Your Name is Nectar



Satsangs of Baba Somanath Ji

volume 1

translated by
Christopher and Suzanne McMahon

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For further information:
Som Ajaib Kripa Ashram
Guddella, Marimakala Palli, Kambadur Mandal
Anantapur District 515765, Andhra Pradesh, India

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Your Name is Nectar

Volume 1



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 for 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 chickpeas 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 stopover 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]

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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, because 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 first 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, jinhoneṅ 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

Taking the broom of love in your hand, clean the temple of your heart. No filth or garbage should accumulate there. What is that garbage? The worldly thoughts and attachments. We must take up the broom of the Lord's love and sweep the heart clean. Only when we have made our hearts clean, can the Lord—who is immaculate and pure—manifest there. He is already residing there, but He will manifest. We don't need to bring some other lord from outside. The false worldly thoughts come from outside and fill up our within. But the Almighty Lord is already innate within us; He does not descend from some other realm.

—Baba Somanath

1

Take Up the Broom of Love

If you have the yearning to meet God,
keep your love absorbed in Him every moment.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. By yearning, He means that your aim in life is to meet God and that you have true love for Him. We people are in love with the world. Day and night, all our efforts are directed towards the outer things, and since we are tied up only in the worldly work, we have become the very image of this world. But now we must reverse the direction of our endeavors. One power is changeable; the other is permanent and immovable. Because our attention has remained extroverted, we have become disconnected from the inner, unchanging Power. Remaining engaged day and night with the impermanent creations of Maya, our attention is always vacillating from one thing to another.

Now, we need to extricate our thoughts from things external and direct our yearning towards the Power of Truth and Unchangeable Permanence within. This is what is called true love. If you have true love in your heart and the longing to meet the Lord, then banish the outer thoughts and desires from your within. With deep love and fixed purpose, keep

1 Kabir Sahib, *Tujhe hai shauk milane kā...*

your attention riveted on the Lord. In that way alone can you sever your connection with this world.

You cannot hope to meet the Beloved Lord within while you remain a slave to the worldly pursuits. Your attention will be torn in two directions, and you will accomplish nothing. In the beginning, when the longing to meet God first arises within us, our heart is still weak; we feel the pull of the outer world.

But as we go forward on our spiritual quest, we gradually grasp the principles of spirituality and apply them to our life. When we do the practices enjoined by the Guru and experience the Lord within, then our condition undergoes a radical change—the love within us no longer clings to this outer world, and we are pulled, as if by a magnet, towards the Beloved within.

Burn to ashes your boastfulness and pride;
then smear those ashes over your body.

Direct your longing towards Him within, to such a degree that you forget all thought of this world. Burn away every worldly desire and then take the sacred ash of true love that remains and smear that over the limbs of your body. Then only One Love remains—both without and within. Do you think you can dabble a little here, there, everywhere? My friend, you won't get anywhere in this way. When the Lord Himself is only One, how can you hope to meet Him till you have become unified yourself? Pride of the body, intellectual vanity, gross material thoughts, and arrogance—until you remove these from your within, how can you hope to merge into Oneness? He is only One—to meet Him, you must also become one.

The sacred ash of true love removes all the worldly thoughts. When the rays of True Love dawn within your heart, that divine

Light of Love is the sacred ash that purifies your whole being. Outwardly, we may collect some ash from the hearth and smear that ash over our body; we think that is all there is to it. But this is not what Kabir Sahib means by *bhasma* or sacred ash.

Take up the broom of love and sweep the chamber of your heart.

Taking the broom of love in your hand, clean the temple of your heart. No filth or garbage should accumulate there. What is that garbage? The worldly thoughts and attachments. We must take up the broom of the Lord's love and sweep the heart clean. Only when we have made our hearts clean, can the Lord—who is immaculate and pure—manifest there. He is already residing there, but He will manifest. We don't need to bring some other lord from outside. The false worldly thoughts come from outside and fill up our within. But the Almighty Lord is already innate within us; He does not descend from some other realm.

Collect the dust of duality and whisk it away with your prayer mat.

Duality is the root of all suffering. What is duality? Its foundation is the sense of "I and you. Mine and yours." Examine the worldly thoughts carefully, and you will realize that the form of this world is duality—"I and you. Mine and yours." Sweep away this dust of duality. Then that Power, the form of Oneness, will manifest within you. No one is tormenting you from outside. No one has ensnared you in this world. No one has clapped you in the chains of birth and death. You imprisoned yourself here when you lost your inner yearning and

directed all your strength towards fulfilling the worldly desires. Because all the outer things are perishable, time and again you go on revolving through the wheel of transmigration. This is all your own doing.

Break the rosary and toss it out; throw your books into the water.

Kabir Sahib tells us, "Forgetting this inner secret and losing the true understanding, you go on performing rites and rituals, but to no avail. Your efforts are all futile. That rosary you are turning, break it and toss it away; all those books you have collected, throw them into the water—then, proceed on this Path."

What do you find in the books? Your own intellect perceives the words written there and imparts meaning to them. You pile up hollow words in your within, but the Truth remains far away.

All that you have learned up till now, expunge it from your heart.

Empty your heart of all its previous impressions. Your heart is filled with the thoughts and desires you have accumulated throughout this lifetime—from childhood up to the present moment. All these impressions are stored in your heart. Now, if you wish to connect your love with the Almighty Lord, you must remove all of these impressions from your within. Then your heart will become open and unattached. When you remember the Lord with an open heart, the Power of the Lord will manifest within you.

If the thief is already in your house and you are still standing

guard at the door with your gun, do you think that thief within will not plunder you? When at heart of hearts, we are already filled up with worldly thoughts, vanity of the body, sorrow and happiness, concern over honor and disgrace, do you think you can protect your wealth of spirituality through a few outer practices? My friend, how is this possible?

You don't need to fast and die of hunger.
You don't need to prostrate yourself in the mosque to pray.

We do not need to go hungry. We do not need to keep the *vrat* (Hindu fast) or the *rozā* (Muslim fast). In our Hindu religion, we celebrate numerous religious festivals: *Ekadashī,*[2] *Shivarātrī,*[3] and many others. On those days, we observe the sacred fast, and then the following day, we eat double the amount of food. So, what was the point of keeping that fast?

Likewise, during the month of Ramadan, the Muslims abstain from food and drink during the day, but at night they drink and eat meat and other flesh foods. During the daytime, fasting is prescribed, but at night there is no such restriction. From dawn till dusk, they keep the fast, but break it after nightfall. This is the state of affairs. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us: "There is no need to go hungry. You don't need to observe the *rozā*; neither do you need to observe the *vrat* at *Ekadashī* or *Dvādashī."*[4] Devotion is a subject of love. Fix your attention at

2 *Ekadashī* is the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight; it is considered to be a spiritual day and is often observed by a partial fast.

3 *Shivarātrī* is an annual festival commemorating the night when Shiva performs his heavenly dance.

4 *Dvādashī* is the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight.

the Lord's door and cry to Him with a heart full of yearning. This is the meaning of true love—never abandon this Path.

Where do the devout Muslims offer *namāz* (prayers)? They go into the mosque, but that outer mosque built by human hands is not the true mosque. The real mosque lies within our hearts. In that mosque, we should offer the ceaseless *namāz*—our deep and undivided love for the Lord.

Smash the sacred pot for performing ablutions; go on drinking the wine of God's love.

Vuzū is a purificatory practice. Before performing *namāz*, the Muslims take water and perform a ritual ablution, working from the right side of the body to the left. This is called *vuzū*. Kabir Sahib says that you should smash the vessel used for the *vuzū* practice and drink the wine of love; day and night drink the Lord's intoxicating nectar of Naam. When you go on imbibing this elixir of love, the taste for the sense pleasures and worldly Maya goes away by itself. You become consumed in the intoxication of the Lord and the intoxication of the world fades. Now we are dyed in the taste of the worldly things—enjoyment, luxury, comfort. But once we drink the nectar of Naam, the taste of the world loses all its savor.

Don't become a Mullah; don't become a Brahmin; lost in disputes of duality, they clash with one another.

There is no need to become a Mullah or a Brahmin. Recognize their real condition and give up this idea. You could become a Brahmin; you could become a Mullah, but what difference is there between them? Both are entangled in the same labyrinth of illusion.

The qalandar (saint) issues this decree:
Ceaselessly proclaim *anal-haq*.

The qalandar speaks the Hukam or decree of the Lord: Repeat *anal-haq*. "*Anal-haq*" means: I am the Truth—I am God. Sat Naam and the Hukam of God are two names for one and the same Power. Repeat *anal-haq* day and night.

Collect the wealth of Simran and Naam in your heart; then whether you are walking or moving about, whether you are awake or asleep, the Lord is ever ready to come to your aid. That conscious Power will be your protector. This is the wealth of the Lord. And no matter how much wealth the Lord bestows, it never decreases; it always goes on increasing. The thieves cannot take it away; fire cannot burn it up; water cannot drown it. That wealth is not affected by any of these things. Whoever collects this wealth is the most fortunate being. The Lord showers His grace and unites the devotee's heart with the Naam.

—Baba Somanath

2

The Lord Becomes Your Friend and Helper

Wherever you worship the Lord, there He becomes your friend and helper.
By Guru's Grace, the Lord comes to dwell in your mind; He cannot be won in any other way.[1]

This is the bani of Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He says that the Lord's help and grace flow to us according to the purpose, the concentration, and the love with which we offer our worship. What does Guru Ram Das tell us further? If anyone does the devotion with some ulterior motive, they will gain nothing. Once we are put on the True Path by the Guru, and when we worship the Lord with full faith and love, then:

Wherever I look, I see the Merciful Lord
who is compassionate on the poor ones.

The Lord dwells within your heart, and wherever you may choose to sit in His remembrance, He will shower His grace

1 Guru Ram Das, *Jithai har ārādhīai tithai har mit sahāī...*

upon you. You do not need to go to the jungles or other secluded places to find the Lord; He is the very support of this body. He is the Power that supports the entire creation.

So where should you look for Him? As long as you have the idea that you must go in search of Him, as long as you think He is something other than yourself, you will go on seeking Him and will remain separate from Him. As long as the feeling of duality is present, there can be no meeting between you and the Almighty Lord. The Guru unites you with Oneness. When He connects you with the one Sat Naam, He tells you how to do the contemplation; He explains all the practices to you. When you adopt this method, then you unite with the Shabd and become the form of Shabd. When you perform the meditation with faith, according to the Guru's instruction, then, wherever you look, you will see only the Lord.

Collect the wealth of the Lord, O Brother.

He says you should fill the treasure chest of your heart with the wealth of the Lord's Naam Simran. That wealth will help you now, it will come to your aid as you proceed along the Path, and at your end time, it will unite you with the Lord. He dwells within your heart; He is All-Seeing and All-Knowing. What can you hope to gain by abandoning such a Lord? What benefit can you acquire through going to the outer temples, bathing at the places of pilgrimage, and observing the fasts? Outwardly you may be fasting, but inwardly your stomach is begging for food. This is no fast.

Nowadays, on Shivaratri, many people keep an all-night vigil in honor of Shiva called "*jāgran*." Five times they perform the arti ceremony. They fast all night or partake only

of a very light meal of fruit. And they go on singing bhajans late into the night. The next day everyone thinks, "I observed the fast all night long. Now I will eat today's meal and yesterday's also." This cannot be called devotion; this cannot be called observing Shivaratri.

"Shiva" is the form of light and *"rātri,"* or nighttime, is full of darkness. So, when the darkness of night falls, you should stay awake in the Light of the Lord, because darkness is the form of ignorance. To perform the true Shivaratri, you must always remain awake and alert in order to dispel the darkness and ignorance of Maya.

If you spend one night out of the whole year singing bhajans, clashing cymbals, beating the mridang[2], and plucking the veena[3], this cannot be called Shivaratri. This is all just outer show. Many people keep that vigil; they don't eat one bite of food, and five times during the night they perform the arti. But the next morning at breakfast, they eat a double portion of everything to make up for the night before. What can come of all this hollow display? Nothing at all.

The Lord will be your friend in this world and the next.

Collect the wealth of Simran and Naam in your heart; then whether you are walking or moving about, whether you are awake or asleep, the Lord is ever ready to come to your aid. That conscious Power will be your protector. This is the

2 The mridang is an elongated drum with a tuned drumhead at each end.

3 The veena is a fretted, plucked lute used in Indian classical music. Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts, is usually portrayed playing the veena.

wealth of the Lord. And no matter how much wealth the Lord bestows, it never decreases; it always goes on increasing. The thieves cannot take it away; fire cannot burn it up; water cannot drown it. That wealth is not affected by any of these things. Whoever collects this wealth is the most fortunate being. The Lord showers His grace and unites the devotee's heart with the Naam.

In the company of Truth, earn the wealth of the Lord.

Therefore, He says, "In order to collect the wealth of the Lord, join the congregation of Satsang." There is such Power in the company of Truth, that if you spend one moment in the Satsang, if one sentence from the Satsang takes root in your heart, then your wanderings in the cycle of birth and death will come to an end.

Understand that place as Satsang,
where the One Naam is spoken of.

Satsang is the place where the glory of the One Naam is described. The letters *akār*, "A," *ukār*, "U," and *makār*, "M," make up the sacred syllable of "AUM" or Onkar.[4] But the One Naam lies beyond Onkar. Satsang is the place where the praise of that One Naam is sung. In the Satsang, we learn how to discern Truth from untruth in our heart. Until we come into the Satsang, what can we achieve? We will lack the right understanding. Therefore, Tulsi Das Ji tells us:

4 The Saints use "AUM" and "Onkar" synonymously to describe the Sound resonating in Trikuti.

There is no place of pilgrimage
equal to the Satsang;
but understanding comes only
through the Lord's grace.

No place of pilgrimage is equal to the Satsang. Only the Satsang can remove the dirt of the mind. When the mind is cleansed of all impurities, it ceases to wander. And when the mind becomes motionless, then that inner Power pulls it upward automatically. Therefore, He tells us that it is difficult to understand the Satsang without the Guru's grace. The Guru gives the discourse for a couple of hours, and you come and listen. But what do you gain from the Satsang? After the Satsang, you get up and brush away the words of the Satsang when you dust off your clothes. You don't take anything with you when you leave, and you return home empty-handed.

You should think this over carefully. When you attend the Satsang, you should leave the thoughts of your home behind. You should lose all awareness of your body and mind; they should become quiet and still. But now when you are listening to the Satsang, your mind is already waiting at the bus stand. You remember your home and think, "I need to reach home quickly. The time is up. Satsang should be over by now." In this way, you remain unchanged; you return home the same as when you left.

Only a few rare ones keep the words of the Satsang in their hearts. Even when they go to the bus stop catch the bus for home, their minds do not take on the world's color. Only a few rare ones remain engaged in the Simran of Naam and go on singing the Lord's praise. Everyone else attends Satsang with their minds full of the worldly things,

and when Satsang is over, they have nothing to show for the time they spent there.

You cannot collect this wealth by any other means; you cannot obtain it anywhere else.

There is no other method; there is no other practice. Nothing other than Satsang can awaken the love of the Lord in your within. You will gain nothing from pilgrimages to Varanasi or Kashmir or even to Rameshwar. It is only the Power of Satsang that can awaken the Soul.

The trader in the Lord's jewels purchases this wealth from the Lord.

Only a few rare devotees—the ones who have done the Simran of the Lord's Naam and have acquired the wealth of inner experience—can purchase those jewels. Nowadays, only a few people are truthful in their outer business dealings. Most people buy and sell on the black market, which is also called the "thieves' bazaar." Similarly, only the rare devotees, those who remember the Lord's Name, can purchase that spiritual wealth and fill up the shop of their heart.

Everyone else is involved in the business of falsehood. No matter how much money you may obtain through outer dealings, none of it will go with you at the time of death. This body that you are enjoying is formed from earth and will go back to earth when the soul departs. And what use is a heap of dirt to anyone? While we have the human body, we should take care of our responsibilities. It is not correct for us to sit around the house in idleness, thinking that whatever the Lord wants done, He will accomplish Himself without

our effort. We should perform our duties, but, along with doing our worldly works, we should also be engaged in the Simran of the Lord.

Just as your mind is now absorbed in Maya,
absorb it in the Lord instead.

Now our thoughts are engaged in the things of Maya, but we need to change their direction. We should do our worldly work with our hands, while in our within, our thoughts remain engrossed in the remembrance of the Lord.

But the trader in cheap glass deals in empty words and cannot acquire this wealth.

The traders in colored glass may outwardly look like the real devotees. They may be satsangis; they may have taken the Naam. But even after being initiated for many years, still they have not progressed. They are showing one thing outside, but within they are something different. They are trading in inferior goods and are still stuck fast in duality. They cannot buy that wealth of the Lord who is the form of Oneness.

At the ambrosial hour, the Lord distributes His wealth of gems, precious stones, and rubies. The Lord's devotees become absorbed in the love of the Lord.

What is the best time to purchase the jewels and gold and gems of that All-conscious Naam? He tells us: "At the *amrit velā*—the ambrosial hour." When is the *amrit velā?* A day is

divided into eight watches [of three hours each]. From six to nine in the evening, everyone is awake. The indulgent ones stay awake from nine to twelve. From twelve to three, the thieves are up and doing their work. And from three to six, the yogis are awake and alert. Those who sleep past three o'clock and lay snoring like Kumbhakarna[5] cannot be called sadhus.

Even though they have taken the Naam initiation, still they remain a pawn of the mind. But we must be on duty at our post, whether the mind takes to it or not. We resolve to wake up in the early morning, but in our within, our past karmas are so strong that the mind does not allow us to shake off sleep. If we do manage to wake up, then the mind tells us: "It's three o'clock now. I won't be able to sit from three to six. Let's wait and get up at four o'clock." At four o'clock you do a little bit of Simran lying down, and while you are repeating the Simran, you drift back to sleep and don't get up till six o'clock. Then you have some idli and dosa, drink your coffee and go to work. You say you have meditated, but the Lord is not pleased with this kind of meditation. Such a meditator is a satsangi in name only.

A true satsangi is one whose attention is always connected to the True Naam, day and night. So, for this reason, the Saints and Mahatmas call this early morning time as the *amrit velā*—the time of nectar—because during these precious hours the Lord distributes amrit to His devotees. He goes from house to house, making his devotees drink this intoxicating beverage. But those who give up the inner Sound and become lost in the outer sound of snoring, who will offer them any nectar?

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5 Kumbhakarna, the brother of Ravana, was known for his snoring and unshakable, deep sleep.

At the *amrit velā*, the devotees of the Lord plant the seed of the Lord's wealth.
They feast on the harvest; they spend that wealth, but it is never exhausted.

No matter how much of that harvest the devotee may eat, it never runs short; no matter how much of that wealth they may spend, still that wealth can never be exhausted. There is never any lack.

In this world and the next, the devotees who collect the wealth of the Lord are praised.

Walking and moving about, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking—do all your work remembering the Name of the Lord. You don't have to give up your worldly work; you don't have to run away to the forest; you don't have to endure hunger. You don't need to observe fasts or offer formulaic prayers. This practice is an internal one. Your thoughts that are now involved constantly in Maya and the outer world need to be turned inward towards the contemplation of the Lord. Once Bulleh Shah went to his Guru and asked, "Maharaj Ji, how does one meet the Lord?" The Guru was transplanting onion seedlings at the time. When you are raising onions, first you plant the seeds, and, when they grow up into seedlings, then you separate and transplant them. So, the Guru replied to His devotee: "There is nothing to meeting the Lord. Just uproot your attention from this side and transplant it on the other side." Just pull up the small onion plants that have sprouted and replant them on the other side. There is nothing more to it. When you withdraw your thoughts from outside and concentrate them inside, the Lord stands ready to receive you.

The Lord is without fear.
His wealth is eternal and unchanging.

The Naam of the Lord is One—Eternal, Self-Existing, and Unchangeable. It does not take birth; it does not die. It is the same, now and forevermore. When the potter molds an earthen pot, that pot is hollow inside. The pot is filled with empty space. And when the potter breaks the pot, that empty space is not destroyed. When the pot is broken, that space within it is set free.

In the same way, the Lord is present in all the bodies, no matter how many may exist. No matter how many pots and pitchers the potter molds, each one is hollow; each is filled with empty space. And when any pot is broken, that space does not go away; it is liberated and remains as it was before. In the same way, the Soul is all-pervading. It lies beyond all and dwells within all. When our body dies, our Soul does not die. It sheds that body, nothing more. The pot breaks, but the space that fills it remains unchanged.

This wealth cannot be burned by fire, drowned
by water, or snatched away by thieves.
Even the angels of death cannot destroy it.

The wealth of the Naam is the form of Truth. It cannot be destroyed by fire or water or wind. It cannot be taken away by thieves. At our end time, it is the True Name that liberates us from the cycle of birth and death. The True Name is Sat Naam. Outwardly, many people recite, "Sat Naam, Sat Naam." But the True Name is not mere outer words; it is the Unstruck Melody resounding in our within. Guru Amar Das tells us:

Those who close the outer nine doors
and fix their attention within
dwell in their own Home at the tenth door.
There, the Unstruck Melody of
the Shabd reverberates day and night.
Through the Guru's teachings, the Shabd is heard.

That Unstruck Melody is called Sat Naam, and the angels of death cannot come near it.

Thieves cannot come near the Lord's wealth;
Yama can levy no tax on it.

The yamduts—the angels of death—run away in fear. Now when we people try to bring merchandise from other countries across the border, the customs officials detain us: "Wait, you are bringing in foreign goods." But if we are not carrying anything with us, then what can the customs officials do? They say, "Go right ahead. You are free to pass." In the same way, if we try to take thoughts of this world with us at our end time, then the angels of death will seize us: "Hold on there, my friend. What do you think you are doing, bringing these worldly goods along with you?" They will beat us and toss us back into the wheel of transmigration.

The worldly people commit sins and gather
in their poisonous wealth,
But it will not go with them for even one step
into the beyond.

He says the worldly person is called a manmukh. Throughout his entire life, the manmukh has only earned the wealth of

the worldly pleasures. If you ask someone how many children they have, some people might even say twenty-one! To have twenty-one children, you would need two wives—one with ten children and one with eleven. So, after you have enjoyed all these pleasures of the world, when the noose of sins is placed around your neck, and you have to give up your life, do you think the angels of death will spare you? They will say, "You are full of sins. You are not fit for another human birth." After giving you countless sufferings in the hells, they will throw you back into the cycle of births and deaths.

The worldly people become distressed as
this world slips away through their hands.
In the world hereafter, they find no shelter in
the Court of the Lord.

Day and night, you earned only the sins, and that noose of sins is placed around your neck at the time of death. You are wrenched out of the body, and you have to suffer the beating of the angels of death. And afterward, you will be sent back as a dog, a cat, a mouse or as an insect or worm, or even as grass or old dry straw.

O, Saints! The Lord Himself distributes this
wealth.
Whoever receives that blessing, gathers it up
and carries it away with them.

He says that the wealthy banker, the benefactor, who distributes the Lord's wealth is the Lord Himself. How can you obtain this wealth? If the Saint is gracious on you, then He will teach you the method to conduct this business. "Sell the goods at this rate. Procure your stock by this method, etc."

And when you carry on your business according to the teachings of the Satguru, then you will earn the profit.

The wealth of the Lord is never exhausted;
the Guru has given this understanding to
servant Nanak.

There is never any shortage in this business. You can never suffer loss. Therefore, He says: "My Preceptor, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, has shown me this Path, and I have become fearless. My storehouse is filled to bursting with His wealth."

Some people praise you; some people criticize you. You do not achieve greatness through other people's praise, and you are not diminished through other people's criticism. These people are criticizing and praising others based on their own understanding and motives. Therefore, shun their company.

—Baba Somanath

3

Shun the Company of the Critic

As there is fire in the wood and fragrance in the flower,
O Paltu, in the same way, the Lord dwells within His devotee.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Paltu Sahib. Nowadays, many people are atheists. They say, "There is no God. You people are believing in fantasy and falsehood." From their point of view, this is true because their intellect is limited to the gross, material world. They do not realize that God is something rarefied and spiritual, so they assert: "There is no God." They do not see Him, so they say, "What is the point of all this rigmarole?"

To help us understand the reality, Paltu Sahib Ji explains about the nature of the Lord. He says, "The Lord is like the fire hidden in the wood." If you superficially observe a piece of wood, you don't see any fire. But in a big forest, fires ignite spontaneously when the branches rub together in the blowing wind. This rubbing produces heat that sets the trees on fire, and in the end, the whole forest is burnt. Likewise, there is fragrance in the flower. We cannot see that fragrance; it is hidden from our eyes. But through the nose, the sense of smell,

1 Paltu Sahib, *Jaise kāṭh meṅ agin hai...*

we become aware of the hidden fragrance. In the same way, the Almighty Lord remains hidden in the heart of the devotee. The devotee is conscious of that Power and says, "The Lord dwells within me. I see Him clearly." But to those with gross, blind intellects, this seems like make-believe.

Just like there is redness in the henna leaves and butter in the milk,
O Paltu, the Saints see that the Lord dwells within all.

Now, consider the leaves of the henna plant. On the surface, they look green, but the leaves have redness within them. Similarly, ghee (clarified butter) is hidden in the milk. When you warm the milk and add some coagulant, then the milk firms up into yogurt. If you churn that yogurt, the butter separates out, and when you heat that butter, the residual water evaporates, and only ghee remains. If you put that ghee into milk, it will float on the top; the ghee will not mix with the milk.

In the same way, the Lord is within us in His hidden form. We have to become seekers after God. The gurumukhs and devotees come to know the Inner Secret. When they search their own hearts, they discover the Almighty Lord. The Lord is not sitting somewhere outside.

One who renounces the desires of this world destroys lust and anger.
O Paltu, seeing such a devotee, the worldly people bow down with respect.

He says, "Give up the desires of the world." What is the root of all these desires? Lust and anger. If a person gives up

both of these and searches within, then the Lord's Naam will manifest. Beholding such devotees, even the wealthy merchants, the kings and emperors spontaneously bow down before them. What worldly goods do these devotees possess? Outwardly, they have only a loincloth or some simple garment. But the Power manifested within them commands so much respect—even from the worldly people. So, you should become absorbed in the Lord, following the example of the Gurumukhs. But this is not an easy thing to accomplish. When, with whole-hearted devotion, we surrender to the Guru, giving up our ego and arrogance—when our love becomes totally absorbed in the Lord—then we achieve such an exalted state.

If someone indulges in criticism and praise,
abandon their company.
O Paltu, everyone bows before those devotees
who free themselves from these ills.

Some people praise you; some people criticize you. You do not achieve greatness through other people's praise, and you are not diminished through other people's criticism. These people are criticizing and praising others based on their own understanding and motives. Therefore, shun their company. Guru Amardas Ji says:

It is never good to criticize anyone;
only the foolish manmukhs indulge in this.
Those who criticize others, their faces are blackened,
and they are thrown into the deepest hells.

Never criticize anyone. Even if someone is the worst of the worst, never have a critical thought or utter a harsh word about them. Once Emperor Akbar was sitting with his assembly of ministers and advisors. Addressing them, he said, "What

punishment should be meted out to those who indulge in criticism and backbiting?" Everyone kept quiet; they had no reply to his question. Whenever someone wants to criticize others, they never do it openly. They whisper their secrets in the ear; they want to unpack their wares behind closed doors. So how could such people be caught and punished?

Just then, Birbal joined the assembly, and Akbar put the question to him: "People who criticize others, what punishment should they receive?" Instantly, Birbal replied, "What to speak of the one who criticizes, even the one who listens to criticism should have their ears cut off." Akbar asked him why he favored such a severe punishment, and Birbal explained: "The person who listens to criticism adds their own embellishments to the tales they hear and then they pass those stories on to others. And when the critic finds such a willing ear, he will definitely return the next day, to share more gossip."

If someone comes to you with vicious tales, instead of listening, you should tell them, "Brother, why are you finding fault with others? You should keep your mind riveted in the remembrance of the Lord and give up this bad habit of criticism." If you explain like this to the critics, they will not return and bother you again. Therefore, it is said, "Avoid the company of those who criticize others and sing their own praises." If you want to praise anyone, praise the Almighty Lord. If you want to criticize anyone, criticize your own self.

Go on with the devotion all the hours of the day
and night, like an unbroken stream of oil.
O Paltu, how else can you reach the other shore?

Remain absorbed in the devotion to the Lord, all the eight watches (24 hours) of the day. Keep your eye fixed on your goal. Don't forget the Lord, even for a moment. Guru Nanak

tells us: "If I were to forget you even for a moment, O Lord, it would be like fifty years."

If you become such a seeker after God, you will find that He is not far away from you—He is the knower of your heart. Many people take initiation but do not even remember the five Holy Names. Somebody might say, "Well, I do remember one of the Names." When you ask: "Which Name do you remember?" they reply, "I remember Sat Naam. But the other four? I've completely forgotten them." They tell me, "Next time you give initiation, I will sit in and refresh my memory." Friend, what can you gain through such discipleship?

These jewels are of inestimable value and, if you want to acquire them, first you should accept the Guru's seva. As you go on doing the seva of the Guru, you will become a buyer of these priceless gems. Whoever does the Guru's seva becomes the form of the Lord. There is no difference between the True Sevadar and the Lord. By doing the seva, you merge into the Lord. But as long as your within is filled with "I and mine," as long as you are controlled by egotism and pride, you are not worthy of doing the seva.

—Baba Somanath

4

The Priceless Jewels

O All-Pervading Lord, hearing your Name, my mind is drenched with joy.[1]

This is the bani of Guru Ram Das Ji, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. When you do the Simran of Naam, you should do it in such a way that you become the form of Naam. The Power of the Soul that suffuses your within is the Power of the Lord. Contact that All-Pervading Power and become one with it—become its very form.

Repeat the Naam in such a way that you forsake the path of the mind and adopt the Path of the Guru. Join with that Naam and merge into it so that the mental wavering and intellectual reasoning of the world can be left aside. This is the correct way to do the Simran of Naam.

When you repeat Naam, when you do the Simran, is your mind fully engaged in the practice? Or is it busy with the simran of the world? When you do the Simran of Naam, be alert and wary of the mind. Make sure it doesn't wander outside. Whatever you contemplate on, you will become its form. This is what is meant by Simran.

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1 Guru Ram Das, *Rāmā ram rāmo sun man bhījai*...

From Simran, you gain happiness.
From Simran, sorrow flies away.
Kabir says, whoever does the Simran
of the Lord becomes one with Him.

What Power is in the Simran? From doing the simran of the world, we have taken on its color. By doing the Simran of the Lord, we will take on the color of the Lord. For this reason, Kabir Sahib says, "From doing the Simran, you gain happiness." From doing the Simran, happiness comes in your within, and sorrow is driven out, just as the sun's rays bring the light of day and dispel night's darkness. When you repeat the Simran over and over again, you become the form of Simran. Remember the Lord. He is not far from us, but we remain far away from Him. When the True Simran manifests in our heart, we become the form of the Lord Himself.

The Naam of Hari is sweet, ambrosial Nectar;
drink that Nectar, following the Guru's Path.

There is so much sweetness in the Lord's Naam; it is full of nectar. So, why don't you perceive that sweetness? When you give up the path of the mind and take to the Path of the Guru, then you will taste that sweet nectar of Naam. And then all the doubts and waverings of the world will leave you. But as long as you follow the path of the mind, as long as you do not become the form of Naam, the thoughts will keep on coming: "This Naam is already within me. Why don't I see it? I should be able to see it."

If you try to repeat the Simran in the midst of all this mental chatter, then your mind will get the upper hand. You cannot mingle with the Naam through such devotion. Your job is to still the mind; then you will become the form of

Naam. When you do the Simran, the nectar of Naam will flood your within, then all the disturbance and dirt of the world will be swept away.

Fire is hidden in the wood; by rubbing the wood, the fire is released.

Now the question arises, "What is the nature of the Lord?" Fire is in the wood, and still, you can't see it. But when you rub two pieces of wood together vigorously, then that fire leaps out. In the same way, the Lord has hidden Himself within everyone; He resides within you in His hidden form. But when you follow the instructions of the Guru, when you vigorously rub the Simran of the Naam against the Conscious Power within, then the fire flares up, the light bursts forth, and all darkness and anxiety are driven away.

Clarified butter is hidden in the milk, but milk is nothing like butter. That milk will not keep; it will curdle and spoil. But the butter is there, and if you churn the milk, the butter will separate out. And when the impurities are boiled away, you can store that clarified butter for many months. Similarly, if you abandon the path of the mind, then, through the Path of the Guru, you can churn your within and separate Truth from untruth. That element of Truth, the clarified butter, will emerge within you, and that Truth never spoils, it never changes, it remains eternally the same.

The Light of the Lord's name is present in all; manifest it through the Guru's Teachings.

The Naam of the Lord is the form of Light. But it cannot be realized through the path of the mind. Following the Path of the Guru, churn your within, and that Light will manifest.

And once that Light manifests, then outside and inside, you will see only Light. The darkness is dispelled—all the desires, egotism, and vanity are driven out of the heart—and only Light remains.

The taste in the nine doors is insipid; extract the Nectar at the tenth door.

Further, this body has ten doors. The lower nine doors are the doors of the sense pleasures, which are lifeless and without savor. Withdraw your thoughts from these nine doors, and fix your attention at the tenth door; there, the sweet Nectar is showering down. Drinking that Nectar, you will be filled with peace, and you will become the form of peace. But as long as your thoughts are running wild in the sense pleasures, you cannot get that Nectar.

Now within us, the sense organs and sense attractions are so powerful that we cannot do without them. If someone is under the control of the tongue, they crave tasty dishes. And when they cannot get food according to their liking, then day and night their heart remains angry and restless. Their desire for food goes on increasing, and that craving keeps tugging at them.

Some people are under the control of the sense of sight, and they long to see beautiful forms with their eyes. The eyes draw them to movie theaters or dance performances or other spectacles. A thousand desires are tugging at you, and no matter how hard you try on your own, you will not be able to reverse the direction of that pull. All at once, the eyes may take hold of you and drag you toward the outer things. Then, no matter how much hardship you have to endure, no matter how much money you have to spend, without seeing those things, you will get no rest. This is the condition of our ten senses.

The five sense pleasures (forms, sounds, tastes, textures, and scents) are the food of the five sense organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, skin, and nostrils). The food of the ears is beautiful sounds. We are always eager to hear strains of melodious music or the sound of our own praise. And the ears are quick to take us to the place where gossip and backbiting and criticism of others are going on. This is the sense of hearing.

The eyes perceive the beautiful forms and are attracted to them. Day and night, the eyes are becoming filled with outer impressions. Through the ears, we listen to the reports of others, and our within becomes filled up with hearsay. In the same way, the tongue is greedy for the tastes, and the sense of touch is greedy for the textures and leads us to outer indulgence. These are the five sense organs and the five sense pleasures.

Until the jiva—the embodied soul—exerts itself and breaks free from these sense organs, it will remain their slave. The senses have taken up their posts in our within, and wherever they pull us, we are dragged there helplessly. We have to reverse the direction of the senses. We have to turn them inward, merge them with the mind, and bring the mind to a standstill. Then the Inner Power will manifest within us, the mind will merge into that Power and become its very form. The force driving the senses will be withdrawn, and they will become powerless.

Some people say, "I will give up the sense pleasures one by one." But, instead of giving them up, they make them stronger. Somebody says, "I will not eat this delicious dish." Friend, for how many days can you keep this up? After a short time, you will remember that taste, and you stealthily enjoy whatever food you have sworn off. Some people say, "I won't go to see this. I won't look at that." Then all of a sudden, the thought

of those things comes in the mind, and their resolution falters. But the most beautiful and attractive Power of all lies within us. When we behold that inner Light of God, then all of the senses cool down automatically and abandon their inclination toward the outer things.

O my Beloved, please shower Your grace, that I may taste the Nectar of the Guru's Naam.

Therefore, the disciple makes a prayer before the Lord, before the Guru: "This is not in my control. This is not in my power. O, Lord, please be merciful and grant me your blessing." Therefore, we all pray, "O my Guru, shower grace, shower grace." If this matter were in our hands, if it could be achieved through the intellect, then we would have already attained it through our own cleverness. But cleverness doesn't work here; the more clever we are, the further we stray away from our goal. Here only grace succeeds. When that grace descends, both within and without, only then can we receive this gift.

The body is a beautiful city, where the Nectar of the Lord is traded.

He says that the Naam of the One Lord dwells in this body. This Naam is the inner Nectar or Amrit, and it is the only beverage fit for the Soul to drink. Everything else is garbage. God has placed all abundance within this human body.

In the city marketplace there are big emporiums, and shops, and stalls; every type of merchandise is being offered for sale there. But it is up to the customers what they want to buy. Peppers, sugar beets, and potatoes are all available. Sweet, sour, bitter, anything and everything—according to your taste. Whatever the customers are looking for, they can purchase.

In like manner, when we get this human body, some people ask for a spouse, or children, or family and relations. All of these things are available. Some people say they want fields, orchards, houses, this and that. It is possible to acquire such material possessions. Somebody says they want to become a minister, a prime minister, a king, or an emperor. You can achieve any of these positions. Someone says, "I'm not interested in worldly things. I want to rule all the heavens." Through performing the austerities and repetitions, you can accomplish this also. Someone says, "I want to become Brahma." You can reach this goal. All blessings are available in this human body. And if someone says, "I don't desire anything. I want You and You alone. I want only Truth," then in this human body, you can receive the gift of the Lord's True Name—Sat Naam.

But what you desire is all according to your fate. Your intellect is shaped by your fate; it is shaped by your past karmas. Not everyone comes into this world with the same intellect, with the same understanding. What we ask for, we are given. A lake has an abundance of water. Someone may come to the shore and fill a small pitcher. Another person may fill a large jug. Someone may plunge in for a bath and someone else may not take home even one drop of that water. What you take away is according to the capacity of your vessel. Whatever you desire, you will be given. Some people ask for the things of this world, and they receive them. But the devotees of the Lord, ask only for the Lord Himself—and they receive Him. We can obtain all of these things in the human body.

When the moment arrives to leave this human body, then no more time remains to ask for anything. And when you go into the lower bodies, you can only eat and drink. Food, procreation, fear, sleep—these are the only things available on the lower rungs of creation. In the lower forms, you can

only reap the fruit of your past karmas; your course is set. The Naam of the Lord resides within the human body. The customers of the Lord's Name are the true devotees, and they are granted that Naam. But all the others remain empty-handed. Tulsi Das tells us:

This world holds all the treasures,
but the unlucky ones gain nothing.

The fortunate ones strive for spirituality, but whoever runs after the things of this world will remain bound here. "Where your desires lie, there you also will dwell."

By serving the True Guru, you obtain the most precious jewels and priceless rubies.

These jewels are of inestimable value and, if you want to acquire them, first you should accept the Guru's seva. As you go on doing the seva of the Guru, you will become a buyer of these priceless gems. Whoever does the Guru's seva becomes the form of the Lord. There is no difference between the True Sevadar and the Lord. By doing the seva, you merge into the Lord. But as long as your within is filled with "I and mine," as long as you are controlled by egotism and pride, you are not worthy of doing the seva.

In one place, Basaveshwar tells us that until you are established in the Truth within, whatever outer seva you do is just like the work of coolies. Whatever work the coolie does, he receives the wages for that work immediately and puts that money into his pocket. When you board the train, the coolie carries your suitcase, trunk, and bedroll and places them by your seat. Then he takes his wages and departs.

So, in the same way, until you have become firm in your devotion, all your outer seva is like the work of the coolie. You do the seva and expect your reward then and there. Such

seva does not cleanse your within; it is just a business transaction. Priceless jewels lie within us. How can we obtain them? Through seva to the Guru. We understand seva as something ordinary, but true seva is the Form of the Lord.

The True Guru is Inaccessible; the True Lord lies beyond our reach.
Becoming like the ocean, offer your devotion.

The Satguru is inaccessible. He is unfathomable. He is the All-Owner. Doing His devotion, you should become an ocean of Love. Then the Lord will manifest within you of Himself. This is the way of devotion.

Take pity, O Lord. Understanding me as the poor rainbird, place the raindrop of Naam in my mouth.

He says, "O Lord, please be merciful. You shower grace on the rainbird during Swati Nakshatra (Libra) when You place the swati raindrop into its waiting beak to quench its thirst. In the same way, please take pity on me as well. Considering me to be that rainbird, drop the nectar of Naam into my parched mouth and then I will be at peace. This is not a difficult thing for You, but it is life to me."

The dyestuff of Naam is a deep crimson color; I have surrendered my mind to the Guru, the expert dyer.
Those who are drenched in the color of the Lord, sip the Ambrosial Nectar again and again.

You may call it the All-Pervading Shabd, the Naad, the Akashbani, or the Sat Naam, but when you merge into that Celestial Sound, you will become drenched in the Amrit—the Nectar of Naam. Drink deeply of that Amrit within and

quench your thirst. This Amrit does not come from outside. Many people bring amrit from outside. Friend, this is not the amrit that you buy at the grocer's shop. You drink some sugar dissolved in water and say, "I have tasted amrit." But this is not the true Amrit; the real Amrit lies within you. When your attention merges into the Shabd Naam, then the rain of Amrit showers down. When once you drink that Amrit, all fear of death will leave your heart—this is the proof of the real Amrit. That Amrit holds the Power to free you from death.

If you placed before them all the gold mined from the ocean and the seven continents of the earth,

The seven continents and the oceans of this outer world are full of priceless treasures. Similarly, within the human body there are nine divisions and seven islands. The nine divisions are the nine outer doors of the body, and the seven islands are the seven chakras.[2] When your thoughts become stilled and your attention rises above these nine doors and seven chakras, then you will unite with the Naam and obtain the true Inner Treasure.

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2 The macrocosm is in the microcosm. Sach Khand, the Realm of Truth, is reflected down through the creation, all the way to the *pind* or body. Here, Baba Somanath Ji mentions the *sat dvīp* —"seven islands"— as the seven chakras (six in the *Pind* and the seventh in the *And*) and the *nau khand* —"nine divisions"— as the nine openings of the body.

And because the lower creation reflects the higher creation, in other contexts, those terms, *sat dvīp* and *nau khand* are also used to describe features of the higher realms. For instance, the *sat dvīp*, or "seven islands," besides indicating the seven chakra centers, can also refer to the seven islands of the material creation described in the Puranas, including *jambūdvīp*—the location of our physical earth. The *nau khand* or nine divisions, besides referring to the nine doors of the body, can also indicate the nine divisions of the universe from the nether worlds up to Sach Khand (Guru Nanak details these as five *khand*s in the *Jap Jī*, including the four regions from Brahm downward—*Pātāl*, *Pind*, *And* and *Brahmānd*—in the realm of *Dharm Khand*.)

**The humble servants of God would not covet it.
From the Lord, they request only His divine Nectar.**

The true devotees of the Lord do not ask for the eight mountains or seven oceans or any other outer things of this world. They say, "O Lord, please give me your Naam." The people who ask for worldly possessions are never satisfied. No matter how much of the Lord's bounty they may receive, still their desires go on increasing. They always crave for more and more. It is only your Naam that destroys all desires. Guru Arjan Dev tells us:

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.

He says, "O Lord, what can I ask for other than you? Whatever I ask for will bring sorrow upon sorrow. Before I came to you, I was carrying a load of suffering on my head. If I only ask for more suffering now, what will I gain from such prayers? Please grant me the contentment of Naam, that takes away the hunger of my mind." Your Naam is the Power that grants contentment. Shower your grace on me, and grant me that Naam. Destroy the desires and cravings of my mind.

The heretics and worldly people remain forever hungry, and they continually cry out in their hunger.

The heretics, the manmukhs, and the evil-doers are constantly hungry for the things of this world. Sleeping or awake, they are always dogged by their desires. "I need this. I need that." They are always after food, drink, wealth, property, children, family, relatives. The mind has them firmly in its grip. No

matter how much they acquire, they always crave more and more. If they gain the rulership of the whole world, they want to go to Lord Indra's heavens. They are not satisfied; they are still praying for more. It is only by following the Path of spirituality that we can become free of desire. If even after becoming devotees of the Lord, we are still begging for things of this world, what can we achieve in spirituality? What we ask for, we will receive.

They rush on for thousands of miles, mad in their love of Maya.

Day and night, they are rushing after Maya, and there is no tally of how many thousands of miles they have run. They are fully absorbed in this blind pursuit. They are like the deer who has musk hidden in its navel. When it smells that musk, it thinks the fragrance is coming from somewhere outside. It chases after that musk and dies of thirst in the pursuit, gaining nothing.

In the same way, running after outer things, the worldly people grow old. And still, the desire within them is not satisfied: "I still need more." Finally, the body becomes weak; they grow tired, their hands and feet wither; then they can only sit and suffer. At that time, they pray: "O Lord, now my life is over, please let me die." Even at this time, they are still asking the Lord to fulfill their desires. So, once again, the Lord answers their prayer, and they leave the body.

In this way, everyone chases after the sense objects and keeps asking God to fulfill their desires. When you look closely, you will see that this is the condition of the whole world. It is said that the one who has no desires is the emperor of emperors. The beggar who has no desires is the king of kings. But the one who is still asking for things, even after

becoming a king, is the biggest beggar of all because his within is full of cravings.

The Lord's humble servants are exalted and sublime. What praise can we bestow upon them?

What praise can you offer to the True Devotee of the Lord? Within and without, He is the form of the Lord. There is no worldly comparison to suggest; there is no outer example to draw on. He is like the Lord, and the Lord is like Him.

Many people place the obstacle of family duties between themselves and God. They say, "This is the dharma of the householder. I have to do my duty. Accepting my responsibilities, I am trying to perform them properly." Friend, what were you before you were born? Were you a householder? Were you a renunciate? It is only as you grew up that you gradually became identified with the drama of this world and adopted these roles. If you have become a householder, then you should fulfill your responsibilities. But your soul is not a householder or a renunciate or an ascetic. You are the Self-Existing Power. The role you take up in this world and the duties connected with it will not help you meet the Lord. Your first duty, your real duty is to realize the Lord and become one with Him. And when you surrender your individual identity and become the form of the Almighty Lord, then the Lord Himself will take care of all your works. Entrust everything to Him.

Narsi Mehta lived in Gujarat, in the village of Junagarh. He would go into the village, play his tambura and sing songs in praise of the Lord. He had young children, and whatever people would offer to him, he would take home for the upkeep of his family. Day and night, he remained immersed in the love of the Lord and went on singing His praises. This was his only

work. When his son grew up, the time came to arrange for his marriage. In those days, it was the custom for the parents to arrange their children's marriages. So, it was the job of the family priest (a Brahmin) and the barber to find a suitable girl and to negotiate the marriage settlement with the head of her family. Nowadays, young people have a more active role in choosing their partners, but, even today, this is still the parents' responsibility in Uttar Pradesh and many other parts of India. So, the family priest and the barber arranged for Narsi Mehta's son to marry the daughter of a very wealthy businessman, and wedding preparations got underway.

But no one was willing to accompany the groom's procession to the bride's house, because Narsi Mehta was very poor. He didn't even have a cart or bullocks to pull it. So, Narsi Mehta went to one farmer living in the village and asked if he could borrow a bullock. The farmer told him, "I have a bullock you can use, but he is blind in one eye." And Narsi said, "That will do. Please let me borrow him." Another farmer said, "I can lend you a bullock, but he is lame in one leg." Nasri replied, "Yes, please let me use him." He also managed to borrow one old, broken-down cart. Then Narsi Mehta loaded his tambura into the cart, and singing the praise of the Lord, he set out with his wife and son. No one else went along with them.

Now, in the heavens, Lord Vishnu saw all these arrangements, and he became worried. He thought, "Narsi Mehta is my devotee, and this is his condition. When he arrives at the bride's house for the wedding of his son, he will be disgraced." Lord Vishnu then ordered Kuber, the Lord of Wealth, and his assembled votaries to go down to earth and join the groom's procession. So, all these celestial guests proceeded along the way with Narsi, singing, and dancing, and playing on their musical instruments. They formed a procession of such splendor

that when the wealthy businessman looked out and saw them approaching, he became worried that he had nothing prepared to entertain a retinue of such magnificence. The wedding rites were performed, all the wedding gifts were exchanged, and, when all the ceremonies were completed, Narsi Mehta set out for home with his procession. Along the way, Kuber and the demigods all returned to heaven, and Narsi Mehta continued home with his family, driving the broken-down cart that he had borrowed.

In this way, if you become His, then He will become yours. And if you don't become His, your complaints will continue: "I do the repetition. But I have some pain. And I'm having another problem…" This and that. Friend, all this disturbance is coming from your mind. If you become the form of the Lord, He will take care of all your works without your asking. Everyone remembers the Lord at the level of the mind. Everyone is involved in this kind of devotion—no one is without it. As soon as you need to accomplish some worldly work, then you remember the Lord and repeat His Name. To remember the Lord when you are in need is one thing, but to merge into the Lord and become His very form is something different.

Nothing can equal the Glory of the Lord's Name.
Servant Nanak says, "Please shower grace on me."

He says, "There is nothing as exalted and sublime as your Name. O Lord, have mercy on me and grant me Naam. I don't ask for anything else."

Therefore, describing the greatness of the Guru, Kabir Sahib says, "When Satguru showered His grace upon me—that Reality which was beyond the grasp of my intellect; which was beyond my finite powers of perception; which is glorified endlessly by the Vedas and Shastras and other holy scriptures—He gave me an experience of that Reality. There is no one in this world like my Satguru; in all the created world, in all the divisions and grand divisions of the universe, He has no equal.

—Baba Somanath

5

The Greatness of the Guru

Satguru has showered such grace on me that the unknown has become known.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He tells us that there is no deity equal to the Guru because all the other gods and goddesses only reward us for the good deeds and righteous acts that we have performed, but if we wish to achieve liberation, we must go to the feet of the Guru. Therefore, describing the greatness of the Guru, Kabir Sahib says, "When Satguru showered His grace upon me—that Reality which was beyond the grasp of my intellect; which was beyond my finite powers of perception; which is glorified endlessly by the Vedas and Shastras and other holy scriptures—He gave me an experience of that Reality. There is no one in this world like my Satguru; in all the created world, in all the divisions and grand divisions of the universe, He has no equal. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says:

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.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Satguru soi dayā kari dīnhā...*

Kabir Sahib tells us: "There is no harm in declaring that the Guru is greater than God because for millions of yugas and countless lifetimes, God resided in my heart, and even now—from the time of my birth up to the present moment—He has been the support of my life. But that Hidden Lord never spoke to me. He never told me that He was within me or that He was caring for me. He never told me how to become freed from the clutches of Kal. He never made Himself known to me at all.

But when the Satguru showered His mercy and grace upon me, He made me contemplate on the Conscious Power that had been hidden from my intellect. He lifted the veil, and I saw that the Lord was nearer than the nearest, living in my very heart of hearts."

Without feet, you walk; without wings, you fly; without a beak, you receive nourishment.

What kind of grace did He shower? How can I describe the mercy He showed me? Whoever takes birth in this world will see through the outer eyes, hear through the outer ears, eat and drink with the outer mouth, walk with the outer feet, and perform all their deeds in this world using this physical body. But when my Satguru described to me that incomprehensible state and inspired me to contemplate within, what did He say? "Without eyes, you will see. Without feet, you will walk. Without wings, you will fly. Without ears, you will hear." When my Satguru taught me the inner technique, the impossible became a reality.

He says: "Without a mouth, you receive nourishment." The jiva imbibes the life-giving nectar within, and the soul becomes satisfied. Satguru opens the way within.

Without eyes, you see; without ears, you hear.

To see without eyes, to hear without ears—this is an inner experience. Guru Nanak tells us:

To see without eyes; to hear without ears.

All the Saints teach the same thing. No matter how hard you may try, you will not be able to have the darshan of that Inner Lord using these physical eyes. Ramdas Swami says:

The eyes of flesh cannot behold that Inner Light;
Only the eye of Knowledge can perceive it.

He cannot be seen with these eyes of flesh. Only when you look with the inner eye of Knowledge will you behold Him. In the same way, you will hear without ears. Through the physical ears, you hear the sounds of the outer words. But the inner Dhun is resounding of itself, and that Sound is heard without ears. We hear outer sounds through the physical ears, but if the inner Sound did not exist, our sense organs would not function—our very life breath would cease.

Where there is no sun or moon, no day or night—
my soul is engrossed in that realm.

Now, He says that in that realm where there is no outer moon or sun, where there is no outer light at all, there I have anchored my attention. I have realized that the Power of Light that illumines both sun and moon is the very Power enlivening my soul. The Satguru has revealed the method of making the soul still and contemplating on that Conscious Power within, and through that practice, He has liberated the jivas. This is

the meaning of the word "Guru." The Guru is not a mere physical body.

**Without eating, I have feasted on sweet ambrosia;
without drinking water, I have quenched my thirst.**

We assuage our hunger in a shower of sweet ambrosia. How can such a thing be possible? And without drinking water, our thirst is quenched. These are the hidden secrets of the inner realms.

*Slothful repeating Ram Naam, but greedy for every meal.
Tulsi says: Such a person is cursed, over and over again.*

As soon as we people wake up, we want something to eat. We get up in the morning and have chai, coffee, idli, dosa. We eat our fill and then go out. But what nourishment does Satguru distribute within? The nectar of Naam. If we would drink that nectar, then every cell of our body would become infused with His life force. We would achieve complete peace and tranquility. In that state, no desire remains. Love of the body vanishes; the weight of unconsciousness is lifted. Becoming the form of the One Light—both without and within—we merge into the Shabd. That life-giving nectar is already flowing within us in abundance, but it is only through the grace of the Satguru that we can obtain it. We eat all kinds of sweets and other tasty dishes outwardly; then, we are overtaken by drowsiness and fall into deep slumber. Trapped in the storm of falsehood, we remain bound to this world and throw away our precious human birth. This cannot be called spirituality.

**In that delight, we find the fullness of happiness.
How can we tell of our joy?**

In that realm, we are filled with delight and bliss, hope and

love. The wonder of this true happiness lies beyond the feeble capacity of human words. The Vedas proclaim: "*Neti, Neti!* He is not this! He is not that." Even those sacred texts lack the evocative power to express that Inner Reality. True happiness lies within each one of us, and it is the duty of every Satsangi to dive deep into that ocean of Ineffable Bliss within. It is only to achieve this exalted state that we have taken initiation from the Perfect Guru.

Kabir says: "The Guru is great beyond words, and great is the good fortune of the disciple."

Then Kabir Sahib tells us: "Blessed, blessed is such a Guru. His Glory is beyond description." But to go into the shelter of such an exalted One, the disciple must also have great good fortune. What is required? Only if we can sacrifice body, mind, and wealth to Him, only if we cherish His teaching in our hearts are we worthy to be called His disciples. Guru Teg Bahadur speaks in a similar vein:

The servant Nanak says: "From among millions,
only a few rare ones get the meditation of the Lord."

Out of millions, only a handful can be called true disciples. All the rest fall short of the mark. If we do not live up to His teachings, we are still on probation. The true disciples cherish the Guru's teachings in their hearts. Daily they devote themselves to the meditation of Naam and experience the ecstasy within. This is the true meaning of discipleship.

Whoever has brought their mind under control and has merged it with the power of Truth, that person has conquered the world. Until the connection has been established between the mind and the Truth, the mind's unsteadiness and volatility will not be eradicated.

—Baba Somanath

6

Victory Over the Mind

O Mother, my mind won't come under my control.[1]

This is the bani of Guru Teg Bahadur Singh Ji, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs. He says that the mind is a mighty power. All of Brahmand is the image of the mind—Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, the 33 million gods and goddesses, the rishis, the munis, yogis, and gyanis all spring from the mind.

Mind is the Creator of the universe.

All of the creation manifested through the power of the mind. If anything existed in this creation that was not infused with the power of the mind, we could not perceive it, and it would hold no attraction for us. So, whoever is under the sway of the mind creates karmas in the realm of Maya, and the impressions in our heart from those karmas exert a strong influence over us. And at the time of death, weighed down by the force of those karmic impressions, the soul has to go again into the cycle of transmigration. For millions of yugas, for millions of lifetimes, the mind has pursued us relentlessly.

1 Guru Teg Bahadur, *Māi man mero bas nāhi...*

The basic principle of all spiritual endeavor is to still the mind. To still the mind, the yogis have practiced contemplation and pranayama. The rishis and munis recite the scriptures and perform the austerities, the gyanis seek after knowledge, while the priestly class remains engaged in rites and rituals.

The mind has created all the Vedas, and Shastras, and Puranas, and other holy scriptures. If you think over your own life, from childhood to the present, you will see that you have been following the dictates of the mind. You have passed your whole life swaying in the constant fluctuations of the mind. For this reason, Guru Teg Bahadur says, "O Mother, I have tried many methods to still my mind, but I have no control over it at all." Guru Nanak has also emphasized the importance of controlling the mind. He tells us:

Victory over the mind is victory over the world.

Whoever has brought their mind under control and has merged it with the power of Truth, that person has conquered the world. Until the connection has been established between the mind and the Truth, the mind's unsteadiness and volatility will not be eradicated.

Night and day, it runs after poison.
How can I restrain it?

Day and night, waves of equivocation and uncertainty arise in my mind. Running after the pleasures of the world becomes my whole aim. The mind is spurred on by the senses; becoming enslaved to the sense objects, it creates karmas in the field of action. I have tried many methods to rein it in, but the mind rushes forward and will not be checked.

I listen to the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Smritis, but cannot hold that teaching in my heart even for an instant.

The four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas, the six Shastras, and the hundred and eight Upanishads teach us to restrain the mind. But the mind does not gain permanent peace through reading those scriptures. As long as you go on reading, the mind understands and remains absorbed in those teachings. At that time, it seems that you have become free of the worldly pleasures. It seems that right understanding and Truth have taken root in your within. It seems your heart has become pure. But as soon as you close that book, all that understanding vanishes into thin air. The outer attachment is still as unshakable as before, and the mind remains caught up in the feverish activity of the world.

I cast a covetous eye on the wealth and wives of others; my life is passing by uselessly.

Constantly, you are thinking of other people's wealth and other people's wives. From the time you rise in the morning till evening falls, you stir up a storm of falsehood. You keep trying to collect more and more wealth, and you indulge in unchaste thoughts about other people's wives. Your whole life passes in this pursuit, and you don't even try to realize your True Form. You listen to many Satsangs, have the darshan of the Satguru and read the sacred writings. But the mind does not possess the strength to remain still and steady within, because, for millions of yugas and lifetimes, it has been a slave to the sense pleasures. Superficially, it may listen, and, for the time being, it may understand, but as soon as it leaves the Satsang, then its capriciousness and instability surge back in full force.

Intoxicated with Maya, I have gone mad and do not understand the True Knowledge.

The mind has become so intoxicated with Maya that it has lost all wisdom and right understanding. The mind can only do one work at a time. Either it can practice the devotion, or it can enjoy the pleasures. It can become absorbed in the Lord's Name, or it can remain trapped in the snare of worldly karma. These are the only two possibilities. Even if someone claims to be able to do two things at once, still it is not possible. A person heading eastward cannot go to the West. And a person heading westward cannot travel to the East. Either you can run after worldly attachments, or you can still the mind and merge into the Lord. If you try to do both, you will not succeed. As long as the mind remains in motion, it has no stability. It cannot contact that immovable Power and become immovable itself.

What is the nature of the Almighty Lord? He is One. He is Inaccessible and Unfathomable. He never takes birth; He never dies. Describing that Unchanging Power, Guru Nanak says:

He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
and shall exist forevermore.

That Power is Truth and Truth alone. Some people conceive of God as Brahma or Par Brahm. Some envision God in the forms of the many gods and goddesses, imagining this one looks like this and that one looks like that. But the Power of the Almighty Lord is only One, not many. That which is seen is transitory, but that which is Unseen is Eternal. The visible things of this world, we can see with our eyes. But that

Unseen Power, which permeates the creation of five elements, cannot be perceived with these outer eyes of flesh.

As long as the mind is controlled by the outer forces, you can never bring it to a standstill, even if you try thousands of different methods. Only the Grace of the Guru can quiet the mind. When the Guru becomes gracious, the mind gets focused within, and the attention contacts the True Naam—then the mind's activity in the world comes to an end. No other method works.

The Immaculate Lord dwells deep within my heart, but I did not know His secret.

That Power is only One, no matter what words you use to describe it. You can call it the Power of the Soul or the Light of God or the Supporting Power of the body. Within you, that conscious Power enlivens the breaths. As long as those breaths are flowing in and out of the body, they are the support of the body; you can fulfill the give and take of your worldly works, and you can practice the spiritual sadhana. But when that conscious Power withdraws from the breaths, even for an instant, then the breaths come to an end, and nothing more can be accomplished.

Niranjan is a name of the Lord, and that supporting Power within the body is also called Niranjan. "*Nir*" means "without"; and "*anjan*" is lampblack—something that stains. "Niranjan" means the One without stain—the Power that is free from Maya. That Power pervades the entire creation; it is present everywhere and in everybody, but we do not understand its greatness. Why? Until the mind introverts and becomes fixed within, we can know nothing of that Power—even if we try thousands of methods, even if we endlessly recite prayers and

mantras, even if we read countless sacred scriptures. Guru Nanak has spoken eloquently on this subject:

O Nanak, if I had shelves and shelves
filled with holy scriptures,
and if I read and recited each one with love,
If my ink were inexhaustible,
and if my pen raced like the wind,
I could not value You at Your true worth.
How can I describe the Greatness of Your Naam?

Many people lay great emphasis on reading the holy books. But, no matter how much you might read, what can you hope to achieve?

When I came into the refuge of the Sadhu, all my evil-mindedness was destroyed.

Even if we wander in the four directions with single-minded devotion, still we do not find Him anywhere until we come into the refuge of the Sadhu. And the Sadhus tell us that within us are two paths—*durmati*, the path of evil deeds, and *sumati*, the path of righteousness. *Durmati* takes us far away from the Lord's Naam; *sumati* leads us to the Lord Himself. On this subject, Tulsi Das tells us:

Where the thoughts are good,
prosperity flourishes.
Where the thoughts are bad,
they bring misfortune in their wake.

When we follow the path of righteousness, when our thoughts are good, then the Lord showers all spiritual blessings on us. Righteousness is the form of prosperity. When we follow the

path of sin, we are visited with calamity. When we become entangled in evil deeds, we meet with one difficulty after another. Therefore, He tells us that when we go into the refuge of the Sadhu, He doesn't pull something out of His pocket and give it to us. He doesn't put something in from outside. The positive and negative forces are already present within us. When the negative becomes ascendant, then the jiva comes under the control of Maya. Therefore, the Sadhus inspire us to pursue the Truth within us and to abandon anything that takes us away from it. They guide us on the Path to the Almighty Lord, and they connect us with Truth. Then, by practicing the meditation on Shabd, we can attain liberation. This is the only Path that leads to the Lord—there is no other.

Nanak says, I contemplated on the *chintāmani*, the wish-granting gem, and severed the noose of death.

He says, "I contemplated on the *chintāmani*—the wish-granting gem." "*Chintā"* means remembering or thinking about, and "*mani"* means gem. So that gem (*mani*) is the Light, the inner Power of Naam; by constantly remembering (*chintā*) that Power, that Light, you yourself become filled with Light. As you think, so you become. When the mind contemplates on that radiant Light, it becomes the form of Light, and all the chains of karma fall off of themselves.

We are just like the dancing monkey. First, the monkey trainer teaches the monkey to dance. And if the monkey makes a mistake, the stick is ready. Out of fear of the stick the monkey performs. It even puts a jug of water on its head and dances. It hops back and forth and turns flips at the trainer's commands. Then afterwards, folding its paws in greeting to the people who have gathered to watch the show, the monkey begs for money, collects the coins, and gives them to its master. Out of fear, that poor dumb animal endures such a servitude.

—Baba Somanath

7

Like the Dancing Monkey

Who can I tell about the restlessness of my mind?
Engrossed in greed, running in the ten directions,
it clings to hopes of acquiring wealth.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Teg Bahadur Sahib, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs. Describing the restlessness, the worry and the suffering of the mind, He says that we constantly engage our mind in useless, meaningless pursuits. We race headlong after worthless objects. We reap no reward, but still, we become ever more engrossed in the things of this world. Sometimes we are possessed by greed, sometimes by the desires and cravings. Sometimes we squander our time in the praise and criticism of others. Always our mind remains mired in the morass of this outer world.

We did not learn to cling to the worldly things from any Purana or Shastra. No one needed to teach us. This attachment is arising spontaneously from within. When we take birth, we bring these inclinations with us from our past incarnations. They are based on our past karmas. Some people say: "Who has seen the past, and who can foretell the future?" They raise a lot of objections and try to avoid the subject. But

1 Guru Teg Bahadur, *Birathā kahau kaun siu man kī...*

think about it. When a child takes birth, after just a few days, when we put something in its hand and try to take it back, the child won't let go. It hangs on stubbornly to the object and starts to cry. Friend, who taught the child to act like this? It is all coming from the past; the child brought these propensities along with it when it came into this new incarnation. These are the sanskaras from past deeds.

And so, in this way, under the influence of impressions and inclinations from previous incarnations, the mind constantly remains entangled in delusion and wastes the precious time allotted for this human birth. We become ever more ensnared in greed, lust, anger, desires, cravings—and so it rolls on.

For the sake of pleasure, you endure great suffering; you have to serve one master after another.

Just for a moment's pleasure, we carry a mountain of suffering on our heads. Our whole lifespan is used up pursuing the pleasures, for which we have to pay a heavy penalty. In this way, our whole life goes wasted. How much servitude, how much indignity, how much humiliation we have to endure. We are at the beck and call of others; nothing is in our control. We accept this servitude and remain in it for life.

We are just like the dancing monkey. First, the monkey trainer teaches the monkey to dance. And if the monkey makes a mistake, the stick is ready. Out of fear of the stick the monkey performs. It even puts a jug of water on its head and dances. It hops back and forth and turns flips at the trainer's commands. Then afterwards, folding its paws in greeting to the people who have gathered to watch the show, the monkey begs for money, collects the coins, and gives them to its master. Out of fear, that poor dumb animal endures such a servitude.

But what about our condition? We are so much under the sway of the pleasures that we have become enslaved to them. Day and night, we remain bound and have become the very form of the pleasures. If we were to dedicate ourselves to the seva of the Guru and the Lord with that much devotion and one-pointed attention, our cycle of births and deaths would be finished. But what auspicious karmas have we done in the past to make us fit for such devotion? We do not even understand what devotion means. Now when someone says that it is time for Satsang, instead of attending, everyone heads back to their village. Everyone is going; no one is coming.

If we are employed in some worldly work—say we are assigned to the night shift at the mill—we will go there on time with no difficulty and take up our post. But in the path of spirituality, when we are told to get up in the morning and meditate for two or three hours, then we become lazy. We don't sit for meditation. We feel drowsy and, making some excuse or other, we lay back down and go to sleep. Only a foolhardy fellow would report for the night shift and then lay down to sleep beside his machine—he knows he would be punished or even thrown out. But in spirituality, we think that no one will ask for our account in the court of the Lord, so we just let the time pass by. What can we gain from practices performed with wavering faith? We will receive our reward according to our deeds.

You wander from door to door like a dog;
you pay no heed to the meditation of the Lord.

Just like a dog wanders from door to door, we also visit every door. We touch the feet of each person we meet and say, "Yes, yes!" to their every remark. We bow and scrape, and we fold

our hands in obeisance, all to further our worldly ambitions and fulfill our desires. If we look at the situation honestly, we will see that there is no relationship between us and all these other people. But what can be done? We have sold ourselves into servitude, but we have to become independent of the world. If we engage in the meditation of the Lord whole-heartedly, then who can have any control over us? But this is easier said than done; we will have to bear the reactions of the karmas we have already created.

We have been searching outside, but the Lord is not to be found there. We have chanted "Ram, Ram" or "Radhaswami, Radhaswami" or "Satguru, Satguru" at the appointed times. My friend, what can be accomplished through mere words? This is a matter of direct inner experience. We pay lip service to the meditation but have never practiced it.

You waste this human life in vain;
others laugh at you, but you feel no shame.

Even the gods and goddesses are waiting and longing for this beautiful human body. But after receiving this precious human birth, we are squandering it in useless pursuits. We care nothing for decorum and correct behavior. We have no shame. We say, "Everyone acts this way, so who has any right to laugh at me?"

Nanak says: Why don't you sing the praise of the
Lord and remove the evils from this body?

Therefore, Guru Teg Bahadur says, "Why don't you praise the Lord and do the meditation? Why don't you give up the evil tendencies? Remove all the sins from the body, and

remember the Lord." As long as our within is filled with these evil tendencies, no matter how much effort we put in, we will always fall short of the mark. We are frittering our life away. Inside we are one thing, but outside we are showing something different—and time is running out. What can we achieve like this?

Instantly, the Grace of the Satguru flowed over me. In just a moment, the stream of Shabd cleansed away the stains accumulated over millions of yugas and millions of lifetimes. For me, there is no more birth, no more death. In a moment, all my soul's connection with this mortal world was severed forever.

—Baba Somanath

8

No Washerman Equal to the Guru

There is no washerman equal to the Guru, for He cleanses the cloth of the surat.[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Swami Ji Maharaj. Since time immemorial, when the jivas first came into this mortal world, they have endured the suffering of the 84 lakh life forms, trapped in the wheel of birth and death, and the only Power that can rescue them from their plight is the Guru. In this world, there is no other remedy for stilling the restless mind and scrubbing away the encrusted filth of age upon age. Rites and rituals, worship of gods and goddesses, prayers and recitations, daily ablutions and offerings, yogic sacrifices, mantras and austerities—all of these are part and parcel of the mind. The outer ceremonies and practices are created by the gross mind; supernatural powers and miracle working arise from the subtle mind and merging into the form of Brahm[2] is inspired by

1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Dhubiya guru sam aur na koy*...

2 One *Māhavākya*, or "Great Saying," from the Upanishads states "*aham brahmāsmi*"—"I am Brahm"—expressing the unity of the individual soul (*ātmā*) with the Universal Power (Brahm) that permeates all of creation.

the causal mind. But the soul is a resident of Sat Lok-Sach Khand by nature—a denizen of Sat Naam. It is only when that pure, shining soul entered the body of five elements and permeated every cell of the physical form, that it became a jiva, or embodied soul.



Baba Somanath with "Pathi Ji," Shri Vyanktesh Shanbag

Weighed down by the karmas from ages past, the mind-ridden jiva is covered in filth and defiled by stain upon stain. And each impure current sets in motion the undulations of Maya. Moment after moment, waves of thought arise in the heart, and the motivating power behind all of these thoughts is the entrenched sense of "I and mine." Because of this I-ness, the

thoughts go on churning, from morning till nightfall, many lodging in the storehouse of memory, many sinking into the depths of forgetfulness, each one shaping the doings of the heart in its own image.

There is no soap in this world that can cleanse away the filth of the mind. In the outer way, if a coal merchant or someone who works with greasy machines brings their clothes to the washerman, he will tell them, "Take your dirty clothes away, and wash them in the ocean. I can't accept them, because if I try to wash them, the oil and grime from your clothes will spoil all the other people's clothes." In this same way, the cloth of the mind is so dirty that it has become pitch black. Who would be willing to wash such filthy cloth? This blackness is heaped up within everyone. Outside the body looks okay, but within, the mind is as black as coal. What washerman can we find to clean it?

You can take your outer clothes to some washing company to have them cleaned, but there is no washing company for the mind. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji tells us that the only Washerman who can cleanse the dirt of the mind is the Guru. The word "Guru" does not mean a mere human being. The Guru is not just a person who gives out religious teachings. The Guru dwells within us; He is the Power of Truth. That Power of Truth has been referred to variously as Guru, Naam, or Lord in different places.

Now, two Powers dwell within us. One is the Power of Truth, the Guru Power; and one is the power of falsehood, the mind. Until we meet the True Washerman—the Guru—the dirt of the mind cannot be removed, and the dazzling whiteness of the soul cannot shine forth. Therefore, He says that for cleaning the mind, there is no washerman in this world equal to the Guru. You do not have to pay Him for His services—He

accepts no fee. He washes away the dirt of the mind free of charge. He washes the cloth of the surat sparkling clean and makes it brand new.

He removes all the dirt and makes it spotlessly pure.
What can I say about the greatness of such a Guru?

Now, He has washed away all the stains and filth of egotism. How can I praise such a Guru? What can I say of His Glory? His Power lies beyond the limits of language. No matter how much I may sing of His magnificence, my praise will always fall short. Kabir Sahib says:

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.

I behold Him seated on the high dais;
flying upward, I bow at His holy feet.

The Satguru sits enthroned on a high dais, and I have gone into His shelter. I have laid the cloth of my soul at His feet.

The stream of Shabd removes all my stains and sins and imparts a brilliant, white radiance to the cloth of my soul.

Instantly, the Grace of the Satguru flowed over me. In just a moment, the stream of Shabd cleansed away the stains accumulated over millions of yugas and millions of life-times. For me, there is no more birth, no more death. In

a moment, all my soul's connection with this mortal world was severed forever.

Becoming a true lover, the soul merges into the Shabd and beholds the hidden secret of Radhaswami.

When the soul merges into the True Love of the Shabd, then it becomes the form of Shabd. Then the hidden experience of the Lord is revealed. This is not a matter of empty talk. Outwardly, your words may fly on the wings of imagination, you may impart wisdom gleaned from sacred scriptures, or you may relate colorful stories from the lives of the great souls, but without the True Inner Knowledge it is all a pretentious masquerade.

Illusion is neither truth nor falsehood. Caught in this ambiguity, we perceive the world through inference; all the jivas pass their lives understanding this illusion as reality. We think, "What if this happens to me tomorrow? In the future, my condition may become like this. My children may become like that. And then I will do such and such for them." But this is all a game of "what if"? It is all inference and guesswork; we have no idea what will actually happen tomorrow. And all the world is caught up in flights of fancy and speculation. We waste our precious lives in these useless daydreams and remain in a state of ignorance. This ignorance is called illusion.

—Baba Somanath

9

Why Form the False Friendship?

O Surat! I know you have been unhappy here, since the day you forgot the Shabd and struck up a friendship with the mind.[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Radha Swami Ji. He says, "O soul! You have been suffering since time immemorial. You have brought all this suffering on yourself through your friendship with the mind, and now you have become the form of the mind itself." Through that friendship with the mind, which is a destructible thing, you have become the form of Maya. By constant association with that which is destructible, you are destroying your life.

You are overflowing with desires, and those desires remain unfulfilled. And because your desires are unsatisfied, your heart remains ever restless; since that day when you first forgot the True Name, you have been enduring suffering upon suffering.

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1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Surat tū dukhī rahe ham jānī...*

The foolish mind has become tied to the body; you are enticed by the taste of the senses.

The ignorant mind, turning its back on the conscious soul, has struck up a friendship with this material body formed of the five elements. The body has come under the control of the senses. The senses in turn seek pleasure in the outside world, while the mind, taking up its seat in our within, finds fleeting happiness in those outer enjoyments. And lost in these ephemeral pleasures, you have forgotten your own True Self; the individual ego has overpowered you. You think, "This body is mine. I am the body." But the body belongs to Maya. This is the reason for all your unhappiness. This world is destructible, and you are being destroyed along with it.

The family and relations heap misery on your head.
But entangled in the illusion, you cling to their company.

The taste of even one sense pleasure can enslave you to such a degree that you can never become free of its addiction your whole life long. Someone may have the habit of drinking liquor. They leave their home with a vessel wrapped up in a cloth. They squander all their money buying liquor to fill the vessel; they drink all that liquor and then return home.

The taste of just one sense pleasure can destroy your life, but so many cravings fill your within. Someone may have a taste for good foods. Or someone might like to look at good

things. Now so many cinema houses have been constructed—every day a new one opens its doors. And the cinemas are always packed with people because the eyes control us. In this way, the taste for all these sense pleasures is ruining our lives, and we don't even realize it. We think: "Whatever I am doing, it is a good thing." We are helpless before these outer tastes, and we are spoiling our precious human birth.

All this suffering comes through the body. We are trapped in the give-and-take of children, family, relatives, caste, clan, wealth, property. All these things bring us suffering, but we have made them our very own. We think, "I have this duty. If I don't take care of everything, who will do it?" Our ego tells us that everything depends on us, and we remain ensnared in the worldly responsibilities until death overtakes us.

How long do you think your relationship with these worldly things will last? We had no connection with them before we were born, and in the end, they will not remain with us. In between birth and death, for a brief "four days" of life, we have become bewitched by the material world, but in the end, death stands waiting for us. Our attachment to all these outer things is the cause of our suffering, but we spend our life in their service and consider them the source of happiness.

You are conscious Spirit, but this illusory world is made up of gross matter. Why form a friendship with falsehood?

Here, He clarifies that you are a conscious soul. Matter, which makes up the outer world, is unconscious; it is unreal. Our perception of the material world is an invention

of our own *buddhi* or intellect. How can day come together with night? Unconscious matter is the form of darkness and ignorance; it appears real to us, but it has no innate reality of its own.

In contrast, our soul is conscious. It is self-existing; it is the form of Light. How can the conscious soul mingle with unconscious matter? Where there is night, there is no day, and where there is day, there is no night. But we are caught in between the two in a state of ambiguity, which is another word for illusion. Illusion is neither truth nor falsehood. Caught in this ambiguity, we perceive the world through inference; all the jivas pass their lives understanding this illusion as reality.

We think, "What if this happens to me tomorrow? In the future, my condition may become like this. My children may become like that. And then I will do such and such for them." But this is all a game of "what if"? It is all inference and guesswork; we have no idea what will actually happen tomorrow. And all the world is caught up in flights of fancy and speculation. We waste our precious lives in these useless daydreams and remain in a state of ignorance. This ignorance is called illusion.

Wake up now; if you lose this opportunity; you will keep wandering in the four kinds of birth.

Now we have the human body, and it is time to wake up. If we develop right understanding now, well and good, but if we don't, we will be thrown back into the wheel of transmigration.

[Baba Somanath Ji asks Pushpamma Ji to sing a Kannada hymn from the *Mankuthimmana Kagga.*[2]]

I am one power; the second power is the world.
When we rise above the duality of "I" and "you,"
only Unity [the third power] remains.
While you attend to your worldly work, stay
absorbed in the Unity
O Mankutimma! The wise devotee understands
that this world is just a play.

Three powers are at work. The poet tells us that the individual "I" who is speaking is the first power; the material world, everything around us, is the second power; and the third Power is the force of Oneness. In the realm of duality, the jiva, with an individual identity, is one power, and the second power is the created world. The third power, the Conscious Force permeates and enlivens the other two, while remaining separate from them, beyond the reach of duality. The action and interaction of these three powers keep all the creation running.

The devotee who is wise and alert practices the meditation and remains absorbed in the Lord's devotion day and night. Such a devotee works within the first two powers but remains detached from them. Rising above the individual self and the created world, the devotee becomes one with All-Consciousness. For such an enlightened devotee, this

2 Written by Dr. D. V. Gundappa ("Mankutimma") and published in 1943.

world is just a play. The devotee watches the play with an air of detachment. As long as such devotees remain in the created world, they think: "I am acting out my role in this play." Having risen above their individual identity, they are no longer bound by it. Such devotees see that all this world is just a play.

[Baba Ji returns to the hymn of Swami Ji]

Therefore, Swami Ji Maharaj says that in this human birth, you should remain awake and alert. Otherwise, you will have to keep wandering through the four kinds of birth (moisture-born, seed-born, egg-born, and womb-born) and all the 84 lakh life forms. But this is your opportunity to come out of the cycle of births and deaths; if you stay alert now, you can accomplish the work for which you came.

Going in the Satsang, seek the Realm of Truth;
become absorbed in Satguru's love.

What is the importance of attending the Satsang? If we go on hearing the Truth, then the falsehood and illusion of the outer world that have grown strong within us are gradually rendered powerless. Love and devotion for the Guru awaken, and following the Guru's instructions, we begin to meditate with accuracy and regularity. This is what we gain from attending Satsang. Just to hear the discourse is not Satsang. Satsang means to become the form of Truth. Many people listen, but when it comes time to apply the Guru's words to their lives, they become lazy. No matter how much you may listen to the Satsang, until

you act on what you have heard, you cannot gain any benefit. Satsang only lasts for one hour. We pass all the rest of our time sitting at home involved in the feverish activity and hubbub of the world. It is only in that one hour of Satsang that we hear the Truth and can devote some time for the upliftment of our soul. But Sant Mat is the Path of experiencing the Truth, and without practicing the meditation, we cannot see this Truth with our own eyes.

Many satsangis get together here when I come once a year on tour, but for the rest of the year, they do not show their faces in the Satsang. When you ask them why they do not attend, they say, "I had some pressing work," or "I live too far away." Someone else says, "There were many difficulties at home." Friend, it is to become free of these very difficulties that you should ignore the dictates of your mind and remain regular in your attendance at Satsang.

You never miss a meal. You never forget that it is time to eat; you never postpone having your food. You expect your meals at the fixed time, and when the food is served, you are never absent. But for attending Satsang you make up one excuse after another. "We have some work to do; how can we come from so far; there are problems at home." This is your attitude to the Satsang. Therefore, He says, "When you attend the Satsang, the Guru tells of the Truth that lies within you. You should search out that Truth by practicing the meditation."

Then the Power of Satguru's Love will manifest in your within, and you will become absorbed in that Power. The love of the world will automatically disappear from your heart, and the True Love will manifest in its place. That Power never dies, and it will liberate you from birth and death.

Satguru reveals the jewel of Naam.
Reverse your attention and ascend to the seat of the soul.

The Satguru doesn't give us some outer mantra or incantation to repeat. Within you lies a veritable treasure house filled with the wealth of Naam, but in order to extract that wealth, the mind has to turn inward. What does Satguru do for us? He tells us the method to still the mind within and gives us a connection with the Naam. And Naam is the treasure house of spiritual wealth. That wealth never runs out. In the end, it makes you immortal. If you listen to the Satsang with attention and true love, then you will earn this benefit. Kabir Sahib says:

The one who practices the devotion just imitating others will never be dyed in the true color.

The people who imitate others think, "If they are doing the devotion, I will do what they are doing. If they are going to take Naam initiation, I will do the same thing." You can never gain anything by doing the devotion in this way.

Complete this work now, ascending within you will attain the knowledge of the Satguru.

He tells us that raising our attention to the seat of the soul is our duty. When we withdraw from the body and reach the still point between the eyes, then the intellect ceases to function. Only the Satguru and the true Power of Naam remain. Until we vacate the nine doors and come to the tenth

door, we have to go on making efforts. But from that point on, the Satguru Himself takes complete charge of the soul.

When we need a bathroom cleaned, we call a sweeper to take care of that work, not a Brahmin. In the same way, we ourselves need to clean away the dirt of the five elements, and the Satguru tells us the means to accomplish this task. Our job is to have faith in Him and practice our meditation regularly according to His instructions. And when we reach up to the gateway of the astral realm, Satguru is standing waiting for us and will take care of all our needs on the journey beyond.

Attend to the words of Radhaswami;
your sufferings will vanish, and you will
gain peace and happiness.

Treasure His every word in your heart and mold your within according to His teachings. Then all sorrow will be banished, and you will become the form of Bliss.

Whoever has attached their attention to that true Love within, they can never forget it. The true Love resides within us, and if that Love becomes manifested even one time, it will never slip away from our remembrance. Love is the most attractive power; nothing can equal it—not the intellect, not the mind, not the outer wisdom. Within us that true Love is dwelling; Love is the form of the Almighty Lord. The soul is Love, and Love is the Guru. So, He tells us that when that real Love or virah (the pain of separation from the Beloved), appears in the within, how could it ever be forgotten? When that Love manifests, then our soul remains united with the Dhunātmak Naam—the Inner Sound—day and night.

—Baba Somanath

10

When the Guru Showers His Mercy

The chant of Rama, Rama remains on everyone's lips, but Rama cannot be won by outer recitation.
If, by the Guru's Grace, the Lord makes His abode in your heart, then you will gain the fruit of all devotion.[1]

This is the bani of Shri Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says that if we are only reciting the simran outwardly with the tongue, we will not be able to remove the falsehood and deceit from our heart. As long as the dirt of the worldly pleasures fills our within, our heart cannot become purified. And until our within is cleansed of all impurity, our heart will not merge into the Conscious Power that dwells within us. We try to remove the dirt from our within by repeating the simran outwardly. But the aim of remembrance is to purify the heart, and that cleansing can only take place when we become fully absorbed in the true Naam Simran within. Since time

1 Guru Amar Das, *Rām rām sabh ko kahai, kahiai rām na hoi...*

immemorial, for millions of yugas and millions of births, our mind has kept the company of gross, inert matter. It has been wrapped up in the material things of this illusory world, and, as a result, the mind has become gross and inert itself. Now, in order to drive that remembrance of the material world from our heart, we need the true inner remembrance of Naam.

Mind has this intrinsic quality, that when it becomes absorbed in the remembrance of one thing, the remembrance of other things is driven out. All other thoughts go away. Now we are involved in the simran of the world and worldly pleasures that drag us away from the remembrance of the Almighty Lord and the Simran of Naam. Therefore, our heart is filled to overflowing with the gross material things; day and night, we are buffeted about by the unsteady mind. This ongoing simran of the gross, outer world has made us even more unconscious, and to remove all this grossness, we have to come in contact with Truth and Higher Consciousness through the Simran of Naam.

When we go into the shelter of the Satguru, He showers grace on us. He explains to us the method of meditation on Sat Naam; He tells us how to keep our mind anchored in the Lord's true Simran. But if, after receiving this gift from the Satguru, we abandon the method He has conveyed to us and spend our entire lifetime engaged in the outer repetition, then we will earn no profit. Until the true Simran of Naam manifests in our heart, we cannot achieve our goal. Therefore, Guru Amar Das Ji tells us that everyone chants "Rama, Rama," but the Lord is not attained through empty repetition. We may go on and on repeating "Rama, Rama"

with our tongue, but we cannot win the Lord just through chanting. It is rightly said:

That which lies beyond utterance is Rama

The Shabd, or Naad (Inner Sound), or Akash Bani (Voice from the Sky), is reverberating within you, and until your mind merges into that Power, you will gain nothing from outwardly repeating "Rama, Rama."

The grace of the Guru, the prashad of the Guru, showers down within; the meaning of *"prashād"* is grace. People eat some puffed rice or sweets outwardly, and then say they have taken prashad. Similarly, people talk about *charan amrit* (the Nectar of the Feet). They bring some water, wash an idol with it, collect that water and then call it *charan amrit*. But you get no benefit from such *charan amrit*, just as you receive no grace from eating some outer sweets. So, Guru Amar Das tells us: "When the Guru is gracious, He comes to dwell in your heart." When we perform the practices enjoined by the Guru and prepare ourselves, then His grace manifests in our within, and our soul becomes one with the Naam. The Guru's grace is the true prashad.

The devotees who enshrine love for God within the mind, never forget the Lord.
They continually sing the Lord's Name—Hari, Hari—with the tongue of thought.

Whoever has attached their attention to that true Love within, they can never forget it. The true Love resides within us, and if that Love becomes manifested even one time, it will never slip away from our remembrance. Love is the most

attractive power; nothing can equal it—not the intellect, not the mind, not the outer wisdom. Within us that true Love is dwelling; Love is the form of the Almighty Lord. The soul is Love, and Love is the Guru.

So, He tells us that when that real Love or virah, the pain of separation from the Beloved, appears in the within, how could it ever be forgotten? When that Love manifests, then our soul remains united with the *Dhunātmak* Naam—the Inner Sound—day and night. We cannot bear to become separated from that Naam for even the fraction of a second. Now we are so bound to mind and Maya that we can never forget them. But when the virah awakens within us, then, in our heart we can remember only the Naam; no other thought strikes there. This is the meaning of virah.

Those so-called saints whose hearts are full of hypocrisy, those who only act and pose, their desires are never satisfied, and they depart from this world repenting.

Purity of heart is spirituality. Spirituality is the touchstone that tests the quality of the heart. Those whose hearts are full of hypocrisy and falsehood, even if they adopt the outer garb of the sadhus and saints, even if they read the holy texts and explain spirituality to others, still the deception and dissembling in their hearts cannot be removed. Desire fills their hearts and gains mastery over them. If they get a hundred, they want a thousand. If they get a thousand, then they want a hundred thousand. If they get a hundred thousand, then they want a million. No matter how much worldly wealth they accumulate, still they have no peace in

their hearts. And at the end time, burning in the fire of unfulfilled desires, they depart from this world and fall again into the revolving wheel of eighty-four.

Even if we bathe at countless places of pilgrimage, still, the ego doesn't leave us.
The ones who remain trapped in duality will be punished by Dharm Rai, the Lord of Judgment.

Further, He tells us that even if we go on pilgrimage to the outer holy places and take sacred baths in countless rivers and pools, still the heart cannot be purified through these external ablutions. We may cleanse the body, but the heart is not cleansed, no matter how much we bathe in the holy waters. The falsehood heaped up in our heart remains the same as before, and without purity of heart, real bhakti is not possible.

As long as we are under the control of the ego, we remain ensnared in duality. Our heart is filled with duality. Duality means that we are thinking one thing within but showing something different outwardly. Many people write books and commentaries on *dvaita* (dualism), *advaita* (non-dualism), and *vashishtādvaita* (qualified non-dualism).[2]

2 *Dvaita Vedānta*, taught by Madhvacharya, is a dualistic school that believes God (the Ultimate Reality) and the individual souls are different in nature and will always remain distinct. The *advaita* school taught by Shankara is non-dualistic. In *advaita*, God (the Ultimate Reality) and the individual souls are identical and all Reality is connected in Oneness. In *vashishtādvaita*, Ramanuja posits qualified nondualism—God (the Ultimate Reality) and the individual souls are different but have the potential to become identical.

Bookish knowledge is all theoretical, but we can experience duality and non-duality at work within ourselves. In the depths of our heart, we are one thing, but outwardly we pretend to be something else. And as long as egotism dominates our within, we cannot free ourselves from this duality—and in the end, we are turned over to the angels of death.

Now, what is the root of spirituality? To rise above all dualism and to merge into Unity. When we become firmly established in Unity, then all egotism disappears. When all desires are left behind, and the soul achieves liberation, then we enter into the Realm of Truth, and all our sorrow is left behind.

When the Guru showers His mercy, the soul meets the Lord; only a few rare Gurumukhs understand Him.

Now, what does He tell us? When we have great good fortune, the Lord manifests in our heart. Only a few rare Gurumukhs achieve this state. Thousands, even millions, of devotees come into the Satsang and take the Naam initiation, but only a few rare ones emerge as Gurumukhs. Not everyone is capable of grasping this subject. Therefore, Kabir Sahib often ends his verses with the line: "Kabir says, listen, O brother sadhu." He never addresses His verses to those who are following the path of the mind. Whoever is practicing the meditation whole-heartedly and is determined to achieve liberation in this lifetime, Kabir Sahib is directing His teachings to those devotees. Therefore, it is said: "Out of millions, only a rare one takes to the meditation of the Lord."

The Gurumukhs are rare; out of millions, you will find only a few who have achieved the highest status. All the rest of the disciples stumble along—falling down and getting up again—as they make their way along the Path Godward.

O Nanak, whoever conquers the ego within,
stands face-to-face with the Lord.

When we start on the Path of spirituality, a veil of ego separates the soul from the Almighty Lord. Only when we become free of the ego and remove that veil from our within can we unite our soul with the Naam and become the form of Oneness. Whoever conquers the ego is the real devotee. This is the meaning of spirituality.

Wisdom does not dawn in Kashi, nor can you
wash away your sins there.
It is only by meeting the True Guru, that wisdom
is awakened.
Then, you attain true enlightenment.

In India, Kashi is considered the most important place of pilgrimage. Nowadays, Kashi is called Varanasi, and many people travel there; if some wealthy person dies in Uttar Pradesh, even if they lived thirty or forty miles away, their corpse is carried to Kashi, to be cremated at the Harishchandra Ghat. It is still believed that if someone dies or is cremated in Kashi, then their soul achieves liberation and ascends to Kailash (Lord Shiva's heaven), or Vaikunth (Lord Vishnu's paradise). But if the person was not able to do any spiritual practice during their lifetime, what can be achieved by cremating their dead body in Kashi? Nothing at

all. Therefore, He says: "Wisdom does not dawn in Kashi, nor can you wash away your sins there."

Spirituality will not awaken within us just because we visit Kashi. A trip to Kashi will not free us of our sins and shortcomings. What can we hope to achieve by traveling there, when our mind will accompany us on the journey? There is a well-known saying:

Widows, bullocks, stairs, and sanyasis:
If you can survive all these, then you can stay in Kashi.

The widows from wealthy and important families come to live in Kashi, in order to pass their remaining years in a sacred place.[3] The bullocks in Kashi have free run of the streets because they are considered to be the form of Nandi, the bull of Shiva. And in Kashi, the streets are so narrow that if one bullock is coming from one direction and another is approaching from the opposite direction, then you could be in grave danger if you get caught in the middle. The steps leading down to the bathing ghats on the Ganges are very steep and narrow; if your foot slips, you can end up taking a nasty fall in the river.

If you manage to save yourself from these three dangers, you still have to deal with the sanyasis. They are sitting everywhere, displaying their spiritual wares. One accosts you saying, "Come over here and accept my teachings," and the next one says, "No, come over here, and I will instruct you." If you come to Kashi and escape from these four pitfalls—the widows, the bullocks, the stairs, and the sanyasis—then

3 Though many widows possess the means for a comfortable living while they pursue their devotion, some are destitute and turn to begging and prostitution.

it is safe for you to stay there. Otherwise, one or the other of them will surround you and take you captive.

Therefore, He says, "When you meet with the perfect Satguru, He will teach you about the Path to the Lord." If you do the meditation according to His instructions, then you can achieve that high status. In this way alone can the jiva attain emancipation from this world; there is no other method.

Listen to the story of the Lord, and enshrine His Shabd within your mind.

What does it mean to listen to the story of the Lord? You should listen to the Shabd—the inner Voice that is reverberating within you. The Lord's story is not told outwardly; that story is unfolding of itself in your within. Listen to it all the hours of the day and night.

If your mind remains stable and steady, then illusion will depart from your within.

When your mind is purified, when it becomes stable, then the clouds of illusion disperse of themselves. The method is straightforward; but Guru Amar Das tells us, "Without good karmas coming from the past, you cannot grasp this subject, and your meeting with the Lord cannot take place."

Enshrine the Lord's lotus feet within your heart, and your sins will be erased.

If you hold the Satguru's lotus feet within your heart day and night, if your contemplation becomes fixed and unwavering, if you see only His feet and are blind to everything

else, this can be called devotion to the Satguru. And until you perfect the devotion, your mind will keep running out into the world. Some thought or other—be it pure or impure—will capture your attention and drag you back outside.

But when you achieve this state of one-pointed concentration, at that very moment, your sins are destroyed. It is not a question of waiting a day or two, or of waiting ten, twenty, or thirty years. When His grace descends, in that very moment, all the sins within your heart are burned away.

When your soul overcomes the five elements, then you will dwell at the true place of pilgrimage.

Our soul has become so identified with the five inert elements—*prithvī, jal, vāyu, agni,* and *ākāsh*—that it has taken on the qualities of these elements and has forgotten its true nature. *Pritvī* (earth) is linked to the sense of smell. *Jal* (water) is linked to the sense of taste. *Vāyu* (air) reflects the wavering quality of the mind and is connected with the sense of touch. *Ākāsh* (ether) has the quality of the buddhi, or intellect, which is an aspect of the *antahkarana*, or inner mind. *Agni* or *tejas* (fire) has the quality of light; it is connected with the sense of sight.

The soul has taken on the qualities of these five elements, and, through them has become inextricably bound up with the *indriyas* (organs of sense), and the aspects of the mercurial *antahkarana* (the inner mind). The conscious soul has assumed the form of these inert qualities. But when the Sat Naam manifests within us, then the soul sheds the inert qualities of the five elements and, merging into the Conscious

Power within, becomes the form of Consciousness. There is no other method to achieve liberation.

The mind of the manmukh is dull and cannot understand.

Now, what does He tell us? This mystery is understood only by the Gurumukhs; it is a subject for the meditators. The manmukhs do not know this secret. [break in the audio] Becoming identified with five inert elements, becoming the form of those qualities, they have lost all consciousness of their true nature. Such unconscious souls are bound to gross, inert matter. You may explain to them in Satsang as much as you want, but they will not be able to comprehend the teachings. In Marathi, it is said: "The sanskaras forged in our previous lives shape our present incarnation." Unless those noble qualities sprang from our past deeds, how else could we have acquired them?

They do not understand the Naam of the Lord; they depart repenting in the end.

No matter how much you explain to the manmukhs, no understanding will take root in their hearts. The Naam of the Lord is incredibly subtle and fine. Only a few rare meditators can discern the secret of the Naam—the all-pervading inner Sound. Our attention is dispersed into all the objects of the created world and has become engrossed in the outer forms. But the Sound is the life force that permeates and enlivens all the forms—there is no place without the Naam.

How does this Sound manifest in the material elements?

In the water, the Sound is *kharbhar*[4] (swishing, bubbling). In the fire, the Sound is *dagdag* (blazing, crackling). In the wind, the Sound is *barbar* (murmuring). The subtle element of ether, pervading throughout space, produces a pure, resonating vibration. The sound of earth is a concatenation of the sounds of all the elements.[5]

The Sound or Shabd is only one, but when that Shabd reverberates in the different substances, it produces different sounds according to the elements composing those substances. The Shabd itself does not change—the Shabd is only one and dwells in every heart. Shabd is the support of our life, but the manmukhs cannot perceive such a subtle Truth. If we ask them if they have attended the Satsang, they will reply, "Yes, we went there." And if we ask them about the discourse, they will tell us, "It was very nice." So, they take this much from the Satsang, but if we consider the matter carefully, we will see that understanding the subtle nature of the Naam is the essence of Satsang. Until we gain that understanding, we cannot meet the Almighty Lord.

This mind contains the sacred city of Kashi and all the places of pilgrimage.
Within the mind, we find the Smritis and all the holy scriptures; the True Guru has explained this.

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4 "*Kharbhar*" is also described as "*khalbal*"

5 According to Hindu cosmology, the five elements, or *pancha mahābhūta*, were created in sequence, each one springing from and adopting characteristics from the preceding element. The characteristic of ether is sound, the characteristic of air is sound + smell, the characteristic of fire is sound + smell + sight, the characteristic of water is sound + smell + sight + taste, and the characteristic of earth is sound + smell + sight + taste + touch: that is, the final element earth, partakes of the qualities of all the elements that preceded it.

When the mind concentrates within, when we do the unbroken meditation according to the instructions of the Satguru, then we will discover that Kashi and all the sacred places of pilgrimage already lie within us.

The sixty-eight places of pilgrimage reside within the devotee whose heart is filled with the Lord.

In India, there is not just one holy place of pilgrimage—there are sixty-eight. If the devotee does the Simran of Naam constantly, day and night, then all the places of pilgrimage manifest in their within.

O Nanak, when we meet with the True Guru, the Hukam is revealed, and the One Lord comes to dwell within us.
Whatever pleases You is True; Your devotees remain absorbed in Truth.

Now, what does He say? When we meet with the perfect Satguru, we contact the True Naam and experience the Lord's Hukam. We merge into the Lord and become His very form. The Lord is the form of Truth, and we also become the form of Truth.

"Prashad" means grace, and it is through the Guru's grace or prashad that the inner Light drives this darkness away. But how far have you succeeded in winning the Guru's grace? You make the halva, praise the names of all the Gurus, and eat that halva understanding it as the Guru's prashad. But what about the inner prashad of the Guru? When you rise above the outer rituals of Maya and become firm in the inner meditation, then you receive the true prashad—the Guru's grace within. When you are blessed with this true Grace of the Guru, then your heart is flooded with dazzling light. Uniting with the form of Oneness, you become Oneness. Then all the turmoil of the world vanishes into thin air.

—Baba Somanath

11

The Knower of All Hearts

The Lord is subtle and inaccessible. How can we ever meet Him?
The Guru's Shabd destroys illusion; the Carefree One has come to dwell in my mind.[1]

This is the bani of Shri Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says that the Lord is the subtlest of the subtle. He lies beyond the grasp of the intellect. The Vedas, the Shastras, the Smritis and the Puranas have become worn out singing His praises; but that Almighty Lord cannot be described in words. Therefore, the loving disciple is making a prayer before the Guru: "How can I meet that ethereal Power of the Lord?" Then He says, "The Guru's Shabd destroys illusion." Hearing the Satguru's words, the illusion within you is removed. Meeting with that Lord, who is the manifestation of Oneness, you become His very form. Only the Guru's words can bring this about:

The root of all mantras is the Guru's word.

1 Guru Amar Das, *Har Jī sūkham agam hai...*

Whatever words the Guru speaks are the supreme mantra. When His words become fixed in your heart, then the Inner Word—the Shabd—will manifest of itself. Your attention will merge into the Oneness of the Lord, and your soul will achieve emancipation.

The Gurumukhs repeat the Name of the Lord.
I sacrifice myself on those who sing the Lord's praise unceasingly.

Day and night, the Gurumukhs keep their thoughts connected to the Naam. Those in whom the Guru manifests, those who live according to His commandments, they are called the Gurumukhs.

Two separate powers make up this created world. One is the Power of Truth, and the other is the power of falsehood. One is eternal, ever the same; the other is destructible and changeable. One is day, the other night. One is Unseen, and the other is visible. One showers blessings, and the other brings misfortune. One is Formless; the other is confined by shape and form. In this world that has been created by these two separate powers, the Gurumukh chooses the Power of Truth, while the manmukh pursues falsehood.

And these two powers are also working within your own heart. Since time immemorial, the mind has forgotten the Power of the soul within. That same mind has maintained its relationship with Maya and the material objects fashioned from the five gross elements, forging the bonds that keep us trapped in the cycle of births and deaths. To become free of these bonds, we have gone into the refuge of the Satguru who explains to us, "Dear one, within you dwells the True Naam—it is untrammeled by Maya and is the form of the

Lord. Repeating the True Naam, unite with the Shabd within and become its very form."

As soon as the Gurumukh hears the Guru's teachings, they have faith in His words. They become firm and constant in the inner practices, and the Shabd manifests within them. They become absorbed in that Shabd day and night; then Maya and all the trappings of this world fade away.

The thieves lurk in the darkness, but when you switch on the light, the thieves flee from that place. Day and night, the Gurumukh's attention remains connected with the Naam; there is no difference between the Gurumukh and God. Guru Amar Das Ji tells us, "I sacrifice myself on such devotees."

The Guru is the lake of Mansarovar; only the most fortunate ones find Him.

So, He tells us, "The Guru is the lake of Mansarovar." Whoever has the darshan of the Guru in that lofty realm is greatly favored. Crossing beyond the physical, astral, and causal bodies, the soul reaches the level of Daswan Dwar, bathes in the pure waters of the Mansarovar, and emerges immaculate. I sacrifice myself on such an Exalted Being. There is no difference between that Great Soul and the Almighty Lord.

Those Gurumukhs go deep within.
They are the Swan-Souls nourished by the Naam of the Lord.

Such Gurumukhs, such true Disciples, who search within and gain emancipation, are called the Paramhansas—the exalted Swan-Souls.

The Gurumukhs meditate on the Naam and merge into that Naam.

Now, He is speaking about the practice of meditation on Naam. When thoughts of a worldly object arise, it is the natural quality of the mind to snap a photo of that object and to store that image for future use. In this way, the mind becomes dyed in the color of illusion.

Day and night, we are spending our life accumulating the wares of Maya. Wealth, lust, and worldly renown—these form three powerful bonds. If someone escapes from amassing gold, wealth, and worldly possessions, then they become trapped in lust. And if they avoid both of these traps, then they will become ensnared in the pursuit of name and fame. These three powerful bonds keep us chained to the outer world.

Therefore, He explains that when you become dyed in the color of Truth, the color of Maya fades away. Then your discipleship is complete. Merging into the Naam, you become the form of Naam.

Whatever is preordained from Sach Khand, accept it as the Will of the Guru.

Now, what does He tell us? When the Lord ordains it, you come to understand the Will of the Guru as the Will of the Lord, and you treasure that Will in your heart. The Guru may have thousands or even millions of disciples. Those disciples take initiation, listen to the Satsang, and do all the outer things. But still, their attention does not converge with the Naam within. This union can be achieved only when the Lord showers His abundant grace. There may be many "satsangis," but if they have not yet contacted the Truth, then they are not

worthy of that name. Only when your soul has the company of Truth within can you be called a "Satsangi."

If it comes in the Will of the Lord, then the mind accepts the Guru's words, otherwise not—because the mind is no small thing. All of the meditation and other spiritual endeavors are only to make the mind understand. The mind is a very mighty power.

By great good fortune, I searched within my home and found the treasure of Naam.

Guru Amar Das Ji tells us, "By great good fortune, I came into the refuge of the perfect Satguru. He taught me the true technique, and day and night, I searched within the house of the body." Within this body are the nine divisions of the world, the seven nether regions, and twenty-one heavens. Only the one on whom the Lord's grace descends becomes the explorer of this body. Otherwise, we are only filling the body with bad qualities.

Every moment the waves keep arising within us—lust, anger, attachment, greed, and ego, the five senses, the twenty-five prakritis. We pass our lives buffeted by these waves. All of this comes from the Negative Power—the way of Kal. But the Gurumukhs do not follow this way. Their attention is focused only on uniting with the Naam and the Lord. Such devotees are known as Gurumukhs.

The Perfect Guru has shown God to me; the soul has realized the Lord.

Everything happens through Satguru's grace. This grace is the Power that awakens the soul. And when the soul comes into its own, the perfect Satguru manifests in His Shabd Form.

There is One God for all; there is no other.

Searching within the body, I have found that Lord.

Wherever I look, I see the Compassionate Lord
who is merciful to the poor ones.

I see my Lord everywhere; His Power is immanent in all. Guru Arjan Dev Ji says:

Naam supports all the divisions of Brahmand;
Naam is the support of the heavens and the nether worlds.

This world is upheld by the Naam. Naam sustains our very life. Naam is the support of the entire creation. When do you come to understand the nature of the Naam? When your attention becomes anchored within, and you become one with that Almighty Lord who permeates all, then you will realize that the whole world is an embodiment of that Power. We people read a few excerpts from the holy scriptures and writings of the Saints, and then we declare that the Lord is all-pervading.

But if you have realized that He is all-pervading, then why has your attention become trapped in this outer world? Why are you a slave to the senses? Why does the unsteadiness of your mind keep you extroverted? He is everywhere, so why are you running here and there in search of Him? Because, at present, you are only holding some intellectual knowledge in your brain. You have not yet transcended the intellect, and you have not merged with that Lord, who is the form of Oneness.

The Guru manifests in that heart where He showers His grace.

He says that when the grace of the Guru descends on you, your within will become illumined by the Light of God.

But until that grace manifests in your heart, your within is filled with darkness. When you close your eyes, what do you see? Only dense darkness. "Prashad" means grace, and it is through the Guru's grace or prashad that the inner Light drives this darkness away. But how far have you succeeded in winning the Guru's grace? You make the halva, praise the names of all the Gurus, and eat that halva understanding it as the Guru's prashad.

But what about the inner prashad of the Guru? When you rise above the outer rituals of Maya and become firm in the inner meditation, then you receive the true prashad—the Guru's grace within. When you are blessed with this true Grace of the Guru, then your heart is flooded with dazzling light. Uniting with the form of Oneness, you become Oneness. Then all the turmoil of the world vanishes into thin air.

God is the Knower of all Hearts; God dwells in every place.

That All-Knowing Power understands the secrets of our heart. That Lord pervades all creation.

Who can I call as evil when I behold the Shabd within all?

Who can I call good or bad in this creation? Who can I call noble or lowly? He is dwelling in every heart.

Only the one trapped in duality calls others as bad or good.

As long as we are under the control of duality, we will remain trapped in "I and mine." We will think, "This one is

my enemy; that one is my friend." We will call one good and another bad. We will seek prosperity for some and harm for others because we have this duality within ourselves, and under its influence, we go on criticizing some and praising others. This is our condition.

The Gurumukh has known the One Lord;
He remains absorbed in Oneness.

The Gurumukh's attention is absorbed in the One Naam. Within and without the Gurumukh remains connected with the Naam, which is the form of Oneness. The Gurumukh has become the form of Naam, and there is no room left for duality. Such a devotee experiences the bliss of emancipation while still living in this body.

The Lord accepts the seva that is pleasing to Him.

Now, He explains the principle of seva. What is the real meaning of seva? Outwardly we may serve the Guru, scurrying here and there all day performing the sevas—financial, mental, and physical—but our heart is not in it. And in the evening, we set it all aside, return home and forget all about it. This is not the true seva. Body, speech, and mind—all of these have to act in unison. Then our seva will be true.

Outwardly, we pay lip-service to selfless seva, but inwardly, self-interest dominates our hearts. We may do the outer physical seva, but then we spoil it with our egotism and arrogance. We think, "If I weren't here, who would do this seva?" This cannot be called seva. Seva means sacrificing your little self. He explains to us how the Gurumukhs do the seva. Losing themselves in Oneness, they become the form of Oneness. This is the true seva.

Why do we perform the seva of body, speech, and mind? The goal of all seva is to lose ourselves in the One Naam. Otherwise, how can we sit for the meditation?

The mind is inclined towards God,
But the body is seeking comfort and repose.
Those who follow both threads,
gain neither the Lord nor Maya

The mind tells us to get up in the morning to meditate. But at that time the body says, "Let's don't get up right now. Let's sleep a little longer, and then we'll think about it." Within we are thinking of the Almighty Lord (*Rām*), and the body is craving rest and comfort (*arām*). Lost in this tug-of-war, we don't gain the comforts of Maya outside, and we don't meet the Almighty Lord in our within. Our condition shows that we have not yet learned to do true seva. We perform the outer seva for show, but we have not united with the Naam. We have not become one with the Lord and are still trapped in duality.

Servant Nanak worships the Lord; He is lost in his Guru's feet.

Therefore, He tells us that the Gurumukh thinks only of the Guru With attention riveted on the Guru's feet within, the Gurumukh merges in the Naam, becoming its very form. This is the exalted state of the Gurumukh.

Moved to mercy, the Satguru replies: O disciple, heed this teaching of mine. Never follow the dictates of your mind. Always remember that the Guru is the All-Owner—the Lord of all that exists. Day and night, fix your attention in the Shabd. Here your intellect cannot help you—this mystery lies beyond its understanding. Lust, anger, and all the evil tendencies are still lurking in your within; keeping the Guru's teachings always before you, cast out these offenders.

—Baba Somanath

12

Soul's Appeal, Satguru's Reply

The Soul's Appeal to the Satguru

I am calling out to You; today, listen to my plea!
I am poor and helpless, but You are the Gracious Giver.[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Swami Ji Maharaj. The loving soul is offering a prayer at the feet of the Sant Satguru saying: "O Satguru! I am praying and requesting at Your feet. Have mercy on me and listen to my plea. Enslaved by Maya, I am suffering unending pain."

Please come to my rescue now—my boat is drifting in mid-stream.
I am suffering deep distress, and you are the Expert Ferryman.

You are my only Protector; no one else will come to my aid. In this world, You and You alone are my Gracious Benefactor. Therefore, I offer this prayer at Your feet again and again. My boat of life is adrift in this ocean of the

1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Karat hūň pukār, āja suniye guhār...*

world, and only You can take me to the other shore. So, now, please come to my aid. O Lord, please ferry me across the ocean of this world. I am filled with misery. You are the boatman, the ferryman, the *Kolī*.[2] You alone are the captain of my ship.

The messengers of death and agents of evil
surrounded me and gave me untold suffering.
They terrified me with the horrors of hell.
But now, O my Wise Protector, you have come to
my aid.

My within is filled with countless bad qualities and evil tendencies—lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego. Day and night, they cause me untold suffering. The messengers of Yama have surrounded me and are giving me endless suffering in this ocean of the world.

Not only do they persecute me here, but they also fill me with dread of the world to come, opening before me the unspeakable horrors of Yama's hells. O Satguru, only you can comfort me and deliver me from this torment. I have fallen at Your holy lotus feet, and time and time again, I cry out for your help.

Now, please grant me your support; give me a
place in your refuge.
Kal is exerting all his might and wreaking havoc,
but You are the Bravest of the Brave.

Eradicating the pain of millions of births, wiping away the suffering of unnumbered years, you have saved me. I have

2 "*Kolī*" is an ethnic group of fishermen. Baba Somanath Ji's sangat included a number of devoted disciples from the *Kolī* community who had adopted the vegetarian diet.

come into your shelter and have thrown myself at Your feet. Now hear my plea and listen to my sad plight.

Kal has bound me within by countless chains of Maya, forged from my own evil deeds. Through the force of karma, Kal has enslaved me. Kal wields so much power that, day and night, he stirs up a tremendous turmoil in my inner mind (*antahkarana*). My agony has become unbearable, and yet, I cannot free myself from it. But you are the mightiest of all heroes. You and you alone can remove my suffering—no one else can accomplish such a feat.

My intellect and understanding are spoiled.
My mind and surat are impure.
All my strength and vigor have been snatched away.
But You, O Satguru, are the All-Powerful Adept.

Controlled by Maya and trapped in the sense enjoyments, my understanding is besmirched with filth. Committing sins day and night, my intellect has become impure. All-Powerful as You are, please wash away all the dross, and keep me at Your holy feet.

Therefore, I implore you; please grant me
this one boon.
You are omnipotent and omniscient;
reveal to me the secret of Surat Shabd.

Please grant me this one request. You are the Giver of Peace. Do not let me look to anyone else; keep my attention fixed at Your holy lotus feet. This is the blessing I crave. Anchor my soul in the Shabd day and night. Shabd is the supreme weapon that vanquishes all sorrow. You are the All-Powerful Lord; only you can remove my suffering.

I have no longing, and I am wanting in love.
I lack the eager spirit of devotion.
Devoid of faith, bereft of belief, I am drowning
in lust, anger and greed.
How can you ferry me across?

I am asking for Your blessing, but what can I give in exchange for such a treasure? I have no good quality in me, no yearning, no true devotion. I have nothing to offer at all.

I am devoid of devotion and my faith is shaky. Day and night, lust and anger overwhelm me. How can you save a sinking stone like me? I have this doubt within me.

Sickness and sorrow torment me daily.
I do not apply myself to Bhajan and Simran.
My desire for the pleasures does not abate,
and the flames of fear and worry burn hotter
within me.
No one listens to my cries.
You alone are my Physician and Healer.

Day and night, worldly worries weigh on my mind, and sickness troubles my body. Even though I have suffered so much, still my desire for the sense enjoyments does not become less. Instead, it grows day by day.

Wherever desire has the upper hand, it brings misery in its wake, and I remain always afraid. When we are trapped in falsehood, fear dogs our every step.

Now, no one else will listen to my cries; you are my only physician. Only You can chase away this sickness. There is no other cure.

Except for the Saints, I have no one to call my own;
the door of the Satguru is my only fixed abode.
There is no virtue in rites, rituals, and superstition.
Shabd is the only true teaching—grant me this blessing.

What support does the jiva have except the Saints? Who but the Satguru will give out the teaching of Truth? I have no store of good karma. I have no righteous conduct to my credit. Except for the teaching of Shabd, there is no other firm footing. Without the Shabd the inner experience does not manifest. Nothing but the Shabd can cut our fetters. I have come to your door seeking alms. I stand here as a beggar. Have mercy on me and grant me the boon of Naam.

Draw my surat upward now; show me the
splendor of Shabd.
Let me hurry on to Sahas-dal Kanwal and behold
the holy congregation there.
Then my mind will be put to shame; please fulfill
this request of mine.

Withdraw my consciousness from the nine doors and take me upward into the etheric realm. Connect me with the Shabd and let me behold that Power within. May my soul reach Sahas-dal Kanwal and experience its radiant beauty firsthand.

So much Power lies hidden within me. When my soul will at last come to experience that Power, then my mind will stand shamefaced. Even though such a mighty Power has always been close at hand all the time, still the mind lured me into the empty outer world and shackled me inextricably in its chains of illusion. Therefore, shower grace on me now, and open that glittering vista before me.

Crossing through the Banknal, may I scale the heights of Trikuti.
Open before me the path leading on to Sunn; remove the barrier of Mahasunn, and transport me through the Bhanwar Gupha.
Making me taste the bliss of Sat Shabd, take me to Satpur, the City of Truth.

Then please escort me through the crooked tunnel of Banknal, so that I may climb to the lofty heights of Trikuti. Open to me the further path into the Sunn (the Void) and escort me onward into the region of Par Brahm. Guide me across the dark, impenetrable expanse of Mahasunn and into the dazzling realm of Bhanwar Gupha, the Whirling Cave. Then escort me into Sat Lok, the Realm of Truth, and make me one with Truth. The *darbār* (court) of the Satguru is in Sat Lok, and He Himself guides you all the way there. But when you reach that point, it is the Power of Sat Purush that will transport your soul higher. Up to Sat Lok, it has been the duty of the Satguru to give you the message of Truth.

Let me behold the regions of Alakh and Agam Lok.
May my soul finally come to rest in Radhaswami Dham.
Of that realm, the pandits, kazis, mullas and sheikhs have no knowledge.
No one gains entry there except through the grace and mercy of the Saints.

Beyond Sat Lok lies the realm of Alakh, the Imperceptible. Then you come to the realm of Agam, the Inaccessible. And finally, you reach the region of Anami or Radhaswami Dham, the Self-Existing Plane beyond all creation.

This knowledge is hidden from those who only practice priestcraft—the pandits, the religious leaders, the swamis and

faqirs. No kazi (judge) or mulla (religious scholar) has discovered it. Without the help of the Satguru, you can never attain these heights. No one else can open the way to you; they don't even have an inkling that such exalted regions exist.

Satguru's Reply to the Soul

Then the Satguru replies: I am telling you one thing.
Pay heed to my advice.
O disciple! Give up the obstinacy of your mind.
Realize that the Guru is beyond comprehension.
Learn the secret of Shabd from him and delve into its mysteries.
Accept that your intellect is ignorant and can offer no guidance.
Cast aside your anger and lust.

Moved to mercy, the Satguru replies: O disciple, heed this teaching of mine. Never follow the dictates of your mind. Always remember that the Guru is the All-Owner—the Lord of all that exists. Day and night, fix your attention in the Shabd. Here your intellect cannot help you—this mystery lies beyond its understanding. Lust, anger, and all the evil tendencies are still lurking in your within; keeping the Guru's teachings always before you, cast out these offenders.

Understand the importance of Satsang.
Appreciate this precious human birth.
Imbibe the nectar of Naam and anchor your attention in the Guru's Form.
Bring the mind and the senses under your control; then step by step, proceed forward with great care.

Tulsi Das has also spoken about the importance of Satsang:

O Tulsi, two things are precious
and rare beyond reckoning:
The fellowship of the Saints
and the praise of Almighty God.
Son, wife, and wealth—
even the sinners possess these trifles.

The human birth is the highest in all creation, and in this age, many souls are blessed with the human body. The population has grown so much that there are people everywhere; even the inaccessible and inhospitable mountains and rocky plains are inhabited.

But Swami Ji is telling us that it is not enough just to get the human birth. Even after we have received such a boon, still it is rare to get the company of the Saints and even rarer to make the mind accept Their teachings. When you go to the Saints, if your mind doesn't accept Their words, then what can you hope to accomplish?

Therefore, day and night, go on doing the Simran of Naam. Let no other remembrance arise in your heart.

Place your hope in Sat Naam;
all other hopes lead to despair.

Keep your hope fixed on the True Naam. Never allow other desires to multiply in your heart. Repeat the Simran in such a way that your soul withdraws from all outside things and collects within. Focus your attention fully on the enchanting form of the Guru. Become totally absorbed in this contemplation. Then what will happen? All the dirt of the mind that has accumulated for ages and ages will be washed away, and your soul will shine forth, spotlessly pure. And when your soul

is cleansed of all outer dross, it will unite with the Immaculate Power of the Shabd within.

But if you allow the evil tendencies to make their home within you, if you accept the influence of the mind and senses while you are practicing the remembrance of the Lord, it is just like putting drops of poison into a jar of nectar. If you do the meditation with pure thoughts and then allow the senses to lure you back into the enjoyments of the world, all of your good deeds are reduced to ashes.

It is just like setting out one day and traveling ten or twenty miles along the way to your destination, and then, suddenly turning around and returning to the point where you had started from. Everything you have accomplished can be brought to naught in a moment. Therefore, you must rein in the mind and senses, keep them firmly under your control, and practice the meditation with undivided attention and wholehearted devotion.

No one is your real friend.
Your family and relations will plunder you.

Other than our Guru, do we have any real well-wisher in this world? No, not one. Therefore, Swami Ji warns us that our friends, our family, and our relations are devouring our life and wealth bite by bite.

Your youth and riches will not accompany you;
the noose of illusion is tied around your neck.
Kal and karma are snatching your precious breaths.

Other than our Guru, do we have any real well-wisher in this world? No, not one. Therefore, Swami Ji warns us that our friends, our family, and our relations are devouring our life and wealth bite by bite.

Do you think your youth will remain with you forever? If you use the time of your youth for meditation on Naam Simran and devotion to the Lord—if you manifest the first-hand spiritual experience in your within—then you will enjoy happiness in this world and the next. But if you squander your youth in worldly pleasures, you will become hollow and empty within. And when your end time comes, you will leave repenting and weeping. Therefore, Swami Ji is warning us that at the time of death neither wealth nor youth will accompany us. Only the Naam and the Guru will go with us. No other power can come to our aid.

In this world, you have become ensnared in the trap of illusion. Kal has bound you with the rope of karma and will devour you one day.

You will go again into the four categories of birth.[3]
Birth after birth, you will be thrown back into the hells.
Yama will torment you and give you great suffering.
With every breath, you will writhe in agony; your desires will not be fulfilled.
The abode of happiness will remain beyond your reach, and you will suffer agony and pain.

Other than our Guru, do we have any real well-wisher in this world? No, not one. Therefore, Swami Ji warns us that our friends, our family, and our relations are devouring our life and wealth bite by bite.

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3 The four categories of living creatures according to their mode of birth are: "(i) Andaj: those born from eggs, like birds, snakes, fish, etc.; (ii) Jeraj: those born from the foetus, like men and animals.; (iii) Utbhuj: those that sprout from seeds, like trees, shrubs and vegetables. (iv) Setaj: those that grow out of sweat, filth, etc., like lice and worms, etc." Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1964) p. 111.

Do you think your youth will remain with you forever? If you use the time of your youth for meditation on Naam Simran and devotion to the Lord—if you manifest the first-hand spiritual experience in your within—then you will enjoy happiness in this world and the next.

But if you squander your youth in worldly pleasures, you will become hollow and empty within. And when your end time comes, you will leave repenting and weeping. Therefore, Swami Ji is warning us that at the time of death neither wealth nor youth will accompany us. Only the Naam and the Guru will go with us. No other power can come to our aid.

In this world, you have become ensnared in the trap of illusion. Kal has bound you with the rope of karma and will devour you one day. When the human body goes out of your hands, you descend to lower bodies, and after every birth, you will endure the torments of Yama. He will hurl you into the hells, and then once again, you will revolve in the wheel of 84 lakh forms of life. Sometimes you will come as a cat, sometimes as a snake, sometimes as a scorpion. You will have to endure countless difficult incarnations.

When you are suffering in the hells, do you think someone will come to rescue you? No one will help you there. The scriptures have tried to enumerate the sufferings in these hells, but how can they describe such horrible tortures? The torments of those hells are beyond the power of words to express. You have to endure terrible pain, and there can be no hope of escape through death.

The astral body that is bearing all that agony does not die. In that region, no matter how much that body is burned or roasted, no matter what torture is inflicted on it, the soul cannot leave that body. You have to undergo whatever punishment has been decreed. The miseries of that place are

beyond count. You are powerless there, and no one listens to your cries.

In that place, there is not even a glimmer of happiness. Day and night, there is only suffering and despair. Some souls are thrown into the *kumbhi narak,*[4] some are roasted in the fire, some eat sand. There are so many different torments that it is impossible to describe them.

Throwing off the chains of worldly pleasures and desires, become detached from all of this.
Seek for the company of the Saints; come into the Satguru's shelter.
Cherish His teachings in your heart, and He will release you from chains that bind you.

There is only one way to escape from these sufferings. Cast the worldly pleasures out of your heart. Become detached from sense indulgences, and free yourself from desire.

He tells us to go into the company of the Saints. In this world, True Saints are very, very rare and hard to find. Otherwise, the world is flooded with so-called saints; you can find platoons of them with no difficulty—but that is a different matter. The True Saint is something totally apart.

Therefore, He says: "Set off in search of a Saint without delay. Hurry into the refuge of the Satguru." Treasure every single word He utters. Just as you would weave together hundreds of pearls on one string to form a necklace, so string His precious words together in your heart like pearls. Keep them always before you and draw inspiration from their luster. Then all your evil tendencies will leave you. Of course, we do listen

4 In the *kumbhi narak*, the jivas are boiled in oil and subjected to other unimaginable tortures. *Kumba* means "jar" or "cooking vessel," and *narak* means "hell."

to the Guru's words, but, unfortunately, they go in one ear and out the other. It is as if there were a direct tunnel from one side to other, and the words pass right through.

What can the Perfect Master do,
if there is some flaw in the disciples?
The blind ones don't absorb even one word;
it's like blowing air through
a hollow bamboo pipe.

What can the Perfect Master do? He is not going to pick up a stick and beat us. Instead, He will try to explain to us. If we understand and adopt His teachings, well and good. If not, then there's an end to it. Therefore, He says that we should take every single word into our hearts and become inspired to act on His instructions. Then liberation in this lifetime comes within our reach.

Always obey the words of the Guru, and
immediately discard the mind's advice.
Pouring the Guru's words into the mold of right
understanding,
Abandon the company of the manmukh.
The Gurumukhs conduct themselves in this
manner; adopt their ways and reduce Kal to ashes.

What criterion goes to show that we are following the words of the Guru? If we are obeying the Guru, then we will reject the dictates of the mind. But if we become drawn into the mind's schemes, then know it for certain that we have pushed the Guru's teachings aside. We don't have to ask someone else to confirm this. Our own mind will bear witness to our condition.

When you want to fashion a fine tool or a beautiful necklace, first you need to make a mold. Then, when you pour the molten gold or other precious metal into that mold, that molten metal will fill the mold and take on its exact shape. Similarly, if you wish to keep the molten gold of the Guru's words in your heart, first you need to make a mold of your intellect. Then, when you pour the Guru's words into that mold, your intellect will preserve those precious words in your heart in the form of right understanding.

At the same time, you also have to give up the company of the manmukhs. The manmukh has a sinful influence. Even if you have spent hundreds of years doing spiritual practices, just in a day everything can be spoiled, and all your hard-earned benefit lost. Therefore, to maintain your right understanding, you must avoid the company of the manmukhs.

Swami Ji is speaking of the Gurumukh's way of life. In the Ramayana we read that because of one word from Kaikeyi everything was changed. When her mind overpowered her, she told King Dasharatha to send Ramchandra into exile and make Bharat his successor. Because of evil influences, in just a second, her way of thinking was changed. As a result, Ramchandra had to go into exile in the forest retreat, and the old king wasted away and died[5]. Therefore, Swami Ji Maharaj

5 King Dasharatha had three wives: Kaushalya, the mother of Ramchandra; Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat; and Sumitra, the mother of Lakshman and Shatrughna. Ramchandra was the eldest son and heir to his father's throne. Kaikeyi was a mighty warrior and, many years earlier, she had saved Dasharatha's life in battle. At that time, he had granted her two boons: Ramchandra would be sent into exile for 14 years, and her son Bharat would be crowned king. Through the years, she had come to love Ramachandra and she recognized him as the rightful heir, but Kaikeyi's maid, Manthara, poisoned her mistress's mind against Ramchandra and convinced her to hold Dasharatha to his former promises.

says that the sincere, loving devotees must shun the company of the manmukhs if they want to do the true bhakti.

Concentrate your attention between the eyes.
Pierce through the veil at the Tisra Til and enter the etheric realm.
Behold the dazzling Light and enter into the gate of Banknal.
Listen to the Anhad Shabd and raise your surat to the Gagan.

Focus your attention within at the still point between the two eyes. Adopt a comfortable position, and do not move from there. We use the word *āsana* for a fixed posture, but this is not the deeper meaning of *āsana. Āsa* means "desire" and *na* means "no." So, sitting in an *āsana* really means to have no desire.

How can you achieve such a state? First, concentrate the mind so that no desire can disturb its stillness. Then, crossing over the Tisra Til, rise into the etheric realm. There a brilliant, Self-Luminous Light radiates day and night. Pierce through that Light and journey beyond it. Then, you come upon the entrance to Banknal, the crooked tunnel. Following along that way, your soul will first rise upward, then descend steeply, and finally, climb up once again. This crooked tunnel is called the Banknal. Traveling through this tunnel, your soul enters the next region.

Now, you catch echoes of the Anhad Bani reverberating from above. Absorb all your attention in that Sound coming from the Higher Realms, and it will lead you onward toward its source. There will be no need to ask directions from anyone along the way.

In the lofty Region of Sunn, catch sight of the glittering moon.
There, behold the white, scintillating rays of Daswan Dwar.
Bathe in the Mansarovar pool—emancipation is at hand.
Listen to the matchless melody of the kingri.
The lines of Karma are erased, and the swan soul flies free.

In the lofty heights of the Sunn, you are immersed in exquisite, indescribable moonlight, and you behold the pure, white radiance of Daswan Dwar.[6] In this region, you find the pool of Mansarovar (Triveni), where the souls wash away their sins and emerge as immaculate hansas. Outwardly, we go on pilgrimage to Triveni at Prayagraj to have a ritual bath where the Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati Rivers flow together. But this outer Triveni is only a copy of the inner Triveni, the confluence of three radiant streams in Daswan Dwar. We think that bathing in that river water washes away all our sins, but in this, we are deluded. No outer water can remove the accumulated sins of ages.

Only by bathing in that inner Mansarovar can we remove all vestiges of the physical, astral and causal coverings still clinging to the soul. In that pool of nectar, the sheaths of the various states of consciousness—*jāgrat* (waking), *svapna*

6 The terms Sunn (Void) and Daswan Dwar (Tenth Door) are used interchangeably for this entire region, though Daswan Dwar is sometimes used specifically to indicate the entryway where the soul crosses into the Par Brahm region from Trikuti. This is the realm where the soul bathes in the Mansarovar, and all traces of the lower worlds are washed away.

(dreaming), *shushupti* (deep sleep), *turyā* (super-consciousness) and *turyātīt* (beyond super-consciousness)—are all removed.[7]

The soul becomes a spotlessly pure hansa or swan. The music of the *kingri*[8] is resounding and, hearing that enchanting melody, the soul merges into it, becoming the form of Shabd. Now the soul flies free; no downward pull of desire remains. This radiant, untrammeled soul is called a hansa.[9]

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7 The Sikhs bathe in the outer pool at the Golden Temple, believing it will remove their sins. But the outer pool is only a copy of the Mansarovar of the Sunn Region. Similarly, the Hindus bathe at Triveni, which is also an outer representation of the real inner Triveni. Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh describes it in this way: "When the Sikh Gurus built the Golden Temple at what is now the City of Amritsar they surrounded it with a pool of water, to represent on earth the Mansarovar Pool or Lake of the third Spiritual Region. This pool they called Amritsar, which has the same meaning as Mansarovar—the pool of the Nectar of Immortality. In the same way, the Indian Rishis and Munis (sages and holy men of the past), called the confluence of the Ganges, Jamuna and the now vanished Saraswati, Tribeni, to symbolize on earth the meeting place of the three great streams of refulgent Light in Daswan Dwar. But the real thing that gives liberation lies within and not without." Sawan Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat* (Beas, India: Radha Soami Satsang, 1975) p. 23.

8 This simple stringed instrument is played with a bow; the kingri produces a plaintive and evocative melody.

9 Just like Sunn and Daswan Dwar are used to indicate the whole of the third region, so the Saints often use the terms Mansarovar and Triveni interchangeably to indicate the holy waters where the souls are purified. Swami Ji also uses the term Triveni to specifically indicate the confluence of three radiant streams at the very top of the Sunn Region: "Surat bathes in Mānsarovar and joins the assembly of Hansas. Turning round, it ascends to Sunn Shikhar (top of Brahmand) where Kingrī and Sārangī (the fiddle and the violin) are resounding incessantly. Hearing these sounds, it attains excellence, and goes across Tribenī. It reaches the threshold of Mahā-sunn and acquires the secret knowledge thereof." Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sar Bachan Radhasoami (Poetry) of Param Sant Puran Dhani Soamiji Maharaj*, Pt 2, Bachan 26, "The Shabd of the Third Heavenly Sphere," trans. S.D. Maheshwari (Soami Bagh, Agra, India: Radhasoami Satsang, 1970) p. 120.

Mahasunn is a region of deep, dense darkness.
But in the company of the Satguru, you will easily break through that impregnable barrier.
Once your soul breaks through, speed on in the company of the Satguru.
Listen to the sound of Bhanwar Gupha, and merge into Sohang.

Beyond this lies the impenetrably dense, dark realm of Maha Kal, the ruler of Maha Sunn. After bathing in the Mansarovar, the soul shines forth with the light of twelve suns. But when that Radiant Power of the soul gets connected to the gross physical body, we forget our true nature.

Confined in the body, we see from the physical level only, and then we assert: I am a woman, I am a man, I am a child, I am an old person, I am a Brahmin, I am a Kshatriya, my name is this, that, or the other. But in reality, when all vestiges of the material realm are washed away, then we recognize that we are truly Self-Luminous Light.

Traveling upward from the Mansarovar, the soul encounters Mahasunn, a vast region of total darkness, inaccessible and impossible to traverse. No one can cross over its dark expanse through their own power. But by the grace of the mighty Satguru—taking the support of the Sar Shabd—we can easily sail across.

Next comes Bhanwar Gupha, the Whirling Cave. Surdas Ji, was a devotee of Lord Krishna. He said so much in praise of the sweet music Krishna played on the murali and the bansari. But when he met a perfect Satguru and did the meditation of Shabd Naam, he rose to the region of Sohang (Bhanwar Gupha). Hearing the music resounding in that place, he said: "I would sacrifice a thousand

Krishna's on this beautiful melody of the bansari." The heart-ravishing Sound of that place is indescribably sweet.[10]

Proceeding along the way, you are surrounded by the music of endless Dhuns and Shabds.
Sublime and noble hansas come forward to meet you and extend a loving welcome.
As you reach the gate of Sat Lok, the sweet strains of the veena fill the air.[11]

After crossing the region of Sohang, your soul climbs higher still. And there the pure hansas come forward to meet you and welcome you with great joy. Having escaped unscathed from the many traps of creation, the souls dwelling in this realm possess a unique greatness. The matchless melodies of the veena and the breathtaking beauty of Sat Lok lie far beyond the feeble power of words to describe.

Go onward and view Alakh Lok, the Imperceptible Realm.
You will hear the Dhun of Alakh Purush and behold the matchless Radiance of that place.
Making the Dhun your support and strength, have the darshan of Alakh Purush.

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10 The words "murali" and "bansuri" both refer to the bamboo flute played by Lord Krishna, but technically they are two different instruments. The bansuri is a classical instrument, played by blowing through a hole in the body of the instrument, similar to a Western classical flute. The murali is a double-reed instrument played through a mouthpiece at the end of the tube. It is associated more with traditional folk music and is characterized by a simultaneous drone and melody line reminiscent of a bagpipe. (In this context, the murali is sometimes called a "pungi" or "been", not to be confused with the veena).

11 The veena is a lute-like instrument with melody and drone strings; the deep, rich, shimmering sound of the veena is central to Indian classical music. Saraswati, the goddess of arts and learning, is often portrayed playing the veena.

Then you come to Alakh Desh; the marvels of that realm cannot even be imagined. The region is called *alakh* or "imperceptible." Only the immaculately pure hansas can glimpse the splendor of the region, and even they have no words to describe it. We people are used to hearing the wandering yogis cry out "*Alakh Niranjan*" when they go from door to door to collect money, but what do they have to do with the Imperceptible Realm? The "*Alakh Niranjan*" of the beggars and the inconceivable glory of Alakh Desh are vastly different things.

Now intimations reach you from Agam Lok, the Inconceivable Realm.
Rushing upward, have the darshan of Agam Purush.
Storm the treasure house of unique refulgence; plunge into the Ocean of Nectar and become One with Agam.
Dancing in ecstasy, go on to the end of the journey.
Just like a river flowing into the sea, place your head at His Holy Feet, and merge into Radha Swami Dham.
Thus, at long last, you return to your True Home.

Going beyond Agam Desh, you reach Anami, the Nameless Region. At that time, the soul is overflowing with happiness and bliss. When the monsoon rains fall, then the swollen rivers break through all barriers and plunge into the sea with a great rush and roar. In the same way, the intoxicated

soul dives into the divine ocean and becomes one with that ocean. This Self-Existing state lies beyond all commentary and comprehension. There is nothing more to be said.

What more can I tell you?
I have revealed enough, and every word I have spoken is true.
You have been wandering astray through innumerable births and deaths.
Now, put the dust of His Holy Feet on your head.
Let all deeds and delusions be washed away.
Go on chanting the Holy Name of Radhaswami.

Satguru says: "What more can I tell you? Everything that needs to be said, I have revealed openly to you. I have left nothing out." For millions of lifetimes, you have wandered lost in forgetfulness; now put the dust of Satguru's feet on your head.

Here, He tells us: "Now, all remnants of delusion and taints of past deeds have been swept from my heart. Immersed in the stream of Shabd day and night, Radha, my soul, has merged with, Swami, the Primal Lord." This is the Self-Existing State.

Now, proceed with love and devotion; fix your attention in the Satsang.
Adopt the true practice. Sing this *Agam Gītā*—the Inner Song.

Therefore, fill your heart with affection and devotion. Fix your attention in the Satsang with deep love. Until love manifests within you, the words of the Satsang cannot touch your heart.

You will learn how to find Truth, how to practice Truth, how to live Truth. This is the *Agam Gītā*—the Inner Song. One person may speak of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Someone else may talk of the *Ashtavakra Gītā.*[12] A third person will tell you of the *Tilak Gītā.*[13] And a fourth will mention some other *Gītā*. But the primal *Agam Gītā*[14] resounding within is the greatest of all. That Inner Song is Self-Existing and all these outer *Gītā*s that are created and consumed by our senses are as nothing before it.

Play the game and win the gamble; you have no other friend in this world.
Place your faith in me. I have explained everything.

Now, you have gotten the human birth; in this game,

12 In the *Astāvakra Gītā*, the hermit Ashtavakra, following a question by King Janaka, explores the nature of the soul.

13 The *Tilak Gītā* is a Marathi translation and interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* completed in 1915 by the independence activist Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Its formal title is *Shrimadh Bhagvad Gītā Rahasya.*

14 The *Agam Gītā* (Inconceivable or Unfathomable Song) is the primal Sound Current as it came into manifestation and descended through all the planes of creation: "Before the creation, Shabd existed in its latent form and as such had no name. In this state, It was something completely established in Itself and was thus known as *Ashabd* (soundless), *Anaam* (nameless), *Alakh* (ununderstandable), *Agam* (inconceivable), *Akeh* (unutterable) *and Akath* (indescribable). When It came into manifestation, It was called Shabd or Naam." Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) p127.

you have won the jackpot. But nothing in this world remains. No one is the friend of the heart. One day you will have to leave everything here, and all the worldly relations will be separated from you. So, in the end, Swami Ji says, "Believe in my words. I have explained everything that you need to understand."

Therefore, Sehjo Bai tells us the proper way to obey the Guru's commands. We should follow whatever He tells us with firm determination. Following the Path of the Guru, we should anchor the mind in His words. Even if we suffer some harm or loss, even if we have to endure some humiliation, still we should not transgress the orders of the Guru.

—Baba Somanath

13

Abide by the Guru's Command

O Sehjo! When you take firm hold of the Guru's command, you can tread the Guru's Path with ease. When the Guru's Name resounds in every fiber of the body, then the disciple is filled with bliss.[1]

This is the bani of Sehjo Bai. She was a Perfect Disciple of Guru Charan Das Ji. Yesterday and the day before, for two or three days now in Satsang, we have taken banis describing the greatness of the Guru. Now we will consider in detail the importance of the disciple following the Guru's commands.

Many people consider the Guru to be great. They honor and respect Him. They perform whatever seva He gives them. But to follow the commandments of the Guru, to act according to His instructions, is very difficult. There is a vast difference between the status of the manmukh, one who obeys the mind, and the Gurumukh, one who obeys the Guru. For millions of yugas, for millions of lifetimes, we have followed the mind. We have gone on creating karmas, and those karmas have become the cause of our revolving over and over in the wheel of births and deaths. And so, for age upon age, we have wandered blindly in illusion.

1 Sehjo Bai, *Guru agyā driṛh kari gahai...*

But when we follow the Guru's commands, He removes all of our bonds, and our soul goes free. For this reason, we should go into the shelter of the Guru. In reality, if we are asking for worldly things, if we are happy receiving the gifts of this world, then we are not following the way of the Gurumukh. We cannot call this obedience to the Guru.

Therefore, Sehjo Bai tells us the proper way to obey the Guru's commands. We should follow whatever He tells us with firm determination. Following the Path of the Guru, we should anchor the mind in His words. Even if we suffer some harm or loss, even if we have to endure some humiliation, still we should not transgress the orders of the Guru.

What to speak of praising the Guru with our tongue, the Name of the Guru should issue forth from every pore of our body. Once Shiva and Parvati decided to pay a visit to Arjuna. When they reached Arjuna's home, Narada Ji had also just arrived, and Shri Krishna was there before any of them. At that time Arjuna was lying down, absorbed in contemplation. From every pore of his body, the chant "Shri Krishna, Shri Krishna, Shri Krishna" was resounding. Krishna Ji went in first to see Arjuna and found him in this state of inner intoxication. So, Shri Krishna sat down beside him and also became immersed in that intoxicated state.

Meanwhile, Shiva and Parvati requested Narada to announce their arrival and to find out if Arjuna was at leisure to meet with them. But when Narada entered Arjuna's room, he also became engulfed by the sound of "Shri Krishna, Shri Krishna," emanating from Arjuna's body and, taking his seat in turn, also became lost in ecstasy. After a while, when Narada did not return, Shiva and Parvati went to discover what had happened. When they entered Arjuna's room, finding everyone absorbed in deep meditation, they also sat down and became blissfully lost to the outer world.

When the disciple contemplates on the Guru in such a way that every pore of their body chants only the name of the Guru, then they can be called a Gurumukh. When such an intoxication takes hold of the disciple, how can any room remain within for the world and worldly things?

So, abide by Guru's command; always remain within His orders.
Never step outside the Guru's command; if you lose everything, happily let it go.

Whatever the Guru tells us to do, we should always follow His orders. If His words appear baneful to our limited understanding, let it be so; but we should never transgress His command.

Whoever follows the Guru's command overcomes all obstacles;
Whoever follows the Guru's command becomes a Gurumukh.

The Perfect Disciple who follows the directions of the Guru never experiences difficulties or obstacles. By following the Guru's order, you become a Gurumukh. Then not even the slightest trace of the mind remains. Obedience means following the commandments of the Guru implicitly.

Guru's words are the root mantra.

What is the root of all mantras? Following the commandments of the Guru. Otherwise, no matter how many mantras you may repeat, you will gain nothing.

[At this point Baba Somanath Ji asks Pushpamma to sing a hymn by Akka Mahadevi, on which He comments.]

O, Father! If I know You, then hell seems like salvation to me.
O, Father! Without knowing You, liberation is no better than hell.
O, Father! Without Your Love, joy is misery.
O, Father! If I have Your Love, misery is joy to me.
O, Father Chennamallikarjuna! Now I truly live; the bond you tied me with has set me free.

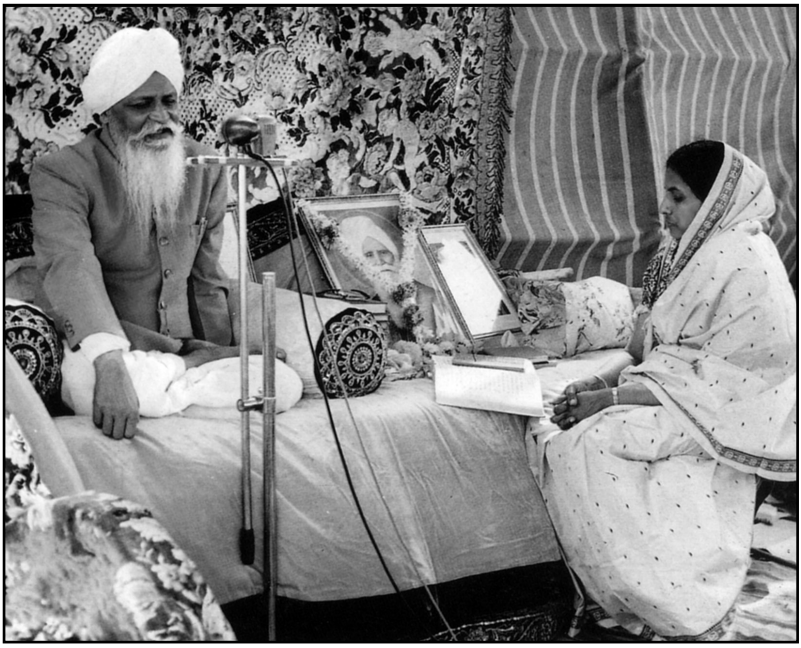
This is the bani of Akka Mahadevi.[2] She says, "When the experience of Your Divine Presence awakens in my within, even if I am in hell, I will remain in a state of supreme happiness. But if You don't shower Your grace, and that experience doesn't manifest within my heart, then even if I attain emancipation, that will be like hell for me."

Further, Akka Mahadevi tells us, "If I do not earn Your pleasure, whatever happiness comes to me will be a source of all sorrow." She says, "No matter how much suffering You give me, if You are pleased with me, then I could achieve no more exalted state.

2 Akka Mahadevi was a renunciate sadhu and devotee of Shiva who lived in Karnataka in the 12th century CE. She is associated with the sharana movement. *"Akka"* means elder sister and *"Mahadevi"* means great goddess.

Whatever words You have spoken to bind me, it is those words that have become my liberation. I was trapped in the net of the world, but now I am free."

[Baba Somanath Ji returns to the hymn of Sehjo Bai]



Baba Somanath Ji with Pushpamma singing the bani

The Guru's command strengthens devotion;
The Guru's command ferries you across the ocean of existence.

It is only by obeying the commandments of the Guru that our attention gets fixed in the devotion, the love awakens in

our within, and we experience true bhakti. Then our slavery to the mind is abolished, and our soul attains emancipation.

The Guru's command is the crown jewel.
Whoever follows the Guru's command is the true devotee of God.

You gain the greatest happiness of all by obeying the Guru's order. The one who follows the command of the Guru is called "Harijan"—the devotee of God.

Whoever accepts the Guru's command is called a Sadhu.
The secret of the Guru's command lies beyond our reckoning.

She says, "Whoever does the meditation unceasingly, according to the Guru's command, is called a Sadhu." When we follow the Guru's instructions and engage in constant meditation, we attain a state of consciousness that is unfathomable and unbounded—beyond the power of words to describe.

Whoever forgets the Guru's command will suffer, hanging upside down in the womb through endless incarnations.

She says that if you don't follow the commandments of the Guru, then all the calamities will fall on your head. You will hang upside down in the womb over and over again, trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

The commands of Guru Charandas are perfect.
Except for His command, everything is garbage.
Sehjo says: Only the obedient Gurumukh is happy.
All the pleasures of this world are dry as dust.

Through following the Guru's commands, we achieve perfection. Without obeying the Guru, no matter how many true and virtuous deeds we may perform, it is all a false dream.

Mountains lie on both sides. A narrow, subtle path runs in between them. Following that path a short distance, you come to a deep lake. People may ask how all this can be located in the forehead: "How did all these huge mountains come to be there? How can there be a lake there?" He explains to us that these things are hidden behind the curtain of the mind.

—Baba Somanath

14

The Treacherous Ascent

Scale the heights of Trikuti with caution.
Capture the three gunas and all the mental oscillations;
tie them to a stake and enter into the Sushumna.[1]

Paltu Sahib is describing the ascent to Trikuti. In the region of Trikuti, there are very steep mountains. He says: "Scale the heights of Trikuti with caution." Take care when climbing those slopes, because the ascent is very treacherous. You begin your climb through the Sushumna, the subtle, central artery in the forehead between the two eyes that leads upward to Trikuti. First, free yourself from all mental oscillations and from the three gunas—*rajas, sattva, and tamas*; you must tie them up securely. No thought should arise in your within. Then your soul can enter into the Sushumna and contemplate there with fixed attention, free of the three gunas.

Between the mountains, a path threads through a
narrow pass till it is blocked by the waters of a lake.

Mountains lie on both sides. A narrow, subtle path runs in between them. Following that path a short distance, you come

1 Paltu Sahib, *Tirakuṭī ghāṭ ko utaru samhāri kai...*

to a deep lake. People may ask how all this can be located in the forehead: "How did all these huge mountains come to be there? How can there be a lake there?" He explains to us that these things are hidden behind the curtain of the mind. They cannot be located by looking only at the gross, material body. If they were in the physical head, then nowadays, the doctors would have removed them and exhibited them. But these things are not located on the physical plane; they lie beyond the gross mind.

Beware of the whirlpools; steer your boat safely around them.
Cross over and leave that lake behind you.

At this place, many great rishis, munis, renunciates, and ascetics have become trapped in these whirlpools and have lost their way. They faltered in their quest and were deluded. For this reason, by the grace of the Satguru, maneuver carefully around these whirlpools and pilot your boat to the far shore.

The servant Paltu says, "You have to navigate your boat carefully."
The stream will merge into the Greater Stream, and you will break through Brahmand.

When you constantly remain alert and keep the conscious Power of your attention fixed within you, what will be the result? You will reach Brahmand and merge into Brahm. But if you do not remain watchful and steadfast, you will not be capable of breaking through the Brahmand. You should merge the stream of your individual consciousness into the stream of Universal Consciousness; then you will become a Brahmgyani—the knower of Brahm. But the goal still lies

far ahead. Through your meditation practice, pierce through Brahmand to the regions beyond.

But if we don't break through Brahmand in this lifetime through meditation, the worldly people are under the delusion that rites and rituals performed after death will liberate the soul. When someone dies and their corpse is burned on the funeral pyre, then the lead mourner takes a bamboo stake and pierces the "Brahmand"—that is, the skull—mistakenly believing that the soul flies free from the body and achieves salvation: "Friend, you didn't break through to emancipation while you were living, so now we'll smash your skull and release you."

In this madness, all the world has fallen down unconscious. Maya has plundered everything from them—even their clothes. They are lying naked and aren't even aware of their pitiful state. No one ever takes the time to think, "What is my real condition?" All are entangled in their children, their spouse, or mother, or sister or wealth, or name and fame, or caste and clan. Everyone is running after one thing or another. They never manage to free themselves from these attachments.

—Baba Somanath

15

All the World Has Gone Mad

Maya the tavern keeper, dispenses a terrible poison.
Everyone drinks it down; no one escapes.[1]

Paltu Sahib tells us that Maya is a tavern keeper. Day and night, she is serving up endless cups of poison to all the world. Intoxicated in the sense pleasures, everyone remains in a dumb stupor. Forgetting their true selves, they are engrossed in the worldly enjoyments. No one can escape drinking this inebriating poison.

If you read the stories of the gods and goddesses, you come to know that Indra was the king of the gods. Being attracted to Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama Rishi, Indra had to leave his throne in heaven and come down into this mortal world. And Chandra, the god of the moon, came along to help him. Those gods drank the cups of poison and drowned in the intoxication of Maya.

In the same way, when Bhasmasura became attracted to Lord Shiva's wife Parvati, he decided to kill Shiva so he could have Parvati for his own. Bhasmasura had the boon that when

1 Paltu Sahib, *Māyā kalavārinī det viṣh ghori kai...*

he put his hand on someone's head, that person would be reduced to ashes. So, he started chasing Shiva, and, in the end, Lord Vishnu had to intervene. To rescue Shiva, he took on the form of Mohini, a beautiful, alluring young woman, and, in that form, he diverted Bhasmasura's attention away from Shiva and destroyed him. Just see the sorry condition of the mighty gods and goddesses.

Maya plies her wares in every household, and we have become enslaved. Daily she serves us cups of poison and, drinking that poison, we remain in a perpetual state of drunkenness.

The lustful person's guru is his beloved,
the greedy person's guru is his wealth;
but Kabir's Guru is the Saint,
and the Saint's Guru is God Himself.

You have to abandon these first two gurus and accept the third Guru. Until you give up lust and greed, how can you become the Saint's disciple? Therefore, He tells us that Maya—the tavern keeper—serves up cups of poison through the sense pleasures and lulls everyone into a drunken sleep. No one can raise the slightest protest.

All the world has gone mad and has fallen in a dazed stupor.
They lie stripped naked, and no one awakes.

In this madness, all the world has fallen down unconscious. Maya has plundered everything from them—even their clothes. They are lying naked and aren't even aware of their pitiful state. No one ever takes the time to think, "What is my real condition?" All are entangled in their children, their spouse,

or mother, or sister or wealth, or name and fame, or caste and clan. Everyone is running after one thing or another. They never manage to free themselves from these attachments.

This addiction is so strong that the craving cannot be removed, once the tongue has tasted this poison.

He says that their addiction is so strong that no medicine can remove it. In the outer way, if you consume opium or if you drink liquor, there might be some remedy for these addictions. But we have been drinking Maya's poison for millions of yugas and millions of lifetimes, and still, we are enslaved to it. He says, "This addiction is so strong that the craving cannot be removed." Once we have tasted that poison, we go on craving it. We think there is no way to reduce that dependence. We go on moaning and complaining: "How is it possible to give this up? O Friend, I cannot live without it. I would simply die. What can I do? I am helpless."

Falling on the ground, they roll in the dust.
The servant Paltu prays for that which is genuine.

Everyone is rolling in the dirt of the gutter, lost in intoxication. Seeing everyone in this drunken state, Paltu Sahib says, "I have become detached from all this, so I know it is possible." Everyone has been fooled by falsehood. Kabir Sahib has said:

I have tasted the real butter, but all the world is deceived by the buttermilk.

Paltu Sahib tells us, "I have extracted the pure butter, but all the world is intoxicated with the residue—the sour buttermilk—mistaking it for the real thing."

He says, "Call those people brave, who have triumphed over the enemies of lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism." The Perfect Ones merge into that Form of Perfection. Kabir Sahib tells us, "Only such a brave warrior, who experiences this state of perfection, can explain it to others."

—Baba Somanath

16

Only the Brave Warriors

O renunciate! First, perfect the practice, and then sing His praise.[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He tells us that whoever has withdrawn their thoughts from outside and fixed them at the still point within, whoever has manifested the Shabd—their words are true. They can impart the Truth to others, based on what they themselves have seen and experienced within. Unless the soul is drawn within and unites with the Shabd, our words are meaningless and false. Only the one who has seen can say.

Until the spiritual practice bears fruit, we remain bereft of love.

The love will not be awakened until the inner portal opens, and we experience the power of the Shabd within. The door of mind and Maya blocks our way. When that door swings open, the treasure house of love that lies within will stand revealed. If there is no spiritual practice, there is no love.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Avadhū amal karai so gāvai...*

If we praise the fruit without savoring its sweetness, our empty words impart no glory.

If we have not eaten the fruit ourselves, if we have not savored and enjoyed it, then how can we praise its delicious taste? If someone has never eaten the fruit, has never even seen it, how can they sing its praise? Their words are empty and do not shed any glory on the fruit. Such praise lacks the ring of truth.

Without the Guru we cannot unravel the mystery of the inner knowledge; we remain lost in the false and useless things.

Until we have met the perfect Satguru and have devoted ourselves to the practices He enjoins, we remain in illusion. Until we have a first-hand experience of the inner way, all our talk is worthless—we are only squandering our spiritual capital. Our intellect is controlled by the ego. Acting on its advice, we believe it is enough to perform auspicious deeds and to avoid inauspicious actions.

We waste our lives enjoying the pleasures and suffering the pains, and then we depart from this world empty-handed. We have not received the true knowledge from the Guru, and we have not achieved any experience of the beyond. Until we meet with the true Guru, what path can we follow? And without knowledge of the right path, how can we progress on the spiritual journey?

Taking the lamp in his hand, the blind person tries to illumine the path.

A blind person takes a torch or a lantern or a lamp, instructs the other blind people to follow him, and then sets out to

guide them along a dark path. That blind person has no idea what light is; he has never even seen it. So how can he guide others and light their way? In the same manner, we entrust our fate to our own blind intellect. We accept the intellect as our god; and serving that god, we throw away our precious human birth.

Once four blind men went to see an elephant. One blind man rubbed his hand over the elephant's back and declared, "The elephant is like a wall." The second blind man rubbed his hand over the elephant's leg and said, "No, the elephant is like a pillar." The third blind man approached the elephant and happened to rub his hand over the elephant's big, flat ear. That blind man told the others, "This elephant is much like a winnowing basket." The fourth blind man approached to find out about the elephant; seizing the elephant's tail, he told the others, "You are all wrong. The elephant is just like a rope." Each blind man was expressing the impression he formed of the elephant through his sense of touch. But if someone with eyes had looked at that elephant, they would have seen that the elephant was something quite different from the impressions of those four blind men.

Similarly, we people are spiritually blind. One person says God has five faces, someone else says God is the four-faced Brahma, someone else says God is the three-faced Dattatreya. And on and on. But what is the reality? God does not take birth or die. He has no form; He has no color. He is a Self-Existing Power. He supports everything that exists with His Power. The whole world, the entire creation, exists in Him. How could He have three or four or five faces? We conceive of these ideas with our intellect, and then—worshiping the fantasies that we ourselves have created—we fritter away the human birth.

You want to enlighten others, while you yourself are stumbling in the dark.

We relate so many stories, exhibiting our knowledge of God to others, but we ourselves remain in the dark. Until the light of the Guru's knowledge dawns in our own hearts, what enlightenment can we offer to others, no matter how much we preach? We cannot impart what we do not know.

You yourself are spiritually blind, but when ten more blind people flock around you, the world calls you a guru.

One blind person starts preaching, and many other blind people gather around. They call that person a guru and the congregation swells to a great size. The word "*Guru*" means the one who shines light in the darkness. "*Gu*" means darkness. "*Ru*" means light. So, until the light of the Guru Power manifests in the darkness of your heart, how can you be called a Guru?

Having no knowledge of the True Home, you lead others astray.

"Where have I come from? What is my true country? What road should I follow? What principles must I adopt? What inner experience leads to my lost homeland?" Until you acquire this knowledge, you cannot progress. It makes no difference if the whole world follows you and praises you as the guru of gurus.

O Fool! You are watering a dead stump with nectar, while the wish-granting tree is forgotten.

This priceless human body is like nectar. But placing your faith

in the false intellect, you are squandering your life. You are pouring that nectar on a dead stump. You do not get the inner experience of the Naam, and you do not discover that True Lord, who is the wish-granting tree.

You sow the seed in the brackish earth, and you are pouring water on the stones.

We have gotten this priceless human birth, and we have repeated a little bit of Naam Simran. But what kind of Naam Simran? It is just like taking the seed and planting it in the dry, brackish soil. That seed doesn't sprout and it produces no fruit.

We say that God dwells in idols made of stone. Daily we go and wash those idols and become their servants. But those idols never eat, they never speak, they never move, they don't do anything. Even if we go on lifelong pouring water over those idols, we will gain nothing at all.

O Fool, your own house is burning, but you are trying to extinguish the fires of others.

The fire of "I and mine," of desires and longings, of lust and anger, is burning in your heart. You are trying to put out the smoldering garbage heaps of others. Friend, first extinguish your own fire. It has been said:

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

You can prepare so many delicious dishes, but if you wish to satisfy your hunger, you must eat them. You must

experience their taste before you can praise them to others. Then your words will carry some weight. But you haven't eaten those foods and enjoyed them. You don't know what they taste like, and still, you are advising other people to eat some food or other, saying, "You should eat this. It will make you as strong as a wrestler." But what about your own condition? When someone asks what you yourself are doing, you reply, "Well, I am afflicted with tuberculosis." What value can anyone gain from your advice?

The pandits are deluded, even though they read and study.
Who will explain to them and set them right?

Some people call themselves scholars, intellectuals and gyanis. But if these learned people are themselves going astray, if they are making mistakes, who will be able to point out their errors to them? When the leaders are going down the wrong path, what will become of the world?

Kabir says, "Listen, O Gorakh. The Saints are not pleased with all this."

Kabir Sahib tells Gorakh Nath, "O Gorakh, the Saints are not pleased with such discussions and teachings and worldly ways."

Only the rare, brave Warriors—those who achieve perfection—can explain this state.

He says, "Call those people brave, who have triumphed over the enemies of lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism." The Perfect Ones merge into that Form of

Perfection. Kabir Sahib tells us, "Only such a brave warrior, who experiences this state of perfection, can explain it to others."

So, He says that you should contemplate on the Guru in such a way that your sins and transgressions are removed, and your within becomes pure. Once you become purified, the outward pull exerted by Maya and the desires is finished off; the world holds no more attraction for you. The Radiant Form functions in the astral planes, and the Power of that inner Radiant Form of the Guru will connect you with that Shabd, which is the true Form of the Guru in the higher realms.

—Baba Somanath

17

Take Firm Hold of the Guru's Naam

O dear soul, contemplate on the form of the Guru.
Without contemplation, you cannot attain liberation.[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Swami Ji Maharaj. He tells us that the mind entered the outer world and became connected with it in two ways: first, through remembrance of the things of this world, and second, through contemplation on those things. Through millions of yugas and millions of births, the mind has remained extroverted. We have become the image of the outer world and go on revolving in the cycle of 84 lakhs births and deaths.

We do not know who we are, we cannot remember the land from where we came, and we have no idea where we will go when we depart from this life. Every person says, "I am a human being. I belong to this country. I am so-and-so's father. I am so-and-so's son. I come from this caste and that community." But in reality, we belonged to no caste or clan before our birth, and no caste or community will accompany us after death. Before coming into this world, no one knows in what country they will be born or who their mother and father will

1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Guru kā dhyān kar pyāre...*

be. And no one knows where they will go after death or where the soul came from originally. For millions of yugas and millions of lifetimes, we have been wandering in this forgetfulness and delusion.

It is to become free from this suffering that we have gone into the shelter of the Guru. What does the Guru teach us? He explains: "Brother, the force that has brought you into this world and made you extroverted has to be reversed." How can we change the direction of that force? Only through Simran, remembrance of the Guru, and Dhyan, contemplation on the Guru. When we contemplated on the outer things, we became the image of this external world. Here Swami Ji tells us how to turn that force inward. He says, "Do the contemplation of the Guru."

Now, the question arises, "Can't I achieve the same thing by contemplating on the form of Brahma or Vishnu or Shiva, or the other gods and goddesses? Can't I contemplate on the form of my own personal god, my Isht Deva?" Truly speaking, our soul is conscious, but all these outer idols and images of the gods and goddesses are unconscious—we have fashioned them ourselves according to the fantasies of our mind. In order to awaken that conscious soul and turn it inward, we need to contemplate on some conscious Power. Such a feat cannot be accomplished by contemplating on that which has no consciousness. Therefore, He tells us that the Guru is conscious, and the soul is also conscious. The goal of your contemplation should be to become so absorbed in the Guru that you become His very form. You no longer remain; only He remains. This is what is meant by contemplation. Without such absorption in the Guru, you cannot achieve emancipation. Until your contemplation is perfected and you have that experience of Oneness within, the Guru Power will not manifest fully within you, and you cannot achieve liberation from this world.

Become dyed in the color of Naam; then you will reach your True Home.

When that conscious Power of the soul crosses beyond the nine outer doors of the body, it becomes self-luminous; it becomes the image of Light. There the conscious, Radiant Form of the Guru is waiting for the soul. When your attention becomes absorbed in the Guru's Radiant Form, then your within is flooded with scintillating Light. On this subject, Tulsi Das Ji has said in the Ramcharitmanas:

Dazzling light flashes from the nails of the Guru's feet.
When I remember Him, His divine vision fills my heart.

The veil of Maya has been thrown over your inner eye. Until the Light of the Guru's feet dawns in your heart, this veil of illusion, ignorance, and sin cannot be flung aside. So, He says that you should contemplate on the Guru in such a way that your sins and transgressions are removed, and your within becomes pure. Once you become purified, the outward pull exerted by Maya and the desires is finished off; the world holds no more attraction for you. The Radiant Form functions in the astral planes, and the Power of that inner Radiant Form of the Guru will connect you with that Shabd, which is the true Form of the Guru in the higher realms. The soul is the form of Shabd, and Shabd is the Almighty Lord. Shabd pervades Brahm. Shabd pervades Parbrahm. Shabd is Truth. Shabd escorts you back to your Original Home by the Royal Road. Don't look to any other guide.

Take firm hold of the Guru's refuge; otherwise, your work cannot be accomplished.

Until you become established in the Guru's devotion with one-pointed attention, and until you have successfully

completed your course in Gurubhakti, your efforts cannot bear fruit. The inner door stands open for the Gurumukhs, but the manmukhs cannot enter there.

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

The wisdom of the Guru unites our soul with the Almighty Lord; the wisdom of the Guru is founded on the experience of Truth.

Why do you long for material gain and worldly honor?
The price you pay will be steep.

Because of the desire for material possessions and worldly prestige, all sentient beings—the gods and goddesses, the yakshas (demigods) and gandharvas (heavenly musicians), the human beings, the animals and birds—stay bound to this world. Therefore, Swami Ji says you should empty your heart of these desires. You run after the material things and strive for the applause of your fellows. You long for these things, and you labor to achieve them, but one day you yourself will have to settle your accounts and pay for the karmas you have created. In your pursuit for honor and adulation, you have amassed heavy karmas that become fetters binding you to this world. You wish for happiness and comfort, but that very happiness becomes a source of bondage. Therefore, He enjoins: "Root out the desire for gain and honor."

All the karmas you are creating will have to be paid for one day.

Whether you are performing the deeds openly or in secret, you will have to bear the reaction of those deeds. First, the

thoughts and desires arise in your inner mind, then they become the cause of action, and this action creates new karma that is added to your already existing store. And who will bear this reaction? You are the one who will have to settle this account. When you sow seeds in your own field, you yourself will have to reap that crop and feast on that harvest. In the same way, everyone's heart is filled with the impressions of the past karmas. And whether those karmas are bad or good, it is the person who created them who will have to suffer or enjoy the reaction.

For this reason, keep the wholesome thoughts—the thoughts of the Lord—in your heart day and night. Don't let any other thought strike there. Tulsi Das says:

Where the thoughts are good, prosperity flourishes.
Where the thoughts are bad,
they bring misfortune in their wake.

No one has bound your soul from outside. Your own misdeeds and arrogance are the fetters that keep the soul tied. And it is through your good thoughts and actions that these fetters can be cut. You create and destroy your own bondage; it is not imposed on you by someone else. But you don't understand the matter correctly.

Whatever actions you are performing, you always think, "This will bring me profit and happiness." But there is no profit in these actions; there is no happiness. In fact, the worldly things you acquire become the source of your bondage. Whether you perform the action openly or in secret, the impression of that deed remains in your inner mind. Deep in your within, you know whether your action is sinful or virtuous. You cannot hide anything from the mind. If you do something in secret, still the mind is aware of it. Not only is

the mind aware of it, the mind is also the source of it. It is the nature of the mind to conceal its misdeeds. For this reason, whatever bad intention the mind has formed, whatever secret sin the mind has resolved on committing, never act on its suggestion. Keep the love and devotion for Sat Naam and the Guru in your heart. Then you will not be sowing seeds for future crops, and you will not have to eat that harvest.

Be brave and free yourself from the net of this world in any way you can.

Kal has ensnared all the jivas in the trap of this world, just like a fisherman. The fisherman casts his nets into the flowing water and fastens them on all sides, leaving one side open, and through that opening, the current sweeps all of the fish into his snare. In the same way, the Lord Kal has created this universe, and in it, he has set the nets of *sanchit*, *prālabdh*, *kriyamān*, and *āgamya* karmas. These are the four categories of karma. *Sanchit* karmas are the karmas created in past lives that have been stored for future payment. The *prālabdh* karmas determine this lifetime, whether we take birth in a good or bad household, in the home of a sadhu, or a wealthy man, or a king. The karmas that shape our destiny in the present life are called the *prālabdh* karmas. And the karmas that we are continually creating in this life itself, whether good or bad, are called *kriyamān* karmas. Further, we go on planning to carry out actions in the future, creating *āgamya* karmas. We are ensnared in the net of these four karmas.

Sometimes the resolve to perform an action arises in our heart, and we think, "I want to do this thing. How will I accomplish it? I will do this. I will do that." This very thought that arises creates an impression or *sanskāra*, and that *sanskāra*

binds us to some future course of action. This is *āgamya* karma. Then further, every day we go on making new karmas through our constant activity: we eat, we drink, we work, we rest. All the activity of the present life creates *kriyamān* karmas. The karmas that determined the present life and formed this body are the *prālabdh* karmas. The soul is weighed down by all these four types of karma. Sometimes we see that even after performing righteous deeds, we reap a bad result. The reason this occurs is that we are paying off the reaction in this life for something from the past that had been stored in our *sanchit* karma.

One day the blind king Dhritarashtra asked Lord Krishna, "O Lord! I have the knowledge of my last one hundred births, but in those lives, I performed no such deed that could make me blind in this birth." Then Lord Krishna answered, "In your hundred and sixth past life, you committed the sin that brought about this infirmity." So you should understand what a thick veil of karma has been thrown over the soul. That veil is made up of our own deeds, taken from the vast storehouse of our *sanchit* karma.

Stretching the nets of these four types of karma, the Lord Kal has captured all the jivas. At the time when we are creating the karmas, we do not understand what a powerful force karma is. Why do we act as we do? The intellect within us has been shaped by the karmas from our past lives. And according to our intellect, we perform deeds in the present. And then we become bound by those fresh karmas as well.

Whoever comes out of this trap can be called brave. You assert: "I am brave; I am a man." Friend, if you consider this carefully, you will understand that you are not yet a true man, a true human being. "*Purush*" means man—"*pur*" plus "*ush*." *Pur* refers to the body, and *ush (ish)* refers to the enlivening

Power of the soul within the body.[2] Whoever gains knowledge of the soul while dwelling in this body can truly be called *purush*. Only a few rare ones achieve this. Just growing a big mustache doesn't turn you into a *purush*. Whoever breaks through this net of Kal and karma is the real *purush*—the brave one.

Whoever has subdued the mind, that person is the brave one.

Whoever brings the mind under control, whoever kills the mind, that person is the brave warrior; the rest are all cowards. Many great warriors like Karna and Bhima came, but those poor fellows were under the control of Kal. They did not understand their own minds. Getting trapped in the outer arrogance of the world, they became involved in wars and fighting to fulfill their Kshatriya dharma, their duty to their Kshatriya caste. They were faithful to their worldly dharma, but they did nothing for the dharma of their souls.

In Punjab, there was once a king named Katas Raj. And just like Hiranyakashipu, he had imprisoned all the sadhus, the renunciates, the yogis, the sanyasis, and devotees of the gods and goddesses. He proclaimed, "I am the God of this time. You have to worship me alone. Whoever worships me as God can go free, all the rest will remain in prison." He had locked up over a thousand sadhus. One day, when a sadhu was being taken away to prison, all at once he addressed the king, saying, "Maharaj, we are all willing to worship you, but among the sadhus, there is one great sadhu who is the

2 Wisdom Library also traces a similar etymology: "the spirit that is hidden in the body" (*puri śete*). https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/purusha Accessed 9/17/2023

highest of all. When he agrees to repeat your name, then all of us will do likewise." So Katas Raj said, "Who is this yogi?" The sadhu told him, "Machindra Nath is sitting performing austerities at Shimla Dwip, and if he accepts you, then we will all repeat your name."

Then Katas Raj told his chief minister, "O minister, gather my army. We march immediately for Shimla Dwip to confront this yogi." The chief minister replied, "Maharaj, for years upon years Machindra Nath has been sitting in meditation, going without food and water. His body will be all dried up, just skin and bones. What need do we have of armies to do battle with him? Let us go talk with him, just you and I." So the king and his chief minister went to where that yogi was sitting. The minister thought, "He has been sitting here for such a long time performing his austerities. If we disturb him suddenly then he will burn us up with his yogic gaze." Thinking this, the minister fashioned three figures out of rags and straw, and each one looked just like the king. Then, using a method known to the minister, they brought Machindra Nath out of his yogic trance. When he awakened and opened his eyes, he saw a straw man before him and, with the heat of his gaze, he reduced it to ashes. He did the same to the second straw man, and then to the third one as well. The minister thought, "The anger of the sadhus is like milk boiling over; it seethes up suddenly and then is quickly finished. He has burned up these three straw men, and his anger is quenched. Now, on the fourth try, it should be safe to approach him."

So, the minister told the king, "Now you can go and stand before him." The king went up to Machindra Nath, and the yogi asked him, "Who are you? Why have you come here?" The king replied, "I am Katas Raj, the king of Punjab. Not

only am I king, I am also God Almighty Himself. Everyone has to worship me, and no one is allowed to bow before any other so-called gods. If you repeat any other name, you will be hauled off to prison and locked away." Then Machindra Nath replied, "Brother, what you say is alright, but I have one enemy. If you can bring that enemy under your control and emerge victorious over him, I will understand you as God Almighty, and I will worship you. This enemy is so powerful that he has conquered the three worlds. Even Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and the 33 million gods and goddesses are numbered among his slaves. Everyone is in his power—the human beings, the yakshas (demigods) and gandharvas (heavenly musicians), the animals, everyone. That enemy is very mighty and powerful."

Katas Raj replied, "Brother, don't praise my enemy in front of me. Just tell me where he is. How can I find him? I will set out right now to defeat and slay him. And if I don't succeed, I will throw myself into the fire and die." Then the yogi asked him, "Do you mean this?" Katas Raj replied, "Yes, I swear it." Then Machindra Nath told him, "This enemy is your mind. If you can bring your mind under your control, then I will acknowledge you as God, and I will worship you." But how could such an arrogant man control his mind? In the end, admitting defeat, he burned himself to death.

The meaning of this story is that if a person can bring their mind under control, they become the owner of the whole world. He who conquers the mind conquers the world. But until you have conquered the mind, how can you conquer anyone else? Your mind is within you, and still, you cannot control it, so how can you expect to control the minds of others?

Mind is a mighty enemy; it dwells in your within.
Victory over such an enemy is hard won.

The only enemy of all the jivas is the mind. That enemy dwells within everyone. It is a simple matter to conquer the whole world. But it is very difficult to conquer the mind within you. The great kings and emperors like Ravana conquered all the world and the heavens as well. But they couldn't overcome the mind. Whoever overcomes the mind, becomes God Himself.

Pursue the mind with determination.
Give up all other methods.

It is only in this human body and not in any other that we can come to understand the nature of the mind and experience its power. It is in the human body that we can make the mind steady through meditation. Therefore, Swami Ji says, pursue the mind and keep a careful watch on it. Endeavor to make the mind still. Give up all other pursuits. Once the mind comes under your control, then you will gain everything.

First, have love for the Guru; then, listen to the Shabd in your within.

Swami Ji tells us the method to bring the mind under control. How can this be accomplished? Through love for the world, our attention has become extroverted. Now, it is essential to attach our love to the Guru. Why? If you want to see your face, you need to take the help of a mirror; you

have to go look into it. The mirror doesn't summon you, saying: "Come look in me and see the reflection of your face." It is up to you to seek the mirror's help. Similarly, when you want to see the Self-Existing Soul within, you have to request the help of the Guru, you have to attach your love to the Guru. Because of the waves of the mind, your attention has become attached to the things of this world, to such an extent that if you see even a worn-out broom, you will assert, "That is mine." You want to lay claim to that useless broom. In order to turn your attention away from all the worldly objects and make it one-pointed, you need to contemplate on the Guru's form.

How can you love and contemplate on the gods and goddesses whom you have not seen? You don't know if they are dark or fair, if they are tall or short. You don't know anything about them, because you have never laid eyes on them. You have heard about them from the Shastras, and you have formed a picture of them in your own mind. What was Krishna like? You say he had a dusky complexion. What was Ram like? He was also dark-skinned. The Shastras have praised them and have given you a description of them, but you have never seen for yourself if they are dark or fair. So, how can you contemplate on what you have not seen? It is impossible.

On the other hand, you have seen the Guru. Therefore, your concentration should be riveted on Him. By meditating on the Guru, your love for the world and worldly things fades away, and your love for the Guru becomes firm. The Guru tells us, "Brother, the Naam within you is the form of Love. Get connected to the Lord's Naam. You don't need to ask for anything else."

Accept these two methods; don't become involved in other practices.

He tells us, "If you desire to become liberated in this lifetime, if you want to have the experience of the Lord, then make two methods foremost in your heart." What methods are these? Dhyan of the Guru and the Simran of Naam. Never let your attention waver from these two practices. In earlier times, people did not have matches or lighters, so what did they do when they needed fire? They would strike a piece of flint against a steel plate to create sparks, and the sparks would ignite a char cloth and tinder. In this way, they could build a fire.

Similarly, when we do the Dhyan of the Guru and the Simran of Naam, the two strike together and ignite the char cloth of *ahankāra* (ego)[3] in the *antahkarana* (inner mind), and they kindle the fire. In that fire, all the impurity of the inner mind is burnt away.

So, if the mind leaves the Simran of Naam, then anchor it in the Dhyan of the Guru. And if it wavers from the contemplation of the Guru, then fix it in the remembrance of Naam. Never let your mind be without one or the other of these two practices. Then your inner mind becomes purified, and the pure Power of the Shabd will drag your attention upward.

When you have conquered your mind, then raise your surat into the gagan (inner sky)

Through these methods of contemplation on the Guru

3 In this context "ego" does not refer to arrogance and vanity, but rather to individuality.

and the Simran of Naam, all the grossness of the mind will be removed, and it will accept what you say. Then you should tell it to ascend to the seat of the soul. Until your mind is willing to obey you, how can it rise to that inner realm? Now when you sit for meditation in the morning, the mind is running here and there, bound up in the worries of the world.

You are just like the crane who stands with closed eyes, seemingly engaged in the contemplation of the Lord, but really waiting to catch a fish. Your body is sitting in meditation with closed eyes, but your mind is wandering outside. So how can you do the remembrance of the Lord? When you repeat the Simran, the mind withdraws and focuses within; when it accepts your commands, then you can instruct it to rise into the spiritual realms above. But when your mind refuses to obey you, when it is running outside, how can it make the inner ascent?

All the other works of this world are false; abandon these useless pursuits and devote yourself to the true work.

He says all the activities, all the happiness and all the honor and respect of this world are false. Only this spiritual work is true. So, when you give up all the false works and attach your thoughts to this true work, then your task will be accomplished. Thousands of people fill their stomachs, and then—lost in the worldly thoughts—they go on repeating, *Rama, Rama, Rama*. Friend, where is this Rama you are worshiping? Does he know of your devotion? What relationship do you have with him?

Radhaswami says, "Hold fast to the support of Naam."

Swami Ji Maharaj says, "Give up everything else and attach your thoughts to the Naam." The deer hears the hunter beating out an enchanting rhythm, and, intoxicated with that sound, it comes near to the hunter and lays its head on the drum. In the same way, you should become so absorbed in the inner Sound, that you become the form of that Sound.

Upon crossing the seventh chakra, we reach the eight-petaled lotus. From that source, the entire shawl of the body draws its power. It is only because of the enlivening Power of the soul that the body can move and speak and walk. That Power works through the three gunas, five subtle elements, five gross elements, the ten indriyas and the twenty-five prakritis, to carry on all the physical activities. In this way, the Master Weaver creates the shawl of the body.

—Baba Somanath

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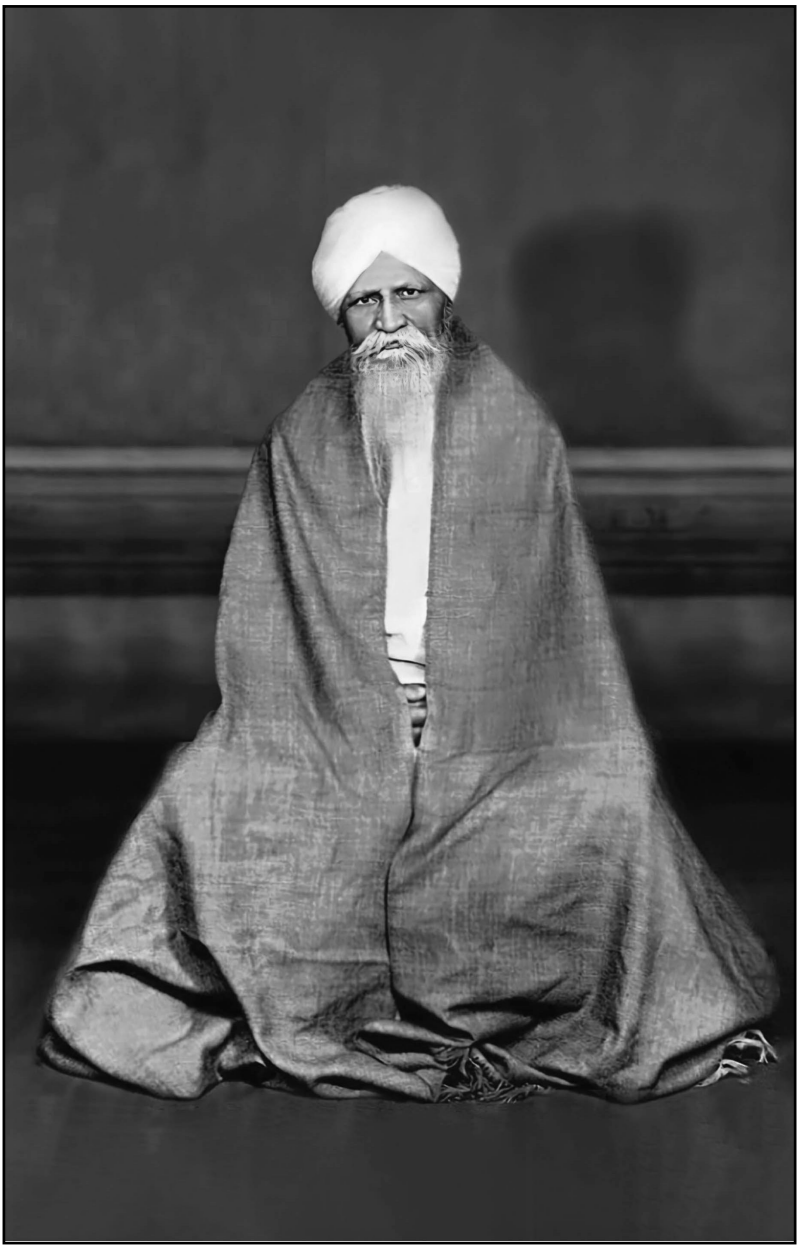
Sheer, Delicate Shawl So Finely Woven

Sheer, delicate shawl, so finely woven.
What makes its warp? What makes its weft?
What fiber forms the strands?[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. What a miracle that the Almighty Lord has made this shawl of the human body. All other shawls are made of cloth. We may dye them with some colors to form a design; still there is nothing special about such shawls. But the shawl of the body is fashioned by the Great Weaver Himself, and no one else has the skill to create it. The makeup of this body is so subtle and complex that we cannot add even one hair to it. If one of our hairs falls out, even if a hundred doctors exert all their skill, still they cannot restore that hair to our body.

With His great power and competence, the Almighty Lord Himself has made this beautiful shawl—so delicate and fine. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says: "What warp has He chosen and what weft has He filled it with? How could anyone fashion such a garment?" Now He describes to us how the Almighty wove this shawl.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Jhīnī jhīnī bīnī chadariyā...*



Baba Somanath Ji

The yarn stretched on the loom is called *tānā*—the warp. The yarn that fills the warp, that is woven into the warp to form the fabric, is called *bānā*—the weft. What are these yarns made of? What thread has been plied and twisted to form their strands? He explains all this to us in great detail.

***Inglā* forms the warp, *pinglā* forms the weft that fills it.**
***Sushumnā* is the thread from which they are spun.**
Thus the shawl is woven.

In the language of the Shastras, the subtle veins in the forehead are called इड़ा *idā* and पिंगला *pingalā*. But in everyday Hindi, we just say *inglā-pinglā*. He tells us these subtle veins are located on the right and left sides of our forehead—*inglā* on the left and *pinglā* on the right. From these two veins emanate lesser veins that carry the lifeforce and empower our hands, feet, stomach, head, and so forth. But the vein supporting all the others is the *sushumnā naḍi* in the center of the forehead. The *sushumnā naḍi* is one and from it arise the other two major veins (*inglā-pinglā*) through which the entire body comes into being.

He turns the spinning wheel of the eight-petaled lotus, twisting the five elements and the three gunas into yarn.

Upon crossing the seventh chakra, we reach the eight-petaled lotus.[2] From that source, the entire shawl of the body draws its power. It is only because of the enlivening Power of the soul that the body can move and speak and walk. That Power

2 The eight-petaled lotus, which is located just above the seventh chakra, is the seat of the soul.

works through the three gunas, five subtle elements, five gross elements, the ten indriyas and the twenty-five prakritis, to carry on all the physical activities.[3] In this way, the Master Weaver creates the shawl of the body.

It takes the Lord ten months to fashion it.
His shuttle flies back and forth—thunk, thunk...
Thus, the shawl is woven.

It takes ten months to weave this shawl. Just like cloth is woven, in the same way, the Lord works very hard for ten months weaving that shawl. No one sees Him working, but after ten months that shawl is ready. And who has woven it, no one knows.

Gods, men and sages alike wrap themselves in that shawl, but wearing it, they soil and defile its delicate fabric.

All the yakhshas and gandharvas, all the human beings, men and women alike, wear this shawl. The whole creation—Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, the 33 million gods and goddesses, and the beings in the seven nether regions and below—all are wrapped in this shawl.

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3 The Almighty Lord weaves the shawl of the body through the interaction of the **three gunas**: activity, righteousness, and inertia; the **five gross elements**: earth, water, fire, air, and ether; and the **five subtle elements**: smell, taste, sight, touch, and sound, producing the **five indriyas of knowledge**: eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and skin; the **five indriyas of action**: mouth, hands, feet, generative organs, rectum; and the **twenty-five prakritis**, described by Sant Kirpal Singh as "compounded elements in varying degrees of proportion (prakritis) which prepare the physical moulds or bodies in different shapes and patterns, shades and colours as a result of karmic reactions." Kirpal Singh, *The Mystery of Death* (Blaine WA: Ruhani Satsang, 2007) p. 51.

But whoever puts it on sullies it and then tosses it away. No one cleanses it. Whoever wears it, stains it and makes it dirty. If they were to wash it and make it clean again that would be beneficial. But they don't even understand how to wash the cloth. They need to find some skilled Washerman.

We wrap ourselves in that shawl, make it filthy, and then throw it away. This is the reason we go on revolving endlessly in the cycle of birth and death. The Lord has woven this shawl, and if we could only understand how to treat it properly and offer it back to him pure and unstained, then we would never again have to take rebirth. But instead, we go on making the shawl dirty and so over and over again, we have to come into this world.

The servant Kabir handles it with great care and returns it to the Lord as spotless and immaculate as when he received it.

Now Kabir Sahib explains to us: "I also put on this shawl, just like you, but I have kept my shawl spotlessly clean. When I offered it back to the Lord, that shawl was just like brand new. I washed the pride from this body and so I will never have to take birth in this world again. The pure, spotless shawl that the Lord entrusted to me, I offered back to Him just as immaculate as when He had given it.

Now He tells us, renounce pride of both body and mind. Become the servant, the lowly one. Then you will climb up to the branch where that fruit is hanging and will partake of its nectar. Until that feeling of humility and lowliness takes root in your heart, how can you progress on your quest?

—Baba Somanath

19

A Sweet Fruit Grows High in the Treetops

A sweet fruit grows high in the treetops; who can climb up to pick it?[1]

He says this fruit is exceedingly sweet—no other sweetness can compare with it. But that fruit is growing high in the treetops, far above all the other fruits. Only a rare soul can pick that fruit; no one else can climb so high.

Only a true one who knows the method to extract that nectar can drink it.

The juice of that fruit is nectar. Only if you have found the Truth and follow the correct method can you drink that nectar. Until you are true through and through, you won't get the juice of that fruit. You will drink a very different "nectar." If falsehood has taken up residence within you, then you will pick only the fruit of falsehood. To reach the fruit of Truth, you must be true yourself. When the amrit of the True Naam manifests in your within, only then can you drink the nectar from the fruit of Truth.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Phala mīṭhā pai ūñchā tarbara...*

Climbing that tree is an arduous task; its trunk is very slippery.
Each time you try to climb higher, you slide back down again.

This tree is so slippery that as soon as you place your foot on its trunk, you slip right down into the nether worlds. Only a rare, brave one, who takes the support of the Satguru and the Naam, can climb this tree.

If you attempt it on your own, without surrendering to the Satguru, you climb up a little way but then slip back down and break your bones. You exert for a while and then declare: "This bhakti is not for me. Maybe more spiritual people can succeed at it, but I'm through with it. I've been trying for ten years, twenty years, and I haven't achieved anything at all. I'm going to forget all about it; that's the thing to do. If I go on like this, I will get nothing from the devotion or the world either. Let me at least enjoy some worldly pleasures while I'm here." Thinking like this, our foot slips yet again; we fall down and our bones are crushed. But the devotees who rely on the Master, who persevere with regularity and determination, they can climb up that tree and taste that fruit. Others are only indulging in wishful thinking.

Many people become satsangis; but only by doing the meditation with accuracy and regularity can you move forward. Now we sit for meditation and we fix our attention—that is like placing our foot on the tree trunk to climb upward. But right away, when some thought of the world comes, we slip and fall back down. Many years pass by like this. Yes, the meditation is going on after a fashion, but we are accomplishing nothing. When we try to meditate, we fall asleep, or we are assailed by pride, or we are overtaken by worldly thoughts. Then, thud! Our devotion comes to an abrupt halt.

Toss aside pride of body and mind, ascend with reverence and humility; then you will taste that fruit.

Now He tells us, renounce pride of both body and mind. Become the servant, the lowly one. Then you will climb up to the branch where that fruit is hanging and will partake of its nectar. Until that feeling of humility and lowliness takes root in your heart, how can you progress on your quest? My friend, if you are seeking worldly grandeur, well, how many times have you already achieved that in past births? The thing you want, you have already had in abundance. It is that very sense of self-importance that you must eradicate through the bhakti. If you are doing the devotion just to become great in the eyes of the world, what can you hope to achieve through your practice? All you will gain is another revolution in the wheel of 84 lakh births and deaths. Kabir Sahib says:

Everyone wishes for greatness;
No one wants to be the lowly one.
But the soul that treads the path of humility,
Becomes the most exalted of all.

Until we become lowly, we can't rise up higher. All the yogis, scholars, renunciates and so forth have this thought: "Let me be the greatest of all." In our earthly sojourn, we have already become big; our ego has expanded beyond measure. If we wish to ascend into the inner realms, we must become the lowly ones. The main tenet of bhakti is to become humble—to toss aside ego and pride. Kabir Sahib tells us we are trapped in illusion:

Everyone performs the bhakti,
but no one casts out illusion from their within
Entangled in the net of illusion,
they undergo untold suffering and strife.

Everyone does the devotion. But until you remove the illusion from your within, your bhakti can't become successful. Even while doing your bhakti, you remain miserable, attacked by the duality—the clash of loves and hatreds. And in that fight, all the bliss, happiness and experience you were enjoying vanish. They are driven away and you have no idea where they have gone.

Many people start the ascent without any understanding of the Path.
You take up the practice, imitating others; but then your foot slips, you fall down from the heights and land on earth again.

Seeing others practicing devotion, some people think: "I will take this Naam and you should also. We have several elderly people in our household—my grandfather and grandmother. I should get them initiated too. Then after taking Naam, if they die, let them die. They will be taken care of."

My friend, what benefit can you gain from taking Naam in this way? None at all. You yourself should first understand the principles of the Path, what practices you must adopt. And then you should follow the instructions yourself and rise within. Once you gain real understanding and experience, then you can encourage your old people to take initiation. Right now, your own thoughts are not stilled, and also, you are not free of pride and ego. Many people hear of the Naam and say: "It will be a good thing if we take the initiation." But do you understand why it will be a good thing? Just taking Naam is not enough. Until you manifest the Naam within yourself, what good can it do for you?

Therefore, seeing others doing the devotion, many people imitate them and take the Naam. They get a little inspiration to

progress on the inner way, but after rising briefly within, they crash back down, breaking their bones. Then they say they want nothing more to do with bhakti. You get no benefit from such incomplete devotion—for all your hard work you receive only suffering.

Place your foot on the step of True Shabd and grasp the rope of the Guru's Knowledge.

There is a rope within you—the Sound of True Shabd. The Ringing Radiance is reverberating within you. Attach your thoughts to that Inner Sound. [end of tape.]

Kabir says: listen, O brother Sadhu,
Only then you can pluck that fruit.

When your inner eye opens, you will see clearly how the world has been filled with countless attractions to pull the mind outward and to ensnare you in the karmic cycle of action and reaction. You will realize that your within is already filled up with so many impressions of this world. Until you look with the inner eye, you won't be able to understand the world as it truly is. But when you see with the inner eye, then, for you, the outer world becomes like an open book.

—Baba Somanath

20

Cleanse the Chamber of Your Heart

Cleanse the chamber of your heart, so that the Beloved may enter.
Remove all the foreign impressions, so that He can take His seat there.[1]

Tulsi Sahib Ji says: first of all, you should cleanse the mirror of your heart. If that mirror is covered with coal tar and you wish to behold your face in it, how is that possible? At present, the mirror of our heart is so besmeared with the impressions of the karmas from millions of yugas and countless incarnations that nothing reflects there. It has become as black as coal. Without making the heart pure and true, it is not possible to gain self-realization and have the darshan of the soul within. Therefore, we first need to cleanse our within and stop filling it up with the worldly thoughts and impressions.

Many people have the complaint that the mind does not remain still and focused when they sit for meditation. My friend, how can you expect the mind to remain still? The *antahkarana* or inner mind is overflowing with the thoughts and desires

1 Tulsi Sahib, *Dil kā hujrā sāf kar...*

arising from past karmic impressions. As a result, it is constantly restless, running outside after the things of this world. When the mind is in such a state, how can our within become pure? When the mind becomes still, all the thoughts and desires are removed. Once the mind is stilled, you can unite with that Power of Stillness within—then all the karmic impressions are wiped away. Then your heart becomes pure.

So here, Tulsi Sahib tells us, "Cleanse the chamber of your heart, so that the Beloved may enter." No other foreign thought should remain. If you invite that Pure Lord to enter your heart, how can He accept your invitation when your heart is already crowded with children, profit and loss, give and take, lust, anger, greed, and desire for name and fame?

We pay lip service to the idea. We say, "The Lord is untainted by this world. He dwells beyond all." But if we wish to have that Immaculate Lord come and take His seat within us, then we must make our heart as pure as He is.

Look with the mind's eye and see the astonishing spectacle of this world.

Now, He tells us that we should look with our inner eye, the eye of the mind—only then will we see the spectacle of this world as it really is. Within the mind there is a single eye. We have to open that eye and see the world in its true light.

What ravishing scenes appear to entice your heart.

When your inner eye opens, you will see clearly how the world has been filled with countless attractions to pull the mind outward and to ensnare you in the karmic cycle of action and reaction. You will realize that your within is already filled up with so many impressions of this world. Until you look with the inner eye, you won't be able to understand the world as it

truly is. But when you see with the inner eye, then, for you, the outer world becomes like an open book.

One heart with many desires and always the lust for more.

He says that the mind is one, but it is filled up with millions of desires and fantasies. From morning till night, the waves of desire surge in our heart, and, even in the span of one day, those waves are beyond reckoning. The mind is never idle—the thoughts rise and fall like ocean waves. As one wave sinks into the deep, another swells up to take its place, and those waves never come to an end. The mind is only one, but the waves are beyond count.

Where is there any place for the Lord to come and reside?

Our within is surging with so many thoughts. But if we wish to make the mind still, how should we go about it? The mind is one, and we need to make that mind remain in one place. But if we are constantly chasing after worldly desires and fantasies, then how can the mind be stilled?

It is a great pity that, going into the artificial temples and mosques, the indweller of the true mosque (the human body) is made to suffer.

Further, Tulsi Sahib says that we use stone to construct the outer temples and mosques, and in those holy places we install idols and shrines made of stone. In the temple, we set up the idol of a deity and give it a name. Then, we call the pandit to perform the *prāna pratishthā,* a ceremony of consecration to invite a divine being to descend and inhabit its stone likeness.

That ceremony is believed to infuse life into that lifeless lump of stone.

Now tell me, if that idol has become full of life through this ceremony, why does it not run out of the temple? Perhaps we had better lock the door and imprison that idol within the temple, so that it cannot escape. Since we have imparted life to that idol, maybe it will now wish to run away.

All this rigmarole is like a children's game invented to hoodwink the innocent people. The pandits and mullahs have created these imitation temples and mosques to further their own ends. They want to keep the worshippers' attention engaged in outer rituals.

This human body—fashioned by the Creator—is the living temple of God. But even after attaining the human body, people go on suffering day and night because they have filled their within with thoughts of Maya. They understand the outer structures of stone to be the true temples. They have forgotten that God dwells in the real temple of the human body.

As long as the pranas go on circulating in the body, as long as life remains within us, we flock to the outer temples and mosques. But when the breaths cease to flow in the body, then what mosque or temple will remain? While living in the human body, we should discover the Hidden Power that is dwelling within us.

Listen with rapt attention in the prayer niche of the true Kaaba.
The Celestial Sound is calling to us from the Court of the Lord.

This human body is the real Kaaba, the true temple, created by God Himself; within the body, the Inner Voice is reverberating from on high. We should listen to that call with deep concentration for it is beckoning us back to our True Home.

But how can we hear that Inner Voice calling to us if we are wandering about outside? When we are engaged in the outer world, who is sitting within to listen to that inner call? It is God who is calling to you from within. But you will be able to hear the sound of His Voice only when you rise up to the seat of the soul and open the inner door. Then you can merge into the Lord and proceed towards your Homeland.

Why are you wandering around lost in search of the Beloved?

When you know that the Lord is within, why do you still go on searching for Him outside? You wander here and there controlled by illusion. Someone goes to Amarnath; someone goes to Rameshwar. Someone visits Badrinarayan; someone travels to Dwarka. Adrift in the outer world, you roam from place to place, but you gain nothing from all your efforts.

The Path leading to the Beloved lies through the royal vein.

The Path to meet the Almighty Lord lies through the *suṣhumnā nāḍī* (ethereal vein) or *shāh rag* (royal vein), the subtle inner channel in the middle of the forehead. When you enter into the *suṣhumnā nāḍī* and rise above the body, there you will find the straight way opening before you. The stream of Naam is flowing down from celestial heights. Immerse your soul in that Sound Current.

O Taqi, go to the Perfect Master with sincerity and patience.

Therefore, He instructs us, "Go and meet with the Perfect Satguru." Approach Him with unwavering faith and serve

Him with love. It is not hard to take up the role of a swami outwardly, but is difficult to become a true disciple, a servant of the saints. Anyone can easily become a swami, but it is very difficult to become a real sevadar.

Once there was a dear one who remained engaged in the seva of his guru day and night. The two of them traveled about the countryside together. On one of their journeys, it so happened that they paused for a while under a canopy of trees growing by the wayside. For several days previously, the guru's health had not been good; so, they sat down under those trees to take a brief rest.

The guru was feeling thirsty after their long travels. He told his disciple to go fetch some water, and the disciple hurried off to do his guru's bidding. But before he could return, the guru drew his last breath and cast off the mortal coil.

But that guru was a very gracious being. As he lay dying, he thought, "This poor fellow has been serving me for twelve years. And so far, I haven't given him any spiritual instruction. The time was not appropriate. But now, I will leave him a mantra so that, after my death, he can repeat it and attain liberation." Thinking these thoughts, he inscribed the mantra on the ground beside him.

Now, as chance would have it, some traveling performers, called Doms, were passing by at that very moment. The troupe—consisting of a girl who walked the tight rope, a drummer, and several other musicians—was coming along the road carrying their drums and musical instruments.

The Guru had been writing something on the ground as they approached, and, now that he was dead, the Doms went over to examine what he had written. Seeing the message, the girl took out a tiny scrap of paper and recorded the mantra that the guru had inscribed in the dirt. Then she rolled up that

scrap of paper and put it in her pierced ear. In the meantime, the disciple came running back to that place. From a distance, he could see that the girl was copying down some message. But by the time he reached that place, she had already rubbed out the mantra that the guru had left for him. So, the disciple entreated the girl saying, "Mother, please tell me what my guru wrote before he died."

She replied, "Just as you have served your guru for twelve years, you will now need to serve me for another twelve years. Only then will I give you the mantra that your guru wrote." So, he had no choice but to accept her condition. He learned the art of drumming, and, traveling along with that troupe, he served them.

One day, they were performing their act in a town along the way. As usual, the girl walked on a tightrope stretched between two bamboo poles. When she had finished her act and was descending from the tightrope, the headman of that area, who was very pleased with her performance, offered her the large gold earring that he himself had been wearing.

And in her excitement to try on the new earring, she pulled the guru's message from her ear and tossed it on the ground. Seeing this, the disciple quickly grabbed that paper, and throwing away his drum, he left the troupe behind. Then, following his guru's instructions, he repeated that mantra whole-heartedly and achieved liberation. So, you see, true seva is never wasted. Outwardly, anyone can do the seva. If someone works all day long in a farmer's fields, that farmer will pay him his proper wages at the end of the day. This is just a business transaction.

The requirement in spirituality is selfless service. If we say, "I have done this work; now you should give me my reward," well, that is not correct. Our duty is to do the seva, whether we receive any reward or not. But the truth is that when we perform selfless service, that service never goes

unrewarded. This is the foundation and essence of seva. When we are patient and unwavering in our devotion, then, if not today, definitely at some time in the future, He will shower His grace.

He will give you the secret to find the *shāh rag*.

When the Satguru becomes pleased, He will reveal the way to enter within through the subtle vein called *shāh rag* or *sushumna nāḍi*.

If you do the practice for a few days, the inner way will open wide before you.

We should meditate daily on the inner secret that we have learned from the Guru. Without meditation, nothing can be achieved. The Satguru has shown us the Path, and that very Satguru dwells within. In order to meet with Him, we will have to do the practices and go inside.

It is the path to reach Allah, the One God, the Most High.

We repeat "*lā illāha lilla allāh*," there is no God but God. But outer words are only an empty formula. There is nothing in outer repetition. The God those words refer to dwells within you. He is a Self-Existing Power, complete in Himself. Here Tulsi Sahib is telling us the way to meet that Inner Lord. The Path that leads us to Him starts with the royal vein, which lies in the middle of the forehead.

This is the call of Tulsi: O devotee, perform the practice with concentration.

Tulsi Sahib says that this is the True Path leading to the Lord. Concentrating your mind in meditation, proceed without delay.

The Kun (Shabd) described in the Quran will take you to Allah, the Most High.

The True Quran of the Lord is written in our within, and the Path to meet the Lord also lies within us. In this bani, Tulsi Sahib explains to us that we must read the inner Quran. There is nothing to be gained merely by reading and reciting the outer scriptures and holy books.

A potter makes thousands of pots, some small, some large. He makes vessels of all sizes and descriptions, but each one is fashioned from the same clay. The large water jugs are clay; the little cups and bowls are also clay. Likewise, God Almighty is only One; there is no question of high or low in His Court. But caught up in duality and disputes, we wander on endlessly through the 84 lakh species of life.

—Baba Somanath

21

No Room for Duality

I have seen that He is One!
Those who say He is two are in delusion.
They have not yet fathomed the nature of Sat Naam.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He says that the Almighty Lord is One and Self-Existent. He does not take birth. He does not die. Where He dwells, there is no day; there is no night. Nothing else exists in that place. He Himself is the Self-Existing, Radiant Power. Whoever describes Him as two—Purush and Prakriti, Shiva and Shakti, Brahma and Devi, etc.—has become entangled in the play of words, and that game has no end. The people who indulge in debates and pen learned commentaries are totally ignorant of the True Naam. Duality rules their hearts and keeps them dancing in perpetual mental gyrations.

The air is one, the water is one; One Light pervades all.

Kabir Sahib puts the plain truth before us. He says that there is no room for duality. The air is one; the water is one; the

1 Kabir Sahib, *Ham to ek hī kari jāno...*

power of the One Light suffuses all creation. That Light is present in all jivas, even in the gods and goddesses, so where is the question of high and low? Do you think the wind blows less on the poor and more on the affluent? The wind does not play favorites. Of course, you can go the bazaar and buy a fan to circulate the air, but that is something artificial. The natural cooling breeze refreshes everyone alike. In the same way, the water flows for everyone. The air, the water, the fire, the ether, the earth: all are supported by the same Self-Radiant Light, and that Light itself is One, free from any taint of duality. But those who are still ensnared in duality have no knowledge of Sat Naam.

Each pot is made from the same clay, and one potter fashions them all.

A potter makes thousands of pots, some small, some large. He makes vessels of all sizes and descriptions, but each one is fashioned from the same clay. The large water jugs are clay; the little cups and bowls are also clay. Likewise, God Almighty is only One; there is no question of high or low in His Court. But caught up in duality and disputes, we wander on endlessly through the 84 lakh species of life.

All the devotees are stuck fast. Shaivites proclaim Shiva as the greatest. Vaishnavites believe Vishnu has no equal. And the Brahmins accept Brahma as the highest of all. We have so many gods and goddesses, and everyone selects their own deity who they worship as the Supreme Being. But truly speaking, all of these gods are just a product of our own imagination. They are the embodiment of duality. There is no deity other than God Almighty Himself, and that same God is worshipped by Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Christians, and all others.

Beholding Maya, you are enticed by her creations.
O man, why do you strut and swagger?

In this world, the power of forgetfulness is in full force. Using the tool of forgetfulness, Maya separates us from the One Lord and spreads before us countless alluring forms. Captivated by Maya, we become trapped in "I and mine," and in our arrogance, we plunge headlong into her creation. Giving up the remembrance of the Supreme Lord who is the Form of Oneness, we become imprisoned in countless forms and go on suffering in the wheel of 84 lakh births and deaths.

Kabir says, "Hear me, brother sadhu.
Why have you still not surrendered to the Guru?"

Kabir Sahib's teaching about the nature of Oneness is only for the sadhus, that is, those who perform the sadhana. His teaching is not for those who shirk the meditation. Why have you not become the real disciple of the Satguru? Why do you not surrender yourself to Him? You will gain the knowledge of Oneness only when you give up your egotism. As long as you remain mired in "I and mine," you will not change. It is like covering hot coals with ashes; outwardly the fire appears to be extinguished, but it is still burning underneath. Superficially, you may pretend to understand Oneness, but within you the fire of duality is still raging. Of what use is such devotion?

All the world is supported by the Power of the One Light; but held in thrall by the countless colors of creation, we bring misery down upon our own heads. Whatever suffering the mother and father have experienced in their own lives, they themselves prepare the same snare of suffering for their children. We ourselves are caught in the snare of happiness and

sorrow, and we feel pleased when we see others fall into the same trap. Our greatest worldly satisfaction lies in beholding the misfortune of others; when troubles assail them, we feel buoyed up. Why? Because we are blinded by duality.

Once, three men were traveling together to another village. It was about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and they began to suffer under the blazing heat of the sun. There was no village or dwelling nearby, but casting about they spied a temple dedicated to Ganesh, the elephant god. It was an ancient temple and housed a very large stone idol of Ganesh. The idol had been rubbed smooth, and, daily anointed with fragrant oils, it had taken on a soft, delicate sheen. And since the temple itself was made of stone, all its interior was cool and dim.

The three travelers approached the temple, and one of them went into the sanctuary to have the darshan of Lord Ganesh. He ran his hand over the trunk and belly of the idol. The stone was cool and pleasing. Since Ganesh has a very round stomach, the navel of the idol was a good two inches deep, and that man stuck his finger in it. Now, a scorpion was sitting in the coolness of the navel, and that scorpion bit the man's finger. Instantly, that man turned the matter over in his mind: "If I call out that a scorpion has stung me, if I cry out in pain, then these other two who are accompanying me will laugh. Instead, I should concoct a story to tell them."

Coming out of the sanctuary, he said, "Well, why are you just standing here talking about cooling off? Why don't you go on in and have the darshan of Ganesh? It's really cool and pleasant in there." So the second man went in and the first man told him, "Why don't you rub your hand over the idol?" And the second man rubbed his hand over Ganesh's trunk. Then the first man said, "Now rub your hand over his belly. But that's not all. Put your finger in Ganesh's navel and see

how cool it is." The second man put his finger in the navel, and the scorpion bit him as well. He exclaimed, "Oh, a scorpion has stung me!" The first man told him, "Shhh! Don't tell our friend. He hasn't had his turn yet, and if we tell him about the scorpion, he'll escape being stung like we have been."

Both of them started praising the wonderful coolness of Ganesh's sanctuary. "Oh, it so pleasant in here. This stone idol of Ganesh Ji is really cooling." Finally, the third man got up and came in with the other two. He started rubbing his hand over Ganesh's trunk and rubbed his hand over the idol's potbelly also. "No, no," his friends told him. "Put your finger in his navel. You'll find it as cold as ice." So, the third man put his finger in the idol's navel, and the scorpion stung him also. He cried out: "Oh! A scorpion has bitten me." Then his friends burst out laughing and told him: "Well, brother, it stung us as well."

All our thinking is colored by the veil of duality. Our head is stuffed full of blind tradition, gods and goddesses, holy scriptures and other sacred writings, not to mention the influence of all the sweet deceivers—mother, father, relatives, caste, and community. Therefore, many people claim, "This Path of Radhaswami is set on destroying our gods and goddesses." But that assertion is not correct. The Path is not about destruction; the Path is about accepting the Truth. So, He tells us, "You should sell yourself, you should surrender yourself into the hands of the Guru."

So, Kabir Sahib tells us that the soul has been covered with a chunarī—the human body— that has been dyed in the colors of the five elements. Therefore, He says, "This many-colored veil (the body) does not please me." These five elements are supported by the True Naam. If the elements did not have the support of the one Naam, they would disintegrate into gross, undefined matter.

—Baba Somanath

22

The Many-Colored Veil

This many-colored veil does not please me.
My veil has been dyed with five hues, but
without the Naam that color has no luster.[1]

The word *chunarī* refers to a veil that women wear as a head-covering. The *chunarī*[2] is commonly worn in the Marwar region of Rajasthan and many other places.

So, Kabir Sahib tells us that the soul has been covered with a *chunarī*—the human body— that has been dyed in the colors of the five elements. Therefore, He says, "This many-colored veil (the body) does not please me." These five elements are supported by the True Naam. If the elements did not have the support of the one Naam, they would disintegrate into gross, undefined matter.

I brought this colored chunarī from my parents' home,
but my Guru has transformed it to pure white.

First of all, where did this *chunarī* come from? I brought

1 Kabir Sahib, *Chunariyā panchrang hamai na suhāya...*

2 Here Kabir uses the word *chunarī* for the head veil, but *chunarī* also refers to any multi-colored textile produced by traditional tie-dying, often on a bright red background.

it from my parental home.[3] Maya wove it from the five elements. The egotistical jiva wrapped itself in that five-colored veil and took on an individual identity. To get that color removed from my veil—to become free of the falsehood of egotism—I have gone into the shelter of the Guru who made my *chunarī* pure white.

When I put on that veil and set out for the bazaar.
Mighty Kal followed after me, but he had to repent.

Wearing that white *chunarī,* I walked to the marketplace. Mighty Kal dogged my footsteps, but now he could not harm me at all.

God Almighty has become pleased with that *chunarī*.
Yama's beard is singed, and he turns away in dismay.

When God Almighty sees you putting on that spotless, gleaming veil, He becomes pleased. But then, the Lord of Death understands he has lost and laments: "My prey has slipped out of my grasp. Now, I cannot work any more mischief."

Kabir says, "Listen, O Brother Sadhu.
Now who is left to come and go?

Kabir tells us, "Listen, O brother sadhu. When oneness merges into Oneness, all coming and going ceases." When you are separate from the Lord, when you are "two," that is, trapped in duality, you go on revolving in the wheel of birth and death. When you are "two" you converse with others and are

3 In India, a woman traditionally leaves her parent's home when she marries and resides with the family of her husband. The woman then refers to her parental home as *maykā*, literally, "mother's place."

immersed in the world. You remain the doer and carry on your own affairs. But when you become unified and merge into the One, where is the question of coming and going ever again?

Further, Kabir Sahib says that the strings are resounding, but no instrument is seen, that is, without the support of any guna (quality) the Inner Sound is resonating. He says that the Shabd is playing without the support of the gunas, without the conceptions of the mind (sankalp), and without the thoughts of the intellect (buddhi kā vichār). That Unstruck Sound is playing within you; it is Self-Resonant. Whoever does the practice of Shabd, unites their attention with Shabd, and becomes the form of Shabd, will hear the music of Shabd both within and without. Then the heart's illusion is removed, and duality is destroyed.

—Baba Somanath

23

The Unstruck Melody

O Kabir, Shabd is playing in this body; the strings are resounding, but no instrument is to be seen.
That Music spreads in all directions, within and without, dispelling all my illusion.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib. He tells us that we can grasp the subject of Shabd only when we cultivate a very subtle understanding. Shabd pervades all, yet dwells beyond all. Shabd vibrates in the earth, in all the elements. In the water, Shabd is bubbling *(kharbar/khalbhal)*. In the fire, Shabd is crackling *(dagdag)*. In the wind, Shabd is murmuring *(barbar)*. And it is the pure Sound of Shabd itself resonating in the subtle, all-pervasive element of ether. Guru Arjan Dev Ji tells us:

Naam supports the divisions and grand divisions of the creation.
Naam supports the heavens and nether worlds.

Whether you call it Naam or Shabd makes no difference; they are one and the same thing. The entire world is supported by the Power of the Shabd. Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwar

1 Kabir Sahib, *Kabīr sabad sarīr meṅ...*

(Shiva), the 33 million gods and goddesses, and the five elements—all exist only with the support of Shabd. That Shabd permeates your very being in the form of soul. Day and night, that Sound is reverberating in all created beings.[2] Further, Kabir Sahib says that the strings are resounding, but no instrument is seen, that is, without the support of any guna (quality) the Inner Sound is resonating. He says that the Shabd is playing without the support of the gunas, without the conceptions of the mind *(sankalp)*, and without the thoughts of the intellect *(buddhi kā vichār)*. That Unstruck Sound is playing within you; it is Self-Resonant. Whoever does the practice of Shabd, unites their attention with Shabd, and becomes the form of Shabd, will hear the music of Shabd both within and without. Then the heart's illusion is removed, and duality is destroyed.

Whoever searches out the Shabd, that Blessed One is a Sant.

Whoever delves into the mystery of Shabd is called Sant—the Blessed of the Blessed.

Kabir says, "Take firm hold of the Shabd, and you will never fail."

In this line of the bani, Kabir Sahib tells us that if we go

2 "The first downward projection of the spiritual current, as it emanated from God, brought into manifestation ether (akash), which is the most subtle of the elements and spreads everywhere in space. This has two aspects. One is that of the spirit or soul remaining unmanifest in the ether, and the other that of the manifest ether, wherein the two forces, positive and negative, which are inherent in it, further combined and brought into manifestation air (vayu) and exactly in the same way the manifest air gave birth to fire (agni) and the manifest fire produced water (jal) and the manifest water led to the formation of earth (prithvi), while the spirit of each element which is essentially the same remained unmanifest throughout." Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life*, pt 1, ch 1, "Yoga, An Introduction: Soul and Oversoul," p. 9.

on doing the meditation of Shabd day and night, if we take firm hold of that inner Divine sound, then our efforts will not be in vain.

There is a great difference between shabd and Shabd—Shabd is the highest Truth.
You can find the True Sound by passing through the lower sounds; the True Sound is the pinnacle of all.

Many yogis master the *dashvidhi nād*—the ten types of lower sounds. Through the practice of pranayama, the ten sounds vibrating in the body manifest of themselves. Those who absorb themselves in these sounds take them to be the highest teaching—the final goal. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says that there is a great difference between shabd (the various manifestations of the Sound Current as it descends into the realms of matter), and Shabd (the Primal Sound Current, shorn of all matter).

The entire creation is permeated by the Shabd. Only through the Shabd can you comprehend the meaning of Oneness. All thoughts take their power from the Shabd. And when you do the inner meditation practice, there is also a difference between listening to the lower shabds and contemplating on the true Shabd.

Many people meditate on the *dashvidhi nād* and remain in that practice. Some reach the first level (Thousand-Petaled Lotus) and stop there. Some reach the second level (Trikuti), where the sound emanates from the form of Brahma, and most go no farther. But those few who meditate on Shabd, the Primal Sound Current, discover that it is the crown of all practices.

Japa dies, Ajapa dies, and even Anhad is subject to death.
Until you catch hold of Sar Shabd,
you will drown in this world over and over again.

Japa happens with the tongue, below the level of the eyes.[3] And when you cross the inner sky *(ākāsh)*, you reach the Anhad Shabd, the sound of Brahmand.[4] When you travel beyond the realm of Sunn, the Void, and into the region of Sohang, you take the support of the Sar Shabd. Therefore, He explains that there is a great difference between the sounds manifesting in the lower regions and the True Shabd beyond the realm of Brahm.

Only Shabd can lead you to Shabd. Following Shabd, stage by stage, you finally merge into its highest manifestation, Sat Shabd, in Sach Khand. Letting go of the lower manifestations of shabd, take the support of the True Shabd and climb higher. As the Celestial Sound pulls you ever upward, its lower manifestations loosen their hold. You can discover the mystery of Shabd only by traveling upward on the Shabd itself. When you begin your search in the lower levels, the

3 Simran is called Japa when it is repeated with the tongue of flesh or the tongue of thought; then, you are the speaker. Simran is called Ajapa when it goes on within automatically; then, you are the listener. When you become absorbed in the Anhad Shabd, the sound of Brahmand, neither speaker nor listener remains.

4 "…it is sufficiently clear that all Master-souls, whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and countless others, were conversant with the practice of the Word, though they did not necessarily expound it as a regular science. Most of them tell of Anhad Shabd only, leading up to Und and Brahmand or the subtle and cosmic regions. But perfect saints, irrespective of whether they belonged to one religion or the other, have gone even beyond this and have spoken of Sar Shabd and Sat Shabd as well, and of regions beyond Brahmand (Par-Brahmand, i.e., Sach Khand, Alakh and Agam Deshas)." Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) 42-43.

Higher Shabd comes to your aid and becomes your support. Sat Shabd is the ruler of all the sounds below. As you rise higher and higher on the Shabd, you come to realize that Shabd is the Owner of All Creation.

There is a great difference between shabd and Shabd; fix your chit in the Sar Shabd.
Whoever wishes to meet with the Almighty Lord must take firm hold of the Shabd.

There is a great difference between shabd and Shabd. The Sar Shabd echoes in the higher regions. So, you must choose. If you adopt the True Shabd it will transport you to Sat Lok and unite you with the Almighty Lord. Accept this Shabd.

Everyone says, "Shabd, Shabd," but the True Shabd is bodiless.
It cannot be spoken by the tongue; you perceive it through contemplation and discrimination.

Everyone speaks of the Shabd or Sound Current. The yogis call listening to the inner sounds *nādānusandhān.*[5] But friend, the important thing is to understand what kind of sound (*nād*) you are talking about, and what technique you should adopt. The Shabd is present everywhere, and all the devotees are seeking a way to unite with that Sound. But what form of Shabd are you pursuing, and what type of listening practice do you perform?

Kabir Sahib tells us that everyone says, "Shabd, Shabd,"

5 *Nāda* (sound) + *anusandhān* (search/research): *Nādānusandhān* is the pranayama practice of listening to the inner sounds, usually the ten sounds of the physical body, but also the higher sounds all the way up to Brahmand. The practioner's goal is to become one with the sound.

but the Sat Shabd[6] and Sar Shabd, which resound in the realms beyond, are shorn of all the bodily coverings. When the soul resides in the body composed of five elements, the Sound vibrates there in the form of the 52 letters (of the Sanskrit alphabet).[7] But when the soul rises into the Akash, in those realms the bell and conch are resounding. And if you ascend further, you find that in each of the five planes the Sound reverberates differently according to their various qualities. As the soul ascends upward, it sheds the physical, astral, causal, and supercausal bodies. The True Sound has no connection with the physical, astral, causal, and supercasual bodies in these realms.

That Shabd is bodiless. It is totally free from the four bodies. That Sound is not spoken with the mouth; you can only experience it through careful concentration and discernment. By focusing your attention within, you can pick out the higher Sounds and then become absorbed in the Shabd.

One Shabd bestows the nectar of happiness; one shabd dispenses a bitter cup of sorrow.
The True Shabd cuts your bonds, while the lower shabds draws a noose around your neck.

Even when we speak the outer words (*shabd* literally means "word"), there is a great difference between sweet words and bitter words. If you are humble and loving, if you speak polite

6 Sat Shabd is the Sound coming from Sach Khand; Sar Shabd is the sound of the Sohang region. The two terms are sometimes used synonymously for the pure Sound reverberating beyond the three worlds.

7 The 52 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet correspond to the petals of the six bodily chakras (48 petals) and the antahkarana (4 petals). But we must rise above these lower manifestations of Shabd. Kabir Sahib tells us:

The three lokas and the fifty-two letters are one and all subject to decay,
But the eternal and the everlasting holy Word is quite distinct from them.

and respectful words to others, then you create the feeling of love within their hearts. And that feeling also reacts back to you and manifests love in your heart as well. On the other hand, if you speak harsh words, it is just like piercing someone's heart with an arrow. And that pain will react back to your heart—you will also suffer.

If someone maligns you, the insult is one;
but if you reply in kind the insult increases beyond count.
Kabir says: "Don't answer with harsh words;
then, that insult remains only one."

If someone calls you names and you respond with more name-calling and abuse, then that one insult becomes two. From two it grows to four; from four it becomes eight. And after that, someone picks up a stick and blows fall. Just think; it all started from one word, but that bitter dispute will linger throughout the entire lifetime. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us that every time we speak, we should remember the great value of each word:

Words are priceless when spoken with courtesy.
First, weigh the words in the scale of your heart;
only then let them pass your lips.

Speech is precious. Before you speak, you should think in your heart, "What will be the result for me when I speak these words, and how will my words affect others?" Having weighed the words in the scale of your heart, then let them come out of your mouth. Only after you have considered your words carefully are you ready to share them.

Otherwise, your words are just like the noise from a spinning phonograph record that plays over and over without any

comprehension. Your words are just like the sound of the machines in the mills. First, the roving (cotton bundle) is fed on to the mechanism at one end; then it is twisted into yarn and collected on spindles at the other end. In between, the hum of that machine drones on without a break—with no beginning, middle, or end. What meaning can such "speech" convey? The noise just goes on and on.

Similarly, if you speak without thinking, what sense can the person who is listening to you draw from your utterance? You go on speaking empty words with no thought behind them, so what can that convey to others? No one gains anything from such mindless babble.

You should speak in such a way that your words sink deep into the heart of your listeners. Your speech should awaken love and devotion. The purity of your words inspires the hearts of others, and your own heart is purified as well. If you must speak, then speak in this manner.

But further He tells us that there is a vast difference between the outer shabd and the Inner Shabd. The One Inner Shabd is an Ocean of Happiness. What does Satguru do for us? He bestows on us that Shabd; He immerses us in that bliss. The other shabd is the image of this anguished, mortal world.

Through the Inner Sat Shabd all your worldly fetters are removed, but the false outer shabd binds you to this creation and throws a noose around your neck.

[Pushpamma sings a Kannada vachana of Basaveshwara and Baba Somanath Ji comments]

> Until your words become pure, you cannot earn the Guru's pleasure. Through your pure words, you earn His pleasure, and because of your words, He showers His grace on you.

With one word of His, He can make you the king of the entire world. With one word of His, He can make you a pauper; and begging from door to door you will be destroyed. For each true spiritual aspirant you encounter, you will meet many others who will just adopt the outer form of a devotee, talking nonsense and wandering aimlessly here and there.

To these people, Basaveshwara says, "Be quiet. Hold your tongue," because when people speak meaningless words, it creates doubt and duality in the hearts of their listeners. How can such words even be called speech? Better to call it ignorance instead.

Then what does Basaveshwara[8] say? "O Lord, come to my aid! Loose my tongue and make my words for Your ears alone. Let no words come forth from my mouth except the prayers I offer to You." He is imploring the Lord to let him remain forever absorbed in His Love.

How did the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas get started? One word from Draupadi set off the whole chain of events. The demon Mayasur built a marvelous palace for the Pandavas. He was a master of optical illusion, and his skill was so amazing that he could make a wall look like a door. He could polish the stone floors so that they reflected everything around them and looked just like pools of water. And he could make a pool of water appear to be a solid floor.

When his work was completed, the Pandavas, with great respect and politeness, invited the Kauravas to visit their

8 Basaveshwara was a 12th century poet and exponent of the Sharana movement in South India. "Sharana" means one who has surrendered to the Guru and accepted His shelter or *sharan*. The Sharanas were bhaktas of Shiva and champions of social equality.

palace of illusion. The five Pandavas were all there, and Draupadi was also present. Mayasur had revealed all the secrets of the palace to the Pandavas, but Duryodhan, who was a Kaurava, wasn't aware of its illusive nature.

So, when he began to tour the palace, first he came to a room with a finished floor, but when he tried to walk on it, he found he had stepped into a pool of water. Next, he came to a room with a floor that looked like a rippling pool. When he approached carefully to wade through the water, he stepped instead on to dry, solid ground. When he tried to walk through a door, he collided with a wall.

Seeing all this Draupadi mocked him, saying: "This son of a blind man must be blind himself." Duryodhan's father, Dritarashtra, had been blind since birth, and Draupadi was laughing at him, saying that he was as blind as his father. Her thoughtless speech set off the Mahabharat war, and we people are still feeling the effects of that horrific conflagration. All from one airy word.

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

Everyone says, "Shabd, Shabd," but the True Shabd has no hands or feet.
One shabd makes the wound, and the other Shabd effects the cure.

Kabir Sahib tells us that everyone recites: "Shabd, Shabd." But the True Shabd has no hands or feet, that is, it is bodiless. Everyone speaks of Shabd, but there is a great difference in shabd and Shabd—one shabd is the disease and the other Shabd is the medicine.

First learn of the True Shabd, then listen to it,
and finally, contemplate on it.
The Shabd bestows happiness; but if you try to grasp
that Shabd with no understanding, you will come
up empty-handed.

First of all, learn about Shabd; understand the value of the Shabd fully, within your own heart. Next, when you have understood about the Shabd outwardly, listen with your inner hearing faculty. And finally, when the Shabd becomes audible within, contemplate on that Sound.

Until you engage with the Shabd in these three ways—understanding, listening, and contemplating—the Radiance of Shabd won't manifest. Many people do perform the Shabd practice, but without any understanding of its significance. The final word of the Simran is Sat Naam. Perfect your Simran and merge your attention into the Sound Current of Sat Naam. Do the Simran aiming your attention within like an arrow at its target—then the door of Shabd will burst open.

The Power of Truth exists beyond the cycles of day and night, and yet that Truth kindles the radiance of both the sun and the moon. Truth dwells where Kal cannot enter; in that realm no years or days or nights measure out the time. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us that Kal, who is the Lord of Time, cannot devour the Truth.

—Baba Somanath

24

No Austerity Equal to Truth

There is no austerity equal to Truth, no sin equal to falsehood.
If your heart is filled with Truth, the Guru makes His dwelling there.[1]

Now, Kabir Sahib explains about *punya* (virtuous deeds) and *pāp* (sins). We talk about virtuous deeds and sins, but do we understand their real significance? When we give donations and feed the hungry, we consider ourselves virtuous. If we visit the places of pilgrimage and bathe in the holy waters, then we say that we have earned merit through our righteous deeds. In our eyes, all these outer rites and rituals are virtuous actions through which we gain religious merit. It is like this in Poona and Bombay.

But what is the true meaning of virtuous deeds and sins? Kabir Sahib tells us that there is no austerity equal to Truth, and falsehood is the greatest sin of all. As long as you harbor falsehood within, you are full of sin. The real austerity is Truth, and when you understand this mystery, falsehood flees from your heart. You become the same both without

1 Kabir Sahib, *Sāch barābar tap nahīñ...*

and within. Then there is no difference between you and the Creator residing in you. If you wish to become one with Him, if you wish to become His, then you must become like He is. If you remain as you are—if you remain your own—then how can you meet with the Almighty Lord?

Remain true to the Lord;
Truth wins the pleasure of the Lord.
It makes no difference if you keep long hair
or shave your head bald.

The Almighty Lord is Truth. To receive the Truth, you must make your own heart true. Many people who are involved in rites and rituals construct a small sanctuary in their homes and call it the house of the gods. They collect idols of all the gods and goddesses and install them in that place. And then, out of respect for the sanctity of that place, they don't allow anyone from outside to enter there.

So, in the same way, we should make our heart the temple of the Lord, and we should not allow anyone to enter that sacred place. We should lock the door and keep everyone out. Outwardly, we don't allow anyone to enter the place we have dedicated to the idols. Similarly, when we make the heart the dwelling place of Almighty God, only He should enter there.

O crazy one, you have not purified
the chamber of your heart.
You sit chatting idly, and the days pass by.

The root of all spirituality is a pure heart. Purity is most necessary. Until you have purified your heart, how can you invite anyone to enter there? Who would accept your invitation to come in? Even a dog will not sit in a dirty place.

No curse can touch the Truth; Kal cannot devour it.
Truth meets with Truth and merges into it.

The Power of Truth exists beyond the cycles of day and night, and yet that Truth kindles the radiance of both the sun and the moon. Truth dwells where Kal cannot enter; in that realm no years or days or nights measure out the time. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us that Kal, who is the Lord of Time, cannot devour the Truth.

In the same way, once you have manifested that Truth within yourself, not even a curse can exert any power over you. In the heat of an argument, many people curse others, saying: "May your Truth be destroyed." My friend, how can the eternal Truth you have been blessed with ever be destroyed? If your heart is true, no one's curse can touch you. If your heart is devoid of Truth, that is a different matter; then someone may well say: "May your Truth be destroyed." But once that Truth has manifested within you, how could it ever be diminished? Truth is Unchangeable Permanence, and puny curses lose all their potency. Kal is powerless before the Truth. If you make your heart true and merge with Truth, then you become the form of Shabd. So, how could you ever fall again into Kal's cycle of births and deaths?

Gain true understanding in your within, and make the true bargain.
Obtain the diamond of Truth, and cut the root of falsehood.

He says, "Make the true bargain, the *sachā saudā.*" But first of all, think carefully in your own heart—what is the nature of Truth? What benefit does it impart? Once you understand Truth, all your transactions become true. If you don't

understand Truth, how can you put aside your bogus dealings? Just for show, you may adopt the appearance of Truth, but your currency is counterfeit. To seal the true bargain, you must make your heart the purest of the pure.

Guru Nanak's father was named Kalu Ji. From the very childhood, Guru Nanak Dev Ji was lovingly absorbed in the Lord's Name, but the worldly people called him lazy and said he had gone mad. And as he grew older, still he took no interest in the dealings of the world. Every day, on one pretext or another, his father would scold and taunt him. One day he said to Nanak: "At least today, go and transact some kind of profitable business." Obeying his father's order, Nanak got ready to go. Somehow, his father had procured a quantity of cloth from the wholesaler and gave it to Nanak saying: "Now come back home only after doing some real business. When customers show some interest, you can sit with them casually and talk about the virtues of your cloth. In this way, your business will increase and flourish." Nanak replied, "Very well, Father," and he set out on his errand.

It was a cold winter's day, and as he walked along, he encountered an assembly of sadhus. Seeing that they were shivering with the cold, he gave every one of them a piece of that cloth so they could keep warm. Having distributed all the cloth to the sadhus, Nanak returned to his home. His father asked him, "What about the money you made from selling the cloth?" Nanak answered, "Who would be giving me any money? You told me to do some true business, and having transacted a true bargain, I have returned home." Kalu Ji asked him, "What are you talking about?" Nanak explained, "Over there, I encountered a group of sadhus sitting in the cold. The poor souls were shivering, and their teeth were chattering. So, I distributed all the cloth to them, giving a piece of cloth

to each one, and now I have come home." Enraged, his father said, "Get out of my house; you can't live here anymore." Nanak humbly replied, "Alright, Father. Now I am going," and then he went to the home of his married sister.

So, this is what is meant by a true bargain. First, examine your heart and understand the Truth. Weed out profit and loss of the world, happiness and sorrow, honor and dishonor; resolve that these things will never enter your within. Only when you make your heart pure can you transact the true bargain. Then you will obtain the Diamond of Truth. You will flee from falsehood, and its very roots will be destroyed.

We all say that our body belongs to the Guru, our mind belongs to the Guru, our wealth belongs to the Guru—everything is his. Sometimes the dear ones would come to my Master, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj and request his help, saying, "My mind does not take to the meditation. I cannot concentrate." Maharaj Ji would tell them, "You must give up your pride of body, mind, and wealth." They would reply, "We have sacrificed all these three things to you." But Maharaj Ji would explain, "First, you must make them your own. You must bring these things under your control. Only then can you give them to someone else."

—Baba Somanath

25

Give Up Your Pride of Body, Mind, and Wealth

My body belongs to the Saints, my wealth belongs to the Saints, and I have given them my mind as well.
By the grace of the Saints, I meditated on the Lord's Name and attained all happiness and prosperity.[1]

This is the bani of Shri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He tells us that there are three thick veils thrown over the soul. What are they? Body, mind, and wealth. Until these three veils are lifted, that is, until we have sacrificed them at the feet of our Guru, our soul cannot become free of them, the inner power of Naam will not be awakened, and our soul cannot unite with that Naam. For this reason, He enjoins us to sacrifice everything to the Guru—body, mind and wealth. We all say that our body belongs to the Guru, our mind belongs to the Guru, our wealth belongs to the Guru—everything is his. Sometimes the dear ones

1 Guru Arjan Dev, *Tan santan kā, dhan santan kā...*

would come to my Master, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj and request his help, saying, "My mind does not take to the meditation. I cannot concentrate." Maharaj Ji would tell them, "You must give up your pride of body, mind, and wealth." They would reply, "We have sacrificed all these three things to you." But Maharaj Ji would explain, "First, you must make them your own. You must bring these things under your control. Only then can you give them to someone else." As long as your mind refuses to obey you, how can you entrust it to anyone? Only when we bring these three things under our control can we sacrifice them to someone else. As long as your body does not obey you, as long as greed for wealth dominates you, as long as your mind cannot give up its evil tendencies, then how can you give body, mind, and wealth to your Guru?

For this reason, Guru Arjan Dev Ji tells us, "My body belongs to the Saints. My wealth and all of my worldly goods belong to the Guru." And then He says, "My mind also belongs to the Saints." This means that when you sit for meditation, you should have no thought for your body. You should think, "This body belongs to the Guru. Through my own power, according to my own will, I cannot even move this body." The mind also has been given to the Guru; no thought other than that of the Guru should arise. The wealth has been given to the Guru as well; it no longer belongs to you. Having given all of these three things to the Guru, focus your attention within and contemplate only on the Guru. No awareness of body, mind or wealth should remain.

So, you have to make all these three things one—that is, you have to focus your whole attention on the still point within and contemplate on the Guru's form. Then you will

see only Him. No awareness of the body should remain; no thought of the mind should remain, no remembrance of the wealth should remain. So in this way, making these three things one, you sacrifice body, mind and wealth to your Guru. When your attention becomes one-pointed, then bring the image of the Guru before your consciousness. The Hidden Power within you will manifest and will connect you with the Naam. That Naam is the form of bliss, and you will also become the form of bliss.

Except for the Saints, there are no true benefactors.
Whoever takes refuge in the Sadhu's shelter is ferried across.

In this world, the Saint is the greatest benefactor of all. The gods and goddesses are beggars. The yakshas (demi-gods) and gandharvas (celestial musicians) are beggars. Indra, the king of the gods, always goes on begging. On the material plane, if someone performs the *Ashvamedha Yagya*[2], they will request to go to Indra's heaven as a reward. When the rishis and munis perform the repetitions and austerities, they ask to join the congregation of gods in Vishnu's heaven, Vaikunt. The yogis and celibates ask for supernatural powers and the ability to perform miracles, in order to increase their worldly name and fame. All of them are beggars; there is no benefactor among them.

In Hindi, *dev* means "god," and *deo* means "you give!" So, what do the gods and goddesses say to their devotees? "I am a god (*dev*). So first you must give to me (*deo*)!" When

2 The *Ashvamedha Yagya,* or "horse sacrifice," is a Vedic ritual performed by rulers in ancient times to lay claim to new territory.

you give something to the gods and goddesses, only then will they give you something in return. This is just give and take—a business transaction. If you worship the gods and goddesses, they will help you, otherwise not!

For this reason, Guru Arjan Dev Ji tells us: "If there is any benefactor in this world, it is the Saint. You will not find any other true giver." Whoever comes into His shelter, He will take them to the other shore. Freeing them from this world, He will take them to the Realm of the Saints.

By serving the Saints, millions of sins are eradicated.
Lovingly sing the kirtan of the Lord.

He says that even if you are carrying millions of sins, even if your load is as huge as a mountain, go into the shelter of the Saint and all your sins will be burned to ashes. But you must go with deep sincerity and undivided devotion.

In this world you will find happiness; in the next world, your face will shine with glory.
By great good fortune, you get the company of the Saints.

He tells us that we will get happiness here, and in the next world, meeting with the Lord, we will become His very form.

I have only one tongue, but He is the treasure house of countless virtues.
How can my feeble words describe His magnificence?

He says: "I have only one tongue, but the qualities of the Lord are without end. His greatness is infinite. His praise is boundless. His power knows no limits. How can this tongue describe Him?"

The Lord is inaccessible, imperceptible, and imperishable; but by going in the Saint's shelter, you can meet Him.

The Lord is inaccessible, imperceptible, imperishable, and eternal. Kabir Sahib left the body so long ago, but whenever we speak of his banis or his teachings, even today Kabir Sahib is here, present before us. In the same way, Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji gave us His spiritual guidance and departed from this physical plane, but whenever we remember Him, even now He is with us. On the other hand, our fathers and grandfathers grew old and left this world, and now we do not even remember their names. Why? Because they only enjoyed the pleasures of this world and died without doing the devotion of the Lord.

I am worthless, lowly, without a supporter, and full of sins.
I long for the shelter of the Saints.

Even the greatest sinner in this world, the one who has no good qualities at all, no matter how many bad deeds they may have committed, if it is in their fate to go into the shelter of the Saint, then all of their sins will be destroyed. It has been said:

The Saints erase the fate line drawn by Brahma.

The Saints have such power that they can even wipe away the fate line that Brahma has traced on your forehead.

Through our own efforts, we cannot obtain the knowledge of spirituality. We cannot learn the inner practice of Naam Simran or discover the Path to Liberation. What kind of noble karma could we have performed to become worthy of all this? If we examine our inner mind, we will see that we have been drowning in the worldly thoughts, the evil tendencies, and the entanglement in the sense pleasures. We are not in any way deserving of the Naam. But because of some past connection or some good fortune, we have come into the refuge of the Guru. And removing the karmas of all our past deeds, the Guru has taught us a new practice, a new karma—the meditation on Sat Naam. And as we gradually perform this new karma, this new practice, all our sins are destroyed.

When we do the mediation daily, with regularity, our sins are gradually burned to ashes. At that time, we may not realize what is going on, but it is definitely happening. Think about this deeply in your within. When you have a bad thought in your mind, if you act on it, you will get no happiness from that deed. Instead, you will suffer and repent. You will try to escape from what you have done but to no avail. The reaction of the karmas has to be endured. But the worldly people are intoxicated in the pleasures. Instead of wanting to get rid of those enjoyments, they desire to accumulate more.

I am drowning in the deep, dark well of attachment.
Nanak says: Please save me, O Lord!

I was a lowly one without qualities, a great sinner, a lifeless stone. I was drowning in the dark well of attachment. So, in the end, He says: "O Lord, take me out. Please save this sinking stone."

He tells us that we need to understand this mystery. We know that each of the five elements opposes all the others. Fire opposes water and water opposes fire; and there is enmity between fire and air. But in spite of all this, One Hidden Power directs all the elements and brings them together in harmony. Naam is that supporting Power, and until the Naam manifests within, we cannot attain right understanding. And without that understanding, we remain trapped in transmigration. The fetters of Yama cannot be severed.

—Baba Somanath

26

Our Lost Treasure

As long as the mind goes on wavering, we remain trapped in egotism.

We cannot taste the sweetness of the Shabd and do not attach our love to the Naam.[1]

This is the bani of Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says that so long as your attention remains involved in the thoughts of the world and the endless waves of worldly activities and attractions, your soul can establish no lasting contact with the Naam. Whenever you try to invert your attention in meditation, the thoughts of the world will automatically sweep you back outside. Some outer thought or other will take hold of you. In your mind you start praising someone, and before you know it your entire meditation time has been wasted. Or thoughts of criticism may arise. Or you may be overtaken by laziness. Your back might start to hurt, or your head will ache. Or you may be swept up by some worldly worry, and instantly, you are pulled back into body consciousness. So, He explains that as long as your attention is tossed about on the waves of the world, you cannot merge with the Naam resounding within you.

1 Guru Amar Das, *Jichar ih manu laharī vichi hai...*

That Naam is immutable and immovable. It is eternal, without beginning or end. If we wish to commune with that Naam, then when we sit for meditation, we have to keep a tireless watch: "Is my body staying in a fixed position or am I moving? Is my mind still and focused or is it running riot, here and there?"

We have to still the body and the mind. We have to make them one. The body and mind should unite, that is, both should become perfectly still. Then the soul can establish the connection with the saving lifelines of the Naam within. Now your body may be sitting for meditation, but your mind is surging up and down on the internal mental waves. If you are dominated by the mind, then even if you do the Simran and come in touch with the Naam, still you will not be able to maintain that connection because those waves will sweep you back into the outer world.

We do not accept the seva; we go on worrying and waste away in misery.

When a person is subservient to the ego, when they are tossed about day and night on the waves of the mind and drenched in the color of the world, then however much outer seva they may do, how can that be counted as seva? Just think about it clearly. If this is your condition, then whatever seva you are given, you will discharge that seva as though it were just another worldly work. Your seva can be accepted only when the soul becomes free of the ego and unites with the Naam within.

Now when we are given a seva assignment, sometimes the mind may accept that. We scurry here and there doing our work. Sometimes, we ourselves volunteer to help with the seva. We dedicate ourselves to secretarial duties or we become an organizer. We take up this role or that role.

But then mind interferes and tells us, "There's nothing here. I don't even have any important position. I'm going to give up this seva. What's the point of it all, anyway?" Later the mind will shift again and lead us in a different direction. It will tell us, "What is the most exalted seva of all? I should become the shoe wiper of the sangat. I should become the servant of His servants." And so, we become caught up in the wave of acting humble and lowly. But then after a little while, we'll decide there is nothing there either.

We sway back and forth but until we achieve inner stillness and steadfastness, we won't be able to experience the benefit earned through the true seva. The meaning of seva is to focus our attention and anchor it in the Naam. This is what is called seva.

O Nanak, the one who cuts off their head and offers it to the Lord can be called the real sevadar. They accept the Will of the True Guru and enshrine the Shabd in their heart.

Speaking of the qualities of the true sevadar, He says, "What is the sign of the true sevadar? That selfless servant will sever their own head and surrender it at the Guru's feet." Guru Amar Das Ji explains further about what is meant by cutting off the head. You should not think that He is referring to the physical head. Here He is speaking about giving up your pride and the sense of selfhood.

To surrender your egotism and treasure the Satguru's order in your heart—this is what is meant by offering your head at the Guru's feet. And what will you gain from this? Your thoughts will merge into the Naam. The Naam will manifest within you. Your burden of "I and mine" will be lifted.

Why cling to what is held in trust for another?
Giving it back, you will find peace.
The Guru's Shabd resides with the Guru;
it does not manifest through anyone else.

Going into the refuge of the Guru, the soul prays, "Maharaj Ji, trapped here I am suffering. Please remove my pain and emancipate me from this world." The Satguru has become gracious and has bestowed the gift of Naam upon you. But what have you done? Receiving that blessing you have not taken advantage of it. You have done nothing with it at all. How many years have passed by since you were initiated? Someone may say ten years or twenty years or forty years.

We people think, "I am an important Satsangi. I am an old Satsangi." But what kind of Satsangi are you, when you have just taken His gift and put it on the shelf? The wealth of the Satguru, the Naam, has been entrusted to you. You did not earn that wealth; it is not yours. It was His gift to you: He gave it to you to hold in trust. You were supposed to earn some profit from that wealth. Why have you just set it aside and done nothing with it? He says that the Lord gave you the secret of Shabd, and you were supposed to manifest that Shabd within yourself by His grace. So now you should become firm in your contemplation of the Guru. Then the Guru will manifest within you and through the Guru's grace the darkness will be banished from your within. Your soul will become purified and will merge back into the Shabd.

The blind man finds a precious jewel and goes
from house to house trying to sell it.
But no one understands its true worth, and they
are not ready to buy it, even for half a shell.

Once in his wanderings, a blind man encountered a precious

jewel. He had no idea how to value that jewel. He was totally ignorant of its worth. He wandered from door to door trying to sell it, but no one could assess its value. If he had found someone "with eyes," a connoisseur who could recognize the true worth of that gem, then that person could have given the blind man the value of it. But when everyone he met was as ignorant as he was himself, even with that priceless jewel in his purse, he remained impoverished.

Similarly, when we ignorant jivas have the good fortune to receive the priceless jewel of the human birth, we do not know how to appreciate it. We have no inkling of its value. In this condition, we do not practice the meditation nor manifest the Naam within. Just talking and wandering from one place to another, the whole life passes by. Someone may chant Wahiguru, or Sat Naam, or Radhaswami. But what is the point of just speaking these words outwardly, when in your within there is only darkness.

Similarly, if you cannot judge the value of something precious, take it to a Connoisseur.
When He examines it, He will give you its true price, and you will be blessed with the nine treasures.

Guru Amar Das says that you have received this priceless jewel of the human birth, but you are taking no profit from it. Then what does He advise further? Since you yourself are ignorant, you cannot judge its worth. Therefore, you should go to a connoisseur with expert knowledge. He can appraise that jewel and explain to you its real value. Then you can act according to His instructions and redeem that treasure. You can manifest the Naam within the human body and remove your spiritual poverty.

The wealth is hidden within the house, while everyone is dying of hunger.
Without the True Guru, no one can understand this secret.
Once the cooling Shabd comes to dwell in the mind and body, no sorrow or separation will remain.

The peace-giving nectar that will quench our thirst is already present within everyone. But engrossed in the pleasures of Maya, we are dragged helplessly towards the worldly desires. Day and night, we run after the sense pleasures and strive to achieve name and fame; controlled by the ego we are squandering this precious human birth. But when we meet the perfect Satguru, He tells us that the Path to meet the Lord lies within us. Guru Amar Das says:

Those who close the outer nine doors,
and fix their attention within,
dwell in their True Home at the tenth door.

Cease running out aimlessly through the nine doors and come up to the tenth door. When you focus your consciousness there, your soul will merge into the stream of Shabd coming from above. When that rain of Nectar begins to shower, then all your desires come to an end, and peace will descend upon you.

Once two men were walking along. Not far ahead, a sack full of gold coins was lying in the middle of the road. It was just four of five steps ahead of them. But right at that moment, one of the men suddenly said, "I wonder what it is like to be blind. How does the blind man find his way along the road?" The other said, "This is not a big thing. It is easy to find out. We'll just tie blindfolds over our eyes and walk along like blind men." One tied a cloth over his eyes and started off. Then the other man did the same and followed along behind him. So,

these two "blind men" didn't even see the bag of gold coins and walked right past it. In this way, the blind lead the blind.

The time we have been given in the human body is beyond price. It is just like that bag of gold coins. But because we bind our eyes with the blindfold of ignorance, we let the precious moments of earth life pass by unheeded, and then we must go once again into the wheel of transmigration.

All these things belong to someone else, but you, O fool, are proud of them and count them as your own.

He says, "This world and this body do not belong to you. If you call them your own, then you are a fool, totally ignorant and without discrimination." But the jiva replies, "No, this all belongs to me. How can you say it is someone else's?"

Everyone follows the dictates of the mind. Wherever you go, whatever you do, you think you are the doer. My friend, what claim do you have on all this? Are you capable of creating anything? What part of this creation was made by you? How can you think you are the doer? The Prime Mover, the One who fashioned all the universe, is the only Doer. He is the real Creator who brought into being all that exists (*kartavya*). Everything else is perishable (*martavya*). This was all fashioned by Maya and is subject to destruction. Whatever takes birth will die.

So, even this body is not yours. This body is composed of air, water, fire, earth and ether. Some other Power has fashioned this body, so how can you claim it as your own? Does the air belong to you? When your allotted life breaths have come to an end, the doctors cannot revive you, even by giving you more oxygen. Is the water yours? Is the fire yours? No, none of it belongs to you. So, if even the elements that form this body are not yours, how can you think that the other things of

the world belong to you? Only an ignorant fool would make such a claim.

O Nanak, without right understanding, no one obtains liberation;
They come and go in reincarnation, over and over again.

He tells us that we need to understand this mystery. We know that each of the five elements opposes all the others. Fire opposes water and water opposes fire; and there is enmity between fire and air. But in spite of all this, One Hidden Power directs all the elements and brings them together in harmony. Naam is that supporting Power, and until the Naam manifests within, we cannot attain right understanding. And without that understanding, we remain trapped in transmigration. The fetters of Yama cannot be severed.

The life within all living beings is the Shabd.
Through it, we meet our Husband Lord.
Without the Shabd, the world is all darkness; the light is manifested through Shabd.

Guru Amar Das Ji says that Shabd permeates the whole universe. Shabd created Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar (Shiva). Shabd is the essence of the soul and the Oversoul. Shabd supports all the elements. Nothing exists without the Shabd. If someone says that something exists that is not created and supported by Shabd, then they are mistaken. There is no such thing. But until we meet the perfect Satguru, our soul cannot be connected with that Shabd. Until He unlocks the secret of the Shabd within us, even though that Shabd is permeating our very being, still we will have no awareness of it—that Shabd will remain hidden.

The pandits and the sages read until they are weary.
The religious fanatics grow tired washing their bodies.

Ignorant of the inner secret, the pandits go on reading and commenting on the four Vedas, the six Shastras and the eighteen Puranas. They waste the human birth in useless pursuits. That Shabd lies within, but they are searching for it outside in books, so, how can they ever find it?

We have lost our treasure in one place, but we go on searching for it somewhere else. So how can we recover that treasure? We are seeking spirituality outside. Maybe it is here. Maybe it is there. The ghost of egotism that haunts our within drives us on and on. And what about the sadhus who wear the saffron robes? They dye their garments outwardly, but they do not dye their minds in the color of Naam.

Without the Shabd, no one attains the Lord;
The miserable ones depart weeping and wailing.
O Nanak, by His Glance of Grace, the Merciful Lord is attained.

He says, "Only through the Shabd can you meet the Lord." [audio ends…]

When the appropriate time to speak comes, do not run away without saying anything. At that moment, proclaim the Truth openly. Don't speak twisted words. Don't hold one thing within your heart and give out something different with your tongue. Abandon cleverness and cunning.

—Baba Somanath

27

Proclaim the Truth Openly

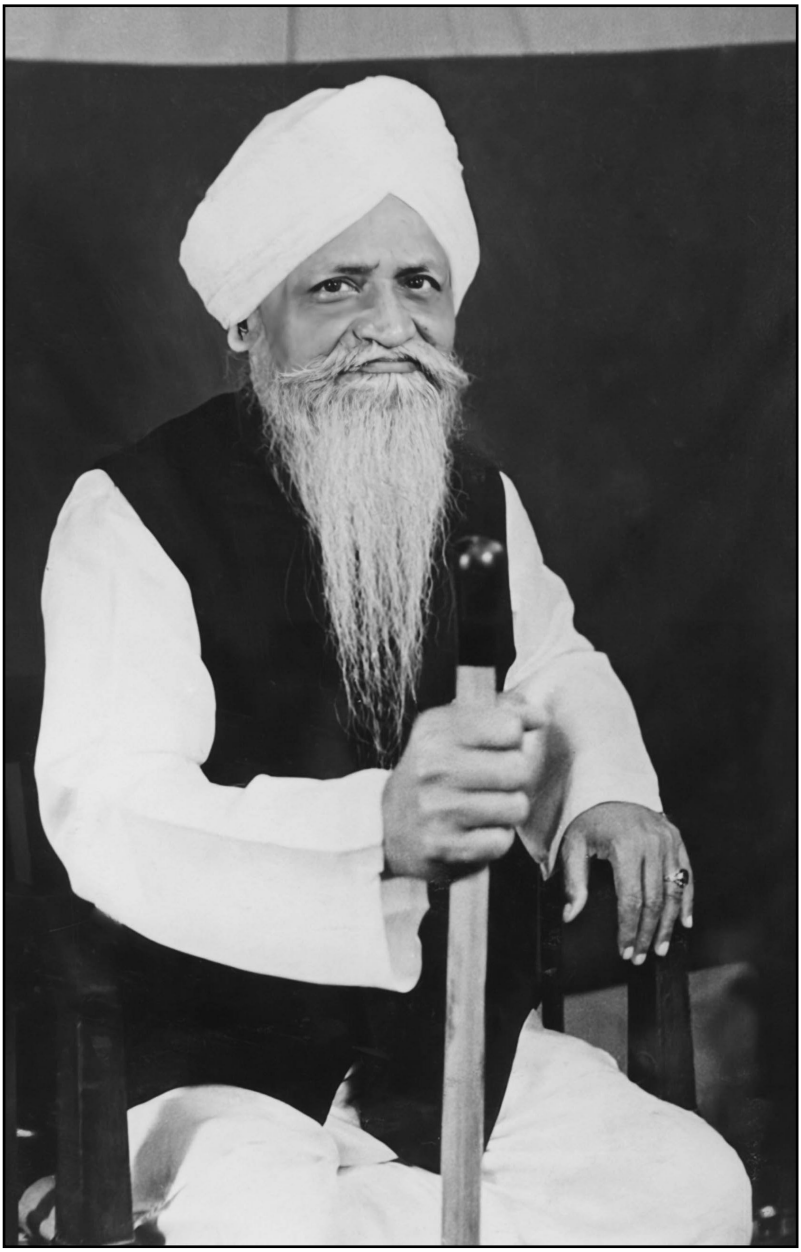
Maya belongs to the Lord; she always runs after Him; O Fakir, stay on your guard.[1]

In order to awaken the sadhus and devotees, in order to warn them, Paltu Sahib says that Maya does not belong to someone else. Maya belongs to the Lord Himself. If she belonged to someone else, He would have chased Maya away to her owners. But she doesn't belong to someone else; she belongs to God Almighty. And if you go a little ahead on the path, she will follow after you. Therefore, He tells us, "O Fakir, remain vigilant and alert." Maya has the habits of the dog. In what way? If you are loving to the dog, it will lick your face. If you oppose it, the dog will bite you. If you try to go away and leave that dog behind, the dog will trail after you. But if you call to the dog to follow you, it won't budge. The dog has that contrary nature. No one can defend themselves against Maya; only some rare devotees understand her true nature.

Don't obey the dictates of greed and attachment. You will have to control hunger and sleep.

He says that we are always thinking, "I need this thing. I need

1 Paltu Sahib, *Māyā hai Rām kī lagaigī dauri kai...*



Baba Somanath Ji

that thing." This is called greed. And when your attention becomes captivated by the beauty of some outer thing, that is called attachment. Don't obey either greed or attachment. They will tie you up and carry you off. And further, you have to save yourself from sleep and hunger. Tulsi Das tells us:

Slothful repeating Ram Naam, but greedy for every meal.
Tulsi says: Such a person is cursed, over and over again.

You stuff your stomach up to your throat, so much so that you cannot breathe; then you stretch out to sleep like Kumbhakarna,[2] and in this way, you squander your whole life. Therefore, he tells us that sleep and hunger are also the limbs of Maya. When you are enslaved to the tastes of the tongue, many other cravings follow in their wake. You must guard against them.

The worldly people may claim that this is good and that is bad,
But you should take shelter in the refuge of the Guru's Shabd.

We people are always punctual for every meal. When you go to Mathura, there you find a Brahmin caste called the Chaubes. They think it is their dharma, their sacred duty, to consume huge quantities of food. And when a Chaube comes for a meal, people ask, "Would you like a seer of food, or two seers, or five seers, or ten seers, or half a maund or a whole maund?"[3] Now, think about their condition. They stuff their

2 Kumbhakarna was the younger brother of Ravana and was known for his prodigious feats of sleep.

3 1 seer equals a little over 2 pounds and a maund 82.3 pounds.

bodies so full of food that they need assistance from other people even to move around. It is considered to be a very virtuous deed to assist these Chaubes. But is such "dharma" virtue or sin? What merit can you earn from toting such foolish people about? What righteousness can be gained through all this indulgence? In their incapacitated state, these people are not capable of doing any devotion or meditation of God Almighty. They have not achieved any spiritual benefit themselves, so what reward can you hope for from doing their seva? Paltu Sahib says, "Friend, when you are enslaved to the taste of food, how can you enjoy the taste of the Lord's Naam?" Until you shed your craving for the outer things, you cannot develop love for the inner thing.

When you follow this Path of devotion, you will find there is a conflict between the practice of spirituality and the blind traditions of caste and creed. Kabir tells us it is like the elephant and the dogs:

The elephant saunters by at its own gait;
if the dogs bark, let them bark.

It is the nature of the worldly people to bark. And so, when you walk on this Path of true devotion, the worldly people will definitely be pressing their ideas of good and bad upon you. Don't even give them a thought. If the worldly people say that what you are doing is good, does that mean you will ascend to the heavens? Or if they criticize you, will you be thrown into the hells? What people say about you has no effect or importance. You will receive your reward according to your own deeds. Don't pay any attention at all to the worldly people—this is the way of the devotee. If you act according to the advice of the worldly people, you won't be able to perfect your devotion and attain the highest level.

The servant Paltu exhorts us, "Speak out when the time is right.
Set aside all hesitancy and proclaim the Truth openly."

When the appropriate time to speak comes, do not run away without saying anything. At that moment, proclaim the Truth openly. Don't speak twisted words. Don't hold one thing within your heart and give out something different with your tongue. Abandon cleverness and cunning.

In this regard, it is said: "Your deeds will reveal the feelings in your heart." Whatever is hidden in your within will have to come out into the open. No matter how much you try to conceal it, the cat will be out of the bag. When doctors fill clear glass bottles with medicine, it is not necessary for them to open each bottle to know what is inside. They can see plainly what every bottle contains. In the same way, whatever is in your heart will be plainly revealed by your behavior. Therefore, when you speak, do not allow ego and arrogance to come in your within. Your words should be kind and pleasing to the heart; you should not speak harsh and demeaning words. What you say should be beneficial to others. You should not make fun of others for your own enjoyment. Your speech should always be courteous and agreeable.

When the Guru frees you from Kal's bondage, you recognize that you are a soul, separate from all the worldly things. And freed from the trap of Kal, you merge into the Lord. No other method is effective. But if you rely on your own extroverted intellect, then you yourself are setting the trap, and you will become ensnared in it.

—Baba Somanath

28

This World is an Alien Land

Brahm is known throughout the whole of creation; no other Will prevails.
But we have no awareness of Him; we churn the past, present, and future.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib. It forms part of a *kakeharā*, an acrostic poem built on the alphabet, beginning with the letter "k" (क): the first consonant of the Hindi alphabet), working through all the consonants, and, in this case, terminating with the conjunct letter "ksh" (क्ष). Each verse is based on a different letter. Day before yesterday, I had commented on the letters up to "p" (प) and "ph" (फ). Today we will begin with the letter "b" (ब).

Kabir Sahib tells us that *Sarvatra Brahm*,[2] the Supreme Lord, is One—All-Pervading, Omnipresent and Eternal. That Power is present everywhere in the creation and eternally One, but you have not yet known that Power. So, your consciousness must awaken; when your lesser consciousness merges with the

1 Kabir Sahib, *Brahm bidit hai sarv bhūt meṅ...*

2 *Sarvatra Brahm*, or *Puran Akshar Brahm* refers to the Sat Purush. Baba Somanath is clarifying that Kabir is speaking of the Lord of Sach Khand.

Greater Consciousness, when you unite with the Lord, you become His very image, then your cycle of birth and death will come to an end. But what is our condition? We speak of past, present, and future. We sit mulling over these three aspects of time. What has already happened we designate as the "past"—all our deeds of this lifetime, all our enemies and friends, all we have gained and lost, all the happiness and suffering we have experienced. Then with the word "future," we indicate our preoccupation with all that is to come: "I will construct a new house in such and such a style. It will be just right for my son when he gets married. Then he will have sons of his own, and I will get to play with my grandchildren there." These restless thoughts mold our future. And even in the "present," we are forging the chains of the *kriyamān* karmas by the actions we perform day in and day out.

Abandoning the Almighty Lord, the form of Oneness, you agonize over these three aspects of time—past, present, and future—churning them over and over in your mind. But all your planning and worrying is to no avail. If you face the reality, you will realize that whatever is written in your fate will come to you, sure and certain. No one can stop that unfolding destiny; no one can touch what has been written in your account by the flowing pen of God. And whatever He has written in the fate of others will definitely go to them; you have no claim on it at all. Guru Nanak Sahib tells us:

One cannot comprehend Him through reason,
even if one reasoned for ages;

He says that, up till now, our planning and worrying have changed nothing. And in the future also, our thinking will exert no effect. Whatever is ordained will come to pass. Brooding

about past, present, and future is meaningless. Your whole life will be frittered away in this useless exercise.

We turn to scholarship, taking the support of an unbalanced intellect.
We are deaf to the One calling from within.

Those who consider themselves great scholars throw away their life in the service of an overweening intellect. Yet they gain no knowledge of the Almighty Lord—the highest Power of all.

In our misery, we worship the Lord in stones;
we destroy ourselves through our futile efforts.

Ignorant of the Almighty Lord, day and night we remain sunk in sorrow and misery. We are tossed about on the waves of the mind. Imagining that God resides in the stones, we dedicate our lives to the worship of idols. Some worship Ram, some worship Krishna, some Hanuman, Sita, or countless others. We give each stone a different name, but all those idols are fashioned from the same stone. We bestow names on the various gods and goddesses who we worship, according to our own understanding. Shankar Ji is represented by a round stone,[3] so when we find a round stone we say, "Oh, this stone is Shankar," even though we have no idea whether Shankar resides in that round stone or not. That Conscious Power is within you, but, always controlled by the mind and subservient to your karmas, you do not recognize that true Brahma within. You thrash about, entangled in the net of happiness and sorrow, and bow before stones understanding them as

3 *Shiva lingam* is a round stone signifying Shiva's power.

the Almighty Lord. You are destroying your own life, and one day you will leave this world empty-handed.

Kal has bound us; the enticing *buddhi* has lured us astray.

Every single person is caught in the web of the world; everyone is bound by the fetters of Kal. Our intellect or *buddhi* is the faculty through which we understand the world, but it is through that very *buddhi*, that Kal ensnares and deceives us. We are duped by the very faculty through which we should be gaining knowledge of the Lord. Because our intellect is directed towards the outer world, we mistake Kal for the Divine Power we are seeking. Thus, becoming extroverted, all the jivas are deceived and plundered. But when we direct our intellect within, we can get free from Kal's snare.

The Lord says, "Whoever recognizes me, I spring them from the trap."

When the Guru frees you from Kal's bondage, you recognize that you are a soul, separate from all the worldly things. And freed from the trap of Kal, you merge into the Lord. No other method is effective. But if you rely on your own extroverted intellect, you yourself are setting the trap, and you will become ensnared in it.

This world is an alien land; may it be tossed into the furnace.
The ocean of this world has no bottom.[4]

The next letter of the alphabet is "bh" (भ). He says this world

4 This Hindi line begins with the next letter of the alphabet, "bh": *Bhār parai yeh desh birānā, bhavasāgar avagāhā*

is not your own country. Driven by attachment and pride, you have tried to take possession of it. When we are asked what possessions we can claim, we reply: "Well, first of all, of course, there is myself. Then here is my house, my village, my country." But we are speaking one falsehood after another. Truly speaking, the country is not ours. The house is not ours. Not even this body belongs to us.

This body is composed of five elements. And the village, house, country, and so forth, are also composed of earth, water, and the other elements. These are the things of Maya; they do not belong to us. Someone may say, "India is my country. The rest of the world is a foreign land; it belongs to others." But no matter where you travel on this earth, you will find the same stones, the same water, the same dirt. All the building blocks are the same. So how can people claim that one country belongs to them and them alone?

Even this body is not your own, so how can you declare that all these other worldly things are yours? Kabir Sahib tells us to throw the worldly thoughts into the furnace. Throw all the outer attachments into the fire and burn them to ashes. The thoughts of this world will never cease. The ocean of this world is bottomless; it has no end. Tossed on its waves, we are pulled under.

The *bhakt* and the *abhakt* will both be destroyed; neither will reach the other shore.

As long as your intellect is directed outside, as long as you are involved in the worship of some *Isht-dev,*[5] you will gain nothing from that kind of bhakti; it is of no consequence whether you perform that devotion or not. There is no difference between the *bhakt* (devotee) who is outwardly worshiping

5 Any god or goddess chosen by the devotee for reverent adoration

the gods and goddesses and the *abhakt* (atheist) who denies the existence of God altogether. Both will be destroyed. If you have taken an idol of stone as your deity and if you are worshiping that inert object, then it's all one whether you perform that bhakti or not. A devotee will be destroyed by such bhakti.

And if you don't believe in God at all, you will also be destroyed. The worshiper of idols and the atheist come to the same end. Neither of them fathom the inner secret; neither discover that Eternal Power that permeates and sustains the whole creation. The ocean of the world is so deep that both the devotee and the atheist drown in it. And this ocean stretches on and on… It has no end.

He is a butcher, a beast of prey, unfolding the play of this creation; his arts and subterfuges are endless.

Kal, the butcher, has fashioned this universe with countless forms and colors. He feeds all the creatures till they are plump and sleek, and then he devours them. The Muslims take good care of their goats before *Bakrā Īd*.[6] They feed those goats well and fatten them up. And then on the day of *Īd*, they slaughter them all. Daily they poke and prod those goats; they measure them around the middle to see how much meat they have on their bones. In the same way, Mother Shakti, who is the form of Kal, feeds us with the food of wealth, spouse, children, grandchildren, caste, community, honor, and all manner of vanities to fatten us up. And then one day, Kal slaughters us—this is his nature.

6 *Bakrā Īd* or *Īd al-Adhā* is the "Festival of Sacrifice" that commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command.

We take that butcher as our well-wisher; we don't recognize our true Protector.

Now, all the poor creatures that are raised for food—the chickens, the goats, and all the others—do you think they understand that the butcher is raising them to slaughter and devour. Kabir Sahib tells us they have no idea; they think, "This nice person is our friend. He is taking care of us and feeding us good food every day."

Similarly, Kal Purush creates all sorts of worldly things to lure and attract us—this is the food he offers. In that way, we become intoxicated eating Kal's food. We think, "How could he ever hurt us? Look at all the good things he is giving us. I have three or four children. I am making a good living. I have this thing; I have that thing." And so, the goat goes on happily eating. But then one day when we are well-fattened on this worldly fare, Kal slaughters and consumes us. And we never even met with that Power who is our real Protector, that Almighty Lord who resides in our within.

The one we are worshiping is a butcher; our Protector remains aloof.
All the jivas have fallen in the cycle of illusion; no one discerns the Shabd—the form of our True Lord.

The one who we meditate on, the one who we address as Lord, the one we are devoted to is a butcher, a beast of prey. And our true Protector has remained aloof. He is within us, but He is hidden. He does not reveal Himself to us.

Everyone is revolving in the wheel of illusion. We think, "Whatever I am doing, whatever I am saying, it is all correct. I am on the right path." But we never spare a thought for the True Shabd that is resounding within us.

Now Kabir Sahib explains the true nature of Rama. He dwells beyond the Vedas. Whoever has received the inner secret from the Satguru and has had the darshan of the Lord within knows what He is like. That primal Rama has no color or form. His True Form is Sound. This is Rama you are searching for.

—Baba Somanath

29

Who is the True Rama?

All the world repeats "Rama, Rama."
Tell me what he looks like? What is his form?[1]

Here Kabir Sahib says that when we repeat the name of God, it is most important that we see the One we are naming. Without beholding the form, repeating the name is empty. In the worldly way, if we have no gold in our possession but we go on saying "gold, gold," what good does it do? None at all. The same is true if we just go on repeating "Rama, Rama." We don't even know what Rama looks like. He may be short or tall, dark or fair, but we have no first-hand knowledge of his form. We have seen likenesses of him; he is depicted as dusky in color; we say he carries a bow, and Sita is his wife. Extolling his qualities, people describe him this way and that. But what does Kabir Sahib tell us?

One Rama resides in everyone.
The second Rama came as Dashrath's son.
The third Rama fashioned the whole creation;
The fourth Rama dwells separate from all.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Rām hī Rām sab jagat hī kahata hai...*

One Rama, the soul, dwells within every being. The second Rama incarnated into this world as Lord Ramachandra, the son of King Dashrath; so that incarnation was another Ram. The third Rama is the Universal Mind, the all-pervading Power that created the material universe. And the fourth Rama is unique—dwelling beyond everything and remaining apart from all.

So, when you chant "Rama, Rama," which Rama are you praying to? You should think about this carefully. There is a vast difference between Rama and Rama, and your repetition will bear fruit accordingly. Are you remembering Rama, the soul? Or are you addressing Rama, the son of Dashrath? Are you bowing before Rama who made the three material worlds (*Pind, And, Brahmānd*)? Or are you seeking the unique eternal Rama that remains aloof from all? Consider this before you repeat Rama. What can you hope to achieve with your "Rama, Rama" when you don't even know which Rama you are praying to?

Besides, Rama is a popular name, just about everyone names a son Ramachandra. Or someone may choose to call their son Dashrath; since he was Rama's father. There are so many people named Rama, but what can you gain through their devotion? Nothing at all. So now tell me, which Rama is yours? What is your Rama like?

Where is his house? How is his court adorned?
In what palace does he make his home?

Now where is Rama's dwelling? What is his street and number? Which his house? Where does he choose to reside? Tell me how to find his dwelling place. If you don't have someone's

address it will be hard to locate them. To make it even more confusing, there is usually someone named Rama in every household. In every chawl or apartment building, you will find three or four Rama's. These Rama's can't help you. So, where does your Rama dwell? Does he rule from a palace? Does he pass his days in a bungalow? Are his living quarters finely adorned? Think carefully, and settle this matter. Where does Rama reside? Tell me about his residence.

What consort joins him on the bed of happiness?
Who is she who, day and night, enjoys union with the Lord?

Who is the wife of Rama? Who is she that remains, day and night, absorbed in the bliss of the Lord? Kabir is not just referring to Sita Ma (Mother Sita, the wife of Lord Rama) in this couplet. Suchlike Sitas are residing in every household.

When you become one with the beloved, where is the question of darshan?
Male and female unite in one indivisible whole.

What is the nature of the male and female? The two principles form one body—like Shiva and Shakti or Purush and Prakriti. When the principles of masculine and feminine are joined, you can no longer say that one is distinct from the other. In the higher realms, there is no more duality of male and female.

Once the soul unites with the Husband (Lord), there is no more question of having darshan, because when the soul merges with the Lord, she becomes one with Him. When female and male unite, when Shakti merges into Shiva, they become one, no longer two.

Tell me about Rama's color.
Is he green or white? Is he red, yellow, or black?

Now Kabir Sahib asks, "What color is this Rama you worship? Is he green or yellow? Is he red, black or white? You go on saying "Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama," but can you describe his hue?

What about his stage of life?
Does he appear young, or old, or is he still a child?

Now, besides his color, what about his age? When you see him, how does he appear to you? Is he a child at play? Is he a young man in the prime of life? Or is he an old man hobbling along with a stick? When you see him, how old would you say he is?

The True Rama dwells beyond the Vedas; so how is His secret revealed?
He speaks without mouth or tongue.

Now Kabir Sahib explains the true nature of Rama. He dwells beyond the Vedas. Whoever has received the inner secret from the Satguru and has had the darshan of the Lord within knows what He is like. That primal Rama has no color or form. His True Form is Sound. This is Rama you are searching for. That which lies beyond utterance is the True Rama. It is said:

Concentrating on Rama, Rama, Rama,
the mind gets absorbed in the Almighty, All-Pervading Lord.
The thousand names of Vishnu cannot compare
to the Rām Nām, the All-Powerful Lord.

Set aside the thousand descriptive names of God you have learned by rote. The Power of the Lord that pervades all

creation manifests as the resounding Naam within. Merge into that Naam and the thousand names of God will spring forth of their own accord.

Kabir Sahib tells us that He lies beyond the Vedas. When those holy books cannot tell of Him, how do you learn His secret? He does not have a face, or ears, or any of the senses. He is the Self-Resonating Sound within—the Ram Naam.

Though You dwell within all, You are separate from all, O Rama, Perfect Form of Bliss.

The Power of the Lord pervades every being. Yet He remains separate from all. He is the Perfect Form of Bliss. Therefore, He is called *Sohang* (I Am That)—the Self-Existing One. He takes no support from anyone, yet He is the support of all.

He dwells beyond the three, the five, and the twenty-five.
With what eyes can we behold that Rama?

Taking the help of the three gunas, the five indriyas, and the twenty-five prakritis, we repeat the name of Rama. But Kabir Sahib tells us that the True Rama resides beyond all this outer repetition. He dwells apart from all. With what eye can you have His darshan? With what intellect can you comprehend Him?

The one who has uncovered the Inner Secret is called a Saint.
Kabir says, "The Saint has beheld the True Rama."

The one who discovers the secret of the True, All-Pervading Shabd Power is called a Saint. He alone is True.

Yet even when we receive the boon of the human body, still we pass our life in ignorance, and at our end time that body is reduced to ashes and dust. We do not understand or appreciate the opportunity that has been afforded to us. Many people believe they can put off doing the bhakti. They say, "We will do the bhakti in our old age." But there is no guarantee you will even reach old age—some babies die as soon as they are born, some die when they are fifteen days old, and some when they are two years old. Some people die in their youth and may only reach twenty-five years of age. There is no guarantee of the life-breaths.

—Baba Somanath

30

No Guarantee of the Life-Breaths

Consider this human body; in the end it will crumble into dust,
So now complete the work you came for.[1]

Now, Kabir Sahib says that this human body is the highest of all. In this body, the Lord has placed the Path that leads us back to Him.

Even the gods long for the human body.

The gods and goddesses yearn for a human birth, but even for them, it is difficult to obtain. Therefore, He tells us to search for the Lord within the human form. There is no guarantee that we will obtain such a beautiful body again. Now we have the blessing of the human birth, but lost in ignorance and forgetfulness, we are throwing our life away. Just look at the condition of the lower lifeforms—the bullock, the donkey, the horse, all the other animals and birds, the insects and the worms. You can see how much the poor things are suffering. They have no understanding about how to meet God; they

1 Kabir Sahib, *Deh to dekh mili jāyagī kheh meṅ...*

have no higher consciousness. The Almighty Lord has placed this understanding only in the human beings.

Yet even when we receive the boon of the human body, still we pass our life in ignorance, and at our end time that body is reduced to ashes and dust. We do not understand or appreciate the opportunity that has been afforded to us. Many people believe they can put off doing the bhakti. They say, "We will do the bhakti in our old age." But there is no guarantee you will even reach old age—some babies die as soon as they are born, some die when they are fifteen days old, and some when they are two years old. Some people die in their youth and may only reach twenty-five years of age. There is no guarantee of the life-breaths. Now we are in the Kaliyuga, and it is said that the expected lifespan in this yuga is one hundred years. But because we are deep in the Kaliyuga cycle, the lifespan may be less. Just the other day, as someone was delivering a lecture, he had a heart attack and collapsed. What was the outcome? That man died. He was a Minister, but while he was giving his lecture, his heart failed and he left the body then and there. There is no guarantee of this body in the Kaliyuga.

In previous times, through asceticism and yogic powers, some people could increase their lifespan. Through the practice of *pūrvak* (inhalation), *kumbhak* (retention), and *rechak* (exhalation), the yogis could hold their breath for an extended time and could reduce their breathing to one breath per minute. Normally, we inhale and exhale fifteen times per minute. But such yogis would inhale and exhale only one time in a minute. Each minute they saved fourteen breaths from their allotted store, and in this way, they expanded the length of time they would stay in the body.[2]

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2 "Our age is fixed, not according to the number of years or months or days, mind that; it is fixed according to the number of breaths we take." Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, December 1976, "No New Faith Mind That," p. 9.

But in these times, we people are always in a hurry. As soon as we get up in the morning, we say, "Come on. I have to catch the bus. Let's go, we have to catch the train." Always rushing, rushing. In this frame of mind, we are breathing thirty times a minute. In a relaxed mood—if we are engaged in the Lord's Simran or if our thoughts are composed—we breathe fifteen times a minute. If we get carried away in some worldly work, when we are running about, we may expend thirty breaths in a minute. And the more we hurry, the faster we breathe. When we are involved in lust, we use up to sixty-four breaths a minute. This is why indulgent people die very early. And in sleep, in the dream state, we can also use up thirty breaths a minute.

Normally, we breathe fifteen times in a minute. But in previous times, through japa, tapa, and other yogic practices many people could slow their breathing to one breath a minute. In that way, they gained an extra fourteen breaths each minute and greatly lengthened their span of life.

But nowadays, alas, we people give this no thought. We don't care at all how we waste the breaths. We think, "All that matters is that I accomplish what I want to do. I should get my work done by any means fair or foul." Kabir Sahib says we already know that this physical body will return to dust one day. So, we should complete our own real work before our allotted breaths run out.

Taking up this human body, gain some advantage.
Worship the Lord and serve the Guru.

What is the benefit of taking up the human body? In this body, we can meditate on the Lord and do the Guru's seva. When we serve the Guru, our ego is eradicated, and our greed for wealth is removed. When pride is erased, our *antahkarana*

(inner mind) is purified; then we can meditate on Ram Naam and reunite with the Almighty Lord.

Here where the cowries are accepted, accomplish something with your wealth.
When you leave this world, not one cowrie will go with you.

He says that while the coins in your purse are being accepted in the marketplace of this world, purchase something of lasting value. Once the accepted currency changes, you won't be able to buy anything at all.

When cowries[3] fell out of favor, metal coins became the legal tender, but now we have banknotes. Coins at least contain some precious metal, but banknotes are only paper. So, the currency changes with the times, and the money of previous eras becomes worthless in the present. Therefore, He warns us: "You have got the human birth, and each breath is a cowrie or coin. The coins of your human life are diminishing. If you want to purchase something of true value, do it now, because when you die not one cowrie will go with you."

In less than the blink of an eye, the Lord drags the pranas from the body.
Kabir says, "Listen to me and wake up to the reality."

Once the pranas cease to circulate, once they withdraw from the body, your ties with the world are broken. Your

3 Cowries or "kaudis" are small shells that were used in India as currency for bartering up to the early 1800's. While shells are no longer used for exchange, the word cowrie (or kaudi) is still used figuratively to indicate a coin of very little value. Kabir's use of cowrie here is synonymous with "coin"; figuratively, He is referring to the life-breaths.

worldly relationships have no more meaning. If someone dies at night, it sets off a lot of chatter in the household: "We should remove the body. Quick, put him in that room and lock the door. Otherwise, he may turn into a ghost and grab someone." If a person dies in the daytime, then they say, "Hurry up and take the body away. I need to go to my work." It doesn't matter who died—the father, the mother, the brother or some other relative.

The neighbors come to mourn the death, but they say, "We have to get back home. Our children are hungry. Please take the body away quickly." Family and friends who come from outside ask, "Have you done all the rites for his well-being? Then let us take the body away." Four people carry the body to the cremation ground and consign it to the fire. They use whatever wood is available, even if it is green, or wet, or inferior. And that body is reduced to ashes. What does it matter if he was born into this world or not? Friend, in two days, he is forgotten. Still, for twelve days, all the rites and ceremonies are performed according to custom. People believe that, otherwise, the soul cannot travel on to the heavens. But this is all the play of the pandits; they have no idea if that soul has gone to the heavens or somewhere else. Who can tell where that soul has gone?

Therefore, Kabir Sahib proclaims, "At least wake up now. Come to your senses, and search for the Lord. Discover the Power residing within this human body.

In this ocean of the world, the Satguru is the ferryman, and Naam is the ship. Sitting in Satguru's ship of Naam, you can easily cross over the fearful ocean of this world. But only a rare Gurumukh is a competent boatman. If we are surrounded by dark night, we may take hold of the hand of a guru to guide us. But if that guru is himself a blind man, how can he see the way. He will fall into the ditch, dragging us down along with him. Only the one whose within is illumined by the Light of Shabd can be called a Guru.

—Baba Somanath

31

Satguru's Ship

Serving the True Guru, the mind becomes immaculate, and the body becomes pure.
The mind gains bliss and eternal peace, meeting with the Unfathomable Lord.[1]

This is the bani of Shri Guru Amar Das Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs. He says, "Ever since I have had the darshan of the Guru, all the impressions and dirt of past karmas heaped up in my heart have been automatically wiped away." How did this come about? The disciple who enshrines the Guru in their heart with undivided attention, understanding the Guru as all-in-all, sacrificing body, mind, and wealth—everything—to the Guru, the heart of such a devotee becomes transformed within.

But what is our condition? Outwardly, we do accept the Naam, and we call ourselves satsangis. And when the opportunity arises, we participate in the seva, but our understanding remains superficial, and we cannot get the full benefit of doing the seva. Sometimes, we end up even farther from the Truth because the mind cannot be purified from outside; the change must come from within. Seva is a helping factor, and,

1 Guru Amar Das, *Satigur seviai man nirmalā bhae pavit sarīr...*

for the time being, outer activity may calm the mind, but such peace comes and goes. The eternal, unchanging Peace we are seeking can only be found within.

So, here He says, "When I had the true darshan of the Guru, the dirt was removed from the mind, and my within became purified." When the real inner transformation comes, the attention becomes still and absorbed within. And further, Guru Amar Das Ji has told us:

Giving up all sense of I-hood,
Become absorbed in the Guru.

Removing all sense of I-hood, unite with the Guru within, and become the form of the Guru. Then within and without you will see the Guru everywhere. Your within will be illumined, and you will see the Guru working in all creation.

Therefore, He says that when you have the darshan of the Guru, the mind becomes pure. Then the inner bliss will manifest automatically. Through the Guru's darshan, bliss floods your within of itself.

Sitting in the Sangat, the True Congregation, the mind is comforted and consoled by the True Name.

He says that we should daily keep the company of Truth. This is the meaning of Satsang. Listening to Satsang is an outer stage on the way; first, you listen, then you reflect on what you have heard, and finally, you focus within. You listen to the banis that the Saints have written. This is also called Satsang. But when our soul unites with Truth within and becomes the form of Truth, this is the ultimate meaning of Satsang. Therefore, He says that you should always keep the company

of Truth. Contacting the Sat Naam within and becoming the form of Naam, this is the real Satsang.

O mind, serve the True Guru without hesitation.

Along with this, do the seva of the Guru. Whether you refer to that Power as Guru, or Sat Naam or Lord or Sound Current, it is all one and the same thing. In varying contexts, the Saints may refer to the Naam with different terms, but they are referring to the same Primal and Unchanging Truth.

Truth is one though called by many names. In one place, this Truth is called Guru. In another place, it is called Sat Naam. And in yet another place, it is called the Almighty Lord. But the Power is one, not many. That underlying Power is unchangeable and eternal, and coming into contact with that Power is called Satsang.

Understand that place as Satsang,
where the One Naam is spoken of.

Satsang is that place where you reflect on the Naam and keep the company of Truth. Only such a gathering can be called Satsang. But in those places where the greatness of Naam is not sung, where we only hear past histories, stories and parables from the Puranas, where we ring the bells and perform the outer rites, such a gathering cannot be called Satsang.

Describing the benefit of the company of Truth, Shankaracharya first tells us ***satsaṃgatvaṃ nissaṃgatvā. "Keeping the company of Truth turns our thoughts from this world."*** Why do the Saints praise Satsang so highly? What benefit do we reap from Satsang? By keeping the company of the Truth, our soul turns away from the thoughts and entanglements of this world—this is what is meant by Satsang.

Then he goes on to say, ***nissaṃgatvaṃ nirmohatvā. "And when our thoughts turn away from the world, we are freed from all forms of attachment."*** When we turn away from the outer facade, we become freed from the chains of attachment. What is the sign that we have achieved detachment? When we behold the attractions of this world, we are not drawn to them; we do not come under their control. This is what is called detachment. When our soul turns from this world, the fetters of attachment fall away.

Further he explains, ***nirmohatvaṃ niśhchalatatvā. "When we are freed from attachment, we become steady and unmoving."*** What do we gain through detachment? The soul no longer wavers; it becomes fixed within. This is fruit of detachment.

And finally, he concludes, ***niśhchalatatvaṃ jīvana muktiḥ. "And when we become steady and unmoving, we achieve salvation while living."*** When, through detachment, we become firmly anchored within, the soul becomes liberated from the chains of this world. This is the benefit of Satsang.

But to reap the benefit he describes, we must act on what we have heard from the Saints. If we go into the Satsang and say, "Okay, now we have heard the Satsang. That's enough," can this really be called the Company of Truth? When we leave, we just brush off the words of the Satsang, like brushing the dust off our coattails—not one word of the Satsang goes with us. So, what have we gained? Nothing at all.

When you serve the True Guru, the Lord abides within your mind, and no trace of filth will attach itself to you.

We should do the seva of the Satguru selflessly, with no ulterior motive. We should not think, "If I do this seva, I will receive

some worldly benefit." Instead, our only thought should be to serve selflessly for the sake of the Guru, the Naam, the Truth.

What is the fruit of true seva? Through selfless service to the Satguru, we become detached from the world, and the mind comes under our control. The mind becomes spotless and pure.

And we should attend the Satsang in this same selfless spirit. Otherwise, our thoughts will never cease, the waverings and worries will not come to an end, and the filth can never be washed away. Through real Satsang, the association with the Truth, we can control and purify the mind. This is the meaning of Satsang.

Hearing the True Word of the Shabd brings honor to the devotee.
True is the Name of the True One.

Then what does Guru Amar Dev Ji say? Those who manifest the Shabd within receive honor. Uniting with the Shabd, they become the form of Shabd. The Shabd is immortal, and they become immortal as well. This is the benefit bestowed by the Lord's Name. This is the glory and greatness of the meditation on Naam.

I am a sacrifice on those who conquer their ego and recognize the Lord.

I sacrifice myself on the devotee who cherishes that Naam in their heart and has become the very form of Naam—the True Naam that permeates every atom of the entire creation, both within and without. Such a lover of the Lord has not a trace of egotism; they have become freed from all the worries and burdens of the petty self.

In this regard, Guru Amar Das Ji says:

Ego is the enemy of the Lord's Name.
The two cannot dwell in one place.

Ego and Naam are always at odds. Where the ego holds sway, Naam will not come near. And where Naam reigns, not a trace of ego can be found. If even a whisper of egotism remains in the devotee, the Naam will not manifest there; you will find no signs of the Naam in one who is filled with egotism.

The self-willed manmukhs do not know the True One; they find no shelter or place of rest anywhere.

The poor manmukhs are always tossed about on the waves of the mind and cannot become free from worldly attachment. In such a state, how can they ever understand the nature of Truth. Even if they hear the Truth in the Satsang, they will not be attracted to it; they will not understand its real significance. They will feel no inclination to unite with that Truth. For one who is dominated by the ego, their mind is always restless. They remain occupied in sins and virtues; they are always engaged in the drama of this world, and the worldly thoughts automatically fill their within. Such a manmukh cannot understand the Truth.

Those who take Truth as their food and Truth as their clothing, make their abode with the True One.

What does the Gurumukh eat? Only the food of Sat Naam. And what do they wear? They put on the garment of Truth. Outwardly, the Gurumukh is clothed in Truth and inside they are nourished by Truth alone.

When the Light of Truth manifests within, then no thought remains of eating and drinking, of high and low, of fine clothing and all the other worldly accoutrements. Only the form of Truth remains before them. What other Power shields them except the power of Truth? Naam is their only protector.

But for us, if our meal is delayed by an hour, we are willing to go begging for food. We are even prepared to steal or lie to get the food we are accustomed to. This is not the way of Truth. Whoever has manifested the Truth, the Lord Himself is their protector. Isn't it so? He Himself supports the devotee in all things. Then day and night, such a devotee remains one with the Truth.

They constantly praise the True One, and in the True Word of the Shabd they have their dwelling.

When our love remains constantly absorbed in Truth, when we become the form of Truth, then no worldly thoughts or fantasies can arise. We are not assailed by worries about the past or future. If such things still arise within us, then we should understand that Truth has not yet made its home in our hearts.

When our within has been emptied of all worldly thoughts and desires, then Truth will fill our hearts. Only Truth will remain there; then there is no room at all left for the waves of worldly sorrow and happiness.

They recognize the Lord, the Supreme Soul in all, and through the Guru's teachings they reside in the True Home.

The Power enlivening my soul is the same Power that permeates and sustains the entire universe. I am in all, and all are in

me. Every soul in the creation is experiencing the same happiness and pain that I feel. When this understanding starts to awaken in our hearts, we suffer seeing the pain and sorrow of others. We become restless and anxious to remove not just our own suffering but the suffering of others as well.

In this way, the heart expands to embrace all of creation. We understand the suffering of others as our very own. We begin to see others as no different from ourselves. The same soul residing within me dwells in all others—there is no difference. When this vision of unity dawns within us, when we see that all are one, then no room remains for petty individual worries and sorrows.

They see Truth, and they speak Truth; their bodies and minds are True.

And now He says that they see the Truth, they speak the Truth, and all their dealings are also in Truth. If we search our hearts, we will discover that we are not true. First, we think one thing in our within; then outwardly, we are doing something else with our hands; and thirdly, with our mouth we speak something completely different.

In such a condition, can we hope to contact the Truth? If we are speaking the true things with our mouth, but our within is filled with deceitful thoughts and our hands are engaged in wicked deeds, how can we meet with the Almighty Lord? Just consider carefully. To know the Lord, our body, our mind and our speech, all three things must merge into one; they must become permeated with Truth. Tukaram says:

I bow down to the one who lives up to their own words.

So, He tells us, "If someone lives up to the words they speak,

I understand that the Lord Himself is manifested there, and I bow before such a being." If we are speaking of the west, but our feet are walking towards the east or turning to the south, what will become of us?

What is our condition? We just copy the way the people who surround us dress; we copy the way they speak and act. We are not being inspired within by Truth. Instead, we are molding our thoughts according to the thoughts of others. In this way, we remain far away from thoughts of the Lord.

In this world, no matter who we come in contact with, we should not be influenced by them. We should always speak the Truth, our conduct should remain grounded in Truth, and all our dealings should be in Truth. Then, without and within, we will be dyed in the color of Truth.

Where the Truth dwells, all fear of birth and death is banished. The Lord of Death flees that place. Just as the darkness of night is banished with the rising of the sun, in the same way the darkness of our heart and the ignorance of duality are driven out by the advent of Truth. All enmity is swept away.

They have witnessed the Truth and their teachings are true.
The True Ones are drenched with Truth through and through.

Your soul is Truth; always keep it anchored in the Truth within. The words imparted by the Saints are full of Truth. Their words always remain true, and they also kindle Truth in the hearts of their listeners. Their words are filled with the very Power of Truth. But what if you yourself have not even seen the Truth? Then, what can you convey to others? Indulging in idle words and gossip, you yourself are far away from Truth, and you lead others astray with you.

Those who forget the Truth are miserable; they depart weeping and wailing.

After millions upon millions of yugas and lifetimes suffering in the wheel of transmigration, you have finally achieved a human birth. But if, after receiving this priceless opportunity, you forget the Truth, if you never remember Truth and don't establish a connection with it, then your poor soul will be buried in misery. You will be bound by countless karmas, and at the time of your death, you will depart in that suffering, to be thrown once again into the wheel of 84 lakh births and deaths.

Those who have not served the True Guru, why did they even bother to come into this world?

Finally, what does He tell us? If, after receiving the precious human body, the jiva still doesn't go in the shelter of the Satguru and come to understand the nature of True Seva, if that jiva doesn't take advantage of the precious opportunity and manifest the Naam within, then curse on that human birth. What difference does it make if such a soul incarnates as a human being or as an animal? If the soul does not earn the treasure of Naam, what is the point of taking the human birth at all? Outwardly, you have the form of a human being, but within you are filled with the qualities of a beast.

You may have the name Suran Singh (*suran* or *swaran* means "gold"; but *suran* is also the name of a large yam that is cultivated for food). But if there is no food to eat in the house (there is no *suran or "*yam"), then even if your name is Suran Singh (then even if your name means "gold"), still there will be a grumbling and disturbance in your home because everyone will remain hungry. Similarly, if you get the human birth but do not act like a human being, then, even though you are called a human being, what humanity is there within you?

You pass your life in *āhār*, *maithuň*, *bhay* and *nidrā*. *Āhār* means food. *Maithuň* is indulgence to have children. *Bhay* is fear, and *nidrā* means sleep. These are the four activities that make up the life of the animal. For all lower life forms in the wheel of the transmigration, these four activities predominate. If these same impulses also rule our incarnation in the human body—the crown of all creation—then curse on such a birth.

At the door of death, they are bound and beaten,
but no one hears their shrieks and cries.

Whoever has made the karmas will have to undergo their reactions. If the father makes the karmas, he will have to pay. If the son creates the karmas, he will have to pay. No one else will undergo the happiness and suffering of the karmas you have created. You have sown the seeds in your own field, and you will have to reap that harvest. If you have sown *babul* (thorny acacia) and then you expect to harvest mangos, that is not possible.

In the same way, if you fill your heart with bad thoughts, if you don't cast out greed, thievery, deceit and so forth, what good can come from outwardly repeating Sat Naam, Sat Naam? You can't gain anything in that way. Whatever seed you sow in your heart, you will reap the fruit of that. When you have sown the bad karmas, then according to your own deeds, you will earn the beating of the angels of death, and you will be thrown back into the revolving wheel of eighty-four.

They waste their lives uselessly; they die and take
birth over and over again.

You uselessly squander your whole lifetime bound up with children, family, and relatives, but this very attachment to the

world becomes the cause of your reincarnating once again in the cycle of birth and death.

Seeing this world on fire, I rushed into the Sanctuary of the True Guru.

He says, "I see that all the world is burning, and to save myself from that fire, I have run to the Satguru and fallen at His feet."

The True Guru has implanted the Truth within me, and I remain steadfast in Truth.

Seeing my humility and devotion, He took pity on my desperate plight and made my heart firm in the Truth. He established me in the worship of the Lord. Manifesting the Truth within me, He rescued me from the burning fire of this world.

The True Guru is the ship of Truth; riding on the Guru's Shabd, we cross over the terrifying ocean of existence.

Now what does He tell us? In this ocean of the world, the Satguru is the ferryman and Naam is the ship. Sitting in Satguru's ship of Naam, you can easily cross over the fearful ocean of this world. But only a rare Gurumukh is a competent boatman.

If we are surrounded by dark night, we may take hold of the hand of a guru to guide us. But if that guru is himself a blind man, how can he see the way. He will fall into the ditch, dragging us down along with him.

Only the one whose within is illumined by the Light of Shabd can be called a Guru. That Power of Shabd is the True Guru, not the outer body. Anyone can take up the role of the

guru outwardly, but you will gain nothing from such gurus, no matter how many you may follow. The Light of Shabd is the only True Guru.

People continue wandering through the cycle of 84 lakh incarnations; without the True Guru, liberation is not achieved.

People go on performing righteous deeds and giving donations. Along with these deeds they have some desire they wish to be fulfilled. They are offering an entreaty for some reward, and God will fulfill their desires. As a result of their virtuous deeds, they may dwell for a span of time in the heavens and paradises within. But they remain denizens of the mortal realms, and when their allotted time has expired, they will once again have to take birth in this world. Until we go into the shelter of the Satguru, our coming and going in this world will never cease. [audio tape ends…]

Reading and studying, the pandits and the sages have grown weary, but attached to the love of duality, they have lost their honor.
The True Guru makes us hear the Shabd; the True One is all in all, there is no other.
Those who are linked by the True One are one with Truth; they always act in Truth.
They reach their True Home and abide in the Mansion of Truth.
O Nanak, the devotees enjoy eternal happiness; they are absorbed in the True Name.

Kabir Sahib Ji says, "O crazy girl, O soul! This life is of four days only; come to your senses now." While you remain in your parents' home, that is, while you have this boon of the human body, develop the qualities that will stand by you in the beyond. While you still dwell in the house of the body, cultivate those good qualities that will help you when your end time comes. Otherwise, when death calls, you will bemoan your fate. When you leave this body, you will not be prepared to meet the Beloved Lord.

—Baba Somanath

32

Develop the Good Qualities Now

Develop some good qualities, O crazy girl, develop some good qualities while you are in your parents' home;
Then, your virtue will shine when you go to the place of your beloved husband.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He is using an outer example to explain an inner reality. In this world, we see the union of woman and man. The woman has love for the man, and the man has love for the woman. The two form one natural whole. This worldly example reflects the unity of the soul and the Almighty Lord. Some people prefer to use the union of Shiva and Shakti to illustrate this divine reality; it is all one and the same thing.

In this bani, Kabir Sahib is using the example of the bride and bridegroom to illustrate divine unity. If, before the girl marries, she develops the qualities that will win her husband's love, then her future life will be successful. But if she just flits about, following her own whims while she

1 Kabir Sahib, *Gun karu bavarī gun karu...*

is still living in the home of her parents, if she spares no thought for the qualities that will make her future life, then how will she enjoy a loving relationship with her husband when that day comes? Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji says, "O crazy girl! O mad one! Develop those qualities to win your husband's love while there is still time."

As long as you reside in your father's house,
cultivate noble ways.
Then you can offer becoming replies to your
mother-in-law and sisters-in-law.

While you are still living in the house of your father, understand which qualities will serve you well in times to come. Because later, when you go to your husband's home, you must be ready to give respectful and loving replies when your mother-in-law, or your elder brother-in-law and his wife call you. Before you are married and go to your husband's home, you should prepare yourself to speak in a becoming manner to all the members of your new household. You should practice and perfect all of those skills and qualities while you are still with your mother and father. Otherwise, later, conflict could arise in your new home, and your new relatives may feel confused and upset.

When the Brahmins arrive to fix the auspicious
date and time,
Your face turns pale; your heart sinks when you
hear it is time to depart.

When you reach marriageable age, the Bhatt Brahmins

arrive to set the date of your departure for your husband's home.[2] Hearing their pronouncements, your face turns pale. You know you have not developed any good qualities. How will you succeed when you go to your new home? You have not even one good quality to win your husband's love. And what about all your new in-laws? If your mother-in-law or your husband's sisters ask you questions, how should you reply to them? Your face falls just thinking of your plight. You are plagued with worry and regret.

The instruments play; the festivities begin; the village resounds with celebration.
The carriers arrive to take you away, but your beloved makes no appearance.

When the time comes for the bride to depart for her husband's home, the Bhatt Brahmins start playing on instruments and the *gaunā* [3] ceremony proceeds with a great deal of fanfare. An atmosphere of celebration spreads throughout the whole village. But when this time arrives, instead of radiating happiness, you are sunk in sorrow and trepidation: "What will become of me when I go there?" You know the

2 Bhatt Brahmins were the sect that presided at religious rituals and festivities.

3 When child marriage was still the prevailing custom, children were betrothed at a very young age, but the bride did not go to her husband's home until she reached maturity. The *gaunā* ceremony marked the time she left her parents' house for good and went to take up her new life. Though customs have changed, departure, which is referred to in different traditions as *gaunā*, or *vidai*, or *dolī*, is still a very poignant moment for the bride and her family.

husband will not even want to see you. Because of all your faults, he will not look on you with favor. And if you are not admired by your husband, then your youth is worthless.

They carry the *dolī* to the husband's home; but the door is shut.
The bride is nervous and afraid. Where is the master of the house?

The bride's kinsmen carry the *dolī* (palanquin) and set it down at the husband's door. Arriving there, the bride's heart sinks. The place seems deserted, and her husband is nowhere to be seen. Similarly, when we meditate, we try to focus our attention between the two eyes—the pathway leading to the Lord. We want to fix our gaze and stay at the eye center, but since we have not yet prepared ourselves, that door doesn't open. No matter how much we may lament, no matter how much we may try to attract the Lord's favor, such efforts are all in vain, because we have neglected the practices. Just like that unhappy bride who came in the marriage *dolī,* we have not yet prepared ourselves to please the Lord, and we find His door shut. Like that bride, we are full of defects and bad qualities. Because we have not developed even one good quality, the Lord's door does not open to us.

If I had only known sooner, I would have developed those good qualities.
Then I could have traveled to the Lord's country and won supreme happiness.

The bride says, "If I had known earlier, then I would have perfected those pleasing qualities. But alas, I didn't take

advantage of that time." Similarly, at our end time, we say, "If we had done the meditation of Naam in our youth and lived the righteous life enjoined by our Satguru, then now at our end time, we would merge into the Love of the Lord and reach our True Home, Sat Lok-Sach Khand. But instead, we wasted our youth and were swept away in the world." If we have not meditated on Naam during our lifetime, but start crying out "Rama, Rama" when death is upon us, what Rama will come to our rescue? The Friend—that Almighty Lord—is sitting within you. He knows full well how much love you have for Him and how much love you have for the world. At the time of our death, when darkness overwhelms us, we call out to Him, but we are still entangled in all our worldly attachments. What love do we have to spare for the Lord? At that time, we can only weep bitterly and repent that, having obtained this human birth, we took no advantage of it.

Here, we had one satsangi who was very strong and robust. He was highly respected by the sangat; everyone knew him. But when his death approached, he found himself empty within. At that time, he frankly and openly proclaimed:

"I have been a satsangi for many years, and everyone knew my name. All the people thought that I must be a great meditator. They expected that when my end time came, I would depart this world in joy and would speak of higher realms. But they were all sadly deceived. Outwardly, I appeared to be a great satsangi, but inwardly, I never engaged in bhajan and simran. I did not meet the Almighty Lord within, and I am going empty-handed. So now, with my last breath, I am warning you. Don't remain in illusion. Don't imagine that you can neglect your inner practices and then expect that your Satguru will come to take you within at your end time.

Give up this wrong thinking right away. From this moment on, become determined in the meditation. The true profit can be earned only through meditation, not through idle talk. Put aside your misconceptions and understand the reality." Having spoken these words to those around him, he left the body.

Come to your senses, crazy girl, come to your senses; the life is of four days only.
Kabir says: Poor creature, you will have to leave all these companions behind.

Kabir Sahib Ji says, "O crazy girl, O soul! This life is of four days only; come to your senses now." While you remain in your parents' home, that is, while you have this boon of the human body, develop the qualities that will stand by you in the beyond. While you still dwell in the house of the body, cultivate those good qualities that will help you when your end time comes. Otherwise, when death calls, you will bemoan your fate. When you leave this body, you will not be prepared to meet the Beloved Lord.

Nothing of this world will accompany you into the beyond; all the worldly things are related to the physical body only. When you take up the spiritual way, if you don't follow the Guru's instructions, then, looking at your condition, people will say: "You haven't changed one iota. You're just the same as you ever were." If you shun the practices, you will remain unchanged. Until you do the meditation and develop the good qualities, you will not be able to pass the test at the time of death. No matter how great your outer accomplishments—you may turn the world on its head and set it right again—still, those deeds are worthless when

death approaches. If you are successful in your final examination, then you can say you have passed. But if you fail that final test, then your whole life has been wasted.

When you are standing guard over your treasure, be sure you have your weapon ready. Your body is the gun. Right thought is the gunpowder in your powder horn. Just as you fill the gun with gunpowder, in the same way, fill the body with right thoughts—with qualities that are lofty and full of truth.

—Baba Somanath

33

The Soldier Stands on Guard

From now on, remain wide awake and vigilant,
O brother.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He tells us that we should be vigilant and wide awake. From His words, it is clear that we have been lost in slumber. All the world is sound asleep. Therefore, in order to rouse us from our stupor, He says: "However long you have slept, whatever has happened up till now—leave it behind you." There is no benefit at all in dwelling on the past. Thinking of past happiness is useless, and there is nothing to be gained in remembering past sorrows. But now—for the future—remain awake and watchful. Do not become careless and forgetful.

Satguru has given you the spiritual treasure;
guard it by the method He has taught you.

Why should you remain vigilant? He says, "Satguru has given you the treasure of Naam. It is your responsibility to stand guard over that treasure." You have to protect it from the

1 Kabir Sahib, *Ab se khabardār raho bhāī...*

thieves; they want to snatch that treasure away from you. Be careful that it does not fall into their hands through your carelessness. To save it from these thieves, you must remain wakeful and watchful. If you keep your thoughts fixed in the Naam and perform the practices taught by your Guru, then you will remain awake, and the thieves cannot touch you.

Don't let it decrease by even a fraction of a *rattī;* go on increasing it day by day.

The smallest jeweler's weight is a *rattī*, based on the tiny red seed from the *rattī* (gunja) plant. So, He says, perform the practice given by your Guru in such a way that your treasure is not reduced by even one-quarter of a *rattī*. And further, you have to increase your treasure by the repetition (*rat*) of Naam. Do not let your attention leave that repetition (*rat*) for even the tiniest fraction (*rattī*) of an instant. Go on repeating the Simran of Naam over and over; become so absorbed in the contemplation of Naam that not even one of your priceless breaths falls into the hands of these thieves.

As you go on practicing the meditation, you begin to progress within, and your inner experience increases; then you start to realize the value of the treasure you have been given, and you become more proficient in preserving it. But now, sometimes we may remember the Naam only one time in a whole day. We think, "I have taken Naam initiation. Today, I've done five or ten rounds of Simran. That should be plenty." And another twenty-four hours pass by uselessly.

One old lady received initiation from Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji. She had come on the initiation day but didn't know anything about the Simran, or Dhyan, or the other practices. Seeing everyone else signing up for initiation, she also requested the Naam, just like people enlist with the army recruiter.

Later, when someone asked her if she was doing the Simran regularly, she replied, "Yes, I am practicing it." So, they asked, "When do you do it?" The old lady said, "In the morning when I get up, I do two rounds of Simran. Then at noon when I eat my lunch, I do another two rounds of Simran. And finally, at night when I go to bed I do two more rounds. Altogether, I am doing six rounds of Simran every day." What progress can you hope to achieve like that?

So, in this way, after we take the initiation, now and then we may sit for meditation. Sometimes we remember the Naam, and then we do three or four rounds of Simran. And then all day and night we remain in the world, lost in the labyrinth of forgetfulness. The force of forgetfulness grows strong within us, and the children of forgetfulness are the bad habits. We become addicted to the sense enjoyments, and our thoughts become so absorbed in the worldly things that the wealth of our breaths is squandered.

Wear the robe of forgiveness and continence;
put on the loincloth of meditation.

Put on the robe of forgiveness and continence and the loincloth of meditation; this is the true renunciation. Adopting this type of renunciation, do the remembrance of Naam. Whether or not you put on the outer *alfī* (a long robe of thick cloth) or the *kafanī* (ascetic's unsewn garment) or *langotā* (loincloth), it makes no difference. If you clothe yourself in these outer garments, what protection can they afford you?

But if you put on the robe of forgiveness, then no matter what the worldly people may say about you—whether they praise you or criticize you, whether they respect you or insult you—still you won't mind; this is the principle of forgiveness. And continence means keeping your senses under

your control. Don't fill your heart with the impure thoughts of the outer senses. Don't waste even one breath in this way. Therefore, He says, "Wear the robe of forgiveness and continence. And, following your Guru's instructions, put on the loincloth of meditation, absorbing your attention day and night in the Lord's remembrance."

Place the cap of mercy on your head, and you will make headway on the Path.

He has explained about the robe of forgiveness and the loincloth of meditation. Now, He says, "On your head always wear the cap of mercy for all living beings. Then your renunciation will be true; from such renunciation you will attain the Lord." Until you develop this quality, how can you progress? How can you love the Lord if you do not love His creation?

Having received the gift, don't remain idle; do your practice day and night.

Once you establish a connection with the Naam through the Guru's grace, never entertain thoughts of procrastination. Once you get the Naam, do the meditation day and night, and increase your capital. If you give up the repetition of Naam, what can you achieve? We think, "Oh, I am an old satsangi. I have been initiated for such a long time." What benefit is there in being an old satsangi? All it means is that a lot of time has passed.

The thieves are sitting within you, lurking in the shadows to ambush you.

If you become careless and inattentive or if you fall asleep on the job, then you have succumbed to the power of forgetfulness.

The thieves are sitting within you in the form of forgetfulness. Lust, anger, greed, attachment, egotism, and the waves of the sense enjoyments that arise moment after moment in your mind—all of these thieves are sitting, awaiting their chance. And when they see that no one is on guard, these thieves say, "Now we can bring this jiva under our control. Let us seize him." This is how the thieves gain ascendancy over you. And when you once come under their sway, your spiritual wealth will be destroyed.

The body is the gun, right thought fills the powder horn, and love is the ramrod.

When the guard is armed with a weapon, then the thieves are frightened. "Friends, he has a gun. He will shoot us and kill us." But if the guard is sitting empty-handed, then the thieves will overpower him. When you are standing guard over your treasure, be sure you have your weapon ready. Your body is the gun. Right thought is the gunpowder in your powder horn. Just as you fill the gun with gunpowder, in the same way, fill the body with right thoughts—with qualities that are lofty and full of truth. Tulsi Das says:

Where the thoughts are good,
prosperity flourishes;
Where the thoughts are bad,
they bring misfortune.

First, fill the body with the qualities of goodness. In earlier times, when the gun was filled with gunpowder, it would be packed down with a ramrod. He tells us, "Filling the gun of the body with the gunpowder of good thoughts, pack it down with the ramrod of love."

What is the meaning of filling the body with good thoughts? Now our within is filled with the bad thoughts of the sense enjoyments. When the bad thoughts connect us to the outer world through the outgoing faculties, then we are drawn to the worldly things and become subject to them. But when the good thoughts increase within us, when we follow the path of right understanding, then we join the congregation of Truth. We should fill our within with this gunpowder to such an extent that the bad thoughts have no power over us. If even one bad quality is strong within us, we won't be able to practice the devotion. Kabir Sahib tells us:

The lustful, the angry, and the greedy ones—
they cannot do the devotion.
Only some brave one can do the devotion,
leaving aside thoughts of caste and color.

When all of the bad qualities are removed from your heart, then you can practice the devotion. Therefore, become so vigilant that the bad qualities find no place in your within. When the bad qualities make their home within you, then the good qualities are driven out and vanish like a dream. If someone else is performing the good deeds and maintaining the good thoughts, then you oppose them. The influence of the bad deeds dominates your perception.

The soul is the ever-burning match to fire the gunpowder; now, where should I aim my gun?

What does He tell us? When you fill the gun with gunpowder and set a match to it, the gunpowder explodes, and the bullet is launched. Similarly, the match of the surat, the conscious Power of the soul, should always be burning. And when a thief comes in sight, you should bring your thoughts, your

attention into contact with that surat, where the inner Light of Naam is burning. Then the conscious Power of the soul will ignite the gunpowder, and the bullet will kill the thief.

The sight is an aiming device mounted on top of the gun to align it with the target. When the hunter pursues his prey, he looks in the sight and lines up the image of his prey within the crosshairs. Then he lights the match, or nowadays he pulls the trigger; then the bullet fires, and strikes the target. In the same way, our target is the still point between the two eyes. We should fix our attention there, fire the gun, and launch the bullet of Naam Simran. Then that higher conscious Power will flare up and destroy lust, anger, and all the passions.

The soldier stands on guard, understanding that the Lord dwells in all.

Now, when you are on guard within, then Maya will try to entice you outside to the things of the world. So, you have to be on guard outwardly day and night. When you see any outer thing, you should remember that the Almighty Lord pervades all creation: "The Power which dwells in my within is residing in that outer object also." When this truth dawns, then within and without you will see only that one Lord, and the commotion and confusion of the world will disappear.

Kabir says, "The Primal, Transcendental Lord looks on all with mercy and is perpetually awakening the souls."

Kabir Sahib says, "I was in the beginning, and my message has come down from time immemorial. Always, with every breath, I am calling out to rouse you from your slumber. I have come to awaken the world."

All the beings under the sway of the sun and moon are controlled by time; they are all the slaves of Kal. Whether they are gods and goddesses dwelling in the heaven worlds or residents of this mortal world, it makes no difference. All are ruled by Lord Kal. But when you do the meditation on Shabd and become absorbed in the Self-Luminous Light and Sound, then the sun and moon have no more influence over you—your own Inner Light will impart radiance to them.

—Baba Somanath

34

The Glory of Shabd

Without Shabd all the world is stark blind.
Who can sever the fetters of attachment?[1]

This is the bani of Param Sant Satguru Hazur Radha Swami Ji. Describing the glory of Shabd, He says, "Without the Shabd, all the world is stark blind." Where there is no Shabd, there is no means of knowing. Inwardly, we receive True Knowledge directly through the experience of the Shabd or Word. But when we are dealing with gaining outer knowledge of things in the created world, we gain knowledge of it through outer words. We share our thoughts and feelings with each other through words. Not only the human beings, but even the animals and birds express themselves in their own languages. The heavens, the mortal world, and the nether regions below are all created and supported only by the Power of the Shabd.

But if we have no inner access to the Shabd, then how can we even picture the realms we have not seen or grasp their mysteries? Only when we hear outer words describing the heavens, do visions of the celestial realms unfold before our eyes. Similarly, if someone mentions hell, unless we have

1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Shabd binā sārā jag andhā...*

heard descriptions of the despair and suffering of that place, how can we conjure up any image of the infernal regions?[2] So, we can see that the Inner Shabd or Word is immanent in all and supports all that exists. And in our outer dealings, we must have recourse to the outer shabd or words. Within and without, no one can accomplish anything without the support of Shabd. Therefore, Swami Ji says that without the Shabd, the whole world has been plunged into dense darkness. And then He asks, "What other Power could cut us free from the noose of attachment?" Shabd alone wields the Power of salvation. Without the Shabd, we cannot remove

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2 Throughout this Satsang, Baba Somanath Ji draws a contrast between the two types of Shabd, outer and inner. On this subject, Sant Kirpal Singh tells us: "Shabd is of two kinds: outer and inner or Varn-Atmak and Dhun-Atmak, respectively. The Varn-Atmak to a certain extent gives a clue to the Dhun-Atmak Shabd. It is a matter of common experience how martial music stirs up men to arms, sad dirges bring tears to the eyes, loving strains bewitch the mind, doleful songs strike the spirit, solemn notes inspire awe and reverence. Again, the words of the wise act as a soothing balm for lacerated minds and smarting taunts cut us to the quick.

> Words there be that cut the very heart-strings,
> And words may lead to profound renunciation,
> Words may work as soothing balm or may strike misery,
> Some of them inspire hope and others engender helplessness.
> KABIR

> What passion cannot Music raise and quell.
> DRYDEN

When there is so much magic in Varn-Atmak Shabd, one cannot possibly imagine the Power that lies hidden in the Dhun-Atmak Shabd, which is very subtle and ethereal in nature. The inner Shabd is sublime and pure, with an irresistible magnetic pull which a freed soul cannot but plunge into." Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word*, (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) p. 130.

attachment. Without the Shabd we cannot break the chains that keep us bound. Shabd is the very life-essence of everything that exists—Shabd is all in all.

Without the Shabd, our deeds are all in vain.
Without the Shabd, the jiva is shackled in chains.

If we are not united with the Shabd, then all our inner thoughts and outer deeds are binding—we cannot escape their pinching effects. Shabd is also the support of all our worldly dealings. If the buyer is not supported by the Shabd, then how can they order the merchandise they require? And if the seller is not supported by the Shabd, how can they supply the buyer's request? Even the paisas and rupees, the silver and gold, that change hands are also supported by the Power of Shabd.

It is the active life-principle behind all that exists. No outer or inner activity transpires without its enlivening touch. So here, Swami Ji tells us that because we jivas remain ignorant of that True Power of Shabd, we have become shackled in unbreakable chains. We are trapped in deep darkness.

Shabd upholds both the sun and moon.
Without the Shabd the jiva is covered with filth.

No doubt, the sun and moon illumine the outer world, but without the support of Shabd, we cannot even perceive their light. And when someone speaks outer words in praise of the sun, we gain more knowledge of it; a mental picture of the sun's lustrous radiance forms within us. When someone praises the moon, their words bring up the image of moonbeams in our hearts. This is all the play of the Shabd. Swami Ji says,

"Shabd upholds both the sun and moon." And without that True Shabd, the jiva remains covered with filth, drowning in the deep, dark well of ignorance.

Except for the Shabd, all other paths lead us astray.
Shabd is the Teacher, and Shabd is the True Teaching.

Without Shabd, the True Path does not open within us. Without Shabd, we have no inspiration to begin our quest, we remain deaf to True Knowledge, and the inner experience of the Lord eludes us. When the Guru speaks words of instruction, the disciple imbibes those sacred words; but without the support of Shabd, neither Guru nor disciple exist. The Shabd itself sits within the Guru giving out the teaching, and the same Shabd sits within the disciple, drinking in the wisdom of spirituality. Shabd alone exists; there is nothing but Shabd.

Words can break our chains, and words can secure our bondage. All the words uttered under the control of the ego, words arising from the sense of I-hood, keep us bound to this world. But the words that are spoken selflessly—the words that are inspired by the Shabd—liberate us from the prison house. One word gives rise to the disease, and another word applies the healing balm.

Meditating on Shabd, we obtain True Bliss;
without Shabd all other practices are a mockery.

Swami Ji says that those who meditate on the Shabd, those in whom the Shabd has manifested, they are worthy of the name Anand (Bliss). All the other Anands—Paramanand (Supreme Bliss), Mahananda (Great Bliss), Sukhanand (Bliss of Happiness), Sadanand (Eternal Bliss), Swanand (Self-Existing

Bliss)—they are "Anand" in name only[3]. Only the Shabd can impart the True Bliss. If someone has been given the name Anand, that's alright. Maybe you are called Nikhilanand (Total Bliss), but, my friend, what Bliss do you receive from having that name? If you meditate on Shabd and manifest that Shabd within yourself, then the real Paramanand, Mahanand, and Sukhanand will manifest within you.

Next, He tells us that except for the meditation on Shabd Naam, all the other practices are like a ridiculing God. Now when we visit the temple, we perform puja to the gods. We bring water and bathe the idol. We offer flowers and leaves to it, we anoint it with fragrant oil, we offer food to that stone idol and burn incense before it. But the True Shabd—the Almighty Lord—is not manifested there. And so rather than glorifying the Lord with all our rites and rituals, we are instead belittling Him. The idol before you does not see your puja. It does not hear your recitations, it does not see the light you are waving, it does not hear the bell you are ringing, it does not eat the food you are offering. In fact, worshiping a piece of stone and accepting it as the Almighty Lord is not less than offering an insult to God. For this reason, Swami Ji says that without Shabd, all your practices and performances are like making a mockery of the True Lord.

Therefore, meditate on Shabd and Shabd alone; abandon all other contemplation.

Therefore, Swami Ji Maharaj advises us to do the meditation on Shabd. Shabd is the only true practice. Do not let any stray thoughts disturb your heart. You have received the support of the One Shabd. Guru Amar Das tells us:

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3 "Anand" and its many variants are common given names in India.

O Nanak, whoever has met the Satguru;
Their karmic accounts are all settled.

When the Satguru reveals the secret of Shabd to someone, that person's karmic account will be wiped clean.[4] There can be no higher good fortune. But if we become weak-minded, if we fill ourselves with thoughts of the world and think that we can unite our own impure intellect with the immaculate Shabd, how ignorant and how unfortunate we are.

Taking the secret of Shabd from the Guru, merge yourself into that Shabd.

The Shabd is Ever-Present, but we must obtain its secret from the Guru—we cannot gain knowledge of that Shabd and manifest it on our own. Every person communicates by means of words; those words are an outer manifestation of the Inner Shabd. Mantras (repetitions) and tantras (incantations) are made up of words. The Vedas and Shastras are also written in words. All the great scriptures of the world are composed of words. Even the debate within your own heart, all the wavering back and forth, is nothing but words.

4 As the soul rides upward on the Shabd, it gains the strength to bear past karmas, and, crossing beyond Trikuti, it escapes the realm of karma altogether. Hazur Sawan Singh Ji tells us: "Joys of the world will not elevate and its sorrows will not depress him. The fate actions are stored in the eight-petalled lotus in Anda above the eyes. Their influence is felt forcibly as long as that centre has not been crossed. When that centre is crossed and the Master's astral form is seen—for that Form resides there—the influence of the fate actions will be perceived nominally. The mind has then become strong and it has the power to bear them without effort. But fate cannot be effaced or altered; it will have to be undergone. An arrow after leaving the bow must find its mark. The reserve actions are stored at the top of Trikuti; and only when a spirit has crossed the third mind or Trikuti, is it said to be free from all karma." Baba Sawan Singh Ji, *Sat Sandesh*, April 1975, "On Karma," p. 19.

But which of these words should we take hold of? Which will lead us to the True Shabd within?

When the yogis still their attention through the practice of pranayama, the *dashvidhi nād*—the "ten-fold" sounds of the lower chakras[5] in the body—become audible within them. Believing these sounds to be the highest Shabd, they become stuck fast and don't progress any further. But the *dashvidhi nād* is not the True Shabd. Therefore, Swami Ji tells us that we should take the secret of Shabd from the Sat Guru and meditate every day with regularity according to His instructions. Don't allow your intellect to waylay you or your progress will be halted.

The Shabd has been with you since the beginning and is even now reverberating within you day and night; you don't need to embellish it with any fabrications of the intellect. You should absorb your whole consciousness into the Sound that is already playing at the seat of the soul. Your attention should not be divided. Do not try to listen to the Shabd with a mind full of fantasy and speculation: "I should be hearing this or that. Why is such and such not happening?" When the *buddhi* or intellect is racing, the Sound of the Shabd will grow faint and die out.

The Light of Shabd brightens your within.
You can glimpse the City of Shabd through the open door.

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5 The sounds of *dashvidhi nād* that become audible through pranayama are distant echoes of the True Shabd and bear some resemblance to the Higher Sounds. For instance, the *Hamsa Upanishad* enumerates the sounds of *dashvidhi nād* as: "chin" (buzzing), "chin-chin" (tinkling), bell, conch, veena, cymbals, flute, bheri (drum), mridanga (double-headed drum) and thunder. The exact description and number of the sounds varies from tradition to tradition, but all these sounds are bound to the body and cannot pull the soul upward.

Everything that Swami Ji Maharaj has proclaimed openly about the Shabd has also been alluded to by other Saints and Mahatmas.[6] For the spiritual practitioner, there is no aid and support equal to that True Shabd.

The Shabd within you does not depend on any other power. It is Self-Existing and needs no other support. When you cross over the threshold to the Inner Realms, then that Shabd becomes audible within you. In the material plane, when the Shabd mingles with the five elements, it becomes inextricably alloyed with them. But when you rise into the Beyond, you begin to encounter the pure, Self-Existing stream of Shabd. No doubt, the lower manifestations of the Shabd are supported by that pure Higher Shabd, but because that Higher Shabd has mingled with the five elements, it has, to some degree, taken on the qualities of those elements. Accordingly, those qualities influence even our power of speech, the workings of our intellect, and the functioning of our individual ego.

Now, when you ring a bell, the musical overtones reverberate and linger even after you have struck it. When you beat a drum, its resonant cadence lingers on the air. Why? That drumming sound arises from the higher Inner Sound of Shabd that is intermingled with the material elements of the physical instrument.

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6 When Swami Ji began His mission, He gave discourses in the Gurdwara in Mai Than and then "shifted the venue of His teachings to His private apartments in Punni Gali and continued His discourses from the Granth Sahib (the copy He used was brought by Hazur Sawan Singh Ji from Agra and is still treasured in the archives of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh at Beas in the Punjab). This system of addressing private gatherings at His home continued for quite a long time; but on Basant Panchmi Day in the year 1861, the floodgates of Surat Shabd Yoga as revived in this age by Kabir and His contemporary Guru Nanak, and firmly entrenched by His successors in the Gurbani, were now thrown open by Swami Ji to the general public." Kirpal Singh, *Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life and Teachings* (Anaheim, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1987) p. 12.

But until the soul rises above those elements, until it crosses into the Inner Realms, it cannot obtain real Knowledge of the Shabd. The poor person sitting below the eye focus, entangled in the thoughts of the intellect—what can they achieve?

The Shabd remains separate from all; yet, Shabd sustains each and every jiva.

Now what does He tell us? The Shabd remains detached from everything, and yet each jiva is supported by that very Shabd. The Shabd is present within everyone; Shabd supports our talking, our walking, all our actions. But because we have become attached to the material body through the allure of those very activities, still no thought of the True Shabd arises in our heart. That Shabd dwells within all, and yet it remains separate from all.

Know Shabd as the Essence of all that exists; accept the Shabd and attain salvation.

The king is created by Shabd; the subjects are created by Shabd. Seated on his throne, the king rules all his subjects through the power vested in him. Whenever the king issues a decree, all his subjects must obey. In similar fashion, the Self-Existing Shabd is the Supreme King. Dwelling in every heart, Shabd is the Giver of Life, supporting all that exists. Such is the Power of Shabd.

O friend, meditate on the Shabd; conquer Kal with the might of Shabd.

Now what does He say? O friend! O dear one! Do the meditation of Shabd day and night. Kal flees the place where

Shabd manifests, because Shabd is the form of Self-Luminous Radiance. In the outer world, the sun and moon give off light, but they remain under the dominion of Kal, who governs their cycles. Understand this as the principle of Kal. The word "Kal" means time. Kal is the power that devours all the jivas. Our earthly life is subject to Kal, the Lord of Time. We tick off the time: "Now it is eight o'clock; now it is nine o'clock; now it is ten o'clock. Today is Monday. Today is Tuesday. A month has passed. A year has passed. Fifty years have passed." Even when someone dies, the passage of the years goes on as before. Just because a person dies, it does not mean that time comes to an end. When will time die? When the moon and sun are no more. All the beings under the sway of the sun and moon are controlled by time; they are all the slaves of Kal. Whether they are gods and goddesses dwelling in the heaven worlds or residents of this mortal world, it makes no difference. All are ruled by Lord Kal. But when you do the meditation on Shabd and become absorbed in the Self-Luminous Light and Sound, then the sun and moon have no more influence over you—your own Inner Light will impart radiance to them.

Discover the seat of Shabd within the body; behold that Beloved who is Shabd and Shabd alone.

From what source is that Shabd arising? On what ground do we listen to that Sound? First of all, take the knowledge of this technique from the Guru. Now, the Shabd is spread downward into all the senses. But the seat of the Shabd in the body is the door into the Inner Realms. Fixing your attention at that place, listen to that Shabd with your inner hearing faculty. Shabd is the Lord of Lords—there is no higher power. Once you obtain the secret of Shabd, the

straight road to your True Home opens before you, and you can proceed without let or hindrance.

Shabd erases the line of karma; Shabd alone can unite you with Shabd.

What does He mean by the line of karma? When some calamity befalls us as a result of our bad actions in the past, we say, "What can I do? Fate has dealt me a cruel blow." Or if we meet with some happy windfall as a result of our good actions in the past, then we say, "Fortune is smiling! The Lord is showering a lot of grace on me." All these ups and downs of destiny are written in our karmas, drawn from the vast storehouse of our past deeds. Only Shabd can bring the endless cycle of karma to a close.[7]

There are four types of karma within us, and the soul is

7 The Satguru finishes off the karmas of the initiate. Sant Kirpal Singh describes the process: "At the time of Initiation, the Master begins the process of winding up all Karmas of the initiate. He gives him a contact with the Sound Current, by practising which the *Sanchit* account is burnt away. The process is similar to putting a handful of seeds in a pan and placing them on a fire, which then causes the seeds to puff up and lose their property of growing again. Then the *Kriyaman* account is dealt with. After warning His disciples to guard against opening any new account of bad deeds, the Master grants a general clemency in respect of past deeds, part of which the disciple has already settled in this life up to the time of Initiation. He is enjoined to lead a clean life and to weed out all imperfections in him by self-introspection from day to day. The *Prarabdha* Karma is not touched by Saints because this is the cause of the physical body, which would vanish due to the interference with Nature's Laws. Thus, a very small amount of Karma now remains to be tolerated in the physical body for the remaining years of the disciple's life, but even this is softened by the grace of the Master. The law of grace works wonders and a devotee, who out of loving devotion, reposes all his hopes in the Master, passes off unscathed from the pinching effects of the reactions of past Karmas." Kirpal Singh, *The Way of the Saints*, (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1976) p. 56-57.

weighed down under that load. We have the *sanchit* karma, the *prālabdh* karma, the *kriyamān* karma, and the *āgamya* karma. *Sanchit* or storehouse karma has brought about our births for millions of yugas and has kept us coming again and again into this world. It is just like the farmer who sows his crop this year, and then, at the harvest time, saves back some seed and stores it for the next planting. The following year, he will sow that stored seed for a new crop, and when he reaps another harvest, he will once again save out seed for the future. Similarly, we have a storehouse full of karmas from our previous births. The word *"sanchit"* means stored or collected.

Next come the *prālabdh* or fate karmas. These are the karmas that form our current body and influence our actions in this present birth. All the major circumstances, good or bad, in this lifetime are the result of the *prālabdh* karmas—what household we will take birth in, whether our outer form is dark or fair, what good and bad qualities predominate within us, whether we are born in the house of some righteous person or in the palace of a king. One person takes birth here, another somewhere else. This is all based on our *prālabdh* karmas.

The *kriyamān* karmas are the deeds we go on performing every day. The wise person is not concerned with the past karmas. Instead, they focus on performing righteous deeds in the present—Naam Simran, contemplation, devotion to the Lord. The *prālabdh* and *sanchit* karmas are a closed book to the intellect. But we can think carefully and control the *kriyamān* karmas that we are making in the present, because we are creating those *kriyamān* karmas according to the advice of our intellect. Using discrimination, we can perform the pure deeds now that will shape our future. Then, no matter what karmas we have done in the past, whether we reap the reward of previous good deeds or endure the punishment for past

bad deeds, still, we will not be afraid; we will feel no pinching effect. So, this is the nature of the *kriyamān* karmas. The *kriyamān* karmas of this life become the *prālabdh* karmas of the next life. If our *kriyamān* karmas are good, then a brighter future is assured.

And finally, we have the *āgamya* karmas. The *āgamya* karmas are like a trap we set for ourselves. Many people act wisely and create good *kriyamān* karmas, but then they forge a painful future through the *āgamya* karmas, the unfilled fantasies and desires that carry us from this life into future incarnations[8]: "I wish I could do this. In the future, I must achieve that. My children need to do such and such. I should have done this or that." Thinking of the future, we make plans: "What can I do next year? And then what will I do the year after that? How will my children get by in the time to come?" All this worry forms the *āgamya* karma; we set our course for future action.

8 Some Saints subsume *āgamya* karma under the heading of *kriyamāṇ* karma, and some detail it as a separate category. But the meaning is the same no matter how it is classified. Sant Ajaib Singh has commented on the unfulfilled desires of the current life affecting future births: "Mahatmas lovingly tell us: 'There is no one in this world who has finished or fulfilled all his desires.' He may have finished or fulfilled some of his desires, but not all: and you may even find someone who has finished most of his desires, but there will still be a couple which were not fulfilled. So, at the time of the death of such a person, all the desires which are not fulfilled come up in front of him, and he starts worrying about them; he says, 'That desire was not fulfilled,' or, 'I should have done this,' or, 'I should have done that.' So according to the desires and imaginations and fantasies which he is having at the time of death, he gets his next birth: because our desires have to be fulfilled either in this birth or the next. So, according to this, because of his unfulfilled desires he gets another birth. In that birth, those desires are fulfilled, but he creates many other desires which are not. So, in this way he gets another birth, and this cycle of birth and death goes on and on. As long as he is involved in desires, he goes on coming and going into this world again and again." Ajaib Singh, *In the Palace of Love* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1992) p. 77.

But the Almighty Lord is caring for us today, in the past, He helped us, and in the future, He will stand by us also. All your worry for the past came to nothing, and your worry for the future will be the same.

Therefore, you should put the past behind you, my friend, and tie up this ghost of the future. Karma is a deep and mysterious subject—very difficult to comprehend. Concerning karma, Swami Ji Maharaj tells us that whoever does the meditation on Shabd, the Shabd manifests in their within, and the four types of karma are reduced to ashes.

In the lower physical body, we have relied on the outer shabd—the words created from the 52 letters.[9] But the Self-Existing stream of Shabd is coming from above. If we rise above and unite with that stream, then all our chains are cast off. The Guru is not the body; the disciple is also not the body. The Shabd is the Guru; the Shabd is the disciple. [end of audio]

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9 "[The six plexuses or centers in the physical body are:] "(a) Muladhara (Basal Plexus) with a four-petaled lotus, extending on four sides; (b) Svadhishtana (Hypogastric Plexus) with a six-petaled lotus, extending on four sides plus one below and the other above; (c) Manipuraka (Solar Plexus) with an eight-petaled lotus, having four additional sides in between the original four sides; (d) Anahata (Cardiac Plexus) with a twelve-petaled lotus. It is a lotus of the unstruck sound as the name denotes; (e) Vishuddha (Pharyngeal Plexus) with a sixteen-petaled lotus, being an all-pervasive ethereal lotus. It is a center of great purity as the name indicates; (f) Aggya (Cavernous Plexus) with a two-petaled lotus, also called Ajna Chakra, meaning the center of command. Besides the above plexuses, there is the Antahkaran (consisting of chit, manas, budhi and ahankar), with a lotus of four petals, thus making in all fifty-two petals, corresponding to the fifty-two letters of the alphabet in Sanskrit, the mother of all languages. We have, however, to rise above all Akshras to a state beyond called Neh-akhshra para, which is eternal and ever-abiding and of which Kabir says: The three lokas and the fifty-two letters are one and all subject to decay, but the eternal and the everlasting holy Word is quite distinct from them." Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life: a Study in Yoga* (Franklin, NH, USA: Sant Bani Ashram, 1980), 64-66.

Without Shabd all knowledge is false;
without Shabd all contemplation is hollow.
O ignorant one! Radha Swami is explaining to you—never abandon the Shabd.

Once the pain of separation takes hold of you, who can remove that pain? No medicine can help you. No allopathic physician or unani physician, or ayurvedic physician can cure you. The One who created that pain of separation within you is the only Doctor who can help. His darshan is the only medicine that can effect a cure; all other medicine is useless.

—Baba Somanath

35

The Fire of Viraha

Only the one who has experienced the pain of separation can understand it.
Who else can fathom this condition?[1]

This is the bani of Hazur Paltu Sahib Ji. He says that you cannot achieve spirituality through superficial efforts—not through rites and rituals, not through repetitions and austerities, not through renunciation and asceticism. Spirituality is achieved through love and devotion, and through viraha, the pain of separation. When true viraha awakens in your within, when you experience that real pain of separation, only then can the rubbish of the world be burned away. Superficial cleansing makes no difference; until you cleanse your heart and make it pure, you cannot have the inner darshan of the Almighty Lord. Describing our condition, Kabir Sahib tells us:

O crazy one! You have not purified your heart,
And you pass your days listening to hearsay.

That Almighty Lord is sitting in our within, witnessing everything; He knows the condition of the inner mind. How can

1 Paltu Sahib, *Jā ke lagī soi tan jānai...*

we please that all-seeing God by offering flower garlands and *pāyasam* (rice pudding) or by putting on special clothes? There is no power in these outer things to earn the Lord's pleasure. He is the Knower of the Heart. If you search your heart, you will realize your true inner state. Do you have a real desire for spirituality, or is your heart full of the world? Examine yourself like a strict judge, and you will see where you stand. Everyone displays an outer show of devotion, but only when you make your heart true will the fire of viraha flare up within you and reduce the garbage of worldly thoughts to ashes.

Whether we are outwardly singing the hymns of the Saints or whether we are sitting for the inner meditation practice, still our mind remains engaged in worldly thoughts. It does not remain concentrated on either the outer devotion or the internal meditation. Until we feel the pain of separation, the mind does not awaken. Therefore, He tells us, "Only the one who has experienced this pain can understand it. No one else can know their condition." Only the person burning in the fire of separation knows the power and intensity of viraha.

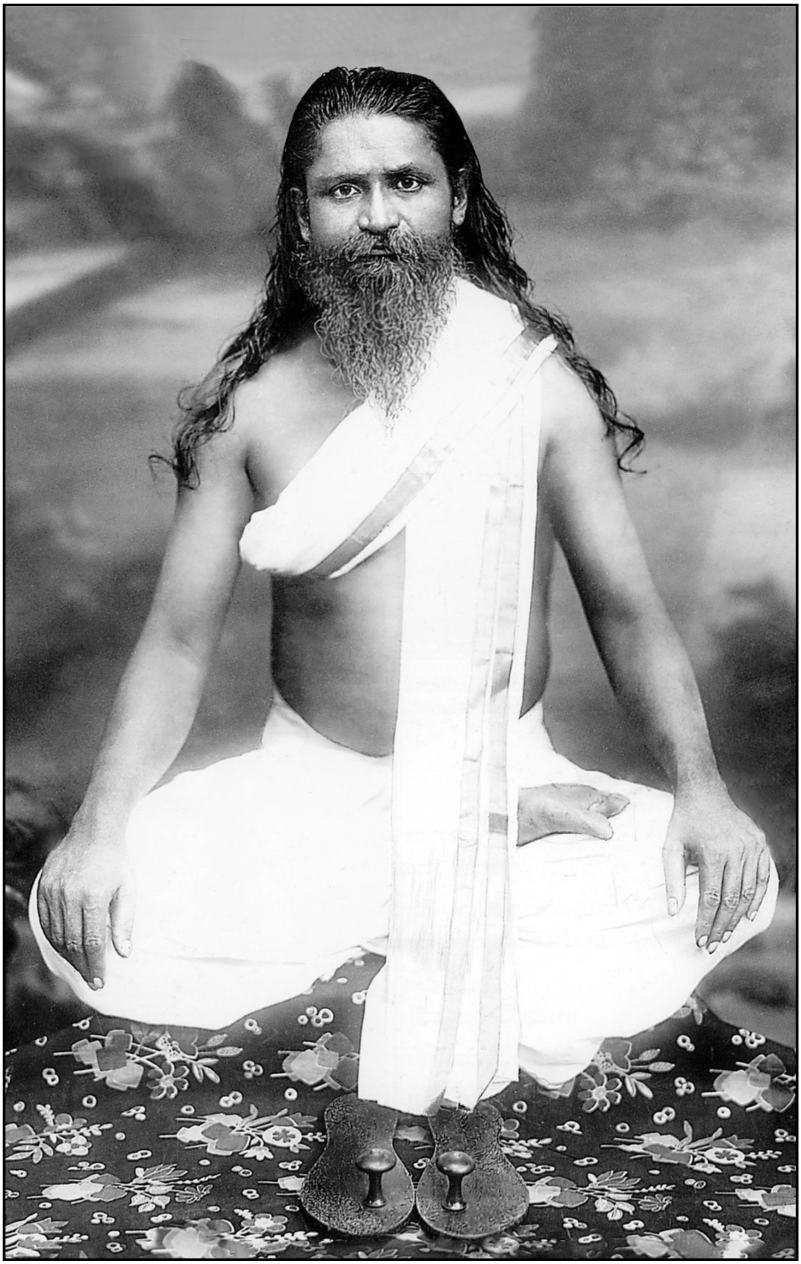
Once I placed a question before Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji. It was after nine o'clock at night, and all the Sangat had departed. Maharaj Ji was sitting all alone. I asked Him, "Maharaj Ji, is there any spiritual practice other than the Simran of Naam?" He sat quietly for a while and then after two or three minutes, He replied, "What do you mean? Are you thinking of complete surrender to the Guru and viraha, the pain of separation? This is the way of the Gurumukh." I answered, "Yes, Maharaj Ji." Then He said, "This is a very difficult way to travel. If you are absorbed in the viraha every moment for twelve years and then if your faith in the Guru wavers even one day, you will lose all the benefit of those twelve years of devotion. But if the disciples go on doing the Simran and Bhajan practices, even if they fall down, they can get up again and continue

their journey. Stumbling along, sooner or later they will reach the True Home. But when you are following the path of viraha, if even once your faith in the Guru wavers, then your entire edifice of spirituality is reduced to ruins. For this reason, the Saints teach the path of Simran and Bhajan; it is a good way that everyone can follow. But the level the Gurumukh has attained is very lofty; it is beyond description."

When the pain of separation flared up within Guru Nanak, then his bones became parched and dry. His father called many well-known ayurvedic physicians. They would prescribe medicines and explain the abstentions to observe, and then they would pocket their fees and depart. One day Nanak's father brought a very experienced and expert doctor to examine his son. The doctor read Nanak's pulse and said he should take this and that herb to bring about his recovery. Then Guru Nanak Dev Ji addressed him, saying: "O doctor! You cannot even diagnose your own disease. So, what medicine can you prescribe to heal me? Please leave me now and go back the way you came." Hearing this, Guru Nanak's father became very angry and threw Nanak out of the house.

So, this experience of viraha is something unique. But through the practices, through the repetition of Naam Simran, everyone can make gradual progress. Doing the meditation and going on with our worldly works, little by little, we can reach our spiritual goal. That is one thing. But the fire of viraha, the pain of separation, is something different.

When the pangs of separation take hold of the devotee's heart from within, the worldly people, looking on from outside, cannot comprehend what has happened. When Mira Bai became absorbed in viraha, the king was baffled and confused; he felt she was bringing disgrace upon the family. To be rid of her, first, he gave Mira a cup of poison to drink, but the poison turned to amrit. Then he sent a poisonous snake in a



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basket, but the snake changed into a garland of flowers. When the devotee is consumed in viraha, all consciousness of the self vanishes. The devotee's love merges into the cherished Lord, and no harm can touch such a lover. This is the true state of viraha.

O Knower of the Secret, reveal it to me.
How does the *virahinī* pass her days?

Paltu Sahib is asking about the devotee who knows the secret of viraha. He says, "How does the *virahinī*—the woman experiencing the pangs of separation—pass her days? By what sign can we know her?"

The path is very long; all the travelers are confounded.
May someone ferry me across the ocean of existence.

He says we must travel very far. We might be able to devise some means to measure the nine divisions of the earth. But the Path we have to tread on to reach Sat Lok, the realm of Truth, stretches across such a fathomless distance that it is beyond description. Many people aspire to journey on that Path to their True Home, Sat Lok, but because that Path is immeasurably long, they halt somewhere along the way and give up their quest. They do not reach the further shore of the ocean of existence.

Maya and attachment are formidable powers. Maya attracts the devotees to herself and binds them in attachment. She may take the form of children, or of wealth and possessions, or of worldly rulership, or of an enemy, or of physical suffering, or any other form through which she can gain influence over them.

The gardener waters the withered tree.
I am wounded and wander about like one gone mad.

The *virahinī* is not aware of anything around her. All her concern is for the Lord's love; nothing else has any meaning. She knows that all the dealings and relations of the world are colored by self-interest. None of this has any hold on her.

No matter how much water you pour on a withered tree, it cannot become green and growing again. But the *virahinī*'s goal is to resurrect that dried up tree; it is the fire of viraha that can restore the withered tree and make it fruitful and flourishing once more. Viraha is such a mighty force.

First, I am pierced by the arrow of love.
And furthermore, I must endure the ridicule of the world.

The *virahinī* who suffers the pangs of separation is caught between the two blades of the scissors. Inwardly, the noose of viraha has been placed around her neck; the fire of separation is raging. And outwardly that lover also has to endure insults and ridicule from the world as well. This suffering is very difficult to bear. It is one thing to practice the meditation and ascend within. But it is something very different to endure the pain of viraha.

Once you have been struck with that arrow, no one can remove your pain.
Poor doctor! What good can your herbs accomplish?

Once the pain of separation takes hold of you, who can remove that pain? No medicine can help you. No allopathic

physician, unani physician, or ayurvedic physician can cure you. The One who created that pain of separation within you is the only Doctor who can help. His darshan is the only medicine that can effect a cure; all other medicine is useless.

Paltu Das says that arrow has struck my heart.
Wounded, I wander from place to place.

Paltu Sahib says, "That fire of viraha is burning in my heart. I am wounded, and I am wandering in all the four directions. I do not know in which direction I am going. I go on searching for Him, not knowing whether He will meet me or not."

If once you hear that Inner Sound and take the support of the Shabd, when you merge into the Shabd and become the form of Shabd, then that Sound descending from the True Home, transports the soul directly back to its source, Sat Lok. There is no need to inquire here and there for directions along the way. When the Almighty Lord created this human body, He placed in it the Path leading homeward.

—Baba Somanath

36

The True Home of the Soul

Worshiping the incomplete Naam,
we come into this world again and again;
Only when we receive the True Naam can we
reach the Highest Realm.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He says that if someone takes the partial Naam—that is, the *varanātmak* Naam[2] that can be written or spoken—as all-in-all, even if they remain devoted day and night, still:

Whatever we see will be destroyed,
if not today then tomorrow.

If we are searching for the Divine in the lower sounds, if we get stuck in the outer words, then no matter how inspiring those words may be, and no matter how heartfelt and sincere our devotion still we cannot contact the living God within. Some trace of ego will always remain, and as a result, the soul goes on revolving again and again in transmigration.

1 Kabir Sahib, *Ans nām teň phiri phiri āvai...*

2 Also referred to as *aksharātmak* or descriptive Naam

Only when we learn the inner secret of the True Naam—the *dhunātmak* Naam reverberating throughout all creation—will we be able to finish off the cycle of birth and death and achieve liberation.[3]

When the soul gains the knowledge of Sat Naam, its coming and going ceases.

You can experience this True Naam in your own heart with the Grace of the Satguru. The Gurumukhs know this secret. That Naam is the form of Oneness. It never comes; it never goes. No trace of defect or dissension can be found in that Naam. It remains ever unalloyed. Guru Nanak tells us:

He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
and shall exist forevermore.

Sat Naam existed before the dawn of creation. Age followed age, but Naam never altered. Unchanged in the present, it

3 "Varan Atmak Bani can be classified into four subdivisions—*Baikhri, Madhma, Pashyanti* and *Pra:*

Baikhri: These are labial sounds or sounds which are uttered with the aid of tongue and lips.
Madhma: These are guttural sounds which are produced in the throat or at the back or root of the tongue and palate.
Pashyanti: These are sounds which originate from the heart center.
Pra: These are sounds which arise through vibrations from the navel center.

These four types of sounds or words are related in one or another form with the six physical ganglionic centers and have nothing to do with Naam or the Word or Logos, which is contacted above the six ganglions, is capable of granting salvation, and is technically called Dhun Atmak Bani or the Eternal Sound Current, the source of God's Light and Life Principles. It is, in fact, the Eternal and Unchangeable Voice of God." Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) p. 241-242.

will remain unchangeable in the future as well. For all time to come, the *dhunātmak* Naam, the True Shabd, will remain as it ever was.

On the other hand, the *varanātmak* Naam and its many forms stay in constant flux. Just consider how much variation you see in the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Some worship him as Vishnu, some as Rama, some as Lakshmi Narayan. He has shifted his shape many times—Matsya, the fish; Kurma, the tortoise; Varaha, the boar; Narasimha, the man-lion; Vamana, the dwarf-god; Parashurama, the Brahmin warrior; Rama; Krishna; Buddha—on and on, ever-changing. Similarly, Shiva has also taken on so many different forms.

This is the condition in Brahmand and the regions below. From Kal[4] sprang Maya. Maya gave birth to the five elements and three gunas. All the lower creation arose from these powers. And since that whole creation is destructible, if the True Naam has not yet manifested in your heart, if you have not yet merged in Indestructible Oneness and become the form of Oneness, then your coming and going in Kal's creation will not cease.

The True Naam is One, and you must also become One. Then no desires of the individual ego remain. Desire is the root cause of birth. At the time of death, everyone has some unfulfilled desire, and the desires of those around you give you no peace. When a wealthy person reaches his end time, it causes a great disturbance. Everyone from his family, caste and community, all his business partners and company associates, rush to his bedside and hover around him: "Tell us what share of the money belongs to us and what share you have left to someone else. What portion have you set aside for the

4 Here Baba Somanath uses *Nirākār*, the one without form, to indicate Kal.

daughters' dowries? What portion goes to your sons? Where have you hidden the jewelry and gold? And how much treasure is buried there?" They are all tormenting him from outside. These outer "yamduts" (messengers of death) are tugging at him from one side, while within the yamduts sent by Lord Kal are dragging his soul out of the body. He has no peace in this world or in the beyond, and in the end, he will be thrown back again into the wheel of eighty-four.

But those who have manifested the Sat Naam within, they have risen beyond the perishable realm, and at the time of their death, when they cast aside the mortal frame, they will merge into the eternal Naam Dhun. There they will view the picture from a different angle of vision.

[Baba Somanath Ji asks Pushpamma to recite a hymn of Mankutimma in Kannada and then He comments.]

Why fear death? Your friend has come to escort you to another country.
There you will see the picture from a different angle of vision.
If you have led a virtuous life, then why should you fear the change?
You are going to a new rest house.
So says Mankutimma.

This is the verse of one Kannada-speaking Mahatma.[5] He says: "Why are you afraid of death?" If you have

5 Dr. D. V. Gundappa wrote many aphoristic Kannada poems under the pen name Mankutimma (Crazy Timma). *Manku* means "crazy." *Timma* is a proper name used to denote a simple, country bumpkin. Baba Somanath Ji had great love for him and often commented on his verses in Satsang.

lived a satvik life and if, at the end time, you remember the True Lord with a pure heart, there is no cause for dread. If a man goes to another country where he accumulates a lot of wealth, when he returns to his own country his heart will be full of happy expectation: "Now I have become very wealthy. When I go to my home, I will meet my loved ones and dwell there very comfortably."

In the same way, while living in this foreign country, if we do the meditation and earn the wealth of Sat Naam, if we have lived our life with a pure heart, then what have we to fear when the time comes to return home? When we go back to our own country, we will bask in a new bliss, never dreamed of before.

Our friend comes at the end time to free us from this mortal coil and escort us into the beyond, never leaving our side. As we travel inward, one ravishing scene after another unfolds before our dazzled eyes. Why should we fear death? For the jivas who have passed their time on earth immersed in purity, there is no cause for trepidation—here or hereafter.

[Baba Somanath Ji returns to the commentary on the hymn of Kabir Sahib]

Remaining absorbed in the True Naam, you inherit the Deathless Kingdom for all ages to come.

Those who merge into the True Name and become the form of Sat Naam remain deathless for all ages to come. They have not a trace of ego or desire in them and never come again into this mortal world.

Merging into the Realm of Truth, you unite with Sat Purush, the True Lord.

The home of the soul is Sat Lok-Sach Khand, and Sat Purush is the Lord of that Realm. Merging into Him, you also become the form of Truth. Truth is eternal, and you must also become eternal. The Truth never dies. If we want to ensure that someone tells the truth, we say, "Swear on the Truth." We don't say "Swear by Brahma" or "Swear by Vishnu" or "Swear by Parbrahm." What do we say? "Swear on the Truth." We are calling on our own soul, whose nature is Truth, to be our witness. The soul is Truth, and Truth is eternal—it never takes birth; it never dies.

The hansa (swan soul) gains knowledge of the soul's True Home;
The Saint who has become one with the Lord can join others to Him also.

Kabir Sahib says that the primal home of the soul is Sat Lok-Sach Khand—the Realm of Truth. And He says that the "*Yog Santāyan*," the Saint who has achieved union, can impart to us the True Knowledge and make us reach our True Home, Sat Lok.

The purified soul beholds the Realm of Truth; the desires of ages and ages are eradicated.

When the swan bird of the soul reached the primal home Sat Lok-Sach Khand, in the blink of an eye, all the suffering of countless births and countless ages came to an end. How easy it is to say these things! But in this mortal world, such mighty forces are arrayed against us that we have no hope without the

Naam. Those forces track even the supreme gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva like prey. Just imagine the power of Maya!

One time, when Shiva was applying ash to his body[6], a small stone fell to the ground, and from that small stone a demon sprang up. Shiva named that demon Bhasmasur, the demon (*asur*) of the ashes (*bhasam*). Shiva gave that demon the duty of collecting the ashes from the cremation grounds where the dead bodies were burned. So everyday, Bhasmasur would go to a different cremation ground, collect all the ashes, bring them back and present them to Shiva. In this way, he eventually emptied out all the cremation grounds and could find no more ashes anywhere. So, he bowed before Lord Shiva and begged for a boon: "Maharaj, now I have collected all the ashes from the cremation grounds, and there are no more to be found. Please grant me such a boon, that if I place my hand on anyone's head, they will be burned to ashes on the spot. Then I will have an unlimited supply for you."

At that time Shiva was only thinking about getting more ashes to smear on his body. Without considering the consequences, he replied: "It shall be as you wish." So, whenever Bhasmasur placed his hand on anyone's head, that person would burst into flames, and quickly be reduced to a pile of ashes. Then he would present those ashes to Shiva, who became very pleased with him.

One day when Bhasmasur arrived, Shiva was sitting with his wife Parvati; and seeing her beauty, the demon was attracted to her. He thought to himself, "Shiva is just a pathetic old man, and Parvati is so beautiful. He is not worthy of her. If I just eliminate this old man, then Parvati will be mine." Thinking like this, he tried to put his hand on Shiva's head to turn him

6 Shiva constantly applies ash to his body to show that nothing is permanent in this creation; everything that is born will die and return to ash.

to ashes. And when the god ran away, Bhasmasur chased after him. Shiva Ji was running for dear life, and Bhasmasur was following close behind.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu was watching this drama unfold. He thought to himself, "I must do something quickly. Otherwise, this demon will kill the Lord Shiva." So, Vishnu took the form of Mohini, a young woman even more beautiful and enchanting than Parvati . He stood in the pathway, right in front of Bhasmasur, and asked, "Why are you chasing this old man? Never mind about him. Now, I have come." Smiling and laughing, she distracted his attention, while the "old man," Shiva, escaped.

Then Mohini started teaching the demon a dance, having him mimic her every action. "Leap this way. Step up there. Sway from side to side." She made a game of it, just like children playing. Demonstrating each move, she was saying, "Now you put your hand on your foot, on your leg, on your stomach, on your shoulder." Finally, she put her hand on her head, and Bhasmasur, without thinking, copied her motion. When his hand touched his head, because of Shiva's boon, he instantly burst into flame and was reduced to ashes.

But then Maya did not spare even Shiva and Vishnu. When the demon was destroyed, Vishnu assumed his true form again and Shiva returned. He asked Vishnu how he had managed to kill the demon. Vishnu replied, "Never mind all that, Maharaj. I have my methods, and now the demon is destroyed." But Shiva was insistent: "No, no, I want you to tell me how you did it." So, Vishnu explained, "It was nothing. First, I took on the form of a beautiful woman and enticed his thoughts away from you. Then with flirting and teasing, I tricked him and finished him off." But still Shiva persisted: "Well, at least show me what that beautiful form is like." So once again Vishnu took on the guise of the charming

Mohini, and Shiva, even knowing that she was Lord Vishnu in disguise, started chasing after her.

Maya is so powerful that only a few rare souls who take the support of Sat Naam, can withstand her. It is easy to talk about taking the support of Naam, but actually doing it is tremendously difficult. The radiance of Sat Naam will manifest only in those souls who have the supreme Grace of the Satguru and the Almighty Lord on their heads.

Others like to hear talks about the Naam, but all the time they will be thinking: "Satsang should be over by now; they should let us out. Why hasn't the bus arrived yet? I will be late getting home. It must be time for lunch already." Such people who chase after the worldly things are just like Bhasmasur.

[Pushpamma recites a hymn of Mankutimma in Kannada, and Baba Somanath Ji comments.]

The lust of Ravana looking at the beauty of Sita and Sita's infatuation with the golden deer spring from the same root of desire.
But the world condemns Ravana and looks on Sita with compassion.
They do not understand the ways of the craving mind; so says Mankutimma.

Now what does Mankutimma tell us? Many people revile Ravana. They say he was a wicked demon, very ruthless and powerful. Why? Because he forcefully abducted Sita, the wife of Lord Rama. Even now we defame him and burn him in effigy at the time of the Holi festival.[7] But just consider; this Mahatma is telling

7 Ravana is usually burned in effigy during Dussehra, but here Baba Somanath may be referring to some local Holi custom (when Holika is also burned in effigy).

us in his verse that it was Sita who committed the first mistake. How can that be? A demon in the service of Ravana took the form of a golden deer and began walking back and forth in front of her forest hut. Sita was captivated by the beautiful creature and said to Lord Ramchandra, "Swami, look at this amazing deer. Slay it for me, and I will show off its golden hide to all the family when we return to Ayodhya."

Just as Ravana was attracted to the beauty of Sita, in the same way, Sita was attracted to the beauty of the enchanted golden deer. So, where is the difference between the two? And yet the whole world scorns Ravana and lavishes praise on Sita, calling her the Adi Shakti, the Primal Mother. But she was attracted to the beautiful golden dear, so in what way is she different from the wicked demon? Ravana and Sita were the same—both were driven by desire.

The same mind was dwelling in them both, so how can we say that one is wicked and the other virtuous? Desire is desire and they were both afflicted by it. But only a few rare souls, who have experienced the Truth within, can grasp this secret. Everyone else praises Sita to the skies and looks on Ravana with loathing: "He was a fiendish villain!" But the same desire was burning in both their hearts.

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

The surat, the happily married bride, becomes focused and is drawn within.
The stream of Love within is irresistibly attractive and pulls the soul upward.

The conscious surat is like a happily married bride, who when

reaching the still point between the eyes, is drawn inward and upward on the magnetic current of Love.

The soul reaches *Puhup Dīp*, the Island of Flowers. The fragrance of that place is indescribably sweet.

On the journey homeward, you reach the Island of Flowers, and the delicious fragrance wafting from that place is beyond description in mortal language.

Reaching the ocean of bliss, the soul frolics in delight and bathes in the pool of Mansarovar.

Then you reach the ocean of happiness. Four veils have been thrown over the soul—physical, astral, causal, and supercausal. The causal body functions in the realm of Brahm. In the supercausal region, we work in the supercausal body. Beyond these regions lies the Daswan Dwar and the Pool of Mansarovar, where the soul comes into its own. When the swan bird of the soul bathes in the Mansarovar, then all the four bodies are left behind, and the soul prepares to travel onward to Sat Lok.

Just like millions of lovers beholding their beloveds, the eyes are filled with scenes of ravishing beauty.
When the surat catches the melodious strains of the Naam, the swan bird of the soul achieves final emancipation.

The ear with the power to hear the Inner Sound is a different ear. The outer ears perceive the outer sounds—the descriptive names of God. But the inner ear that listens to the essential *dhunātmak* Naam is something entirely different.

If once you hear that Inner Sound and take the support of the Shabd, when you merge into the Shabd and become the form of Shabd, then that Sound descending from the True Home, transports the soul directly back to its source, Sat Lok. There is no need to inquire here and there for directions along the way. When the Almighty Lord created this human body, He placed in it the Path leading homeward. But the veil of mind and Maya blocks our vision. The only means to rend this veil in two is the grace of the Guru.

When the Guru showers His grace, all our seva becomes successful.

Now, Kabir Sahib makes a prayer before the Guru: "Maharaj Ji, shower grace on me, and grant me this experience of the Truth, so that my seva may become successful." Otherwise, our seva cannot be accepted, because without the Guru's grace, we remain busy in the service of the mind. Only a few rare ones do the seva of the Guru; the rest of us remain busy in the works of the mind.

The fortunate ones receive initiation; those with highest destiny achieve Sat Naam.

Whoever meets the Satguru and takes Naam initiation from him is very fortunate. But the most fortunate one maintains firm faith in the Guru's words, meditates with regularity and manifests that Naam within. Such a disciple is called a Gurumukh. We do not become a Gurumukh just by taking the Naam; but many people start calling themselves "gurumukhs" right after initiation—this is a misunderstanding. Some three or four million people are following the path of Radhaswami, maybe even more. But from among them, to find even one real Gurumukh is difficult.

In thought, word, and deed, our resolve must be firm.

Kabir Sahib tells us, "Take up the Guru's seva with determination, be it the seva of thought, word, or deed.[8] Some people take up the seva of the intellect (thought), some do the seva of speech (word), and some take up the physical seva (deed); whatever needs to be done, they put their shoulders to the wheel. But other people become lazy and say, "This physical seva is just for the poor people. We should be assigned some more appropriate seva befitting our status." They like to give lectures before dignitaries and other important people. They want to be selected as president of this or that. They apply to be appointed as secretary. Well, secretaries secretly alter the account sums, and any "surplus" disappears into their pockets. And the president will press others; he will tyrannize and threaten people to further his own interests.

This is what a worldly president does. But in spirituality, the secretary is the one who takes any sums of surplus karmas owed to Kal and Maya and eliminates them. And the president is the one who "presses" the mind, and, making it stable within, merges the soul with the inner Power of the Shabd. These are the fitting sevas for the true "secretary" and "president." The outer presidents who attack and oppress their fellow beings have no place in spirituality—they are less than worthless.

He says, you should be firm and engage in whatever seva you are assigned—be it the seva of speech, seva of action, or seva of the intellect—and remain true to your duties. There is not the slightest doubt about this.

Taste the nectar of the Guru's Shabd.

Here, Kabir Sahib tells us that the Word of the Guru is the *dhunātmak* Naam resounding within. To merge into that Sound

8 *Mansa*=mind or thought; *Vāchā*=speech; and *Kriya*=deed (sometimes mentioned as *Kaya*=body)

and taste its sweetness is the sign and the fulfillment of the Gurumukh who has become the mouthpiece of the Guru.

[Pushpamma recites a hymn of Basaveshwara and Baba Somanath Ji comments.]

Is there some other heaven?
O Guru Natha, the only heaven is to live with you —
What other heaven could there be?

This is the bani of Basaveshwara, a Mahatma from Kalyana in the Karnataka region (12th century). He says, "Is Har Lok, the Realm of God, different from the mortal world we are familiar with? No. Wherever the Guru dwells is the home of the Almighty Lord." All the fantasies we propagate about the heavens and the celestial realms are just figments of our own imagination. The place where the Guru dwells is heaven on earth.

Further, He is explaining about the three kinds of greed, saying that we are deceived by greed of body, greed of mind, and greed of wealth. When it is time for physical seva for the Guru, we are deceived by greed of the body, and we run away. We think, "Uh-oh! I'm going to have to do some work," and we disappear. The greed of the mind also deceives us. We show one thing outside, but we harbor something quite different in our hearts. Then, when the time comes for financial seva, we are attacked by greed for wealth. Someone gives a piece of land for a Satsang hall, and we think, "Now, they'll want me to donate some money. I think I'll slip out and come back when the collection is over." It's like tax evasion; we don't want to be separated from our wealth. This is the deception of greed. Greed for wealth deludes us.

If we turn away from these three types of greed and replace them with longing for the Lord, He always stands ready to fulfill our wish. But if you remain in the grip of these three types of greed, if we become the thieves of the Guru's seva, then we will also receive the fruits of those desires.

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

The life force is collected and stilled;
rising above the vital airs you discover the
secret of beginning and end.

The mystery of the beginning and the end stands revealed. Initially, the *chitta* or consciousness is stilled, resting on the vital airs, but to rise higher you must leave the vital airs behind. You have to take the support of the Shabd. Merge in the Shabd and become the form of Shabd.

Sat Lok is both the source and the Eternal Home of the Shabd. In Sat Lok, you discover the origin—the primal source of all your wanderings—from where the soul set forth on its long journey eons ago; and returning at last to Sat Lok, the Blessed Realm, your soul reaches the journey's end.

All this world is false; only the One Naam proves
itself to be True.
Each breath we take in the human body is as
precious as Truth itself.

All this world is false; only the One Naam is True. And that very Shabd, that very Truth, enlivens every breath in the human body. Therefore, Kabir Sahib Ji tells us:

Wherever I go I proclaim it loudly
with the beating of drums:
Each breath you breathe is worth
the price of the three worlds.

What do we do with these breaths? Consider this carefully. Every single breath that we dedicate to the Lord and spend in His Simran, that breath is successful. But if we use up all our breaths on useless things—stirring up trouble, imposing on others, usurping others' rights, forming illicit relationships—then our breaths are wasted. It has been reckoned we expend 21,600 breaths every 24 hours or 15 breaths a minute. We recklessly throw away all these precious breaths, but when we go into the Satsang of the Guru, at least then we realize our mistake and take some advantage.

On the other hand, the real meditators do not let even one breath pass by without the Simran. Their Simran never ceases. This is called *ajapā jāp*, the Simran that goes on reverberating in your within, even without your repeating it. But most of us don't even wake up for meditation, or if we manage to get up, we are quickly overcome by the mind. After a little while we slump over; then we lay down flat. We get drowsy while we are doing our Simran and then drift back to sleep. When we wake up again, we think, "That's enough for today. I'll meditate again tomorrow." We go on saying tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, till one day we are carried away to the graveyard. Then we can do nothing at all.

The souls revel in the pleasures of this false world, but the true Sadhu seeks union with Sat Naam.

Everyone is intoxicated in the illusion and goes on enjoying the worldly things. Only a few rare Sadhus unite with the Sat Naam and enjoy the inner bliss. Trapped in this creation, the jivas remain absorbed in all the worldly attractions, but the Sadhus become one with the Naam within.

This human body is an earthen vessel filled with the dirt of the senses, but in this body, it is our birthright to win the Naam.

The body is an earthen pot filled to the brim with thoughts of the senses and sense pleasures. But the support of the body is Sat Naam.

The Saints and Sadhus enshrine the Naam in their hearts; for age upon age they have proclaimed its glory.

Kabir Sahib Ji says that the Saints and Sadhus have proclaimed the glory of Naam since the beginning of time. They have borne witness to its greatness, but the world turns a deaf ear and remains unmoved.

The Sadhu is worthy of great praise; He has taken the support of Naam.
The devotee on whom the Satguru showers His Grace sails across the ocean of existence.

No words can describe the greatness of the Sadhu. But if a seeker does the meditation through the Grace of the Satguru and manifests the glory of Sat Naam within, then that soul crosses over the ocean of life and escapes from the wheel of birth and death forever. This is the magnificence and unique greatness of the Primal Sound.

Swami Ji's bani is written in very simple language, and everyone can understand the meaning of His words. But the deeper meaning that He is conveying can only be grasped by someone with first-hand inner experience. What does He tell us first of all? Make your heart gentle and spotlessly pure. How can this be done? At present, your heart is defiled with the sense pleasures and worldly passions, and until you remove all this dross, the heart cannot be purified.

—Baba Somanath

37

With a Gentle Heart

With a gentle heart and a mind full of compassion, set out to solve the mystery of life.[1]

This is the bani of Hazur Swami Ji Maharaj. [break in the audio] Therefore, He says that you should first make your own heart gentle. Make it spotless and pure. When you are true within, then you are ready to set out in search of spirituality.

Leave this plane of the senses behind, abandon the sensual pleasures, and keep your surat (soul) constantly anchored in the Shabd.

Swami Ji's bani is written in very simple language, and everyone can understand the meaning of His words. But the deeper meaning that He is conveying can only be grasped by someone with first-hand inner experience. What does He tell us first of all? Make your heart gentle and spotlessly pure. How can this be done? At present, your heart is defiled with the sense pleasures and worldly passions, and until you remove all this dross, the heart cannot be purified.

1 Swami Ji Maharaj, *Komal chitt dayā man dhāro...*

And once you remove all the sense pleasures and indulgences from your heart, then mercy, continence, peace and love will make their home there. When your consciousness radiates purity, when no thought of the world remains in your within, then attune your attention to the Shabd. Once your soul is purified, since the Shabd is also pure, then the two will unite, and the Conscious Power of the Shabd will transport your soul to the higher regions. The technique is very simple; nevertheless, as Tulsidas tells us:

All the treasures are here for the taking,
but without the noble karmas
the unlucky one gains nothing.

This world is filled with good things. But the karmas we made in the past have shaped our intellect. Our intellect guides our deeds, and we receive the fruits of happiness and sorrow accordingly. So, the Saints teach us this simple method. First, purify your heart and draw back the fluttering veils of sense pleasures and evil tendencies that are obscuring your consciousness. Once your consciousness has become purified, then merge into the Shabd and ascend within. The technique is so simple, but as long as your heart remains lifeless and hard like stone, you will not be able to discern the subtle currents of higher consciousness flowing within you.

Take the True Essence from the Guru,
and increase your love for His lotus feet.

Now, along with this, He tells us that if anyone thinks that they can achieve success through their own efforts, then they are deluded because this is not possible. We have no first-hand knowledge of the Truth so our understanding is based on the speculation and conjecture of the intellect—but the

intellect itself is stark blind and unconscious. Therefore, we have to take guidance from the Inner Conscious Power; whether we call it Guru, or Light, or Soul, or Naam, it is all one and the same.

First, we have to go to the Guru and learn how to walk on the Path that leads to Truth. And then, following His instructions, we have to focus our attention on the Guru's holy lotus feet. Tulsidas tells us:

Dazzling light flashes
from the nails of the Guru's feet.
When I remember Him,
His divine vision fills my heart.

When we go on contemplating on Him, then gradually our sense of I-hood will dissolve and only the dazzling light of His lotus feet will remain. When the soul and the attention become purified, then a natural connection with the Shabd is established.

But if we try to accomplish this through our own intellect, then our efforts are doomed to failure. There will always be some selfish purpose inherent in our actions. When we assert with our own intellect, then we are always harboring some ulterior motive. In this way, we block the untainted Conscious Power within us, and it cannot come to our aid.

Catch hold of the Shabd coming from Agam, and unite your surat with it.
Remain always absorbed in the inner Satsang.

Swami Ji says that the stream of Shabd is cascading down from Agam, the unfathomable region. That stream is Self-Existing and beyond the reach of the intellect. Uniting with that stream of Shabd, become the form of Shabd. Whatever thoughts

keep coming in the mind: "I am listening to the Shabd; this type of sound is coming; I am separate from the sound; now, I should be hearing some different kind of sound," all of these thoughts that go on arising in the mind must be removed. You must become the form of the Shabd itself; then, that Shabd will attract your soul and transport you into the higher regions.

Satsang means "the company of Truth." So, when we contact the Shabd within, this is called Satsang; and, any gathering where the Guru gives out the teachings of Truth is called Satsang as well.

The surat ascends and enters the astral realm,
through the portal in the inner sky,
It has the darshan of the astral realm, and rising
above, glimpses the expanse of the three worlds.

When the soul crosses beyond the etheric region, then it has a direct view of the physical, astral and causal planes. The soul sees all that is below the third eye in the material world; it views the astral realm with its heavens, paradises, gods and goddesses, riddhis and siddhis (supernatural powers), all and sundry. And further still, the soul also experiences the Brahmand and in this way, comes to know the three worlds.

Becoming absorbed in Brahmand, the soul travels
beyond into Par Brahm.
The lotus blooms on the lake of Sunn.

Beyond Brahmand lies the realm of Par Brahm. Here you cross into the region called Sunn (Void) or Daswan Dwar (Tenth Door), where the soul bathes in the pool of Mansarovar. This is the region of the six-petaled lotus. In the Sunn region, you totally divest yourself of the four bodies: physical,

astral, causal and super-causal. Here, the soul emerges in its pristine form and is called a hansa or swan. When all vestiges of the four bodies covering the soul are washed away, the immaculate hansa flies free. Understand this as the state of Self-Knowledge or *Ātma-Gyān*; here, you attain complete knowledge and experience of the soul.

All the powers of Kal are defeated when the soul bathes in the Mansarovar.

When Dissolution occurs, all the regions up through Trikuti are rolled up. But when you rise above Trikuti and go into the region of Sunn, then you have risen beyond the reach of Kal. In this verse, Swami Ji refers to the "powers of Kal," meaning Kal's dominion over time. The cycles of the sun and moon are under his control. Day and night belong to Him. Our life may last a day, a month, a year or a hundred years but in the end, we die—this is all under Kal's control. What to speak of the physical plane, even in the heavens the gods and goddesses dwell there for a fixed span and then have to leave those bodies.

Further, when Dissolution or Grand Dissolution occurs, one cycle of time ends and another begins.[2] But, once the soul reaches the Mansarovar, then all the powers of Kal—which were in full force in the regions below—those powers are all destroyed, and the soul emerges in its Self-Existing state. Once

2 "The process of Dissolution works up to the realm of Triloki or three worlds (physical, astral and causal planes) and that of Grand Dissolution up to the subtlest of the causal planes, but it cannot reach Sach Khand, or Sat Lok or *Muḳām-i-Haḳ* as the Mohammedans call it (New Jerusalem of the Christians), for it is the veritable Kingdom of God, as spoken of by Christ. The Saints have therefore set Sach Khand as their goal, which is beyond the ken of Dissolution and Grand Dissolution." Kirpal Singh, *Simran: The Sweet Remembrance of God* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1967) p. 4-5.

the soul reaches that level, then it is no longer subject to birth and death in the lower three worlds.

Traveling onward, the soul merges into the *Akshar*, leaving this foreign land behind.

Then the soul travels upward to the region of *Akshar* or Par Brahm. Saints refer to the creation up through Trikuti as *Kshar*, the perishable realm. When you go above Trikuti, you enter the region of Par Brahm, where *Akshar*, the imperishable realm, begins. There all the alien lands, that is, the lower regions of creation, are left behind forever. For numberless days, the soul has been imprisoned in those perishable worlds, but now it flies free, merges into *Akshar* and travels upward.

The purified soul soars skyward; the old palaces are all abandoned.

Becoming free from all coverings, the soul now ascends untrammeled. The realms where it has been imprisoned are all left behind. And once the soul has been purified in Par Brahm, it ascends ever higher and becomes absorbed into the *NīAkshar,* the Realm of Truth that lies even beyond the imperishable.

Climbing higher and higher, you rise into the realms beyond;
Stage after stage you discover the unique mysteries of Shabd.

Shabd reverberates in the realms beyond. Here, in the material world, the Shabd is intermingled with the five elements and yet remains separate from those elements. Similarly, when you reach the etheric astral world, there also Shabd permeates the

whole region and yet is separate from it. And when you ascend to Brahmand, once again you find that the Shabd pervades all and yet it is separate from all. In the region of Brahmand, the Shabd takes on the sound of *onkār*. Then when you cross over into Par Brahm, Shabd resounds as *rārang*.

But through all its stages, it remains separate and unattached. Shabd is complete in itself, the supporting Power behind all that exists and yet taking support from none. And when the soul rises higher still, it merges into the Sar Shabd, leaving aside all the lower sounds. And finally, taking the support of the Sat Shabd, it reaches the primal home of the soul, Sach Khand.

Without the Saint, no one can understand the revelations that unfold as you ascend.

When you ascend into the Par Brahm and beyond, your entire experience arises from Shabd and Shabd alone. The *prāna vāyu* (vital airs) do not reach to that region; the *buddhi* (intellect) does not function there; the *brahmākāra vritti*, the knowledge that comes from complete identification with Brahm, has also been left behind[3]. Only the soul who has manifested the higher

3 In the three worlds, the soul acquires knowledge through the vrittis—rays emit from the mind, strike an object and then return to the mind as vibrations (something like sonar waves sent out from a ship that strike on underwater objects and then rebound, providing information about those objects). The five *vritti*s are: 1) Correct knowledge (*pramāna*); (2) Incorrect knowledge (*viparyaya*); (3) Imagination or fantasy (*vikalpa*); (4) Sleep (*nidrā*); (5) Memory (*smrti*). But when the soul reaches Brahmand and becomes the form of Brahmand, its perceptions are the perceptions of Brahm; all knowledge is laid bare through the working of *brahmākāra vritti,* that is, complete identification with Brahm. And when the soul transcends the region of Brahm and rises into Par Brahm, then all the coverings are removed. In the region of Par Brahm and beyond, all experience and knowledge come directly by means of Shabd.

Shabd and has experienced its secrets within can understand this state. All the others, who have only heard about these inner planes, do get some conviction from knowing about their existence, but they can only imagine with the mind's eye the nature of the Shabd, the mysteries that lie hidden there, and the joy of the soul that attains that status. They have no actual proof from first-hand experience.

Without the inner experience, we can't properly describe the inner Shabd.
Our descriptions are just a meaningless jumble of words.

Until we have the inner experience, we cannot speak of the inner realms with the conviction of Truth. We take some words from here, some from there and put them all together to describe the inner reality. But our words can carry no authority, because they are not backed up by actual experience.

Scholars build castles in the air, but without meditation and practical experience,
The Light of illumination does not dawn.

The difference between the meditator with practical experience and the scholar who just talks is as great as the difference between heaven and earth. If some lowly laborer starts prattling about the grandeur of the royal court, what glory can he shed on its magnificent splendor. The poor fellow has never even seen it.

In the same way, the scholars take one thing from this scripture and something else from another scripture. They pore over the Shastras, the Puranas, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and so on. Pulling together quotes from all the

various holy books, they can deliver impressive sermons, explaining the mysteries of spirituality for the benefit of others. They become great orators. But if you glimpse within their hearts, you will find a barren wasteland. They are just playing with words without any idea of what lies behind them. But, in the end, spirituality is a matter of doing, not of talking. Until we have first-hand experience of the within, we are not capable of saying anything about the higher realms.

The scholars who rely only on bookish knowledge and do not practice the meditation cannot open the inner eye, called *divya chakshu* (divine eye) or *gyān chakshu* (or eye of knowledge). And until that inner eye opens, we are unable to have a peep within. Instead, we collect the words that are spoken by the mahatmas who have experienced the inner worlds and then interpret their words according to our own intellect. We multiply everything ten times, add our own masala (spice) from here, there, and everywhere, and then give memorable lectures to other people.

But nothing is accomplished like this. When our own heart is empty, we have nothing to share with others. It is like a person with tuberculosis trying to train a wrestler: "Now, every day you should drink three or four seers of milk. Then you should apply yourself to a program of vigorous exercise." That wrestler might well ask: "Brother, what about your own condition?" And then that trainer would have to admit: "Truly speaking, I only have about three or four days left to live. Then I will be departing from this world."

So, this is the condition of those with mere bookish knowledge. They have not controlled the mind, and they have not done any meditation, but with great enthusiasm they go on advising others about spirituality. What can be gained from this? Nothing at all. These learned people have

no wealth in their wallet to distribute, and their listeners will go away empty-handed.

Only a Saint knows the status of the Saints.
How could others fathom Their profound depths?

Until you experience the Shabd, you can know nothing of it. Therefore, Swami Ji explains to us that a Saint—one who has experienced the Shabd and discovered its secret—can understand the stature and condition of the Saints. This is the hallmark of the Saints—they first see and then say.

Give up your conjecture and cleverness;
acknowledge the Saint's words as True.

Now it is clear that your intellect must, first and foremost, accept the Guru's words. If you want to grasp this subject through your own intellect, you can go on trying for your whole life long, but you will not get a glimmer of understanding. Instead, believing in the words of the Saints, we should follow Their instructions. And what do they tell us: "If you meditate in this way, you will achieve that exalted status." Such knowledge is totally inaccessible to the intellect.

But the intellect is such a mighty power that it is not ready to accept anyone else's understanding. Your intellect will always try to interfere, putting some objection or other before you. And if you are swayed by its arguments, you are only harming yourself; what harm can it do to the Saints?

He tells you what He has seen Himself.
Why do you listen to His words and then twist
them to suit your own limited understanding?

The Saints have seen the truth for themselves; they have the

proof of their own eyes. And whatever they have experienced, they say only that much. But we people indulge in intellectual wrestling. We think the understanding of our intellect is more important than the words of the Saints. My friend, the intellect is stark blind, so what knowledge can you hope to gain from it?

Radhaswami proclaims to one and all: "Only someone who knows the inner secret can fathom the mystery of the Saints."

Now, Swami Ji has told us everything. He has spoken of the secret of the Saints. When the Saints are gracious, they reveal this secret. And those who accept the Saints' words and apply themselves with firm faith will experience this mystery within themselves.

When you drink the nectar of Love, then all sense of self is forgotten; all the thought of "I and mine" that filled up your within is smashed to pieces. When the sense of self dies, then the Inner Divine Consciousness awakens.

—Baba Somanath

38

Drink From the Cup of Love

I sacrifice myself on the Satguru, who removed all my illusion.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. He says, "I sacrifice myself on such a Perfect Satguru who dispelled all my illusion." Now we act in the arena of illusion. We are entangled in the past, present and future. We remember the deeds we have done in the past; we think on our current condition in the present time, and concerning the future, we are anxious about achieving high or low status, indulging in the sense pleasures, acquiring and hoarding wealth.

Our heart is ever-restless as we grapple with these three sprites—past, present, and future. We dwell on the past, we are mired in the present, and we fear for the future. In this trap of time, we are frittering away the days of our lives. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, "Blessed is that disciple who is anchored in the remembrance of Sat Naam given by the Satguru. I sacrifice myself on such a Satguru who removes the illusion that has enshrouded my heart."

1 Kabir Sahib, *Vārī jāuṅ maiṅ satguru ke...*

The whole world sees the moon rise; but when I behold the inner moon, all the darkness of illusion flies away.

The whole world sees the moon outside. But when I behold the moon within, all the illusion of my heart flies away. In the Yajur Veda it is said:

As is Brahmand, so is the pind (human body).

The pind (human body) is the repository of all Brahmand.[2] Just like all the towns and other places in India are represented on a map of India or of the world, in the same way all the realms of Brahmand appear within the human body. But as long as we are wandering lost in the nine doors below, we can gain no knowledge of this reality. It is only when we rise above these nine apertures that the Light of Truth dawns upon us; as Kabir Sahib tells us: "When I behold the inner moon, all the darkness of illusion is dispelled."

When the Light burst forth, all other desires vanished from my heart.
The Immaculate Radiance has dawned.

When the One Light manifested both within and without, the darkness that filled my heart was driven away, and

2 "The macrocosm is in the microcosm. The human body is the prototype of the universe and much more than that. In it there are millions of solar systems with their suns, moons and earths revolving in and out. The sweetest of the sweet music is also going on in it, emanating from the true throne of the True King—God." Kirpal Singh, *The Way of the Saints: Sant Mat, Collected Short Writing* (Sanbornton, New Hampshire: Sant Bani Ashram, 1999) "Simran: The Sweet Remembrance of God," p. 98.

illusion was vanquished. Illusion exists only when our perception of reality is based on incomplete understanding or "*ādhā buddhi*" (literally: "half-intellect"). When the false understanding of inference provided through the *buddhi* or intellect (an aspect of the mind and an agent of Maya) becomes mixed in with the true understanding of direct knowledge coming from the inner conscious Power of the soul, this understanding is referred to as *"ādhā buddhi."* And when these two methods of perception intermingle, the result is illusion.

If our understanding is not "mixed," then illusion does not arise. If there is complete darkness, nothing is visible to give rise to illusion. If there is all light, then everything is visible, and illusion cannot come there. Now, animals, birds, insects, etc. are in darkness (they do not have the etheric element of higher consciousness). The souls in those bodies cannot achieve liberation; they do not have the capacity for higher thought and understanding. On the other hand, the Realized Souls are filled with All-Light; they have complete understanding, and there is no room at all within them for illusion. But the mixed power of perception that emerges between these two extremes of darkness and Light gives rise to illusion.

For example, say a man leaves his house at 5:00 in the morning and sets out walking down the road. An old, worn-out piece of rope has been discarded there, and seeing that rope from a distance, the man's heart is filled with fear. He imagines that rope is a snake. But there is no snake lying in the middle of the road. Now, just consider carefully how this illusion of a snake arose. If it were pitch dark, the man would not even see the rope, and no fear of the snake would arise. On the other hand, if it were broad daylight, he would

see plainly the piece of rope and again, he would have no reason to feel afraid of a snake. But there in the half-light of dawn, a mixture of day and night, the forces of both light and darkness are at play.

And just consider one more thing; there was no preconception on either side. Before he left home, that man did not think: "I will go out and walk along the road to such and such a place. And there I will be frightened by a snake." Also, the rope was not planning: "Such and such a man is coming. I will lie here and pretend to be a snake, and then I will give him a scare." It was all just a spontaneous illusion, and the cause of that illusion was the half-light of dawn—the mixture of day and night. In the same way, when our understanding is based on both the inference of the unconscious *buddhi* or intellect and the direct knowledge of the Conscious Soul, when unconsciousness and Consciousness are tied together by the knot of duality, then illusion ensnares us. But when the Satguru floods our within with the Divine Light, all the illusion is swept away.

When the Divine Light appeared, then all the darkness of Maya and attachment was banished, and I attained God Consciousness.

Attachment to Maya is darkness, and darkness is banished by the Light. Maya means the attachment to the destructible, material things of this world; all these things arise when darkness intrudes. Think carefully about this. When you close your eyes, you see some darkness within. And where even a trace of darkness prevails, the thieves are lurking. The storehouse of lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego, and the other evil propensities always remains full. But when the

full Light of Consciousness dawns, all of these bad qualities run away on their own. There will be no need to chase them off. When the sun rises, who can say where the dark night has gone? In the same way, when the Inner Light dawns within you, the darkness of ignorance is driven away.

We are caught up in the sense pleasures and evil deeds; burn them away; reduce them to dust.

As long as the worldly desires and other evil propensities linger in your heart, you cannot escape from their ill effects. They will destroy your life. In some people, they are hidden beneath the surface, while in other people, they are in full view, but the same shortcomings are present within all. Until the Satguru graciously shines the Light of Naam in our within, we cannot become free from these negative tendencies. Even if we bathe in the holy Ganges waters a hundred times, even if we make a pilgrimage on foot across the length and breadth of India—from Kashmir to Kanyakumari—still we cannot remove the dirt from our within. But when the Inner Light manifests, it burns away all the filth and evil deeds.

When you drink from the cup of Love, you lose all consciousness of this world; your ego is crushed to bits.

When you drink the nectar of Love, then all sense of self is forgotten; all the thought of "I and mine" that filled up your within is smashed to pieces. When the sense of self dies, then the Inner Divine Consciousness awakens. These

things are very easy to talk about, but when the time comes, you realize how difficult it is to perform the spiritual practices. The mind brings so many excuses; when it is time to get up in the morning to meditate, you are put to the test. Here, I am talking about those disciples who get up for meditation. Those who are sleeping unconcerned, this does not pertain to them. If they are sleeping, let them sleep. But those who do the meditation, only they know how many means the mind employs and how many obstacles it throws in the way of their devotion.

First of all, the mind won't let you get up. And if somehow you manage to get up and sit for meditation, then after a short while, the mind who is sitting within the meditator, will suggest: "What harm would there be if you lie down to do your Naam Simran?" Then you stretch out your legs, get comfortable, and do three or four rounds of Simran. Finally, you drift into sleep, and that is the end of your meditation. The next morning you get up and start the same routine again. From morning till night, you are involved in stealth, deception, and all the false dealing of this world. Then when evening comes, you tie up all the things you have collected in your bundle and head back home. When it is time to go to bed, you think: "I will meditate later. I can do it in the morning." But when morning comes your condition is exactly the same as before, and in this way, day after day flies by. Even if you go on meditating like this your whole lifetime, you will accomplish nothing. For that reason, it is said:

Just as your mind is now engrossed in Maya,
Instead, immerse your whole being in the Lord.

Just as your thoughts are now attached to the things of Maya, in the same way, when you absorb your attention in the Lord, you can perfect your meditation. But if all your efforts in meditation are only superficial, what can you hope to accomplish? You go to the temple, ring the bell, prostrate yourself before the idol, apply the *sindūr* (red powder) of Hanuman Ji to your forehead, and on Saturday, you even break a coconut. But what have you achieved? Nothing at all.

When you go within, you no longer remain aware of the body—who you are, where you are sitting. Then the false love of the world that fills your heart dies away. Otherwise, there is no remedy. Many great rishis, munis, japis,[3] and ascetics left hearth and home behind and spent thousands of years performing austerities—but still the mind tricked them. Now, just consider honestly. How much bhajan do we people do? If you observe in the morning, you will come to know the sad state of affairs. The great devotees did hundreds of years of practice, but even then, the mind duped them. So, what about our condition? How much real meditation have we done?

When you become immortal, you leave death behind and realize the essence of life.

But Kabir Sahib tells us: "Now, I do not take birth or die. I see the Almighty Lord before me, and I have merged into His Self-existing Form." Describing this form, Guru Nanak Dev Ji says:

3 "Japis" are spiritual practitioners who repeat sacred mantras, prayers, and scriptures.

He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
and shall exist forevermore.

That True Power is the very support of your heart. You may call that Power as Soul or Lord or Truth or any other name you like. It makes no difference. You may call that Power as Guru or Naam or anything else but when it manifests within you, then your soul will never again die or take rebirth. This state is called liberation, and until you attain liberation, illusion will not leave your heart.

Your chains are broken, and you are freed from Yama—the Lord of Death.
You have the darshan of the Lord.

What does He mean by chains? The chains that bind us are not something outside of us. The power of Kal generates these bonds and takes up residence within us. The word Kal means "time." Time is divided into day and night. And within the spectrum of day and night three states of consciousness are at play: *jāgrat* or wakefulness, *svapan* or dream, and *sushupti* or deep sleep. During the daytime we experience the phase of wakefulness; we eat and drink; we wander about here and there. At night, we indulge in the sense pleasures and slip down into the state of dreams [and finally, sink into deep sleep]. These are the three states of consciousness, and as long as our *buddhi* or intellect is functioning within them, we are enslaved by Kal. But when we rise out of these three states and enter into Divine Consciousness, we do not remain aware of eating and drinking, and we aren't

bothered by sleep. We no longer try to deceive others. All thoughts of self-interest, greed, and attachment disappear. These are the fetters of Kal, but when the Inner Light manifests, those fetters are broken.

Attachment flees, the heart enjoys equanimity; happiness and sorrow run away.

Ruled by attachment, we remain involved in enmity and disputes, high and low, large and small. But when we achieve *samatā*, or impartiality, we see with an equal eye. We understand that our own soul, our own life force, pervades all—I am in everyone, and everyone is in me. What is the sign of this impartial vision? Whenever some need arises or calamity befalls, we will perceive not only our own suffering, but also the suffering of others. Whenever we have some pain or discomfort in our body, we will not only procure all the remedies to alleviate our own pain, but we will also make the same arrangements to help others who are suffering. We will view others as our own selves and show compassion and concern for all.

When our own family and children have some difficulty, we spare no pains in coming to their aid. But they are our very own—we are helping them out of attachment and self-interest. This cannot be called *samatā*. When the power of impartiality manifests within us, it sweeps away all selfishness, and we realize that the power enlivening our soul is also permeating the whole creation. Then we look upon all as our very own selves.

Now we are trapped in high and low, mine and thine. But when impartiality manifests, when the sense of self is

eradicated, then not even happiness and sorrow remain. We experience happiness and sorrow only as long as the sense of "I-hood" dominates our within.

This incomprehensible and ineffable state is beyond description.
A current of ecstasy penetrates the innermost recesses of your soul.

Now, the question arises: "What is the nature of *samatā*? What is its form?" So, Kabir Sahib Himself explains that this question has no answer: "This incomprehensible and ineffable state is beyond description." Only when impartiality dawns in our hearts can we divine its nature. We cannot impart that experience through words. Why? Because when our soul reaches that exalted state, the outer eyes and ears no longer work. The antahkarana (entire apparatus of the higher mind) itself—with its aspects of chitta (subconscious or storehouse of impressions), buddhi (intellect or faculty of decision and discrimination), manas (lower mind that connects with outer world and senses), and ahankāra (ego or identity)—becomes paralyzed. So, what faculty then remains to give an explanation in words? And what faculty remains to hear that description? The soul is in perfect balance. This is the state of *swayambhū* or Self-Existence.

Kabir says, listen, O, Brother Sadhu: The Immaculate Music is resounding.

He is giving out this teaching for the sadhus—the devotees who practice the sadhana. Other teachers may attach their

own name to some verses and give out other teachings, but Kabir Sahib Ji says, "Listen, O brother sadhu. Those who want to do the sadhana, those who are the real children of the Guru, those who are the true disciples of the Guru—my teachings are for them. To all the others who do not want to meditate, I have nothing to say."

If you follow His instructions, your meditation will flourish. And when the Immaculate Dhun resounds within you day and night like a trumpet, permeating every cell of your body, the tumult of the world will subside by itself.

What is written in your fate cannot be turned aside, so why waste time worrying about it? The pandits are ready and waiting for those who are fearful for the future. They open their "shops," reading palms, casting horoscopes, and delivering a soothing stream of reassuring patter: "You are afflicted by an inauspicious alignment at present, but more auspicious times lie ahead. All will be well. We know remedies—yajnas, donations, mantras, etc.—that will eliminate your past karmas." They make a great production of it and then relieve you of your money. These are the wares they are peddling, but it is all mumbo-jumbo. What is decreed by the flowing pen of God cannot be set aside. What is written in your fate cannot be changed.

—Baba Somanath

39

Why Worry About the Future?

O mind! Why don't you show some patience?
All your good and bad fortune springs from your own past deeds; you cannot decrease or increase it by even one grain.[1]

This is the bani of Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji. This world is the manifestation of happiness and sorrow, and every living being plays out their existence on this stage—sometimes buoyed up on waves of happiness, sometimes weighed down by sorrow. Swinging between these two extremes, we waste our entire lifetime.

But if the truth be told, there is no happiness or sorrow innate in lifeless worldly things. The conscious Power within us becomes attached to the inert material objects and comes under the control of the fickle mind. That mind desires one thing one moment but the next moment it has run off after some new amusement. As destructible objects come in our grasp and are snatched away, the pendulum swings back and forth from elation to grief. Sometimes, we may even cling to a worldly object one moment, while it gives us pleasure, but

1 Kabir Sahib, *Are man dhīraj kāhe na dhare...*

hurl it away in disgust the next moment when it gives us pain. In this way, the mercurial mind keeps us in a state of constant agitation. We fret over past sorrows and remain wistful for bygone moments of fleeting happiness. In this never-ending drama, our precious breaths are consumed, and our useless life comes to an end.

Therefore, He says, "O mind! Why don't you show some patience?" Happiness and sorrow are the result of our own past deeds, whether from this life or from some previous life long forgotten. Because nothing is lost in nature, we will have to undergo the reaction—whether good or bad—of every single deed. We may run to astrologers, or fortune tellers, or soothsayers of all descriptions, hoping to rewrite our fate, but it will make no difference. If you plant neem trees, expecting that you will harvest mangos, this can never be. So whatever deeds we have performed, we will have to undergo the result of those deeds, be it happiness or suffering.

Kabir Sahib tells us to give up such useless thinking and accept the vicissitudes of life with equanimity. Dedicate your whole heart to the devotion of God Almighty and ignore the rest. The ups and downs of life afflict all who take birth in this mortal world. The ghosts of happiness and sorrow pursue you from cradle to grave.

Why do you worry about the future?
Whatever is meant to be, that will come to pass.

What is written in your fate cannot be turned aside, so why waste time worrying about it? The pandits are ready and waiting for those who are fearful for the future. They open their "shops," reading palms, casting horoscopes, and delivering a soothing stream of reassuring patter: "You are afflicted by an inauspicious alignment at present, but more auspicious

times lie ahead. All will be well. We know remedies—yajnas, donations, mantras, etc.—that will eliminate your past karmas." They make a great production of it and then relieve you of your money. These are the wares they are peddling, but it is all mumbo-jumbo. What is decreed by the flowing pen of God cannot be set aside. What is written in your fate cannot be changed.

The Lord remembers beasts, birds, insects, and all living creatures alike.

So, then we ask, "If we entrust everything to the Lord and put our faith in Him, then how do we know He will take care of us, of our children, of all of those connected to us?" Just think on what Mulak Das tells us:

The python lies about all day.
The birds never do any work.
Mulak Das says, "Still, the Lord
showers blessings on everyone."

The Lord showers grace on all His creatures. He is always standing ready to come to our aid, and if we turn our thoughts to Him, He will take care of us as well. But we have to be patient. We must remain steadfast and keep our faith strong. Without faith nothing can be accomplished.

Narsi Mehta[2] and Sudama[3] both endured so much hardship, but they never wavered from their goal. When Narsi Mehta's son was going to be married, the gods themselves joined the

2 15th century Vishnu bhakta from the area of Gujarat.

3 Childhood friend of Shri Krishna. Sudama lived in poverty, but his devotion to Krishna was of a high order. Seeing the quality of his love, Krishna blessed him with both worldly and spiritual wealth.

barāt[4] to save his honor, carrying with them a treasure chest filled with jewelry, gold, and precious gems. Narsi Mehta and his family had nothing; they often went hungry and their clothes were in tatters. All he had was faith, and seeing that immovable faith, the Lord lavished all His blessings on Narsi.

But what is our condition? If our meal is delayed by even an hour, we lose all our composure. At this slight provocation, our professions of faith and devotion to God go out the window. Our attention is centered in the *annamaya kosha*[5]; just a slight delay in our routine and all our good intentions are forgotten. Therefore, Kabir Sahib says, "O mind! Until you learn patience and develop faith, you won't accomplish anything in the field of spirituality."

He looked after you in the womb of the mother,
so why did you forget Him after you took birth?

When you were in the womb of the mother, He nourished you and cared for all your needs. So why did you forget Him when you came out into this mortal world? It is His duty to give to all living creatures, and He will not forget you. But you will receive His bounty only according to your own past karmas.

You are burning in the fire of worldly
attachments—mother, father, wife, son, wealth.

You have forgotten the Almighty Lord, the Power dwelling in your own heart. He is the Supremely Gracious One, the Form of Bliss. Instead, you have filled your heart with mother,

4 A wedding procession where the groom travels to the bride's house, accompanied by his family and other well-wishers.

5 Five koshas cover the soul: *annamaya kosha* or food sheath; *prānamaya kosha* or vital air sheath; *manamaya kosha* or mind sheath; *gyānamaya kosha* or the knowledge sheath; and, *anandamaya kosha* or bliss sheath. After shedding each of these sheaths in turn, the soul rises into the region of Par Brahm.

father, friends and relations, wife, children, grandchildren, and everything else under the sun. You are being burned alive in the fire of attachment. Day and night you are consumed with that worry. And in the final hour, you depart from this world, never knowing that Divine Friend who dwells within you, the nearest of the near.

O swan soul! Why have you let the mind mislead you?
Abandoning the Satguru, you contemplate on others.
You will never be successful in anything.

O swan soul! Discover your true heritage and merge into the Lord. Forget all the worry and commotion of this world. But to achieve this state you must go into the shelter of the Guru with unwavering devotion. The Guru is not a mere man. He does not dress in colored clothes or preach empty words from lifeless scriptures. The true Guru inverts the attention and teaches you the method to meet God. God is not something outside of you, but only the Guru can collect your scattered thoughts at the seat of the soul and guide you on the Path to Him within. Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us, "With whole-hearted devotion, go into the shelter of the Guru. Otherwise, your egotism remains an impediment, and your soul cannot merge into that Inner Power."

If we abandon the Guru's shelter and turn to idol worship, then we won't accomplish anything—because all these outer things are inert. We contemplate on Ram and Krishna, but we have never seen those gods face-to-face. Instead, someone fashions an image of Ram or Krishna according to their own imagination, and we contemplate on that lifeless image. Such practices are all bogus. It has been said:

The root of meditation is the Guru's form
The root of liberation is the Guru's grace.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib tells us, "Until you go into the Guru's shelter with unwavering love, you cannot complete your work."

O my mind! Do the seva of the Sadhus; millions of obstacles will be removed.

If you do the seva of the Sadhus with undivided love, free from all trace of ego, then, automatically, your sins from millions of births will be destroyed. When the Pandavas performed the Ashvamedha Yagya, Lord Krishna told them they would know their yagya was complete when they heard the divine bell sound ringing in the sky. So, they performed the yagya and then, to commemorate the completion of the ritual, they invited all the rishis and munis to a great feast and served them lovingly—but no bell rang. Yudhishthira, the King of Dharma, became downhearted and finally said to Lord Krishna, "Bhagwan, you have not yet partaken of our feast." Shri Krishna also had food, but still the bell did not ring.

Then Yudhishthira said very sadly, "I set the horse free to roam, and, following after it, I conquered rajas and maharajas, kingdom after kingdom, seizing their treasuries. Sometimes, I even slaughtered the rulers and their armies, just to complete this Ashvamedha Yagya. But all I earned was more sins; it was all in vain."

Then he said to Shri Krishna, "Bhagwan, something is still lacking. There is still some impediment. Please use your divine vision and tell us our mistake. Otherwise, all this effort will be for naught." Then Shri Krishna looked with his yogic vision and told them, "Outside of the town dwells one mahatma by the name of Supach, who is a low caste sweeper. If this holy man comes and takes food at your feast, then your yagya will be complete."

So, the five Pandava brothers bound flower garlands around their wrists, folded their hands in respect and walked to the mahatma's hut. Addressing Supach, they said, "Maharaj, please come and grace our feast with your presence. Partake of our food and make our yagya successful." Then he replied, "If you will give me the fruit of one crore Ashvamedha Yagyas, only then will I come."

But the Pandavas were already having so much trouble performing even one yagya, so how could they fulfill his request and give him the fruit of one crore yagyas? With crushed hopes they made their slow way back to the palace, and when they arrived, Draupadi asked them, "What has happened? Where is the great mahatma?" They replied dejectedly, "He will come only if we can give him the fruit of one crore Ashvamedha Yagyas."

Then Draupadi said, "This is not a problem. I will go myself and bring him here." She put on an old, tattered sari, and, with bare feet, she walked to the hut of Supach Sudarshan. There she greeted him respectfully and implored him: "Maharaj, please come bless our yagya with your holy presence and make our efforts successful." So, he replied, "I have already told your husbands my condition when they came here. First, give me the fruit of one crore yagyas and then only will I come to your feast." Then Draudadi asked, "Maharaj Ji, please tell me: are the words of the Saints true or are they false?" Supach told her, "In this world, the words of the Saints are the truest of all." Then Draupadi recited this couplet:

Go to the feet of the saint, giving up
greed, attachment, and egotism.
Then with every step you take,
you earn the fruit of one crore yagyas.

"I have walked so many steps from my home to reach your door. Now take the fruit of one crore yagyas from my one step and allow me to keep the rest. Then please come with me, Maharaj, and bless our feast with your presence."

Supach was struck speechless, and he willingly followed Draupadi back to the palace. Draupadi was famous for her culinary skills. She was the foremost cook of the age, and she took great joy in caring for her household. Nowadays, the ladies order food from the restaurants and hotels. They don't even want to go into the kitchen. But Draupadi willingly took up this seva, thinking: "This great devotee is our guest and has honored our house with his presence."

She prepared a delicious meal with her own hands, arranged everything beautifully on a thali, and set it respectfully before the mahatma. Now, Supach was a God-realized soul, and his thoughts were all absorbed within. He was unconcerned with fine foods and, before eating, mixed all the dishes together, as was his habit—chutney, raita, laddus, jalebis, dal and rice. He even tossed in the buttermilk and the water. Seeing this, Draupadi thought to herself, "No doubt he is a great mahatma, but he is also a low caste sweeper, so what can you expect? He has no appreciation for the fine dishes I have prepared." And after Supach humbly ate all the food served to him, still the bell did not ring.

Greatly distressed, the Pandavas implored Shri Krishna: "Maharaj, even now no bell has rung. What has gone wrong?" Shri Krishna replied, "The fault lies with Draupadi. She has allowed an evil thought to creep into her mind." Hearing his words, Draupadi confessed her error: "Yes, Maharaj Ji, you are correct. I thought the mahatma was of low caste and didn't appreciate the taste of my fine dishes." Then, when she folded

her hands and begged the mahatma's forgiveness, the yagya was at last successful, and the mighty bell resounded across all the earth.

Therefore, Kabir Sahib says that it makes no difference whether the Sadhu is high caste or low. Those who engage in the practice of Naam Simran can be called Sadhus; there is no other criteria. Day and night, remain in the service of such Sadhus, giving up all your vanity and ego. If you perform that seva with a pure heart, with undivided devotion, then, millions of your past sins will be washed away. But only if your seva is true. Otherwise, what kind of "seva" are you practicing?

We had one satsangi here. Before he was initiated, he used to go on pilgrimage to the Vithoba temple in Pandharpur[6], on *Ekādashī*[7] during the month of *Āsārh*[8]. At that place, the pilgrims would line up and then go into the inner sanctum, one after another, to have the darshan of the idol of Vithoba. On each side of the entrance to the room, two guards were stationed to "keep out the dogs." When someone would go in for darshan, the guards would not let them stay; they would grab them by the arm and rush them along. This was the method for having darshan. But if anyone put their hand into their pocket to pull out the "entrance fee," the guards would let that person alone. They could have Vithoba's darshan in peace.

So what did our satsangi brother do? When his turn came, he would approach the idol of the god, thrust his hand in his pocket, and then pull it out again as though he had a fistful of

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6 Pandharpur is located in Solapur District, Maharashtra. It is the site of the Shri Vitthal-Rukmini Mandir, also referred to as the Vithoba temple.

7 Eleventh day of each fortnight in a lunar month.

8 Mid-June through mid-July

money. But in reality, it was a trick; his fist was actually empty. Then he would put his empty fist into the donation bowl and open his hand as though he were dropping in coins. Finally, he would close his hand again, skimming off the donations on the top of the pile, and stealthily pocket that money. What a way to please the Lord Vithoba! Such devotees can never receive the Lord's Grace within, because their bhakti is all deception.

Kabir says, Listen brother sadhu, the jiva easily swims across.

If the devotee serves the Guru whole-heartedly, without any trace of ego, then easily that jiva attains liberation. Such seva is even higher than bhajan. But only if it is done with right understanding and complete surrender.

O mind! Why don't you accept the reality?
Just consider: Who is speaking, who is listening, who is knowing?

O mind, spirituality is the subject of knowing the Self within. But we are caught in duality, performing all the rites, rituals and other practices just to satisfy our individual desires. No doubt the Lord will grant these selfish prayers of the devotees, but this has nothing to do with real spirituality.

Think deeply for a moment about the reality. Who is speaking? Who is listening? Who is seeing? When you consider carefully, you will realize that the soul sitting within powers all these activities. That soul is neither female nor male; it is not young, it is not old. Its origin lies far beyond the realm of duality. The soul's essence is Self-Existing Light, supporting all the activities of the senses and inner mind. The Power

of the soul pervades the whole creation. When that One Power infuses the body with life, then the ears can hear, the eyes can see, and the tongue can speak. When we invert our thoughts and withdraw them from all these outer things, then we realize that the inner Power is none other than our own soul. This is the way to liberation.

Gaze at the reflection in the mirror if you wish to discover your own Self.

When you look in the mirror, you can see your reflection. In the same way, when you look into the mirror of your heart within, you will see the image of your own true Self. But if the mirror is smeared with the filth of the sense pleasures and worldly thoughts, then you can see nothing. When you scrub away the dirt, the brilliant radiance of the pristine soul shines forth. When the veil of duality is removed, you will behold the Lord. When duality is removed from your within, when your attention is focused at the still point between the eyes, then you will have the darshan of the Almighty Lord, who is closer than hands and feet.

Just as water freezes into ice, and ice melts into water again, in the same way, the soul and the Almighty Lord are of the same essence.
When the jiva becomes Shiva (when the soul merges into the Lord), who can say they are two?

The soul and the Almighty Lord are the same essence, just like ice and water. When water freezes, it turns to ice; when ice melts it becomes water again. Similarly, when the soul puts on the body of five elements, it is called jiva, an embodied soul.

From that day forward, it is bound to the body, cruelly dominated by ego, entangled in high and low, craving for status and power, striving to wield the scepter and sit upon the throne, looking down on the rest of humanity, all the while proclaiming: "I am the greatest." This is the sad condition of the embodied soul.

But when the soul becomes freed from the body of five material elements, when the veil of egotism is ripped in two, then—just like ice melts into water—so the soul merges back into its original source and becomes One with the Almighty Lord.

When the soul (*ātmā*) unites with the oversoul (*Paramātmā*) it loses its individual identity. When the "jiva becomes Shiva"—that is, when the embodied soul becomes one with the Lord—then who remains?[9]

Whoever grasps this truth is pure gold; all others are sham tinsel.

[Break in the audio]… You can explain to such a person till you are out of breath, but they will remain unchanged. Therefore, He says, "To the one with right understanding, the teachings are the highest truth. But to the one who has no understanding, it all seems like a fairy tale."

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9 In this instance, Kabir Sahib's poetic use of "Shiva" to rhyme with "jiva" points towards the Universal God Power as Absolute Unchanging Consciousness. He is not referring to the individual god Shiva, included in the Hindu triumvirate of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The gods themselves are bound by duality; subject to birth and death, they cannot free the jivas from the three worlds.

Kabir says, when you rise above duality, for you mud and pearls are one.

He says that you must stop thinking in pairs of opposites—understanding and ignorance, truth and falsehood. Give up all this duality, and you will become His very form.

If even for one moment our soul is separated from that Power of love within us, if our consciousness of that love falters even for an instant, it is as though fifty years of separation had passed. He explains to us that just like the fish loves the water, our attention should remain riveted on the love of the soul within us. In this way, our love for the Guru is perfected.

—Baba Somanath

40

As the Fish Loves the Water

Love the Guru as the fish loves the water.[1]

Paltu Sahib explains to us about Gurubhakti—the love the disciple should have for the Guru. In the beginning, we people do not understand the real nature of the Guru. We go to some gathering or other, and the swami who presides there whispers a mantra in our ear. Then we think, "This person is the guru, and I am the disciple." It goes no further than that. But the Guru is not a person. The Guru is not a swami. The Guru is not any outer thing. The Guru is the Power that unites us with the Almighty Lord. You can call that Power as Guru, Naam, Soul, Oversoul, or Truth. All of these words describe one and the same Power. The Saints and Mahatmas use different words in different contexts according to the need—in some places Paramatma, in some places Atma, in some places Guru, in some places Naam. All of these words refer to the Inner Power.

There are only two powers. One is changeless and the other changeable. One is invisible and the other visible. One is true, and the other is illusory and false. Now we are all trapped in the false dream of this world. Illusions continually arise

1 Paltu Sahib, *Jal aur mīn samān, Guru se prīti jo kījai...*

within the heart, but it is all unreal—mother and father, sisters and brothers, children, grandfather, great-grandfather, castes, communities, societies, countries, authorities, and officials. It is all a creation of the mind. When you were born from the mother's womb, you did not bring any of these things with you. And when you die, you will not carry any of them back to the other world. But in between birth and death, you will definitely have to endure suffering and enjoy happiness according to your karmas.

In this arena of karma, you act according to the oscillations of your mind, and, then one day, when the karmas that brought you into this life are exhausted, you will have to leave this world. But the soul within you remains unchanging, eternal, and unborn. Now that soul is spread out in the five gross, material elements. The Satguru tells us how to become detached from the unconscious things of this world and how to attach our love to the Conscious Power within us. That Conscious Power is formless, undivided, unmanifested, and inaccessible to the intellect.

He dwells beyond the realm of mind and speech.

So, the question arises, how can we contemplate on that which has no form? What devotion and love can we offer to that formless God? He lies beyond the grasp of our intellect. So how can we develop love for Him? Guru Arjan tells us:

How can we contemplate on what we have not seen?

But we have seen the Guru, and therefore, we can fix our attention on Him. So, our first step is to develop love for the Guru. Now, in this regard, He asks, "How should we love the Guru?" We people say, "I was initiated forty years ago. I am a

devotee of Naam; I am a Satsangi. I am this and that." Even though so much time has passed, still you have not understood the secret of love. Everyone loves the Guru outwardly only.

We say, "Today is Saturday, so I went to the Hanuman temple. On the way, I bought a coconut and some flowers. I made an offering of them at the temple, and I broke the coconut. One of the priests accepted my offering, did a little puja, and gave me some prashad. Then I folded my hands to him, and I went home." This is the way we offer our love and devotion to the gods and goddesses who we are worshiping. If we offer our love and devotion to the Guru in the same shallow, outer way, what can we gain from that? When we worship the gods and goddesses, we get nothing; we come away empty-handed. In the same way, if we offer this kind of superficial love and devotion to the Guru, we can get no benefit from Him—we remain empty.

It is your responsibility to awaken that love for the Guru within yourself. Love is the nature of the soul and is already within you. But at present, that love is hidden, and further, it has been attached to the unreal things of this world. You have to withdraw your love from the outer things and focus your attention on the Guru within; then the love for the Guru will manifest. The mirror never tells you: "Please come look in me and see your face." The mirror doesn't summon you. If you want to see the reflection of your face, you must pick up the mirror yourself and look into it. Just as the mirror doesn't need for us to look into it, in the same way, the Guru has no need of our contemplation and love. We need to develop that love for our own benefit. When we focus our attention on the Guru alone, then the love of the soul already within us flares up. It is not a question of putting something in from outside.

You should love the Guru as the fish loves the water. If the

fish is taken out of the water even for a moment, it thrashes about in agony and gives up its life. It has been said: "If I forget the Beloved even for a moment, it is like fifty years to me."

If even for one moment our soul is separated from that Power of love within us, if our consciousness of that love falters even for an instant, it is as though fifty years of separation had passed. He explains to us that just like the fish loves the water, our attention should remain riveted on the love of the soul within us. In this way, our love for the Guru is perfected.

If the fish is separated from the water even for a moment, it gives up its life.

If the fish is taken away from the water for a fraction of a moment, it dies. When the love of the Guru awakens within you, then the Almighty Lord is not far away, He is with you. Kabir Sahib says:

O, man! Why do you search for me outside?
I am dwelling near you.
I am not in the heavens, nor in the nether worlds;
Look within yourself, and in just a
moment you will discover me.

Even if someone takes the fish and places it in milk, still it suffers without the water.

Now, if someone tries to help the fish by taking it from the water and placing it in milk, still the fish will thrash about. The fish and the water are precious to each other; the fish's love is only for the water. It is the same for the Lord's true devotees. Their whole love is for the Guru; they have no need of any other god.

Once, when Kabir Sahib was lost in contemplation, God Almighty and his Guru both appeared. At that time, Kabir thought, "If I pay obeisance to my Guru and ignore God Almighty, God will be angry. But if I bow before God and ignore my Guru, then He will be angry with me." He was caught in a dilemma and 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.

At that time, Kabir Sahib became resolute within and fell at the feet of the Guru. "If God is angry, let Him be angry." Why? He explains: "When I was enduring birth and death in the 84 lakh forms of life, that God was with me. When I came as a donkey, God was there. When I took on the bodies of the insects, that God was there also. But He never comforted me, He never protected me, and He never showed me the Path to emancipation. He became invisible and sat within me, never uttering a word. But when I met the perfect Satguru, He told me about God and showed me the means by which I could meet Him. When the Guru gave me Initiation and showed me the way, then I realized God. Before meeting the Guru, what knowledge did I have of that God?"

Water is everything to the fish, it depends on the water for its life.

Water is the life of the fish. The fish is dependent upon the water; the fish belongs to the water. In the same way, if you surrender yourself completely to the Guru, then He will become yours. What is the meaning of spirituality? If you

become His, He will become yours. This is the whole meaning of spirituality. When you belong to the Almighty Lord, then He also belongs to you. Then there is no need for the Vedas, or Shastras, or Puranas.

Paltu Das says: "Love the Lord in this way. Through love, you will realize Him."

Paltu Sahib Ji says that if you want to meet the Lord in this very lifetime, then you must take firm hold of this love because God is love. Until that love of God manifests in your within, you will not be able to perform true bhakti, true devotion. If you are one thing inside, and you are showing something else outside, this is not true devotion. This is just a business transaction, the work of a broker.

Biographical Notes

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First Line Index to the Banis

Biographical Notes on the Authors of the Banis

AKKA MAHDEVI (c. 1130–1160) 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 entitled *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 prēmaviddare 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 of 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." *Nadigaḷu 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 12 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 mīňje gaye lūṭ liye dhan bām, nirabhimānī ho chale pahuňce 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 Sehjo 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 niraňjanā, sabhahī ghaṭ dekhai; ūňch nīch antar nahīň, 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 Khatris, 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-in-law, 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 the village of Sardaha (district Barabanki) near the Ghaghra River (located in modern-day Uttar Pradesh). He

showed signs of spiritual precocity from a very early age. It is believed that his Guru was Bulla Sahib, a Gurumukh disciple of Yari Sahib, 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 nahiṅ 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 kahāṅ ḍhūnḍhe bande maiṅ to tere pās meṅ, nā maiṅ deval nā maiṅ masjid nā kābe kailās meṅ.*

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 milihuṅ, pal bhar kī tālāśh meṅ.* 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 implored Him to shower mercy on them.

MANKUTIMMA, or Crazy Timma, (1887–1975) was born in Mulbagal, Kolar, Kingdom of Mysore (now Karnātaka 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. 1498–1547) 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 maṅhai, mahā puruṣha kai aṃsa diyā pāpī kaṅhai.* 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 the 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.

SEHJO BAI, also Sahajo Bai, (c. 1725–1805?) came from a Dhusar family of Rajputana, Rajasthan. Her 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 im-

permanence of worldly bliss. Sehjo 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 Sehjo Bai's life and work. Following the technique taught by Charandas, Sehjo achieved perfection and expressed Her gratitude toward Her Guru in Sehaj Prakash, a collection of eighty-five heartfelt verses. Sehjo 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 karūṅ gholūṅ samundar jāy; dhartī kā kāgad karūṅ guru astuti na samāye.*

SWAMI JI MAHARAJ, also known as Shiv Dayal Singh, (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, donoň 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 Ayodhya, 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 khayo. Raghubhīra charita apāra bāridi pāru kabi kauneň lahyo.*

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, Baji Rao Peshwa. When Guru Gobind Singh traveled in South India, he came in contact with

the Peshwa family and initiated Ratnagar Rao, later authorizing 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 aṅtarātmā kī or baṛhtā 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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Ab se khabardār raho bhāī / From now on, remain wide awake and vigilant, O brother); Kabir Sahib, Satsang 33, p. 285

Are man dhīraj kāhe na dhare? / O mind! Why don't you show some patience? Kabir Sahib, Satsang 39, p. 359

Avadhū amal karai so gāvai / O renunciate! First, perfect the practice, and then sing His praise; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 16, p. 145

Ans nām teṅ phiri phiri āvai / Worshiping the incomplete Naam, We come into this world again and again; Kabir Sahib, (also includes short hymns of Basaveshwara and Mankutimma) Satsang 36, p. 317

Kabīr sabad sarīr meṅ / O Kabir, the Melody of Shabd is playing in this body; Kabir Sahib, (also includes a short hymn of Basaveshwara) Satsang 23, p. 201

Karat hūṅ pukār, āja suniye guhār / I am calling out to You; today, listen to my plea; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 12, p. 105

Komal chitt dayā man dhāro / Keep a gentle heart and a mind full of compassion; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 37, p. 335

Gun karu bavarī gun karu / Develop some good qualities, O crazy girl, develop some good qualities; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 32, p. 277

Guru agyā driṛh kari gahai / O, Sehjo! Take firm hold of the Guru's command; Sehjo Bai (also includes a short hymn of Akka Maha Devi) Satsang 13, p. 129

Guru kā dhyān kar pyāre / O dear soul, contemplate on the form of the Guru; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 17, p. 153

Chunariyā panchrang hamaiṅ na suhāya / This many-colored veil does not please me; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 22, p. 197

Jal aur mīn samān, Guru se prīti jo kījai / Love the Guru as the fish loves the water; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 40, p. 373

Jā ke lagī soi tan jānai / Only the one who has experienced the pain of separation can understand it; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 35, p. 309

Jichar ih man laharī vich hai / As long as the mind goes on wavering; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 26, p. 227

Jithai har ārādhīai tithai har mit sahāī / Wherever you worship the Lord, there He becomes your friend and helper; Guru Ram Das, Satsang 2, p. 9

Jaise kāṭh meṅ agin hai / Just like there is fire in the wood; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 3, p. 23

Satguru soi dayā kari dīnhā / The Greatness of the Guru; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 5, p. 45

Tan santan kā, dhan santan kā / My body belongs to the Saints, my wealth belongs to the Saints; Guru Arjan Dev, Satsang 25, p. 219

Tirakuṭī ghāṭ ko utaru samhāri kai / Scale the heights of Trikuti with caution; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 14, p. 137

Tujhe hai shauk milane kā / If you have the yearning to meet God; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 1, p. 1

Dil kā hujarā sāf kar / Cleanse the Chamber of Your Heart; Tulsi Sahib, Satsang 20, p. 181

Deh to dekh mili jāyagī kheh meṅ / Consider this human body; in the end, it will crumble into dust; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 30, p. 257

Dhubiya guru sam aur na koya / There is no washerman equal to the Guru; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 8, p. 65

Phal mīṭhā pai ūnchā tarbar / A sweet fruit grows high in the tree-tops; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 19, p. 175

Birathā kahau kaun siu man kī / Who can I tell about the restlessness of my mind? Guru Tegh Bahadur, Satsang 7, p. 59

Brahm bidit hai sarv bhūt meṅ / Brahm (God) is known throughout the whole of creation; Kabir Sahib (acrostic), Satsang 28, p. 243

Māi man mero bas nāhi / O Mother, my mind won't come under

my control; Guru Teg Bahadur, Satsang 6, p. 51

Māyā kalavārinī det viṣh ghori kai / Maya, the tavern keeper, dispenses a terrible poison; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 15, p. 141

Māyā hai Rām kī lagaigī dauri kai / Maya belongs to the Lord; she always runs after Him; Paltu Sahib, Satsang 27, p. 237

Rām rām sabh ko kahai, kahiai rām na hoi / The chant of Rām, Rām remains on everyone's lips, but Rām cannot be won by outer recitation; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 10, p. 81

Rām hī Rām sab jagat hī kahata hai / All the world repeats Rāma, Rāma; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 29, p. 251

Rāmā ram rāmo sun man bhījai / O All-Pervading Lord, hearing your Name, my mind is drenched with joy; Guru Ram Das, Satsang 4, p. 29

Vārī jāuṅ maiṅ satguru ke / I sacrifice myself on the Satguru; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 38, p. 347

Jhīnī jhīnī bīnī chadariyā / Sheer, Delicate Shawl, So Finely Woven; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 18, p. 169

Satigur seviai man nirmalā bhae pavit sarīr / Serving the True Guru, the mind becomes immaculate, and the body becomes pure; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 31, p. 263

Sāch barābar tap nahiṅ / There is no austerity equal to Truth; Kabir Sahib, Satsang 24, p. 213

Surat tū dukhī rahe ham jānī / O Surat! I know you have been unhappy here; Swami Ji Maharaj, (also includes a short hymn of Mankutimma), Satsang 9, p. 71

Shabd binā sārā jag andhā / Without Shabd all the world is stark blind; Swami Ji Maharaj, Satsang 34, p. 293

Ham to ek hī kari jāno / I have seen that He is One! Kabir Sahib, Satsang 21, p. 191

Har Jī sūkham agam hai / The Lord is subtle and inaccessible; Guru Amar Das, Satsang 11, p. 95

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.

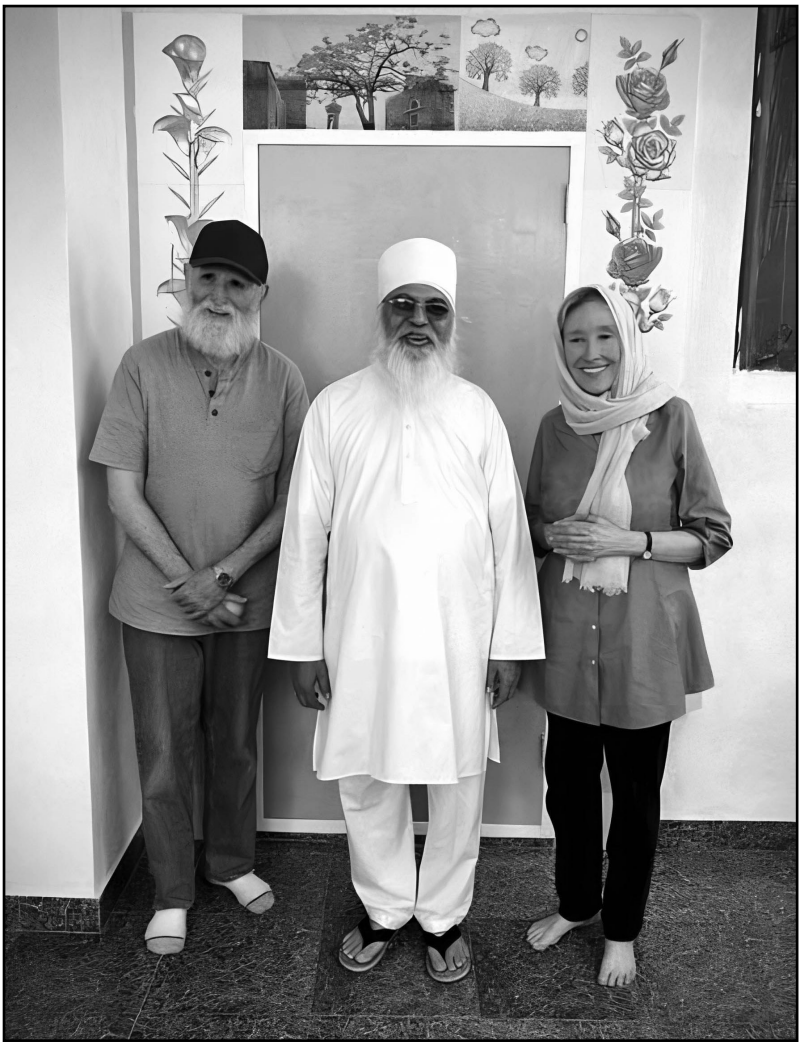
After Baba Somanath's departure from this world in 1976, he found the same Power working in Sant Ajaib Singh of Rajasthan and was a tireless sevadar at Sant Ji's yearly Bombay programs in remembrance of Baba Somanath from 1978 till Sant Ji left the body in 1997. He is now continuing his spiritual journey, 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.

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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.