanhār* or destruction is governed by Shiva.

doubt” (*sansā + sār*), and the false perception that produces it, is the innate nature of this world (*sansār*).³ Therefore, when we are deeply mired in the delusion of this world, how can we hope to navigate its treacherous waters and cross to the other shore unaided?⁴

Offering this outer example, Kabir Sahib has explained to us that if we are going to cross over a river or an ocean, first we must find a ferryman. And what will he do for us? He will take us across in His boat. In the same way, when we want to cross the ocean of this world, the Guru—the Expert Ferryman—takes us in His ship of Naam and transports us safely to the other shore. So now, enough has been said on the subject. Kabir Sahib has laid His wisdom before us. The rare ones will take His words into their hearts and bring into experience the mystery He has described. The rest will just listen to what He has to say, and then not give it another thought.

**When you cross over the ocean of existence,
this world is left behind.**

3 Our knowledge of the material world arises from the action of the *vritis*: “When a current emanating from the spirit strikes any object, such as a physical thing, a mental feeling, an idea, or a sensory sensation, and returns to its source, it is called a *vriti*. The *vriti* produces a modulation in the mind-stuff. All our knowledge of the world without and within comes from *vritis* or the rays of thought.” Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang Books, 1997) p. 7.

4 As the soul sinks deeper into the creation, the *vritis* become increasingly misleading, as seen in the description of the *vriti* of *vikalp*: “(iii) *Vikalp*: It is the relationship that the mind-ridden soul has with the objects, producing doubt and delusion as to the objects themselves, their existence, their intrinsic nature and the life-essence at their core.” Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang Books, 1997) p. 8.

When you cross beyond the undulating waves of uncertainty, when you become free of all doubt and wavering, then know you have crossed over the ocean of this world. Until your heart is free of uncertainty, how can you cross over? The facts of the matter are right in front of you. Delve into your own heart and see for yourself. Have you progressed in spirituality, or are you slipping farther away from your goal? As long as your heart is filled to overflowing with thoughts and worries, desires and indulgences, money and wealth, “I and mine,” then no real advancement is possible. Therefore, He says that when no more thoughts or desires trouble your heart, then you have landed on the other shore. This is a clear confirmation.

When you reach the other shore, this world of uncertainty evaporates like a phantom. Not a trace remains. Many people want to renounce this world, but they don't understand the real significance of renunciation. Outwardly, they may give up the worldly things, but within doubt still torments them. How can this be called renouncing the world? The fetters that bind us to this world are within us, not somewhere outside. In the blink of an eye, we can give up the worldly things outwardly. When you take a trip to Calcutta (Kolkata), you leave your worldly possessions here in your home. But what about your inner attachment to all those things? Can you set that aside? Until the inner bonds are cut, you cannot say you have renounced the world. Therefore, Kabir Sahib asks: “What is the sign that you have cast off the bonds of this world and crossed to the other side?” Your heart becomes freed from all doubt and delusion, and your consciousness becomes one with the immaculate and carefree soul within. This is the inexorable proof.

**If you want to see your reflection,
you must clean the mirror of your heart.**

Now He gives us another worldly example. Many people take the Naam initiation and then claim: “Now, we have achieved liberation.” But Kabir Sahib advises us: “Introspect your own heart.” The heart is like a mirror. If you want to see your face in it, the surface of the mirror must be clean. If it is covered with rust or scum, then you will need to scrub away all that dirt; otherwise, you can’t see a clear reflection, no matter how hard you try. So, if you want to examine your face in the mirror, you will have to make the mirror spotlessly clean. What do we mean by cleaning the mirror of the heart? No doubt or delusion should remain.

In just a moment, you can clean an outer mirror. But the inner mirror of the heart is covered with mud encrusted from age upon age and has become as black as pitch. And it will take a great deal of effort to make it clean again. We people think we have progressed just because it has been two, or four, or fifteen years since we took Naam initiation. No doubt the years have passed by, but what about the condition of our heart? Unfortunately, it is the same as it always has been. There is no need to ask other people about this. We know our own condition best, so what can we gain by discussing it with others?

Someone says, “My children are causing me a lot of trouble,” and tears well up in their eyes. Someone says, “I have lost a lot of money,” and they break down weeping. If someone is crying over the worldly things, know for certain that the mirror of the heart is still covered with filth. If your within is shining with the Light of Purity, why would you be crying over outer things of no consequence? Everything arises from within you; no one is putting anything in from outside. If you are crying, it means the dirt is still heaped up within. If you are laughing, well, that also comes from within. Therefore, He

tells us, “You must clean the mirror of your heart.” Then, you can behold the Light of your untarnished soul reflected there.

If the mirror is covered with scum, what can you hope to see there?

So, He says that if the mirror is obscured by rust and scum, then we cannot see any reflection in it, no matter how long we go on gazing. This is an outer example. Similarly, if the mirror of the heart has become besmeared with filth, how can you see the Immaculate Lord reflected there? Forgetting the Truth, we quarrel with others over the Vedas, Shastras, Granths, and Puranas, rites and rituals, and daily prayers. But what is the point of coming to blows over these outer things? It is all useless.

Instead, look in your within, and ask yourself: “How far have I progressed? What can I do to improve myself?” Until you introspect your within, you can’t gain benefit from the spiritual teachings. What can you gain by looking at others? “So and so is doing such and such.” Friend, what do other people’s actions have to do with you? Nothing at all.

**When the celestial music resounds in the fort of the body,
Then the inner spectacle unfolds before you.**

So, when the mirror is made pure, then the attention merges into the immaculate *ātmā* (pure soul). This is actual experience, not just hearsay. By what sign can you recognize this experience? You hear the Celestial Melody resounding, and you behold the pageant of Bliss within yourself.

When you concentrate within, the swan bird of the soul flies free.

When the countless melodies of the *Anhad Bānī* begin to play within, the shackles of this earthly existence fall off, and the soul flies free, untrammelled by mind and matter. This is not a question of second-hand accounts. Those who practice the meditation faithfully experience it within themselves; but the poor lazy fellows have no inkling of it at all.

**Kabir says, beware of the mind's antics;
It is always ready with its scissors.**

When your within becomes pure and you merge into the Naam and ascend to the higher regions, the workings of the mind stand revealed. Mind is the enemy of spirituality. The mind does not want to be confined, but when the soul ascends within, it is like imprisoning the mind. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, "My friend, keep a close eye on the doings of the mind." The scissors of the mind cut into the fabric of spirituality and spoil it." We always think: "I will do the Bhajan and Simran. I will do the meditation." But, in reality, we remain attached to the world, and the scissors of the mind cut our resolutions to ribbons and toss them away.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib alerts us that we should never let down our guard: "What is your most important work? To keep a close watch on the mind." The mind is always ready with its scissors, eager to wreak havoc. When some thought of the world arises within us, the mind's scissors fly, and we are cut to shreds. When a thought arises of children, or of wealth and property, or of "I and mine," or of love and hatred—then,

shearing right and left, the mind severs us from the Lord. Therefore, Kabir Sahib warns us: “Beware of the mind, or it will cut you to pieces.”

**If you don't remove the fastener holding the two
scissor blades together,
Yama will seize and plunder you again and again.**

Now, He explains how the scissors of the mind work. What are the parts? First, you have two separate cutting blades. These two blades symbolize two different powers—one auspicious and the other inauspicious. So, He tells us that the mind's two scissor blades are held together by a small pin, and that pin of the scissors is egotism—our sense of “I and mine.” Whether our deeds are good or bad, they arise from the same “I-hood.” The two blades are held together by that pin.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib says that until you remove the pin of I-hood, the scissors will go on cutting. If you want to be successful in spirituality, you must remove that pin. Then, even though the two blades remain, they can no longer cut anything. The scissors are rendered useless.

But as long as that fastener is still holding the blades together, the yamduts (angels of death) stand ready to fall upon you and cut you to bits.

**O brother, remain in the Satsang.
Your distorted fate will be set right.**

He says that spirituality and inner progress are founded on Satsang. Tulsidas tells us:

Without Satsang discrimination will not awaken.

Without the Satsang, we cannot discriminate between true and false. We cannot recognize which things are true, and we do not understand which things are false. Therefore, He says, “First of all, hear about the Truth in the Satsang.” Don’t think that Satsang is just listening to some stories about Rama and Ravana and then going home unchanged. Some people tell of the Pandavas and Kauravas, some recite the histories of the great kings, and some give learned commentaries on the sacred texts.

But my friend, none of these things constitute real Satsang—the company of Truth. During the Satsang, our soul should come in contact with that Truth. Then we will have some lasting impression of Truth in our hearts. We say we are holding Satsang. Someone is reading stories or reciting verses, and a few other people have gathered to listen, but this is not Satsang. This is just passing the time. In the real Satsang, your distorted fate will be reshaped. This can be called the company of Truth. Otherwise, you are just hearing some stories and then returning home empty-handed.

The butcher fattens the bullock with the wealth and treasures of this world.

What treasures does this world have to offer you? Wealth and possessions; wife, children, and grandchildren; honor, name, and fame. Instead of giving these things up, we are becoming more and more entangled in them, so how can we hope to benefit from attending the Satsang?

To understand our situation, take the example of a butcher. Say the butcher is going to slaughter a bullock, but it is not yet time to kill the animal. He is thinking he will kill it on the second, third, or fourth day. But, in the meantime, that butcher

won't let the bullock go hungry. Instead, he'll feed it very lavishly to fatten it up.

Similarly, Kal is a butcher, and the ignorant jiva is the bullock. Kal provides the jiva with food—money and possessions; wife, son and grandson; prestige and honor. The jiva is delighted with that food and has no idea it is about to be slaughtered. The jiva is thinking, “These are my children. I have accomplished so much. I have earned so much money.” My friend, in the end, when you have to leave this world, everything you have earned will be lost.

When your end time comes, the blow of Kal will fall unannounced.

What plain speaking! When Kal surrounds you and attacks, will he warn you beforehand? Do you think the Lord of Death will inform you where he is taking you? Not the least. The yamduts will beat you soundly and drag you away. In this world, you were a big businessman. You were very respected. You lived in a fine mansion. But at the end time, no one will even be willing to keep your body in the house. When the breath stops, you're hardly worth a shell⁵. Everyone says, “Take the body away.” With our own eyes, we have seen so many depart. Daily, we see people dying. But still, the jiva goes on like the poor bullock, heedlessly consuming the food of Kal.

Become so devoted within that cleverness and deceit are driven out.

What is the nature of “Kal?” Kal means forgetting the Truth

⁵ Shell currency was used in India up till the early 19th century. These small shells, called *kauris* or cowries were of nominal value.

and becoming lost in the pride of the body and worldly possessions. And that pride leads us into deception and double-dealing. So now, giving up all duplicity, practice Truth, and be saved from the butcher Kal. If you harbor deceit in your heart and still try to practice the devotion, you will reap the fruit according to your deeds. You plant a thorny acacia tree, but you hope for a rich harvest of wheat. How is that possible?

Through seva, meditation, and humility, you will easily meet the Guru.

Now He tells us how to rid ourselves of deceit. First of all, do the Guru's seva. It is through seva that arrogance and self-love are washed away. Pride of the body is removed. Many fine gentlemen think, "I am such an important man. Why should I do any seva?" My friend, you are not interested in doing the seva? Would you rather remain enslaved in the domain of Kal? We take up the seva to cleanse away the pride of the body; we are not doing any favor to the Guru. One or two sevadars can take care of all the Guru's needs. He doesn't need thousands of people to serve Him. This is not the aim of seva. We do seva to crush our false pride. When we offer service to the Guru, we are the real gainers.

After doing the seva, next, we need to practice the meditation. Kabir Sahib Ji keeps saying this over and over, but our intellect still doesn't accept it. Meditation means doing the Naam Simran of the Lord. It means performing the Dhyana and Bhajan practices. But when we do the meditation, we must not become puffed up: "I have done so much meditation." After all, are we doing this meditation to benefit someone else? No, it is for our own benefit. So, what do we have to be arrogant about? We start thinking, "I am a great

swami. I have become something.” But such an attitude is utterly mistaken.

And finally, He tells us that we need to practice humility. We should speak sweetly and lovingly to everyone we meet. Humility and lowliness—these are the qualities we should adopt in our life. This is the clear sign that we are progressing in the meditation.

When we cultivate these three things—seva, meditation, and humility—then we will not need to go in search of the Guru. He Himself will come to find us. These are the Guru’s own qualities, and when we cultivate them, He is naturally drawn to us.

**Kabir says: Listen, O brother sadhu.
The Guru is speaking to you.
This world is of four days only;
Now, anchor your love in the Imperceptible Realm.**

In every bani, Kabir Sahib tells us in the final lines that He is not addressing the worldly people, those who have no use for spirituality: “Listen, O brother sadhu.” His words are for the sadhus, those who practice the sadhana. No one else will understand, so, why should He try to explain to them? His words would all go in vain.

*You keep explaining, but they won't understand.
The mind still runs the show.
They are floating down the stream, but let them go.
In fact, give them an extra shove or two,
to send them on their way.*

What other words can He use to explain? If people don’t wish to understand, then what can be done? Therefore, He is

saying: “Listen, O brother sadhu. I am speaking to the sadhus, those who want to progress in meditation and achieve liberation in this very lifetime. My words are for these devotees, not for the others. If someone is intoxicated in their children and all the things of this world, what can I tell them?”

These are the Guru’s words. This is His message. Now, there is no more to be said.

Applying gold plating over brass cannot turn it into gold. We spread a superficial layer of gold on top, but brass remains brass. Only when the brass of our petty ego is removed can we be converted into precious metal. Then we become gold through and through—100% pure. This is the proof of our spirituality.

—Baba Somanath

Pull Back the Curtain

As long as the curtain is drawn shut, we remain engrossed in illusion.¹

Understand that as long as the veil of egotism and Maya separates us from the Lord within, we are living a false life. From morning till night, all of our deeds are under the control of deception. The veil obscures our vision. Behind that veil of illusion, the Lord sits waiting for us, but we are bound in the chains of Maya. When that veil is rent in two, when we meet with the Lord and become His form, our heart is freed from illusion.

**We remain engrossed in illusion;
We think God is separate from us.
But we find peace when we see the One Lord
within and without.**

Now, Paltu Sahib explains to us the nature of deception. We consider the Almighty Lord as something separate from ourselves. We say He dwells in Kailash or Vaikunt. We think He

¹ *Jaū lagi pardā parā hai, dhokhā rahā samāy*, Paltu Sahib

can be found in the heaven worlds or the nether realms. But whoever thinks of the Lord as far away is laboring under an illusion. God Almighty is the form of Oneness, and whoever draws back the inner veil will find Him and become one with Him. His darshan destroys all illusion. If we think that the Lord is separate from us, then we will go on searching for Him—in Rameshvaram, in Pandarinath,² in Badrinarayan,³ in Dwaraka, in Viranath.⁴ Our understanding is enshrouded in a thick veil of ignorance, and therefore, even if we travel to all the holy places, Maya accompanies us. Even if we perform all the righteous deeds, we do not find the Lord. We are squandering our whole life in this deception.

There is One Lord pervading everything—both within and without. We all say, “The Lord is within us; He is present within everyone.” We read these things in the Vedas and Shastras and then repeat them. But what does Paltu Sahib tell us? Seeing Him, we achieve peace and contentment. When we develop one-pointed attention, we realize the Oneness both within and without. And through that experience of Oneness, we see that the Lord is everywhere.

**Those who have seen Him became one with Him;
Those who have not seen Him remain separate.
When we prepare the laddu with sugar and flour,
the two tastes unite to create something different.**

Whoever has seen the Lord has become His form. When we merge into Him, our little selves are eradicated, and we

2 Pandarinath Temple, Aliamber

3 Badrinath Temple

4 Veerabhadreshwar Temple, Aliamber



Baba Somanath Ji

become something different. But what can those who have not seen the Lord tell us about Him?

When we merge into the Lord, it is like making laddus. When grains of wheat are milled, the bran remains in the whole wheat flour; isn't that so? And when we mix that bran flour with sugar to make laddus,⁵ Then, neither the taste of the sugar nor the taste of the bran remains. When we eat that laddu, the taste is different from either of them.

But how can those who have not gone within and seen the Lord teach others about Him? All their explanations are based on inference and confusion. As long as they are not faced with any difficulties, they go on loudly proclaiming their knowledge and telling spiritual stories. But if they are confronted with any worldly problem, all the veneer of spirituality falls away, and they are shown to be only brass. Applying gold plating over brass cannot turn it into gold. We spread a superficial layer of gold on top, but brass remains brass. Only when the brass of our petty ego is removed can we be converted into precious metal. Then we become gold through and through—100% pure. This is the proof of our spirituality.

**Whoever ascends within reaches the True Home
and unites with the Lord.**

**By remaining absorbed in the Naam, the meditator
arrives at their destination.**

He says, “Whoever has the darshan of the Lord becomes His real form.” Uniting with the Naam, you become the Naam—your little self is lost in the Greater Self. The darkness of

⁵ Laddu is a globe-shaped sweet popular all over the Indian subcontinent. Laddus appear in countless varieties and are popular at celebrations and religious festivals, particularly those honoring Ganesha, the elephant god.

night is dispelled, and illusion fades away. Merging into the Immaculate One, you become immaculate as well.

**O Paltu, when we pull back the curtain, deception
is driven from the heart.**

**But as long as the curtain is drawn shut, we remain
enshrouded in illusion.**

If the curtain of illusion is obscuring your vision, understand it for certain that you are living a false life. When that curtain is pulled back, when you meet with the Almighty Lord within and become His form, then all the deception flies away.

Kabir says that if you want to find something, you need to search for it where you lost it. The Lord is dwelling in one place, but you are searching for Him somewhere else. You may travel to Kashi, Rameshwar, or Pandarpur, but what can you find there? God dwells in your heart. He is with you, isn't that so? The witness of the heart is the Lord Himself. He never wavers. He is always present with you.

—Baba Somanath

Why Do You Search for Me Outside?

**True devotion is obtained only through the Satguru,
when His True Bani comes to dwell in your heart.
By serving the Satguru, you gain eternal peace;
Your egotism is eradicated through merging into
the Shabd.¹**

This is the bani of Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. What is the power that binds the soul and keeps it separate from the Almighty Lord? It is the power of the ego. Ego is the cause of birth and death. The heavens and the hells are created by the ego. Through the power of the ego, the entire world came into being.

When we remove the ego, we discover that the soul is none other than the Lord Himself. This is called Naam bhakti, the devotion to the Naam. And how do we become successful in this devotion? Through whole-hearted dedication to the Guru's seva. The real meaning of seva is to eradicate the sense of "I and mine." Going to the feet of the Guru, we should pray for His grace. Guru Amar Das tells us:

¹ *Sachī bhagat satigur te hovai sachī hiradai bānī*, Guru Amar Das

*Surrender body, mind, wealth, and everything to the Guru.
Accept His Will, and you will find Him.*

First of all, these three things—body, mind, and wealth—are keeping you bound to this world. You should offer them before the Guru and obey the Guru's commands.

Then, when you do the Simran of Naam according to the Guru's instructions, the power of the True Naam, which is already dwelling in your heart, will remove all the chains that bind you, and you will become the form of Naam itself. This is what is meant by true bhakti or devotion.

In all other types of devotion, you are always the supplicant. Whether to a greater or a lesser degree, you are imploring for some boon. But there is no question of seeking boons when speaking of devotion to the Naam. In true devotion, no sense of a separate self remains—you become the form of Naam itself.

**Without the Guru, there is no true devotion,
and we wander about lost.**

He tells us that until we meet with the perfect Satguru, our devotion cannot be called true bhakti. Through true bhakti we become the form of Truth. And to become successful, we need to receive the technique from the True Guru. Who else can reveal the way to us?

We are all motivated by an all-encompassing sense of “I and mine.” Even the rishis, munis, yogis, sanyasis, and other great souls come under the influence of ego; they all have some ulterior motive in their devotion—they want some return on their investment. Only when we meet the Satguru do we learn the way of true bhakti, through which we can

discover the Truth within our own hearts. All others are stuck in delusion. They remain ignorant of Truth.

**The manmukhs perpetually go astray and
undergo constant suffering;
They drown and die without water.**

If someone does not understand the Guru's secret, if they follow the promptings of their mind, then they remain a manmukh—the mouthpiece of the mind. Guru Amar Das Ji tells us that such manmukhs drown without water. How can this be? When the manmukh obeys the mind, then waves of doubt and delusion are constantly surging in their heart, and battered by falsehood, their whole life is destroyed.

**O brothers, remain forever in the refuge of the Lord.
Bestowing His glance of grace, He preserves our
honor and blesses us with the glory of His Name.**

He says remain in the Lord's refuge, with single-minded devotion, and then you can unite with the Naam. But taking refuge with the Master comes only through His boundless grace. It is no easy matter to completely take refuge with the Saint. There should not be a trace of "I and mine" in the heart of such a devotee.

Guru Amar Das Ji, the great soul who wrote this bani, met his Satguru when he was already an old man. And what seva did he perform for the Guru? First, he would rise at 3:00 am and carry water from a distant well for the Guru's morning bath, and then he would continue carrying water throughout the day for use in the langar.

His only garment was a short dhoti fastened around his

waist, and on his head, he tied a short length of cloth. He wore no other garments. All day long, and even into the night, he was totally absorbed in doing the seva.

So, one morning during the rainy season, he got up at three o'clock and went to fetch the water. He filled the jugs and was returning with them balanced on his shoulder.

Along the way, there was the hut of a weaver and his wife. Now, the weavers used to clean the cotton with a comb and then stretch the fiber out between two short stakes driven into the ground. In the rain and darkness, Amar Das Ji could not see the stakes. Walking along, he struck his foot against one of them and fell to the earth with a loud crash.

Hearing that noise, the weaver asked his wife, "Who is out and about at this time of the morning? Who is making such a racket?"

His wife replied, "It is only that homeless one, Amru. Just to get a few scraps of food, he has come to the Guru's door. For him there is no difference between day and night. As soon as he wakes up, he is busy with one thing or another; it doesn't matter the time. He is the homeless one who has fallen outside our door."

Then Amar Das Ji laughed and said, "O mad woman! It is true that before coming to my Guru, I was homeless. But now I have made my dwelling in the Immovable Region, whereas you have no place to call your own." Speaking these words, he picked up his water jugs and went on his way.

From that moment, the poor woman began to act like a crazy person. She tore her clothes, her hair flew wild, and she started roaming about aimlessly. When the day dawned, the weaver took his unfortunate wife to Guru Angad Dev Ji. He complained to the Master, "Maharaj Ji. Your disciple Amru has cursed my wife. And now, just see what her condition has become."

Guru Angad Dev Ji replied, “He would never curse anyone. But if he did, even if the Lord of the three worlds came here, he could not remove that curse. But, as I said, he would never curse anyone in the first place.”

But the weaver insisted, “No Maharaj Ji, he has cursed my wife, and now she has gone mad.”

So then, for the first time in twelve years of seva, the Guru summoned Amar Das Ji to His presence. Hearing of the Guru’s summons, Amar Das became ecstatic. “Today my Guru is calling for me.” Going before the Guru, he fell at His feet, saying, “Maharaj Ji, what is your order?”

The Guru replied, “There is no order. But tell me, why have you cursed this woman? She has gone mad.”

Amar Das said, “No, Maharaj Ji. I did not curse her. I had drawn water from the river, and I was returning. On the way back, while passing the house of the weaver, I struck my foot on a stake and fell down with a loud crash. So, the weaver asked his wife, ‘Who has come at such an early hour of the morning?’ She replied, ‘It is just that homeless Amru. He has nothing to eat or drink. He has only come to the Guru’s ashram to get a free meal. He cannot tell the difference between day and night.’ She was speaking like this. So, Maharaj, I told her, ‘My permanent dwelling place is assured, but you, poor crazy woman, have no place to call your own.’ ”

At that time, Guru Angad Dev Ji told him, “This unfortunate lady is ignorant. She doesn’t have the eyes to see. She doesn’t understand the reality. Take back your words and give her your blessing.”

In reply, Amar Das said, “As you wish, Maharaj Ji. But only if you shower your grace can she be healed.” As soon as he had spoken these words, the madness of the weaver’s wife was

removed. She was restored to her former self and returned with her husband to her home.

This is what is meant by taking refuge with the Guru. It is no small thing. The person who truly takes refuge achieves immortality. But it is very difficult to go in the Guru's shelter. The mind stands in our way. In each and every endeavor, the mind asserts and tells us, "I should be first." When we do the seva, we say, "I should have the highest position." When we sit in the Satsang, we say, "I should sit in front of everybody else." And if there is any special news, we think, "I should hear it first." In every single activity, we say, "I should be at the head of the line."

My friends, if you also maintain this sense of being superior to others when pursuing spirituality, you will always be pushing in front. Controlled by ego, you won't be able to quietly step back.

*We all wish to be the greatest.
No one wishes to tread on the path of humility.
But those who are truly lowly and meek
become the most exalted of all.*

Everybody wishes to dominate over others, no one is ready to serve. But until you are willing to accept a lowly position, how will you ascend on the Path of Spirituality?

Our soul is controlled by the five elemental powers and thus has become materialistic. The grossest of all the material elements is earth. Water is more subtle than earth. Fire is more subtle than water. Air is more subtle than fire. Ether is more subtle than air. Even more subtle than ether is Maya. And more subtle than Maya, the most ethereal of all, is the soul.

If your heart has become attached to the gross material

elements, then how are you going to become aware of the most subtle Power? We are not going to the Guru for someone else's sake; it is strictly in our best interests. It is not as though we are doing the Guru any favor by taking refuge with Him. It is to remove our gross material tendencies that we need to wholeheartedly do the seva and take refuge with the Guru. Until we go into the Guru's shelter, we cannot progress on the path. Otherwise, some trace of egotism remains in our hearts—be it physical, mental, or material.

Many people consider it beneath them to do the physical seva. They wish to be excused from the physical seva and say that they will donate money instead. But my friend, this is not a business transaction. We cannot buy the benefit of the physical seva.

Others are very active in the physical seva, but when the time comes to donate, they don't want to part with their money, so they quietly slip away. They think, "What harm is there if I don't donate anything. After all, I have done so much physical seva. Why are they asking me to donate money as well?" This is a common occurrence.

And then there are those who donate for the sangat, and they also do a lot of physical seva. But they don't think it is necessary to do the meditation. Until you do the meditation, your egotism and attachment will not leave you. The defects within you cannot be removed. You remain stuck in gross unconsciousness. So how can you hope to attain any spiritual benefit?

Body, mind, and wealth—you must sacrifice all three. Only then can that subtle Power, the Power of Spiritual Knowledge, manifest in your within. If you remain in the Guru's shelter with unswerving devotion, then He Himself will bestow His glance of grace on you.

*Fall at the door of the Giver and do not leave,
Even if you receive kicks and knocks.*

Whether He feeds you or lets you remain hungry, whether He gives you good clothes or leaves you in tatters, never leave the door of the Guru. You have come begging for the wealth of spirituality; you are not asking for any worldly thing.

And if you remain at His door with unwavering devotion, He Himself will become merciful on you. Your heart will become pure, and the Power of the Lord will manifest within you.

*Through the Perfect Guru,
You will gain self-realization
by contemplating on the Shabd.*

He says that when you meet the Perfect Master, you will attain self-realization; you will understand the soul's essential nature. How do you gain this knowledge? Unite your attention with the True Shabd within you.

**The Lord who gives life to all the creation dwells
forever in your heart.**

Now, give up lust, anger, and egotism.

The Lord is dwelling within all, so why do we not all meet Him? Kabir Sahib tells us:

*My Lord is dwelling in every heart;
There is no place without Him,
But I sacrifice myself at that place
where He has manifested.*

My Lord is seated within everyone, but lust, anger, and all the

gross passions are also residing there. Where the thieves rule, all the honest people run away. Our within is filled up with such rulers, and until we turn these renegades out, how can the noble qualities thrive there?

The Almighty Lord who supports the universe is residing within us. So why can we not contact Him? Only if we renounce lust, anger, greed, attachment, and egotism can we meet Him.

The lustful person cannot repeat the Naam. The current of lust leads us to the lower organs of sense, whereas the current of Naam transports us to the higher realms. Those people who are being swept downward by the senses cannot rise above, and those who follow the Naam current into higher regions do not descend below.

We need to understand that our greatest enemy is lust. When lust comes, anger follows. It has been said:

*When lust manifests,
Anger follows in its wake.*

Anger follows lust, and wherever lust and anger are present, there you will also find greed and attachment—they all work together.

So long as our life is being swept away in the currents of these negative qualities, how will we be able to meditate on the Naam? It is not necessary to consult any Vedas or Puranas to know the truth of this. Just bear witness to what is in your own heart.

The Lord is ever-present—permeating and pervading all places.

The Name of the Infinite Lord is enshrined within the heart.

Now He tells us that the Lord is ever-present. He never comes; He never goes. You will not find Him in the outer places of pilgrimage. He does not dwell on Mt. Kailash.

*O, man! Why do you search for me outside?
I am dwelling right within you.
I am not in the heavens,
Nor in the nether worlds;
Not in the places of pilgrimage,
Nor on the Kailash Mountain.
Look within yourself, and in an instant,
You will discover me.*

Kabir says that if you want to find something, you need to search for it where you lost it. The Lord is dwelling in one place, but you are searching for Him somewhere else. You may travel to Kashi, Rameshwar, or Pandarpur, but what can you find there? God dwells in your heart. He is with you, isn't that so? The witness of the heart is the Lord Himself. He never wavers. He is always present with you. How could it help you if He was with you at one time and then abandoned you at another time? He is ever-present; He never leaves you. He permeates the whole creation and is your nearest and dearest.

**His Shabd has been known throughout the ages;
His Name is sweet and loved by the mind.**

For age upon age, the Naam of the Lord has sustained the creation. He is as He always has been. He is immovable and unwavering.

Nowadays, many people ask: "In this Kali Yuga, where is God? We believe in eating, drinking, and making merry. All

that exists is what we see before us. People have told us that we'll be punished in the next world after we die. But have they ever seen the next world? Have they ever paid a visit there? No, they are just trying to frighten us with stories they have read in the scriptures." Just consider this carefully. Guru Nanak Ji has told us:

*He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.*

Since the beginning of time, even before the creation was fashioned, He was there. He exists now, and in the future too, He will remain. He is not subject to change.

This created world also operates on fixed principles. The sun and moon follow unchanging laws. The nature of the elements does not alter—air, water, and earth are immutable building blocks. The oscillations of the kaleidoscopic mind are ever-changing; but the basic laws and components of the created world remain the same. They do not shift or vary.

Were there four suns in earlier times and now only one sun shines? No, it is not like that. Did the sun previously rise in the west and set in the east? No such change has occurred.

But our inner mind undergoes continual change. We perceive the objects of Maya through the lens of our mind and intellect, and thus we wander lost in an ever-shifting panorama of illusion.

The Naam or Sound Current has endured through age after age. But what is that Sound Current like? Only when our attention gets connected with it, will we come to know its unrivaled sweetness; nothing in all the creation is as sweet as Naam.

Once we have tasted that inner sweetness of Naam, all

inclination towards the sense pleasures and evil deeds will disappear automatically from our within. It is said that Naam is the form of bliss because it has the power to satisfy all our desires. And when we experience its enchanting sweetness, we become immersed in bliss beyond all measure.

**The one who serves the Guru discovers the Naam,
and their coming into the world is made fruitful.**

So, whoever serves the Satguru with single-minded devotion will manifest the Naam within and make their human birth successful. Such a person comes into this world and earns the profit. All others simply eat, drink, have three or four children, and depart. Where they came from and where they are going to at the time of death, no one knows. They spend their whole life in eating, sensual indulgence, fear, and sleep.

This is not true just of human beings, but of animals as well. The animals also indulge and have children. They also eat, drink, and sleep. They also experience fear. And if we waste our whole human birth engaged in these activities, then what is the difference between us and the animals?

What does it mean to be a human being? Both mind and God are present in this human body. The person who realizes that God dwells within is a true human being. But until we discover our divine nature, we are human in name only.

**Tasting the ambrosia of the Lord,
the mind is satiated forever;
The soul who sings the glories of the Sublime
Lord is content and fulfilled.**

Whoever has tasted the Nectar of the Lord's Name is satisfied

forever. Such a disciple becomes free of egotism and desire. In one place, Guru Arjan Dev says:

*To ask for anything other than
You is to invite suffering upon suffering.
Please grant me the contentment of
Naam that takes away the hunger of my mind.*

If we ask for anything from the Lord except the Lord Himself, we are only praying for more suffering. Already we are undergoing so much suffering and will just be heaping more suffering upon our heads.

So, we should pray to the Lord, “Kindly shower mercy upon me and grant me the gift of your Naam, which is the destroyer of all pain. Please bestow this gift on me.”

**The lotus of the heart blossoms forth.
We are ever imbued with the Lord’s Love,
and the Unstruck Melody resounds within.**

Now, He explains what you experience by doing Naam Simran. As your attention is gradually detached from the world, it begins to withdraw and turns within. Then, uniting with the Naam, you become the form of Naam and the lotus of your heart blossoms—filled with effulgent Light. As you merge into that Naam, all sense of “I and mine” is obliterated. No awareness of the outer world or the individual self remains.

**The body and mind become immaculately pure;
The speech becomes purified as well, and the soul
merges in the Truth of all Truths.**

The disciple’s body is purified, the mind is purified, and the

speech becomes pure also. Then what gift does the Guru bestow? He gives us one Word. He does not come to grant material wealth, nor does He give us the boon of children. He gives us only one Word—the Shabd. And in that Shabd, all Power resides. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*The one Shabd of the Gurdev
is full of limitless wisdom.
The gods and the human beings,
the sages and the demigods,
None could fathom its meaning.*

One Word sustains the entire universe. And when that mighty Word manifests within the devotee, then their body and mind are cleansed, and they become the purest of the pure.

*No one knows the nature of the Lord's Name;
Through the Guru's teachings,
It comes to abide in the heart.*

Many people repeat the name of the Lord.

*Everyone repeats Rama, Rama;
But Rama is not realized through outer repetition.*

Everybody repeats the name of Rama, but we gain nothing by engaging in such outer repetition. But further we have:

*Everyone repeats Rama, Rama.
No one speaks of Dashrath.
Whoever who repeats the name of Dashrath,
Millions of their incarnations are crowned with success.*

Everyone repeats the name of Lord Rama, but no one repeats

the name of Rama's father, King Dashrath. Still, in this couplet, we are told to repeat the name of Dashrath. We know that by outer repetition nothing can be gained, so what is the significance of these words? The real meaning behind this verse is that when we repeat "Dashrath", that is when we rise above the ten (*das*) senses and become absorbed (*rat*) in the inner Naam, then our millions of incarnations in this world finally bear fruit. But until we unite with the Inner Power, just repeating Rama or any other name outwardly will accomplish nothing, even if we go on for a hundred lifetimes.

Therefore, Guru Amar Dev Ji tells us that no one understands the real nature of the Lord's Name. Those disciples who, with great devotion, perform the seva of the Satguru, that power which permeates all will manifest within them.

Otherwise, we say, "I have taken Naam initiation. I have been initiated for a long time. I am an old satsangi." There is no significance in how long you have been initiated. What difference does it make if you are an old satsangi? After all, old things get eaten up by the insects.

And what can we say about the new satsangi? Truly speaking, the "new" satsangi is the one in whom Naam is manifested. Otherwise, you may say you are an old or new satsangi, but what difference does that make?

**Becoming a Gurumukh, one understands the Path;
The tongue savors the sublime essence of the
Lord's Nectar.**

The path opens before the one who becomes a Gurumukh; tasting the Nectar of the Lord's Naam they become the form of that Nectar.

**Through the Guru you get the benefit of
repetitions, austerities, and self-restraint;
The Naam comes to dwell within your heart.**

He says that through the Guru, you get the benefit of repetitions, self-restraint, donations, charity, and righteous deeds. Until you have met the Guru, for whose sake are you devoted to these practices? Who will reward you for your efforts?

Take for example a company that has no owner. Even if you work there all day long, who is going to pay you? No one is in charge. No one is responsible. You don't even know whose company it is. You go there and work every day, but who will give you your pay?

Similarly, on the Path of Spirituality, if you have no Guru, then who is keeping the account of your good and bad deeds? Who will reward you for your devotion? Through the Guru your donations become acceptable, and through the Guru your repetitions bear fruit.

And it is only through the Guru that you learn to do the Simran of the Lord's Name. Until you meet the Guru, for whose sake are you doing all this devotion? What kind of remembrance of God will you be able to do? It is only when we follow the Guru's teaching and adopt the way of the Gurumukh that we can meditate on the Naam and receive the fruit of our devotion.

We see that some people do the practice of *solāh som-wār*, fasting for 16 consecutive Mondays. Now we are in the month of Sawan, and during this month, so many people observe these special fasts. They say they are fasting in honor of Lord Shiva. Friends, which Shiva are you honoring? Have you ever met him?

And what kind of fast are you keeping? When the month

of Sawan comes to an end and the month of Bhadon arrives, you will eat twice as much to make up for what you missed. So, my friend, why did you fast in the first place? What do you gain from it? Nothing at all.

He tells us that the repetitions, austerities, and self-restraint that we practice can have value only if the Guru has taken responsibility for us. It is only through the Guru's grace that Naam manifests in our hearts. Without His grace, we can do nothing.

**O Nanak, those devotees who meditate on the
Naam become beautiful and are honored in the
Court of the True Lord.**

He says that those dear ones who make the Naam the support of their life, who manifest that Naam in their hearts, they are glorified in both this world and the next. They achieve immortality. Naam never dies, and they are also freed from death.

The river swirls and rages when it is separate from the sea. At their source, high in the Himalayas, the Ganges and Yamuna rivers come thundering out of the mountainside. The water cascades down to the plains, flowing rapidly and noisily along toward the ocean. But when the rivers finally reach their destination, when they abandon the riverbeds and flow into the ocean water, all the noise ceases. They merge silently into its fathomless depths.

—Baba Somanath

Closer than Hands and Feet

**I have sung the Lord's praises over and over;
But now what songs should I sing?
The One who I was praising is the True Singer;
And He is dwelling within me.¹**

This is the bani of Param Sant Ravidas Ji. He says that so many days have passed by singing the Lord's praises: "I sang bhajans and shabds. I praised His greatness and glory. I placed all my supplications before Him. But now who am I praising and who is offering that praise?" Answering His own question, Ravidas Ji tells us: "The True Singer resides within me." Who is the True Singer? The Almighty Lord who dwells within you. He is closer than hands and feet—the nearest of the near. Now recognize that One who is the source of all this praise; He is the support of all your singing.

**As long as you remain aware of the body and its
desires, you will go on crying.**

While you are conscious of the body and its desires, you go

¹ *Gāi gāi ab kā kahi gāññ*, Ravidas

on crying out for the Lord's help. If you conceive of God Almighty as something separate from yourself, then, in the hope of reuniting with Him, you will praise and glorify Him; you will sing of His qualities and describe His greatness. But when you rise above all thoughts of the body, when every desire is removed, then you are soul becomes detached from mother, father, and all the bodily relations and—untrammelled by the chains of this world— is freed from birth and death. As long as you remain attached to the body and dominated by pride, you will continue to be bound to mother and father, friends and relations; you will be caught in the love for spouse and children; you will go on thinking of yourself as a man or a woman. But as soon as you cast aside the love for the body and the selfish desires of this world, then you will be freed from the entanglements of this material realm—now and forever. Ravidas Ji is revealing a profound truth to us.

**When the mind loses itself in the Shabd and
all the desires of the body disappear, who
remains to sing the Lord's praise?**

When the mind becomes absorbed in the One Primal Lord, when it contacts the Shabd and becomes united with it; when it merges into the Light and becomes the form of the Light, then who remains to sing the Lord's praise? There is no more "you." When you have become one with the Lord, you have no existence separate from Him.

So, who is singing the praises and whose praises are being sung? If you think you are separate from the Lord, then you yourself sing His praise and glory, and you yourself hear that praise. You are the singer, and you are the listener. But when

you have merged your individual identity into the One who is the All-Doer, when you have become His very form, then who remains to sing or listen?

Before the river flows into the sea, its pride goes on increasing.

But when the river of the mind flows into the ocean of the Lord, then all its clamor ceases.

The river swirls and rages when it is separate from the sea. At their source, high in the Himalayas, the Ganges and Yamuna rivers come thundering out of the mountainside. The water cascades down to the plains, flowing rapidly and noisily along toward the ocean. But when the rivers finally reach their destination, when they abandon the riverbeds and flow into the ocean water, all the noise ceases. They merge silently into its fathomless depths.

Similarly, while the soul is attached to the love of the body, it longs to be reunited with the Lord and goes on praising Him, extolling His qualities, singing of His glory, and speaking of the True One. But when the soul follows the stream of Shabd and merges into God Almighty, then what becomes of all the noise, the singing, the praise, and the speaking? The soul becomes as silent and still as the depths of the ocean.

As long as you do the bhakti with the hope of liberation, you keep singing the praise of the Almighty Lord.

As long as we perform our bhakti cherishing in our heart the hope of liberation, we will go on singing the glory and

extolling the greatness of the One Supreme Lord. We will describe Him as Formless, Flawless, Immaculate, Supreme, All-Pervading, All-Protecting. We will glorify Him as the Merciful One, the Protector of the poor, and we will heap countless praises upon Him. But when our soul merges into Truth, when it becomes one with the Shabd, then who will be glorified and who will offer that praise.

**Wherever your mind fixes its desires,
you will not find happiness there.**

He says that as long as desire remains in your mind, it makes no difference if the desire is noble or base. It is said: “You are bound by the objects of your desire.” Whatever we are longing for becomes the source of our bondage. When we are controlled by desire, we can gain nothing, because desire is empty. As soon as desire is eradicated, we will experience the bliss of desirelessness; but while any trace of desire remains, we will find no happiness anywhere.

**When you rise above longing and desire,
you reach the Highest Realm;
There you attain true happiness.**

When you remove desire from your within, then you become the form of tranquility. No cravings remain within you. When water becomes still, then no waves can arise. But when the water becomes agitated by the wind or by any other currents that would disturb its equanimity, then waves and ripples form. We chase after those waves, and following wave after wave, we continue to take birth. Friend, think about it; what is the nature of a wave? It is made up of water. And what is the nature

of water? It is mercurial—ever-changing. So, as long as the waves of desire keep arising in our mind, they will shape our understanding and our intellect. All our actions will be driven by those waves. We will create karmas to fulfill our desires, and then we will become bound fast by those very karmas.

But when we reverse the trend of our thoughts, from where can those waves arise? Then we enter the field of Truth. When we absorb our thoughts in Truth then no desires can come up, and when desire is removed, we cease creating karmas to achieve those desires. When desire controls us, then we create more karmas to gain the object of our desire, and those new karmas keep us bound. When desire is removed, we become free of karma. Then we gain true happiness.

**Ravidas says, you once saw the Lord as
something separate;
But now you experience the Divine, Primal
Element permeating all.**

The Almighty is All-Pervasive and Self-Existing; this is His state of being. He is *Paramatattva*—the Divine, Primal Element. He dwells beyond the grasp of the intellect.

If we imagine that God is something separate, we will see Him as Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, or Shankar. And while our attention is identified with these different forms that we have attributed to God, we remain fragmented. But when we become absorbed in the Oneness within, these imagined forms of God disappear of themselves—no Rama or Rahim remains.

—Baba Somanath

The Vision of Oneness

**I cannot be called a devotee of God.
I have done no seva and cannot be counted among
His servants.¹**

Many worldly people make a great show of devotion, seeking to increase their name and fame and spread their reputation for holiness. Becoming puffed up with pride, they call themselves mahatmas and sadhus. But here, Sant Ravidas tells us, “I have not done the devotion of the Lord. There is no need to address me as a devotee. Neither have I done any seva nor have I become His servant.”

**I have not learned the art of yogic practices or the
performing of yagyas (ritual offerings).
I have stayed away from such things.**

Further, He says, “I will not perform the various yogic practices nor participate in the yagyas or other rites and rituals. I remain detached from them. Why? Because I know that if I do all these things, they will bind me to the world. If I do yogic

¹ *Rām bhagat ko jan na kahāññ*, Ravidas

practices or perform the yagyas, the world will praise me. And through doing pranayama, I will acquire miraculous powers. Then egoism will swell up in my heart. Worrying about the opinions of others, I will seek praise and fear criticism. I do not engage in yogic practices and perform the outer worship, rites, rituals, and offerings because these things will not help me reach my goal.”

If I call myself His devotee, then my fame will spread far and wide.

If I make a show of the yogic practices, then people will start to revere me.

Ravidas tells us: “If I call myself a devotee, the world will hold me in high regard. And if I make a show of the yogic powers, then everyone will sing my praises. Someone will say, ‘He is a great mahatma, and I should go to him. He will be able to fulfill all my desires. He will bestow this blessing on me. He will bestow that blessing on me.’ Each person will come to me to get their own works accomplished. I will become venerated as a great soul, and this will interfere with my progress. So, I don’t want to be known as a devotee. I don’t want to perform the yogic practices or the rites and rituals.”

If I develop all the noble qualities, the world will sing my praises;

And I will start to believe in my own greatness and magnificence.

He goes on to explain: “If I become a noble person, a virtuous person, and lead an exemplary life, if I parade my virtues

before the people, then they will say, 'He is a very great man, a very holy soul.' When they praise me, I will start to believe that I am an exalted and extraordinary being. And in that way, I will become ever more ensnared in egotism and vanity."

There is nothing in egotism, attachment, and self-deception.

All of these impediments must be rooted out from your within.

Here, Ravidas sounds a word of caution: "If you are free from ego and attachment, then you will not be susceptible to people's praise. But as long as those qualities are lurking within, there is always some danger that one day they may lure you astray."

**I consider hell and heaven as equal;
To consider them different is illusion.**

Now He speaks of heaven (*bahist*) and hell (*dozakh*): "Both heaven and hell are equal in my eyes. I am not performing good deeds to win the heavens nor avoiding sins to escape the hells. For me, heaven and hell are both the same."

So, if they are the same, from where does the perception of difference arise? As long as you remain tied to your individual ego, the sense of duality persists. But when you eliminate yourself from the equation—when you transcend the feeling of I and mine—then you see no difference between heaven and hell.

When you have transcended the ego, even the desire for liberation cannot arise. When your little self merges into the

Greater Self, to whom should you pray for emancipation?
Who even remains there to offer that prayer?²

**You view the world through the lens of duality.
Stuck in “I and you,” all the merit you have
attained is lost.**

He explains, “I have searched throughout the whole world. I have pursued intellectual knowledge, carefully studying the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, and other holy books. I have practiced the yogic disciplines and have performed the rites, rituals, and devotions. But in the end, my quest has only led me to conclude that the odor of egotism arises from all these pursuits—the sense of I-hood is at their very core. Therefore, I have decided to leave all these things aside because wherever the sense of ego intrudes, it pollutes all your good intentions. You lose those attainments you had to begin with, and you remain devoid of the real essence you are seeking.”

2 Many Saints and mahatmas have expressed this same thought in their own words:

“When God is the Knower of the secrets of all, there hardly remains anything to be told to Him. With the Lord seated in each one of us and permeating our very being, what need is there to pray and to whom?

*Hari is the Indweller and knoweth all,
To whom then art we to tell of us?*

— Guru Arjan

*What should the lowly urge for
When God is seated within all?*

— Guru Ram Das

Saints always live in this state. Being one with His Will and conscious co-workers with Him, prayer of itself becomes a heresy for them and savors of skepticism. Nature’s forces simply wait on them. However slight a thought may arise, it must, like an immutable law, prevail. God is ever with His devotee and looks after him with more care and attention than any loving mother would give her child.” Kirpal Singh, *Prayer: Its Nature and Technique* (Sawan Ashram, Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) “What to Ask from God,” p. 78.

**O brother, when the mind and self become unified,
you can unite with the One within.**

The soul realizes its real nature when the mind becomes freed from the outer attachments. Then, it merges into the Oversoul and attains the bliss of Oneness.

**Krishna, Karim, Ram, Hari, and Raghav.
We worship God in all these various forms,
only so long as we have not witnessed His
Oneness for ourselves.**

So long as we have not attained that state of unity, one person may worship the Lord as Krishna, another may worship Him as Rama, and someone else may be devoted to Him as Karim, Allah, or Khuda.

This remains our condition until we experience that Unity for ourselves. But when that vision of Oneness dawns within us, then no difference between Rama or Karim or Rahim remains. Then we see that all the names refer to the same Power.

If we imagine that God is something separate, we will see Him as Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, or Shankar. And while our attention is identified with these different forms that we have attributed to God, we remain fragmented. But when we become absorbed in the Oneness within, these imagined forms of God disappear of themselves—no Rama or Rahim remains.

*The Vedas, the Puranas, the Koran,
and other holy books have not seen that Oneness.*

He says that the Vedas, the Koran, and the Puranas have not

seen that Oneness because whoever has experienced that Oneness is silent; that Oneness cannot be described.³ If you have not known that Oneness, you may seek to describe it by relying on the manifold conjectures and concoctions generated by the mind and intellect.

But Oneness is Self-Existing—it lies beyond the realm of words. The sun never needs to say, “I am radiating light, and you must look at me.” Would the sun ever need to express its own greatness? No, never. It is self-evident.

**The forms of God we worship are all unreal.
O brother, only the Self-Existing Lord is True.**

If we worship the form of some imagined god of our own creation, that is an imperfect type of devotion, and we become enslaved by it. He says that Truth naturally pervades every being. But to grasp this reality is very difficult.

Everyone is searching for the Truth according to their own makeup and stage of development. Even the most untruthful person will proclaim sincerely: “I am speaking the truth.”

3 In these lines, Ravidas is making the point that the scriptures have not seen the Unity of the Divine, but still they go on trying to describe that state of Oneness, which is ineffable. As Lao Tzu tells us: “Those who know do not speak. Those who speak do not know.” Even though the Saints respect the scriptures because they contain accounts of the lives and experiences of the great souls who have gone before, still they also point out the limitations of these written records. The scriptures can inspire us to search for God, but they cannot make us see God. Master Kirpal Singh tells us: “The scriptures are indeed wonderful and precious records of the personal experiences of the great souls in their quest for Reality; and, as such are worthy of respect and adoration. The study of the scriptures has its own value. To a certain extent, these books awaken in us a desire for knowledge of God. By reading them, we too are moved to experiment in the science of life, to seek out some living Master competent to initiate us into the preliminaries of this science, for such a one can help and guide us on the spiritual Path from plane to plane. But beyond this, the scriptures cannot help.” Kirpal Singh, *Spirituality: What It Is* (Anaheim, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1981) “Apravidya (or Knowledge of the World): Its Value,” p. 91.

We think like this because our innate nature is Truth, and we always have the feeling within us that we are the true ones. We think we know best of all. Even though someone may be speaking a falsehood, they will still think to themselves, “All that I am saying is right and true.” Truth is all-pervading, and even though a person may be speaking a falsehood, still Truth is the foundation of all that exists. A person may take a solemn oath: “I swear I’m telling the truth.” They may be conveying something false under oath, but because their innate nature is Truth, they mistakenly think they know best about everything and that whatever they speak is true.⁴

Truth pervades all the creation. God is Truth—no other form of God exists. Until we understand this reality, the illusion obscuring the Truth within us cannot be dispelled. This is a profound subject. We envision God as Brahm or believe in Him as Parbrahm. We always wish to worship the Deity in an image of our own creation. But God is what He is—He has no equal. What room is there for us to create another God?

**Ravidas says, “I worship only the nameless God
Who has no fixed abode.”**

He says, “I worship that One, who has no dwelling place—He exists beyond the realms of time and space. The God who I worship is nameless and formless. Losing my existence in Him, I have become One with Him.”

4 Master Kirpal Singh expands on this subject in a talk from January 18, 1971: “God is all-bliss, all consciousness, all-joy, all-intellect, and we are a drop of the Ocean of All-consciousness. He is ever-existent—do we think we will ever die? We never dream of it. With all this, we know that people leave the body, but even then we feel we cannot die. Even in a child that reflection is there. Because God is All-wisdom, we consider that what we know is also all-wisdom. Even a child will say, “I know better!” Is it not so? This is the reflection of that all-wisdom.” Kirpal Singh, *Light of Kirpal* (Sanbornton, NH, Sant Bani Ashram, 1980) “Permanent Happiness,” p. 230-231.

When the secrets of the True Path are revealed before your very eyes, what is the point of arguing pro and con over theoretical points of no significance? When you see plainly that something does not exist, there is no need to argue it away. And when the Unchangeable, Immutable Reality has manifested before you, of what use are embellishments on that Reality or proofs that it exists?

—Baba Somanath

Sail Across the Ocean of Existence

**Have the darshan of the Guru within, taking your
seat at the Tisra Til.**

**Always listen to the Sound of the Shabd Guru;
Attach yourself to Him and burn all desires to
ashes.¹**

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Swami Ji Maharaj. Every spiritual path teaches us that the Guru's darshan and devotion are the essence of all practices. We attend Satsang daily, and there, through the Guru's darshan and grace, we are inspired to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to meditation.

It is not easy to practice the sadhana taught by the Satguru; ascending within on the Guru's Path is not for the faint-hearted. All the other sadhanas—repetitions, austerities, yogic practices, and drawing inferences—only serve as an intoxicating soporific, pacifying the mind and lulling it into a state of dull complacency. But manifesting the Guru within is entirely different; it is the most challenging sadhana of all. As long as the

¹ *Guru kā daras tū dekh rī, til āsan dār*, Swami Ji Maharaj

slightest trace of doership remains within, the Inner Guru will not appear. Here, Swami Ji is explaining to us the method to contact the Guru Power already residing within us.

He tells us to divert our thoughts from the world and focus our attention between the two eyes. In this way, we bring the mind to a standstill. Gaze within with one-pointed attention at whatever you see before you. When the form of the Guru manifests there, keep your attention riveted on Him and merge into that form.

*Giving up all sense of I-hood,
Become absorbed in the Guru.*

When you no longer exist, only the Guru remains. Within us lie two faculties of higher perception—inner hearing and inner sight—and when we concentrate within, these two powers awaken. Through the faculty of inner sight, we have the darshan of the Guru within, and through the faculty of inner hearing, we hear the music of the Shabd. When we invert our attention and exercise those faculties, the mind automatically withdraws from outside and begins perceiving the inner reality. Then, we enjoy the true darshan of the Guru.

That Inner Guru is always with you, closer than hands and feet; you only have to look within to see Him. Wherever you may go, the mind always accompanies you, but the Guru is also always by your side. And whatever questions you may ask, the Radiant Form of the Guru will give a reply to your queries. He is always present at the *Tisra Til*, the still point at the center of the forehead between the two outer eyes.

When no worldly desire remains in your heart, when you become totally absorbed in the Sound of Shabd within, when your thoughts merge into the Conscious Inner Light,

then all awareness of the body disappears. And when you no longer have any awareness of the body, the outer world is also completely forgotten.

**The Guru's Inner Form is unimaginably beautiful,
scintillating like the sun.**

**The black bee is enchanted when the lotus flower
opens in full bloom.**

When the sun rises, the dark night is dispelled, and all the earth is bathed in light. In the same way, for millions of ages and lifetimes, the heart has been enshrouded in darkness, but when the dazzling sun of the Guru's Radiant Form rises within, the heart is flooded with the Light of Spirituality.

Within the body are six lotuses, and a seventh is located above in the astral plane.² When the Guru manifests within, these lotuses are drenched in the Self-Radiant Light of the Guru's form. Just as when the sun rises, the outer lotuses bask in the sun's rays and unfold their petals, so, in the same way, the inner lotuses blossom in the Guru's Light. The mind becomes totally enamored with their form, color, and beauty, just as the black bee becomes infatuated with the outer lotus flowers.

So, in this way, the black bee of your mind should become so absorbed in the luminous beauty of the Gurudev that all thought of the outer world is banished. And then, with a stilled mind, the soul revels in the vision of the Guru's Radiant Form. This is what we call having the darshan of the Guru.

2 The six lotuses correspond to the six chakras in the body up to the *āgyā chakra* at the third eye. The seventh lotus is the crown chakra or *sahasrār kamal*, the thousand-petaled lotus, in the astral region.

O friend, those whose hearts are enshrouded in darkness cannot receive the Guru's knowledge. They do not meet the Perfect Satguru and wander lost in the labyrinth of this world.

Having received the human body, if you do not take advantage of the treasure bestowed on you, then your life passes uselessly. Your coming into this world is worthless, and you depart empty-handed. Therefore, He says that your human birth has no meaning unless you manifest the Guru's knowledge—the practical inner experience given by the Guru—in your within. This is what is meant by the Guru's knowledge or *guru gyān*.

Manifesting the knowledge of the Guru does not mean reading sacred scriptures, reciting mantras, bathing at places of pilgrimage, or performing yogic practices. These outer rites and rituals have nothing to do with *guru gyān*. The real knowledge of the Guru is the Light that illumines your heart. When your soul unites with the Naam, this can be called *guru gyān*. But if you do not receive that knowledge from the Guru, your within will be filled with ignorance, and darkness will envelop your soul.

You do not need to ask anyone else about your inner condition. Just close your eyes. Do you see darkness or Light? Daily, you consume a quarter or half or even a whole seer³ of food and water. And yet, you have no idea where all that nourishment goes in the body. It is all darkness within. When you close your eyes, you see only blackness before you. And as long as that inner darkness prevails, you cannot say you have manifested *guru gyān*.

3 Approximately 2.75 lb / 1.25 kg

What is the reason for this unfortunate state of affairs? Until your good fortune is awakened, you cannot meet with the perfect Satguru. And until you get the company of the Guru, who will tell you of the True Path? But here, there, and everywhere, you will find countless gurus who just whisper some mantra into your ear. And there is a world of difference between those so-called gurus who tell you to repeat a few words and the Power of the Limitless, Unstruck Shabd that can transmute you into the form of the Almighty Lord Himself.

So here, Ravidas tells us that many have not yet met the Perfect Satguru. When you are fortunate enough to meet with such a Guru, He will instruct you in the True Path. And once you have had the great good fortune to find such a Guru, could you ever abandon Him and go to another door? Where else could you find such a refuge?

**But now, by good fortune, I have met the Satguru,
and I sacrifice myself on Him.**

Here He tells us: "I have met the Perfect Satguru. Now, He dwells in my heart, and, over and over, I sacrifice myself on Him." Just as the sense of "I and mine" is foremost in everyone, so for me, my Guru is all and all. Whatever He tells me to do, I will follow His instructions wholeheartedly.

**Like the moonbird gazing at the moon, I am lost in
contemplation of His marvelous form.**

My soul becomes enraptured, gazing at the Guru's beauty like the moonbird contemplating the moon. As soon as the moon

rises in the east, the moonbird becomes enthralled by its shimmering rays. The moonbird is absorbed to such an extent that as the moon travels high in the sky, the moonbird's head follows it, and when the moon's path reaches its zenith, the beak of the moonbird is pointing straight up in the air. Its attention is riveted on the moon, and that attention never wavers. And when the moon starts to sink in the west, the moonbird cannot bear to break its contemplation long enough to turn its body around to look in that direction. Instead, the moon bird twists its neck as its beak follows the descent of the moon like a needle till the moon sinks below the horizon. As long as its beloved moon is visible in the sky, the moonbird does not look away even for a fraction of a second. Its contemplation is unbroken.

So, Swami Ji says, "I am lost in the contemplation of His beautiful form, just like the moonbird gazing at the moon." How can any thought of the world and the worldly things—sons and daughters, family and relatives, wealth and possessions, comforts and pleasures—intrude there? Whoever beholds the enchanting form of the Guru, their attention remains transfixed on that radiant vision.

Satguru is the form of Shabd and has taken up His seat in the Inner Sky.

You are also the form of Surat (the soul), so follow in the Guru's footsteps.

Hardly anyone has spoken so openly as Swami Ji Maharaj concerning Guru bhakti and the features of the Inner Path. Now, what does He tell us? He says, "My Satguru is the form of Shabd. When I incarnated in this gross material body created

by Maya, at that time the Guru Himself also took up the human form. To separate me from the body and the qualities fashioned by Maya—to free me from this unconsciousness of the material world—he gave out Truth through the Satsang. When I followed His instructions and closed the nine doors of the body, the Conscious Power within me ascended to the tenth door, and there I had the darshan of my Gurudev. Earlier, my soul was trapped in mind and Maya, but when I rose within, I realized that the Guru is a Conscious Power, and the disciple is that same Conscious Power. And when Light merges into Light, the two become one. I realized that the true form of the Guru is Shabd, and taking the support of that Shabd Power, my soul merged with the True Guru within. Supported by the Power of Shabd, I crossed over the astral plane, and riding on that Inner Sound, I was transported to the regions beyond.”

The soul and the Shabd are not two different things. Because we are attached to the physical body, we think the Conscious Power within is something separate from us, but the Shabd and the soul are one and the same Power. They appear to be different only because of the veil of mind and Maya that has come in between.

**Guru’s form dwells at the still point between the
two outer eyes;
Open your inner eye and behold Him there.
Guru’s Shabd is resounding in your ears;
Listen to it calling from the Gagan.**

He says, “Guru’s form dwells in your eyes.” When your inner eye opens, you will discover the Guru’s form sitting within

you. Then, naturally, the question arises: Why didn't you see Him earlier? As long as your eyes are attracted by the mirage of the world and worldly forms, the Power of your soul will remain extroverted. The veil of mind and Maya totally obscures the inner realms, and you will perceive only the illusory material objects of the outer world.

But the inner eye is a doorway into the realms beyond. And at that juncture, the Guru sits waiting for you. Therefore, Swami Ji tells us, "Open your inner eye and behold Him there." The Guru's Shabd is also resounding within you; open your inner hearing faculty and listen to its enchanting melody. That Sound cannot be perceived by the outer ears; only the subtle inner ear can catch its celestial strains.

Radhaswami is openly revealing the secrets of the True Path.

The fortunate soul who accepts His words sails across the ocean of existence.

He tells us there is no question of debating and intellectual wrangling; on this Path there is nothing to assert or refute. When the secrets of the True Path are revealed before your very eyes, what is the point of arguing pro and con over theoretical points of no significance? When you see plainly that something does not exist, there is no need to argue it away. And when the Unchangeable, Immutable Reality has manifested before you, of what use are embellishments on that Reality or proofs that it exists? Therefore, He says: "I am not refuting one thing, nor asserting another. I am laying before you the True Path leading to the Almighty Lord—the Primal Way laid down before the beginning of time. I am sharing the

Truth I have seen with my own eyes. But who will accept my words and believe in them? Only those with great good fortune. The worldly people stubbornly refuse to listen, and so, how can those poor fellows gain any understanding?"

He says we should stop running after the sweet taste of the illusory worldly pleasures. He refers to all the difficulties we undergo in this world as the bitter cup, and when we are willing to drink that cup of suffering, we have become true spiritual aspirants. If we aspire for Godhead but still think there is no harm in hankering after all the worldly pleasures, how can we hope to meet with the Almighty Lord?

—Baba Somanath

Drink the Bitter Cup of Love

**First, break away from worldly attachment,
Then enquire about meeting the Beloved.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Paltu Sahib Ji. He tells us, “If you wish to do the devotion of the Lord, first of all, give up your love of the world, your egotism, and your attachment to worldly pleasures. Then come and ask your questions about God.” Even if your within is full of dirt and garbage, you can still go to the Saint to ask about meeting the Lord. But the Saints know what lies hidden in our hearts, so He replies, “Friend, who do you really want to meet? What you wish for, you will receive.”

Many people used to go to Swami Ji to discuss spiritual matters. But one lady was living in Swami Ji’s home, and before you could talk to Swami Ji, you had to explain to her the purpose of your visit. She would ask the visitors, “Why have you come here?” They might reply that they needed His guidance on some work they had in hand. Or they would tell her they had come to talk with Swami about their meditations. Or they would say they had some pressing spiritual question to

¹ *Pahile sansār se tori āvai, tab bāt piyā kī pūchiye jī*, Paltu Sahib

ask Him. So, she would listen to each one and then tell them, “That’s alright. But first, tell me a little more about the matter. Answer me truthfully. When you came here, what was your real desire?” That dear would likely reply, “My only desire is for the Almighty Lord.” Then that lady would probe deeper: “And what kind of Almighty Lord do you really want?” So, under her relentless questioning, any falsehood lurking within them would slowly come to the surface, and then she could decide whether or not to allow them an audience with the great Guru. The visitors who had come with ulterior motives would soon become ruffled by her scrutiny and feel uneasy. Then she would tell them, “Sorry. He has no time for you today. Come back another time.”

A few rare ones were lucky enough to come into Swami Ji’s presence, and then He Himself would tell them, “First, think over carefully what your inner mind is really craving. Once you know your own heart, you can speak to me of spirituality.” So, only a few rare ones came before Him—the true lovers suffering the pangs of separation and desiring liberation. Those fortunate souls asked Him about the spiritual Path and told Him of their deeply cherished hope. Then, Swami Ji would impart to them the knowledge of the God Way.

Most of us would say, “I wish for liberation. I want to meet the Almighty Lord and become free from the pain of birth and death.” But usually, that wish does not run very deep. Kabir Sahib says:

*The devotee who is only imitating others
cannot be dyed in the true color.*

Watching others, someone might think, “Come on. They are going to see the Guru. I will go also.” But such devotees

cannot meet the Almighty Lord. Therefore, Paltu Sahib tells us: “First remove the worldly thoughts from your heart; then, enquire about the spiritual secrets.”



Baba Somanath Ji

**You can't fit two swords in one scabbard,
No matter how hard you try.**

You have two swords but only one scabbard. Similarly, you have only one heart. How can you fill that one heart with the love of the world and the pursuit of spirituality? This world is the form of desire. This illusory creation is filled with expectation and discontent. But spirituality is desireless; it is content and asks for nothing. Desire and desirelessness—how can the two coexist? Craving and contentment cannot dwell together in one place, just as two swords cannot reside in one scabbard.

**Set aside the sweet cup of the world,
And drink the bitter cup of Love.**

Spirituality is not easily obtained. If you take gold to a goldsmith, first, he will rub that gold with a touchstone. How can he tell if that gold is 100% pure? If that gold is not absolutely pure, then when he rubs it with the touchstone, the line that gold makes on the stone will not match the line characteristic of pure gold. After the goldsmith has tested your gold with the touchstone, he will throw it into the fire and observe the result. If the color of the gold remains unaltered, then it is 100% pure. In the same way, when the purity of your heart is tested by happiness, sorrow, profit, loss, and all the other vicissitudes of life, if you do not waver and do not abandon the way of Truth and Oneness, then your spirituality is genuine.

He says we should stop running after the sweet taste of the illusory worldly pleasures. He refers to all the difficulties we undergo in this world as the bitter cup, and when we are willing to drink that cup of suffering, we have become true

spiritual aspirants. If we aspire for Godhead but still think there is no harm in hankering after all the worldly pleasures, how can we hope to meet with the Almighty Lord?

**O Paltu, when you cut off your head and offer
it to Him,
You are ready travel on the Path to the Beloved.**

In the end, He tells us, “Cut off your head and offer it to Him. Then take up the Path leading to God Almighty.” You will meet the Lord, but this is not a task to be undertaken lightly.

Similarly, when the soul becomes absorbed within, it is like pouring oil—that oil flows down smoothly in an unbroken stream. But when we pour water, it splashes and splatters into separate drops. So, until the soul unites with that Inner Power, we sometimes slip into forgetfulness, and our inner connection breaks. Sometimes the thoughts of the world crowd into our within and separate us from that inner Power. But the Saints and Mahatmas stay continually connected. They remain absorbed within. Their devotion is just like the flow of the oil that never breaks. Their Light has merged into the Greater Light within.

—Baba Somanath

The Unbroken Stream of Devotion

**O seeker, I no longer practice mediation; I don't sit
with closed eyes.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Paltu Sahib Ji. Many people teach that God can be met through acquiring intellectual knowledge or practicing renunciation, yoga, repetition, or austerities. And the practice of meditation is considered to be the highest of all. But here, Paltu Sahib is telling us: "I no longer even practice the meditation. I neither close my eyes nor contemplate on the Lord within. I don't engage in bhajan and dhyan. I have left these practices behind."

**When the contemplation becomes one-pointed, the
meditator becomes absorbed in the meditation.**

When the one practicing the meditation merges with the object of their devotion through the meditation practice—when the two become one—then who remains to do the meditation,

¹ *Ham bhajanik meñ nāhiñ avadhū*, Paltu Sahib

and who will they contemplate on? It is just like when we travel home to our village. As long as we have not reached our destination and are still on the way, we continue traveling along the road. But once we have reached our village, when we have arrived at our goal, then the road has no more meaning for us—it has served its purpose.

Once the meditator merges into the object of devotion, then no more meditation remains to be done.

When the meditator and the object of the meditation become one, what further effort is required? As long as we are separated from the Lord and are filled with the intense desire to meet Him, we have to go on practicing meditation. But after we have merged with the Lord, then we have achieved the goal of meditation. So, what else remains to be done?

The wife who enjoys the love of her husband doesn't long for her parents' home.

When a wife loves her husband and enjoys being with him, why would she want to return to her parents' home? Her heart is with her husband; she understands his home as her own. She used to belong with her parents, but once her love becomes attached to her husband, she is no longer drawn to her former life. In the same way, before we become absorbed in the love of the Lord, we meditate on the Lord and remain engaged in the spiritual practices. But once we contact the Lord within and become His form, we leave off our previous practices; they have no more meaning for us.

**The anul bird lives in the sky;
It doesn't like to descend to the earth.**

The anul bird² always remains in the sky. The world has no attraction for that bird. It never descends to earth; it lives its whole life in the sky. In the same way, when the Conscious Power of the soul ascends within and meets with the Self-Existing Power of the Lord, why would it turn again toward this world?

**When a drop of water falls into the ocean,
it is no longer called a drop.**

When a drop of water or rain falls into the sea, it merges with the sea and becomes its form. Then, it is no longer a drop; it has become the sea. Likewise, the embodied soul, the jiva, is a drop of the Lord. When the soul of the jiva merges into the Ever-Present, All-Knowing Power of the Lord, then that Conscious Power of the soul is no longer separate from the Lord. It is no longer called a jiva.

**When a lump of salt is thrown into the water, how
can you take it back?**

When you throw a lump of salt into the water, the salt dissolves in the water and becomes the form of the water. Then, even if you want to, you won't be able to retrieve that lump of salt. It has vanished into the water and has become

² Indian traditional tales are filled with fantastic creatures from previous ages of the world and Saints often draw on ancient lore to emphasize important spiritual points. The device is a poetic allusion pointing towards inexpressible truths, not an objective description in the spirit of scientific enquiry.

the water itself. In the same way, the soul is called “jiva” only so long as it remains bound to the inert elements. When the soul abandons the egotism of the five gross, material elements and merges into its true form, it no longer has any sense of separateness. Uniting with the Lord, it becomes the image of the Lord.

**Day and night, the flow of the oil is unbroken;
The Light merges into the Greater Light.**

Similarly, when the soul becomes absorbed within, it is like pouring oil—that oil flows down smoothly in an unbroken stream. But when we pour water, it splashes and splatters into separate drops. So, until the soul unites with that Inner Power, we sometimes slip into forgetfulness, and our inner connection breaks. Sometimes the thoughts of the world crowd into our within and separate us from that inner Power. But the Saints and Mahatmas stay continually connected. They remain absorbed within. Their devotion is just like the flow of the oil that never breaks. Their Light has merged into the Greater Light within.

**The servant Paltu says, “The devotee whose love
comes and goes is only a quarter of a gyani.”**

Sometimes, our thoughts incline us towards acquiring spiritual knowledge or *gyān*. At that time, we think of ourselves as *gyanis* and engage in the study of sacred texts. But then, we are drawn back to our outer pursuits, and once again, we become the puppet of the world. [break in tape]

Our attention wavers. Sometimes, the wave of *gyān* comes

into our mind; sometimes, *gyān* is forgotten. Caught in such wavering, we can never perfect our *gyān*. We remain stuck fast in outer bookish knowledge and never gain a peep into the book of True Spirituality within.

Now, Paltu Sahib gives us the example of the hansa or swan. He asks, "Who taught the swan to separate milk from the water?" This knowledge is natural to the swan; it arises within unbidden. Similarly, when you sit for meditation, adopting a fixed position, then, with the grace of the Lord, the Inner Knowledge manifests by itself.

—Baba Somanath

True Knowledge Comes of Itself

What can you achieve through explanations? True Knowledge comes of itself.¹

No matter how much you may instruct others on spirituality, how will anyone understand your explanations? If someone's inner mind and intellect are wrapped up in the affairs of the world, if they have become the image of the world and are attached to things of this world, how can they grasp what you are saying? This subject lies beyond outer words, beyond the thoughts and waverings of the intellect. So you can explain to such people as much as you like, but what will you accomplish?

Therefore, in one place, Kabir Sahib tells us that even if you sit for ages explaining to a fool, your wisdom will be wasted. Further, He says: "Assess the worth of the sword, and let the scabbard lie."

Many gyanis take a vow of silence. But this silence, or *maun*, can also be full of falsehood. It's true these gyanis aren't speaking words outwardly. But when they ask for money, they show how much they need by counting on their fingers. When the

1 *Samujhāye se kyā bhayā, jab gyān āp se hoyā*, Paltu Sahib

opportunity arises to get more money, they may even break their silence and speak out loud. If they are hungry, they make a sign that they want food, and if they are thirsty, they make a sign for water. This is not the meaning of silence. Silence is when no thought or desire arises in the heart. That is true silence or *maun*. Such gyanis who maintain outer silence may refrain from speaking with their mouths, but the thoughts and desires are raging in their inner mind. Therefore, Paltu Sahib tells us that if we try to explain the inner spiritual mysteries to such people, how will they understand? They cannot grasp what we are trying to convey because they have not had that experience themselves; they have not yet reached that level.

**True Knowledge comes of itself.
Who taught the hansa to separate milk from
the water?**

Now, Paltu Sahib gives us the example of the hansa or swan. He asks, “Who taught the swan to separate milk from the water?” This knowledge is natural to the swan; it arises within unbidden. Similarly, when you sit for meditation, adopting a fixed position, then, with the grace of the Lord, the Inner Knowledge manifests by itself. You may try to accomplish this through your own efforts, but without the Lord’s grace, you will never achieve inner understanding. Kabir Sahib says:

*O, man! Why do you search for me outside?
I am dwelling within you.*

If you become absorbed in the inner Love, even for a moment, then that inherent knowledge manifests within you, and

your soul is attracted towards it. In this way, you can perfect your samadhi. Until you uncover that inner knowledge, even though the Conscious Power pervades your within, how can you perceive it? What proof do you have that it exists? If you do not get this direct experience, you will waste your whole life in inference and speculation.

So, in this example, Paltu Sahib asks, “Who taught the swan to separate milk from the water?” Nowadays, merchants mix water with the milk they sell so they can earn more profit, and the city government has tried to detect that water and remove it. But they can only inform us that the milk has been adulterated. Even though they can tell you how much water has been added, they can still not remove that extra water from the milk. Only the swan has this innate quality of knowing how to extract milk from water.

Similarly, devotees and spiritual aspirants can discard the water of the world and extract the essence—the Power of the soul—by using the Immaculate Power within. Those who remain absorbed in this practice are called hansas. Therefore, the Saints refer to the soul within us as the hansa, the swan. They also call those engaged in inner practices paramahan-sas—the supreme swans.

**The anul bird lays its egg in the sky.
The hatched chick, remembering its true home,
soars heavenward.**

The anul bird is born in the sky; it lives in the sky; it takes all of its food and drink from the sky. When the anul bird lays its egg, that egg falls from the sky, and the chick is hatched as the egg descends. Then, when the chick remembers its home in the sky, instead of falling to earth, it automatically flies

heavenward. The Saints have witnessed this, but most people have never seen it. They think the anul bird is just a fairy tale.

In the same way, the soul has come down from the Realm of Truth and is a particle of Truth. The great souls—leaving the world and the worldly pleasures behind—fly back to the True Home, Sat Lok.

**Does anyone instruct the lion cub?
Still, without delay, the lion brings down
the elephant.**

Many people are so weak in their devotion that they say, “This is too hard. We can’t do it.” Friend, do you expect someone to sit on your head and make you do it? If you want to accomplish this work, it is up to you to make the effort. You can succeed only when you manifest that Power already residing within you. If you try to force the bullock forward by twisting its tail, how far can the poor animal go? No one can force you to do the practices; this is your responsibility.

Now consider the example of the lion cub; no one teaches that cub what it means to be a lion. But within that cub, the inherent knowledge of a lion’s nature is already present. When the cub grows into a lion, it can bring down an elephant in an instant. In the same way, the Power of the soul is working within us. When that Power awakens, it drives away falsehood and illusion.

**O Paltu, study the ways of the Satguru.
What can you gain from outer explanations?
True Knowledge comes of itself.**

When you understand the ways of the Satguru—His conduct,

ways of dealing, gestures, and hints—then True Knowledge dawns within you of itself. The Satguru is merged in Truth. He is connected with the Power of the Sound Current, and that Power exerts an influence over the hearts of the people. He draws back the veil and reveals the Truth already lying within us. Even if we were to go on listening to spiritual talks and stories, day and night, what could we gain? We can acquire outer knowledge at the intellectual level, but our intellect is bound to the material world. It cannot soar to the higher realms and has no access to the Inner Wisdom.

At present, we know nothing of death. Even though we witness it with our own eyes, we still cannot understand what it is like. At the end time, everyone has to undergo this suffering. Therefore, Paltu Sahib warns us, "One day, you must leave. No one remains here forever."

—Baba Somanath

No One Remains Here Forever

**A letter has come from my Beloved; my Lord says,
“Your time is up. Don’t delay.”¹**

When the time of death approaches, the notices announcing its coming begin to arrive.² You start to feel ill. You get pain in your stomach. You get pain in your head. You get a fever. Some disease or other appears. To cancel these notices, you hurry to such and such a hospital; you run to such and such

1 *Pāti āi more pītam kī, sāi turat bulāyo ho*, Paltu Sahib

2 Whoever takes birth in this mortal world will die when the appointed hour arrives. When the time of death approaches, the Lord sends a notice that this incarnation is finished and it is time to vacate the body, which is, at best, a rented house. In this hymn, Paltu Sahib is describing the frightful condition of the souls who have not solved the mystery of death in this lifetime. They are wrenched from the body by the angels of death at the last moment and taken before the Lord of Judgment, who is no other than Lord Kal himself, to answer for their deeds and continue their journey through the wheel of transmigration. But those souls who take refuge in the Perfect Saint and follow His instructions have no fear of death. When the moment comes to leave the body for the final time, they meet the Guru within and proceed to the real Home of the Soul in His company. Kabir Sahib tells us: “Death from which the whole world shrinks is welcome unto me; I rejoice as it is a harbinger of perfect peace and joy.”

a doctor. By any means possible, you want to ignore those notices and avoid responding to them. You try to deceive the messenger: “Oh, that man has been called away. He does not live here anymore. Please return this notice to the sender.” You will try anything to ward off the inevitable.

**First, you are in a small dark room;
Further, there is neither light nor lamp.
The angel of death seizes you by the arm;
And no one comes to your aid.**

In the end, when you don't reply, a warrant is issued to take you into custody. “No matter where he may be, seize him. We sent him so many notices, but still, he didn't come. So now we are issuing a warrant.” In this way, the angels of death arrive, and no one sees them coming. In that small, dark room, there is no lamp or light; there is nothing at all. In that darkness, the angels of death lay hold of your soul and drag you away, but no one sees your going and no one knows where the angels of death have taken you.

**In Sawan, the skies grow dark;
And the clouds pour down rain day and night.
The gusts of wind assail me from every direction;
And my heart is full of fear.**

At that time, the soul is greatly distressed. The pranas, along with the consciousness, are wrenched from the body, and in every cell, we feel such a stabbing pain that it seems like hundreds of scorpions are stinging all at once. In the month of Sawan, the clouds gather, and the storms rage day and night;

the rain pours down, and it becomes so black that a lamp cannot dispel the darkness. Difficult times come to us even while we are still living in this world. But at the time of death, the rain of misery thunders down on our heads, and we are plunged into densest darkness.

**Definitely, we have to go one day;
No one can remain here forever.
What will we take with us when it is time to
meet the Lord?
We have collected no wealth in our purse.**

Without question, whoever takes birth has to die one day.

*What we see will be destroyed,
if not today then tomorrow.*

We often recite the verse:

*Rama departed, and Ravana departed
with all their kith and kin.
At the end time, nothing remains;
This world is like a dream.*

At present, we know nothing of death. Even though we witness it with our own eyes, we still cannot understand what it is like. At the end time, everyone has to undergo this suffering. Therefore, Paltu Sahib warns us, "One day, you must leave. No one remains here forever."

When you go to meet the Lord, what will you have to show? Children, wealth, and possessions do not accompany you

there. Only your meditation, Naam Simran, and devotion will accompany you. But you have not accumulated any of this true wealth for your journey into the Beyond.

**Paltu Das says: When you come into this world,
your eyes shed tears.**

**And when the human birth goes out of your
hands,**

**It is you yourself who have wasted this
precious opportunity.**

What do we do in this earth life? We fill our bellies, and we go on weeping. We come into this world sobbing; when the child is born, at that time, it begins to cry. We go on crying till our last breath, and then we depart from this world weeping. No one escapes this lifelong lament. Whether you ask the king or the pauper, the tale is the same—everyone is weeping. Outwardly, we look alright, but within, everyone is shedding tears. Kabir Sahib says:

We inquire about the well-being of others;

But no one remains in this world forever.

Everyone grows old and dies, but fear never dies.

So, where is the question of well-being?

As long as we have fear in our hearts, we will go on crying. If you ask anyone about their condition, they will tell you, “What can I do? I have so many sorrows.” If you tell them they should put aside the things that are causing them unhappiness, they will whimper, “I cannot leave these things. How can I set them aside?” Suffering has taken a firm hold of them; no happiness

can be found. They clutch onto the things of this world that give rise to their suffering, mistaking them for the source of joy, but later, they get the result of their deeds. When we have itchy skin, it feels very soothing to scratch it. But afterward, our skin burns and becomes inflamed. Similarly, our whole life long, we are caught up in scratching the itch of the senses and worldly pleasures. But at our end time, we have to suffer in the fire.

The Saints explain how to experience this Truth within ourselves. When we follow their instructions, a glimmer of understanding dawns in our hearts, and as our inner access increases, our inclination toward Truth grows ever stronger. This transformation can be accomplished only through the alchemy of Satsang. In Satsang, our attention comes in contact with Truth, and we become wholly absorbed in that Inner Power. This is the greatness of Satsang.

—Baba Somanath

The Alchemy of Satsang

**My mind roams and rambles every moment.
It runs from place to place and does not stay
in its home, even for an instant.¹**

These are the teachings of Guru Ram Das Ji, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. The basic teaching of all spiritual paths is that the mind must come under our control. Yogis endeavor to control the mind through the practice of pranayama. The gyanis try to accomplish this control through *brahmākāra vritti*, a deep state of meditation where the attention is focused on the Brahm (God) alone.²

Some devotees try to control their minds through internal meditation, while others try to subdue their minds by performing outer ceremonial and sacrificial rites and rituals. The japis (those who engage in the repetition of mantras), the tapis (those who perform austerities), the yogis, the sages, and the seers aspire to bring the mind to a standstill through their

1 *Man khin khin bharam bharam bah dhāvai til ghar nahī vāsā pāiai*, Guru Ram Das

2 *Brahm* indicates the divine Universal Consciousness. *Ākāra* means shape and *vritti* means a wave of thought. So *brahmākāra vritti* literally means “the wave of thought that has the shape of the Divine.”

various practices. But mind is an immense power. The vastness of the Three Worlds is all an expression of the mind. Brahma, Vishnu, Shankar, Sarada (Saraswati), and Narada—the messenger of the gods—are all expressions of the mind, as are the 33 million gods and goddesses, the physical plane, the twenty-one astral heavens, and the seven nether worlds.

The goal of *Paramārth* (Spirituality) is to control the mind. *Param* indicates “the highest,” and “*ārth*” depicts wealth and prosperity from which we derive happiness. So, *Paramārth* is a word that describes the highest spiritual wealth gained by contact with that Immovable Power that abides forever. It has no connection with the fleeting joys of worldly possessions. As long as the mind is not under our control, we cannot experience that great spiritual wealth nor savor our contact with it. Therefore, He says that, under the domination of the mind, we are deluded and perpetually run about here and there. In an instant, the mind races from the depths of the seven nether worlds to the peak of the twenty-one heavens. Therefore, the question arises, “How can we control this mind?”

But when the Guru applies the goad of Shabd, the mind comes under control and returns to dwell in its own home.

There is only one means to bring the mind under control. Guru Ram Das tells us that the goad of the Guru’s Shabd that chastens the mind. The elephant driver wields the *ankush* or hook to keep the head-strong elephant moving along the right path. Similarly, to direct the obstinate mind and eradicate its wayward tendencies, we need the goad of the Shabd and Simran. The mind is constantly engaged in some sort of simran or remembrance. The simran of the world pulls the mind

outside. But the Guru's Simran severs that outer simran and connects the mind with the Sat Naam. As the inner, spiritual Simran increases, the remembrance of the world decreases, and the mind turns within.

**O Beloved Lord, grant me the company of the
Truth so that I may meditate upon You.**

Then He says that from the Satsang of the Saints, we learn about the importance of the Guru and Naam, the tricks of the mind, and the existence of God. In Satsang, we discover the means to control and introvert the mind. Therefore, He says, "O God, shower grace on me and grant me the Satsang of the Saints."

It is only in Satsang that we learn to discern Truth from falsehood. We come to know which things are false and which are true. As long as the power to comprehend what is true and what is false is not firmly established within us, we will not be attracted to Truth.

If our conception of the divine is just a product of our own imagination, then even if we sincerely engage in worship, recitation of scriptures, rites and rituals, and adoration of gods and goddesses, it will not bring us close to realizing the Truth.

The Saints explain how to experience this Truth within ourselves. When we follow their instructions, a glimmer of understanding dawns in our hearts, and as our inner access increases, our inclination toward Truth grows ever stronger. This transformation can be accomplished only through the alchemy of Satsang. In Satsang, our attention comes in contact with Truth, and we become wholly absorbed in that Inner Power. This is the greatness of Satsang.

**The disease of egotism has been cured;
And the soul has found peace, entering into
Sehaj Samadhi, the state of Natural Equipoise.**

As long as the sense of I-hood persists, then, even in the state of dreams, true joy does not arise. The Sound Current is the only weapon that can defeat the ego. Until the Sound Current of Sat Naam manifests within, the disease of egotism will not depart.

All the avatars of the gods who have incarnated in this world have demonstrated great righteousness, but even the avatars fundamentally act in the realm of ego. The history of Ramchandra is depicted in the Ramayana. He was a great soul, but we can see in his life that the sense of I-hood intruded from time to time.

When Sita was abducted by Ravana and dragged away to Lanka, Ramchandra set out in search of her. As he went from place to place, his travels led him to the domain of King Bali, which was called Kishkinda.³ Sugriv, the younger twin brother of Bali, was living in exile on the nearby Rishyamukha Mountain. Earlier, angered by a misunderstanding, Bali had driven Sugriv out of his kingdom, abducting Sugriv's wife in the process. At that time, Sugriv had fled to the sanctuary of Rishi Matunga, who had an ashram on that mountain. That rishi already had a grievance against King Bali because he had once polluted the ashram's sacred precincts.⁴ At that time, the

3 Kishkinda is the kingdom of the vanaras (literally, "forest dwellers: vanaras are portrayed as monkey-like beings in the Ramayana). It is traditionally identified to be the region around the Tungabhadra River (earlier known as Pampa Sarovara) near Hampi in present-day Vijayanagara district, Karnataka.

4 Once when Bali was fighting against the demon Dundubhi, he grabbed the demon by the horns, hurled him through the air, and sent him crashing to his death. Unfortunately, the demon landed right on the rishi's ashram, defiling the spot with his blood and infuriating Matunga Rishi.

rishi had laid a curse on Bali, saying that if Bali ever showed his face on Rishyamukha Mountain, he would be killed, and, fearing for his life, Bali never went near that place. Therefore, the Rishyamukha Mountain retreat was a place of safety for Sugriv in his exile, and he was residing there, along with his trusted friend Hanuman.

When Lakshman and Ramchandra came to the area searching for Sita, they visited the Rishyamukha Mountain. And seeing the arrival of these illustrious visitors, Sugriv and Hanuman came and fell at Ramchandra's feet.

Then Sugriv explained to Ramchandra how the dispute had arisen between him and his twin brother, Bali. Sugriv offered to assist Rama in recovering Sita from Ravana if he would help him overcome Bali. Hearing his words, Ramchandra took a vow on the spot, saying, "I will kill Bali and give the kingdom of Kishkinda to you." But Sugriv told him, "Maharaj, Bali cannot be killed just like that. He is so strong that, tucking Ravana under his arm, he dunked him in countless oceans. He is such a mighty being. Conquering Bali is not such an easy matter. He has received a boon from Lord Brahma that any opponent who comes forth to do battle with him will lose half of his strength to Bali. In this way, Bali's strength is always doubled when someone confronts him in open battle. And as a consequence, no one can kill him in direct combat. If he is to be vanquished, it will have to be by stealth."⁵ Hearing his words, Ramchandra replied, "I will devise a plan to defeat him."

Then Rama and Sugriv traveled together to Kishkinda. Near the city, there was a thick forest of trees. First, Ramchandra

5 Bali was granted this boon by Lord Brahma after sitting in long and arduous penance. Bali was already enormously powerful, with the strength of many thousands of elephants. And with the attainment of Brahma's boon, Bali appeared to be invincible. It was said that no one could defeat him in head-on battle.

hid himself in ambush behind the screen of their foliage. Then Sugriv, standing before the city gates, issued a challenge to Bali, calling him out into the open to engage in hand-to-hand combat. In an angry rage, Bali surged forth, and the two brothers commenced to fight with each other. But Sugriv and Bali were identical twins, and in the battle that ensued, they were indistinguishable from each other. And as the fight progressed, Sugriv was getting soundly thrashed by Bali.

After a while, the two combatants agreed to a pause. During that break in the battle, Sugriv made his way stealthily to the place where Ramchandra was concealed and weeping told him, "Maharaj, I told you earlier that Bali is a mighty being, and it is only because of the assurance of your assistance in this fight that I could dare to stand before him. Now I am in great difficulty." Then Ramchandra replied, "You two look just alike, and since I could not tell who was who, I was in some confusion about who to shoot and who to spare. So now go back and engage with him a second time. Before the battle, Hanuman will place a garland of flowers around your neck so I will be able to distinguish you from Bali. In this way, I will know my target."

Once again, the battle resumed, and from his place of concealment, Ramchandra loosed the arrow from his bow, piercing Bali through the heart. Then, when the mighty Bali fell to the earth, Ramchandra came out of hiding and approached the place where he lay. Seeing him, Bali spoke these words to Ramchandra, "My Lord, you have been called as the avatar of Parbrahm. You are the one who protects the world. The Vedas, Shastras, and other holy scriptures all say that you are the embodiment of Truth. So why did you kill me by stealth? And further, it is said that those of the kshatriya caste⁶ must

6 The warrior caste to which Ramchandra belonged

adhere to a strict code of ethics. When they do battle, they always call out their enemies openly and fight them in face-to-face combat. With this vile deed, you have not only acted in opposition to your dharma as a kshatriya, but you have also betrayed the Truth of Parbrahm. If you wanted to kill me, it was your duty to first inform me that you wished to do battle with me. You owed me at least that much.”

Then Ramchandra replied, “You committed a despicable sin. Therefore, I had to kill you.”

Bali enquired, “What sin have I committed?”

Ramchandra told him, “You forcefully abducted your brother’s wife.”

Then Bali said, “Maharaj, this was a family dispute. He is my brother, as I am his. This was a matter for the two of us to settle between us. But, if you wished to intercede, you should have approached me directly and told me to my face that what I had done was not justified. You should have told me why you wished to kill me. You should have challenged me honorably to a fight. Why did you shoot me from concealment? You understood me as your enemy and made Sugriv your dear friend. It seems to me that the real injustice, in this case, is that, even though you are an avatar, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, still, you harbored this feeling of enemy and friend.”

Bali’s assertion was true, and Ramchandra could not refute it. So, admitting his mistake, he then conceded, “In my next incarnation, I will come into this world as Krishna. At that time, you will be reborn as a hunter and will slay me as I have slain you.”

What is the meaning of telling this story? It shows us plainly that Ramachandra was still in the grip of egotism, and that egotism led him to show partiality in his decisions. This same tendency is revealed in the lives of all the avatars.

As long as the veil of “I and mine” remains over the soul, even if one is a god, goddess, or avatar, liberation can never be possible. That veil of egotism sits between the soul and liberation. The aim of all spiritual endeavors is to remove egotism from within, and when this veil parts, your liberation is achieved.

**This house is heaped up with countless gems,
jewels, rubies, and emeralds;
But the wandering mind cannot find them.**

The entire universe, with its divisions and grand divisions, is housed within this human body. The Lord Himself is also within this human body. When we ask anyone where God resides, they will naturally reply: “He is within me.” The soul, the Almighty Lord, the gods and goddesses, Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh, all are to be found within this human body.

This body is a treasure house filled with priceless gems of spiritual experience. Even though this is so, we still run about outside collecting worthless shells—all the useless objects of matter and Maya. The worldly sense pleasures are contemptible; they have no value. These very pleasures are the cause of sickness and disease. They are not less than death. Yet day and night, under the domination of the power of illusion, we chase after them. In this regard, it has been said:

*The child you are searching for
is tucked under your arm;
Yet you are beating the drum in the city
sounding the alarm.*

One lady went to a festival and, entranced by what she saw, forgot that she had her child safely secured under her arm. In this forgetfulness, she cried out, “O, my child is lost.” She searched throughout the festival grounds and finally went to the police station to report the missing child. But the police officer looked at her and said, “Your child is not lost. He is right there, tucked under your arm.”



Baba Somanath Ji with Shri Pushpamma

Similarly, even though everything is within you, still, you worship the gods and goddesses and chase after the pleasures of the world day and night. You have become so entangled in these extroverted pursuits that if someone asks you if you ever go to Satsang, you just make excuses.

One person replies, “What can I do? I have no time for it.”

Another said, “I have to work the night shift, so I am not free in the evening.”

And a third person answers, “I work the day shift and become so exhausted that I have no energy left after work to go for the Satsang.”

A fourth replies, “Well, I was all ready to go to Satsang when some friends dropped in unexpectedly. So, what could I do? They kept talking and talking, and by the time they left, the Satsang was over.”

Just think about it! How can we compare chit-chatting with our friends with attending the Satsang? The mind finds one reason or another to excuse its behavior; under the control of illusion, we have become involved in worldly indulgences and remain stuck in a state of forgetfulness. A spiritual treasure house lies within this human body, but we can discover it only by introverting our attention and going inside.

**When the water diviner finds the hidden water,
you can sink the well without delay;
In the same way, the Satguru shows you where the
spiritual treasure is hidden.**

When you dig a well and strike water, you can draw up the water immediately. Similarly, when you go into the refuge of the Satguru and learn the technique He teaches, you can behold the Divine Power without delay. But this will happen only when you practically apply yourself to the meditation. You will not get the Lord’s darshan through mere talking.

Eating (*āhār*), procreation (*maithuñ*), fear (*bhay*), and sleep (*nidrā*), these four activities are innately rooted in our within. When we go out to catch the bus, we fear it may not arrive on time or stop at the place where we will be waiting. Further, we are afraid that someone might pickpocket us on

the way to the bus stand. Fear always occupies our attention in one way or another.

We worry that our foot may slip as we walk along. Fear is the common experience in the realm of the Negative Power; eating is natural to all living beings, as are procreation and sleep. It is not only in the human form that these four activities dominate; they are also present in the lower life forms. One finds them in animals, birds, insects, worms, and all sentient beings.

The human birth is wasted when the mind remains occupied with these four activities. What attention have we given to the unique quality of humanity that distinguishes us from other species? We spend our time eating, drinking, and sleeping. We make our way through life, and then we die. Such a human birth is accursed.

Someone may ask, "How many children do you have?" One person replies, "I have a dozen children." Friend, what type of accomplishment is that? Someone else replies, "I have twelve children." Twelve children or a dozen, what difference does it make? Either way you are in the same boat. No matter how many children you claim to have produced, what is the value of such proclamations? Where is the greatness in these accomplishments?

We have to ask ourselves, "Who am I? I have incarnated into this world again and again, but where have I come from? Where is my True Home? What are these worldly shackles that bind me, and how can I become free of them?" Only in the human form can you find the answers to these questions.

If we don't go into the shelter of the Guru with total sincerity, then we have no hope of finding the inner pathway that leads to the Lord's feet. We can meet Him only by meditating

according to the Guru's instructions. But if we have not done the meditation and gained the direct inner experience, then curse on such a life. It is of no consequence.

**Cursed, cursed are the lives of those people who
not find such a realized Satguru.
We have obtained the treasure of this human birth
because of our past good deeds;
But we throw it away in exchange for mere shells.**

This most auspicious time has come into our hands, and we have received the human body. But having been granted such a beautiful opportunity, we have become the slaves of the sense pleasures that are no more than worthless shells.

No one has ever been able to fulfill all their worldly ambitions. We reach the end of this earth life, but our worldly desires never come to an end. And after we depart from this material plane, the worldly affairs go on just as before—they are never completed. Some people die in the middle of building a new home. Others die during their own marriage celebration. Death takes us in one way or another, and all the unfinished works remain just as they were at our departure time.

**O Lord God, please be merciful to me; shower
Your grace, and make me meet the Guru.**

Now, the devotee offers a prayer before God Almighty: "Oh Lord, be merciful and guide me to the Guru. If one meets the Guru, then one will contact God." But who can meet with God? Only the Gurumukhs. How many hundreds of thousands of people come in contact with the Guru? But only a

few take to the Path and achieve perfection. The rest remain as they were before.

**Servant Nanak has attained the state of Nirvana;
Meeting with the Sadhu, he sings the glorious
praises of the Lord.**

When we take refuge with the Sadhu or Guru, devote ourselves to the seva, and repeat the Simran of Naam, we can achieve liberation in this very lifetime.

The Satguru looks on all with the same balanced, gracious sight, but we receive the fruit of his Darshan according to our receptivity. Some people say, "I only want the worldly possessions," and they will receive what they ask for. If someone says, "I desire liberation," well, everything is available in the court of the Satguru. We receive the gifts from the Guru's bounty according to the desires that we cherish in our hearts.

—Baba Somanath

According to the Love in Your Heart

Only the one who lives in the Guru's Will can be called a disciple, a friend, a true relative. Those who follow their own will, O brothers, suffer the pangs of separation and gets kicked and knocked.¹

These are the teachings of Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says, “Whoever molds their life according to the precepts of the Guru, that person is a disciple and a devotee. That person is my true relative and friend.”

The real disciple always gives the words of the Master foremost importance, integrating his precepts into every aspect of life and acting according to his commandments. Only such a follower—who reveres and obeys the teachings of the Guru—is worthy to be called a disciple.

As long our mind has not developed the natural inclination to act according to the words of the Satguru, we may have become the Guru's disciples outwardly. Yet, the power

¹ *So sikh sakhā bamdhap hai bhāi je gur ke bhāṇe vich āvai*, Guru Amar Das

that dominates over us will be the mind. This proves we are not yet genuine disciples of the Guru but are still disciples of the mind.

First of all, the mind will tell us, “You should accept the Guru’s teachings. Take the Naam initiation and do the meditation.” So, following the mind’s advice, we take initiation and start our practice. But then, after some time, the mind will counsel us, saying, “You aren’t getting any benefit from this practice. You’ve worked so hard and gotten nothing. Give it up now.” And then we give up our meditation. Why does this happen? Because our mind is the power ruling over us—we are following the mind instead of the Guru.

The Guru’s words are the primal mantra.

The Guru’s form is the essence of meditation.

The Guru’s grace is the foundation of liberation.

The cornerstone of all mantras is obeying the Guru’s instructions. As long as we are not capable of following the teachings of the Guru, the master of our within will be the mind and intellect. If we act according to our mind’s advice and follow the spiritual path at its behest, then who are we really obeying? At any time, the mind’s counsel may make us disdain the Guru’s teachings and can divert us from the Path.

Therefore, He says that a person is a disciple, a friend, a relation, and a devotee who has attached their heart to the Guru’s teachings. That dear one who does not transgress the bounds of his teachings is the worthy child of the Guru.

The person who follows his own will and acts according to the dictates of his mind remains disconnected from the Path of Spirituality and, in the future, will endure beatings from the angels of death.

**O brothers, without the True Guru, they never
attain peace;
Again and again, they repent and regret.**

Up until now, no one has achieved the bliss of the highest spiritual status without the Satguru, nor can they hope to do so in the future. If you wish to experience supreme happiness, then you can only do so by taking refuge with the Satguru. Without going into the refuge of the perfect Satguru, you cannot experience pure spiritual bliss. It will remain inaccessible to you.

**O brothers, happy are the servants of the Lord;
The sins of countless lifetimes are eradicated.
The Lord Himself makes this union.**

The devotees of the Lord are eternally happy. Their sins of many past births are eradicated. Their souls become immaculate and pure. They unite with the Truth and become the form of Truth. For such dear ones, birth and death come to an end. But as long as we are not united with the Truth, falsehood reappears and reasserts. And trapped in that falsehood, we must endure endless suffering in the cycle of birth and death.

**The world is deluded by doubt, and all these
worldly relations are like chains upon the soul.**

Through the body and senses, we are chained to our family and relatives, but we ourselves have forged these bonds. Just to fulfill our sensual desires, we have developed relationships with all these outer things, and they become the source of our enslavement. Swami Ji Maharaj tells us:

*The first chain is the body; the second is the spouse.
The third is the son, and the fourth is the grandson.
From your grandson comes a great-grandson,
and the chains have no end.²*

Many people beg for a son to be born in their family. They think that if there is no male heir, who will represent the family name in future generations? What nonsense! When you have not understood your true name, how can your son preserve its honor in the future? What does it mean to understand your true name? You must develop self-knowledge. If you yourself have not understood your true spiritual heritage, how can your son add to its glory in times to come?

And what is our real heritage? We are the same essence as that of God. Whoever receives the pure Simran of the True Lord and practices it sincerely removes the sins, impurities, and duality from their within and realizes that they are part of God Himself—His obedient child, His true spiritual heir.

But we have forgotten our true nature. Everyone forms outer relationships and becomes entangled in family affairs according to their own way of thinking. Of our own volition, we trap ourselves in this net. No one else has created this bondage.

And then, to justify our attachments, we say, “Now I am a householder, and it is my religious duty to follow all the rules and regulations of the family life. I have reached the stage of *grihastha āshrama* (the time of life for earning a living and raising a family)³ and must fulfill the obligations and uphold the traditions of family life.”

2 Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sar Bachan Nazm Yanī Chhand Band*, Bachan 15, Chitāvanī bhāg dusrā, Shabd 7

3 The system of Hindu dharma defines four *āshramas* or stages of life: *brahmacharya* (education/celebracy), *grihastha* (householder), *vānaprastha* (retired, “forest dweller”), and *sannyāsa* (renunciate)

My friend, you say you are following the religious traditions laid down by your forefathers. You say it is your duty to follow the prescribed rules and regulations. You say you must fulfill your dharma. But that “dharma” is of your creation; it has no inherent existence of its own.

It is the same with those who say that the dharma or duty of the renunciate is to leave home and go and reside in the jungle. This is the *sannyasa āshrama*. The renunciates vow to endure hunger or go from house to house with a begging bowl to get food. They say it is their dharma to do so. But all these practices we promise to follow have been defined according to our own understanding of dharma.

Some people say, “I am a devotee of Vishnu.” They understand Vishnu as the greatest of the gods and think that worshipping him is the real religion. There are devotees of Vishnu and devotees of Sri Vishnu. There are several sects of Vishnu’s followers. Each has its own practices, and each believes its own is the only true religion. There are also the worshipers of Shiva, the Shaivites. They have their own customs and believe they are following the true religion.

But in reality, the true religion is the one in which the soul becomes luminous within, and vaporous fantasies are dispelled. When one is permeated by and absorbed in the Truth, that can be called the true dharma. As long as this fundamental understanding of dharma is not achieved, our coming and going in this world continues, and the waves of pain and sorrow that wash over us can never be stilled.

**Without the Guru, the chains cannot be broken;
The Gurumukhs find the door of salvation.**

Unless you go into the refuge of the Guru, you will not find

any other power that can free you from the clutches of Maya. The Guru tells us, “Shabd is within you. Invert your attention and unite with it.”

**One who performs rituals without realizing the
Guru’s Shabd will take rebirth over and over.**

If we give up the path of Sant Mat, if we abandon the meditation practice, and, in its place, we take up the performance of karmic rituals, even if we respect those rites and rituals and remain absorbed in their practice day and night with deep devotion, still we cannot break free from the bonds of this world. Instead, they will only entangle us further because all the outer actions, whether good or evil, create karmas. It is just like shackles made of iron and shackles made of gold—both are equally binding.

Now, many people understand themselves as householders. They follow the dharma of the householder’s life, based on the teachings laid down in the Shastras, and, in this way, they think they can achieve liberation. They declare the *grihastha āshrama*, the householder’s way of life, to be the highest dharma of human existence, but they have no real understanding of the householder’s dharma. They consider themselves householders based on some ideas gleaned from the scriptures, but to discover how the ideal householder behaves, we have to look deeper.

One time, some sadhus came to a mahatma to ask a question concerning how the path of the householder compares with that of the renunciate. That mahatma was himself a householder, and his wife was a devoted companion who was even more advanced on the spiritual path than he was himself.

So, when those sadhus arrived at his home, and everyone was seated, they asked him: “Which is greater, the path of the renunciate or the path of the householder?”

He did not reply immediately but instead called out to his wife, saying, “Bring drinking water to welcome our guests.” At the time she heard him calling to her, she was pounding some rice and other grains with a large pestle, and at the very moment she heard his voice, the pestle she was using was in its upstroke of pounding the grain in the mortar, and, without hesitation, she left the pestle hanging in midair while she went to fetch the water. She had so much faith and trust in her husband that she implicitly acted according to his words. The company of such a devoted wife is one way to liberation, and if married couples live together in this manner, then the householder’s life is the greatest of all.

But if they cling to their ideas and wishes, they will clash and end up confused and upset. They will not have any peace in the householder’s life. Likewise, there is no happiness to be found in the renunciate’s life if we engage in quarrels and wrangling with others. This way of living leads to suffering, whether we are householders or renunciates, and one day, we will depart from this world empty-handed.

Many people consider themselves very spiritual and think they are fulfilling the dharma of the renunciate, but unfortunately, they have not grasped the basic principles of detachment. They do not realize they are stuck fast in attachment and are no different from worldly people. But if they cultivate inner detachment, the renunciate’s life can be a helping factor for spiritual progress. And the householder’s life can also be a boon if both husband and wife are unified in their approach to life. The wife accepts the husband’s orders, and the husband remains absorbed day and night in the Almighty

Lord, the True Husband. If this mode of life is followed, the householder's way is the best.⁴

It makes no difference if the Gurumukhs are renunciates or householders; they merge into the Lord and attain liberation.

But day and night, the manmukhs remain involved in the fantasies of their own minds; their egotism leads them astray, and they perish, caught in the net of karma.

**The world is entangled in egotism and
possessiveness, O brothers;
But no one belongs to anyone else.**

The entire world is caught in the trap of egoism and perishes in its grasp. The truth is that we bring such a death upon ourselves. We proclaim, "I am the greatest of all," or "All this belongs to me." These words are death itself. Saying "mine, mine," we incarnate in this world; saying "mine, mine," we depart. It is this sense of I-hood and possessiveness that is the cause of our being trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

What is the fundamental aim of all spiritual endeavor? Liberation from the trap of "I and mine." And there is only one method to achieve this goal. Within us is the Light of

4 Here, Baba Somanath Ji is speaking according to the customs and culture of his time, and the Saints often use the metaphor of the wife and husband to describe the love between the soul and the Almighty Lord. The Saints respect all cultures and take the souls from the line of least resistance. The critical point here, whether living in a traditional or modern culture, whether following the householder's or the renunciate's lifestyle, is that we should live in harmony with our fellow beings. Sant Kirpal Singh Ji has told us, "Put in one ounce of love in all your affairs, even the mundane affairs; you will have your happiness. All these strifes are going on for want of love. And the main thing is: Love knows giving. Love knows service. Love knows sacrifice. If we learn that subject, everything comes in." Kirpal Singh, *The Light of Kirpal* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1980) p. 118.

the Shabd, and when our attention becomes absorbed in that Shabd Power, no trace of egoism remains. Then, all the impressions of birth and death are eradicated, and we attain liberation. But as long as our within remains filled with the sense of “I and mine,” be it gross or subtle, the thought of liberation does not even arise.

**The Gurumukhs attain the Mansion of the Lord.
Singing the glories of the Lord, they reach their
own True Home.**

The Gurumukhs follow the path according to the teachings of the Saints and return to the True Home from which they have come. Within this human body, they control and concentrate the mind. Then, catching hold of the stream of the Sound Current emanating from above, they merge into it and follow it back to the source from which it originated. All others come under the enchantment of the senses and the inner mind, and, trapped in the worldly karmas, they remain stuck fast in the cycle of birth and death.

**Those who understand achieve self-realization,
and the Almighty Lord becomes theirs.**

Many people claim that after death, they will attain the heaven worlds. They think they are free to live any life they want, and then, by practicing some rite or ritual, they will become entitled to enter the celestial realms. But this is all a product of their imagination.

Whatever we do in this world, we will reap the fruit of our deeds. If we do bad karmas and then think we can dwell in the heavenly abodes after death, well, this can never come to pass.

If, for instance, the worm living in the neem tree is intoxicated by the bitterness of its leaves and bark, how can it appreciate the sweetness of sugar cane? Similarly, those who, day and night, remain engrossed in doing the evil karmas die with the impressions of those actions imprinted on their mind.

**The True Guru is forever merciful, O brothers.
Without good fortune, what can anyone obtain?**

We may call that Power the Guru, the Almighty Lord, or the Naam. These words all refer to the same thing. That Power is the form of grace.

Why doesn't everyone receive this gift? Because it can only be obtained through good fortune. Until we receive the Divine grace, we cannot meet the Guru. Even if the Guru is living in our own home, our mind may not accept him. What can He impart to us if that good fortune is not written in our fate?

**He looks alike upon all with his glance of grace;
But we receive the reward according to our love
for the Lord.**

The Satguru looks on all with the same balanced, gracious sight, but we receive the fruit of his Darshan according to our receptivity. Some people say, "I only want the worldly possessions," and they will receive what they ask for. If someone says, "I desire liberation," well, everything is available in the court of the Satguru. We receive the gifts from the Guru's bounty according to the desires that we cherish in our hearts.

At the time of Gorakhnath, there were two parties of Nathpanth yogis. One party consisted of those who were

disciples of Jalandharnath, and the other party was comprised of followers of Machindranath, which included Gorakhnath and others.

Once, the two groups of disciples met in a large assembly to confer because both of their gurus had fallen into dire straits. Jalandharnath's disciple, Raja Gopichand, had buried him alive in a well because the guru would not instantly grant the king's wish for the secret of immortality. Machindranath, Goraknath's guru, had become infatuated with one queen in Bengal, and deluded by his mind, he was hopelessly ensnared in that attachment.

As they discussed how they could help their gurus, the followers of Jalandharnath started taunting Gorakhnath because of his guru's lapse of conduct. They said insultingly, "Just see how your guru has become ensnared in this worldly attachment. Even though he has supernatural powers, he is still roaming about here and there, caught in the outer enjoyments."

Eventually, both gurus were rescued successfully, and preparations were made for a large, two-day feast to celebrate their safe return. The first day was to be hosted by Jalandharnath and the second day by Machindranath, and, because of the rivalry between the two groups, they each wanted their guru's feast to be the most magnificent. Sadhus from all over the country gathered there to join in the festivities.

On the first day, when Jalandharnath was the host, everyone attending enjoyed a delicious meal. But on the second day, as the time for Machindranath's feast approached, there was no sign of any cooks or the vessels required to prepare the food. Nevertheless, at noon, Gorakhnath came before the gathering and told the sadhus to sit in lines so that the meal could be served. They all sat down, and after the leaf plates were distributed, Gorakhnath announced, "Brothers, this is a

wish-feast. Whatever you would like to eat, think of it in your mind, and that food will appear before you on your plate.”

Now, at that time, one sadhu named Kanipa, a follower of Jalandharnath, realized that Gorakhnath was going to glorify his guru and restore his honor by using his supernatural powers to serve a marvelous feast to all the guests. Kanipa harbored ill will towards Machindranath and Gorakhnath, and he thought, “I should do something to embarrass them. I will not imagine delicious food. Instead, I will think of something disgusting and see what happens.”

So, what did Kanipa wish for? He thought, “On my plate, a black cobra should appear.” As soon as the thought crossed his mind, a cobra appeared there before him, sitting on the leaf plate. Seeing this, Gorakhnath told Kanipa, “This was very poorly done; you had a low, despicable wish, and your wish has manifested here. Henceforth, you and all who follow you will always have to carry a snake with them. Now take what you have wished for and depart.” And even up to the present time, each of the yogis in that sect, besides wearing earrings in his pierced ears, also drapes a cobra about his neck.

The purpose of telling this story is to demonstrate how the Guru’s grace manifests according to our desires.

Your feelings determine the fruit of your devotion.

We worship God according to our conceptions of Him, and we get the benefit of that devotion according to the feelings in our hearts.

God dwells within us according to our love.

The Lord reveals Himself to us according to our love for

Him. The Satguru offers the same balanced glance of grace to all, but we will benefit from it according to the quality of our devotion.

O water, where does your color come from?

Water is colorless, but it takes on the color of whatever we mix into it. Similarly, the Almighty Lord is pure and all-pervading and looks upon all with the same balanced, gracious vision. But each one benefits from His grace according to their understanding and capacity.

O Nanak, when the Naam comes to dwell in the mind, self-love is eradicated from within.

The grace of the Satguru is the most important thing. For those in whom the Naam has manifested, their egoism disappears, and they achieve liberation in this lifetime. They become worthy vessels for the true grace of the Guru. But until we attain this state, the Sound Current does not become strong within us, and we remain subservient to the law of karma.

What is the true mantra? Spirituality is taught in many different forms, and so many mantras are prescribed. But the words spoken by the Guru constitute the highest teaching of all—the primal mantra. Only when you accept the Guru's words will your devotion become fruitful. But if you do not accept his words as all in all, then even if you go on performing the spiritual practices for a hundred years, you can reap no benefit.

—Baba Somanath

Guru's Words are the Primal Mantra

**Who should I serve? What should I meditate on?
I go and enquire from the Sat Guru.¹**

I have submitted to the will of the Sat Guru and have removed self-love from my within. This is the bani of Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs. In this one verse, He has clarified the essence of spirituality. The Guru's words contain all the wisdom of the four Vedas, the six Shastras, and the eighteen Puranas.

So, first, the disciple enquires from the Guru, "Who should I serve?" What seva should I offer, and what repetition should I practice?" This is the disciple's question.

Then the Satguru replies, "Accept the will of the Guru. Go into His shelter with loving devotion, and whatever order He gives, enshrine that order in your heart." He further instructs the disciple, "You must remove all sense of I-hood from your within." Once we accept the Guru's words in our hearts and remove our sense of ego, we should act according

¹ *Kis hau sevī kiā jap karī satagur pūchau jāi*, Guru Amar Das

to His instructions. He tells us to practice our meditation every day with regularity.

*The Guru's words are the primal mantra.
The Guru's form is the essence of meditation.
The Guru's grace is the foundation of liberation.*

What is the true mantra? Spirituality is taught in many different forms, and so many mantras are prescribed. But the words spoken by the Guru constitute the highest teaching of all—the primal mantra. Only when you accept the Guru's words will your devotion become fruitful. But if you do not accept his words as all in all, then even if you go on performing the spiritual practices for a hundred years, you can reap no benefit.

**By performing seva according to His instructions,
Naam has come to reside in my mind.
Through God's Name alone, I have obtained
happiness and am adorned with the True Word.**

What instruction does the Guru give us? What does He reply to our enquiry? He tells us that the true service to the Guru is to accept His words and engage in meditation day and night. Then His Naam will manifest within us.

What is the nature of the Naam? It is the same without and within. That Naam permeates every particle of the creation. When you merge into that Naam, all traces of egotism, all pride of the body, and all thoughts of the world are driven out. Naam is perfect happiness and bliss. By merging into that happiness, you become the form of happiness. You will not

find it by searching outside, repeating empty words, or engaging in intellectual wrestling.

Many people fall into this error. They start lecturing to others, "This is how to attain liberation. You should mold your mind in this way. The nature of Naam is like that. You should do the repetition in such and such a way. This is how it should be." They make a great fuss and get trapped in all sorts of discussions and disputes. The result is that they make no progress in their own meditation. The inner door does not open for them because meditation is the only method to go within.

O my mind, day and night, remain wakeful and meditate on the Lord.

Protect the crop lest the cranes descend and plunder your fields.

What a clear explanation! When you become firm in your meditation, you will discover that the impressions of countless ages are stored within you. Therefore, you should always remain vigilant. You should be like a farmer who has planted a new crop in his field. He always remains on guard. He fences in that area and stays constantly vigilant. Otherwise, birds and animals will eat up those newly sown seeds, destroying his whole crop.

In the same way, when you have sown the seed of Naam in the field of your heart, you must guard that field constantly through meditation. Remain awake day and night. Stay alert, and keep your love absorbed in the Shabd Naam. Otherwise, the scavengers of lust, anger, attachment, greed, and egotism will plunder your crop. Therefore, you must always be on the lookout.

**The mind's desires are all fulfilled when love for
the Shabd overflows within.
Whoever does constant devotion with fear and
love beholds the Lord close at hand.**

We should fix all our hopes on Shabd, which reverberates throughout the entire creation. At present, our desires are drawn to the illusory things of this world, but our worldly desires can never be satisfied. If one desire is fulfilled, ten more arise to take its place. We go on asking for one thing after another. We cannot sleep at night because of worry. Our thoughts are consumed with whatever they lack, and sleep flies out the window. If we fully concentrate all our longing on the Shabd Naam, we can achieve a little peace. But until we manifest the Naam within, we will find no other means to eradicate desire.

You may practice yoga, you may perform ritual offerings, you may light the sacrificial fire and do austerities, you may fast, you may turn the rosary made of 17-sided rudraksha beads,² and you may bathe at the holy places of pilgrimage, but all these efforts are in vain. Even with so much effort, your practices will yield no result.

The desires of the mind can be finished off only by contact with the perfect Shabd Naam within you. When your desires are merged into the Shabd, then they become the form of Shabd and desire finished off forever. Further, He says that both fear and love are necessary. Until we cultivate a deep reverence for the Guru, our love cannot become complete. Kabir Sahib tells us:

² The *satarah mukhi*, or 17-sided, rudraksha beads, and their accompanying mantra, are thought to be particularly auspicious.

*If we do the devotion just imitating others,
We can never be dyed in the true color.*

Someone may say, "Come on, we're going to Satsang," and we tag along. In this way, we attend the Satsang, but what do we gain from it? Nothing at all. We sit watching all the other people who have come for Satsang. We spend an hour or two there and then come back home empty-handed. We don't bring any spiritual wealth back with us.

Therefore, Guru Amar Das tells us that we should do our devotion with both fear and love. But what kind of fear does He mean? Everyone is afraid because of their evil deeds. They feel guilty and want to hide their sins. They think, "If someone sees what I am doing, what will happen?" The thief is afraid. The adulterous woman is afraid. Those who tell lies are always afraid. We want to hide our wrongdoing from others. This is not the fear Guru Amar Das is referring to. Such fear only leads you into greater sin.

So, what fear do we need to cultivate? We should always go on thinking, "God is everywhere. If I do any evil deed, my Satguru will be watching me." We should always be afraid of transgressing against the Truth. Now we say, "Satguru knows my innermost heart. He is ever-present."

But do we think He is ever-present? If we are stealing things from others, then we can't really believe He is always watching us. We say, "The Guru will never see me here. I have closed the door. No one will know what I am doing." We have no fear of the Guru. We think we have pulled the wool over His eyes. If a five-year-old child is standing in front of us, at that time, we cannot do any false or evil deed. What do we say at that time? "This child may go and tell someone

what I am doing. My reputation will be ruined, which will not be good.” We are worried this child will reveal our secret. But if we are more afraid of that child than we are of our Guru, how can we ever remove the evil deeds from our hearts? Therefore, fear is necessary. When such fear of the Guru comes into the heart, we start to develop real love for Him. When we develop both these qualities, love and fear, then our devotion will become successful.

**All doubt flees from the body when the mind is
constantly imbued with the True Name.**

He says that when the True Shabd is revealed within, when our mind merges into that Shabd, no place remains in our heart for illusion and error. But until Shabd manifests within us, that illusion cannot be dislodged. Our hearts remain filled with illusion, while on the surface, we go on praising the greatness of Shabd. But we are just repeating what we have read or heard. This is all pretense.

When the True Shabd dawns within, it drives out all illusion. Then, we don't need to rely on the testimony of others. If you introspect your heart, you will see clearly whether it is filled with the Light of Shabd or the darkness of deception.

**Then, we meet with the Immaculate Lord, the
ocean of all virtues.**

When your soul contacts the True Shabd, then that immaculate Power manifests within. This is the Power of Truth, the Treasure House of Grace, the Ocean of all Virtues.

**Those who remain awake are saved;
Those who sleep are plundered.**

Here, He conveys a fundamental truth to us. Whoever stays awake can achieve liberation in this lifetime. But those who remain sunk in ignorance and sleep will be sent into the hells.

**They don't recognize the True Name, and their life
passes away like a dream.**

Even though the overflowing treasure house of Shabd lies within you, still you have no awareness of it. You have not done the meditation or manifested that Shabd within yourself. This whole world is a dream; lost in that dream, you waste your human birth and depart empty-handed.

When the parents decide to have a child, they have no idea what soul will come into the mother's womb. And that soul has no idea what household it will be born into or who its parents will be. It all appears to be happening almost by chance. And before you know it, that child is born.

Then, right away, the mother says, "This is my child." And then the father asserts, "This is my child." But that soul does not belong to either of them. Neither the mother nor the father can lay greater claim to the child. Therefore, we can say that the child has been born out of duality. And that duality predominates in the child. His whole incarnation springs from duality. As he goes through his life, all his deeds arise out of duality. And in duality, he finally departs from this world at the time of death. His whole life was just a dream.

Yesterday, we were one thing; today, we are another, and tomorrow, we will be something else yet again. Throughout

childhood, youth, and mature years, our bodies keep changing. Finally, reaching old age, we depart from this body altogether. The whole drama of life is only a dream. But in our ignorance, we people constantly mistake this dream for reality. Therefore, we have no inkling of the true state of affairs.

Only the Gurumukh, who has become absorbed in the True Naam, can be called a real human being, and that rare soul sees beyond the shadow of a doubt that this world is a dream. This is the condition of the Gurumukh. But, as for the rest of us, we remain sunk in the illusion—we do not even realize we are dreaming.

Only when we wake up will we say, “Oh, that was all just a dream.” Then, the truth becomes clear to us as well. When we are still trapped in that half-conscious dream state, how can we call it a dream? At that time, we insist that it is all real.

**The guest who comes to a deserted house will
depart empty-handed, just as they came.**

**In the same way, the life of a manmukh passes by
uselessly.**

What face will they show in the next world?

Once, a recently married man was going to make his first visit to the home of his wife’s family. As he was traveling along on the train, he started daydreaming. He imagined what a fine reception he would receive when he arrived. He thought, “Now, I am going there to visit them. My mother-in-law and wife will come out to greet me. All the members of the household will come and pay respect to me. They will welcome me and entertain me. They will make me comfortable and serve me delicious food.”

As he went along, he was picturing all these things in his mind as though they were real. But when he arrived there, what did he see? The house was shuttered, and there was a lock on the door. The whole family had gone off to another village for a visit, and the house was empty. And so, he had to return home disappointed and upset.

Our whole life is no more substantial than that man's day-dream. When we are born into this world, our family distributes sweets, light lamps, sing songs, and plays musical instruments. Everyone is rejoicing.

But later, as we make our way through life, we waste every moment in duality, and, at the time of death, we have to depart empty-handed. We get a beating from the angels of death, and then we are thrown back into the cycle of 84 lakh births and deaths.

We have gained nothing from human birth and are wasting our precious time in the useless pursuits of daily life. Even dogs have children and look after their families. This responsibility is not so demanding that it should consume all our time. We should give some thought to our soul's welfare and endeavor to free ourselves from this cycle of birth and death.

There is more to life than just eating and drinking. Therefore, Guru Amar Das says, "O manmukh, you have wasted your precious birth in useless, meaningless things. When you go into the next world at death, how will you dare to show your face?"

**The Lord Himself is all in all; those who are
caught up in ego, what can they say of Him?**

Now what does He say? “O Lord, You are all in all.” Superficially we have learned that God is Omnipresent, and everyone repeats, “The Lord is within me. He is present everywhere.” But when a person who is still controlled by the ego utters these words, they shed no glory on the Almighty Lord. The wisdom of the Gurumukhs is contained in such utterances, but everyone repeats them without any understanding of their deeper significance.

When we recognize the Guru’s Shabd, the disease of pride is eradicated from our within.

When we experience the True Shabd of the Satguru, then we will see that a veritable treasure lies heaped up within us. Unless we experience this for ourselves, what have we accomplished by taking the Naam initiation? Many people say, “I have been initiated forty years. My mother and father are also initiates; my whole family is initiated.” My friend, why do you talk about how long you have been initiated? Our aim is to remove all ego; no I-hood should remain within us. Then all worry or sorrow are finished off. Only then do we become the real initiates.

I fall at the feet of those who serve their Satguru.

Finally, Guru Amar Das tells us: “Day and night, such Gurumukhs are true, and they serve the Satguru. I fall at the feet of such devotees.” The Gurumukh is God Himself in human form; there is no difference between the two. Again and again, I bow before such a devotee.

**Nanak says, "I sacrifice myself on those who
have become the form of Truth in the Lord's
True Court."**

That devotee who has united with the Almighty Lord becomes the form of Truth. I wish to sacrifice myself on such a Gurumukh.

The Almighty Lord not only pervades the entire universe, He is also the Power behind everything that exists. He dwells within Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and all the other deities, and they draw their power from Him. The whole of creation came into being with the support of that Almighty Lord. If He were to withdraw His Conscious Power, even for a fraction of a second, this body would crumble into dust.

—Baba Somanath

The Witness of All

My Lord is the witness of all and everything.¹

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He is explaining to us about the relationship between God and this created world. He tells us: “My Almighty Lord is *sarvasākshī*, the Witness of All.” He is everywhere—in the food; in the water; in the grass; in the wood. He pervades all the five elements and everything else in this world. He is omniscient and omnipresent. God is a Power and the soul is the same Power as that of God. But in order to understand that Almighty Lord, we need a subtle and conscious inner eye. He dwells within us in His Eternal Form. He is the boon companion to all. But because of our strong attachment to the things of this outer world, we cannot perceive Him.

**He pervades Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, and Ishwar,
yet He remains unseen.**

The Almighty Lord not only pervades the entire universe, He is also the Power behind everything that exists. He dwells

1 *Sab kā sākshī merā sāññ*, Kabir Sahib

within Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and all the other deities, and they draw their power from Him. The whole of creation came into being with the support of that Almighty Lord. If He were to withdraw His Conscious Power, even for a fraction of a second, this body would crumble into dust.

**Consider the five and the twenty-five;
They have misled the whole world.**

He tells us that we have the five senses and twenty-five prakritis. With the intellect, we can easily understand the five senses. But the twenty-five prakritis, subtle elements compounded in varying proportions, lie beyond the grasp of the intellect. These twenty-five prakritis combine in seemingly countless variations and determine the individualized makeup of every human being, every creature, and every object. One father may have five or ten children. And each of those children comes into this world with a different combination of prakritis that determines their individual natures.

Even the unconscious material objects are fashioned according to the prakritis. So, while the intellect easily comprehends the five senses, it remains baffled by the nature of prakriti. Even the great meditator souls that have access to the higher realms cannot totally reverse the effect of prakriti when they are functioning in the region of the three worlds. Some trace of their prakritis remains, even if only in minute amounts.

We read the writings of Kabir Sahib, who teaches about the path of Surat Shabd Yoga, and when we read the writings of Swami Ji Maharaj and Tulsi Sahib, we find their teachings are exactly the same. But the prakritis of each Saint that incarnates in this world are different, and if we examine the

writings of these great Souls closely, we will see that they have framed their teachings according to their individual personalities and mentalities. The teachings never change, but they will be presented in varying forms according to the prakritis of various Mahatmas. Therefore, He says we need to understand the nature of the five senses and the twenty-five prakritis. And realizing their reality, we should rise above them and become absorbed in the Naam.

These forces that have brought us into this world do not leave us. They have made their home in our within, and we cannot change them. The only way to change them, to become free of them, is to rise above their sphere of action and leave them behind because when we are functioning in this mortal world, those prakritis that are present to a greater or lesser extent within everyone will become active at the appropriate time.

Akār, Ukār, and Makār—His Home lies beyond the sacred syllables of “AUM.”

Akār, the letter “A”; and *ukār*, the letter “U”; and *makār*, the letter “M”—these letters form the three syllables of the sacred word “A-U-M (*Onkār*). But the Power of the Almighty Lord lies beyond these sounds. He is not in the *Onkār* or *soham* of the yogis. For the yogis, *onkār* is the sound of Brahm, and *soham*² is the sound of Shakti or Maya.

2 Here, Baba Somanath is referring to “*soham*” or “*sohang*,” the sound emanating from the throat chakra, the seat of Shakti. Yogis practicing pranayam contemplate on this sound. It is distinct from the “*Sohang*” of the Saints—“I am Thou”—that reverberates in Bhanvar Gupha, the fourth inner plane of the soul’s ascent within. The “*soham*” or “*sohang*” of the yogis is just a distant echo of that higher Sound.

**Consciousness and semi-consciousness,
unconsciousness and superconsciousness—
He dwells above these four states.**

Now, what does He tell us? Day and night, we remain involved in different states of consciousness: *jāgrat* or waking (consciousness); *svapan* or dreaming (semi-consciousness); *shushupti* or deep sleep (unconsciousness); and *turiya* (super-consciousness). The dwelling place of the Lord lies far beyond these states.

**He exists without the presence or absence of
qualities: *rajas*, *tamas*, *sattva*, and *nirgun*.**

The material world is created, maintained, and destroyed through the three syllables of AUM—*akār*, *ukār*, and *makār*. The syllable “*akār*” is the seat of Brahm, the creator; the syllable “*ukār*” is the seat of Vishnu, the preserver; and the syllable “*makār*” is the seat of Shiva, the destroyer. The three states of consciousness in the creation up to Trikuti are also inherent in the three syllables of AUM: *jāgrati* (the waking state of consciousness, identified with Vishnu); *svapna* (the dream state of semi-consciousness, identified with Brahma), and, *sushupati* (the unconscious state of deep sleep, identified with Shiva).

Further, these three syllables of the primal mantra “A-U-M” and the gods who reside in them also correspond to the three *gunas* or qualities. Brahma has the quality of *rajas* or activity, Vishnu has the quality of *sattva* or purity, and Shiva has the quality of *tamas* or inertia. These three qualities fill our within.

Since we have not yet been able to understand the workings of all these profound powers or forces that control creation,

we take birth over and over again and keep on wandering about outside. This is no trivial matter. Understanding these powers and realizing the soul that lies beyond their domain is not easy. Not everyone is fit for this undertaking.

**Physical, astral, causal, and supercausal—
obtaining these bodies, we get lost in the
pleasures.**

Now, having explained the gunas thoroughly, Kabir goes on to tell us about the four bodies. All of the centers located below the eyes are the seat of the physical body. Above the physical body lies the astral region, where the astral body functions. This is the subtle region of the gods and goddesses, the heavens, Vaikunt, and so forth. The causal body is the form of Brahm. And the supercausal body lies beyond in the region of Parbrahm. These four bodies are veils that obscure the soul. And blinded by these veils, the yogis, ascetics, and even the great rishis get waylaid over and over again.

The Saints teach us the easy and natural Path to God. But following the other paths, the aspirants are led astray. When they rise above the physical world and enter into the subtle, astral regions, they offer their devotion to the gods and goddesses—Vishnu or Shiva or Ganesh or Lakshmi or Sharda Devi (Saraswati). In return, these deities grant them supernatural powers. Then, the devotees fall prey to ego. “I am a great Mahatma.” As a result, the attention becomes entrapped in the astral body, and they have to incarnate once again into this mortal world.

Beyond the astral region lies the causal. You may call it the causal body, or you may call it the form of Brahm, or you

may call it the dwelling place of Brahm; they are all one and the same thing. Brahm is the ruler of this region, and through Brahm, this whole creation came into being. But the causal body is also just a veil over the soul. Passing beyond the causal region, we reach the supercausal plane, where the supercausal body forms yet another covering to be removed. This realm is called Daswan Dwar or Mansarovar in the terminology of the Saints.

Know the essence does not lie in *vishwa, taijasa, prajna, or ātmā.*

The soul has four powers or attributes: *vishva* or “earth,” the quality of the consciousness in the physical body; *taijasa* or “radiance,” the quality of the consciousness in the astral body; *pragya* or “wisdom,” the quality of the consciousness in the causal body; and *ātmā* or “soul,” the quality of the consciousness in the supercausal realm. These are also four names of the soul. The soul has been described as the support of the world, *vishwambharam*. In the form of *taijasa*, radiance is present in all. And *pragya* is the wisdom that arises spontaneously from our within. These are all the powers of the *ātmā* or soul.

***Para, pashyanti, madhma, and baikhri*—don’t pay any attention to these four sounds.**

Now Kabir Sahib tells us that four sounds arise from the body: *parā, pashyantī, madhyamā, and vaikhrī*. The sound arising from the navel is *parā*; the sound originating from the heart is *pashyantī*; the sound produced in the throat is *madhyamā*; and the sound produced with the mouth is called *vaikhrī*. So, in the

lower chakras of our body, these four sounds are going on. But the soul, the real motivating Power, remains separate from all this hubbub. Until we get some experience of that True Power, we cannot rise above. And this is not a small thing. Many say, “My mind doesn’t take to it; my attention doesn’t become concentrated.” Friend, how will the mind take to it when your within is filled up with these lower things? You have to become separate from these four sounds.

You can acquire a little bit of outer knowledge and learn to give lectures. You can start calling yourself a mahatma. You turn the rosary for a few rounds and leave it at that. But this does not make you a True Mahatma. What is there in giving lectures? If you practice it every day, you become good at it. But the Reality within you lies beyond all the worldly knowledge, and when you experience the Power of the soul—untrammelled by this outer world—then all of the noise and confusion of this world evaporate. Otherwise, your progress will be stopped at one point or another.

**Look beyond the five koshas;
Don’t take them for the True Essence.**

Now He addresses the subject of the five koshas or sheaths: *annamaya*, the food sheath; *prānamaya*, the sheath of the vital airs; *manomaya*, the mental sheath; *vigyānamaya*, the sheath of knowledge, with two aspects, *gyān* and *vigyān*; and, lastly, *anandamaya*, the sheath of bliss, the final gossamer-thin kosha covering the soul.

Many people focus their attention on the *annamaya* kosha. They pass their life thinking that eating food and satisfying their hunger is the most important thing. But if one day they

don't get any food, and someone comes and tells them—"I will serve you food, but you must sacrifice your life."—they won't accept that. At that moment, their attention moves upward from the *annamaya* kosha into the *prānamaya* kosha, which now becomes their primary focus. Then they think: "Oh, no! Perhaps I may starve, but I am not willing to give up my life's breath in this way, just for a meal." The immediate preservation of the pranas or vital airs in the body becomes more urgent than staving off hunger.

What about when the attention moves from the *prānamaya* kosha into the *manomaya* kosha? The *manomaya* kosha, the kosha of the mind-stuff, is characterized by strong beliefs and intense emotions. When focused on the *manomaya* kosha, a person may be willing to lay down their life for a cause they believe in strongly. But sadly, we sometimes see that when people commit some irredeemable error, then under the grip of strong emotion centered in the *manomaya* kosha, they become ready to take their own lives, and in this way, suicides result.

After this comes the *vigyānamaya* kosha, the sheath of knowledge. This kosha has two aspects: *gyānamaya*, concerned with knowledge of the material planes, and *vigyānamaya*, concerned with enlightenment in the spiritual planes. When we focus our thoughts on the All-Pervading, All-Knowing Power, we realize: "I am in everything. I am the witness of everything." Then we become free from the power of the mind-stuff and contact the power of Brahm. Here, the *manomaya* kosha is destroyed, and we transcend into *gyānamaya*.

Then, from the *gyānamaya*, we become absorbed into the *vigyānamaya*. How does this happen? When we realize that the Power of the Almighty Lord is the cause of all that exists,

when we focus our thoughts on that Power and become absorbed into it—this is called *vigyānamaya*. But the *vigyānamaya* kosha resides in the domain of the buddhi or intellect, and the Power of the soul lies beyond all the koshas. It is something separate from them and has no connection with them at all.

Understand the nature of these ten: five *gyān indriyas* and five *karma indriyas*;

So, we have seen that a collection of powers has been amassed in this human body. Besides all these powers, there are also five *karma indriyas* (the organs of action that interact with the material world) and five *gyān indriyas* (the organs of sense that gather information from the material world). The five *karma indriyas* are the hands, the feet, the rectum, the genital organ, and the mouth. The five *gyān indriyas* are the ears, the eyes, the nose, the tongue, and the skin.

The distinguishing factor of the *indriyas* is that they cannot work independently. The eyes can see the thing we need, but they cannot lift it. This is a drawback, and we need to use one of the *karma indriyas*, in this case, the hands, to pick the thing up and carry it along with us. The eyes can distinguish good things from bad things, but until they get the help of the *karma indriyas*, they can't take hold of anything. The ears may be able to hear a sound, but they won't be able to see what is making that sound. And while the ears can hear and the eyes can see, the work of distinguishing good fragrances from bad odors belongs to the nose.

In this way, no one *indriya* can perform all the tasks; the *karma indriyas* can act, and the *gyān indriyas* can gather

information, but they have to cooperate to get anything accomplished. Kabir Sahib says we should rise above the ten *indriyas*—the five *karma indriyas* and the five *gyān indriyas*—and not be bothered about them.

Chitta is a quality of the inner mind.

Know that the True Essence is not found there.

Now, He explains about the four aspects of the *antahkarana*, or inner mind: *manas* (thinking faculty), *buddhi* (reasoning intellect), *chitta* (recording and storing information), and *ahankār* (egotism: ‘I know’). These are the four powers or characteristics of the inner mind.

One German man used to come to the ashram; he would visit in the evening for Satsang. He was the manager of a factory in the area, and he lived in the cantonment in Bangalore. Suddenly, one night around eleven o’clock, a doubt came into his mind. He thought, “What are the functions of *chitta*, *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahankār*? There is only one *antahkarana*. Why have these four powers been created? What do they do?” Our Punjabi brother, Hansraj, was living there also. So, he went and awakened Hansraj, and both of them drove here by car.

When they arrived, I asked them, “Why have you come here at this time of night?” The German man presented his query: “Baba Ji, what are the functions of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, and *ahankār*? The *antahkarana* (inner mind) is only one, but it has these four aspects. What are their different functions?” Now, if I had brought out some holy book or scripture, how could I have explained to him? He would have just raised more objections and arguments. So, I said, “Okay. First, the thought

arose in your within to come here. This is the work of the *manas* (mind). Then, you came up with questions. “I will ask him this. I will ask him that.” This is the work of the *buddhi* (intellect). So first, the thought occurred to you to come here; this was the *manas* (mind). Then you thought, “I will ask Baba Ji this question and that question.” This thought came from the *buddhi*. Now you are listening to my answer and making note of it. This is the work of the *chitta* (attention). Then, when you feel satisfied that your doubt has been resolved, this feeling of satisfaction is the function of your *ahankār* (egoism: ‘I know’).”

All four of these powers reside in the *antahkarana* (inner mind). Sometimes the *manas* (mind) thinks of a plan of action and gets started with it. Then, the *buddhi* (intellect) considers the pros and cons of the plan and decides to stop the work. But then the *manas* (mind) becomes obstinate, ignores the *buddhi*, and forges ahead with its idea. So, in this way, day and night, a struggle is raging in our *antahkarana* (inner mind). Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us that the soul is watching this play. The soul is the witness of the four aspects of the mind, the three gunas, and the four states of consciousness. The soul witnesses the entire workings of Brahmand. If the soul were not overseeing the process, nothing could be accomplished.

Now examine *kuram, ses, kirkīlā, dhananjay, and devdatta.*

Here, He tells us about the secondary pranas: *kuram, ses, kirkīlā, dhananjay, and devdatta*. These are all defined in the Shastras and are also powers working in the body. There are 84 *vāyus*, or pranic currents, of which ten are the most

important. Five of these have major functions: *prāna*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, and *samāna*.

The *prāna vāyu* helps respiration and is located between the two eyes; the *apāna vāyu* is located in the region below the navel and helps the excretory system; the *udāna vāyu* is located in the throat and helps with swallowing; the *vyāna vāyu* aids the circulatory system and pervades the body like an ethereal element. The *samāna vāyu* is located at the solar plexus and spreads food throughout the body, balancing the actions of the other *vāyus*. The remaining five have minor functions. *Kuram* opens and closes the eyes; *devdatta* causes yawning and brings on gentle sleep. *Kirkilā* causes sneezing, *ses* (*nāg*) produces belching, and *dhananjaya* controls assimilation throughout the body via the heart. These ten *vāyus* are constantly working within everyone.

Don't consider the fourteen organs and their fourteen rulers as the Hidden Power.

Now, Kabir Sahib has told us there are fourteen *indriyas*: that is, the five *karma indriyas*, the five *gyān indriyas*, plus the four aspects of the *antahkarana* or inner mind, which is sometimes called the sixth *gyān indriya*. And there are fourteen *indras* or rulers. Each *indriya* has a corresponding ruler (*indra*) that governs it: the skin by the wind, the hand by Indra,³ the foot by Vishnu, and so on. But the Highest Power, the True Power, the Power of the soul, does not reside in them. That Power dwells beyond them.

3 Indra (upper case) is the King of the gods, the Lord of Heaven, while an *indra* (lower case) is a power or "ruler" of an individual *indriya* (sense).

Tat, Tvam, and Asi—understand the meaning of these words.

Now, to explain the fundamental principle of the one *Onkār*, Kabir Sahib presents the three concepts that make up the *Mahāvākhyā*,⁴ or “Great Saying,” *Tat Tvam Asi*, which literally means—You Art That. “*Tvam*” means “you,” referring to the soul. “*Tat*” means “that,” referring to *Onkār*. And the word “*Asi*,” meaning “are,” equates the two. The soul realizes that *Onkār* is an entity and thinks to itself, “I am that *Onkār*,” that is, the soul realizes its divine nature. This is the real meaning of “*Tat Tvam Asi*.” But the true Power of the soul lies beyond this stage; *Onkār* is only a waystation.

Kabir Sahib tells us that we have both *vākhyā* (word) and *lakshya* (the meaning that can be inferred from that word). Whatever can be spoken with the mouth is called *vākhyā*. When a person speaks about something, they choose a word, a *vākhyā*, to indicate that thing. Once that word is spoken, we hear it with our faculty of hearing. Then, we can infer the meaning of the word (what that word is referring to), and that meaning is called *lakshya*. So Kabir presents the words— “*Tat Tvam Asi*,” You Are That—and hearing those words, the meaning comes into our mind. The soul has realized that it is *Onkār*. But this is not the final goal; the goal still lies far ahead.

We split hairs over inferences; we say *jahad* is *ajahad* and vice versa.

4 *Mahāvākhyās* (Great Sayings) are sayings drawn from the Upanishads that express principles of non-dualistic Vedānta.

Using words, we try to gain knowledge of God through implication and inference.⁵ But only through real inner experience can we gain True Knowledge of the *Anahad Dhvani*, the limitless Sound of the Almighty Lord that pervades and enlivens the entire universe.

**When you meet with the Satguru, He reveals the
True Sound, and you can distinguish the
essence of Shabd.**

Having said all this, now He tells us the fundamental principle. You should meet a perfect Guru who teaches the path of Surat Shabd Yoga and who can give you a connection with the True Shabd. The disciple needs to cultivate complete love for the Guru and to practice the meditation according to His instructions; only then is it possible to contact the Shabd and complete the spiritual work. But if instead, you try to rely on

5 Baba Somanath Ji is pointing out that the outer words that can be written or spoken have no innate meaning and do not furnish us with direct knowledge. Outer words convey meaning through implication and inference, inclusion and exclusion. In Vedanta, such implied meaning (*lakshana*) is of three types. In *jahallakshana*, “exclusive implication,” the literal meaning of a word is rejected, and an implied meaning is substituted to get the correct meaning. In the phrase “the village on the Ganges,” the implied word “bank” is added, and “Ganges” is removed to achieve the correct meaning; that is, the village is located on the bank, not on the Ganges itself. In *ajahallakshana*, “inclusive implication,” the literal meaning is retained, but what is implied is also added. In the phrase “the red is running,” the meaning implied is “the red horse is running.” “Red” is retained, but the implied word “horse” is added to complete the correct meaning. *Jahad-ajahallakshana* is exclusive-inclusive implication. In the phrase “this is that Mohan,” you are implying that the Mohan you met earlier is the very same Mohan you are encountering at the present moment. “Mohan” and “Mohan” are identical, and both are retained. But the earlier time/place when you met “that” Mohan and the present time/place when you are encountering “this” Mohan are different, so both are rejected.

your limited intellect, you will find it unequal to the task. When the intellect cannot even deal with the complexity of this created world, how can it lead you into the Higher Realms?

Kabir says: "They are the Perfect Ones, who free others and sing the praises of the Lord."

After explaining all these things to us, Kabir Sahib tells us about the One who has manifested the Power of Perfection within Himself. He who has become separate from the created world, and who can separate others, He is the Perfect One.

No one can describe this experience of the Infinite. It has no limits. When we see the Lord within ourselves, as clearly as we see the outside world, this is a surest sign of True Darshan.

—Baba Somanath

The Signs of True Darshan

Whoever loses the little self becomes a dervish.¹

This is the bani of Satguru Paltu Sahib Ji. He is telling us about egotism—the sense of self. He says that *ahankār*, or egotism, is the source of the entire creation. Egotism is the cause of birth and death. Under the influence of ego, we go on creating karmas. The whole world is dancing to the tune of the ego.

Therefore, He tells us that the foundation of spirituality is becoming free from the thralldom to the petty ego. You must cast off the false sense of self. Otherwise, no matter how many righteous deeds we may perform, they are all rooted in egotism. Outwardly, our deeds are righteous, but inwardly, we are harboring some selfish motive.

Therefore, Paltu Sahib Ji says, “Whoever eschews egotism becomes the true dervish, the true sadhu, the true practitioner, the true spiritual seeker.” The one who gives up “I and mine” can be called a sadhu. Someone may perform countless outer rituals, hoping to reach Vaikunth and the other heaven worlds, but even if they ascend to those celestial realms, still they cannot escape from the domain of ego. Such people cannot be called sadhus. They remain inmates

1 *Khudī khoya ko hovai soī hai derves*, Paltu Sahib

in the prison house of this mortal world, and when the fruits of their righteous deeds are depleted, they must take birth and return again to this arena of action.

The dervish becomes purified within and is blessed with the darshan of the *Nabī* (Prophet).

The dervish always cultivates a state of perfect inner purity. When you do not allow any evil to come near you, this is called continence. Many people think continence refers to controlling only one sense organ. However, if we control one sense organ and allow the other four to run riot as before, our within will remain full of defects. This cannot be called continence. When you control the mind and senses; when you constantly remember God Almighty in your heart; when your soul regains its pristine purity and merges into the immaculate Naam—this is true continence. Through that purity, you can discover the Almighty Lord within yourself. Your heart has become unalloyed, and when you achieve this purity, there is no need to cry out for the Lord; He will come there of His own to give you His darshan.

Rain pours down without clouds or sky.

What are the signs of True Darshan? Paltu Sahib says that when we rise into the inner realms, the rain showers down without clouds or sky. We are drenched in the inner nectar of Naam. This is a one sign.

Without heat, the flame glows. Without a tongue, Sound fills the air.

In that place, there is no heat; there is no cold. The Celestial

Name resounds, but no tongue is speaking. These are also signs. Someone may tell you, “I see God everywhere.” But if you ask them, “Friend, what are the signs of having His Darshan?” They will say, “There are no signs. God pervades everywhere. That God dwells within us.” But such vague words only demonstrate that they have not risen to the place where God manifests. Just repeating what we have heard from others proves nothing. We have to see the Lord for ourselves.

The heart soars up to *Lahūt* (Sunn), the region without space or form.

Whoever destroys the sense of self attains the Kaaba—the True House of God.

No one can describe this experience of the Infinite. It has no limits. When we see the Lord within ourselves, as clearly as we see the outside world, this is a surest sign of True Darshan.

Paltu says: When you remain engaged in His Remembrance, worry is reduced to ashes; Whoever loses the little self becomes a dervish.

Fikar is the word for worry, and *zikar* is the word for repeating the Naam Simran. When you go on repeating the Simran of Naam (*zikar*) without a break, your heart becomes free from all worry (*fikar*). When your heart is cleansed of the sense of self, then you merge into the Almighty Lord and become His form. This is referred to as *prataksh pramān*—the direct experience of the Lord.

That bird comes in the evening and flies away the next morning. And yet, no one has fathomed its secret. During the hours from dusk till dawn, when night falls and the darkness of ignorance prevails, the bird of the soul comes down into this world; and when the Light of spiritual awakening dawns, that bird again takes flight and soars back to its True Home. But up until now, no one has been able to describe the manner of its coming and going.

—Baba Somanath

The Bird that Sings Within

**No one can tell me about the bird that sings
within.¹**

Kabir Sahib tells us of a bird that is formless and endless, beyond the limits of the intellect. Even though that bird is sitting within this body singing its sweet, enchanting melody, no one can discover that bird or give us any news of it. People can tell us what they have heard about Shiva, Rama, and Krishna. They can repeat what they have been told about the heavens above and the hells below, on and on. But my friend, we are concerned with what actually lies within; we are searching for the knowledge of the soul. We are not looking for some god outside ourselves—we are in search of the God who dwells within all and is one with all. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, “A bird is singing within this body, but no one can tell us its secret.”

**That bird is neither colorful nor colorless;
It has no outline or form.
That bird sits sheltered in the tree of Naam.**

¹ *So panchī mohi koī na batāvai, jo bolo ghaṭ māñhī re, Kabir Sahib*



Baba Somanath Ji

What does that bird look like? It is neither colorless nor colorful. It has no outline or form. Where has that bird taken up residence? It is sitting in the shade of the Lord's Name. It has taken the support of the Naam.

The bird is perched in that tree.

Dancing from branch to branch, it nibbles its food.

A bird is perched in the tree of Naam. The bird flutters about in the branches, eating and drinking.

**No one else recognizes it or knows what has
inspired its song.**

In the deep shade, the bird nestles in the foliage.

Who is this bird? What is its nature? How does it come to be sitting within the body? And from where does its sweet song arise? No one has unraveled these mysteries.

We know about the gods and goddesses. We say: "This god is the true one, and he will give us some reward for our devotion." But such gods and goddesses are just outer concoctions. We ourselves commission images and idols of the gods. Then, we accept one of those gods as our own deity. With deep devotion, we perform the rites and rituals; then, we stretch out our hands and entreat that god for blessings. But the whole time, the stone idol of that god just sits there; it never even moves.

So, we ask, "What about the bird sitting within us? From where does its song arise? What kind of bird is it? How can we meet it?" That bird is truly Divine. All the outer gods and goddesses we create are just figments of our own imagination.

Now Kabir Sahib asks, “What *bhāv*² inspires that bird to lift its voice in song? From what wellspring of love does that song arise?” In the created world, the five elements mix together to form the 52 letters and all the outer languages through which we express the love and longing in the human heart. Using these outer languages, the great mahatmas, moved by their own *bhāv*—their own inner feeling of deep devotion to the Lord—composed all the sacred texts: the Vedas, Shastras, Granths, Puranas, and many more.

When Vyasa received inspiration, he penned the eighteen Puranas³ according to his own inner inclination. When inspiration arose within the rishis and munis, they composed the Upanishads, imparting their own wisdom. Likewise, in the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna, intoxicated in the love of the Almighty, addressed Arjuna’s questions, revealing his own divine nature.

Similarly, we worldly people are also motivated by deep inner feelings built over many past lives, but our *bhāv* directs us to the world and not to God. When we take up the human form, our emotional and mental makeup guides and influences our course of action in this world. We derive a fleeting happiness from worldly things and, therefore, devote all our energies to collecting wife, children, money, and possessions. This is where we have focused our love and longing.

But Kabir is speaking of the highest manifestation of Love. He asks, “What *bhāv* has inspired the bird’s song?” That song

2 *Bhāv* is a deep feeling or mood that arises from ingrained emotional tendencies. It is related to *sañskāra*—the impressions coming from past lives. In classical Indian music, *bhāv* is also an essential element—the predominant feeling that endows any composition or performance with life. The *bhāv* Kabir Sahib is speaking of is love.

3 All of the eighteen Puranas are traditionally ascribed to Maharishi Vyasa.

springs from the true *bhāv*. The bird sits sheltered amongst the verdant foliage within, basking in the Self-Existing, Radiant Power of Naam, lost in unbroken contemplation. Bathed in bliss, it flutes its eternal Melody of Love, pouring forth its song in a language and *bhāv* far beyond the reach of human understanding.

**It alights in the evening, and in the morning, it
flies away again.
The bird keeps its secret hidden within itself.**

That bird comes in the evening and flies away the next morning. And yet, no one has fathomed its secret. During the hours from dusk till dawn, when night falls and the darkness of ignorance prevails, the bird of the soul comes down into this world;⁴ and when the Light of spiritual awakening dawns, that bird again takes flight and soars back to its True Home. But up until now, no one has been able to describe the manner of its coming and going.

**That bird is only one, not ten or twenty;
And it tastes the nectar of two fruits.**

That bird is only one, but it partakes of two different kinds of fruits. When it comes into this world, it gains nourishment from the physical fruit of Maya and also tastes the divine fruit of inner spiritual experience. That bird of the soul consumes both fruits but is not bound. All the trouble arises from the mind. It darts here and there, tasting the fruit of this world. Without the support of the soul, the mind would die; on its

4 That is, the soul incarnates in the darkness of the material plane.

own, the mind could not enjoy the worldly pleasures. So, the mind feasts on the worldly fruit and becomes stuck fast in that enjoyment, forgetting that it draws all its power from the soul.⁵

But when the mind realizes its true nature, the worldly pleasures lose their charm. Once it tastes the sweetness of spirituality, it finds the worldly fruit insipid, and—breaking all its attachments—the mind sours home to its native place.

**It dwells in the Inaccessible, Limitless, Infinite
Realm—no one marks its comings or goings.**

The bird of the soul comes from the Inaccessible, Unbounded, and Infinite Realm. Its nature is beyond understanding. No one sees it arrive or depart. When someone departs from this world, what do we people say? “Oh, that person has died.” The body has died, but the soul is immortal. And where it

5 The Saints often describe this situation with the example of the fly and the honey: “Master Sawan Singh Ji used to say that this world is not bad but do not make it your own. He used to say that the meditator lives in this world like the water fowl lives in the water, but whenever he flies, he flies with dry wings. In the same way, even though the meditator lives in the world, he is unaffected by the dirt of the world. He used to say that the mahatmas live in this world like that fly who comes and sits on the bowl of honey and tastes the honey and flies away without getting her wings or legs in the honey; whereas the worldly people live in this world like that fly which goes and sits in the center of that bowl of honey. Neither are they able to eat that honey nor are they able to get released from that bowl, because whenever they try to get their legs out of that bowl of honey, their wings are stuck in it, and whenever they try to get their wings out of the honey their legs are stuck in there. So finally, they die in that honey without tasting it. He used to say that in fact Saints are the only ones who enjoy life in the true sense because the love for Almighty Lord has been awakened within them, and because of the support of that love they enjoy the world and they do their work.” Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, *Light of Ajaib: Questions and Answers from Sant Bani Magazine*, v 2, April 1984, “On Fear and Love” p. 20: https://www.mediaseva.com/books/LightOfAjaib_V2.pdf

has gone, no one can say. And when a baby comes into this world, we say, “Oh, now a child is born.” But we do not know what soul has come into our household. We say someone has taken birth or someone has died. But we have no knowledge of where that soul dwelt before it came into the world and no idea where it goes after death. It comes and goes so quietly that no one marks its passage.

**Kabir says: Listen, O brother sadhu!
This is the unfathomable story.
Let the wise ones seek to know where that bird dwells.**

He says, “O Sadhu! This matter lies beyond the realm of intellect.” Even after Kabir Sahib has explained so beautifully, this mystery still lies beyond the grasp of the intellect. But when the intellect ceases to exist, when it merges into the One Lord and becomes one with the Light within, then true understanding dawns. This matter cannot be comprehended by idle imagination or feeble reason.

He says, “O Pandit! O Gyani! What can the outer Vedas and Puranas and holy books teach you? Search for the bird that dwells within you. Delve deep and discover its secret. When you gain such enlightenment, your wisdom will be perfected; your knowledge will be complete. But when you don’t unearth the treasures hidden in your own house, what wisdom can you impart to others?”

Unless we wholeheartedly follow the meditation technique taught by the Master, we cannot walk on the Inner Way. Our condition is like that of the old woman who was sitting before the cook stove, saying: "O cook stove, make the curry. Prepare the gulab jamuns, the puris, and the khir." She sat giving orders but the stove didn't make any food for her. Nothing happened at all, and that old woman went on sitting—staring at the ashes in the cold grate.

—Baba Somanath

A Matter of Doing, Not Talking

**Many people try to foretell the future,
But none have unlocked its secret.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Charandas Ji. He tells us that many people try to look into the future. One person may predict that great happiness will come to you this month. Another may promise that, if you follow their instructions, you can reap rich rewards and even gain access to the heaven worlds. Someone else may suggest that by spending your wealth on rites and rituals, you can remove difficulties that would otherwise block your way in life.

All these soothsayers hold out false hope of achieving future happiness, and, if we allow such erroneous impressions, garnered from surmise and guesswork, to take root in our hearts, we will end up squandering our lives in meaningless endeavors. They may assure us that they have only our best interests at heart and that their advice is for our benefit. But my friend, what tangible good can come from following their suggestions? They go on telling us, “I am only concerned for your welfare.

¹ *Honhār ko bahut batāve, pai tā ko kachu marama na pāvaiñ*, Charandas Ji,

If you follow my advice to the letter all will be well.” But their assurance that we will benefit from their instructions rests on mere mental conjecture, with an admixture of self-interest. And when we eagerly follow their questionable advice, our acquiescence rests on nothing more than a vague and unsubstantiated hope that all the rigmarole they are telling us is gospel truth. But they cannot present even one scrap of concrete evidence that their predictions and instructions are founded in reality.

**What is destined to happen will happen;
No one can alter the course of destiny.**

Now, what is Charandas Ji explaining to us? Whatever is meant to be will be; we cannot rewrite destiny. No one can change the future or modify those life events that unfold in the Will of God. Whatever has been ordained by the flowing pen of destiny will come to pass. The laws of the created world are fixed. No one can steal the sunshine from the day, drive the darkness out of the night, or make the afternoon like the morning. The times of day each have a set role in the natural order. Similarly, the karmic laws are inexorable and inescapable. Our past deeds mold the pattern of our lives, and according to our fate, we undergo pain, pleasure, profit, and loss to clear our karmic debts. According to our fate karmas, we become kings, emperors, or paupers. Whatever is written in our destiny will manifest; no one can alter its course by even one jot.

**Some seek to unravel this mystery, but their efforts
are all in vain.
Abandoning their faith in the True Path, they take
up the coward’s way.**

We should set aside all worry about the future and cultivate firm faith in the Guru, but we place our trust in astrologers instead. Many people receive initiation into the Naam and become satsangis. They go into the Satguru's refuge and listen to Satsang daily, but despite all this, they still cling tenaciously to their belief in astrologers.² And when an astrologer comes to the neighborhood and starts reading peoples' charts and talking of the future, these innocent souls accept all the mumbo-jumbo unquestioningly and allow themselves to be led further and further away from Satsang, Satguru, and Sat Naam.

Would it not be wiser to first ask that astrologer about their own condition? They have given up their honest professions and spend their time consulting astronomical tables and making predictions to dupe those who fall into their net of deception. These tricksters then spread out their hands before the people and relieve them of their hard-earned cash. They pick the people's pockets and create false expectations, laying out before them a rosy future and assuring them that everything will be just fine.

2 When an aspirant is initiated into Surat Shabd Yoga, their karmic accounts are transferred from the hands of Dharm Rai, the Lord of Judgment, into the hands of the Satguru, the Lord of Compassion. Then it is up to the Satguru how those karmas will be finished off. For this reason, the destiny of an initiated soul may be modified by the Satguru as He sees fit. "Generally, in the life of an initiate, he'll find many changes in his life. His life history according to astrology does not stand true. Those who have transcended the starry skies are under the control of One Who goes beyond those planes; there astrology does not stand true—things are changed. Many things are omitted, sometimes some things are delayed, some things are minimized." Kirpal Singh, *The Light of Kirpal* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1980) Chapter 5, "Who Are You? Where Are You? Where Are You Going?" p. 36.

To those predicting the future, I would say, “First, give some thought to your own future instead of making predictions about others.”³

Many people from all walks of life place their trust in such astrologers. Once, a king began to wonder about his end time, and after summoning a renowned astrologer to his court, he asked that man, “How many days are left to me in this world? Will I enjoy a long life?”

Eyeing him, the astrologer realized what a windfall had come his way. He thought to himself, “Now my prey has fallen into my trap.”

But outwardly, the astrologer replied to the king, “What can I say on this matter? It is too painful to talk about.”

The king insisted that he tell him what he foresaw about his remaining life span, but the astrologer replied, “No, Your Majesty. This should remain hidden; I cannot speak of that which I know. Whatever is in the Will of God, let it come to pass.”

But the king was not to be put off so easily, and drawn in by the astrologer’s cryptic words, he pressed on: “No, this will not do. Tell me all that you foresee.”

Finally, with seeming reluctance, the astrologer said heavily,

3 The Saints do not condemn astrology. They simply say that, while the laws of astrology are valid, such laws do not apply to the disciples of the Satguru. And in this Satsang, Baba Somanath Ji is also emphasizing that, unfortunately, not all those who practice astrology are proficient in that discipline—many have turned it into a mere money-making scheme. Sant Kirpal Singh tells us: “Astrology is a regular science, but few there are who are really conversant with it. This requires a clear mind vision. Moreover, it affects those who are under the influence of the Stars; but those who transcend the starry sky or are taken under the care of Masters who transcend the starry sky, the predictions in their cases do not stand correct.” Ruth Seader, ed., *The Teachings of Kirpal Singh, v 3: The New Life*, (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1977) p. 72-73.

“Your Majesty, it pains me to speak these words, but in just eight days, you are destined to die.”

From that time forward, the king was as good as dead. He gave up food and drink and closeted himself in his private chambers. He ceased attending the audiences in the royal court and could not be persuaded to show his face in public.

Now, his prime minister was greatly alarmed at this turn of events. He thought, “What has brought about this sudden change in the king’s behavior? He was not showing any signs of ill health. He was not suffering from any fever. So, what has happened to bring on this strange display of weakness and despair?”

The minister went to the room where the king was secluding himself, and directly enquired from him: “Your Majesty, what is the cause of your sad condition? Open your heart and confide in me the reason for this change that has come over you. Once I understand the nature of your difficulty, I can summon the finest Ayurvedic physician in the kingdom to treat you. I urge you to let me render this humble service to you.”

The king languidly replied, “Of what avail would it be to bring a physician to my bedside? It is God’s Will that I should depart from this mortal world within eight days.

Hearing these words, the minister was stunned: “Where on earth did you get such an idea, my Lord?”

So, the king explained to him, “I happened to speak with a skilled astrologer yesterday, and through his craft, he divined my impending doom.”

The minister enquired from the king, “Who is this fellow? Where does he stay? Which village does he belong to?”

When the king told him where the astrologer was to be found, the minister immediately summoned that man to the

royal palace. And when the astrologer arrived, he was respectfully seated in the royal court. He thought his plan was proceeding well and that he had been called to the palace to help save the king's life.

Addressing him, the prime minister asked him, "Is your prediction about the king's impending demise correct?"

The astrologer replied mournfully, "Yes, my prediction is accurate."

Then, the minister pressed him further: "Are you sure that the king is going to cast off the mortal coil within eight days?"

With a heavy sigh, the astrologer replied, "There is no doubt of it."

By this time, the king was also listening to their conversation. The minister then enquired, "My good man, can you tell me how old you are?"

Surprised, the astrologer stammered out, "I am now 50 years old." On hearing these words, the minister whipped out his sword and, quick as lightning, struck off the astrologer's head.

Alarmed, the king asked his minister, "Mantri Ji, what have you done?"

The minister replied, "Maharaj, this astrologer just told us that he was only 50 years of age, about the same age as you. In the normal course of things, there was no reason for him to think that he would die today. But if he had the power to see the future and alter its course—if he could foretell your death—then why didn't he see his own death waiting for him here in the palace and take steps to ward it off?" These words broke the astrologer's spell over the king.

The minister explained further: "This astrologer's predictions were all based on guesswork and speculation. It was just a fantasy concocted by his mind, with an eye to profit from

your trust in him. But I had no faith in his words. He told you that you would die within eight days, but the evidence of my own eyes convinced me that nothing was wrong with you. You are in vigorous health, and this is not your time to depart from this world.”

The numbing fear of death that had taken hold of the king released its hold on his heart, and he returned to his former robust self. He was not destined to die in the prime of life.

In this way, the astrologers and soothsayers create doubts and uncertainties in our minds. Then they suggest a dubious remedy for the dilemma they themselves have spun out of thin air and hope to make a lucrative profit through all this double-dealing.

Therefore, a Satsangi should remain strong and affirm: “My soul is Truth. Both within and without, there is One Essence. The soul transcends the duality of happiness and sorrow. It does not die, nor does it take birth.”

When this type of firm confidence and determination arises in our inner mind, all these outer, worldly inferences and conjectures can have no power over us. Many people believe in the astrologers’ predictions, but they are susceptible to such suggestions only because they have forgotten the Truth.

**With no understanding of domestic duties, they
adopt the householder’s way;
Then, discouraged, they put on the renunciate’s
robes, but devoid of devotion, they earn no profit.**

Whether a person is a householder living the family life or a sadhu wearing colored robes makes no difference. Both ways are noble dharmas if we discharge our legitimate, outer duties with detachment and proceed on the God Way. But if we

abandon detachment and become ensnared in the outer world, we will sink and drown in our self-created fears and anxieties.

Householders are burdened with a load of worry and tension. Every aspect of their lives is filled with uncertainty. They are concerned for the welfare of their children, worried about the loans they have made and the debts they have incurred, and constantly troubled about feeding their families and keeping a roof over their heads. On top of all that, their minds remain uneasy over their black market dealings, and they lose sleep over the income tax and sales tax snatched from their hard-won wealth. They entered the householder's life with only a tenuous grasp of its duties—not fully understanding the load they would have to carry—and now the worldly affairs consume all their time and attention.

And what can be said of those who adopted the garments and lifestyle of the so-called renunciate sadhus? Many of those poor fellows expected a free ride but find themselves burdened down with work they had not anticipated. Meditation goes by the wayside, and they earn no spiritual merit. Instead, to earn their livelihood, they devote all their time to ensnaring the unsuspecting people in a storm of falsehood. Constantly, they go on plotting: "How can I take advantage of this person? Who else am I going to entrap today?" Their main concern is to secure an idle and luxurious lifestyle. All their thoughts are for worldly ease and comfort.

Thus, we can see that both the householder and the renunciate are constantly possessed by fear, worries, doubts, and concerns; both are chasing an illusion of happiness and peace that cannot be achieved by outer activity.

**Even though our past actions remain hidden from us,
we have to reap their consequences in the present.**

The karmic debt we have accumulated in our past lives is beyond reckoning, and those karmas have shaped our present incarnation. In our present life, we continue creating karmas and undergoing their reactions. If we introspect our hearts carefully, we will see that, according to our own actions, we will receive the appropriate reward or punishment. When our actions in past lives have sketched out our destiny in this life, what is the point of asking the astrologers about our future? Whatever karma we have created, we ourselves will have to undergo the reaction, be it pain or happiness.

If we still insist on taking our troubles to the astrologers, what can they tell us? They will pour over their ephemerides, and, according to what they discover, they will prescribe remedies to attract positive forces or repel negative ones. But, in the end, we cannot escape the consequences of our past deeds. Whatever is written in our destiny will come to pass—sure and certain.⁴

**We may call it fate, or we may call it destiny;
Either way, our current course has been set in
motion by our past deeds.**

4 The Saints tell us that astrology is an exact science and that astrologers competent in that body of knowledge can discern the broad outlines of a person's destiny. However, as Baba Somanath Ji is pointing out, not all astrologers are competent. Worse, some may even seek to exploit the fears and uncertainties of the innocent people for profit, suggesting that the future can be modified. But more importantly, the initiates who have come into the shelter of a Param Sant are beyond the influence of the stars. On the Third World Tour, Master Kirpal Singh was asked if it was all right for initiates to study astrology. He replied: "You can study anything you want. The stars only control those who are under the starry sky. Those who have risen above the stars (or are under the protection of a Master who has risen above the stars) aren't affected." Kirpal Singh, *The Third World Tour of Kirpal Singh, 1972: As Taken from the Pages of Sat Sandesh* (Sawan Ashram, Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1974) Part IV, "In the West and South, Cincinnati," p. 115.

Now, when the time comes to balance the karmic accounts, those who have grasped the laws of karma take comfort from understanding that they are reaping the results of karmas they have done in the past.

If they receive a windfall of wealth and property, they will rejoice in this good fortune, understanding that it has been written in their fate because of some generous past action. And when difficulties and troubles beset them, they will concede that this misfortune was written in their *pralabdha* karma because of some previous moral misstep.

Further, the saints and seers advise us that, just as we are reaping the reaction in the present based on actions we have performed in the past, so whatever deeds we are doing in the present, we will reap the fruit of those deeds at some future time.

But good and bad karmas are chains forged of gold and iron. Both are binding, and the question arises: How can we extricate ourselves from the shackles of karma altogether?

Doership is the root of all action, and if we are constantly mulling over our past and future karmas, focusing only on our petty selves, we will remain entangled in the karmic conundrum.

We would benefit more by setting aside our I-hood and becoming absorbed in the Almighty Lord who dwells far beyond the arena of action and reaction—then whatever is destined to happen will happen, but we will not feel its pinching effects. Therefore, Tukaram says:

*Your fate that unfolds in this lifetime
is born of your actions from the past.*

There is no need to ponder over the matter further; we can

gain nothing by splitting hairs.⁵ Whether you are a yogi, a king, or a pauper, whether your life is filled with happiness or sorrow—you will definitely have to undergo the reaction of your past deeds.

Once, Gorakhnath visited the city of Ujjain. And when Raja Vikramaditya, the ruler of the time, received word that Gorakhnath—a great Mahayogi adept in spiritual wisdom—was gracing the city with his presence, he was eager to have the darshan of this illustrious guest and set out to visit him.

When Gorakhnath got word that the king was coming to meet with him, he thought, “He is a very noble personage. He is a brave warrior, a great scholar, and a wise and truthful king. I must receive him with due respect.”

At that time, Gorakhnath was suffering from a bad cold. His body was burning with a high fever, and his limbs trembled with severe chills. He thought, “If the king comes here to meet with me and sees me shivering and shaking like this,

5 Sant Ajaib Singh used to tell a story of Rabia Basri that emphasizes this point: “Rabia Basri was a very famous Saint among the Muslims and once some Satsangis came to Her and they said, ‘Well, tell us something about the will of God.’ Rabia Basri said, ‘Since you have brought up this subject, it is better if you say something about it.’ One of them said, ‘Whatever pain God gives to you, you should accept that, and patiently bear it.’ Rabia said, ‘Well, that is not the correct attitude for the lover Satsangis, because in this statement there is still some smell of egoism. In this statement it seems that you are saying, *I am bearing* or *I am suffering* the pain which God has given to me.’ Then the other dear one said, ‘It is better to accept the pain given by God without any complaints or feeling bad about it.’ Rabia said, ‘Even in this statement there is some smell of egoism. So, you should say something else.’ But those people did not have anything else to say so they requested Rabia Basri to say something about the will of God. She replied, ‘A dear satsangi, a lover satsangi, should not even know when the pain came—in the will of God—and when it went away. He should always remain happy in whatever is given to him, and he should never be aware of what is happening with him and what God is sending to him.’” Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, May/1985, “Beyond Hell and Heaven,” p. 25.

it will not look good. How can I show him proper respect during his visit?” He looked around him and, seeing a shawl lying on the ground nearby, he decided to transfer his cold over to that shawl while Vikramaditya was with him.

When Vikramaditya arrived, Gorakhnath was sitting comfortably, not bothered by any symptoms of fever or trembling. So, he and the king sat together undisturbed and talked freely for a while about spiritual matters. But at the conclusion of their meeting, when the king was preparing to leave, he said to Gorakhnath, “Maharaj Ji, I have one question. I noticed something strange about the shawl lying over there on the ground. It kept heaving about all the time that we were talking. Is there perhaps a dog or a litter of puppies lying beneath it? Or is the shawl draped over some person who is tossing and turning in their sleep? Why is this shawl shaking so?”

Gorakhnath replied, “No, no one is lying beneath that shawl. It is only that I have been suffering from a bad cold, and when I learned that you were coming here to visit with me, I transferred my cold over to the shawl for a little while. I did not want my shivering and thrashing about to cast a shadow on our meeting.”

King Vikramaditya then enquired, “Maharaj Ji, if you possess such spiritual power that you could transfer your cold to the shawl for this brief interval, then why can’t you free yourself from the malady permanently?”

So, Gorakhnath explained to the king that his physical suffering resulted from his own past karma, and only he could bear the karmic reaction he had incurred—the debt could not be transferred to someone else. Similarly, every sentient being must undergo the pleasure or pain meted out by fate because: “As you sow, so shall you reap.”

But the satsangis are dedicated to a higher spiritual goal;

they practice true living, and their attention is riveted in the Lord's Name. So, when they have to undergo suffering due to past karmas, even though they feel that reaction, it is to a lesser degree—the thrust of a sword is reduced to the prick of a pin.

The actions we perform today will follow us into the future—some even bear fruit instantly.

Now, Charandas Ji tells us about the *kriyamān* karmas. Four veils of karma are thrown over the soul—*sanchit*, *prālabdh*, *kriyamān*, and *āgami*.

These four types of karmas produce indelible impressions within us that remain until they are compensated for by an equal and opposite reaction.

For instance, sometimes we perform a meritorious deed but find that it leads only to failure and disappointment instead of producing the beneficial result we expected. In such an instance, we are undergoing the consequence of some *sanchit* karma lingering from the past that has been written into our fate for this life.

Then, we have the *prālabdh* or fate karma that determines the home we are born into. We may be born into the holy household of a sadhu or mahatma or into the luxurious mansion of a wealthy banker or businessperson. Our *prālabdh* karma also determines the shape, color, and appearance of the physical body for this lifetime.

And the *kriyamān* karmas result from the deeds that we do every day.

Finally, the *āgami* karmas can be understood by way of an example. Someone realizes: “Now I have become old. My health is failing, and I don't have much time left, but I want to be sure that my children enjoy a comfortable life when I

am gone.” So, what does that person do? They make a will, leaving hundreds of thousands of rupees to their children. And when they die a few days later, all that wealth is transferred to their heirs.

As the end time approaches, many people worry about their children’s future and bequeath their estate to them so they can live a good life: “My son will need a nice house.” If there are many children, they may need three or four houses.

Actions taken as death approaches will fructify at some future time and fall within the sphere of *āgami* karma.⁶

But our ultimate aim is to become free from all four types of karma. If we direct our thoughts toward Truth, our I-hood is gradually eradicated, and our individual desires lose their potency. When all our actions are performed without ego or desire, we become “karma-less” or *neh-karma*. This is the goal of spiritual sadhana.

Until we have cast off the four karmic veils, our soul cannot get in touch with the Oneness that is its true nature. But this is no ordinary subject. To fathom it requires deep dedication and unwavering commitment; you can’t succeed with a wishy-washy attitude. But those rare and fortunate souls who break

6 Generally, the Saints define three classes of karmas: First, the *sanchit* karma, a vast storehouse of karmas accumulated from past lives; second, the *prālabdh* or fate karma that brought us into this incarnation; third, the *kriyamān* (or *āgami*) karma created in this life that will bear their fruit either immediately or at some time in the future. Generally, *kriyamān* and *āgami* are used as synonymous terms, but *āgami* karmas are sometimes treated as distinct from the *kriyamān* karmas when the emphasis is on the reaction coming at some future time. Here, Baba Somanath Ji is giving an example of a person who wills their property to their children as death is approaching. This action occurs right at their end time and so, by definition, the reaction will not occur in the current incarnation. Instead, that karma will fructify in some future birth. Similarly, Saints tells us that our final thoughts at the time of death exercise a disproportionate impact on the future journey of the soul, propelling it into the higher realms or dragging it down into lower life forms. This is the working of *āgami* karma.

through those inner veils can turn their thoughts within and merge into the Holy Naam. If it were easy to accomplish this task through superficial efforts, everyone would have already succeeded by now. But it is only when the Almighty Lord inspires us from within to seek Him that we find the courage and determination to collect our scattered thoughts and invert our attention inward. When we become fully absorbed in Him, all our worldly fetters will fall away.

**Some hurl insults at others; some kick and beat them roundly.
Some are devoted to feeding those in need; some bow their heads in reverent devotion.
Some resort to thievery and gambling, while others are controlled by anger.**

Now, Charandas Ji explains how we people conduct ourselves in this world. Some people are always ready to criticize. They hurl abuse and condemnation at their fellow beings or attack whoever is unfortunate enough to come in their way, using their power to frighten and intimidate those who are weaker than them. However, many people care about the well-being of others and make charitable donations to alleviate the suffering of those living in poverty. Others who are devotionally minded worship God through religious rites and recitations. Further, he tells us that some people resort to thievery, while others have fiery tempers and pick fights with their fellows.

**Both good and bad deeds fructify in due course of time,
O Charandas, Sage Sukadeva has explained this.⁷**

⁷ Sage Sukadeva was the Guru of Charandas Ji.

We reap the reaction of our deeds. If we insult someone and they reply in kind, then the insult is doubled. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*When someone maligns you, the insult is one;
But if you reply in kind, it multiplies beyond count.
Kabir says: If someone speaks harsh words to you,
don't respond; then, that insult remains only one.*

If we keep on trading insults, we set in motion a chain of action and reaction. Two insults become four, then eight, and on and on, with the result that a discussion disintegrates into a brawl, with people kicking and beating each other.

And as the abuse mounts up, each party is caught up in a spiral of revenge that knows no end. We beat each other black and blue, and all we gain from this undignified display is a load of bad karma that we will have to pay for in the future.

Then, we seek a remedy from astrologers and soothsayers with the vague idea that they can help us solve our problems and change our future. But instead of freeing us from the difficulties we have created, they play on our susceptibilities and create false hopes within us for their own profit.

We must emerge from this mental fog and leave doubt and delusion behind. Then, we can focus our thoughts within, absorbing our attention in the Naam, which is the source of peace and happiness.

**Observe the spectacle of this creation unfold;
Understand the duality of high and low as
an illusion.**

The entire world is an arena of action and reaction, where the

jivas remain captive. Observe this spectacle with discrimination and understand its nature.

*The king worries about his battles.
The learned worry about the scriptures.
The youth worries about desires,
and the poor worry about everything*

All the sentient beings are subject to the law of karma. We go on discussing our predicament but remain stuck fast in speculation and misunderstanding about its true nature.

We have the hopes and aspirations that our future can magically improve, and we waste our entire lives in misguided, wishful thinking.

When astrologers broach the subject of the future, they hedge their bets. They will say, “This is likely to happen, but I see obstructions in your path, so events may take a different turn.” They clothe their predictions in such devious language that no matter what actually happens, they can say: “I told you so.”

There was once an astrologer who gave a stone to each person who came to him. He would tell his customers that if they took that stone home and worshiped it for a certain number of days according to his instructions, their task would be accomplished.

So, one person received such a stone and took it home, but then, after a short time, he returned to the astrologer and informed him that his technique did not work:

“Maharaj Ji. I worshiped the stone just as you instructed, but I did not get any benefit from it.”

The astrologer replied with a slight chuckle, “I can see the problem clearly. I gave you that stone to help you with your

endeavor. But now look what has happened? Instead of serving you, that stone is stubbornly sitting on top of your task and is weighing it down. No wonder you have not succeeded.”

Then, another customer came to the astrologer with a problem, and the astrologer also gave him a stone. That man took the stone home with him and immediately succeeded in his work. When he reported this happy turn of events, the astrologer told him, “It is no surprise. Previously, there was an obstacle standing in the way of your progress. But now I have knocked that obstacle out of the way with my stone, and you have achieved your aim.

So, the astrologers have an answer for everything. But what can be gained through stones and clever talk? Nothing at all.

**Millions of theories abound, but the Saints’
teachings encompass all wisdom.**

**O Charandas! The law of action and reaction rules
the created world, thus, says the Sage Sukadeva.**

Out of millions of musings about what the future may hold, only the Saints’ explanation stands up to examination. We will receive the fruit of our own actions. We see the truth of this every day with our own eyes. All other attempts to explain why events unfold as they do are based on guesswork and fall short of the mark.

**The nature of the mind is *gyān*, through which we
see the hand of the Almighty working.**

Now, He says, “What is the nature of the casual mind? It is the

gyān or True Knowledge through which we observe the God Power in action.”⁸

When we merge with the Brahm, the Universal Mind, our fears are all dispelled.

So, now he explains that by following the spiritual teachings of the Saints, we merge into the form of Brahm, the Universal Mind. When all desires are removed, the soul merges into the Divine Light and becomes the form of Light.

The ocean of existence is burning with fear, yet the wise are untouched by its fire.

Fear assails the false ones, but vanishes before Truth without a trace.

8 The mind has three aspects: physical, astral, and causal. The physical mind aids us in acquiring outer knowledge on the theory of spirituality through scriptures and other holy books. And once the spiritual aspirant puts that theory into practice, achieves a little concentration, and begins to taste the inner bliss, the astral mind pursues that ineffable experience with the same enthusiasm it previously lavished on worldly enjoyments. But it is only when the soul reaches the causal plane, the realm of the causal or Universal Mind, that it gets a glimpse of True Knowledge—an active experience of the Ultimate Reality with two distinct aspects: *Gyān* and *vigyān*. In *Naam or Word*, Master Kirpal Singh, defines the properties of these two cosmic states: “In the Bhagavad Gita, we come across two terms: *Gyān* and *Vigyān*. The knowledge of that One life principle, called Paramatma or God, actively operating in all living creatures that appear and disappear like so many bubbles, is called *Gyān*; and the realization that the said live principle is the material and efficient cause of all that exists is known as *Vigyān*. A person possessed of *Gyān* or *Vigyān* then actually sees nothing but God in His creation and creation as established in God; that is to say, the two as identical and not separate from each other—God in man and man in God—which is akin to the pantheistic view of religion (identification of God with the Universe).” Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, Sawan Ashram, 1970) p. 287-288.

The Ocean of Existence is surging with waves of fear. Fear dwells within one and all. Fear pervades every aspect of our lives as we go about our worldly duties. Fear exists between friend and foe. Fear dominates our give and take with others. Even the act of eating and drinking is filled with fear. At all times, the invisible presence of fear is at work within us.

The Power of Naam lies beyond fear. Until we have manifested the Naam within, we will go on thinking: “What is going to become of me? What is going to happen to my children? How will my caste and community survive? How am I going to maintain my give and take with others? Will I make a profit, or will I suffer a loss?” These thoughts are all due to the presence of fear within us—fear is part and parcel of our lives.

We can see that the entire world lives in a state of perpetual fear. The proof is all around us. Whether it is day or night, whether it is summer or winter, fear is ever at work. We are always seeking to secure the comforts of the body but are haunted by the fear of death and decline that await all mortal creatures.

We are all the puppets of fear. Only those who contact the Truth within and become One with it can become fearless. Otherwise, the whole mortal world is held fast in its cold grip.

Only by practicing meditation can we ascend and reach Parbrahm, the realm of the Supreme Lord. Run to the feet of the Satguru and become free of all your suffering.

What gift does the Guru give you? What wisdom does He impart? Most of us have no understanding of the Guru’s greatness. We have no conception of what wealth he wishes to bestow on us.

If we go to a king to receive supari,⁹ will we ask him to give us something stale and tasteless instead? In the same way, when we go before the Satguru, the Sat Naam, or the Sat Purush, who is the Owner of all Creation, will we ask Him for ephemeral worldly trinkets of no value?

When you come into the refuge of the Guru, ask Him only for the gift of Holy Naam, which is the high road to union with the Almighty Lord.

Then, whatever teaching He gives you, live up to that. Follow His instructions implicitly.

If we receive the Naam from the Master but do not tread on the Path He has shown us, what was the use of taking initiation? Suppose someone purchases a train ticket to travel to another village. But instead of going to the train station at the scheduled departure time, they sit at home thinking, "I've purchased a ticket. Why should I have to go all the way to the station? The train should come here and pick me up." But a train or plane will not collect you from your house just because you have a ticket.

Once, two people planned to travel to their native village and met at the railway station. Now, that railway station had a restaurant, and after they purchased their tickets, they went to have a snack while they waited for the train.

They told the waiter: "Bring us some dosa, pakora, and bhajia." But while they were waiting for their order, their train arrived, and its departure was announced.

One man said, "That is our train. Never mind the food. We had better board our train now before they leave without us."

But the other man replied, "Well, if the train has come, so

9 Supari is a flavorful mixture of areca nut and herbs, wrapped in fresh betel leaves.

what? We've already purchased our tickets, so how can the train depart without us?"

No doubt, the tickets were in their pockets, but while they sat eating, the train pulled out and left them behind, so they had to return home disappointed.

Similarly, we have received Naam initiation from the Master and have our ticket back to our True Home. But merely having the ticket does not mean we have reached our final spiritual destination. Once we have our ticket, we still have to board the ship or railway car; that is, we have to meditate and reach the still point between the two eyes behind where our spiritual journey begins. Otherwise, we'll be left behind.

Only when we reach our final destination—when we cross over into Parbrahm and travel on to the Home of Truth—can we say we have used our ticket well and realized its full value.

But if we take initiation and then just sit idly without doing any meditation, if we buy our ticket but don't board the train, then what hope do we have of reaching our final goal? If we ignore our true work and waste our lives engrossed in worldly activities, what can the Guru do for us? What can the Naam do for us?

Without effort, you can gain nothing, so be wholly devoted to meditation.

Gaze within and contemplate on the Inner Light again and again.

Unless we wholeheartedly follow the meditation technique taught by the Master, we cannot walk on the Inner Way. Our condition is like that of the old woman who was sitting before the cook stove, saying: "O cook stove, make the curry. Prepare the gulab jamuns, the puris, and the khir." She sat giving orders

but the stove didn't make any food for her. Nothing happened at all, and that old woman went on sitting—staring at the ashes in the cold grate.

In the same way, we can't enjoy the fruit of meditation through imaginings and empty words. This is a matter of doing, not talking. Only when we meditate regularly and accurately, according to the instructions given by the Guru, can we derive any real benefit. Even if your father and mother were to depart from this world while you were sitting for meditation, you should still leave off your practice until you had completed your allotted time.

Charandas proclaims: Awake and proceed with unwavering resolve.

Abandon all laziness, and do not lose yourself in the poison of worldly pursuits.

In the end, He enjoins us: “O Friends, arise in the early morning hours and sit for meditation.” Become lovingly absorbed in the practices of Simran and Dhyān; never waver in your determination.

Do not give in to laziness. Never criticize anyone. Leave aside all disputes and arguments, and keep your head when others praise you. In the Inner Sanctuary of your heart, only you and the Naam should remain. Then, forgetting all your sense of self, become wholly absorbed in the Divine Bliss.

Absorbed, day and night, in the contemplation of the Almighty Lord, the Sadhu has united with the Formless One. He is tatvā gyānī, the knower of Absolute Truth. His heart is perpetually illumined with the Divine Light. His knowledge comes from direct inner experience. The noble words that proceed from his mouth are full of Truth, and he inspires others to seek for Truth within themselves.

—Baba Somanath

The Qualities of the Sadhu

The Sadhu controls the body through sadhanas; he abandons laziness and pointless debates.¹

This is the bani of Sahajo Bai, a True Disciple of Charandas Ji. Her profound words are full of love and wisdom, and in this bani, she describes the signs by which we can recognize the real Sadhu.

What are those signs? First and foremost, the Sadhu is one who has discovered the mystery of the Divine deep within the human body. All the divisions and grand divisions of the Universe are hidden within its folds. Guru Arjan Dev Ji says:

*Naam supports the divisions and
grand divisions of the creation.*

Naam supports the heavens and nether worlds.

Naam upholds the entire creation. Naam is the support of our very soul. The body also exists only with the support of Naam. Whoever discovers the treasure of Naam in the body and, taking its support, escapes unscathed from the prison house of this world— such an exalted soul is called a Sadhu.

¹ *Sādha soi jo kāyā sādhai, taji ālāsa āura bāda bibādaī, Sahajo Bai*

When we sit for meditation, we are constantly ambushed and overpowered by sloth, sleep, and illusion. The negative tendencies and impressions arising from our past deeds dog our footsteps and refuse to leave us.

The soul longs to practice the Bhajan and Simran, but the mind remains the slave of sleep, comfort, and ease. And so, a perpetual tug of war is raging within us. Over and over, the mind emerges victorious, and the poor jiva sinks into slumber.

But we need to fight back when the mind tries to lull us to sleep. We should never give in to its dictates. This struggle has been going on since the beginning of time, and whenever we have obeyed the mind, the consequence has always been misery and suffering. Therefore, Sahajo Bai tells us that Sadhu always controls his thoughts and remains engaged in meditation. Ignoring the lure of laziness and sleep, he surrenders his whole heart to the Lord. Such a devotee is worthy to be called a Sadhu.

Another impediment encountered on the way is useless debate. Those who lack true understanding are always ready to engage in argument and hairsplitting. For the Sadhu, pointless debate and its inherent duality of winning and losing is a waste of precious time and a positive hindrance in the spiritual way. On close examination, we see that debate has no inherent value. These intellectual wrestlers have not seen the Truth. All their arguments rest on inference and supposition. The real goal is not to discover the Truth but to defeat others and declare victory for yourself.

**The Sadhu becomes determined, ignoring the
changing panorama of world activity.
He is not anxious for praise nor afraid of slander.**

Once and for all, resolve to invert your attention and meet the Lord within. Leave no room in your heart for anything apart from your cherished goal. Remain unruffled when others praise or criticize you. Patiently endure the sufferings of the body. Turn your back on worry and confusion. Your one desire should be to connect your whole being with the Holy Naam. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*If you have the desire to meet the Lord,
then keep the flame of love
perpetually burning in your heart.*

If you want to meet with the Lord, then, day and night, keep your attention fixed on Him. In this way alone can you become a True Sadhu. Otherwise, the world is filled with so-called sadhus who only act and pose—they can be found in the hundreds, the thousands, the millions.

**The Sadhu is full of patience and forgiveness;
He has subdued the five senses and killed the mind.**

Our hearts should be overflowing with true forgiveness. Unless we look mercifully upon others, we cannot break free from the cage of egotism, and the fire of anger within us cannot be extinguished. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*The earth bears the digging.
The forest bears the axe.
The Sadhu bears the harsh speech of others;
no one else can endure it.*

We may dig deep into the earth and heap burdens upon it, but the earth will never retaliate. Going into the forest, we may

recklessly hack down the trees, and those trees will never utter a word of complaint. But only the Sadhus can bear the harsh words of the worldly people without a murmur.

Until forgiveness takes root within us, we cannot rid ourselves of egotism, enmity, and all the other bad qualities. So, forgiveness is the highest virtue of all.

Next, we have to deal with the five senses that perceive sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. Our ears hear sounds. Our eyes see forms. Our nose smells sweet fragrances and foul odors. When we eat or drink, our tongue senses sweet and sour tastes. And our skin senses hardness and softness, pleasure and pain. In this way, the five senses give us information about the world around us and play an important role. And our mind is meant to be their sovereign. In the natural order of things, the senses should serve the mind while the mind remains aloof from their influence. But at present, the mind is dragged helplessly by the senses into the arena of outer sense pleasures. If we would only seize the mind and bring it under our control, order would be restored, and the senses could no longer run the show.

But how to control the mind, that is the question. As long as we do not understand where the mind resides and how to rein it in, the mind will never obey us. And if the mind does not come under our control, the senses will continue to run riot.

Then, no matter if we go about with a downcast gaze to avoid seeing the beautiful forms in this world; no matter if we avoid listening to worldly music and hear only songs in praise of God; no matter how if we give up indulging in the delicious foods, subsisting on bland, dry fare or even giving up food altogether and remaining hungry; it will make no difference. How can such austerity bear any fruit when, at any moment, the senses may break loose and overpower the mind?

We cannot achieve lasting success until we abandon all desire, which is the root cause of all our trouble.

So, for this reason, Sahajo Bai tells us that if we once take a firm hold of the mind and bring it under our control, all the senses will automatically become tame and manageable. Rahimdas² says:

*Focus fully on the primary task at hand,
Then all your works will be accomplished with no effort.*

If we succeed in the most important task of controlling the mind, we automatically accomplish much more. Once the wayward mind has been restrained, then the senses, which are naturally subject to the mind, will be subdued as well. Therefore, Sahajo Bai enjoins us to kill the mind and five senses. But what does She mean by “killing the mind”? She warns us that we must restrain the mind; it should not be allowed to roam about unfettered. When the mind calms down and reposes in stillness, this is the meaning of killing the mind.

**The Sadhu renounces falsehood;
Only true words pass his lips.
He keeps His attention fixed firmly at one point,
not allowing it to wander this way and that.**

Now Sahajo Bai talks about body, mind, and speech—we must practice Truth in all three.³ If we speak a lie with our tongue, that falsehood spreads throughout our whole body. So, first of all, the words we speak should be truthful. And what will be the result? Truth will suffuse our whole body.

2 Rahimdas was one of the “Nine Jewels” or ministers in the court of Akbar the Great.

3 *Kāyā, mansā, and vāsā/vāchā*

Through the words you speak, your whole body is either purified by Truth or polluted by falsehood—the choice is yours. If you want to manifest Truth, then whenever you express yourself, you should take that opportunity to practice speaking only true words. But if your tongue is speaking truthfully and you are still harboring falsehood in your heart? Then, your outer words will only create more falsehood because your inner condition is false. Both your heart and your words must be anchored in Truth. Then that Power of Truth will overflow within you, washing away all falsehood and illusion. But if we remain bereft of Truth, how can we hope to harvest the fruit of bhakti?

Only through the True Guru and the True Name can the soul meet with the Immaculate Lord, who is the form of Truth or *Sat*. The word Guru denotes a True Power, and that Power is called *Sat Guru*. And what is the meaning of *Sat Naam*? It is the True Name of the Lord, forever One and Unchanging. And the soul's real essence is Truth. But through constant contact with untruth, we have taken on its form. To cleanse ourselves of falsehood, we must practice Truth, and the first step toward that goal is to speak truthfully. Never utter a false word. Truth is unchanging, deathless, and eternal.

When our soul merges into that Truth, it becomes unshakable; it is no longer dragged here and there. But while falsehood lurks within us, no matter how much we may speak the true words outwardly, it will make no difference. Our wavering attention will not collect at the still point, and the inner Divine Door will not open.

**The Sadhu's body resides in this world, but His
mind dwells with the Lord within.
He is indifferent to the pleasures of the senses.**

Many people are confused about how to live a life of truthfulness. They say, “We are householders, after all. We must fulfill all the duties of a householder; we have to live amidst our children, family, and other relations. How can we develop the quality of truthfulness under such circumstances? How can we become successful in the way of Truth?” People often have this doubt. They present their objections as though they were a given fact that can’t be questioned. They say, “This is just the way it is.”

But the Saints have proved otherwise. They practice the meditation as requested by the Guru while fulfilling all the duties of the householder’s life. They have inverted their attention within and have discovered the Truth. Therefore, they look at the outer world from a different angle of vision.

They say, “The body functions in this physical plane, but the mind has to invert within and connect with the Shabd Power. So, remain in your homes. Perform all your outer duties faithfully, but keep your attention attached to the Truth within.”

[Break in the audio.]

[It is all a question of controlling the mind. There was once an old woman who had] a goat and a pet monkey. One day, while she was preparing a meal, she picked up a jug and went outside to fetch some water.

Now, her pet monkey was feeling hungry. Seeing her go out, the monkey thought, “This is my opportunity.” He slipped the rope from around his neck and hopped about the kitchen, greedily gobbling up one dish after another. Then, before the old lady returned, the monkey loosened the goat, fastened the rope back around his own neck, and sat looking on innocently.

When the old woman returned to the kitchen with her water, she found the monkey sitting tied up just as she had left

him, but the goat had somehow broken free and was roaming around the house. Seeing the mess in the kitchen, she became angry and, picking up a stick, began to beat the poor goat. And all the while, the monkey sat chuckling to himself: “I ate all the food, but now the goat is taking the beating.”

So, the goat is like the body, and the monkey is like the mind. The meaning of this story is that the monkey mind happily commits all the sins, but the body must endure the punishment.

It is a question of keeping a tight rein on the mind, who is the real mischief-maker. We should fulfill our worldly obligations and responsibilities, but all the while, our thoughts should remain fixed in the remembrance of the Almighty Lord.

From within, we should always remain indifferent to the worldly pleasures. We should be in the world, yet out of it—only then can we taste the Inner Bliss. But as long as our within is filled with the desire for the sense enjoyments, we will not be able to develop detachment from the physical world.

**The Sadhu practices abstinence and truthfulness;
He is filled with virtue from head to toe.
His body, mind, and speech impart bliss to all
around Him.**

Now, Sahajo Bai says that a Sadhu is one who has conquered the senses. He has become the form of Truth. His whole body is filled with nothing but Truth. Without and within, He knows nothing but Truth. Once we realize there is no difference between within and without, falsehood and illusion fly away, and we see all the creation as One.

But at present, we are trapped in duality, so for us outside

and inside are two different things. We perceive the outside world as real and think of the inner realms as something insubstantial. This is the influence of duality. Duality is the very nature of the physical world, and so no wonder. Bound to this physical world, we see everything through the prism of duality—day and night; truth and falsehood; impermanent and eternal; male and female; attached and detached; auspicious and inauspicious.

We perceive everything in opposing pairs, and the fabric of the destructible world is woven from these two strands. *Du* means two, and because of this two-fold or *duharā* nature of the creation, we use the word *duniyā* to mean “world.”

Some people also call the “world” *sansār*. When we take birth in this world, doubt or *sansā* enters our hearts. We forget the reality and, mistaking the shadow for the substance, begin taking action in this world to allay our doubts and fears. But those very actions create karmas, which further bind us and give rise to countless desires. As a result, we spend our earth life caught up in a never-ending cycle of action and reaction. This is why we call the world *sansār*—the place of doubt.

And further, the created universe is referred to as *prapanch*. This word is made up of two parts: *pra* (that which is transcendent or beyond) and *panch* (five)—“the transcendent soul is combined with the five.” And what are these “five”? The five elements and further the five senses. Coming into the creation, the transcendent soul loses its freedom, trapped in the net of five elements and five senses. For this reason, the created universe is described as *prapanch*.

Once the soul becomes liberated from the working of the five senses and the perception of duality, it regains its pristine purity and reunites with the One Unchanging, Omnipotent Lord. When no difference remains between the body, mind,

and speech—when they are permeated with Truth and become unified—we will not have to search for the happiness that eludes us. Our True Nature is Bliss, and that Bliss will manifest within us of itself.

He contemplates on the Formless One;

He is the knower of Brahm.

The words He speaks are filled with nectar.

Absorbed, day and night, in the contemplation of the Almighty Lord, the Sadhu has united with the Formless One. He is *tatvā gyānī*, the knower of Absolute Truth. His heart is perpetually illumined with the Divine Light. His knowledge comes from direct inner experience. The noble words that proceed from his mouth are full of Truth, and he inspires others to seek for Truth within themselves.

He has realized the One and loves no other.

Sahajo bows at His holy lotus feet.

The Sadhu has become absorbed in the One Lord and loves Him alone. The two have become One. Through the alchemy of love, the Sadhu has become the very form of the Lord, and no difference can be found between them. Sahajo Bai says, “I bow in adoration at His feet.”

Through the Sadhu, the God Power has manifested in the human body as an individual personality, and beyond the confines of that body, that same True Power exists without limit or form. This is the only difference. It is just like when you are preparing fresh ghee. If you pour some of that ghee into a jar to cool, it will solidify and take on the form of the jar, while

the unpoured ghee will remain liquid and pourable. But both substances are ghee; the only difference is the outer form.

**He has gone beyond all duality;
He has enmity for none.
Sahajo says: The Sadhu is free from all desire.**

She says the Sadhu is free from duality. When duality is active within us, we see our fellow beings as friend or foe. But when we rise above duality, we see all as one, so we no longer feel enmity towards anyone. This is but natural. And further, She tells us that the Sadhu is desireless; he is not involved in the play of the senses.

**His state is immaculate.
He dwells in contentment and tranquility.
He is not dependent on anyone else.**

The Sadhu is the form of contentment. His consciousness shines pure and radiant. He doesn't spread his hands before others. Having merged with that Immaculate Power, all his desires are fulfilled.

**Established in True Knowledge, He is absorbed in
Divine Contemplation.**

Sahajo Bai says that the Sadhu has become firmly established in the Inner Knowledge and has lost himself in contemplation. He has become absorbed in the Naam. In the words of Guru Amar Das:

*Giving up all sense of I-hood,
Become absorbed in the Guru.*

We have to surrender all sense of “I and mine” and become the form of the Guru. This is the meaning of contemplation. Contemplation is made up of three parts—*dhyātru*, *dhyāna*, and *dhyeya*. *Dhyātru* is the one doing the contemplation, *dhyāna* is the act of contemplation, and *dhyeya* is the object of the contemplation.

Sahajo says: The Sadhu has surrendered to the Lord, giving up all desire for name and fame.

The Sadhu is free of petty egotism, for he has become the form of God. There is not a trace of I-hood within him.

**In sleep, he is dead to the world;
In the waking hours, he sings the praise of God.**

After we have our evening meal, we fall asleep, and at that time, our soul withdraws to its home at the back of the eyes and then sinks down to the lower chakras. In the state of deep sleep, we have no awareness of self at all. We forget about the body; we forget the oscillations of the mind. It is like death in life. The Saints teach us that those who die to the world can invert and go within.

In the same way, when our consciousness sinks into sleep each night, we should completely forget the outside world and rest peacefully. And when we awake, we should rise refreshed and anchor our thoughts in the Name of the Lord.

**His discourse is filled with stories of the Lord;
He does the devotion without expecting any
reward in return.**

If that devotee comes into conversation with others, all his speech is devoted to describing the sweet mysteries of bhakti, and he only wants to hear talk of the Lord. The one who practices devotion without thought of self is called a Sadhu. In the Shri Guru Granth Sahib, it is written:

I bathe your feet and imbibe that holy water.

Why do we drink that *charanamrit*, the nectar of the Holy Lotus feet of the Sadhu? Because there is indescribable purity in that water. It is the purest of the pure.

But many so-called sadhus roam from house to house, charging money to allow people to wash their feet. This is not what is meant; drinking such water has no value. Only the True Sadhu, who has become one with God, can impart benefit to others.

**Both his body and mind are free from anxiety
and distress.**

He has overcome all obstacles.

No anxiety remains in his body or mind. All the obstacles have been removed from his within.

**O, Sahajo, the Sadhu has surrendered to the Lord;
He has no greed for gold or women.**

She says that the Sadhu belongs to God, and God belongs to him. He has become desireless, so what thought of women or wealth could arise? The sense pleasures have no hold on him. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*I do not turn the rosary nor run after the Lord,
nor do I recite "Rama, Rama."*

*My Lord comes to me without my asking;
Reposing in Him, I attain peace.*

I don't turn the rosary or recite *Rama, Rama* with my mouth. The Lord Himself runs after me, and now I repose in bliss. When you unite with the Almighty Lord, you are not bothered by the world—the thought of the world does not even enter your mind. But until you attain this state, the mind will never cease its restless wandering.

**This noble soul has deep understanding;
His eyes are pools of mercy.**

He has attained True Knowledge, and His eyes shine with wisdom and goodness.

**O Sahajo, His consciousness is awakened, and His
words are filled with coolness and comfort.**

His consciousness has become one with the conscious God Power within. His utterances are filled with peace and consolation, and they spread coolness to the heated hearts.

**Through sadhana, He has controlled the body, and
His thoughts remain in check.**

The Sadhu has put an end to the mind's waywardness and has perfected the meditation practice. Now, he remains in perpetual equilibrium at the still point within.

O Sahajo, the Sadhu restrains His mind and does not run after the senses.

The Sadhu has brought the mind to a standstill, and it can no longer rush headlong after the senses. The ever-active mind has finally come to rest.

When we take to the Guru's Path, we turn our backs on sins or virtues. We need only devotion to the One Naam. Righteous deeds lead us to the heavens, and sins cast us into the hells. But the true devotees give no thought to either realm. They have become absorbed in the True Happiness. What do they have to do with heavens and hells?

—Baba Somanath

The Month of Agahan Has Arrived

**Now Agahan, the sixth month of the year,
has arrived;
Sin is destroyed, and filth is cleansed away.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Hazur Radha Swami Ji. In their writings, Saints and Mahatmas often include a *Bārahmāsā*, a poetic cycle built on the twelve months of the year that describes the different stages and experiences of the human incarnation. Some of these great souls include all twelve months in just one hymn. Other Saints compose separate hymns to describe each of the twelve months. Swami Ji has composed a separate hymn for each month and, describing the month of *Agahan* (November-December), He refers to it as the sixth month of the year.

Why does He call it the sixth month? The New Year begins at different times in different parts of India. In Maharashtra, the New Year starts in *Chaitra* (March-April). In Rajasthan, the Marwari New Year is celebrated in *Kārtik* (October-November). According to the English calendar, January is the first month

1 *Āya mās Agahan ab chaṭhā*, Swami Ji Maharaj

of the year. But Swami Ji is writing according to the reckoning used in Agra, Braj, Mathura, and Vrindavan, where the year begins in the month of *Āsārh* (June-July). According to that reckoning, *Agahan* is counted as the sixth month of the year. In Maharashtra, *Agahan* is referred to as *Mārgashīrsha*.

Speaking of *Agahan*, Swami Ji tells us that “*ag*” means “sin.” In the month of *Agahan*, remove the sins from your soul. Becoming pure within, ascend to the realm where the soul attains salvation.

**The mind has been purified, and the attention
is stilled;
Lust and anger have departed, and the senses are
of no consequence.**

Swami Ji tells us that the mind has now become free of its base inclinations. It is only because of the mind’s impurity that the attention wavers. Once we cleanse the mind, the attention settles peacefully at the still point between the eyes. Lust, anger, sense indulgence, and the other evil tendencies cease to function. From where do lust and anger draw their strength and power? From the impurity of the mind. When the impurities are removed from the mind, lust, anger, and all the other passions lose their force and cool down naturally.

**Leaving the earth behind, the soul rises into the
astral realm;
Catching the Shabd, it ascends to Trikuti.**

He says that leaving this body, the soul climbs to the astral realm. Catching hold of the Sound Current flowing down from Trikuti, it rises upward to the causal region.

**In the company of the Shabd, the soul now revels
in continual bliss;
It witnesses the wonder of the divine spectacle.**

When the Shabd and surat meet, the mind and intellect experience such an intoxicating delight that they cease to work—they become paralyzed. The inner scenes cannot be described by comparing them to anything in this mortal world. Only those who have enjoyed this experience can understand what it is like. When the mind becomes pure, and the soul meets with the Shabd, it is something without parallel. It lies beyond the power and scope of human language.

**Leaving this worldly home behind, the soul finds
its True Home;
Losing this world, it gains the Satguru.**

This house of the material body has been fashioned by mind, Maya, and the senses. Once the mind becomes purified, it longs to return to its origin, and turning away from the material world, it joins the soul in its inner ascent.² The soul's nature is purity, and leaving the mind behind in Trikuti, it surges forward to merge into the Pure Shabd. Abandoning this dwelling of gross matter, the soul soars heavenward to its original home in Sat Lok, the Realm of Truth. The Home of the Soul and the home of mind and Maya are not the same. The home created by mind and Maya is supported by egotism—the sense of “I and mine.” When the soul is freed from ego and unites with Shabd, its attachment to this world is broken forever.

2 The home of the mind is Trikuti, and reaching that level, the mind merges back into its source. But the origin of the soul is higher still. Leaving the mind, the soul continues its journey into Parbrahm and the regions beyond.

**Since I have taken refuge in the Satguru,
I hear the melody of Sat Naam resounding in the body.**

How was this state attained? He tells us: “When I went into the refuge of the Guru with wholehearted devotion, then I took the support of Sat Naam. And meditating on Sat Naam, I have become the form of Truth.” The foundation of all devotion is taking refuge in the Guru. Until we go into the Guru’s shelter, our egotism will not leave us. Until we remove the veil of egotism, we cannot experience that Self-Existing Power.

**Hail to the Satguru. Hail to His Blessed Company;
through His greatness, I have achieved this status.**

When the soul attains this state of Inner Bliss, it cries out: “Hail to my Satguru, who has shown me the True Path. Through His mercy, He has made me reach the Realm of Truth. He is blessed. He is worthy of praise. No matter how much I sing His Glory, it will never be enough.” Kabir Sahib tells us:

*If I make paper of all the earth,
And from the vegetation fashion a pen,
If I change all the seven oceans to ink,
Still I cannot describe His greatness.*

He says: “Even if I use all of Brahmand, the earth and its nine divisions³ as my paper, even if I make ink of the seven oceans, even if I fashion my pen from all the vegetation in the creation,⁴ in the end, all these materials will be used up.

3 The Puranas mention *jambudvīp* (one of the *saptadvīpas*, or seven continents, of Puranic cosmology), which is divided by mountain ranges into nine latitudinal strips.

4 “*Athārah bhār vanaspati*” means “18 loads of vegetation.” The expression indicates all the vegetation existing in the creation.

But the praise of the Guru has no end, for He is limitless. All these other things in the creation will crumble to dust, but His Power has no end. The Guru who has manifested such a Power within me and has made me meet with the Almighty Lord, I am grateful to Him, over and over. Only through His greatness have I attained this state.”

When we thank someone in Hindi, we say *dhanyavād*. In earlier times, *dhanyavād* conveyed: “May you be blessed!”—an acknowledgment of our indebtedness for some great favor bestowed. But what has happened to that deeper sense of gratitude? Nowadays, we have adopted the English phrase “thank you,” and we use it very casually. We say, “Thank you” if someone hands us a pen. “Thank you” and *dhanyavād* both express gratitude, but how does using “thank you” for insignificant things like a pen relate to the profound gratitude inherent in the word *dhanyavād*? This is what we have come to.

The Saints have described their experience in their banis and other writings, and many people wish to translate those writings into English and other languages. But how do we capture the profound spiritual experience those writings describe? How will we distinguish our gratitude to the Almighty Lord for His Grace and Mercy from the mere formality of acknowledging that someone has handed us a pen? What words can we draw on? If we translate the acknowledgment that someone has given us a trifling object like a pen with “thank you,” then what word will we choose to convey our boundless gratitude to the Lord for granting us the human birth and the means to liberation? If we translate literally, word-for-word, without thought for the deeper meaning, then the inherent Truth, the fathomless depth, and the heartfelt sincerity of the original will be obscured.

Once, Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji was giving Satsang and used the English word “teacher” when referring to the Satguru.

One initiate of Baba Jaimal Singh, named Inder Singh, spoke up and said, “Don’t use the word ‘teacher.’ Please, say ‘Guru’ instead.” On hearing this, Maharaj Ji said, “It shall be as you wish.” The word “teacher” does not bestow any glory and honor on the Guru. A teacher gives instruction at some college or school, which is a very ordinary thing, but the word “Guru” resonates with depth and gravity. The word “Guru” has great spiritual significance, but what spiritual significance is there in the word “teacher?” A teacher is a schoolmaster. How can this compare with the ineffable greatness of the Godman?

**Attending the Satsang, I have accomplished my work.
My sins have been destroyed, as though I had
consumed datura.**

Now He says: “Attend the Satsang of the Sant Satguru.” What is the meaning of Satsang? Gratitude is important, but the greatness of Satsang is much more. What is the principle of Satsang? That perfect being—the Satguru—is the form of Sat Purush. By going into His congregation, all the shortcomings in your heart are removed. When the mind becomes pure, and love is awakened in your soul, then through that love, your soul can contact the Naam; this is the meaning of going in the Satsang. True love dawns in your within, and through that love, you meet the Almighty Lord. This meeting with the Truth is called Satsang.

Swami Ji says we become free from sin by going in the Satsang. The root of sin is our sense of “I-hood.” When we listen with our undivided attention to the Satsang of the Guru, we become like people who have taken datura; to others, we will appear to have gone mad. Datura is an intoxicating drug. When someone grinds the seeds of the datura plant and drinks them in a beverage or smokes them in a hookah,

they lose their wits, and their behavior becomes very bizarre. Does Swami Ji mean the Guru gives the Satsang to make the disciples like users of datura? No, it is not like that. He tells us that when you become intoxicated in the Guru's Satsang, you appear to have gone mad to the worldly people, but in reality, you have come in contact with Truth. You have become absorbed in Inner Bliss. When you do not follow the ways of the world, people will call you crazy; when you adopt the Path of the Guru, as far as the worldly people are concerned, you have become a madman.

Sins and virtues have both been destroyed, and the spirit of devotion fills my heart.

In the heart of the devotee, neither sins nor virtues remain. We have been taught that we must perform some righteous deed to atone for our sins. But if we are no longer involved in sin, what is the need to perform those righteous deeds? What benefit would we gain? Their only purpose is to remove our sins. When we take to the Guru's Path, we turn our backs on sins or virtues. We need only devotion to the One Naam. Righteous deeds lead us to the heavens, and sins cast us into the hells. But the true devotees give no thought to either realm. They have become absorbed in the True Happiness. What do they have to do with heavens and hells?

**Now I have come into the Satsang of the Guru;
And I hold fast to His holy feet.**

When you have gained admittance to the Guru's Satsang, let only the Guru's lotus feet dwell in your heart, all the hours of the day and night. "Whenever I look within, I see the Guru's feet manifested there." This is called gurubhakti—devotion

to the Guru—and gurbhakti is no small thing. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*In the first birth, we practice devotion to the Guru,
And in the next birth, we get the Naam.*

Without even completing our course of devotion to the Guru, we still think we are fit to take the support of Naam and ascend within. Many people believe they can follow the Shabd without practicing the Simran and the contemplation. The Shabd is a Conscious Power. Until you have removed the gross tendencies covering your soul, how can the Shabd pull you within? For this reason, in one place, Swami Ji Maharaj tells us:

*If someone tries to become absorbed in the
Shabd without first doing the devotion,
Understand that person as a fool.*

How can the Shabd accept you if your devotion to the Guru is wanting? Therefore, He says: "First perfect your love for the Guru; manifest the Guru in your within." The Guru is the Power of Shabd. When you manifest the Guru within yourself, you can contact the Shabd and forge that inner connection.

But the fool abandons this connection with Shabd and establishes a connection with the mind. He thinks, "What more is needed? I have received the Naam initiation. That's enough. There is nothing else to obtain from the Guru. The Guru gives the Naam initiation, and I have already received that. There's nothing more to it."

**I serve His holy feet and drink the *charanamrit*;
I live by eating the prashad of the Guru.**

Now, He explains the meaning of going into the Guru's refuge. Many people think: "I always remain with the Guru. I always carry out whatever tasks He gives me to complete. Therefore, I am a devotee of the Guru." Friend, you cannot perfect your gurubhakti through these outer activities. When the Inner Guru manifests to you, when you constantly enjoy His company within, when you drink the *charanamrit*—the nectar of the Guru's feet—and when you partake of the Guru's prashad, then you are worthy to be called the Guru's devotee. You may say: "I do all these things. I take the prashad given by the Guru. I wash His feet and drink that holy water, that *charanamrit*. After doing all this, how can my devotion be incomplete?" The truth is you have only drunk the outer nectar of the Guru's feet. You must concentrate at the still point between the two eyes and manifest His feet in your within. When you contemplate on the inner feet of the Guru, when you drink that inner nectar, then you can perfect your devotion. Tulsi Das tells us:

*Dazzling light flashes from the nails of the Guru's feet.
When I remember Him, His divine vision fills my heart.*

When the Guru's radiant feet illumine your within, you should become absorbed in those feet. Then the inner nectar, the real *charanamrit*, will shower down. And when you have tasted that nectar even once, all your suffering in birth and death comes to an end. Drinking that *charanamrit*, you become a fit vessel for the Guru's grace.

What is true prashad? We eat the halva, munch on puffed rice, or enjoy some sweet sugar candy and say we have taken the Guru's prashad. Friend, this puffed rice prashad is distributed outwardly, but how many know that the Guru distributes another prashad within? What does Swami Ji tell

us in this regard? When this nectar from His holy feet rains down on the soul within, then the devotee becomes worthy of receiving the Guru's grace—the true prashad. When you rise above the practices of the outer world and immerse yourself in the inner practices, then He showers His grace upon you. This grace is the prashad you are seeking. When your whole life is transformed into the form of grace, this is called prashad.

**I have His darshan and listen to His holy words;
Remembering them again and again, I cherish
them in my mind.**

When you listen to His every word with reverence, holding His words in your heart and contemplating on them day and night, then you can be called a devotee of the Guru. But now your within is filled with mental wrangling, with love and hate, with criticism, praise, and backbiting, so what room is left for the Guru's words? What can you accomplish like this? Nothing at all.

As soon as you hear the Satsang, you have already forgotten it. When you are leaving the Satsang, you do not remember even one word of the bani; you are vacant within. By the time you reach home, nothing remains in your heart from the discourse; your heart is empty. In the Satsang, you should rivet your attention on having the Guru's darshan. What do you gain from His darshan? The filth of your heart is cleansed away. When you hold His image in your heart day and night, when you dwell constantly on His words, remembering them over and over, then the waves that arise in your within will be stilled; the oscillations of your mind will cease. What does

Kabir Sahib tell us?

*Everyone discards gross Maya;
But who can slip out of Maya's subtle nets?
Whoever breaks free from subtle Maya,
Millions of their births are crowned with success.*

We remove the outer, gross forms of Maya through having His darshan. The subtle, inner Maya—the inner wavering and unsteadiness of the mind—can only be removed by hearing His words and singing His praises. And when your soul becomes immaculately pure, you become capable of merging into the Shabd. This path is so simple, but walking on it is extremely difficult.

**Carefully sifting out the spiritual from the gross,
I grasp the Essence and draw my sustenance
from it.**

His words are so clear, but only when we make ourselves worthy of hearing them will the nectar and bliss they describe manifest in our hearts. Now Swami Ji says, “How can you understand His greatness and discern the inner meaning of His words?” When you become separated from the gross tendencies of the outer world, listen to the words of the Satsang with deep reverence, and lovingly cherish those words in your heart, then all the thoughts and worries of the world will be banished from your within. This is called listening to Satsang.

It is just like using a winnowing basket. First, the stalks are threshed to loosen the grain from the husk and straw. Then, the grain is poured into the winnowing basket and is tossed rhythmically into the air. The light, hollow chaff is blown away

by the wind, and the fine sand and dirt collect in one corner. As the bigger stones rise to the top, you pick them out and throw them away, till finally, only the pure grain remains.

In like manner, you should pour the spiritual grain of the Guru's words into the winnowing basket of your heart. Let all the worldly thoughts and sense pleasures that have filled your heart blow away in the wind. Pick out the big stones and discard them; the gross physical attachments are the big stones. And finally, remove the fine sand and dirt of the subtle attachments through hearing and singing His praises. Then only the grain will remain—the Essence of Essences. Nourish yourself on that food.

**Brother, from that nourishment, I grow
strong and hearty;
The fear of Yama and public shame has left me.**

When the soul receives the inner sustenance of Sat Naam, day and night, then the true nectar of the Guru's love will manifest in the heart. Once the soul grows strong and healthy, then the fear of the world, the worry about public shame, the blind adherence to tradition—all these weaknesses—will leave you. What is the meaning of weakness? First, we think, "I could never do that. I'm too afraid of what people would say." Then lust and anger appear. They seize us and pull us in whatever direction they want. This is called weakness. Kabir Sahib says:

*The lustful, the angry, and the greedy ones
cannot practice the devotion.
Only some brave one can do it,
leaving aside all thought of caste and color.*

The power of the Guru can manifest only when you remove your egotism and pride of the body. This pride became your companion at the time your body was formed. Sometimes, when you sit in Satsang and hear the words of the Guru, for that brief time, your pride is suppressed, and you become a devotee. But after the Satsang is over, the mice and rats of ego and pride dig their way back out and steal all the benefit.

**Understand devotion to the Guru as love for
the Guru;
Penetrating my mind, that love permeates my surat.**

When such devotion to the Guru enters your heart, you can rest assured your gurubhakti is complete. Your soul can merge into the Shabd. Otherwise, you remain a devotee of the mind. Mind and Naam cannot coexist. The thief and the wealthy man cannot live under one roof. If you are a thief within, how can the True Shabd accept you?

**My devotion is complete; it is firmly established
within me.
Absorbed in the devotion, I have become mad in
His Love.**

In this way, true devotion awakens within you. Your course of devotion is complete, and you are no longer tied to this world. Freed from all attachment, you have become mad in His love.

**Just as the husband is dear to the wife, just as the
water is dear to the fish, so the Guru's form is
dear to the devotee.**

What can we compare to the love that true devotees have for the form of the Guru? He says that just as the wife loves the husband and is engrossed in his form, just as the fish loves the water and cannot live without it, in the same way, the devotees should love and cherish the Guru within. We say that the water and the fish are one because water is the life of the fish.

When the devotees manifest such love in their hearts for the Guru, this is called gurubhakti. If we compare our own devotion to the Guru with this true gurubhakti, we will see how far short of the mark we fall. But we people think, “Why should we introspect ourselves? If our devotion is complete, that’s fine. If it isn’t, never mind.”

You should attend the Satsang in such a way that you achieve true benefit.

Now, he sums up by saying that we should attend Satsang in such a way that we gain something real. Otherwise, we just listen to the discourse and return to our home. Friend, tell me, what took place during the Satsang? We say the Satsang was held at Worli or some other location. But the question is not what happened at Worli or some other outer place. The question is, what happened within you?

We say, “Satsang, Satsang.” We attend Satsang every day, but we take no benefit from it.

Now consider Swami Ji’s words—they are very apt. We go on saying, “Satsang, Satsang.” We attend every day, but we take no benefit with us when we leave. We get up, and when we brush off our garments, we brush off everything we have heard. We

leave all the benefit right there at the Satsang place and return home empty-handed.

**Great is the glory of Satsang, but only the
deserving souls recognize its worth.**

He says that the glory of Satsang is indescribable and infinite—beyond the confines of mortal words. Swami Ji says that only the rare, deserving souls can comprehend it. If one is not deserving, then how can they understand? There is a saying: “Playing your veena before a bullock.” How can the poor bullock appreciate the veena’s dulcet tones? It is like performing Nandi puja (worship of Shiva’s Bull) in the *Shambū* temples.⁵

**Everyone goes to the Satsang as a matter of routine;
But the benefit of Satsang manifests only in the
deserving ones.**

We wish to take advantage of the Satsang, but we cannot do this fully until we make ourselves deserving. Only the deserving ones reap the benefit.

**Over and over, they come before the Satguru but
don’t take His words to heart;
They never lose themselves in His darshan.**

We say, “Let’s go to the Satsang.” The children, the old people, the neighbors, everybody goes. But what do they gain? It

5 Nandi is the gate-guardian of Kailash (Shiva’s heaven) and is also the vehicle of Lord Shiva.

is like going to a fair; everyone attends, and then they return home. What did the Satsang mean to them? For them, it was just another get-together. They think: “Everybody is going. I’m going to go too.” You dress up in good clothes, attend the Satsang, and then head back home. Some people want to sit at the front of the congregation, thinking: “I am a prominent satsangi.” Friend, what difference does it make if you sit in the front or the back? Where you sit is not the point. The point of going to Satsang is to grasp the meaning of the Satguru’s teachings. We sit right in front of the Satguru at the Satsang. We attend every day; we are never absent. But if the Guru’s words don’t penetrate into our hearts, what benefit can we receive? We think: “I have been initiated for so many years. I am a very old satsangi. I was initiated by the previous Guru. I am somebody.” My friend, if you have not ascended into the inner realms, what difference does it make if you were initiated by the previous Guru or by the Guru who came before Him? You say you are old satsangis. The old satsangis get eaten up by the worms and ants.

**What can the Satguru and the Satsang do for them?
How can such jivas cross over the ocean of existence?**

He says, “What can the Satguru do for these undeserving jivas? What benefit can they derive from the Satsang? They will drown in the ocean of this world.”

Water dissolves rock candy but doesn’t affect a stone.

When such an unconscious person comes into the Satsang, what is their condition? Swami Ji says it is like throwing a stone into the water. The stone does not dissolve; it doesn’t absorb even a drop of water. The stone remains a stone. But if you

throw rock candy into water, that rock candy mixes with the water and makes the water sweet. It dissolves completely. This is the case of the deserving person who goes into the Satsang. That devotee is like rock candy dissolving in water. But the undeserving person remains like a stone; the water does not affect the stone at all.

**When we have the Satguru's company outwardly,
nothing should be more dear to us than Him.**

Here, he describes how to benefit from the Guru's outer company. The physical connection we establish outside with the Guru should be such that we see no one but Him. Not seeing anything else in this world but the form of the Guru is called outer Satsang.

**Then, the devotee can become absorbed in the
inner Satsang;
The surat ascends into the inner sky, from where
the Shabd is calling.**

Then, the devotee's soul becomes concentrated and establishes a link with the Naam—the form of Oneness. Connecting with the Naam, it becomes the form of Naam. This is the inner Satsang. If we do not have love for the outer form of the Guru, how will we develop love for His inner form? If there is no water in the well, from where will the bucket be filled?

**The sky of Sahans-dal Kanwal is reverberating,
and thunder roars in the Gagan.
Taking its seat upon the throne, the mind
becomes enraptured.**

Then, your soul rises into the inner sky of *Sahans-dal Kanwal*. You hear the thunder sounding in the Gagan of *Trikuti*. If you become absorbed in this Sound, the inner scenes will open before you. But if instead of going inside, you only sit outside and talk about the inner realms, what is the use of such idle talk?

The surat gains access to Sunn or *Lāhūt Lā-Muqām*; *Nāsūt* (physical plane), *Malkūt* (astral plane) and *Jabrūt* (casual plane) are left far below.

The *Sunn* region is also called *Lāhūt Lā-Muqām*. Going beyond the plane of *Sahans-dal Kanwal*, you reach the plane of *Trikuti*. Then, as you merge deeper into the Shabd, the region of *Sunn* appears.

Now the surat opens the door to *Hāhūt* (Maha Sunn) and secures ingress to *Hūtal Hūt* (Bhanvar Gupha) and *Hūt* (Sat Lok).

Going further still, you reach *Bhanwar Gupha*, which the Sufis call *Hūtal Hūt*. Then comes *Hūt* or *Sat Lok* and the sound of *Haq-Haq* (Truth); entering into this realm, we become the form of Truth.

***Hūt* (Sat Lok) is the final stage of the *Fakīrs*.
The surat circumambulates the throne of Sat Purush.**

Sat Lok, also called *Muqām-i-Haq*, is the realm of the True *Fakirs*. Sometimes, people use the word “fakir” as an insult. Someone says: “You’re nothing but a fakir.” The other person takes offense: “Who are you calling a fakir?” Then, they come

to blows over it. But what is the true significance of the word “fakir”? Becoming free from all care and taking on the form of Truth. When the soul leaves the nine doors and sheds the physical, astral, and causal bodies, then it reaches the True Home. This is called liberation.

**The Surat catches the strains of “Allahū” in Trikuti;
And “Hā” (Hū) pervades the region of the Void.
On reaching Bhanwar Gupha, the soul discerns the
Sound of “Anahū.”
the melody of Sat Naam, “Haq-Haq,” resounds in
Sach Khand.
Sant and Fakir, two words for One Power;
Haq and Sat, two names for One Realm—indivisible
and imperishable.**

In Hindi, we call this Power “Sant.” In Muslim terms, that is, in the Urdu language, we call it “Fakīr.” Two different words in two different languages, but the Power is the same.

So, we have to invert the mind and attach it within. When the mind stops racing here and there outside, when it is no longer filled to overflowing with worldly thoughts, when it becomes still and remains connected to the Naam — that is what is meant by turning the rosary.

—Baba Somanath

Rotate the Rosary of the Mind

Listen to the Guru's words, and fix your attention in the Satsang.¹

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Huzur Radha Swami Ji. He tells us that this world has been fashioned by the working of opposing powers—Truth and untruth, eternal and changeable, invisible and visible, day and night, auspicious and inauspicious, that is, *gurmat* (the Path of the Guru) and *manmat* (the path of the mind). Controlled by ignorance, we have remained attached to the phenomena of destructible Maya for millions of yugas and millions of incarnations. Yet, over and over, all the illusory objects have vanished into thin air, and we ourselves have been destroyed. Since time immemorial, we have gone on revolving endlessly in the ever-turning wheel of births and deaths. The root cause of all this is duality. In a creation born of the union of two opposing powers, we have become hopelessly trapped in the wheel of transmigration.

Now, to free ourselves from that wheel, to escape from the

¹ *Guru bachan kaheñ so sun re*, Swami Ji Maharaj

endless cycle of reincarnation and the torments of Yama, we have gone into the refuge of the Satguru. For countless ages, we have passed our earthly incarnations bowing to the dictates of the mind. And in this servitude, we have squandered lifetime after lifetime. Now the opportunity has come when we can forget the world forever. Meeting with the Beloved Lord, we become His very form. In this way only can we shake off our shackles and escape from the cycle of birth and death.

Therefore, we have come into the Satguru's shelter. And the Satguru has told us of the Unchanging and Immortal Power that resides within us. Now, we have to unite with that Power. Then the restlessness of the mind will be stilled. The pride of worldly possessions, the vanity of the body, and the arrogance of "I and mine" will all be removed. Then that Immoveable, Conscious Power will manifest within us, and the soul will achieve liberation.

So, here Swami Ji Maharaj says that we should take the Satguru's words into our hearts and understand them as Truth. We should mold our minds according to His instructions. This effort to transform the mind is called sadhana, and the Guru explains to us the correct method to adopt. Unless we obey the Guru's words, no matter how many other practices we may perform—still all our efforts will only lead us back to mind and Maya. Therefore, the Guru's words form the root of all mantras.

The Guru's form is the foundation of contemplation;

The Guru's lotus feet are the essence of all worship.

The Guru's words are the root of all mantras;

The Guru's grace is the source of emancipation.

When we enshrine the Guru's words in our heart, then our practice will bear fruit. When we go on performing the practices, little by little the darkness of ignorance will be dispelled, and the radiance of True Naam will flood our soul. All the thoughts of the mind will be banished, and the soul will find salvation. This is the meaning of Truth. This is the meaning of sadhana. All the other sadhanas that exist in this world are invented by the intellect—they do not arise from actual inner experience of the Truth. Therefore, the Guru teaches us the highest method of all. We should understand the Truth of His words and strive to act in accordance with His instructions.

This is the real meaning of Satsang. Satsang is not just sitting and listening to some stories. Our within cannot be illumined just by hearing the histories of the past mahatmas. When the Conscious Power of the soul spreads out in this unconscious material body, the soul itself takes on the quality of unconsciousness. And in this unconscious state, the soul becomes trapped in the outer world by mind and Maya. It cannot become freed from that bondage of illusion through mere words. Therefore, day and night, we must keep the company of Truth. Satsang means that the Conscious Power of the soul remains in contact with the Power of Truth.

*If I were to forget You, O Lord, even for a moment,
It is like fifty years to me.*

If we let the remembrance of the Naam slip away from our hearts for a moment, it is as though fifty years have passed. So, Satsang means remaining connected with the True Naam. We should immerse the soul in the company of Truth.

**You have received the Eternal Naam;
Focus your surat within and catch hold of the
Inner Sound.**

Naam is Unchangeable Permanence; it never decays. Daily we should meditate on the Naam and connect our thoughts with that Immortal Power. It is very difficult to get the Naam initiation. And once we have been granted that boon of Naam, we will find that practicing the meditation every day is not easy. It is an uphill task. Tulsi Das says:

*It is difficult to explain, it is difficult to understand,
And it is difficult to practice with discrimination.*

First of all, to explain the nature of Naam is very difficult because the Naam Power is *nirākār*—it has no form. Naam is not like anything in this world and so it is not possible to understand through examples and comparisons. It stands alone—separate from all.

Naam lies beyond the grasp of our intellect, and our heart is ignorant. And yet, the Guru must explain to us in some way that will inspire us within. He must make accessible to us that which is inaccessible. He must present the unknowable in a way that will enlighten our intellects and kindle love in our hearts. For this reason, it is said that to explain the Naam is very difficult.

Someone may give a talk about the lives and teachings of the past saints. They take their discourse from some sacred scripture: this saint said such and such; his teachings benefited many souls; and he traveled far and wide for the sake of the dear ones. But this is all hearsay. The person speaking has no proof or experience of the events they are relating;

their sermon is nothing but empty talk. Only when the person speaking has some spiritual experience within can their words touch the soul. And, thus, we can see how difficult it is to explain the nature of Naam.

Even if someone can explain, still understanding is also difficult. Our intellect is unconscious and can only understand from its own level. It is not ready to hear the Truth. Only when we listen to the words in Satsang with an open heart and mind can we understand what is being said. When someone speaks of the Truth, we have to hear those words in the same spirit. Only then can those words take root within us. Only then can we appreciate the true import of the Satsang.

So, we can see that it is difficult to explain, and it is difficult to understand. But once someone has explained the Truth to us, and we have accepted that Truth into our hearts, still we must do the meditation practice with discrimination. Devoting ourselves to that practice, we must witness the Truth within ourselves, which is the most difficult of all. The dear ones listen to the Satsang, but once the Satsang is over, only a few rare ones remember what the Guru has said. Everyone else dusts off the Guru's words even before they leave the Satsang place. Once again, Maya throws the veil of illusion over their hearts, And, in that condition of forgetfulness, they go back to their homes. When they are sitting in Satsang, they will say, "Oh, this Satsang is very good."

My friend, the very good Satsang is the one we take home with us. If we discard the teachings of the Satsang and go away empty-handed, where is the value in that? When we go into a shop, we may see some very useful item. But only if we purchase that item and put it to use will we get any benefit from it. If we leave it sitting in the shop, how can it do us any good?

So, it is difficult to explain the Truth and difficult to understand it. But once we do get some understanding, we must also put that Truth into practice. Only then can we achieve success. Then the Satguru imbues our soul with the Immortal Power of Naam—the Name of the Lord that never decays. And when we receive this blessing of the Guru’s grace, we should anchor our attention within and catch hold of the Divine Sound showering down from above.

**The Guru will lift your soul into the Inner Realms;
Prepare yourself now to go with Him.**

If you rise up to the level where the Satguru resides, He will unite you with Himself. The Guru is the Shabd, and the surat is the disciple. When your conscious attention becomes fixed at the point between the two eyes, you will cross over into the astral plane. There the Guru is waiting to greet you and merge your soul into the Shabd, which is His True Form. And as soon as you unite with the Shabd, all the gross unconsciousness that was lingering in your within is driven away.

**Your attention is spread to every corner of the
material world;
The Guru will remedy this shortcoming.**

Now, He says, “You are so attached to the worldly objects that you have become the image of the world.” Now, what is our condition? If an old broom is sitting outside our house and someone tries to take it away, we will say: “Hold on there! That broom belongs to me.” Just see how trapped we have become. Every cell, every vein in our body is attached to the

world. The Satguru must liberate the soul, but it has become inextricably bound to the gross, material objects. After all, it is just an old broom!

In order to divert our attention away from these material objects, the Guru uses so many means. We may have to suffer hardships. We may have to deal with worldly problems. We may have to endure disgrace. We may lose our wealth or experience so many other deprivations. But if we are the true beloveds of the True Guru, we will benefit from this adversity. We will understand it as the Guru's grace. We will turn away from the world and search within ourselves for the Reality.

When the soul becomes attached to the Guru within, no matter what difficulties assail us in this outer world, we will remain unperturbed. The Almighty Lord is *Beparvāh*—the One Without Worry. He is never disturbed; He remains separate from all and worry-free.

Now, if you introspect your own heart, you will see where you stand. Your heart is so bound up in the worries of this world that it is difficult for you to become free from them. But the washerman's duty is to clean the clothes.² First, he applies soap to remove all the dirt. If the clothes are cleaned in this way, well and good. But if those clothes are still dirty, even after applying soap, then he will toss them into the cauldron

2 Nowadays, washing machines are becoming more common in India, but at the time when Baba Somanath Ji gave this Satsang, traditional dhobis were numerous, and the work of those dhobis was arduous. Depending on how soiled and stained the clothes might be, they would apply soap, boil the clothes, use brushes and bleach, and, finally, whirl the clothes over their heads and slap them down vigorously on large stone slabs to remove the dirt. Just as those washermen would accept the clothes of both the gentleman and the oil merchant, so the Saints are ready to clean the souls of the virtuous and the sinners alike by any means necessary.

and boil them with some strong detergent or bleach. And finally, he will beat those clothes on the rocks until their natural radiance shines through. In the same way, the Satguru is like a washerman, and the mind is like the dirty clothes. He will use any means necessary to clean those dirty clothes and make them spotlessly white.

**He will capture Kal and put an end to him;
Then He will rid you of arrogance and conceit.**

But the Satguru does not stop there. He separates the soul from the power of Kal and unites it with the Almighty Lord; He transforms the soul into the image of the Lord. Many people think that the word “Kal” refers to death. When someone dies, they say, “Oh, he has entered the domain of Kal. His time came, and now, he is a denizen of that realm.” Dying is called “going into the domain of Kal.” They present as a kind of victory, but this is all flummery.

But the real Kal is with us every day. Our whole existence is spent in the domain of Kal. Kal governs both day and night, and, within those two divisions of time, we are subject to the three states of consciousness—*jāgrata* (waking), *svapna* (dreaming), and *sushupti* (deep sleep). For twelve hours we remain awake, and during those twelve hours we take care of all our give and take, all our eating and drinking, all our worldly affairs.

In that *jāgrata* or waking state, we go on from morning till night, engaged in countless underhanded dealings; our false deeds are beyond reckoning. Most people in the world are caught up in this sinful existence, mistaking untruth for truth. We don’t realize that we are involved in falsehood, that

we are committing sins. All our focus is directed to collect more money by any means, fair or foul. And for all the twelve waking hours we are lost in that storm of falsehood. Then at night, when we lie in the *svapna* or dream state, figures from the account books swirl in our heads, because that is what we have been engaged in all day long. But in that groggy state, everything is confused, so, when the soul drifts into dreams, then all the activities of the day resurface in a jumbled way. And later, when the soul falls into the deep, heavy sleep of *sushupti*, we don't even know who we are or where we are. We have no recollection of the world at all. Our soul is sunk in deep darkness. In this way, Kal has thrown the veil of these three states of consciousness over every soul.

But when we cross beyond these three states, we enter into to an awakened state of clear consciousness. There the outer sun and moon do not measure out day and night. When the radiance of the soul itself shines forth, this is called the *chetan avasthā*,³ the super-conscious state. Therefore, He tells us that when we cross over the three lower states of consciousness and rise into higher consciousness, these veils of Kal are removed from the soul. As the soul ascends higher and higher, the arrogance of “I and mine,” is eradicated. The friction between mine and yours fades away. Here, Swami Ji Maharaj assures us: “He will rid you of arrogance and conceit.” When He disentangles the soul from the

3 The fourth state of consciousness is described by the yogis as *turiya pad*, where the soul rises above the gross physical senses and the *antahkarana* or higher mind. In Sant Mat, *turiya pad* is the eight-petalled lotus located above the *antahkarana*. When the soul rises above the body to the threshold of the astral realm, it is greeted at *turiya pad* by the Radiant Form of the Satguru. Here, Baba Somanath refers to the fourth state as *chetan avasthā*, meaning the various states of higher consciousness experienced by the soul on its ascent through the astral, causal, and super-causal regions, as it journeys to the Realm of Truth—Sach Khand.

three lower states of consciousness, and unites it with True Consciousness, then no room for “I and mine” will remain. This is the true victory over Kal.

**Fix your consciousness firmly within;
Then you will be freed from the wheel of
eighty-four lakh forms of life.**

Swami Ji has described how the Satguru aids and supports the jiva. Now, He explains the duty of the disciple: “You should keep your thoughts firmly fixed on the Sat Naam given to you by the Satguru. Never let your thoughts stray away from the Lord’s True Naam.”

Two powers are at work—forgetfulness and wakefulness. Wakefulness does not mean waking up from the state of sleep. The true meaning of wakefulness is to never let the heart forget the Naam of the Lord, even for a fraction of a second.

**Rotate the rosary of the mind repeating the
Simran of the Lord.
Take the Guru’s key in your hand.**

Here, He gives a further instruction to the disciple—rotate the rosary of the mind. The rosary He is referring to is not made up of string and beads. At present, the mind is stuck fast in the world. So, we have to invert the mind and attach it within. When the mind stops racing here and there outside, when it is no longer filled to overflowing with worldly thoughts, when it becomes still and remains connected to the Naam—that is what is meant by turning the rosary. Once the mind inverts within, our Simran becomes true. But when the mind is still

roaming about outside, whose simran are we engaged in?

We repeat the Simran half-heartedly, just like a rite and ritual. But Simran becomes truly beneficial only when the mind remains focused within. When the Simran is done with the mind, the simran of the world that is swirling within us will cease. This is why Swami Ji tells us to turn the rosary of the mind. He says that if our remembrance is absent-minded and wishy-washy, our effort will bear no fruit. When we follow the technique that He has taught us, our efforts will stir the Divine Grace. And what does He tell us? First, engage the mind fully in the Simran, only then will your attention remain fixed inside. All the dirt of the mind can be washed away.

**Attune yourself to the Limitless Shabd.
Pierce through the clouds in the sky of Trikuti.**

Then the Limitless Shabd Dhun will manifest. Focus your attention in that Dhun to such an extent that you become the form of the Dhun. Set aside all the distractions of the mind: “Now, I am listening to the Sound. Now, I am seeing this or that.” Listening to the Inner Sound with total absorption, become the form of the Sound itself. Then what will happen? The Conscious Power of the soul will rise within and, crossing beyond the inner sky, it will proceed further and further, till it finally merges into Truth and becomes the form of Truth.

**Loose the arrow of yearning, listen to the deep,
rumbling Sound within.
Ascend to the pool of Mansarovar.**

Viraha or yearning means that you do not want to be separated from the one you love even for a moment. Except for the thought of the Beloved, you do not let any other thought enter your heart. When you remain absorbed, day and night, in the remembrance of the Beloved, this is called *viraha* or yearning. If you will remain attached to the Naam with deep inner yearning, that Naam, that Sound, will transport you to the region of Daswan Dwar and the pool of Mansarovar.

**Become established at the peak of Sunn;
And listening to the Dhun, proceed onward
to Sach Khand, the Realm of Truth.**

Climbing beyond the pool of Mansarovar, reach the peak of Sunn and become established there. Then travel onward towards Sat Lok, from where the Primal Sound streams forth unendingly, and merging into that Sound, follow it back to its Source.

**Sail on through the regions of Alakh and Agam;
And come to rest in your True Eternal Home—
Radhaswami Dham.**

Beyond Sat Lok, you cross over the regions of Alakh and Agam. And, finally, you enter Radhaswami Dham, also called *Anāmi* (Nameless) or *Akeha* (Unspoken). That region lies because it lies beyond all names or speech. Now, the soul is freed forever from the mortal world and the tyranny of Kal. It comes to rest at last in its own True Home, the Source from where it sprung.

**Perform this arti every day with regularity;
And the Guru will shower His grace and mercy
upon you.**

Now, He tells us to perform the arti. The word “arti” is made up of *ā*, meaning “come” and *rat*, meaning “repeat.” So, when we perform the true arti, we must come (*ā*) away from the world and repeat (*rat*) the Name of the True Lord within. This is the real meaning of arti. So, Hazur Radha Swami Ji is telling us: “Perform the arti every day with regularity. Then you will achieve salvation through Satguru’s grace.”

This is the Path of Liberation, and by following it, we can meet the Lord within. By walking on this Path, we become free from the sea of existence and the wheel of eighty-four lakh births and deaths. Until now, no one has achieved success on the spiritual Path without the Satguru, nor will they be able to do so in the future. Search through the four Vedas, the Shastras, the Puranas, and all the holy scriptures. You will find that they all proclaim that liberation is achieved only through the Guru.

—Baba Somanath

The Most Noble Destiny

**If your destiny awakens, you meet the True Guru;
Without noble karma, He cannot be found.**

**The one who meets the True Guru is transformed
into gold if it is the Lord's Will.¹**

These are the teachings of Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He tells us that only through the highest good fortune can we obtain the human birth. It is a unique boon to get this precious body. In the times that we live, there are more human beings than ever, but only those people with the most noble destiny encounter a True Guru.

So, to meet the Guru is a rare privilege. All the other major events of our life are reactions of our past good karmas. But karma alone cannot bring about the meeting with the Perfect Guru. Only through the Grace of God do we come in contact with the Guru; that meeting is ordained from above. And what is the result of such a meeting? We are turned into pure gold, something very precious, and this transformation comes about through the pleasure of the Lord. It is by His will and through His grace that we meet with the Satguru.

¹ *Karam hovai tā satigur pāiai viñ karamai pāiā na jāi*, Guru Amar Das



Baba Somanath Ji

**O my mind, contemplate on the Name of the Lord.
The Lord is found through the True Guru;
And the soul remains merged with the True Lord.**

What instruction does the Guru give us? He says, “Friend, the Lord dwells within you, and this is the Path by which you can meet Him. Through this technique, you can come in contact with Him and have His darshan straight away.” The Guru reveals the secret of the True Shabd and the way to meditate on it. So, once we have received His instruction, we should tell the mind: “Oh mind, day and night, meditate on the Shabd through the technique revealed by the Satguru.”

The Naam will take you on the straight road to the place from where it originated. You will not need to ask for directions from anyone along the way. So, He says, “Oh my mind, contemplate on the Name of the Lord.” Through Satguru’s grace, that True Power will manifest within you, and you will unite with God Almighty.

**Spiritual wisdom springs from the True Guru;
And all doubts are dispelled.**

When the Satguru reveals the true spiritual wisdom, no place remains for even a trace of doubt.

In the outer world, we see that if we wish to gain competence in any endeavor, we must seek instruction from experts in that field and serve them. We can gain knowledge and wisdom from them. If someone has become an engineer, a doctor, or has acquired any other skill, we can derive benefit from their company.

But we cannot learn the expertise required for meeting the Lord from any of these outer experts. Therefore, Guru Amar Das tells us that to acquire inner knowledge, we have to go in

the company of the Guru. Only He can reveal the spiritual wisdom within us and banish all our doubts and illusions.

**Through the True Guru, the Lord is realized.
Then, you will not have to enter the womb and
take birth ever again.**

Meet the Lord through the Grace of the Guru and merge in Him—then you will not come back again into this world. For the one who has merged in the Lord, the seed impressions that bring the soul back into the world have been consumed by fire. If you plant seeds, you will have to harvest the crop. But if the seeds are destroyed, then how can a crop grow?

**Die while living, by the Guru's grace;
And become fit to merge into the Shabd.**

Establish the words of the Satguru in your heart and die while living. To “die while living” means that we lose all consciousness of “I and mine.” Then, we become fit to meditate on the Shabd and gain experience of the Inner Sound. As long as the sense of “I-ness” remains, the Shabd does not accept the soul. If the intellect and *antahkarana* (higher mind) remain active within, we can have no experience of the inner Sound Current. Therefore, He tells us to die while alive. Only then will the Sound Current reveal itself.

When the bhringi² catches another insect, she brings it to her home. There, she places it in a mud cell and renders it unconscious by giving it a sting. Then, the bhringi begins to hum a sound into the cell where the insect is lying. Three times, the

2 The bhringi is usually described as a type of wasp but is occasionally referred to as a black bee or beetle.

bhringi hums this sound, and if the insect can assimilate that sound, it is transformed from what it was before into a bhringi. Similarly, the Satguru instructs us to practice three methods—Simran, Dhyan, and Bhajan. If we perfect even one of these methods, then our inertia and ignorance are removed, and true consciousness starts to dawn within us. Then the Shabd attracts us, and merging into it, we become its very form.

But as long as we remain conscious of the body, the Shabd will not manifest. Our concentration will be broken, and our attention will be pulled outward if we feel the mosquitoes start to bite, or we move our legs, or we hear a child crying, or some stray thought intrudes. In this way, we remain separated from the Shabd. Only when we have become oblivious to everything outside will the Shabd manifest within us. That is called dying while living. We die to the outer world but awake to a new life within.

**Whoever eradicates self-conceit from their within
finds the Door of Salvation.**

Now, Guru Amar Das explains further. He says you can pass through the door of liberation only when you eradicate the sense of the individual self. This is the fruit of meditation and is achieved by good fortune. It cannot be had just for the asking. If you think that you can go on enjoying the worldly pleasures and still achieve union with God, how is that possible?

This is a very subtle matter. If even a trace of worldly thoughts and aspirations remains, the Shabd will not embrace you, and you will sink back down.

**By the Guru's Grace, the soul takes birth in the Home
of the Lord, becoming free from Maya's hold.**

When you meditate, the Guru showers His grace (prashad), and in that way, you attain liberation—this is the principle of Sant Mat. Following the Path of the Lord's Name, you merge into the form of bliss and become free of Maya.

Acquiring the wisdom to discriminate between the unchanging and the transitory, you meet with the Primal Lord.

You will develop the faculty to discriminate between that which is permanent and that which is temporary. There is one Power of Truth that is unchanging and everlasting and another power of falsehood that is wavering and evanescent. When you learn to distinguish between the two, you will meet with the Almighty Lord and become the form of Truth itself.

The intoxicating dream of this world deceives everyone, and the jivas depart at death, losing all their capital.

Now, He says that the Lord has placed the one Power of Truth within everyone, but the transitory drama of Maya has deluded the whole world. Thus, at our end time, babbling nonsense, we leave the body without honor. Even though the Spiritual Power resides within the human body, we depart from this world without ever having discovered it.

**The spiritual profit is earned in the Satsang;
Those with good fortune obtain this wealth.**

He says that Naam is the Path back to God, and that Path

is revealed in the Satsang, the company of Truth. But this knowledge can be gained only with good fortune.

If by chance you come into the Satsang but do not remain attentive, what can be gained by attending? Your body is sitting there, but instead of listening to the discourse, your mind is dwelling on enjoying a plate of savory snacks³ when the Satsang is over. You are paying no attention to the Truth that is being explained. During Satsang, you remain absorbed in the thoughts and fantasies arising from your mind and intellect and then return home devoid of any spiritual wealth.

**Without the True Guru, no one finds it;
Examine your within and consider this matter
carefully in your heart.**

This is the Path of Liberation, and by following it, we can meet the Lord within. By walking on this Path, we become free from the sea of existence and the wheel of eighty-four lakh births and deaths. Until now, no one has achieved success on the spiritual Path without the Satguru, nor will they be able to do so in the future. Search through the four Vedas, the Shastras, the Puranas, and all the holy scriptures. You will find that they all proclaim that liberation is achieved only through the Guru.

**By great good fortune, we meet the Guru and cross
the ocean of existence.**

When the Guru manifests within us, we become the most fortunate ones. Why? Because when we meet with the Guru

3 Kichla—a popular papad (fried cracker) made of rice flour, often served with a spicy vegetable garnish

within, we become His very form; then, for us, this physical world and the whole of creation cease to exist.

**The Naam of the Lord is my anchor.
I rely only on the support of His Name.**

The Naam of God is the support of the devotee's heart. That Naam has existed from time immemorial. It is the foundation of the entire creation.

*Naam supports the divisions and
grand divisions of the creation.*

Naam supports the heavens and nether worlds.

But only when we meditate on that Naam can we understand its greatness. If we take the initiation but remain bound in worldly indulgences and do not meditate according to the Guru's instructions, then what was the point of initiation? You can realize the Naam only by hard work; simply taking initiation is not enough.

Suppose you purchase some agricultural land. Will you get a crop by merely owning that land? It is just uncultivated earth. Until you plant the seeds and tend the crops, you won't be able to bring home any harvest. What crop can the field produce without your labor? And if there is no harvest, what food can your wife prepare to feed the household?

**O Dear Lord, please be gracious and make me
meet the Guru, so that I may find the Door
of Salvation.**

The entire Granth Sahib is permeated with this nectar. Now Guru Amar Das says that it is through the grace of the Guru

that we obtained the Naam, and it is through the grace of the Lord that we met the Guru, who showed us the Path to liberation. The devotee prays: “Be merciful upon me and make me meet the Guru who can bring about my union with You.”

**The destiny written on our forehead by the
Almighty Lord cannot be erased.**

We cannot change the fate inscribed on our forehead, no matter how hard we may try to evade it.

**O Nanak, those who are pleased by the Lord’s Will
achieve perfection.**

Those dear ones who accept the Will of God achieve perfection and are liberated from this world.

Until a river flows into the ocean, it keeps its identity as a river. But when it merges with the ocean, that river becomes the ocean itself. In the same way, when our individual thoughts merge into Truth, we become one with Truth and achieve liberation.

—Baba Somanath

When the River Flows into the Ocean

**O my mind, in this world you are always coming
and going in birth and death;
Only the True Name will emancipate you in the end.
When the True Lord Himself grants forgiveness,
you are freed from the wheel of eighty-four.¹**

This is the bani of Shri Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He tells us that we can never achieve stillness as long as we continue coming and going on the wheel of transmigration. But what can free us from this cycle of birth and death? Only the Inner Power that is unchanging and true. Until we merge our thoughts in Truth, our coming and going will not cease.

It makes no difference if we worship the gods and goddesses. No matter what outer efforts we may make, it will accomplish nothing. And so, after death, the vast majority of the souls take rebirth, and this cycle carries on unbroken.

Let us look at this situation for what it is. If we continue to rush headlong into the illusion of this material world,

¹ *E mana meriā āvā gauṇ samsār hai ant sach nibeṛā rām, Guru Amar Das*

deluded by our own false understanding and egotism, we will remain bound to the wheel of transmigration. But when the soul becomes motionless and concentrated within, we contact the Truth. Our coming and going ceases, and we gain self-knowledge. Once we understand the reality for ourselves, the thought of rebirth cannot arise.

At present, our attention is so much taken up with the world; our thoughts are constantly wavering. But when our soul meets with the unchangeable Naam, we see the cycle of birth and death clearly and understand its workings. Therefore, Guru Amar Das Ji says: “O my mind, trapped in the cycle of reincarnation, you continue to die and take rebirth. But when you become attached to the unchangeable permanence of Naam, then you will be freed from all coming and going.”
[break in tape]

Whether we call it Truth or Naam, we are referring to the same Power. That Power finishes off all coming and going in this world. When we unite with that power within, our revolving in the wheel of eighty-four lakh births and deaths is finished.

**The cycle of reincarnation comes to an end;
And through the Truth, liberation is achieved;
The Gurumukh is blessed with the Lord’s greatness.**

Until a river flows into the ocean, it keeps its identity as a river. But when it merges with the ocean, that river becomes the ocean itself. In the same way, when our individual thoughts merge into Truth, we become one with Truth and achieve liberation.

So, Guru Amar Das Ji says that the one who attains this state is a Gurumukh. Gurumukhship does not mean just respecting the physical Guru outwardly. It is more than that. To

become a Gurumukh, we must merge into the Naam. Shabd is the Guru, and the soul is the disciple.

Dyed in the color of the True Lord, the Gurumukh remains intoxicated in Sehaj Samadhi.

The Gurumukhs are filled with grace. Dyed in the true color, they remain absorbed in Sehaj Samadhi—the state of Natural Equipoise. Whether standing, sitting, walking, or moving about, their whole attention remains riveted within. Now, the question arises: How can we achieve this state? While doing all the worldly work, we should remain immersed in Sehaj Samadhi, but how can we accomplish this?

It is just like when a woman lives in a large family. She serves her husband's elder brother and his wife, all his sisters, and whoever else may be living in that household. In big families, there may be twenty or more people. While serving them, she is always thinking of her husband. Her thoughts remain absorbed in the love and service of her husband. Although she dutifully serves the family, all the time her thoughts are absorbed in her husband.

Similarly, when we fulfill our worldly duties, we should keep our thoughts turned towards the Beloved within. Where our desires are, there we dwell also. Whoever has the thirst within for True Love keeps their attention always turned in that direction. No matter how many worldly responsibilities we must fulfill, all our thoughts are still attracted to the object of our love.

**The True Lord is pleasing to the mind.
When you enshrine Him in your heart, you merge
into the Shabd and achieve emancipation.**

When the mind contacts the Truth within, it merges with that Truth and achieves liberation. Truth does not come; it does not go. It is not affected by time. It never changes. It takes no notice of morning, noon, or evening. Monsoon, winter, or summer pass by, but Truth does not mark the seasons. It is ever the same.

Once the mind comes in contact with and merges with Truth, it becomes fixed and stable. Then liberation becomes a reality. Before that, it was just a dream, a fantasy.

**O Nanak, those imbued with the Love of Naam are
not thrown back again into the ocean of existence;
They unite with the Truth, and their wanderings
cease.**

What is this Truth? It is the Naam. Whoever merges into the Naam achieves liberation and never again returns to this ocean of existence. We think that doing the inner devotion is for someone else, but this understanding is not correct. Kabir Sahib tells us:

*Everyone does the outer bhakti,
But they do not cast out illusion from their within.
Entangled in the net of deception,
they undergo terrible suffering and strife.*

Bhakti is not for someone else. We ourselves have to do the true bhakti to remove the veils from our within. It is through bhakti that we achieve permanent happiness. No one else can do this work for us.

Take the example of the banana tree. When you peel back the layers of its stalk, one after the other, in the end, there are

no layers left. In the same way, you must remove the inner veils one by one through meditation until all the veils are removed. You can throw out the simran of the world from your heart by doing the Simran of Naam. Then you merge into that Naam within and achieve liberation. This is the real meaning of bhakti.

**Attachment to Maya is total madness;
Through love of duality, you are destroyed.**

Now, Guru Amar Das describes the nature of Truth and paints an accurate picture of this creation. What is the nature of this world? Our attention is bound by attachment to the illusion of Maya within us. What is the nature of this attachment? How does it come about?

The trifles of this world are just like foam and bubbles. They appear to have substance, but in reality, they are empty—just an illusion. Similarly, when the sun's rays strike the air on a hot day, a shimmering mirage appears to the eye. The thirsty traveler chases that mirage, thinking it is water but finding no water there, dies of thirst and exhaustion.

In the same way, when our attention becomes attached to the things of Maya, we think they are the source of happiness and peace. We are forever chasing the waves of illusion. When one wave fades away, we go running after another. But Maya's creations are all ephemeral. They are unreal and bring us no lasting peace or happiness.

Indulging our desires for Maya is like throwing gasoline on a fire to put it out. Instead of being quenched, the flames flare up more than ever. And one day, we die burning in the fire of our unfulfilled longings. When we come near the mirage, it disappears, and we perish of thirst.

**Mother, father, and all our kin have selfish motives;
Everyone is entangled in duality.**

Someone takes up the role of mother; someone takes up the role of father. Someone becomes the child, spouse, brother, or friend. But these relationships are not real. No one is the brother, friend, mother, or father forever. When the potter fashions the pots from clay, he shapes them in so many different forms. But in fact, all the pots are made from the same clay.

In the same way, someone comes as the mother, someone as the father, the brother, the friend, the wife, the son. But this trap of the world ensnares us no matter what form it takes. Egotism and attachment keep us bound in this trap. Intoxicated with the illusory objects of Maya, we snatch at them, saying, "This is mine. That is mine." But there is no difference between these worldly things; they are all composed of the same clay. Why do we attach so much importance to them? Because we are deluded by duality.

**They are caught in this love because of their past
actions, which no one can erase.**

He says we have been ensnared in this trap since the dawn of creation. Caught in duality, we continue to act and make new karmas. Now, who can free us from this cycle? A farmer sows seeds one year and lives on that year's harvest. Then, the rainy season comes, and the farmer again sows the seeds. This cycle goes on and on. The sowing of seeds never comes to an end, and we go on harvesting the crop that we have sown. Thus, age after age, we have remained subject to the law of karma. We go on suffering and enjoying the karmas we ourselves have created.

**The Creator of the Universe cares for it;
No other is as great as He.**

The Almighty Lord who created the universe is the All-Doer. He is the greatest of all. Once you see the Lord face-to-face, all your doubts will be driven away. You will come to know who fashioned the creation, and you will understand its nature.

It is like watching a magician's performance. As long as your attention is absorbed in the magic tricks, you will remain mesmerized and astonished. But who is doing all that magic? It is the magician. Once you turn your attention to the magician performing all the tricks, the sleight of hand becomes obvious, and the reality comes into focus.

**The manmukh is blind, consumed in the fire of
this world.
Without the Shabd, there is no peace.**

Not understanding the reality, the manmukh is blind, and in that blindness is consumed in the fire of karma. [break in tape]

**O Nanak, without the Naam, everyone is deluded.
They are destroyed by their attachment to Maya.**

The force of attachment is strong, but the Power of Naam is much more potent. And when we come in contact with the Naam, we are enthralled by it. Someone may say, "Using the intellect, I will give up all my attachments, one after the other." But they will not be able to do it. Instead, those outer attachments will become even stronger. When the sun rises, the darkness of night is dispelled. If you are surrounded by a pitch-black night and someone starts relating stories of the sun, can such talk drive the night away?

Similarly, we are sitting in inner darkness, but we go on talking about spirituality and the Light of the inner sun. “What is the Lord like? He exists without any support. He is the Supreme Being. He is luminous, radiant, dazzling.” We go on talking like this, but we don’t see even a glimmer of light within.

Such empty talk cannot remove our illusion and attachment. But when the living Power dwelling within us is awakened, the Inner Reality will be revealed. And how does such awakening come about? Through the Naam.

**Seeing this world is on fire, I have run into the
refuge of the Lord.**

Now, what does Guru Sahib tell us? The whole world is burning. Seeing those flames, I have hurried into the Lord’s shelter.

**I offer my prayer to the Perfect Guru: Please save
me and bless me with Your greatness.**

He prays to the Perfect Guru within, “O Lord, please save me from this fire. Otherwise, I will be consumed. Please protect me.”

**Keep me in Your sanctuary and bless me with the
glory of Naam;
There is no giver as great as You.**

Further, He implores, “I have come into Your shelter abandoning all else. None is greater than You. You alone exist. You are the Creator of the three gunas, of Maya, of the entire universe. There is none greater than You.”

**Fortunate are those who are engaged in Your seva.
You are the One Lord throughout all the ages.**

And how can You be found? Whoever comes into Your shelter with undivided love, whoever accepts Your seva wholeheartedly, will meet You. Age upon age, this has been the Path to God.

Without seva, our egotism cannot be removed. Until we become freed from the ego, we cannot escape from Maya's grip. And as long as that *mamkār* (egotism) remains, Maya (illusion) holds sway. Maya and *mamkār* are intertwined.

**You may practice celibacy, truthfulness, and
self-restraint;
You may perform all the rites and rituals; But
without the Guru, you will not achieve
emancipation.**

He says that we practice celibacy and truthfulness. We perform all the austerities and arduous practices. But until we meet the Perfect Guru, we will gain nothing from all this strenuous effort. Everything is achieved through the Guru. Until we meet the Perfect Satguru, our doubts cannot be removed, and our egotism cannot be finished for good.

The authors of all the holy scriptures have written that the one God resides within us, and we should meet Him. But, my friend, the scriptures can only give us theoretical knowledge. Who is this Almighty Lord they speak of? What are the practical steps we can take to meet Him? How do the writers know about this one God?

**O Nanak, only the one who understands the
Shabd can enter the shelter of the Lord.**

What does the Perfect Satguru tell us? He says, “Brother, within you, the unbroken melody of Shabd is resounding. Merge into that Shabd through meditation and meet with the Lord.” He does not contradict the scriptures. He does not tell us that three or four gods are residing outside. He says the one God is living within you. The door leading within is bolted, and Shabd is the only key to unlock that door. So, following the Guru’s instructions, go within and meet the Almighty Lord, who is waiting for you there.

**When the Guru puts you on the path to God, you
will flourish;
There is no other way to succeed.**

When the Guru puts you on the Path of Truth and reveals the secret of the True Naam, you should have firm faith in Him. When you devote yourself wholeheartedly to the meditation practice according to His instructions, all your doubts will be removed.

**Within and without, there is only You.
You Yourself have revealed this Knowledge.**

One Power is working both within and without. And when you experience that one Power directly, no place will remain in your heart for any uncertainty or confusion. Within and without, the same Power is at play. But when you try to grasp that Power through your intellect, the waves of inference arise in your heart. And as those waves expand ever outward, they drive the Truth farther and farther away.

Inside and outside, there is only unity. The one who understands, the faculty of understanding, and the One who

is understood are three manifestations of the same Power. When these three are united, no room remains for even an iota of doubt. When we see the unity in all things, the Lord unites us with Himself.

**You Yourself have revealed this Knowledge.
The Gurumukh loves no other and imbibes the
nectar of the Lord.**

**His court is True and endures forever;
There, the True Word is resounding.**

**Within the home (of the body), you discover the
Primal Home—the Satguru bestows this great gift.**

**O Nanak, those who repeat the Naam find the
Mansion of the Lord;
They follow the True Path and enter honorably.**

When humility, lowliness, and mercy manifest within you, know that you are practicing true bhakti. If the so-called devotee doesn't have these qualities, they are like a lovely flower that emits no fragrance. Outwardly, they look alright, but within, they haven't manifested even one speck of devotion.

—Baba Somanath

Like a Flower Without Fragrance

**Another devotee earned the merit, but it was
written in my account.
It belonged to some great soul but was bestowed
on a sinner.¹**

This is the bani of Satguru Paltu Sahib Ji. He says that until you develop humility within, you cannot become free of egotism. Humility is the one weapon that drives away vanity and pride. The ego ensnares us, and humility sets us free. But that humility must arise from the depths of the heart; it must be genuine. When we need to get some worldly work accomplished or to secure a favor from someone, we make a show of outer humility—we fold our hands in respect, prostrate ourselves, make ingratiating entreaties, and do so many things. But such humility is superficial—it remains only as long as it serves our purpose. Real humility is an inner experience; it is the form of Bliss. Explaining the quality of humility, Paltu Sahib says, “I was a sinner—wretched and base. But somehow, by accident, the Almighty Lord wrote the devotion of some great soul into the account of my karmas. The Lord made an error.”

¹ *Karam rahe dui likhai patra ekai mañhai*, Paltu Sahib

**Someone else performed the devotion, but by
mistake, the Lord gave all the credit to me.
O Paltu, it was a grave error, but He didn't take
that devotion back again.**

He says, “Some great devotee did that bhakti, but when the time came to write down the karmas, the Almighty Lord inadvertently entered that devotion in my name. It was a big mistake. But the Lord is True—through and through—and once He had written that bhakti in my account, He didn't take it back again. This is all His greatness. For my part, I have searched my heart, and I can honestly say that I was not worthy of His gift.”

**I am a baniya by caste;
I am lowly, a great sinner.
I am wicked through and through;
There is not a speck of truth in me.**

He says, “I am a baniya by caste.” The banyas are traders, and traders never tell the truth. From the time they are born, they learn to speak nothing but lies. They start doing the trading right from their childhood because trading is the profession of their fathers. And they go on telling one lie after another. Therefore, He says: “I am very base and lowly. I come from the baniya caste. The knot of falsehood is tied within my heart all the hours of the day and night. I bring falsehood with me when I get up in the morning; I earn falsehood all day long, and then I carry falsehood with me when I go to sleep at night. How could a person like me earn the fruits of true bhakti? There is not a trace of truth in my heart. I am not worthy of doing the devotion.”

There must be some other Paltu, but look what has happened to his devotion.

O Paltu! Bhagwan must have made a mistake because He gave me the fruits of that bhakti.

Paltu Sahib says: “There must be some great mahatma named Paltu. And since my name is also Paltu, maybe his devotion was written in my name.” He tells us: “There must be some other devotee named Paltu. But once the God Almighty has showered His grace and written the reward for that devotion in my account, even by mistake, He will not take it back again. He has given it to me once and for all. This is His grace and mercy.”

Humility, lowliness, and mercy—these form the root of devotion.

Now, what is bhakti? We all practice bhakti, so why don't we taste the nectar of devotion? The happily married woman is called *saubhāgyavatī*. Destiny smiles on the *saubhāgyavatī*; all good things come her way. “*Sau*” means “one hundred,” and “*bhāgyavatī*” means “the one with good fortune.” The *saubhāgyavatī* is blessed with good fortune, not just once, but a hundred times.

Similarly, there are signs and indications of bhakti or devotion. First of all, the devotee is humble. You will have observed that wealthy bankers and merchants do not conduct themselves with humility. But we should not preen and strut about; instead, we should be humble and modest before everyone. Second, the devotee is lowly. Our words should always be sweet and gentle. And finally, the devotee shows mercy and kindness to all living beings. These three qualities—humility,

lowliness, and mercy—are the signs of true bhakti, and they shed glory on the practice of devotion.

But you have seen the swamis—each one tries to become more important than all the rest. When some swami goes out for a stroll, he is carried in a palanquin, and his entourage accompanies him in a procession. In his mind, he thinks: “I am a very important swami. I am the greatest of all.” Friend, what kind of swami is this? What meaning is there in all this outer show? When humility, lowliness, and mercy manifest within you, know that you are practicing true bhakti.

If you have not developed these qualities within yourself, you are like a flower without fragrance.

If the so-called devotee doesn’t have these qualities, they are like a lovely flower that emits no fragrance. Outwardly, they look alright, but within, they haven’t manifested even one aspect of devotion. For the true devotee, there is no question of defeat and victory. They always consider themselves the one who has lost; the thought of winning doesn’t arise.

**What is the use of becoming important?
It only burdens you down with pride.
O Paltu, you can drink the sweet water from the well;
But the ocean’s water is brackish.**

You may achieve greatness in the outer world, but what purpose will it serve? The water of a well resides in a very narrow space, but it tastes sweet and can quench many people’s thirst. On the other hand, the water of the ocean spreads across a vast, fathomless expanse, but it remains brackish and unfit to drink.

In the same way, however exalted you may be in the eyes of the world, still, at the end time, you will come crashing down, and you will be cast again into the wheel of eighty-four lakh births and deaths. On the other hand, the truly humble one always remains small and lowly—and even God Himself comes under their control. But the humility has to come from the heart. Those who only exhibit humility outwardly—the ones who bow and scrape, who fold their hands in false reverence and touch other people's feet—that's another matter altogether.

Biographical Notes on the Authors of the Banis

AKKA MAHDEVI (c. 1130–?) was a renunciate sadhu born in the village of Udutadi located in the Shikaripur taluk of Shimoga district, Karnataka. Akka means “Elder Sister,” and Mahadevi means “Great Goddess.” She worshiped God in the form of Lord Shiva, who she called *Chennamallikarjuna*, “Lord, White as Jasmine.” She was a prominent figure in the Lingayat Shaiva sect known as the sharanas (those who have surrendered) and composed 430 Kannada poems called vachanas, a form of spontaneous bhakti poetry, also authoring two short works on spirituality called *Mantrogopya* (The Secret Mantra) and the *Yogangatrividh*. (The Threefold Aspects of Yoga.)

The traditional story goes that the king of the region, Kaushika, fell in love with Akka Mahadevi and the girl agreed to marry him on three conditions: “First, no matter how many sadhus come to our door, and no matter how much wealth I give them in alms, no one should stop me. Second, whenever I am sitting in meditation, you should not disturb me. And finally, you must respect my spiritual quest.” The king promised to abide by all three conditions, but over time, one by one, he broke all three. Akka Mahadevi abandoned the palace and adopted the life of a renunciate sadhu. She had turned her back on the world and attached all her love to the Almighty Lord. She wrote in her vachanas: O, Father! Without Your Love, joy is misery. O, Father! If I have Your Love, misery is joy to me.” *Appā! Ninna prēmavillade santōṣavū duḥkhavē. Appā! Ninna prēmavidhare duḥkhavū santōṣavē nanage.* When her mother asked how she would survive, Akka Mahadevi said simply: “If I am hungry, I will wander from door to door, if I am thirsty, I will drink from the lakes and

rivers, and when tired, rest in the broken-down ruins of temples and monasteries. If I am not concerned about how I will live today, why should I worry about tomorrow?"

BASAVESHWARA, also Basava or Basavanna, (c. 1131–1196) was born in Bagewadi, a town in Hungund taluk in Bagalkot district (former Bijapur district) of Karnataka. He played a significant role within the Lingayat community and wider society as a philosopher, poet, statesman, and social reformer. As a youth he spent twelve years studying at the Sangamesh Monastery at Kudala Sangama, where Eeshanya Guru imparted free education, disbursed free food, and dispensed free medicine to people of all religions. This was a huge influence in the life of young Basava. He stayed with the Guru for 10 years and learned the Vedas, Puranas, and Shastras, as well as Sanskrit and Kannada. His education led him to a universal outlook, and he strongly opposed caste, creed, and gender discrimination. Because of his commitment to ahimsa (non-violence) he condemned both human and animal sacrifice.

When his education was complete, he then took up a position in the court King Bijjala I of the Kalachuri dynasty, and through hard work and aptitude rose to the position of Administrator of the Royal Treasury. In that role, he established the Anubhava Mantapa (Pavilion of Experience), an assembly where people from widely divergent socio-economic and religious backgrounds could sit together and openly discuss the spiritual, philosophical, and practical aspects of life, seeking first, unity in the diversity of beliefs and backgrounds, leading to unity with the Almighty Lord. Basaveshwara requested Allama Prabhu, a great scholar of the time, to serve as the first president of Anubhava Mantapa. Besides discussions, the reading of poetic compositions became an important part of the proceedings and was an invaluable aid in rising above superficial differences to find the common divine

thread shared by all. Basaveshwara himself penned many Kannada poetic compositions called vachanas. In his writings he expressed his devotion to God in the form of Lord Shiva, Sangameshvara, “Lord of the Meeting Rivers,” which beautifully captures the essence of Basava’s experience of the Divine as the confluence of spiritual energies and the unity of diverse paths. As he wrote in his vachanas: “Just as rivers flow together at the confluence, so my mind merges in you, O, Sangameshvara.” *Nadigalu saṅgamavāguvudu hegē? Nanna manassu ninnakḷegē saṅgamavāguvudu.*

CHARANDAS, also Charan Das, (1703–1782) was born in a Brahmin family, in the village Dehra in the Alwar District of Rajasthan. His parents were devotees of Lord Krishna. When his father left the earth plane, the family shifted to Delhi where Charandas spent the rest of his earthly sojourn. In adolescence, he was prone to wander throughout the countryside seeking isolated spots where he could sit for meditation. It was on one such excursion to far-flung regions that he encountered an obscure sadhu name Baba Shukdev Das, who initiated him into the mysteries of the beyond. After his initiation, Sant Charandas continued to live in Delhi and meditated for about twelve years in a nearby cave outside of the city. He authored several books on the spiritual path, the most prominent being *Bhaktisagar* (Ocean of Bhakti) that dealt with the theme of devotion to God, which can only be successful by becoming free of the ego: “Those who were filled with pride were robbed of their wealth. Those who became egoless reached the abode of Lord Hari.” *Abhimānī mīñje gaye lūṭ liye dhan bām, nirabhimānī ho chale pahuñce hari ke dhām.* During his lifetime, his reputation for purity and piety spread far and wide, and even King Muhammadshah of Delhi became his disciple and donated several villages to him. Also counted among Charandas’ disciples were Sahajo Bai and her sister Daya Bai, who wrote hymns extolling the greatness of their Guru.

GARIB DAS (1717–1778) was born to a family of prosperous Dhankhar Jats in the village of Chudani, District Jhajjar, Haryana, India. According to his own account, his spiritual journey started when “Almighty God” Kabir came to meet him and gave him initiation at the age of 10 years. It is said that Kabir took him to Sat Lok, where he found Kabir sitting on the throne. After achieving spiritual enlightenment, he composed hymns describing the spiritual journey and emphasizing the divine nature shared by all life: “God sees everyone with equal mindedness, He is in every heart and soul; There is no difference between the high and the low.” *Ekai najar nirañjanā, sabhahī ghaṭ dekhai; ũñch nīch antar nahīñ, sab ekai pekhai*. His works were later collected in the holy book *Garib Dās kī Granth* (The Writings of Garib Das).

He is not to be confused with Garib Das (1846-1918), the devoted initiate of Swami Shiv Dayal Singh and beloved brother disciple of Baba Jaimal Singh.

GURU NANAK DEV (1469–1539) was born in Rai Bhoi di Talvandi (now Nankana Sahib, Pakistan), near Lahore. His family were Khatri, a Hindu merchant caste, and as a youth, Nanak worked in his father’s shop. Later in life, Nanak married and settled in Kartarpur, where he earned his living by farming. He had two sons: Sri Chand, who rejected his father’s Path and took instead to asceticism and pranayama, and Lakhmi Das, who had no interest in spiritual matters at all. Guru Nanak’s teachings, stressing the oneness of God and salvation from rebirth through meditation on the divine Naam, are encapsulated in His writings, particularly the timeless Jap Ji: “There is One Reality, the Unmanifest-Manifested; Ever-Existent, He is Naam (Conscious Spirit), the Creator; pervading all; without fear; without enmity. The Timeless; the Unborn and the Self-existent; complete within Itself; through the favor of His true Servant, the Guru, He may be realized.” *Ik Onkār, Sat Nām, Kartā Purakh, Nirbhau, Nirvair,*

Akāl Mūrat, Ajunī Saibhang, Gur Prasād. Guru Nanak undertook many journeys, over a period of 30 years, to spread the teachings of the Naam and the liberation of the soul, often accompanied by His faithful companions, Bhai Bala, a Hindu, and Bhai Mardana, a Muslim. His four major tours took Nanak: northward into and across the snow-capped Himalayas where He met the Lamas, the Siddhas and the Naths, the Tibetans and the Chinese; eastward into the modern states of United Provinces, Bengal, and Burma; southward through India as far as Sangla Dwip (modern-day Sri Lanka); and finally, westward, to the middle-east countries of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia as far as Mecca, and Jerusalem, Turkistan, Egypt, Turkey.

Sikhism is founded on the teachings of Guru Nanak and the nine Gurus who succeeded Him in a direct line (those whose writings are included in the Guru Granth Sahib are listed below in chronological order):

GURU ANGAD DEV (1504–1552) was born in the village of Matte-di-Sarai (now Sarainaga) in the Muktsar district of Punjab. While on pilgrimage to the shrine of the Hindu goddess Durga, he attended the Satsang of Guru Nanak and was so enthralled with the Guru and his message that he left off all thought of idol worship. He took initiation from Guru Nanak and devoted the rest of his life to the Guru's service. His original name was Bhai Lehna, but Guru Nanak recognized in him a worthy successor, with a claim to his spiritual riches and styled him *Angad*, "my own limb," indicating that He and Guru Angad had become one, with no difference between them. Angad Dev is credited with having formalized the Gurmukhi script, which was used for the writing of the Punjabi language. He assembled the writings of Guru Nanak and added 63 hymns of His own to the collection.

GURU AMAR DAS (1479–1574) was born in the village of Basarke, which is now part of the Amritsar district in Punjab. He spent the greater part of his life going on pilgrimages and attending to outer rituals, and he reached the advanced age of 70 without ever accepting a Guru of his own. Then one morning he heard his nephew's new wife, Bibi Amro, who happened to be the daughter of Guru Angad, reciting a hymn from Guru Nanak's Jap Ji and was profoundly moved. In this way, he came in contact with Guru Angad Dev and received initiation from him.

He served his Guru selflessly, and Guru Angad formed him into the perfect disciple. Before He departed from this world in 1552, Guru Angad bestowed on Amar Das the task of initiating the souls into the mysteries of Surat Shabd Yoga. Guru Amar Das was the embodiment of humility. When Guru Angad's sons kicked him off the dais while He was giving Satsang, He massaged their legs and told them: "I hope my old, brittle bones have not bruised your tender feet."

GURU RAM DAS (1534–1581) was born as Jetha Mal Sodhi, in Lahore (now in Pakistan). Jetha was orphaned at the age of seven and was raised by his maternal grandmother. He encountered Guru Amar Das when the family shifted to Goindwal around the year 1546. Guru Amar Das accepted him for initiation and became his spiritual preceptor. Jetha later married Guru Amar Das' daughter, Bibi Bani, and through dedicated meditation and seva, became the form of his Guru, so much so that Guru Amar Das renamed him Ram Das (servant of the Lord) and authorized him to carry on his work, initiating the seekers after Truth and giving out the message of liberation in the

Satsangs. Following the orders of His father, Guru Ramdas moved from Goindwal and founded a new town that came to be known as Ramdaspur (later Amritsar). There He began the construction of the Harmandir, the Golden Temple. Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son, was still living at this time, and, overcome with remorse at opposing his father, came to pay homage to Guru Ram Das. When Sri Chand arrived in the Guru's darbar (court) his ego again attacked him, and he asked Guru Ram Das why He had grown such a long beard. Guru Ramdas replied, "To wipe the feet of great devotees like you." Then, with all humility, He rose and respectfully wiped the feet of the son of the great Guru Nanak.

Guru Ram Das is not to be confused with Ramdas Swami (c. 1608-1682), the Maharashtrian mahatma whose disciples included Chhatrapati Shivaji, the legendary Maratha king.)

GURU ARJAN DEV (1563–1606) was born in Goindwal, Punjab and was the youngest son of Guru Ram Das and Bibi Bani. During His lifetime, He completed the construction of the Golden Temple at Amritsar and also founded the town of Tarn Taran. He compiled the Granth Sahib, a compendium of the writings of the Saints, both Hindu and Muslim including His own compositions; and carried on the mission of liberating the souls from the bondage of the three worlds. He was unjustly imprisoned and executed by the Emperor Jehangir, but before departing from this world He appointed His son, Hargobind, as His successor. Throughout His severe trials, He remained in the Will of God: as He wrote in the Adi Granth: "Your Will is sweet, O Lord." *Miṭhā lāgai terā bhāṇā Rām.*

GURU TEG BAHADUR (1621–1675) was born in Amritsar, Punjab, as the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru in the lineage of Guru Nanak and in 1664, he became the successor to Guru Har Krishan. Growing up in the household of Guru Hargobind, he was immersed in a noble atmosphere from the very beginning, and, as a child often withdrew from the outer world to enjoy the bliss of the inner regions. When he grew into a young man, he served under the command of his father and showed himself to be a fearless warrior, and his name means “brave sword.”

He was a learned spiritual scholar and composed numerous hymns that were added to the Guru Granth Sahib, compiled earlier by His grandfather Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Tegh Bahadur ran afoul of the Mughal authorities when He provided aid and shelter to Hindu holy men from Kashmir. These holy men sought refuge after refusing Emperor Aurangzeb’s order to convert to Islam. The emperor then arrested Guru Teg Bahadur and imprisoned Him in Delhi. Aurangzeb demanded He convert to Islam. But Guru Teg Bahadur steadfastly refused his request, saying: “I will sacrifice my head but not my religion.” The emperor then demanded that He show a miracle to demonstrate His power, but the Guru said His God had no use for such cheap tricks of magic. He was beheaded in Chandni Chowk, and the Sisganj Gurdwara was later erected at that site to memorialize His martyrdom. Before His death, He authorized His son Gobind Rai, later known as Guru Gobind Singh, to carry on as His successor.

JAGJIVAN DAS (1727–1761) was a householder Saint who lived in Sardaha Chas near the Ghaghra River (in modern-day Jharkhand). He showed signs of spiritual precocity from a very

early age. It is believed that his Guru was Udhodas, a pupil of Sant Ravidas, and some say that he was also influenced by Yari Sahib (1725-1780), though according to Satnami tradition, his guru is mentioned as Maharaja Vishveshwara Puri. Jagjivan became successful in both *swarth* (worldly life) and *paramarth* (spiritual life), pursuing the householder's dharma along with perfecting the inner technique he had learned from his Guru. His prominent disciples included Dulanadas, Gosaindas, Devidas, and Khemadas. He authored over a dozen works on spirituality, including Agh Vināsh (The Destruction of Sin), Maha Pralay (Grand Dissolution), and Gyan Prakāsh (The Light of Wisdom), which explored themes of cosmic cycles, morality, bhakti, and liberation of the soul. Jagjivan Das stressed the need to search for God within instead of adhering blindly to narrow religious dogma and performing outer rites and rituals that promise much, but yield little. He tells us: "We cannot gain enlightenment by imitating others—in this way we only become more deeply enmeshed in illusion." *Dekhī karai būjhi nahin āvai, bharama bhulāne soī*. The Satnami sect of Hinduism is based on the teachings of Jagjivan Das.

KABIR SAHIB (c. 1398–1518) is renowned as the Poet-Saint of Kashi. His name means "Great One." He earned his livelihood as a weaver, and much of the imagery in his poetry reflects his humble occupation. He compared life to a weaver's loom. The warp threads represent birth, and the weft threads represent death. The shuttle moving back and forth symbolizes the cycle of life and death. Kabir urged people to weave the fabric of life with love, compassion, and devotion. A Muslim by birth and education, Kabir became a disciple of the Hindu Saint Ramananda, and his whole life was spent in tearing down the barriers between Hindus and Muslims and demonstrating the inner Truth common to each religion. In His writings Kabir tells us that the Lord is not found outside: "O man, where do you seek me? Look! I am

right beside you. I am neither in temple nor in mosque: I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash.” *Moko kahāñ dhūndhe bande maiñ to tere pās meñ, nā maiñ deval nā maiñ masjid nā kābe kailās meñ.*

He then goes on to say that He is to be found within: “If you become a true seeker and search for me within, then you shall find me instantly, in just the blink of an eye.” *Khojī hoyā to turate milihuñ, pal bhar kī tālāsh meñ.* He was a contemporary of Guru Nanak for over forty years and is said to have met with Him at least once. Kabir Sahib was the author of the creation story *Anurag Sagar* (Ocean of Love) and of numerous hymns on wide-ranging spiritual topics. He was the first Saint to manifest in the mortal world and incarnated in each of the four yugas.

MALUK DAS (1574–1682) was born in Kada, near Prayag (modern-day Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh) and was an exponent of the bhakti movement flourishing at that time. He emphasized the inner Path to God realization, along with themes of social equality and religious tolerance. When one of Aurangzeb’s officers approached Him asking for initiation, seeing the love and longing for God in the officer’s heart, He readily granted the supplicant’s request. After accepting the officer as His disciple, Maluk Das gave him the name Meer Madhav, a combination of the Muslim name Meer (Ruler or Mahatma) and the Hindu word Madhav (an epithet of Krishna meaning: “Lord, Sweet as Honey). Maluk Das’ heart was open to all without any distinction of caste or creed. He believed that there is no high or low in the house of the Lord.

Maluk Das put all His faith in the Almighty, knowing He would take care of his devotees. Once when He was traveling alone in a remote area, He encountered a band of dacoits and recited this couplet: “The python doesn’t plow; the bird doesn’t work. Maluk Das says: The Lord provides for all.” *Ajagara karai*

na chākarī pakṣhī karai na kāma, Dāsa Malūkā kahata hai, saba ke dātā Rāma. Moved by His fearlessness, the dacoits spared Him and, instead, begged for His mercy.

MANKUTIMMA, or Crazy Timma, (1887–1975) was born in Mulbagal, Kolar, Kingdom of Mysore (now Karnāṭaka state). Mankutimma is the pen name used by Dr. D. V. Gundappa (DVG), an eminent Kannada writer, poet, and philosopher. He wrote many aphoristic Kannada poems, including *Mankuthimmana Kagga*, published in 1943, which is often referred to as the Bhagavad Gita in Kannada due to its profound philosophical insights. Dr. Gundappa chose the pen name Mankutimma for its charm and whimsy; it summons up an image of a dull, ordinary fellow, lost in a haze of ignorance, and he humorously referred to his own masterwork (*Mankuthimmana Kagga*), as “A Foggy Fool’s Farrago.” His poems embody the essence of leading a balanced life, advising us to be humble, gentle, and strong simultaneously. One of the popular poems from the *Kagga*, “*Hullāgu Bettadaḍi*,” conveys this spirit: “Be a gentle blade of grass when you are at the foot of the mountain and a fragrant jasmine flower when you are at home. Be strong like a rock when fate pours torrential rains of difficulties on you. Be sweet like sugar and jaggery to the poor and weak. Be one with all, O Mankutimma.” Baba Somanath Ji had great love for Mankutimma and often commented on his verses in Satsang.

MIRA BAI (c. 1498–1548) was the daughter of the Raja of Merta, and she married the crown prince of Mewar. From her early years, Mira was a devotee of Lord Krishna, but after the death of her husband in battle, her in-laws, according to tradition, raised serious objections to her devotional practices, even trying to assassinate her on multiple occasions. Once, on a pilgrimage to Kashi, she met Sant Ravidas Ji and became his de-

voted disciple, adopting the inner Path to God realization. As Ravidas Ji was a low caste cobbler, this new development further antagonized her noble relatives. She eventually left the royal household and settled in a more congenial environment for her practices, possibly in Dwarka. Her life was marked by love for her Guru Ravidas and fearless disregard for social conventions that limited her devotion. Mira Bai composed numerous devotional hymns, singing Her gratitude to the Almighty Lord: “I have won the treasure; I have attained the precious jewel of the Lord’s Name.” *Pāyo jī maine, Nām ratan dhan pāyo.*

PALTU SAHIB (c. 1710–1780) was born in the village of Nanga-Jalapur near Ayodhya in the district of Faizabad-Oudh and was a grain trader of the Kandu caste. His soul was thirsting for the Lord and in his search for God realization he left no stone unturned. To reach his cherished goal, he became a disciple of Govind Das, who had received enlightenment from Bhikha Sahib. According to Govind Das’ teachings, the whole wondrous creation and the regions of Truth are contained within the human body, and the key to spiritual awakening is to tap inside and connect with the Inner Power coming down from the Highest Realms. After Paltu Sahib received initiation into this Path, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the inner practice and quickly attained perfection.

Speaking of his rapid spiritual progress, Paltu wrote: “Another Paltu earned the karma, but it was written in my account by mistake. The devotion that belonged to a Great Soul was bestowed on a sinner.” *Karama rahe dui likhai patra ekai mañhai, mahā puruṣha kai aṃsa diyā pāpī kañhai.* Gobind Das was extremely pleased with Paltu and made him His successor, giving him the commission to grant Naam initiation to seekers after Truth. In His Satsang, Paltu explained that the Way of the Saints was an inward Path based on love and unity, and He was ever ready to

awaken souls who had a sincere longing for God-Realization.

In later life, He moved to Ayodhya, a very traditional religious town in Uttar Pradesh, where He quickly gained a reputation for being bold and outspoken. He was fearless in pointing out the futility of the orthodox rites, rituals, and superstitions that dominated the devotional culture of the time. His forthright words enraged the local pandits and upset the orthodox devotees who thought His teachings were heresy. Paltu met His death when He was sitting in His grass hut one morning for meditation; a band of fanatic religious zealots crept up, bolted the door, and set the hut ablaze.

RAVIDAS, also Raidas, (c. 1450–1520) was a cobbler Saint of the Chamar caste, born in Benares. He earned his living by mending people’s old and worn-out shoes and spent all his spare time in meditation. Like his contemporary, Kabir Sahib, he is believed to be a disciple of Ramananda. He taught the kinship of all humanity and the deep inner unity of all religions. Most importantly, He emphasized merging back into Godhead by following the Inner Current of Light and Sound, referred to in the various traditions as Naam, Word, Kalma, and so forth. He wrote many hymns elucidating the principles of Sant Mat, explaining that the soul and the Almighty Lord are of the same Essence: “You are me, and I am You—what is the difference between us? We are like gold and the bracelet, or water and the waves.” *Tohī mohī mohī tohī antar kaisā, Kanak kaṭik jal tarang jaisā*. Among His disciples were included Sant Mira Bai and Raja Pipa.

SAHAJO BAI, also Sehjo Bai, (c. 1725–1782) came from a Dhusar family of Rajputana, Rajasthan. He family had a close connection with Sant Charandas Ji, and she received initiation from him at an early age. The story goes that, on the occasion of her marriage, Charandas Ji spoke to her movingly about the

impermanence of worldly bliss. Sahajo Bai, touched and inspired by his words, abandoned her bridal adornments and chose instead a life dedicated only to the devotion of the Lord. The term *sehaj* signifies “naturalness” or “ease” and that quality permeated Sahajo Bai’s life and work. Following the technique taught by Charandas, Sahajo achieved perfection and expressed Her gratitude toward Her Guru in *Sahaj Prakash*, a collection of eighty-five heartfelt verses. Sahajo has said: “If I grind all the mountains into powder and dissolve that powder in the ocean to make my ink. And if I make all the earth my writing paper, still it could not contain the praises of the Guru.” *Sab parvat syāhī karūñ gholūñ samundar jāy; dhartī kā kāgad karūñ guru astuti na samāye.*

SHIV DAYAL SINGH, also known as Swami Ji Maharaj, (1818–1878) was born in Agra to a Khatri family who were devotees of Tulsi Sahib of Hathras. He received initiation from Tulsi Sahib at the age of six, later spending seventeen years in meditation in a dark, back room to reach the inner spiritual goal and to prepare for the work that lay before him. He began holding public Satsang at the Mai Than Gurdwara and later transferred His discourses to the family residence on Panni Gali. He revived the teachings of Kabir and Nanak for modern times and explained profound truths to the general public in very simple words, accessible to all. He wrote extensively on the subject of spirituality, and, because of the religious tolerance predominating at the time, He was able to describe openly many features of the inner way that had to be shrouded in hints and inferences. Swami Ji used the term “Radhaswami” to describe the relation of the soul to God and explained it in these terms: “Radha is the name of the Primal Soul, and Swami is the name of the Shabd that leads to the True Abode. The Path of Surat Shabd and the Way of Radhaswami, recognize them both as the same for there is no difference between them.” *Rādhā ādi surata kā nāma, Svāmī ādi*

śhabda nija dhāma. Surata śhabda aura rādhāsvāmī, donoñ nāma eka kara jānī. His writings, both poetry and prose, were collected in *Sar Bachan* by Rai Saligram after Swami Ji's departure from the physical plane. His work was carried on in the Punjab by His beloved Gurumukh disciple, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji.

TULSI DAS (1511–1623), born as Rambola Dube in the town of Soron (Delhi Sultanate, now in the Uttar Pradesh), was a Vaishnava Hindu saint and poet. It is said that he did not cry at his birth, but spoke the name of Ram, hence his given name of Rambola, “the one who utters the name of Ram.” As a child, Tulsidas displayed an early interest in learning and literature. He studied Sanskrit grammar, the Vedas, and various philosophical texts under the guidance of his guru, Narharidas. Tulsidas' encounter with Lord Hanuman and his divine vision of Lord Rama's enchanting form further deepened his devotion. In Ayo-dhya, he began composing the *Ramcharitmanas*, a retelling of the Sanskrit Ramayana in the vernacular Awadhi language to make that beautiful story accessible to common people and to fill his own mind with the remembrance of the Lord. At the end of Bala Khand (the volume on Rama's youth) he writes: “To purify his own tongue, Tulsi has sung the praise of Shri Ram. Otherwise, the story of Ram is a limitless ocean which no poet has ever been able to cross.” *Nija gira pavani karaṇa kārana rāma Tulasī khayō. Raghubhīra charita apāra bāridi pāru kabi kauneñ lahyō.*

TULSI SAHIB (1763–1843), originally known as Amrit Rao and later Sham Rao, was a Brahmin by caste. He hailed from a noble lineage and was the eldest son of the Peshwa of Pune. His whole interest was in spiritual matters and he had no worldly ambitions. Renouncing his birthright as the eldest son, he ceded the throne to his younger brother, Bajji Rao Peshwa. When Guru Gobind Singh traveled in South India, he came in contact with

the Peshwa family and initiated Ratnagar Rao, and later authorized him to give sincere seekers initiation into the inner way. Tulsi Sahib must have contacted him at this time and received the secret of the Naam from him. He settled in Hathras, about 35 miles north of Agra. Tulsi Sahib knew that without the guidance of such a Master, true liberation from bondage was unattainable, regardless of one's status or attainments. He made rapid headway on the inner Path and his Guru found him fit to continue the work of giving Naam initiation. All His writings and hymns express His gratitude to his Master, who blessed Him with Naam and transformed His life. His best-known work was the *Ghat Ramayana* (The Inner Journey of Lord Rama), an inner version of the Ramayana epic in which he presents characters like Dashrath, Ram, and Sita as symbolic forces and currents; these characters represent deeper spiritual realities, and their stories serve as metaphors to demonstrate the inner journey towards the Kingdom of God and the reality that God is found within, not outside: "The one who turns inward discovers their True Self." *Jo apane añtarātmā kī or barhtā hai, vaha apane āpako pātā hai*. When Tulsi Sahib departed from the physical plane, He passed his spiritual mantle on to Swami Ji Maharaj of Agra.

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Āyā mās Agahan ab chaṭhā / Now Agahan, the sixth month of the year, has arrived; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 36: “The Month of Agahan Has Arrived” p. 391

Ishq binā nahiñ mili hai sāhib, keto bhesb banāvai / If you are bereft of love, you cannot meet the Lord; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 15: “The High Road to Liberation,” p. 157

Isu jug mahi bhagatī hari dhanu khaṭiā horu sabhu jagatu bharami bhulāiā / In this age, you earn the wealth of the Lord through devotion; Guru Amar Dev, Satsang 13, “What is True Bhakti?” p. 139

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Guru se kar mel gañvārā, kā sochata bārambārā / O fool, unite with the Guru, Why waste time thinking over and over again? Kabir Sahib, Satsang 18 : “The Expert Ferryman,” p. 197

Gurudev bina jiv kī kalpanā nā mite / Without the Gurudev, the jivā’s fantasies are not removed; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 8: “Touched by the Philosopher’s Stone,” p. 79

Chānṛī de man baurā ḍagmag / O crazy mind, stop wavering back and forth; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 6: “The Time for Wavering is Past,” p. 59

Jisu simarat sabhi kilavikh nāsahi pitari hoi udhāro / Remembering Him, all our sins are erased, and many generations of our family are rescued as well; Guru Arjan Dev, Satsang 4: “As the Rainbird Longs for the Raindrop,” p. 41

Jog jugat nā gyān kachhu guru dāsan ko dās / Knowledge is not achieved through yogic practices; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 14: “Serve the Servants of the Guru,” p. 151

Jauñ lagi pardā paṛā hai, dhokhā rahā samāy / As long as the curtain is drawn shut, we remain engrossed in illusion; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 19: “Pull Back the Curtain,” p. 211

Paramātam guru nikaṭ birāje / The Almighty Lord and the Guru dwell within you; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 1: “Awake, O my mind, awake!” p. 1

Pahile sansār se tori āvai, tab bāt piyā kī pūchiye jī / First, break away from worldly attachment, Then enquire about meeting the Beloved; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 24: “Drink the Bitter Cup of Love,” p. 259

Pāti āi more pītam kī, sāt turat bulāyo ho / A letter has come from my Beloved; my Lord says, “Your time is up. Don’t delay.” Paltu Sahib, Satsang 27: “No One Remains Here Forever,” p. 277

Pāv aur palak kī ārtī kaun sī / What kind of arti lasts just for a moment? Kabir Sahib, Satsang 11: “He is Not This! He is Not That!” p. 113

Beda bāñī jagu varatadā trai guṇa kare bicāru / Entangled in the words of the Vedas, the world ruminates over the three gunas; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 12: “The Secret of Shabd,” p. 123

Man khin khin bharam bharam bahu dhāvai til ghar nahī vāsā pāiai / Every moment, my mind goes on roaming and rambling. It runs from place to place and does not stay in its own home, even for an instant; Guru Ram Das, Satsang 28: “The Alchemy of Satsang,” p. 283

Man chanchal kahā na māneñ / The Fickle Mind Does Not Obey Me; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 5: “The Fickle Mind Does Not Obey Me,” p. 47

Man baniyāñ bāni na choṛai / The mind doesn’t give up the ways of the baniyā; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 7: “Your Consciousness is Torn in Two,” p. 73

Man mihīn kari lījye jab piu lāgai hāth / The mind becomes rarefied, when the Lord blesses you with His hand of grace; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 9: “Apply the Diamond Tilak,” p. 93

Rāma bhagata ko jana na kahāūñ, sevā karūñ na dāsā / I cannot be called a devotee of God. I have done no seva, and I am not counted among His servants; Ravidas, Satsang 22: “The Vision of Oneness,” p. 241

Rāmā ham dāsan dās karījai / O Lord, please make me the servant of Your servants; Guru Ram Das, Satsang 2: “Make Me the Servant of Your Servants,” p. 17

Sachī bhagati satigura te hovai sachī hiradai bānī / Real devotion is obtained only through the Satguru when His True Bani comes to dwell in your heart; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 20: “Why Do You Search for Me Outside?” p. 217

Sachmuch khel le maidānā / Play a true game on the field of life; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 17: “Pitch Your Tent in the Immortal Realm,” p. 187

Saba kā sākhī merā sāīñ / My Lord is the witness of all and everything; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 31: “The Witness of All,” p. 323

Samujhāye se kyā bhayā, jab gyān āp se hoyā / What can you achieve through explanations? True Knowledge comes of itself; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 26: “True Knowledge Comes of Itself,” p. 271

Sādh soī jo kāyā sādhai, taji ālāsa aur bād bibādai / The Sadhu is one who controls the body through sadhanas ; Sahajo Bai, Satsang 35: “The Qualities of the Sadhu,” p. 375

So panchī mohi koī na batāvai, jo bolo ghaṭ māñhī re / No one can tell me about the bird that sings within; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 33: “The Bird that Sings Within,” p. 343

So sikhu sakhā bandhapu hai bhāī ji gura ke bhāñe vich āvai / Only the one who lives in the Guru’s Will can be called a disciple, a friend, a true relative; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 29: “According to the Love

in Your Heart,” p. 297

Hansā sudhi kar apno desā / O Hansa, Remember your Homeland!
Kabir Sahib, Satsang 10: “O Hansa, Remember your Homeland!”
p. 99

Ham bhajanik meñ nāhīñ avadhū / O seeker, I no longer practice
mediation; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 25: “The Unbroken Stream of De-
votion,” p. 265

Henahāra ke bahuta batāveñ, pai tā ko kachu marama na pāvaiñ /
Many people try to foretell the future, But none have unlocked its
secret; Charandas Ji, Satsang 34: “A Matter of Doing, Not Talking”
p. 351

About the Translators

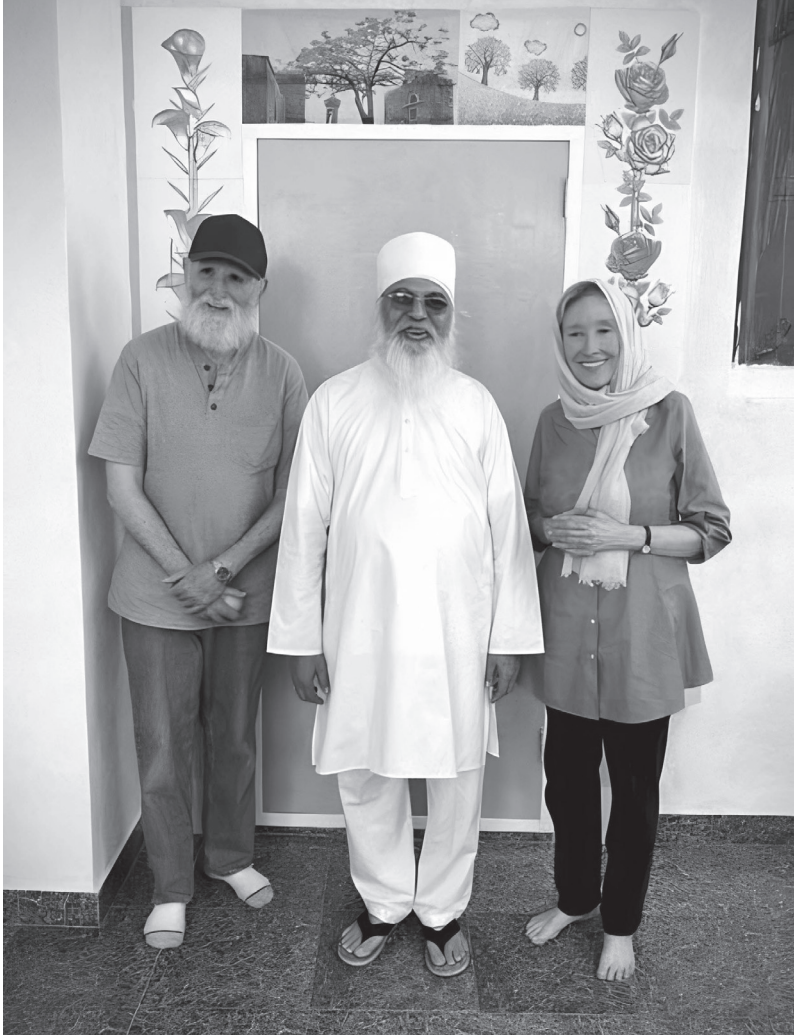
Christopher McMahon studied in Bangalore at Friends World College, where he received a B.A. in Indian Philosophy. While studying there, he had the good fortune to come to the feet of Baba Somanath Ji and was initiated by Him in 1971. From 1971-1976 he spent six months each year living with Baba Somanath at Sawan Durbar Ashram and traveling with Him to Satsang centers throughout South India. During that time, Baba Ji told Christopher that it would be useful for him to learn Hindi, and he completed the intensive summer course at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1972.

After Baba Somanath's departure from this world in 1976, he found the same Power working in Sant Ajaib Singh of Rajasthan and was a tireless sevadar at Sant Ji's yearly Bombay programs in remembrance of Baba Somanath from 1978 till Sant Ji left the body in 1997. He is now continuing his spiritual journey, attending the programs of Satsang, Seva, Simran and Bhajan held by Baba Ram Singh, a Gurumukh disciple of Baba Somanath and True Lover of Sant Ajaib Singh.

Christopher is retired, after a 22-year career as a wholesaler of essential oils, and lives with his wife Suzanne in the beautiful Pacific Northwest of the United States.

Suzanne McMahon was initiated by Sant Kirpal Singh Ji in 1970, and, by His grace, was fortunate to be one of the blissful but disheveled disciples who followed the Master around the United States during the 1972 World Tour; those three months with the Master laid the foundation of her life. When Sant Kirpal left this physical plane, she was drawn to the feet of His Gurumukh disciple Sant Ajaib Singh.

In 1974 she completed her B.A. in German and Comparative Literature at the University of Texas, Austin, where she began her pursuit of Hindi. She then went on to study Hindi and Urdu at the University of Heidelberg on a Fulbright fellowship; and, the following year, continued her studies in Delhi on an American Institute of Indian Studies scholarship. It was during this stay in India that she was blessed to attend Sant Ji's first love-filled Bombay program, and, in subsequent years, she had the privilege of participating in that program of Satsang and meditation each year to help with the seva. In 1984, she and Christopher were married in Sant Ji's presence.



Christopher and Suzanne with Baba Ram Singh Ji at Guddella

Between 1994-2004 she served as South Asia Librarian and Head of the South/Southeast Asia Library at the University of California, Berkeley, where she received an M.A. in Hindi in 1997. She is now retired and has the opportunity to travel to India each year to participate in Baba Ram Singh's programs for the foreign dear ones at the Channasandra and Guddella ashrams.